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VOLUME IV

*WELDING OF THE NATION*

1845-1900

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# American History told by Contemporaries

VOLUME IV

*WELDING OF THE NATION*

1845-1900

EDITED BY

ALBERT BUSHNELL HART

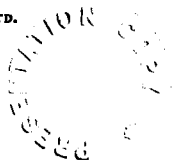
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## Preface

IN taking leave of a work which has called for much time and consideration during the past five years, I feel first of all a sense of gratitude to the good worthies who had sufficient interest in the affairs of their times, and sufficient sense of their own importance in the eyes of posterity, to provide such rich material for our use. Theirs is the delineator's task throughout the *American History told by Contemporaries*: if the pupils in schools, the readers in libraries and at home, teachers and searchers, find the books useful, it is because our forefathers did interesting things and left entertaining records. In my own mind I find the story of the nation's development clearer for the suggestions made by the writers of these four volumes. They are prejudiced; they see but a part of what is going on; they leave many gaps; but, after all, they tell the story.

The selection has been difficult because of the mass of excellent materials, and much that is valuable had to be left aside for lack of space. I have tried to let advocates of both sides speak on all great contested questions; to call upon the best informed and best disposed witnesses; to give examples of the writings of the nation's leaders; to let no significant episode pass unrepresented. In the latter part of this volume it has not been possible to appeal to many diaries and collections of letters, for they have not yet come into print, or even into collections of manuscripts; but there are plenty of other forms of available writings. Official documents have, as in the previous volumes, been left for the most part to other collections.

At this stage of the work it is not necessary to apologize for the system of literal transcripts from the originals; changes of spelling and grammar would in any case be few in the writings of the last half cen-

ture, and the simplest rule is to stick to the copy. Beyond reasons of convenience is the lesson of accurate use of materials, of looking exactly to what a man said, and not to what an editor makes him say.

The ground covered by this volume includes many stirring events. It begins with the Mexican War and the consequent renewal of the slavery contest, and it leads through the exciting "Fifties." Then comes the Civil War, which is treated in detail; on the causes, conditions, and progress of that titanic struggle, the participants, both civil and military, speak with directness and cogency. The troubled and confused Reconstruction period is illustrated by extracts which bring out the main events and scenes; there is no attempt to restate the wearisome debates, or to bring out the details of party and personal controversy. For the period since 1875 I have found the usual difficulty of the searcher into recent history: it is hard to get a right perspective, and impossible to include all the thronging activities of a nation; but the main currents of public thought are illustrated.

In this volume, as in all the others of the series, my expert aids have been Mr. David M. Matteson and Miss Addie F. Rowe; and the Harvard College Library, Boston Athenæum, and Boston Public Library have been hospitable.

Acknowledgments have been made throughout to the volumes from which extracts have been taken. Especial mention is due of the courtesy of Houghton, Mifflin & Co., authorized publishers of the works of Dr. Holmes, Longfellow, and Whittier, and of the *Atlantic Monthly*. I have drawn much from their rich stores of contemporary material.

'Tis only a mosaic at the best — fragments which in themselves feebly shine with the glow of their original stones; but the effectiveness of a mosaic is not to be judged altogether by the tesserae, nor by single figures; it depends on the color sense, the grouping, the broad scheme. The workman knows better than anybody else the defects of his materials; and he cannot judge how far they fit together into an illuminating whole.

ALBERT BUSHNELL HART.

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