

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

**ALEXANDER HAMILTON.**  
 HISTORY OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNITED STATES, AS TRACED IN THE WRITINGS OF ALEXANDER HAMILTON, AND OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES. BY JOHN C. HAMILTON. VOL. I. 8vo. pp. 576. D. Appleton & Co.

The author of the work of which the title is given above published in 1834 and 1840 two volumes of a Life of Alexander Hamilton, in which the narrative was brought down to the meeting of the Convention by which the Federal Constitution was framed. He has since been diligently and zealously employed in the collection of materials, of which he has amassed a large amount, covering as well the period embraced in the published volumes above referred to as the subsequent portion of Hamilton's life. These volumes have been long out of print, and instead of a mere continuation of them the author has adopted the plan of recasting the whole in an entirely new work, of which we now have the first volume. In this, as in his former work, he by no means confines himself to a mere biography of his father, but aims rather, as his title shows, at a history of the Federal Union as illustrated by Alexander Hamilton's life and writings. Another leading object seems to be to bring forward New-York into a more conspicuous and leading position than has hitherto been assigned to her by historians of the Revolution. Yet the work cannot properly be called a history. It lacks the comprehensiveness which that term implies. It belongs rather to that class of writing to which the French give the title of *Memoirs*, and of which the value in general depends much more on the copiousness and authenticity of the materials than upon the style or method of the compiler. In the present work, so far at least as we can judge from the present volume, Hamilton forms the central figure, with a few other favorite characters grouped around him, upon whom all the light of the picture is made to fall—a light heightened by the contrast of shadow thrown upon another group which is also brought pretty conspicuously into the foreground, while the general history of the period serves but to furnish a background and surroundings, many important portions being wholly omitted and others but slightly sketched, so that to have a full comprehension of the positions taken by the author his book ought to be read in connection with some full history.

He commences with a historical sketch of the colony of New-York previous to the period (1774) at which Alex. Hamilton first made his appearance on the political stage. As this sketch extends to less than forty pages, it is but a mere outline; yet it serves to convey a rather striking idea of the political history and sentiments of the colony, though of course many important features are entirely left out as not included in or necessary to the plan of the work.

It is the opinion of Mr. Hamilton, who, as a grandson of Gen. Schuyler, has the blood of the old Dutch colonists in his veins, that the province of New-York, from the very character of its population, especially the Dutch and Huguenot sections of it, was impelled to a resistance to the authority of the mother country, such as was hardly to be looked for in any other colony. He does, in fact, show that in the matter of opposing the imposition of the English Church on the colony as a public establishment, and also in claiming for themselves the unrestricted levy and disbursement of taxes, the New-York Assembly did make, from time to time, a strenuous opposition to the pretensions of the Crown. Nevertheless it is equally certain that upon both these points that opposition was only partially successful, and that the Crown did succeed in building up a party in New-York which gave the mother country a much stronger hold there than upon any other province north of the Potomac. In fact, there was not another colony in North America which adhered to the English connection with greater tenacity. Yet it gives a color to Mr. Hamilton's view that when the scheme of parliamentary taxation was first publicly broached, and partially carried out by the passage of the Sugar Act, New-York, by the emphasis of her protest against it, so strong indeed that no member of Parliament could be found to present it, outdid all the other colonies. He even undertakes to claim for her "the initiative of all the subsequent movements to express authoritatively the united sense of America," as witness the following extract:

A Committee of the Assembly was appointed (Oct. 18, 1764), "to correspond with the other Colonies, or with Committees of them," in relation to the Sugar Act, the act restricting the emission of bills of credit, and several other acts of Parliament in relation to the trade of the Northern Colonies; and "on the subject of impending dangers which threatened the Colonies, of being taxed by laws to be passed in Great Britain."

The question of the origin, in the Colonies, of Committees of Correspondence, has been much debated. The first was appointed by New-York prior to the passage of the Stamp Act.

This passage is sustained by the following note: This statement is appended to a handbill issued in 1774. See New-York handbills in the New-York Historical Society Library. The Committees of Correspondence proposed by James Otis were not appointed until May 31, 1765.

But the proposition of Otis went a great deal further than merely the appointment of Committees of Correspondence. It was no less than a proposal for the meeting of the Stamp Act Congress, and the correspondence suggested by it was in relation to that special subject.

Mr. Hamilton also claims for New-York the invention of non-importation agreements, but we think he is mistaken in ascribing that measure to a public meeting held on the day (November 1) on which the Stamp Act was to go into operation, and as preceding the riots in which Lieutenant-Governor Colden's carriage was destroyed, and Mayor James's house was ransacked. If we are not much mistaken, in this as in most other cases the passion of the city, to borrow our author's phraseology, began to act before its prudence had spoken. It was not, we believe, till five days after the riots that a meeting was held of the more substantial citizens, at which a committee was appointed, with whom the non-importation agreement originated, followed up soon after by a non-exportation agreement. The stand also taken by the Assembly of New-York in refusing to furnish supplies to the British troops stationed in the Colony, required by the Quartering Act, which had been passed at the same session with the Stamp Act, gave that Colony a position, at the commencement of the dispute with the mother country, at the very head of the opposition. In consequence of this refusal, Parliament, in 1770, passed a bill, a sort of forerunner of the attacks several years later on the Provincial Administration of Massachusetts, by which the Assembly was deprived of its right to legislate upon any other subject till it had first made the required provision for the troops. The Assembly consisted at that time of only twenty-seven members. It met with closed doors, and not even its journal of proceedings printed, so that it lacked the support and strength which the contemporaneous Legislature of Massachusetts derived, not only from its larger

numbers, amounting to a hundred or more, but from the presence of sympathizing spectators in the gallery. Nevertheless, under the leadership of Schuyler, George Clinton and Philip Livingston, the Assembly stood out manfully for two years. Our author, indeed, speaks of its having given way in 1768, and of its having, in so doing, but imitated a precedent set by Massachusetts, but both these statements are, we think, incorrect. That work was reserved for the Assembly elected in the Spring of 1769, at which the moderate party triumphed. Lieutenant-Governor Colden artfully prepared the way for it by consenting to a bill for the emission of paper money, to be lent out, according to the fashion of that day, to such persons as could give the required security, the interest to go into the public treasury. The British Government were opposed to these sort of emissions, and had, of late years, much to the dissatisfaction of the colonists, forbidden the Colonial Governors to assent to them. But Colden obtained leave to assent to this bill, by representing that the accruing interest, which could not be applied without the Governor's assent, would furnish a fund out of which provision might be made for the troops.

The next step of retrogression was taken, not by the Assembly, but by the merchants, in the abandonment of the non-importation agreement as to everything but tea, for which an excuse was found in the repeal by Parliament of all the late import duties except on that single article. Our author, with that zeal for the honor of New-York which he constantly exhibits, endeavors indeed to throw the blame of this change of policy upon the delinquency of Boston and Philadelphia in not standing up squarely to the old agreement. However that may be, it is certain, nevertheless, that those two towns at first rejected the proposal of New-York to modify the non-importation, and if New-York is entitled to the honor of originating the non-importation, she must be content to submit to the discredit, if so it is to be regarded, of having led the way in its abandonment. In fact, it was an impracticable policy, except for a very short period—so long, that is, as the old stocks lasted. It required too much self-denial, not merely on the part of the merchants, but on the part of consumers, who were just as little inclined to forego their accustomed luxuries as the merchants were to forego their accustomed profits.

From this time, New-York fell off altogether from the position of leadership which she had temporarily held. A sullen calm of two or three years succeeded, during which even the press, which in former years had sometimes spoken out pretty plainly, was silent. It was during this interval that Alexander Hamilton, then a boy of fifteen, a stranger from the West Indies, became a resident of the City of New-York, over the destinies of which, as well as of the province and the continent, he was destined to exercise so powerful an influence. On his father's side he was of Scotch descent; in fact, our author, emulating the genealogical zeal of Irving in his Life of Washington, traces Hamilton's descent to "Bernard, a near kinsman of Rollo, the first Duke of Normandy, and progenitor of William the Conqueror." The pedigree descends through the Cambuskeath branch of the Scotch family of Hamilton, Alexander's father having been the fourth son of the fourteenth in descent from the founder of that branch. This long pedigree, however, appears not to have availed him much. Like so many other Scotchmen, he went to the West Indies to seek his fortune. He established himself at St. Christopher as a merchant or trader, but soon failed in business, and passed the remainder of his life in reduced circumstances.

It was to his mother that Alexander Hamilton owed his genius and his energy, and it was to her family that he was indebted for his means of education and setting out in the world. She was of French Huguenot descent. Her maiden name was Faucette. Her father, a physician and a man of education and polish, had settled in Nevis, close by St. Kitts, a little island which rises like a cone from the ocean, but with some fertile land round the shore, upon which was planted one of the earliest English settlements in the West Indies. Hamilton's mother had first been married to a Dane named Lavine, a rich man, whom she did not love, and from whom she obtained a divorce. Hamilton, who was born on the 11th of January, 1757, had the misfortune to lose her in childhood; but her relations, who resided at Santa Cruz, took charge of the orphan child. His first instructor was a Jewess, who made the little boy stand by her side on a table, and taught him to repeat the ten commandments in Hebrew. There were no great advantages of education at Santa Cruz; but, beside English, the young Hamilton acquired French, which he spoke and wrote with fluency, and he eagerly read such books as fell in his way. He enjoyed also the friendship and advice of Dr. Knox, a Presbyterian clergyman of the island, who had been struck with his unusual abilities. From him, too, he acquired a touch of divinity and polemics, and was confirmed by him in that respect for religion which adhered to him through life.

At twelve years of age he was placed in a counting-house at Santa Cruz. This avocation was not much to his taste. He longed for active life. War, by the English of the last century, was much more generally looked to than now as the road to distinction. John Adams, while a school-master at Worcester, had his military aspirations, and would have gone into the army could he have got a commission. So Alexander Hamilton, then in Mr. Nicholas Cruger's counting-house, in his earliest extant letter contents "the groveling condition of a clerk or the like," and wishes for a war.

But though he did not like his mercantile employment, he applied himself to his duties with characteristic assiduity; and the practical knowledge acquired by the "groveling clerk" was doubtless in after times a stepping-stone to his position as Secretary of the Treasury and founder of our American system of finance. To this he owes his fame. Had he nothing but his military services to stand upon, he would long since have vanished, or nearly so, amid the crowd of revolutionary colonists.

Like most persons who have a call to write, Hamilton began to use his pen at an early age. Among other things, he wrote and published in a St. Christopher's newspaper a description of a hurricane by which St. Croix was visited in August, 1772. This description appeared while the impression made by the hurricane was still fresh, and it attracted so much attention that it was resolved by his friends to comply with his wishes by sending him to New-York to complete his education.

He was first placed at a grammar school at Elizabethtown, New-Jersey, where he enjoyed the acquaintance of the families of Governor Livingston and Mr. Boudinet. Brockholst Livingston (afterward a Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States) and Jonathan Dayton (subsequently

Speaker of the House of Representatives) were among his school-fellows. His teacher, Francis Barber, was a man likely enough to add fuel to his military ardor. A few years after, when the Revolutionary war broke out, he gave up his school, joined the army, served with distinction and rose to be Colonel.

After a few months spent at Elizabethtown, Hamilton entered King's (now Columbia) College. He also attended lectures on anatomy, with the idea of becoming a physician.

While he was engaged in these studies, the quarrel with the mother country about the tea tax came to a head. A Continental Congress was resolved upon. Some difficulty arose in New-York as to the selection of delegates to this Congress between the ardent party headed by Sears, and the City Committee of Fifty-one lately appointed. This difference led to a public meeting held in the fields on the 6th of July, 1774, at which McDougall presided. Hamilton attended, and is even said to have addressed the assembled multitude. At all events, it is certain that very shortly after he began to employ his pen actively upon the pending dispute. He became a correspondent of *Holt's Journal*, the organ of the New-York patriots, and before the end of the year he also published in a pamphlet a reply to two pamphlets written by Seabury—afterward the first Episcopal Bishop of Connecticut—in which the proceedings of the Continental Congress had been attacked with considerable art and ability. This reply drew out a rejoinder, to which Hamilton replied in a still more elaborate pamphlet. He placed the right of the colonists upon the basis not merely of the Colonial Charters, by which, as he maintained, the idea of Parliamentary taxation was excluded, but also "upon the sacred rights of mankind, which are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or rusty records; they are written as with a sunbeam in the whole volume of human nature, by the hand of the Divinity itself, and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power."

These pamphlets, which show a maturity of intellect exceedingly unusual at Hamilton's age, at once drew the eyes of the popular leaders upon him.

In June, 1775, he published "Remarks on the Quebec Bill," which measure, not less by its favor to the Catholics than by its arbitrary principles of colonial administration, gave great offense to the insurrectionary Colonies.

Meanwhile, he had joined a volunteer corps, which met every morning for exercise in the church-yard of St. George's Chapel. It was his fortune to be present (August 22, 1775) on the first brush of arms which took place at New-York. A party engaged in removing some cannon from the Battery was fired at from a boat of the Asia, a British ship-of-war which lay in the harbor. The fire was returned by a volley, which drew a broadside from the Asia, wounding several citizens, damaging a number of houses, and occasioning no little alarm. Hitherto, New-York had been in a somewhat equivocal position. The Assembly, having met in April, had refused to approve the proceedings of the Continental Congress. It had, in consequence, been superseded by a Provincial Congress; but this new revolutionary body, though it cooperated with the Continental Congress, was very moderate, and anxiously bent on conciliation. Tryon, the Royal Governor, who returned from England about the same time that Washington passed through New-York on his way to assume the command of the army before Boston, was received with precisely the same military honors which had been extended to the Commander-in-Chief. But the collision at the Battery brought matters to a crisis. Wooster, who lay encamped with a Connecticut regiment at Harlem, was invited into the city. The Tories were beset by armed mobs, and it was not without difficulty that Hamilton succeeded in saving Dr. Cooper, the President of the College, and a warm partisan of the mother country, from the consequences of his obnoxious politics. Tryon, obliged to quit the city, took refuge on board a ship in the river. Not long after, Sears, who had withdrawn to Connecticut, dashed into the city one day at the head of a Connecticut troop of horse, which drew up before the office of Rivington, the Tory printer. They destroyed his press and carried off his types, taking with them, as they returned to New-Haven, the Tory Mayor of the borough of Westchester, and also Seabury, author (under the name of "A Westchester Farmer") of the pamphlets against the Continental Congress, to which Hamilton had replied.

This operation of Sears produced a good deal of excitement. Hamilton, whose pamphlets Rivington had printed, did not like this attack on the printing office. He considered it a violation of the liberty of the press and was in favor of pursuing the intruders and recovering the types. The matter ended, however, in a remonstrance to the Governor of Connecticut.

There was at this time not a great deal of spirit or energy of any sort in the New-York Provincial Congress. Schuyler, in command on the northern frontier, was very feebly supported, and the men and means for the invasion of Canada were drawn chiefly from Connecticut and Vermont. The New-Yorkers warmly opposed Lee's entrance into the city with troops from Connecticut; and, in the expectation of the arrival of the German mercenaries taken into the British service, they avowed their "unshaken loyalty to their sovereign," and pronounced protection to Tryon if he would return. New-York, nevertheless, was carried along by the general current, and joined, though somewhat hesitatingly, in the Declaration of Independence.

This result had been for some time foreseen by the young Hamilton, as his writings show. Meanwhile, he had applied himself to obtain such information and instruction as he could in the artillery service, and in March 1776, with the assistance of McDougall, he obtained a commission as captain of a provincial artillery company which Schuyler had recommended to be raised. The remnant of his last remittance from his friends in Santa Cruz is said to have been employed in equipping his company. The main body of the continental army, lately employed in the siege of Boston, was now at New-York, and Hamilton's artillery company was attached to Scott's brigade. Of the way in which this artillery captain of nineteen years of age occupied his leisure, we have the following curious details:

Hamilton seems not to have permitted the duties of his military profession to divert him wholly from the prosecution of his previous studies. The "pay book" of his company gives an interesting exhibition of his train of thought. With minutes of works to be read, are found notes relating to commerce, to the "rates of exchange," the "money circulation," the "proportions of land and labor," the "increase of population," "tables of observations, exhibiting the probabilities of life." Among these are an interesting inquiry, indicating how early his mind was directed to the organization of a General Government with effective independent powers: "Que: Would it not be advisable to let all taxes, even those imposed by the States, be collected by persons of Congressional appointment, and would it not be advisable to pay the collectors so much per cent on the sums collected?"

It was not long, however, that Hamilton was able thus quietly to pursue his studies and speculations. The Declaration of Independence was speedily followed by the arrival in the waters of New-York of a large British force, under the two Howes. Our young artillery captain was called into active service, and, in the disastrous retreat from Long Island, he lost his baggage and one of his guns. It soon became necessary to abandon New-York, and Washington retired with his army to the upper part of the island. It was here that Hamilton, while employed in the construction of an earth-work, first attracted the attention of the Commander-in-Chief, who invited him to his quarters.

Hamilton's artillery, now attached to McDougall's brigade, formed a part of the force of sixteen hundred men which held Chatterton's Hill—the attack upon which by the British is commonly known as the battle of White Plains. Again the Americans were forced to retreat, but Hamilton's conduct in the engagement was such as fully to satisfy his commander.

He followed Washington in the dispiriting retreat through the Jerseys, and his guns helped to check the advance of Cornwallis, who came upon the retreating forces with double their numbers as they were crossing the Raritan. Hamilton's company was also in the battles of Trenton and Princeton, by all which hard services it was reduced to twenty-five men.

Hamilton's spirit and ability had not escaped notice, and he had been invited by two major-generals to take a place in their staff. These invitations he had declined, but he accepted a similar offer from Washington, and on the 1st of March, 1777, was announced in orders as aid-de-camp to the Commander-in-Chief, with the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

What Washington most wanted in his aide-de-camp, and what he found it extremely difficult to get, was assistance in the multifarious correspondence he was obliged to carry on—persons able to think as well as to write for him—qualifications not easily found, but which Hamilton possessed in a high degree, and of which Washington largely availed himself.

In fact, the bulk of this volume, which comes down only to the close of the year 1779, is made up of extracts from letters written, as the compiler expresses himself, "by Hamilton over Washington's signature." The narrative of events thus given is further illustrated from Hamilton's correspondence with the Council of Safety of New-York, his private letters, and by extracts from the letters of other actors in the scene, diligent use having apparently been made of the collection of the papers of Gen. Gates, deposited with the New-York Historical Society. All other known sources of information, printed or manuscript, have been diligently put into requisition. It is, however, to be regretted that the dates of the letters quoted are not more uniformly given, and that in some cases we are neither furnished with the name of the writer nor with that of the person to whom they were addressed, both circumstances of prime importance in determining the historical value to be attached to such documents.

Were we to judge by the lamentations with which for two or three years past the newspaper press has abounded, we might imagine that sectionalism was quite a new thing in our politics—a horrid monster now for the first time heard of. This is a very great mistake, as all familiar with our history are fully aware, and as is most abundantly demonstrated in this volume. The point most strikingly brought out in it is the very high degree of sectional jealousy and personal antipathy, and the extremely low estimate of each other, whether as to talents or honesty, which prevailed among the cliques and parties into which the heroes of the Revolution and the founders of our Republic were divided—a state of things not in any respect exceeded by the similar antipathies and feelings of the present moment. And from this we are authorized to derive consolation and encouragement. If infant liberty in its cradle survived those sectional jealousies, may we not expect that the hatreds, jealousies, suspicions, plots, violences and contradictions of interest and ideas of the present day will be in like manner surmounted?

The origin of the trouble at that time was not without a certain degree of resemblance to the causes of our existing political divisions. New-England was altogether too radical, too fanatical, too democratic, too much carried away with ideas of equality, to suit the temper or to cooperate kindly with "the gentry of the Middle and Southern Colonies," to borrow the phrase of our author. Then as now it was with the "gentry" that the political leadership of the South rested. The great mass of the population counted in that respect for little or nothing; whereas in New-England it was absolutely necessary to take into account the opinions and prejudices of the masses, the body of the people being impressed with the inconvenient idea that they too must be consulted; while on the other hand the "gentry of the Southern and Middle Colonies" felt and expressed toward these pragmatical and insolent New-Englanders and their representatives in Congress much the same feelings entertained and expressed to-day by our Southern slaveholders for the laboring inhabitants of the democratic section of the Union—New-England having gradually extended itself since the Revolution through New-York into Ohio and the Far West.

These feelings of sectional jealousy and disparagement having led to the denunciation of the New-England officers as bores and her soldiers as cowards—a charge to which too much color was given by the misbehavior of some New-England regiments at New-York—were naturally enough re-echoed by corresponding injustice on the other side; and in this state of feeling, taking also into account the success of Gates with his New-England troops and officers at the North, and the loss of Philadelphia, it is not by any means surprising that the idea was formed of substituting a new Commander-in-Chief in Washington's place. It by no means follows that every person engaged in this movement, or indeed that the larger part, were impelled by unworthy motives. Many of the parties more or less concerned in it became in after times Washington's strongest friends and supporters. As things then stood, there were reasonable, or at least plausible, grounds for believing that with another Commander-in-Chief the colonists might have been more successful. It must be recollected that even Hamilton himself does not appear to have formed a very high opinion of Washington's talents. In his letter to Schuyler—not found in the present volume, but which, no doubt, will appear in the next—giving an account of his resignation of the place of aide-de-camp, and begging that Schuyler (whose daughter by this time Hamilton had married) would not in consequence withdraw his support from Washington—Schuyler being at that time a Delegate in Congress—he thus expressed himself:

"The General is a very honest man; his competitors have slender abilities and less integrity. His

popularity has often been essential to the safety of America, and is still of great importance to it. These considerations have influenced my past conduct respecting him, and will influence my future. I think it necessary he should be supported. His estimation in your mind, whatever may be its amount, I am persuaded has been formed on principles which a circumstance like this cannot materially affect."

If, so late as 1781, Hamilton could thus place his support of Washington less on his merits than on the force of circumstances and the weakness and unworthiness of his competitors, it will not do to set down, as our author seems too inclined to do, every criticism upon the army and the Commander-in-Chief to be found in private letters to ill-temper and a malicious disposition. In private correspondence, a certain license and freedom must be expected and allowed. The same liberty which the General, or at least the members of his staff, took with Congress, Members of Congress must be expected to take with the Commander-in-Chief and the army. Take, for instance, the following letter of Hamilton to Gov. Clinton, of Feb. 13, 1778. Can he be allowed to speak so freely of Congress and its Members without conceding an equal liberty to the other side?

There is a matter which often obtrudes itself upon my mind, and which requires the attention of every person of sense and influence among us; I mean a degeneracy of representation in the great council of America. It is a melancholy truth, Sir, the effects of which we daily see, and feel, that there is not so much wisdom in a certain number of those who are called members of it, as our affairs absolutely demand. Many members of it are, no doubt, men in every respect fit for the trust; but this cannot be said of it as a body. Folly, caprice, a want of foresight, comprehension and dignity, characterize the general tenor of their conduct. Of this, I dare say, you are sensible, and that you have not persons so well qualified for the office of knowing it as I have. Their conduct, with respect to the army especially, is feeble, indecisive, and imprudent; inasmuch that we are reduced to a more terrible situation than you can conceive. False and contracted views of economy have prevented them, though repeatedly urged to it, from making that provision for officers which would be to interest them in the service. This has produced such carelessness and indifference to the service, as is subversive of every officer-like quality. They have disgusted the army by repeated instances of the most whimsical favoritism in their promotion; and to the meanness of rank to rank, and to the charge of suffering themselves to be bullied by every petty adventurer who comes armed with the orders of some military merit and experience. Would you believe it, Sir? It is become almost proverbial in the mouths of the French officers and other foreigners, that they have nothing more to do, to obtain whatever they please, than to assume a high tone, and assert their own merit, and to come armed with the orders of some military merit and experience. Would you believe it, Sir? It is become almost proverbial in the mouths of the French officers and other foreigners, that they have nothing more to do, to obtain whatever they please, than to assume a high tone, and assert their own merit, and to come armed with the orders of some military merit and experience. Would you believe it, Sir? It is become almost proverbial in the mouths of the French officers and other foreigners, that they have nothing more to do, to obtain whatever they please, than to assume a high tone, and assert their own merit, and to come armed with the orders of some military merit and experience.

America once had a representation that would do honor to her name. The present falling off is very alarming and dangerous. What is the cause, and how is it to be remedied? are questions that the welfare of these States requires should be well attended to.

In the presentation which he makes of the personal and sectional feuds, and the different ideas of policy which prevailed in the early years of the Revolutionary war, Mr. Hamilton plays rather the part of an advocate than of a judge. He makes little or no attempt to conceal his own feelings of partisanship. In general, however, he treats with a decent respect those whose share in the Revolution have given them a fixed place in the public esteem. In the case of John Adams, we are sorry to notice a departure from this policy. He is pursued in a manner so marked, that it can hardly fail to defeat, in a great degree, the writer's object. Thus, among other things, his absence from Congress during the retreat through the Jerseys, is represented as a desertion of duty, as a piece of poltroonery; as though he had run off for fear of the British. If so, Baintree was but a poor place to run to. While marching on Philadelphia, Howe sent an army and fleet from New-York, which occupied Narragansett Bay, a distance by land of not more than thirty miles from Adams's house. In going back to Massachusetts, Adams only threw himself into the focus of the rebellion. Few men ever underwent a more rigorous political scrutiny than John Adams; and, had there been the slightest ground for the insinuations now for the first time urged against him, we should most likely have heard of it during his lifetime. Whatever might have been John Adams's faults or failings, cowardice certainly was not of the number.

One of the most curious and remarkable letters in this volume is one written by Hamilton for the purpose of introducing to Jay, then President of Congress, the younger Laurens, and a project he had of enlisting a brigade of negroes. As the letter expresses Hamilton's opinions on some points which still continue to be discussed, we give it at length:

Colonel Laurens, who will have the honor of delivering you this letter, is one of the best of our Carolina, or of any other, soldiers. In the present situation of affairs there, is a very good one, and deserves every kind of support and encouragement. This is, to raise two, three or four battalions of negroes, with the assistance of the Government of that State, by numberless promises. If you should think proper to contribute from the subject whom he, will give you a detail of his plan. He wishes to have it recommended by Congress to the State; and as an inducement, that they would engage to take their battalions into continental pay.

It appears to me that an expedient of this kind in the present state of Southern affairs is the most rational that can be adopted, and promises very important advantages. Indeed, I hardly see how a sufficient force can be collected in that quarter without it; and the enemy's operations there are proving infinitely serious and formidable. I have not the least doubt that the negroes will make very excellent soldiers, with proper management, and I will venture to pronounce that they cannot be put in better hands than those of Mr. Laurens. He has all the zeal, intelligence and enterprise, and every other qualification requisite to be employed in such an undertaking. It is a main object with some great military judges, that with suitable officers, soldiers can hardly be too stupid; and on this principle it is thought that the Russians would make the best soldiers in the world, if they were under other officers than their own. The King of Prussia is among the number who maintain this doctrine, and has a very emphatic saying on the occasion, which I do not exactly recollect. I mention this because I have recently heard it objected to the scheme of employing negroes, that they are too stupid to make soldiers. This is so far from appearing to me a valid objection, that I think their want of cultivation (for their natural faculties are probably as good as ours) joined to their stupidity, will secure their fidelity. To acquire from a life of servitude, will enable them sooner to become soldiers than our white inhabitants. Let officers be men of sense and sentiment, and the nearer the soldiers approach to machines, perhaps the better.

I foresee that this project will have to combat much opposition from prejudice and self-interest. The contempt we have been taught to entertain for the blacks makes us fancy many things that are founded neither in reason nor experience; and an unwillingness to part with property of so valuable a kind will furnish a thousand arguments to show the improbability or perniciousness of a scheme which requires such sacrifices. But it should be considered that if we do not make use of them in this way, the enemy probably will, and that the best way to counteract the temptations they will hold out to be to offer them ourselves. An essential part of the plan is to give them their freedom with their swords. This will secure their fidelity. To acquire from a life of servitude, will enable them sooner to become soldiers than our white inhabitants. Let officers be men of sense and sentiment, and the nearer the soldiers approach to machines, perhaps the better.

The present volume comes down only to the close of 1779. One or two other volumes are already in

the press, and the whole work, speedily to be completed, will extend to five volumes. The ground gone over in this volume is rather hackneyed, but we have reason to believe that the future volumes, especially those which treat of the post-revolutionary history, will contain much new and very interesting matter.

The question how far the letters and other papers written by Hamilton for Washington's use are to be considered as Hamilton's, and how far as Washington's, is one which we reserve for future discussion.

**LIFE OF AARON BURR.**

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF AARON BURR. BY JAMES PARTON. 12mo. pp. 626. Mason Brothers.

The reputation of Aaron Burr, as colored by the popular traditions concerning his character, will be modified to a considerable degree, by the statements of his biographer in this singularly interesting volume. Mr. Parton has obviously pursued his elaborate researches with a determination to ascertain the exact truth in the matter, without regard to current opinions or prejudices, in spite of a certain natural leaning in favor of a man whom he believes to have been too rigidly dealt with by his contemporaries. He does not, however, blind himself to the fatal defects in the character of Burr—he treats his subject generously, but not in the spirit of chivalrous romance—presenting the extenuating circumstances of his career, without attempting to gloss over the unscrupulous love of intrigue and want of high principle which were the distinguishing features of his life. In the hands of Mr. Parton, Aaron Burr ceases to be the malignant, ferocious, Satanic monster of prevailing tradition, but is converted rather into the smooth, smiling, plausible demon, best represented by Goethe in the character of Mephistopheles. From the beginning to the end of his career we find no trace of moral principle—among the elements of which he was composed, conscience was omitted—there was no touch of piety toward God or man in his nature—no gleam of human tenderness, or of divine aspiration—his heart was cold and hard as a rock—his ambition knew neither limit nor restraint—his selfishness was as exclusive as it was subtle; but still, he gave no evidence of a love of the grosser forms of depravity—he was polished and refined, even to fastidiousness, in his exterior—he was not a foul-mouthed scolder at religion—nor did he rudely violate the proprieties of life—the cloven foot was usually concealed beneath the nicest silk hose and varnished leather—and for coolness, self-possession, and courtesy of manners he was scarcely a whit inferior to his gentlemanly prototype in Faust.

Burr was left an orphan before he was two years old, and he had scarcely cut his teeth before he began to show the love of mischief and intrigue, which proved the "child was father of the man." When he was only four years old, he engaged in a violent rebellion against his leading string, took this bit between his teeth, and, snapping his fingers at the tutor in charge, ran away from home. It was some three or four days before the precocious truant could be found; nor is it related with what demerit grace he received the consequent chastisement; but he continued his pranks, as opportunity afforded, and by the time he was ten years old, he had spent the second time in order to go to school. "He went to New-York, took the post of Albany on board a ship getting ready for sea, and actually served in that capacity for a short time. But one day while he was at work on the quarter-deck, he spied a suspicious clock-looking gentleman coming rapidly down the wharf, who, he soon saw, was his uncle, bent on the capture of a cabin-boy. He sprang into the rigging, and before his uncle got on board the ship, had climbed to the mast-head. He saw his advantage, and resolved to profit by it. He was ordered down, but refused to come. As his uncle was a gentleman who would have been nowhere less at home than at the mast-head of a ship, the command had to soften itself into an entreaty, and it became, finally, a negotiation. Upon the condition that nothing disagreeable should befall him in consequence of the adventure, the runaway agreed to descend, and go home again to his books." The young scape-grace, however, had no active brain. When no devilry was at hand, he took well to his studies. He got fitted for college at the age of eleven, and applying for admission at Princeton was rejected on account of his extreme youth. At this time he was a dapper little gentleman, with a fair, handsome face, his keen black eyes already beginning to be dangerous, and his soft, enticing ways making him a general favorite. He at length became old enough to enter college, where he was occasionally a hard student, and always greatly addicted to multifarious reading. A curious indication of his love of mystification and intrigue was here given in his habit of writing his confidential letters in cipher, although as a boy of fifteen, he could scarcely be supposed to have been burdened with any secrets of moment. Soon after leaving college, he went to reside in the family of Dr. Bellamy, the celebrated Calvinistic divine of Bethlehem, Conn., with a view to the study of theology. But one year's trial was enough to convince him that he had neither the faith nor works requisite to the exercise of the clerical profession. He turned his back upon the creed of his ancestors, and exchanged the robust and sinewy belief of Jonathan Edwards for the gospel according to Chesterfield and Voltaire.

The breaking out of the Revolution gave a strong impulse to the military spirit, which was certainly a natural element in Burr's character. On receiving the news of the battle of Lexington, he flung aside the law-books to which he had recently been devoted, and, seizing the sword, hastened to join the patriot forces in the vicinity of Boston. "He felt that he was formed to excel as a soldier. A mere strapping in appearance, with a stature of five feet six inches, a slender form, and a youthful face, he yet possessed a power of prolonged exertion, and a capacity for enduring privation, that were wonderful in a youth of nineteen. His courage was perfect—he never knew fear; even his nerves could not be startled by any kind of sudden horror. He was a good horseman, a good huntsman, a tolerable fencer, and a decent shot. Moreover, he loved the military art; knew all of it that could be learned from books, and more highly prized the soldier's glory than that of any other pursuit. To these qualities he added a mind cultivated and most fertile in those suggestions for which the agencies of war furnish such frequent material. And with all his power to win the combat, he equals and outstrips, men saw in his face and bearing what Kent loved in Lear, authority." No period of Aaron Burr's life is better known than the time spent in the Revolutionary army. Three times, in the latter part of his life, he claimed under the Pension and Compensation passed for the benefit of the soldiers of the Revolution; and, to substantiate his claim, he had soldiers gave written and sworn testimony of his services, some of them narrating, with particularity, exploits of his which they