

PREFACE.

THE following work was commenced several years ago, but the prosecution of it has been repeatedly interrupted by other occupations, by a long absence in Europe, and by occasional derangement of health. It is only within the last two or three years that I have been able to apply myself to it steadily. This is stated to account for the delay in its publication.

The present volume treats of the earlier part of Washington's life previous to the war of the Revolution, giving his expeditions into the wilderness, his campaigns on the frontier in the old French war; and the other "experiences," by which his character was formed, and he was gradually trained up and prepared for his great destiny.

Though a biography, and of course admitting of familiar anecdote, excursive digressions, and a flexible texture of narrative, yet, for the most part, it is essentially historic. Washington, in fact, had very little private life, but was eminently a public character. All his actions and concerns almost from boyhood were connected with the history of his country. In writing his biography, therefore, I am obliged to take glances over collateral history, as seen from his point of view and influencing his plans, and to narrate distant transactions apparently disconnected with his concerns, but eventually bearing upon the great drama in which he was the principal actor.

I have endeavored to execute my task with candor and fidelity; stating facts on what appeared to be good authority, and avoiding as much as possible all false coloring and exaggeration. My work is founded on the correspondence of Washington, which, in fact, affords the amplest and surest groundwork for his biography. This I have consulted as it exists in manuscript in the archives of the Department of State, to which I have had full and frequent access. I have also made frequent use of "Washington's Writings," as pub-