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THE REVOLT

OF THE

British American Colonies, 1764-84.

CHAPTER I.

The Treaty of Paris recognised the undisputed supremacy of Great Britain in North America, and as far as human foresight might determine no civilized competitor to call it in question could by any possibility be evoked—her sway was undisputed—nor would the keenest and most daring political intelligence attempt to conjure the shadows of the future with those forms of reality which under subsequent events they attained—in fact to the eye of the statesman at home or abroad the British American Colonies at this period presented the aspect of content and security and undoubtedly were a source of great additional strength to the Empire.

From an early period in Colonial History causes had been at work whose evident tendency was to produce a separation of interests from the Mother Country which were rapidly becoming more divergent as the Colonies increased in wealth and population. The most important of those agents which brought about the final catastrophe were—Commerce—and local personal ambition—the operations of the "Navigation Act," first enforced by that great and unscrupulous tyrant Cromwell, fettered and restricted Colonial traffic, kept prosperity within prescribed limits and opposed an insurmountable barrier to development. The vicious practice of making the Government of the Colonies the reward of political subserviency at home filled all offices of value with the most ignorant and worthless of the parasites and retainers of the British Minister—men whose elevation only helped to make their insolence more insufferable and their incapacity more apparent, thus closing the way to royal favor or distinction to the wealthy educated and able Colonial magnate. If, therefore, the "Navigation Act" with the consequent Custom's Laws and the stringent regulations of Admiralty Courts were just

subjects of complaint and vexation to the mercantile and agricultural class, the reasons above stated found them zealous and ready advocates and defenders in the Provincial magnates—men of large Estate and ample means—who were debarred from access to the British administration and the honors of the State by the imbecility or envy of the Governor and the supercilious ignorance of his immediate officials. Is it any wonder then that those men should be predisposed to shake off what was to them an intolerable yoke and to seize the first favorable pretext for that object. The fact remains that both causes combined (and those alone as primary) finally severed the American Colonies from Great Britain and erected in their stead the United States Empire.

One class of political philosophers affect to believe that the loss of those valuable possessions was a direct gain to Great Britain, because she might be led into expensive wars to protect her Colonial interests; another class declare the loss to the Empire to be irreparable, while a third thinks that under a Constitutional Monarchy the resources of the revolted Colonies would never have received the development attained since the separation.

The series of articles presented to the readers of THE VOLUNTEER REVIEW, on the subject of the *Revolt of the British American Colonies*, are designed to investigate without prejudice and impartiality the causes which led to the separation of the thirteen Colonies from Great Britain, a narrative of the campaigns consequent thereon with reference to the military operations and strategy as well as the political motives and effects with a consideration of the influence the results have had on the affairs of the Empire. While deeply impressed with the difficulties to be encountered in carrying out successfully an object of the magnitude proposed, the writer thinks it necessary to supply a want felt especially amongst the mass of the Canadian people of a true statement of the occurrences which dismembered the British Empire, and within a period of twenty years from the consolidation of its power in America erected on its ruins a rival nation identical in lang-

uage, literature, and Jurisprudence—aliens in Constitutional Government, competitors in commerce and rivals in ambition—and to point out the reasons why of all her vast possessions extending from the Mississippi to the North Pole the newly acquired Province of Canada alone remained. This object is more necessary because American authors invariably accuse the British Government of tyranny, and a desire deliberately to subvert their Constitutional rights and privileges, while the revolutionists were the most patient, submissive, patriotic and disinterested of mankind and that resistance was postponed until it became inevitable and was in fact the discharge of a holy duty.

On the other side British writers of the period are apt to designate the Colonists as a most mutinous and rebellious set of pragmatical knaves, led on by designing scoundrels, who, to cover their own misdeeds or to minister to their paltry ambition precipitated a revolt unnecessary from the first, and rendered reconciliation impossible. At a later period another class justified the action of the revolted Colonists on the broad principles that every people have the right to shape their own form of government. Thus the student who will wade through the mass of authorities on either side will feel all the bewilderment consequent on disingenuousness and special pleading, and be puzzled to find that one party are all angels of light, the others angels of darkness. A plain statement of facts, with a thorough analysis of the character and motives of the principal actors in this political tragedy, as far as such can be ascertained, will enable a fair conclusion to be drawn of the causes which led to the separation of the thirteen Colonies from Great Britain.

Such an investigation will go far to illustrate the dangers of extra constitutional acts and will help to point out the landmarks by which those excesses, imperilling the well being of society, can be avoided. Exact knowledge, in every department of life, has always been a necessity of the social condition of mankind, but it is only lately that this fact has obtained recognition. Historical analysis has therefore a double value, as