

AMERICAN STATESMEN.¹

AMERICAN politics have acquired a practical interest for Englishmen. England under monarchical forms has, through blind extensions of the suffrage, induced by the rivalry of factions, slid into democracy without facing the problem of democratic organisation. The framers of the American constitution had to face the problem. The circumstances under which it presented itself to them were different from those under which it presents itself to British statesmen, the people for which they legislated having been made up partly of freehold farmers, partly of slaveowners; and their solution was not a national but a federal constitution, such as was applicable to a group of thirteen states, among which no one was too predominant, while it would be wholly inapplicable to the Three Kingdoms. Still, they faced the problem, and they bequeathed to us a solution. To speak of the American constitution as having been struck off by a single and unique effort of the human mind is of course to betray strange ignorance of the process by which it was evolved. The groundwork was there in the town meeting and the colonial assemblies, while the British constitution furnished a model, always actually, though not avowedly, present to the minds of the political builders. But, if there was not a new creation, there were deliberate revision and adaptation; a definite experiment was made and the result of that experiment is before us. Not that the American constitution was, as American writers sometimes assumed, the very first

¹ *American Statesmen: a Series of Biographies of Men conspicuous in the Political History of the United States.* Edited by John T. Morse, jun. (Boston, U.S.: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.):—

John Quincy Adams. By John T. Morse, jun.

Alexander Hamilton. By Henry Cabot Lodge.

John C. Calhoun. By Dr. H. von Holst.

Andrew Jackson. By Professor W. G. Sumner.

John Randolph. By Henry Adams.

James Monroe. By Pres. Daniel C. Gilman.

Thomas Jefferson. By John T. Morse, jun.

Daniel Webster. By Henry Cabot Lodge.

Albert Gallatin. By John Austin Stevens.

James Madison. By Sydney Howard Gay.

John Adams. By John T. Morse, jun.

John Marshall. By A. B. Magruder.

Samuel Adams. By James K. Hosmer.

Thomas H. Benton. By Theodore Roosevelt.

Henry Clay. By Hon. Carl Schurz.

Patrick Henry. By Moses Coit Tyler.