

## ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

THE greatest name in American history is that of ALEXANDER HAMILTON, if we consider the versatility of the man who bore it, the early age at which he began a great public career, the success which attended all his labors, the impression which he made on his country and its government, and the rare foresight by which he was enabled to understand that our political system would encounter that very danger through which it has just passed, — and passed not without receiving severe wounds, which have left it scarcely recognizable even by its warmest admirers. Talleyrand, who had a just appreciation of Hamilton's talents and character, said that he had divined Europe. An American need not be possessed of high powers or position to venture the assertion that Hamilton divined American history, and foresaw all that we have suffered because our predecessors would build the national edifice on sand, so that it could not stand against the political storm which it was in the breath of selfish partisans to send against it, but has, as it were, to be buttressed by mighty fleets and armies. A system, which, had it been rightly formed in the first place, would have been self-sustaining, was saved from destruction solely by the uprising of the people, who had to operate with bullets and bayonets, when it had been fondly hoped that the ballot would ever be a sufficiently formidable weapon in the hand of the American citizen, and that he never would have to become the citizen-soldier in a civil contest. Had Hamilton been allowed to shape our national polity, it would have worked as successfully for ages as that financial system which he formed has ever worked, and which has never been departed from without the result being most injurious to the country. At this day, when events have so signally justified the views of Alexander Hamilton, and are daily jus-

tifying them,\* it may not be unprofitable to glance over the career of one whose virtues, services, and genius are constantly rising in the estimation of his countrymen and of the world, "the dead growing visible from the shades of time."

To be born at all is to be well born is the general belief in this very liberal-minded age: but even the most determined of democrats is not averse to a good descent; and Hamilton, who was a democrat in no sense, had one of the noblest ancestries in Europe, though himself of American birth. His family was of Scotland, a country which, the smallness of its population considered, has produced more able and useful men than any other. The Hamiltons of Scotland, and we may add of France, were one of the noblest of patrician houses, and they had a great part in the stormy history of their country. Walter de Hamilton, of Cambuskeith, in the

\* Mr. Riethmüller, in his volume on "Hamilton and his Contemporaries," coolly assumes that Hamilton would have opposed the late war for the maintenance of the Union, had he been living! Anything more absurd than such a view of Hamilton's probable course, under circumstances like those which occurred in 1861, it would be impossible to imagine. Hamilton would have been the firmest supporter of the war, had he lived to see it, or had such a war broken out in his time. His principles would have led him to be for extreme measures. It is easy to see why Mr. Riethmüller thus misrepresents Hamilton's opinions. Living in London, where it is thought that every foreign nation should submit to destruction, if that be desirable to England, he wrote under the influence of the place. The English do not take the same view of Secession, when it comes home to them. They think as unfavorably of that repeal of the Union which the Irish demand as we thought of that dissolution of our Union which South Carolinians demanded; and they moved against the Fenians much earlier than we moved against the Carolinians. Mr. Riethmüller's assumption is pointedly disclaimed by General Hamilton's representatives, who declare that it is a palpable misrepresentation of their father's views; and no one who is familiar with Hamilton's writings and history can honestly say that they are wrong. To say that Andrew Jackson, who crushed Nullification, would have been a Secessionist, had he been living in 1861, would be a moderate assertion, compared to that which places Alexander Hamilton in the list of possible Secessionists, had he survived to Secession times.

County of Ayr, — Burns's county, — second son of Sir David de Hamilton, Dominus de Cadyow, was the founder of that branch of the Hamilton family to which the American statesman belonged. He flourished *temp.* Robert III., second of the Stuart kings, almost five hundred years ago. Many noble Scotch names are very common, because it was the custom of the families to which they belonged to extend them to all their retainers; but Alexander Hamilton obtained his name in no such way as that. His descent from the Lord of Cadyow is made up with the nicest precision. The family became of Grange in the sixteenth century. The names of the ladies married by the heads of the Hamiltons of Cambuskeith and Grange all belong to those of the ingenuous classes. The same Christian names are continued in the line, that of Alexander appearing as early as the latter part of the fifteenth century, and re-appearing frequently for three hundred years. Alexander Hamilton of Grange, fourteenth in descent from Sir David de Hamilton, had three sons, the third bearing his father's name; and that son's fifth child was James Hamilton, who emigrated to the West Indies, settling in the Island of Nevis. Mr. James Hamilton married a French lady, whose maiden name was Faucette, and whose father was one of many persons of worth who were forced to leave France because of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, through the bigotry of that little man who is commonly called the Grand Monarch, and whose bigotry was made active by the promptings of Madame de Maintenon, who was descended from a fierce Huguenot, as was the monarch himself.

Alexander Hamilton was born on the 11th of January, 1757. His mother died in his early childhood, a more than usually severe loss, for she was a superior woman. He was the only one of her children who survived her. His father soon became poor, and the child was dependent upon the relatives of his mother for support and education. They resided at Santa Cruz,

where he was brought up. Just before completing his thirteenth year he entered the counting-house of Mr. Cruger, a merchant of Santa Cruz. Young as he was, his employer left him in charge of his business while he made a visit to New York, and had every reason to be satisfied with the arrangement. He read all the books he could obtain, and read them understandingly. Even at that early age he was remarkable for the manliness of his mind. He wrote, too; and an account of the hurricane of 1772, which he contributed to a public journal, attracted so much attention that he was sought out, and it was determined to send him to New York to be regularly educated. He left Santa Cruz, and sailed for Boston, which port he reached in October, 1772. Proceeding to New York, he was sent to school at Elizabethtown, New Jersey; and in 1773 entered King's College, in the city of New York, where he pursued his studies with signal success. But events were happening that were to place him in a very different school from that in which he was preparing to become a physician. He was to be the physician of the State, and to that end he was thrown among men, and appointed to do the work of men of the highest intellect, at an age when most persons have not half completed the ordinary training which is to fit them to begin the common routine of common life.

Hamilton's connection with the history of his country, as one of those who were making material for it, began at the age of seventeen. The American Revolution was moving steadily onward when he arrived at New York, and by the summer of 1774 it had assumed large proportions. He first spoke at "the Great Meeting in the Fields," July 6th, and astonished those who heard him by the fervor of his eloquence and the closeness of his logic. His fame dates from that day. He sided with the people of his new home from the time that he came among them, and never had any doubt or hesitation as to the course which duty required him

to adopt and pursue. As a writer he was even more successful than as a speaker. A pamphlet which he wrote in December, 1774, vindicating the Continental Congress, attracted much attention, and that and another from his pen were attributed to veteran Whigs, particularly to John Jay; but the evidence of Hamilton's authorship is perfect, or we might well agree with the Tories, and believe that works so able could not have been written by a youth of eighteen. Other writings of his subsequently appeared, and were most serviceable to the patriots. Young as he was, he was already regarded by the country as one of its foremost champions with the pen. The time was fast coming when it was to be made known that the holder of the pen could also hold the sword, and hold it to effective purpose.

He had joined a volunteer corps while in college, and was forward in all its doings. The first time he was under fire was when this corps was engaged in removing guns from the Battery. The fire of a man-of-war was opened on it, doing some injury. This was the first act of war in New York, and it is interesting to know that Hamilton had part in it. In the commotion that followed, he was zealous in his efforts to prevent the triumph of a mob, and not more zealous than successful. From the very beginning of his career, he never thought of liberty, save as the closest associate of law. Diligently devoting himself to the study of the military art, and particularly to gunnery, he asked for the command of an artillery company, and obtained it after a thorough examination, being made captain on the 14th of March, 1776, when but two months beyond his nineteenth year. He completed his company, and expended the very last money he received from his relatives in making it fit for the field. Even at that time he advocated promotion from the ranks, and succeeded in having his first sergeant made a commissioned officer: a fact worthy of mention, when it is recollected that his enemies have always represented him as an aristocrat, there being nothing less aristo-

cratical than the placing of the sword of command in the hands of men who have carried the musket. While pursuing his military duties, he did not neglect the study of politics; and his notes show that before the Declaration of Independence he had thought out a plan of government for the nation that was so soon to come into existence. Among them is this inquiry: "*Quære*, 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?" This, as his son says, "is the intuitive idea of a general government, truly such, which he first proposed to Congress, and earnestly advocated." He was in his twentieth year when he showed himself capable of understanding the nature of the situation, and the wants of the country. Probably no other person had got so far at that time, and it required years for the people to reach the point at which Hamilton had arrived intuitively. With them it was a conclusion reached through bitter experience. The lesson has not been perfectly acquired even at this time.

Hamilton's company belonged to that army which Washington commanded, in 1776, in New England and New Jersey; and it was while the army was on the heights of Haerlem, in the autumn of 1776, that he attracted the notice of Washington. The General inspected an earthwork which the Captain was constructing, conversed with him, and invited him to his tent. This was the beginning of an acquaintance that was destined to have memorable consequences and lasting effects on the American nation. On the 1st of March, 1777, Hamilton was appointed to a place on Washington's staff, becoming one of his aides, with the rank of lieutenant-colonel,—his "principal and most confidential aide," to use Washington's language. It was not without much hesitation that Hamilton accepted this post. He had already made a name, and his promotion in the line of the army was secured; and had he remained to take-

that promotion, he would have won the highest distinction, supposing him to have escaped the casualties of war. His military genius was unquestioned; and what Washington required of him was service that would not secure promotion or opportunity to show that he deserved it. He required the mind and the pen of Hamilton. These he obtained; and the amount of labor performed by the youthful aide-de-camp with his pen was enormous. He was something more than an aide and a private secretary. He was the commander's trusted friend, and he proved that he deserved the trust reposed in him, not less by his high-minded conduct than by the talent which he brought to the discharge of the duties of a most difficult post, — duties which were of an arduous and highly responsible character. The limits of a sketch like the present do not admit of more than the general mention of his great services. Those who would know them in full should consult the work in which Mr. John C. Hamilton has done justice to the part which his father had, first in the Revolutionary contest, and then in the creation of the American Republic, and the settlement of its policy.\* There was no event with which Washington was concerned for more than four years with which Hamilton was not also concerned. The range of his business and his labors was equal to his talents, and it is not possible to say more of them. He was but twenty years old when Washington thus really placed him next to himself in the work of conducting the American cause. In what estimation his services were held by the commander-in-chief may be inferred from the fact that he was selected by him, in 1780, being then in his twenty-fourth year, as a special minister to France, to induce the French Government to grant more aid to this coun-

try. Hamilton did not take the office, because it was desired by his friend, Colonel Laurens, whose father was then a prisoner in England.

Colonel Hamilton was married on the 14th of December, 1780, to Miss Elizabeth Schuyler, second daughter of General Philip Schuyler, one of the most distinguished soldiers of the Revolution, to whom was due the defeat of General Burgoyne, and head of one of those old families of which New York possessed so many. This lady was destined to survive her husband half a century, and to be associated with two ages of the country, — her death occurring in 1854, in her ninety-eighth year. She was a woman of exalted character, and worthy to be the wife of Alexander Hamilton.

The relations between Washington and Hamilton were briefly interrupted early in 1781, and Hamilton left the commander's military family. He had a command in that allied army which Washington and Rochambeau led to Yorktown, the success of which put an end to the "great war" of the Revolution on this continent. When the British redoubts were stormed, Hamilton commanded the American column, and carried the redoubt he assailed before the French had taken that which it fell to their lot to attack. Shortly afterward he retired from the service, and, taking up his residence in Albany, devoted himself to the study of the law. In 1782 he was elected a member of the Continental Congress by the Legislature of New York, and took his seat on the 25th of November. He proved an energetic member, his attention being largely directed to the financial state of the country, than which nothing could be more dreary. At an early day he had been convinced that something sound must be attempted in relation to our finances; and in 1780 he had addressed a letter on the subject to Robert Morris, which showed that his ideas regarding money and credit were those of a great statesman. But the time had not come in which he was to mould the country to his will, and make it rich in spite of itself, and against

\* *History of the Republic of the United States of America, as traced in the Writings of Alexander Hamilton and his Contemporaries.* By John C. Hamilton. Seven Volumes. 8vo. New York: D. Appleton & Co. A work in every respect deserving of the closest and most attentive study, replete as it is with valuable and well-arranged matter and able writing.

its own exertions. More suffering was necessary before the people could be made to listen to the words of truth, though uttered by genius. Military matters also commanded the attention of the young member, as was natural, he having been so distinguished as a soldier, and retaining that interest in the army which he had acquired from six years' connection with it. His Congressional career was brilliant, and added much to his reputation. It seemed that he was destined to succeed in everything he attempted. Yet at that time he thought of retiring altogether from public life, and of devoting himself entirely to his profession, in which he had already become eminent. In November, 1783, he removed to the city of New York, which then had entered on that astonishing growth which has since been so steadily maintained.

The first of the law labors of this great man were in support of those *national* principles which are more closely identified with his name than with that of any other individual. In advocating the cause of his client, he had to argue that the terms of the treaty of peace with England and the law of nations were of more force than a statute passed by the Legislature of the State of New York. He carried the court as decidedly with him as public opinion was against him; and he had to defend himself in several pamphlets, which he did with his usual success. As time went on, it became every day more apparent that the country's great need was a strong central government, and that, until such a government should be adopted, prosperity could not be looked for, nor order, nor anything like national life; and had not something been done, North America would doubtless have presented very much the same spectacle that has long been afforded by South America, and from which that rich land is but now slowly recovering. Of those who most earnestly and effectively advocated the action necessary to save the country from anarchy, Hamilton was among the foremost. As we have seen, he had thought soundly on this subject

as early as 1776, and years and events had confirmed and strengthened the impression formed before independence had been resolved upon.

Appointed a delegate from New York to the commercial convention held at Annapolis in 1786, Colonel Hamilton wrote the address put forth by that body to the States, out of which grew the Convention of 1787, which made the Federal Constitution. To that Convention he was sent by the New York Legislature, and his part in the work done was of the first order, though the Constitution formed was far from commanding his entire approbation. Like a wise statesman, who does not insist that means of action shall be perfect, but makes the best use he can of those that are available, Hamilton accepted the Constitution, and became the strongest advocate for its adoption, and its firmest supporter after its adoption. This part of his life—a part as honorable to him as it was useful to his country—has been systematically misrepresented, so that many Americans have been taught to believe that he was an enemy of freedom, and would have established an arbitrary government. He was accused of being opposed to any republican polity, and of seeking the annihilation of the State Governments. He was called a monarchist and a consolidationist. These misrepresentations of his opinions and acts were forever dispelled, according to the views of honest and unprejudiced men, by the publication of a letter which he wrote to Timothy Pickering, in 1803. In that letter he said,—“The highest-toned propositions which I made to the Convention were for a President, Senate, and Judges, during good behavior, and a House of Representatives for three years. Though I would have enlarged the legislative power of the General Government, yet I never contemplated the abolition of the State Governments; but, on the contrary, they were, in some particulars, constituent parts of my plan. This plan was, in my conception, conformable with the strict theory of a government purely republican; the essen-

tial criteria of which are, that the principal organs of the executive and legislative departments be elected by the people, and hold the office by a responsible and temporary or defeasible nature. . . . I may truly, then, say that I never proposed either a President or Senate for life, and that I neither recommended nor meditated the annihilation of State Governments. . . . It is a fact that my final opinion was against an executive during good behavior, on account of the increased danger to the public tranquillity incident to the election of a magistrate of his degree of permanency. In the plan of a constitution which I drew up while the Convention was sitting, and which I communicated to Mr. Madison about the close of it, perhaps a day or two after, the office of President has no longer duration than for three years. This plan was predicated upon these bases: 1. That the political principles of the people of this country would endure nothing but a republican government; 2. That, in the actual situation of the country, it was itself right and proper that the republican theory should have a full and fair trial; 3. That to such a trial it was essential that the government should be so constructed as to give it all the energy and the stability reconcilable with the principles of that theory. These were the genuine sentiments of my heart; and upon them I then acted. I sincerely hope that it may not hereafter be discovered, that, through want of sufficient attention to the last idea, the experiment of republican government, even in this country, has not been as complete, as satisfactory, and as decisive as could be wished."

Such were the views of Hamilton in 1787, and which had undergone no change in the sixteen years that elapsed between that time and the date of his letter to Colonel Pickering. Yet this man, so true a republican that his only desire was to have the republican polity that he knew must here exist so framed and constituted as to become permanent, has been drawn as a bigoted monarchist and as the enemy of freedom!

In the eyes of good democrats he was the Evil Principle incarnate; and even to this day, in the more retired portions of the country, they believe, that, if he had lived a few years longer, he would have made himself king, and married one of the daughters of George III. They had, and some of them yet have, about as clear conceptions of Hamilton's career and conduct as Squire Western and his class had of the intentions of the English Whigs of George II.'s time, whom they suspected of the intention of seizing and selling their estates, with the purpose of sending the proceeds to Hanover, to be invested in the funds.

The leaders of the great party which triumphed in 1801, and who had libelled Hamilton while they were in opposition, found it for their interest to continue their misrepresentations long after the fall of the Federalists, and when the ablest of all the Federalists had been for years in his grave. Many of them could overlook Burr's party treachery, as well as his supposed treason, because he had been the rival of Hamilton; though probably it would be unjust to them to suppose that they approved of his conduct in murdering the man whose talents and influence caused them so much alarm. So far was Hamilton from pursuing a course in the Convention of 1787 that would have embarrassed that body, because it did not adopt all his plans, that Dr. W. S. Johnson, one of Connecticut's delegates, said, that, if "the Constitution did not succeed on trial, Mr. Hamilton was less responsible for that result than any other member, for he fully and frankly pointed out to the Convention what he apprehended were the infirmities to which it was liable,—and that, if it answered the fond expectations of the public, the community would be more indebted to Mr. Hamilton than to any other member, for, after its essential outlines were agreed to, he labored most indefatigably to heal those infirmities, and to guard against the evils to which they might expose it." M. Guizot, who understands our poli-

tics, who knows our history, and whose practical statesmanship and lofty talents render his opinion most valuable, when he declared that "there is not in the Constitution of the United States an element of order, of force, of duration, which Hamilton has not powerfully contributed to introduce into it and to give it a predominance," stated but the simplest truth. Equally correct is his remark, that "Hamilton must be classed among the men who have best known the vital principles and fundamental conditions of a government." Alone of all the New York delegates Hamilton subscribed the Constitution.

In the discussions that followed the labors of the Convention, Hamilton had the principal part in urging the adoption of the Constitution. "The Federalist," that first of all American political works, and the excellence of which was quickly recognized by foreign statesmen, was his production. Not only did he write most of it, but the least of what he wrote for it excels the best that was contributed to it by men so able as Jay and Madison. Every attempt that has been made to take from him any portion of the honor of this masterly work has failed, and it is now admitted that it can fairly be associated only with his name. "The total number of these essays," says Mr. John C. Hamilton, "by Hamilton's enumeration, approved by Madison, is seen to be eighty-five. Of this enumeration, an abbreviated copy by Hamilton from his original minute, both in Hamilton's autograph, ascribes to himself the sole authorship of sixty-three numbers, and the joint authorship with Madison of three numbers, leaving to the latter the sole authorship of fourteen numbers, and to Jay of five numbers."\* "The Federalist" had a pow-

erful influence on the public mind, and contributed vastly to the success of the Constitution; and other writings of Hamilton had scarcely less effect. Had he not been a friend of the Constitution, and had he sought only the creation of a powerful central government, he never would have labored for the success of the Constitutional party; for the surest road to despotism would have been through that anarchy which must have followed a refusal by the people to ratify the action of the Convention of 1787. As a member of the Convention of the State of New York, Hamilton most ably supported the ratification of the Constitution made at Philadelphia.

The Constitution was adopted, and the new government was organized on the 30th of April, 1789, on which day General Washington became President of the United States. It was not until the 2d of September that the Treasury Department was created; and on the 11th Alexander Hamilton was made Secretary of the Treasury. Writing to Robert Morris, Washington had asked, "What are we to do with this heavy debt?" To which Morris answered, "There is but one man in the United States who can tell you: that is Alexander Hamilton. I am glad you have given me this opportunity to declare to you the extent of the obligations I am under to him." Hamilton had thought of the station for himself, but his warmest personal friends objected to his taking it. Robert Troup says,—"I remonstrated with him: he admitted that his acceptance of it would be likely to injure his family, but said there was a strong impression on his mind that in the financial department he would essentially promote the welfare of the country; and this impression, united with Washington's request, forbade his refusal of the appointment." Having said, in conversing with Gouverneur Morris, that he was confident he could restore public credit, "Morris remonstrated with him for thinking of so perilous a position, on which calumny and ble production, and worthy of the subject and of his name.

\* *The Federalist: a Commentary on the Constitution of the United States.* A Collection of Essays, by Alexander Hamilton, Jay, and Madison. Also, *The Continentalist*, and other Papers, by Hamilton. Edited by John C. Hamilton, Author of "The Republic of the United States." 1 vol. 8vo. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co. — This is by far the best edition of "The Federalist" that has appeared, and should alone be consulted and read by Hamilton's admirers. The Historical Notice with which Mr. Hamilton has prefaced it is a no-

persecution were the inevitable attendants. 'Of that,' Hamilton answered, 'I am aware; but I am convinced it is the situation in which I can do most good.'" He had the same just self-confidence that Cromwell felt, when he said to John Hampden that he would effect something for the Parliamentary cause, and that William Pitt felt in 1757, when he said to the Duke of Devonshire, "My Lord, I am sure that I can save this country, and that nobody else can." As with Cromwell and with Pitt, Hamilton's self-confidence was to be conclusively justified by the event.

Hamilton's career as the first finance minister of the United States is the greatest evidence of statesmanship in American history; nor is it likely ever to be surpassed, so complete is the change in the country's condition, — a change due in great measure to his policy and conduct. The world's annals show no more striking example of the right man in the right place than is afforded by Hamilton's Secretaryship of the Treasury. "The discerning eye of Washington," said Mr. Webster in 1831, "immediately called him to that post which was far the most important in the administration of the new system. He was made Secretary of the Treasury; and how he fulfilled the duties of such a place, at such a time, the whole country perceived with delight, and the whole world saw with admiration. He smote the rock of the National Resources, and abundant streams of revenue gushed forth. He touched the dead corpse of the Public Credit, and it sprung upon its feet. The fabled birth of Minerva, from the brain of Jove, was hardly more sudden or more perfect than the financial system of the United States, as it burst forth from the conceptions of Alexander Hamilton." Lofty as this praise is, it is literally true. American Public Credit was a dead corpse in 1789; and in 1790 it was living and erect, as it has ever since remained, in spite of the utmost exertions of all political parties to reduce it to the state in which Hamilton found it, in the hope of injuring their

rivals. All that has been good in our financial history for three quarters of a century is due to Alexander Hamilton; and all that has been evil in it can be traced directly to violation of his principles or disregard of his modes of action. That we were enabled to preserve the Union against the attacks of the Secessionists must be attributed to Hamilton's genius and exertions. He is one of those "dead, but sceptred sovereigns, who still rule our spirits from their urns."

Ten days after his appointment to office, Secretary Hamilton was required by Congress to report a plan for the support of the public credit. His report is admitted, even by those who do not agree with its views, to be an able state paper. Besides upholding the payment of the foreign debt, on which all parties were of one mind, he recommended that the domestic debt should be treated in the same spirit. As the revival and maintenance of the public credit was the object which the Secretary had in view, he advocated the fulfilment of original contracts, no matter by whom claims might be held. His recommendations were adopted; and the famous "funding system" dates from that time, and with it the prosperity of the United States. He had recommended the assumption of the State debts; but in this he was only partially successful. The measures suggested for the carrying out of his system were adopted. Among these was the creation of a national bank, at the beginning of 1791. Other measures concerned the raising of revenue, and were extraordinarily successful. And yet others for the advancement of trade, both foreign and domestic, were not less successful: there being no subject that came properly within his department to which he did not give his entire attention; and as he was laboring for a new nation, it necessarily happened that all the machinery had to be improvised. To the demands made on his intellect, his time, and his industry, the Secretary was found to be more than equal. His triumphs astonished and gratified the friends of good government throughout



the world, and carried his name to all nations. In only eighteen months, a change had been effected such as it well might have taken as many years to accomplish, and which thoroughly justified the new polity, and the measures which had been adopted under it. Foreign commerce flourished, and also the domestic trade. The agricultural interest prospered, and manufactures steadily increased. "The waste lands in the interior were being rapidly settled; towns were springing up in every direction; the seaports were increasing in wealth and population; and that great career of internal improvement, by numerous highways, with which the United States have amazed the world, was begun." Fisher Ames wrote to the Secretary of the Treasury that the national bank and the Federal Government possessed more popularity than any institution or government could long maintain. "The success of the government, and especially of the measures proceeding from your department," he said, "has astonished the multitude; and while it has shut the mouths, it has stung the envious hearts, of the State leaders." American credit was raised so high in Europe, that, at the opening of 1791, a great loan was taken in Holland in two hours, on better terms than any European government but one could have obtained. The subscriptions to the national bank were filled in a day, and could easily have been doubled. Such another instance of successful statesmanship it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find.

It is sometimes said that the success of the Hamiltonian system was due to European events, — that the great wars which grew out of the French Revolution created so extensive demands for our productions that we must have prospered, no matter what should have been the course of American political life. What might have been, had the Constitution failed of adoption, it is not necessary to discuss; but this we know, that the success of Secretary Hamilton's plans was pronounced and complete before the European wars alluded

to began. That success was seen in the early days of 1791, and war did not commence until 1792; and then it was not waged on that grand scale to which it subsequently reached. The war between France and England, which affected this country most, broke out in 1793, two years after Ames had written so encouragingly to Hamilton, and yet warning him to prepare for the inevitable Nemesis, that "envy of the gods," which, according to the Hellenic superstition, but fairly justifiable by innumerable historical facts, waits on all prosperity and rebukes human wisdom. To us it seems that the most that can be said of the effect of the wide-spread and long-continued European quarrel on our business was this, — that it gave to it much of its peculiar character, but did not create it, and was not necessary to its creation or its continuance. What Hamilton did was to remove depressing influences from American life and the American mind, — to substitute order for disorder, hope for fear, and confidence and security for dread and distrust. This was what was done by Hamilton and his associates; and this done, the native energies of the people did all the rest. It is all but certain that the extraordinary career of material prosperity that began immediately after it was seen what was to be our policy under the new polity, would have been essentially the same, as to the general result, had Europe remained quiet for twenty years longer, and had there been no downfall of the old French monarchy. The details of American business life would have been different, but the result would have been pretty much the same as what we have seen.

Events soon justified the apprehensions of the sensitive, but sagacious Ames. Hamilton's prosperity bred its natural consequences, and he became the target at which many aspiring men directed their attacks, — Thomas Jefferson standing at their head. The cause of this, which has been sought in the French Revolution, in opposition to the supposed centralizing tendencies of the Hamiltonian policy, and so forth, really

lies on the surface. It grew out of men's ambition, and their desire for power. It was plain to Southern men, that, if Hamilton were permitted to accomplish his purpose entire, he must become the man of men, and that his influence would become equal to that of Washington, whose influence they bowed to most unwillingly. Not less plain was it that power would be with the North. Hence their determination to "break him down," which they would have pursued with all their might, had the French Revolution been postponed, though its occurrence furnished them with means of attack,—the larger part of the American people sympathizing with the French, while Hamilton shared with Edmund Burke opinions which time has done much to show were sound; and he was a strenuous supporter of that policy of neutrality which Washington wisely adopted. The Secretary of the Treasury was assailed by those who envied and hated him, in various ways. His official integrity was called in question, but the investigations which he courted led to the confounding of his enemies, while his personal character stood brighter than ever. So bitter became the opposition that some of their number wished for the success of the Whiskey Insurrection in Pennsylvania, as Mr. Jefferson's correspondence shows; and the part which Hamilton had in suppressing that outbreak did not increase their regard for him. The presence of two such men in Washington's Cabinet as Hamilton and Jefferson made it the scene of dissension until Jefferson retired.

Hamilton remained in office some time longer; and when he left it, he did so only for personal reasons. He was poor. He had expended, not only his salary, but almost all the property he possessed when he took office. The man who had made his country rich had made himself poor by his devotion to her interests, and had received nothing but vindictive abuse in requital of his unrivalled labors. He resolved to return to the practice of his profession, which he never would have left, had he

consulted merely his individual interests and those of his family. Some weeks before he retired, he addressed a letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, announcing his purpose, in order that inquiry might be made into the state of his department, should Congress see fit to make it; but his foes had been so humiliated by the results of the two inquiries undertaken at their instance, that they would not venture upon a third. In January, 1795, he sent a letter to Congress on the subject of the public credit, which is one of his ablest productions, full of sound financial doctrine, and showing that he was in advance of most men on those economical questions the proper settlement of which so closely concerns the welfare of nations. This letter affords a complete view of the financial history of the government, and may be considered as Secretary Hamilton's statement of his case to the world. The debt exceeded \$76,000,000, a sum that bore as great a proportion to the revenues of the country seventy years since as the debt of to-day bears to our present resources. As Hamilton was no believer in the absurd doctrine that "a national debt is a national blessing," we need say no more than that he dwelt with emphasis on the necessity of providing for the debt's payment. It is important to mention that he declared government could not rightfully tax its promises to pay.

Though Hamilton, as Madison wrote to Jefferson, went to New York "with the word Poverty as his label," his great reputation rapidly secured for him abundant professional employment. But he was too important a personage to be able to refrain altogether from political pursuits, and was forced to defend some of the measures of government, though no longer responsible for them. He advocated Jay's Treaty, one of the most unpopular measures that ever were carried through by an honest government in face of the most vehement opposition. Had the treaty been rejected, war with England would probably have followed, which would have been a profound calamity. While living in retire-

ment, Hamilton was assailed by his Southern enemies, who were supported by their Northern allies, their object being to show that he had acted corruptly while at the head of the Treasury. His reply was as complete a refutation as their earlier calumnies had encountered. He wrote the celebrated Farewell Address of President Washington. On all occasions he was ready with pen and tongue to defend and uphold those political principles in the triumph of which he had that interest which a statesman must ever have in the advancement of truth.

When it was supposed that the French might attempt the invasion of this country, in 1798, preparations were made to meet them. Washington was made Commander-in-Chief, with the rank of Lieutenant-General; but he stipulated that he should not be required to take the field save for active service, and that Hamilton should have the post next to his own, which made the latter actually commander of the army. He was indefatigable in discharging the duties of this station; but, fortunately, hostilities with France were confined to the ocean, and the seizure of power in that country by Bonaparte led to a settlement of the points in dispute. Hamilton again returned to private life. He could not, however, altogether give up politics, but was forced to take some part in the exciting political contests of those days. When the Presidential election of 1801 devolved upon the House of Representatives, he exerted his influence against Burr, whom the Federalists were inclined to support, preferring him to Jefferson. In 1804 he again labored to defeat Burr's political aspirations, and prevented his being chosen Governor of New York. Burr was then on the verge of ruin, and he resolved upon being revenged, and on the destruction of so powerful a political foe. He required from Hamilton the disavowal of language which there was no evidence that he ever had used, and so managed the dispute that a duel became inevitable, — reference being had to the state of public sentiment

then prevalent on the subject of honor, and to the circumstance that duelling was almost as common in New York at that time as it was in any Southern State just before the Secession War.

The death of Alexander Hamilton was as much the work of assassination as was that of Abraham Lincoln, in all save the forms that were observed on the occasion. Aaron Burr, of whose actions he had sometimes spoken with severity, — but not with more severity than is common in all high party times,\* — was determined that so bold and able an enemy should be removed from his political path; and to that end he fastened a duel upon him, and in the meeting that ensued deliberately shot him. It has been said, that Burr, who was "a good shot" from his youth, and whose nerves were as brazen as his brow, practised with the pistol for some days before the fatal encounter took place; and the story is perfectly in character, and helps sustain the posi-

\* Burr, in his correspondence with Hamilton just before the challenge that led to the duel, said, — "Political opposition can never absolve gentlemen from the necessity of a rigid adherence to the laws of honor and the rules of decorum. I neither claim such privilege, nor indulge it in others." This has been called affectation; but we have no doubt that Burr uttered the truth in the sentences quoted. He was exactly the man to observe the rules of decorum, and those of honor, as he understood them, in political warfare. The strong language that is so common in political disputes is proof as much of the abundance of men's sincerity as it is of their want of good breeding. They are honestly moved by the evil words or deeds, or both, or what they consider such, of their opponents, and speak of them coarsely. The man who is indifferent to all opinions, principles, and actions, but who is nevertheless ambitious, is never tempted to the utterance of disparaging language concerning his political foes. He may laugh at their zeal, but he cannot be offended by it. Burr was utterly indifferent to all political principle. He never really belonged to any party, and was as ready to act with Federalists as with Democrats; and it was only through the force of circumstances that he did act generally with the latter. A party man never would have done as Burr saw fit to do when the Presidential election of 1801 devolved on the House of Representatives. The party to which he professed to belong intended, as everybody knew, that Jefferson should be President; and yet Burr allowed himself to be used against Jefferson. That "all is fair in politics" was his creed. He may have been "a man of honor," but what Lord Macaulay says of Avaux is strictly applicable to him, namely, — "that of the difference between right and wrong he had no more notion than a brute."

tion that Hamilton was assassinated. That Hamilton should have consented to meet such a man, knowing as he did what was his purpose, and that he was capable of any crime, has often been remarked upon; and probably his decision will serve to point many a moral for ages, and all the more emphatically when the force of that opinion in regard to duelling which once was so strong shall not only have utterly passed away, but have been forgotten, and have become quite incomprehensible to men who shall live in the light of sounder opinion than prevailed at the beginning of this century. A soldier, it was reasonable that Hamilton should feel very differently on the point of honor from a mere civilian, and that he should not have felt himself at liberty to decline Burr's challenge. He believed that his ability to be useful thereafter in public life would be greatly lessened, should he not fight. In the paper he drew up, giving his reasons for the course he pursued, he says, — "The ability to be in future useful, whether in resisting mischief or in effecting good, in those crises of our public affairs which seem likely to happen, would probably be inseparable from a conformity with public prejudice in this particular." He was particularly thinking of his power to contend against a scheme for a dissolution of the Union which had been formed in the North, the existence of which he knew, and also that it was known to Burr, who, had he not committed suicide by the same act which made him a murderer, would soon have been seen at the head of a rebellion. The result of the duel was to deprive Burr of all power and influence. He killed Hamilton, but he fell himself by the same shot that carried death to his opponent; and so complete was his fall that he never could rise again, though he continued to cumber the earth for more than thirty-two years. Hamilton's quarrel with Burr, as his son and biographer truly observes, "was the quarrel of his country. It was the last act in the great drama of his life. It was the deliberate sacrifice of that life for his coun-

try's welfare, — a sacrifice which, by overwhelming his antagonist with the execrations of the American people, prevented a civil war, and saved from 'dismemberment' this great republic."

What strikes us most forcibly, in considering Hamilton's career, is the remarkably early development of his powers. At thirteen, he was found competent to take charge of a mercantile establishment. At fifteen, his writings win for him public applause and the aid of friends. At seventeen, he addresses with success a great public meeting. At eighteen, his anonymous productions are attributed to some of the leading men of America. At nineteen, he has thought out that principle of government which is indelibly associated with his name. At twenty, he has not only approved himself a skilful and courageous soldier, but he has won the esteem of the grave and reserved Washington, and is placed by that great man in a post of the closest confidence, and which really makes him the second man in the American service. At twenty-three, he has shown that he is master of the intricate subject of finance. At twenty-five, after an active military life that had allowed no time for study, he is known as a lawyer of the first order. At twenty-six, he is distinguished as a member of Congress. At thirty, he takes a leading part in framing the Constitution of the United States. And in his thirty-third year, he becomes the most extraordinary finance minister the world has ever seen. He was statesman, soldier, writer, and orator, and first in each department; and he was as ready for all the parts which he filled as if he had been long and studiously trained for each of them by the best of instructors. When Mr. Webster so happily compared the instantaneousness and perfection of his financial system to "the fabled birth of Minerva," he did but allude to what is to be remarked of all Hamilton's works. All that he did was perfect, and no one seems to have been aware of his power until he had established the fact of its existence. Such a combination of precocity

and versatility stands quite unparalleled. Octavius, William the Third, Henry St. John, Charles James Fox, and William Pitt the younger, all showed various powers at early periods of their lives; but not one of them was the equal of Hamilton in respect to early maturity of intellect, or in ability to command success in every department to which he turned his attention. The historical character of whom he most reminds us is the elder Africanus. In the early development of his faculties, in his self-reliant spirit, in his patriotism, in his kingliness of mind, in his personal purity, in his generosity of thought and of action, and in the fear and envy that he

excited in inferior minds, he was a repetition of the most majestic of all the Romans. But, unlike the Roman soldier-statesman, he did not desert the land he had saved, but which had proved ungrateful; and the grave only was to be his Liternum. He died at not far from the same age as that to which Africanus reached. In comparing him with certain other men who achieved fame early, it should be remembered that they all were regularly prepared for public life, and were born to it as to an inheritance; whereas he, though of patrician blood, was possessed of no advantages of fortune, and had to fight the battle of life while fighting the battles of the nation.

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## REVIEWS AND LITERARY NOTICES.

*Memoirs of the Life of William Shakespeare, with an Essay toward the Expression of his Genius, and an Account of the Rise and Progress of the English Drama to the Time of Shakespeare.* By RICHARD GRANT WHITE. Boston: Little, Brown, & Co.

MR. WHITE'S closing-up of his Shakespeare labors has been long in coming, but comes good and acceptable at last. The volume now in hand, however, does not form a part of his edition of the poet; it stands by itself; though a portion of its contents is repeated in the first volume (the last published) of this edition. It is rich in matter, and the workmanship, for the most part, capital. All Shakespearians are bound to relish it; and if any general reader does not find it delectable, he may well suspect some fault in himself.

The contents of the volume are, first, "Memoirs of the Life of William Shakespeare"; second, "An Essay toward the Expression of Shakespeare's Genius"; third, "An Account of the Rise and Progress of the English Drama to the Time of Shakespeare."

In his "Memoirs," the author of course adds nothing to what was already known of the poet's life. But his presentation of the

matter is eminently readable, and, in parts, decidedly interesting; which is as much as can fairly be looked for in any writing on that subject. Some readers may think, we do think, that the author is a little at fault on one or two points. For instance, he overworks certain questions touching the poet's wife, worrying up the matter against her to the utmost, and, in fact, tormenting the poor woman's memory in such a way as to indicate something very like spite. Now this is not fair; and Mr. White's general fairness on other subjects makes his proceeding the less excusable in this case.

Of course everybody knows that Mrs. Anne Shakespeare was some eight years older than her husband; that the circumstances of the marriage were not altogether what they should have been; and that the oldest daughter was born a little too soon for the credit of either parent. This is all, all, there is known about the matter. And if conjecture or inference must be at work on these facts, surely it had better run in the direction of charity, especially of charity towards the weaker vessel. We say weaker vessel, because in this case the man must, in all fairness, be supposed to have had the advantage, at least as much in strength of natural understanding as the woman had in years. And as Shakespeare was, by all accounts, a