HISTORY

OF

CHARLES THE BOLD,

DUKE OF BURGUNDY.

BY

JOHN FOSTER KIRK.

VOL. I.

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JOHN FOSTER KIRK,
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TO

JAMES LAWRENCE, ESQUIRE,

OF BOSTON.

MY DEAR MR. LAWRENCE,

I wish to be permitted to connect your name with this book, as well on account of the associations which first led you to feel an interest in its composition as because you, more than any other of my friends, have known the obstacles in the way, and have done all that friend—or man—could do to remove them.

I believe me, dear Mr. Lawrence,

Ever faithfully and affectionately yours,

J. F. KIRK.

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Preface.

For the greater number of the works consulted in the preparation of this History, the author was indebted to the kindness of the late William H. Prescott, who employed all the facilities at his command for procuring the requisite materials. Circumstances might be mentioned to explain the generous interest thus displayed in a doubtful enterprise by one who knew, because he had himself surmounted them, the difficulties of historical investigation. But, in truth, nothing was more characteristic of that distinguished and lamented man, than his readiness to afford encouragement, counsel, or assistance to the humblest of his fellow-laborers in an ample and ever widening field.

Mr. Charles Folsom, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, whose critical acumen, happily for more than one generation of literary men, has found less congenial employment in the public castigation than in the private correction of faults and inaccuracies, gave kind and valuable aid in the revision of the press; an advantage, however, confined unfortunately to the first volume, owing to a greater rapidity in the printing of the second.
To several other gentlemen whose merits and accomplishments are widely known,—to Professor Parsons of Harvard College, the Reverend William R. Alger, Mr. James A. Dupee, and in a very particular degree to Mr. James T. Fields,—the writer is under obligations for various friendly offices which have facilitated the prosecution of his task. It can detract nothing from the force of this acknowledgment to add, that the warmth with which such services were rendered is a national as well as an individual trait. All who are well acquainted with the social condition of the United States will admit that it is the country where men are best able to help themselves, and most ready to help others.

The career of Charles the Bold has been commonly regarded as merely a romantic episode in European history. That the subject is in truth one of a very different nature, has, however, been apparent to the Continental scholars who within the last twenty years have made a special study of its different portions, and whose researches have done much for the elucidation of its obscure features. In the volumes now submitted to the public, to be completed by a third which is in course of preparation, an attempt has been made to combine in a symmetrical narrative whatever the chronicles, the documentary evidence and the fruits of critical inquiry and discussion could furnish for the just appreciation of an eventful period. Recent explorations in Belgium, in Switzerland, in Austria, and other German states, have brought to light a quantity of material, which
has been rightly considered as claiming for the chief
actors and notable transactions of that period an
ampler presentment, a stricter analysis, and in some
cases a more impartial judgment, than they had
hitherto obtained. Those, therefore, in whom the
masterly delineations of Philippe de Commines, the
skillfully executed mosaics of M. de Barante, or the
fascinating pictures of Scott, may have suggested a
wish for fuller or more accurate information, will not,
it is hoped, be disposed to reject the contribution
here offered. While it might be more satisfactory to
gather the results from the original sources them-
selves, the most inquisitive can scarcely be expected
to roam over so wide a field, in search of memoirs
and documents scattered among the publications of
Royal Commissions and learned Societies, written in
various and often in obscure dialects, and requiring
for their comprehension a previous familiarity with
details.

That the material has been duly sifted, to the
extent of the author’s ability, need hardly be said,
for the canons of historical composition are now too
well settled and too generally understood to allow of
any wanton negligence on the part of the writer, or
any willing credulity on that of the reader. The
one thing essential to the value of such a composi-
tion is a strict conformity with facts, as far as these
can be ascertained. No one expects from it the
artistic harmony, the unity and completeness, the
agreement of form and substance, which give their
highest charm to products of the pure imagination.