
**The war of
independence**

Fiske John

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THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

By JOHN FISKE



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BY
JOHN FISKE



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PREFACE.

THIS little book does not contain the substance of the lectures on the American Revolution which I have delivered in so many parts of the United States since 1883. Those lectures, when completed and published, will make quite a detailed narrative; this book is but a sketch. It is hoped that it may prove useful to the higher classes in schools, as well as to teachers. When I was a boy I should have been glad to get hold of a brief account of the War for Independence that would have suggested answers to some of the questions that used to vex me. Was the conduct of the British government, in driving the Americans into rebellion, merely wanton aggression, or was it not rather a bungling attempt to solve a political problem which really needed to be solved? Why were New Jersey and the Hudson river so important? Why did the British armies make South Carolina their chief objective point after New

York? Or how did Cornwallis happen to be at Yorktown when Washington made such a long leap and pounced upon him there? And so on. Such questions the old-fashioned text-books not only did not try to answer, they did not even recognize their existence. As to the large histories, they of course include so many details that it requires maturity of judgment to discriminate between the facts that are cardinal and those that are merely incidental. When I give lectures to schoolboys and schoolgirls, I observe that a reference to causes and effects always seems to heighten the interest of the story. I therefore offer them this little book, not as a rival but as an aid to the ordinary text-book. I am aware that a narrative so condensed must necessarily suffer from the omission of many picturesque and striking details. The world is so made that one often has to lose a little in one direction in order to gain something in another. This book is an experiment. If it seems to answer its purpose, I may follow it with others, treating other portions of American history in similar fashion.

CAMBRIDGE, *February* 11, 1889.