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The
HISTORY
of the
AMERICAN
REVOLUTION

IN TWO VOLUMES

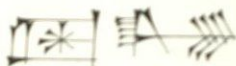
by David Ramsay, M.D.

EDITED BY LESTER H. COHEN

Volume I

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The cuneiform inscription that serves as the design motif for our end-papers is the earliest-known written appearance of the word "freedom" (*ama-gi*), or "liberty." It is taken from a clay document written about 2300 B.C. in the Sumerian city-state of Lagash.

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Frontispiece portrait of Dr. David Ramsay (1749–1815), oil on canvas, by Rembrandt Peale. Courtesy of The Gibbs Museum of Art/Carolina Art Association, Charleston, South Carolina.

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theless, to the persecution and tyranny of his evil ministry, we will not tamely submit. Appealing to heaven for the justice of our cause, we determine to die or be free." From the commencement of hostilities, the dispute between Great-Britain and the colonies took a new direction.

Intelligence that the British troops had marched out of Boston into the country on some hostile purpose, being forwarded by expresses from one committee to another, great bodies of the militia, not only from Massachusetts but the adjacent colonies, grasped their arms and marched to oppose them. The colonies were in such a state of irritability, that the least shock in any part was, by a powerful and sympathetic affection, instantaneously felt throughout the whole. The Americans who fell were revered by their countrymen, as martyrs who had died in the cause of liberty. Resentment against the British burned more strongly than ever. Martial rage took possession of the breasts of thousands. Combinations were formed and associations subscribed, binding the inhabitants to one another by the sacred ties of honour, religion, and love of country, to do whatever their public bodies directed for the preservation of their liberties. Hitherto the Americans had no regular army. From principles of policy they cautiously avoided that measure, lest they might subject themselves to the charge of being aggressors. All their military regulations were carried on by their militia, and under the old established laws of the land. For the defence of the colonies, the inhabitants had been, from their early years, enrolled in companies, and taught the use of arms. The laws for this purpose had never been better observed than for some months previous to the Lexington battle. These military arrangements, which had been previously adopted for defending the colonies from hostile French and Indians, [192] were on this occasion turned against the troops of the Parent State. Forts, magazines, and arsenals, by the constitution of the country, were in the keeping of his majesty. Immediately after the Lexington battle, these were for the most part taken possession of throughout the colonies, by parties of the provincial militia. Ticonderoga, in which was a small royal garrison, was surprised and taken by adventurers from different states. Public money which had been collected in consequence of previous grants, was also seized for common services. Before the

commencement of hostilities these measures would have been condemned by the moderate even among the Americans, but that event justified a bolder line of opposition than had been adopted. Sundry citizens having been put to death by British troops, self preservation dictated measures which, if adopted under other circumstances, would have disunited the colonists. One of the most important of this kind was the raising an army. Men of warm tempers, whose courage exceeded their prudence, had for months urged the necessity of raising troops; but they were restrained by the more moderate, who wished that the colonies might avoid extremities, or at least that they might not lead in bringing them on. The provincial congress of Massachusetts being in session at the time the battle of Lexington was fought, voted that "an army of 30,000 men be immediately raised, that 13,600 be of their own province, and that a letter and delegate be sent to the several colonies of New-Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode Island." In consequence of this vote, the business of recruiting was begun, and in a short time a provincial army was paraded in the vicinity of Boston, which though far below what had been voted by the provincial congress, was much superior in numbers to the royal army. The command of this force was given to general Ward.

Had the British troops confined themselves to Boston, as before the 18th of April, the assembling an American army, though only for the purpose of observation and defence, would have appeared in the nature of a challenge, and would have made many less willing to support [193] the people of Massachusetts, but after the British had commenced hostilities the same measure was adopted without subjecting the authors of it to censure, and without giving offence or hazarding the union. The Lexington battle not only furnished the Americans with a justifying apology for raising an army, but inspired them with ideas of their own prowess. Amidst the most animated declarations of sacrificing fortune, and risking life itself for the security of American rights, a secret sigh would frequently escape from the breasts of her most determined friends, for fear that they could not stand before the bravery and discipline of British troops. Hoary sages would shake their heads and say, "Your cause is good and I wish you success, but I fear that your undisciplined valour must be overcome, in the unequal contest. After a few thousands of

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