

Those who turn over the pages of this book, it is true, will not find that they stand on the mountain peaks, or that the laws here recorded form "The true history" . . . "which most vividly recreates the past, that we may share the great thoughts of men about great things, and be dignified by their possession." (Harold J. Laski, *Yale Review*, Vol. 6, p. 835.)

Yet the period of beginnings is worth study, and, in these crucial moments, when nations gather for Armageddon, one may well turn to the Eighteenth Century, when "Those troublesome doubts of all kinds, which, since the great upheaval of the French Revolution have harassed mankind, had scarcely begun to ruffle the waters of the life." (Hill's *Boswell's Johnson*, Vol. I, p. XII.) We may well turn back from our Nation's present important position in the world and investigate the development of the English colonies to the American union. The colonists were not destitute of self consciousness, and they knew that they were laying the foundations of a great structure. As Rev. Charles Chauncey put it, in a letter he wrote Rev. Ezra Stiles on November 5, 1766, "'Tis without doubt the design of Providence that there should arise in North America one or more of the most considerable empires that have been in the world." (Dexter's *Stiles' Itineraries*, p. 443.)

They laid the foundations deep and strong, and they did their work so well that we are now beginning to learn that it was not merely a flamboyant rhetoric which led George Bancroft to begin the introduction to the first volume of the first edition of his "History of the United States," thus: "The United States Constitution is an essential part of a great political system, embracing all the civilized nations of the earth. At a period, when the force of moral opinion is rapidly increasing, they have the precedence in the practice and the defence of the equal rights of man."

Through the study of the material contained in these Archives, one may practice *diligence* and gain *accuracy*, which Gibbon called (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, edition 1807, Vol. I, p. XI) "the only merits which an historical writer may ascribe to himself, if any merit indeed can be assumed from the performance of an indispensable duty."