

**THE SEXAGENARY: OR,  
REMINISCENCES OF THE  
AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

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The sexagenary: or, Reminiscences of the American revolution by John P. Becker & S. De Witt Bloodgood

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**JOHN P. BECKER & S. DE WITT BLOODGOOD**

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THE  
SEXAGENARY:

OR,

Reminiscences of the American Revolution.

Old age prates willingly, as well you know,  
And loves to talk about the strange old times  
That are no more, ..... WIELAND.



ALBANY, N. Y. :  
J. MUNSELL, 78 STATE STREET.  
1866.

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275  
B62<sup>s</sup>  
1866

## LETTER TO THE PUBLISHER.

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J. MURRELL, Esq.:

Many years ago, when I resided in the city of Albany, I was frequently attracted to your office, where I found you, combining with the practical industry of printer and publisher, an antiquarian spirit, intent upon the rescue of the traditional and documentary history of that old town. It excited my respect and attention, which have followed you through all your subsequent literary labors. I, too, had been an explorer in the same direction, and you had all the encouragement I could give, to induce you to continue in your career. Since then you have preserved from neglect, if not from oblivion, its very interesting annals, and many local incidents illustrating its progress from its commencement as an outpost of the New Netherland down to its becoming the populous and enterprising capital of a state now containing more inhabitants than the father land. I do not know whether your labors have been appreciated by the people of Albany as fully as they deserve to be, though it is certain they owe to you the rescue of their most interesting monuments, well preserved and cared for, with the inscriptions restored and legible. No one can ever write its history without the careful study, and large use of the *Annals*. More than this, with much originality of design and execution, you have collected a series of curious, valuable, elegantly printed works, illustrating the history of the revolution, snatching from under the crushing footsteps of time, many precious relics which otherwise would have been scattered and lost. As

the editor of this remarkable series of works you have gained an enviable reputation.

In complying with your request to furnish you with a copy of *The Sexagenary* to become a part of that series, I do so under the impression that it contains some interesting personal statements, throwing light on the condition of our northern borders during the revolutionary struggle; and it, so far at least, may be a guide to the future writer who shall seek to portray the social aspect of that time. Unfortunately there are but few personal narratives of the period extant, for those were not the days for writing or publishing.

This little work was undertaken at the suggestion of Governor DeWitt Clinton, who, at the same time, placed at my disposition his family manuscripts, for the illustration of a part of the narrative. So, too, those of General Van Schaick were put in my hands for a similar purpose; some of the most curious of which will be found among the notes.

In revising the original of this work I discovered the marks of haste, but nevertheless I have concluded to leave the text of the work as it was, as artists sometimes do their early productions, their very faults and slips attesting their authenticity. It was prepared for the personal benefit of the narrator, but now that you adopt it as a part of your later publications, I shall secure for it, what it otherwise might not have attained, the advantage of becoming a portion of your valuable series. It has long been out of print, and is only now to be had occasionally by collectors who are ready to pay for it a high price, and one much beyond its value.

The present edition, with some notes and letters never before published, may give it more consideration than it had before.

Yours very truly,

S. DE WITT BLOODGOOD.

NEW YORK, Sept. 1, 1865.

## THE SEXAGENARY.

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### CHAPTER I.

I AM aware of the difficulties which beset the author of a personal narrative. His opinions are almost always tinged with prejudice, and his sketches often distinguished by their mannerism. His efforts, be they ever so well intended, contribute rather to the gratification of individual taste than to the benefit of science at large. But as a vast proportion of readers prefer amusement to philosophy, the autobiographer escapes from the charge of being uninteresting, if he contrives to make his story interesting. Since I first determined to publish these reminiscences I have taken some pains to learn the character of this species of authorship. I stumbled, as it were, upon the memoirs of Gibbon, and the reading of his elegant compositions has somewhat damped the ardor of my zeal. But he observes that if "they are sincere, we seldom complain of the misfortunes or prolixity of these personal memoirs." Under this safeguard I shall



attempt the humble narrative of a life chiefly spent in the neighborhood of our northern armies. The principal events of the war of independence are well known, and their happy conclusion has made us justly proud of that remarkable era. Yet who does not regret that so few of the actors on that busy stage have left behind them the written records of their various fortunes? We have now but a little company left of all those heroic battalia. One by one the leaders in the cabinet and the warriors of the field desert the scenes of their renown. What a rich treat would even the "trivial fond records" of their personal history afford to those who seek to rescue their motives, their actions and their characters from the biting tooth of time! The memoirs of some of those sagacious old men who formed our committees of safety, the correspondence of the most intelligent of the Whigs of our own state, would be rich in those incidents by which we judge of men and things, now rapidly vanishing from the view. Such details every reflecting mind would relish; for what are the events of life, the epochs of history, and the annals of nations, but exhibitions of the powers of the human mind displayed in the multifarious forms of its own strange embodying? These are the gems of its casket, or the poison of its laboratory.

Biography, however, which is to history what groups are to the canvass, is more directly addressed to our individual sympathy, since it narrows the view of the observer to some particular point, and appeals to every class and condition, by the presentment of some trait, some resemblance which becomes the more striking, the more irresistible, as it conforms to circumstances which have befallen ourselves.

It was the opinion of Dr. Johnson that there has rarely passed a life, of which a judicious and faithful narrative would be without advantage. It was he who also asserted that the motives of great or little actions were founded alike in the depths of the human heart; upon this principle, the biography of the humblest individual might be fraught with as much advantage to mankind, as that of the high born, the beautiful and brave. "The prince," said he, "who loses his empire, feels no more indignation in proportion to his consequence, than the luckless farmer, at the wretch who steals his cow."

Fortified by authority so respectable, and more than all induced by the cares of poverty which now press upon me with a weight unfelt in happier years, I have at the instance of a gentleman, who has befriended me in adversity, consented to entrust to his hands, the incidents of my life for publication.

Old age is garrulous, but the grain of wheat often lurks in the bushel of chaff, and a piping voice, be it never so musical, may convey a lesson replete with the wisdom of experience.

I am by no means a veteran—I never was in actual combat, but I can shoulder my crutch, exulting at the remembrance of the fight, and show how fields were won. I was neither continental, nor levy. I served in the unpretending, but not useless character of a wagoner, in the quarter master's department, at one time actively employed in forwarding cannon, and laboring with my own horses; at another carrying the relief which saved a post. My station in life was that of a farmer in respectable circumstances, and rather above that which furnished the usual recruits for the regular army. In the course of numerous journeys, I had the opportunity of seeing and hearing much more than if I had been a common soldier. I shall confine myself principally to those incidents which I witnessed, or which were naturally the subject of conversation among my own connections. My view of things may be somewhat novel on this account. Many persons at the present day would be pleased to know, and, if possible, to realize the feelings and reflections of even ordinary individuals during our revolution. We are familiar with the contemplation of