

**THE GERMAN ELEMENT IN  
THE WAR OF AMERICAN  
INDEPENDENCE**

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The German Element in the War of American Independence by George Washington Greene

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# THE GERMAN ELEMENT

IN THE

## WAR OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

BY

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THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION," ETC., ETC.



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31

To  
THE HON. WILLIAM GREENE,  
OF WARWICK, R. I.

MY DEAR KINSMAN,— I dedicate this volume to you, in order to have the opportunity of publicly reminding you that one so profoundly versed in the unwritten history of his country ought not to withhold his treasures from his countrymen.

Believe me ever

Your friend and kinsman,

GEORGE W. GREENE.





## PREFACE.

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THE following pages make no pretension to original research. They are founded on the admirable monographs of Doctor Friedrich Kapp, for many years an honored member of the New York bar and now an active member of the Imperial Assembly of his native Germany. During his residence in the United States, Doctor Kapp made special studies in the history of the Germans in America, and especially of those whose names have passed into American history. The result was the lives of Steuben and Kalb, and the history of those unfortunate men whose blood was shed to gratify the avarice of their sovereign; one of the darkest chapters in the history of wicked rulers. From these sources I have drawn freely in preparing this new tribute to the history of my country.

The history of the American war of independence has not yet taken the place which belongs to it in historical literature. Its causes, its actors, and its events invest it with an interest for the statesman, for the philosopher, and for the lover of picturesque narrative which has never been surpassed. It is a great prose epic, with heroes whom we can love and revere, whose marvellous truths exceed the boldest inventions of fiction.

In the first decade of the present century one of the most attractive saloons of Paris was the saloon of a lady whom, out of reverence for the memory of her father, Italians loved to call *Madame Beccaria*, although she was already the mother of *Alessandro Manzoni*. The conversation of authors and artists—for it was chiefly of these that the assembly was composed—naturally turned upon literature; and one evening the question arose, which of all the events of modern history was best adapted to epic poetry. The discussion was long and animated, the French Revolution and the Thirty Years' War finding eloquent advocates. At last, after weighing the matter deliberately and looking at it from every

point of view, it was unanimously decided that the American war of independence was the fittest of all. In that group of eminent men and women was Carlo Botta, a young Canavese, already tried by persecution in his own Italy, and an eloquent defender of the purity of his native tongue. Following up the train of thought which the evening's conversation had awakened, he took his way homeward through that square so deeply stained with the blood of the victims of the Reign of Terror, and, as he paused on the spot where the guillotine had stood, said to himself: —

“If it be a good subject for an epic poem, why not for a history? It is, and I will write it.”

The very next morning he began his studies, and in 1809 gave his great classic to the world.

Shall I complete the story?

The publishers of Italy republished it to their great emolument, while the author, unrecognized by those laws which recognize every other product of labor as the property of the producer, was compelled to sell the last six hundred copies