

**FRANCE AND THE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION.
LAFAYETTE, THE FRIEND
OF AMERICAN LIBERTY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649354146

France and the American revolution. Lafayette, the Friend of American Liberty by Alma Holman Burton

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

ALMA HOLMAN BURTON

**FRANCE AND THE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION.
LAFAYETTE, THE FRIEND
OF AMERICAN LIBERTY**

FRIENDS OF AMERICAN LIBERTY

LAFAYETTE



M. Lafayette

FRANCE AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

LAFAYETTE

THE FRIEND OF AMERICAN LIBERTY

BY

ALMA HOLMAN BURTON

Author of "The Story of Our Country," "Four American Patriots" etc.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

JAMES BALDWIN, Ph.D.



WERNER SCHOOL BOOK COMPANY

NEW YORK CHICAGO BOSTON

012-5-137 A7

1. 28-5-8

INTRODUCTION.

The story of the Marquis de Lafayette forms one of the most interesting chapters in the history of human liberty. To understand clearly the nature of Lafayette's services, both to America and to the whole world, we must first think of the conditions of life at the beginning of his career, and then contrast them with those which now prevail. One hundred and forty years ago, when Lafayette was a child, the world was not so pleasant a place to live in as it is in our own time. Even in the most enlightened countries of Europe, the majority of the people were downtrodden and oppressed. Men had scarcely so much as heard of liberty. Outside of England and her colonies, the idea of popular freedom was unknown.

This idea, as you may have learned elsewhere, seems to have been a sort of birthright of the Anglo-Saxon race. Ever since the barons of England forced King John to grant them a charter of rights, the peoples of that race have defended and cherished it. Like a spark of fire in the midst of general gloom, it has oftentimes been almost extinguished; and yet, no matter how its enemies have tried to stamp it out, it has survived and been rekindled.

The American colonists, because this idea of liberty was

implanted in their hearts, rebelled against the tyranny of George III., and boldly demanded their rights as freeborn Englishmen. Frenchmen, at that time, would not have done this. They would have tamely submitted to every form of oppression, not yet having learned that the common people have certain rights which even kings must respect. Indeed, at the very time that the American patriots were refusing to obey the unjust laws of their English rulers, the common people of France were suffering from oppressions ten times as great; and yet they had no thought of resistance, but submitted silently, as creatures whose only duty was to obey their masters. At the very time that our forefathers were resisting the payment of the tax on tea, the common people of France were paying all the taxes for the support of the French king and his nobles.

So burdensome were these taxes that they consumed the greater part of every man's earnings. The people had no voice in the management of public affairs, nor had they any rights save to toil unceasingly for those who had set themselves over them. Every year thousands of persons died of starvation, because the earnings of labor, instead of providing food for the laborers, were taken for taxes. Meanwhile, the nobles, or privileged classes, who owned all the land, were living in ease and luxury; they did no work of any kind; they paid no taxes; they seemed to live for no purpose but to gratify their own pleasures and do honor to the king.

Such was the condition of France at the time Lafayette was preparing to aid the cause of liberty in America. Do you ask why he did not first help the oppressed in his own country? They were not yet ready to be profited by such assistance. The time was not ripe for any movement against the tyranny of the king and his court. To the downtrodden people of France, liberty seemed a thing so impossible that they had not even so much as dreamed of contending for it.

Lafayette was not one of the people—he was a member of the nobility, and we should naturally expect to find him arrayed on the side of the oppressor rather than on that of the oppressed. But here his patriotism seems all the more praiseworthy because it was wholly unselfish. What could he expect to gain by befriending the American colonists? They could not even offer him a salary as an officer in the continental army. Did he hope to win fame by great achievements in war? There were in Europe other and more promising fields for the display of military genius. In only one way can we account for his ardor in behalf of American liberty, and that is by saying that he was imbued with the true spirit of freedom, and was, therefore, a friend to all mankind. He thought that he saw in America the first opportunity to do good by striking a blow at oppression. The results were greater than any one could have dreamed. Without his aid it is hardly possible that our revolution would have succeeded; without it, the American colonies might have still remained