

**OUR COUNTRY'S FLAG
AND THE FLAGS OF
FOREIGN COUNTRIES**

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Our country's flag and the flags of foreign countries by Edward S. Holden

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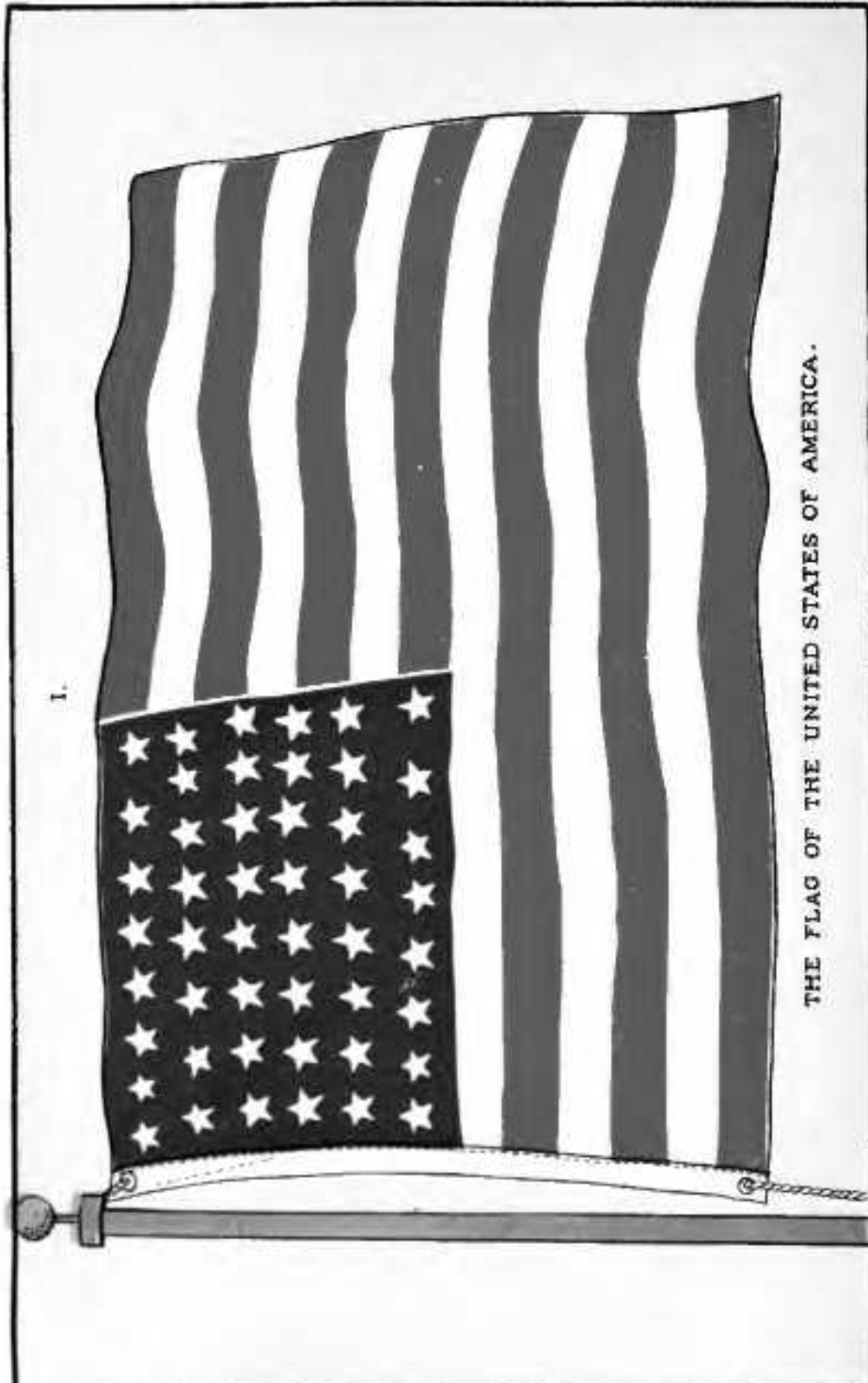
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EDWARD S. HOLDEN

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I.

THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

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FOREIGN COUNTRIES

BY

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

IN Part I of this book a history of the national flag of America is given. It is presented first because every American child should, first of all, know how the flag of his country came to be what it is. Some account is also given of the various standards that were set up on the continent of North America by the early discoverers and explorers. From the settlements at Jamestown in Virginia (1607) and at Plymouth in Massachusetts (1620) until the American Revolution (1775), the flag of England was the flag of the colonists. The king's colors flew on forts and ships of war, but the white ensign with the red cross of St. George was the flag of the people.

The protest of the colonists against unjust rule led to the assumption of liberty-flags in every colony. In 1775 a flag was adopted by the colonies to mark their union for securing, by force if necessary, their rights as Englishmen. On the 4th of July, 1776, the Declaration of American Independence proclaimed "that all political connection between us and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved," and a year later the Congress adopted the flag of thirteen stripes with its union of thirteen stars—a new constellation—to symbolize the birth of a new nation.

During the whole history of America, therefore, our flag has been the flag of a *country*, not the personal standard of a king or of an emperor. It stands, and it has stood, for us as the symbol of an abstract idea, not as the sign of the power of any ruler. It is, and it has been, a national flag, not a personal standard.

This is by no means the case with the flags of other and of older nations that have

gone through a different development and have had a different history. France, for example, is far older than the United States, yet the French people had no national flag until after the revolution of 1789. Before that time its banners represented the power of the king. They were personal standards, not national flags.

The oriflamme of St. Denis was borne before the armies of France because the French king had succeeded to the honors of knight-banneret of the famous Abbey of St. Denis. It represented the national aspirations in a manner; but it chiefly symbolized the belief that the power of God was on the side of the French monarchs. Ever since the Crusades, the banner of St. George has stood for England, not for the power of the English king.

The idea of nationality has not sprung up in the world all at once. In the beginning of things an army or a tribe gathered round a chief, and his personal standard stood for the power of the army, and the

army was the state. As the state grew stronger and more complex the chief of the state became—as in the later years of the Roman Republic—merely its leading citizen and soldier; and the emblems of power grew more and more to represent the majesty of the state itself. The color-bearer of the Roman legion advanced the eagle-standard against the enemy in the name of the Republic and of the commanding general.

Mediæval Europe was under feudal lords in whom, once more, the power of their petty states was concentrated. Their personal standards once more represented the army and the state. The religious banners given by the Church to lords and princes had something of the character of national banners; and the crosses of different colors borne by the Crusaders (white crosses for the English, red for the French, etc.), distinguished soldiers of different nationalities. But even the Crusaders owed their first fealty to the banners of their personal chiefs. Each knight followed the fortunes of his overlord.