

**AMERICAN STATESMEN.
ALEXANDER
HAMILTON. [BOSTON]**

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HENRY CABOT LODGE & JOHN T. MORSE

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By **Henry Cabot Lodge**

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American Statesmen

EDITED BY

JOHN T. MORSE, JR.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

IN the history of the United States, Washington and Lincoln stand apart in a monumental solitude. They belong in no class; no one seeks a place near them, or challenges even a possible comparison with them. It is only after we have established them in this grand and undisputed isolation that we try to put our other statesmen into ranks and classes according to our judgment of their capacity and their services. This attitude of these two men is a peculiarity in our annals distinguishing us from other peoples. No other nation has heroes filling quite the like relationship. The nearest approach to it is furnished by William of Orange. Neither Julius Cæsar nor Napoleon Bonaparte are parallel instances, though they overshadowed respectively all other Romans and Frenchmen; they were greater than others, yet they could be compared and measured with others. But this cannot be done with either Washington or Lincoln, because, apart from greatness, they are *different* from others.

When we come to make out the list of our statesmen of the first rank, Alexander Hamilton would probably receive at least a plurality of votes for the highest place. In the minds of his countrymen, his memory has always been surrounded with a brilliant halo, has always had a prestige which may be regarded as in some respects surprising. For when readers come down to the actual records of his career, they find that they have to hear chiefly of financial schemes, the management of the treasury, arrangements concerning the national debt, revenues, tariffs, and internal taxation—dry matters, for the most part, and not often enticing popular interest. None the less it is the case that our historical writers have found a singular fascination about Hamilton; the amount of literature and the consequent research concerning him have been very great: yet there is not any symptom of satiety; our people still eagerly seize upon everything which is written as to his career, and seem unable to hear enough of the subject. Such a condition cannot be accounted for by the tradition of his personal beauty of countenance and charm of manner, which made him a leader of the leaders in public life, neither by the interesting tale of his tragic death. The explanation and the truth lie far deeper. Ham-

ilton's fame indicates the unformulated but full appreciation of the unquestionable historic fact that he was the real maker of the government of the United States. Washington created, or at least caused to be created, the national entity; Hamilton did actually create the political¹ entity.

By reason of these facts, the life of Hamilton was sure to be one of the most important volumes of this series; and, since so much careful writing had been already done concerning him, the selection of his biographer demanded more than ordinary consideration. No one in the country had at that time made a more thorough study of Federalism than Mr. Lodge had done. His ancestor, George Cabot, had been one of the chiefs of the Federalist party in its stronghold of New England, and had been the intimate friend of Hamilton; and the testimony of the intimacy still lives upon Mr. Lodge's library wall in the shape of Trumbull's portrait of Hamilton, a present to George Cabot as a near and dear friend. Knowing well that, if Mr. Lodge was very naturally inclined to make a hero of Hamilton, he at least practiced a strictly intelligent and reasonable worship, I

¹ I regret to be obliged to use this now degraded word, but I use it in its original and proper classic signification.