

**THE VEIL REMOVED; OR,  
REFLECTIONS ON DAVID  
HUMPHREYS' ESSAY ON THE  
LIFE OF ISRAEL PUTNAM**

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The Veil Removed; Or, Reflections on David Humphreys' Essay on the Life of Israel Putnam by  
John Fellows

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**JOHN FELLOWS**

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ON  
DAVID HUMPHREYS' ESSAY ON THE LIFE  
OF  
ISRAEL PUTNAM.

1840,

NOTICES OF OLIVER W. B. LEAODY'S LIFE OF THE SAME,  
S. SWETT'S SKETCH OF BUNKER HILL BATTLE,  
XTC. ETC.

BY JOHN FELLOWS.

"History has been styled, 'The evidence of time—the depository of events.' It should oblige all who have performed any distinguished part on the theater of the world to appear before us in their proper character; and to render the account of their actions at the tribunal of posterity, as models which ought to be followed, or as examples to be censured and avoided."—*Gordon, Hist. Am. Rev.*

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## PREFACE.

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“Is the time never to arrive when an honest man can tell the truth as to the events of the revolution? Are facts, in regard to the character and conduct of Gen. Putnam, to be refuted by idle denials, and tales to be deemed veracious because they have been often repeated? I trust not, but that the time will come when the candid and impartial historian will do full justice to the men who were distinguished in the war for national independence.”

The above is an extract of a letter in reference to the work I had commenced. The prophecy of the writer is, I believe, already fulfilled. *The fullness of time*, in respect to this matter, has at length arrived.

Judge Marshall has done much to dissipate the mist that enveloped a portion of our revolutionary history, and other lights have appeared since his publication, that clear the way for Mr. Bancroft to complete the work.

Objections are made to my undertaking; that it is too late to correct erroneous statements of occurrences which happened so long ago as our revolutionary war; that the sacred ashes of the dead should not be disturbed, *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*, etc. As though the truth should not be told, for the benefit of the living, from fear of injuring the deceased, who are beyond the reach of harm. This principle acted upon would render history as worthless as romance.

Many even say, if they suspected they had been

cheated in respect to the history of Putnam, they would not wish to be undeceived ; showing thereby the tenacity with which the generality of mankind cling to preconceived opinions. With such, all argument would be vain and useless.

It is, moreover, said that the feelings of the descendants of Gen. Putnam would be wounded by any remarks tending to depreciate the military fame of their ancestor. To this I answer, that in the United States every person is estimated by his individual merits, and the descendants of Gen. Putnam may be entitled to the highest respect, without claiming one of the greatest military heroes in the world for their ancestor.

If the history of our glorious revolution has been perverted by awarding undue honor to some, to the neglect of those more deserving ; if the stories promulgated to the world by Col. Humphreys and others of the wonderful prowess and achievements of Israel Putnam are not true, and the credit bestowed upon them disreputable to an intelligent, free people, I can see no reason why they should not be shown to be at variance with fact. This is the object I have in view, without any ill-will towards Gen. Putnam, or any of his family, none of whom have I ever known.

I have not written without book ; but if any errors, in matter of fact, should be pointed out, that have crept into the work, they will be acknowledged with pleasure, and corrected. Vituperative abuse will be suffered to pass unheeded.

NEW YORK, Feb., 1843.



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## INTRODUCTION.

I SHALL have frequent occasion to refer to the journal of Major Robert Rogers, who commanded a corps of provincial troops denominated Rangers, during the French or Seven Years' War, so called. The journal was published at London, in 1765. And as the work is probably little-known in America, it will doubtless be satisfactory to the reader to be made acquainted with the character and standing of the author. For this purpose, I will in the first place give an abstract of the introduction to the work; followed by official documents, establishing the reputation Major Rogers acquired with the respective commanders; likewise examples of his hazardous enterprises.

"I claim," says the author, "the merit of impartially relating matters of fact without disguise or equivocation. Most of those which relate to myself can at present be attested by living witnesses."

As an apology for defects in the style of his journal, he says: "It is the soldier, not the scholar, who writes; that many things here were written in deserts, on rocks and mountains, amidst the hurries, disorders, and noise of war. This was my situation when the following journals were transmitted to the generals and commanders I acted under; which I am not now at liberty to correct, except in some very gross and palpable errors."

Major Rogers was a native of a frontier town in the