



The American Revolution

John Fiske

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During the seventy years which elapsed between the overthrow of the Stuart dynasty and the victory of Wolfe on the Heights of Abraham, the relations between the American colonies and the British government were, on the whole, peaceful; and the history of the colonies, except for the great and romantic struggle with New France, would have been almost destitute of striking incidents. In view of the perpetual menace from France, it was clearly unwise for the British government to irritate the colonies, or do anything to weaken their loyalty; and they were accordingly left very much to themselves. Still, they were not likely to be treated with any great liberality,—for such was not then, as it is hardly even yet, the way of governments,—and if their attachment to England still continued strong, it was in spite of the general demeanour of the mother-country. The Lords of Trade Since 1675 the general supervision of the colonies had been in the hands of a standing committee of the Privy Council, styled the “Lords of the Committee of Trade and Plantations,” and familiarly known as the “Lords of Trade.” To this board the governors sent frequent and full reports of the proceedings in the colonial legislatures, of the state of agriculture and trade, of the revenues of the colonies, and of the way in which the public money was spent. In private letters, too, the governors poured forth their complaints into the ears of the Lords of Trade, and these complaints were many and loud. Except in Pennsylvania and Maryland, which were like hereditary monarchies, and in Connecticut and Rhode Island, where the governors were elected by the people, the colonial governors were now invariably appointed by the Crown.

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