



The Women of The American Revolution

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When Mrs. Ellet compiled her history of "The Women of the Revolution," she could not have foreseen the deep interest in Colonial and Revolutionary history, that was destined to mark the last decade of the Nineteenth Century, nor could she have realized that the various patriotic societies that were to be organized among women, would lead to as great an interest in the lives of the mothers as in those of the fathers of the Republic. Yet the writer of these sketches of noted women has prepared for just such a phase of American life, which makes her work now appear a prophecy of the future as well as a summary of past events. "The Women of the Revolution" having been published in the middle of the century, the material for these biographical sketches was collected while some men and women were still living who could recall the faces and figures of the statesmen and soldiers of the Revolutionary struggle. When the sketch of Mrs. Philip Schuyler went to press, the daughter of that heroic lady was still living in Washington, and able to relate for the entertainment of her friends stirring incidents of her mother's life, and of her own life in camp with Mrs. Washington, when as Miss Betsey Schuyler she won the heart of the General's young aide-de-camp, the brilliant, versatile Hamilton. Another interesting character, who was living while Mrs. Ellet's work was in course of preparation, was Mrs. Gerard G. Beekman, whose mind was a storehouse of Revolutionary incidents and adventures, of many of which she was herself the heroine or an eyewitness. There are in these volumes many proofs that Mrs. Ellet availed herself of the opportunities afforded her to draw from original sources. In some instances, the author acknowledged her indebtedness to the rich fields of reminiscence in which it was her privilege to glean, in other passages the result of such gleaning is evident from the minuteness and vividness with which she portrayed certain characters and depicted the scenes and circumstances in which they moved. In the opening paragraph of the sketch of Martha Wilson of New Jersey, Mrs. Ellet speaks of the valuable fund of recollection that was opened to her through familiar association with intimate friends of the subject of the biography. Mrs. Wilson, who lived through the first decade of the Nineteenth Century, recollected the stirring days of the Revolution when New Jersey was its principal battle ground, and she, as the daughter of one of General Washington's officers and the wife of another, entertained in her father's house and in her own, the Commander-in-Chief and other prominent Revolutionary heroes. Mrs. Wilson was able to relate many conversations that were held at her table, and numerous personal incidents which threw light upon the characters of Washington, Wayne, Greene and Knox, while the faces and voices of such foreign patriots as Pulaski and the Marquis de Lafayette were familiar to her as household words.

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