

## PREFATORY NOTE

The Journals and Records of the Continental Congress have never been printed in full. The entries made from day to day by Secretary Charles Thomson were far from complete, and were subjected to revision by committees before publication; but the contemporary issues of the Journals have served as the basis of all subsequent reprints, and the original manuscript has remained almost unused, except by the curious bent upon studying the course of a certain measure. For the first time these valuable records of consultation and legislative action are now to be printed as written and as they were kept by the office of the Secretary of Congress. The entries will be supplemented by information gathered from the indorsements made upon papers and reports laid before Congress, which often note action not entered upon the Journals, and from such other sources as will aid in reconstituting the proceedings of this Revolutionary body.

The Congress of 1774 stands by itself. The first step toward common measures, carefully taken by the committees of correspondence and more or less popular assemblies of the localities, easily led to a general or Continental Congress, whose powers were but ill defined, and whose acts were largely tentative. It was not prepared to take any radical step, and an assertion of the

claims to rights rather than of the rights of the Colonies formed the burden of these papers. The conservative feeling carried the day and restricted the proceedings to statements of the grievances and appeals for relief. The delegates were unable to go beyond their instructions, and these were limited to consultation on the present state of the Colonies and the measures demanded by the situation for the best good of the dependencies. A restoration of union and harmony between Great Britain and the Colonies was the wish of the meeting. The resulting addresses and papers were on that line, and only when the Congress of 1775 assembled was it seen that the time was ripe for action.

Of the original papers prepared and adopted in this Congress of 1774 but one has been preserved—the Articles of Association. From a number of sources documents have been obtained throwing light upon the measures submitted and the various forms they assumed before acceptance or rejection. What is printed here will even thus form only a journal of proceedings, with the reports prepared in the Congress; but the intended publication of the papers and documents of the Continental Congress in full will supply to the student the material necessary to the understanding of the position, measures, and influence of this body.

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