everything away before it. The news was hurried by express along the roads to the southward ; men left the plough in the furrow when they heard it, and rode off to Boston ; town committees of safety collected money and provisions and sent them to the same point ; and before the end of the month the mainland around Boston harbour was occupied by a shifting mass of undisciplined half-armed soldiers, sufficient to keep the British troops cooped up within the peninsula on which the town was built.

1. The overturning of the royal governments in North America followed rapidly, as the news of the fights at Lexington and Concord spread abroad. In one colony after another the lower houses of the colonial legislatures, taking the name of “ provincial congresses,” met and assumed the reins of government ; the officers of militia and subordinate magistrates accepted commissions from them ; and the colonial officials, to whose advice so much of the course of events had been due, fled to England or to the nearest depot of royal troops. On the day (May 10, 1775) when the stronghold of Ticonderoga, the key of the gateway to Canada, was taken by surprise by an American force under Allen (p. 787), giving the besiegers of Boston a welcome supply of weapons and ammunition, the Second Continental Congress met at Philadelphia. It came, under new circumstances, to redeem the pledge which its predecessor had given that all the colonies would support Massachusetts in resisting force by force. It was thus the representative of a united people, or of nothing. The struggle for union had been so far successful.
2. This fact of union has coloured the whole sub­sequent history of the country. The Articles of Associa­tion had really preceded it by a substitution of general popular government, however clumsy in form, for the previously recognized governments ; in so far the authority of the various colonies was also suspended, and a general national organization took their place. It was soon found that the colonial organizations had too much innate strength to be got rid of in this summary fashion ; they held their own, and, as soon as imminent danger had disappeared, they succeeded in tearing so much power from the Continental Congress as to endanger the national existence itself. But, when the Second Conti­nental Congress met, it met (as Von Holst maintains) as a purely revolutionary body, limited by no law, and by nothing else but by its success in war and the support which it was to receive from the people, without regard to colony governments. With the energy and recklessness of a French revolutionary body it might have blotted out the distinctions between colonies, and established a centralized government, to be modified in time by circum­stances. In fact, it took no such direction. It began its course by recommendations to the new colonial govern­ments ; it relied on them for executive acts ; and, as soon as the new colonies were fairly under way, they seized on the power of naming and recalling the delegates to the Congress. From that time the decadence of the Congress was rapid ; the national idea became dimmer ; and the assertions of complete sovereignty by the political units became more pronounced. This failure of the Second Congress to appropriate the universal national powers which were within its grasp is responsible for two opposite effects. On the one hand, it built up a basis for the future assertion of the notion of State sovereignty, necessarily including the right of secession. On the other, it maintained the peculiar feature of the American Union, its large State liberty, its dislike of centralization, and its feeling that the national power is a valuable but dangerous instrument of development. The effort to find a com­promise between the two forces makes up the record of subsequent national politics, ending in the present asser­tion of the largest possible measure of State rights, but under the guarantee of the national power, not of the State’s own sovereignty.
3. The conversion of the former colonies into “ States ” followed hard upon the outbreak of war (§ 72). Since that time the States have really been the peculiar feature of the American system. The circumstances just mentioned put them into a position in which they held all real powers of government; and they are still the residuary legatees of all such powers as have not been taken from them by the national power or by their State constitutions. In 1775 they differed very materially in their organization, but there has been a constant tendency to approach a general type, as States have adopted innovations which have proved successful in other States. All have now governors, legislatures of two houses, and State judiciaries. The governor, except in a few States, has a limited veto on legislation, and has a pardoning power. The State legislature is supreme in all subjects relating to the jurisdiction of the State, with two exceptions: the constitution of the United States imposes certain limitations on them (§ 116), and there is an evident tendency in the later State constitutions to prohibit the legislatures from “special legislation,” and to provide that, in specified subjects, they shall pass only “general laws,” applicable to the whole State and all citizens alike. With these exceptions, it is difficult to imagine a more complete autonomy than is pos­sessed by the States of the American Union. The main restriction upon their action is in its results upon their welfare. They may even repudiate their debts, and there is no power which can make them pay ; but, even in respect to this, the results upon the credit of a repudiating State have been enough to check others in any action of the kind. They control the organization of the State into counties, towns, and cities ; they touch the life and interests of the citizen in a far larger degree than does the Federal Govern­ment ; and, in many points, such as that of taxation, their powers are co-ordinate with those of the Federal Government, so that the two departments of the American Governmental system operate on the same subjects. The admission of new States (§ 97) has raised the number of the original thirteen States to thirty-eight (in 1887), and the powers of the new States are exactly those of the old ones.
4. The “ force resolution ” of the First Congress (§ 59) shows that the national existence of the United States, in a purely political sense, dates from the fulfilment of the conditions of the force resolution—that is, from the first shot fired at Lexington. From that instant the fact of union was consummated in the support given to Massachu­setts by the other commonwealths ; and George III. was king no longer of thirteen separate kingdoms, but of one. The fact that he did not recognize the union did not alter the fact of union ; that was to be decided by events. This success of the struggle for union gave the United States a date for the political, as distinguished from the legal, existence of the nation (April 19, 1775).

**IV. THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE : 1775-83.**

1. The Second Congress adopted the “army” around Boston as “ the American continental army rules and articles of war were formulated for it ; and Ward, Charles Lee (a British soldier of fortune), Schuyler (p. 790), and Putnam were named as major-generals, with eight brig­adiers, and Gates as adjutant-general. Union, though ac­complished, was still weak. Sectional interests, feelings, and prejudices were strong; and the efforts of the delegates to accommodate them had, as one result, the appearance of Washington on the historical stage which he was to fill so completely. He had been of special service on the military committee of Congress ; and the Massachusetts members —the Adamses and others—saw in him the man whose appointment as commander-in-chief would be most accept­able to all the sections, and would “ cement and secure the union of these colonies,” as John Adams wrote in a private letter. He was chosen unanimously and commis­sioned, and set out for Boston. But another collision, the battle of Bunker Hill, had taken place on the date of his commission (June 17).
2. In one of the irregular surgings of the colonial force around Boston, it took possession of Breed’s (now known