



The Life of John Kalb: Major-General in the Revolutionary Army (Classic Reprint)

Friedrich Kapp

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Excerpt from The Life of John Kalb: Major-General in the Revolutionary Army

Congress having on February 19th, 1883, passed the resolution to carry out the vote of October 14th, 1780, to erect at Annapolis a monument in honor of General Kalb, I find the moment propitious to prepare for publication a book which I have long had by me. Besides I prefer publishing my researches in my own name to running the risk of seeing them adopted by others who do not even condescend to mention the source from which they have drawn their information.

I do not consider it out of place to submit this work to the American reader, as the necessary sequel to the life of Frederick William von Steuben, published in 1859. Kalb and Steuben taken together complete the design I had in view of detailing the participation of German generals in the establishment of American independence. Both of these men were noble specimens of the race from which they sprung, and under the most unfavorable auspices they have unfolded some of its finest qualities.

What first led me to an inquiry into Kalb's personal history was the mysterious twilight in which his memory was shrouded. Even the orthography of his name was uncertain. Some write it Kalbe, others Colbe, still others Kalb; Mr. Bancroft names Alsace as his native land, while Lord Stormond, the English ambassador, assigns him to Switzerland. The year of his birth varied between 1717 and 1732; one authority credits his military antecedents to the Prussian, another to the Austrian, a third to the French army.

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