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DISTINGUISHED JERSEYMEN.

BIOGRAPHICAL
SKETCHES

OF

DISTINGUISHED JERSEYMEN.

BY S. C. ARNOLD.

"No study can be more useful to the ingenuous youth of the United States, than that of their own history, nor any example more interesting or more safe for their contemplation, than those of the great founders of the republic."

Tudor's Life of Otis.

TRENTON, N. J.

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ENTERED according to act of Congress, in the year 1845, by S. G. Arnold, in
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PREFACE.

THE idea of the following sketches was first suggested in a small circle of literary friends, who each agreed to contribute for the columns of the "Emporium & True American," something towards rescuing from oblivion the names of those who have played a distinguished part in the councils of the state, or who have, in some way, contributed to its glory or prosperity. These sketches, as they appeared in the Emporium, attracted considerable attention, and the publication, in some form more permanent than that of the columns of a newspaper, was so often suggested, that it has been deemed best to venture on the experiment. Should they prove to be the means of extending the knowledge of our history among those who are just entering on the stage of life, the writers will feel that their labors have not been in vain, and with this hope they commit these pages to the indulgent attention of the great public.

Trenton, July, 1845.



ABRAHAM CLARK.

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To an American, the most important political event of modern times, is the Declaration of our National Independence ; and the names which were subscribed to that immortal paper, have naturally drawn around them an interest commensurate with the greatness of that event. The state of New Jersey was, at that time, represented in the National Assembly by five delegates, one of whom was a minister of the gospel, two were members of the bar, and two were cultivators of the earth. They were not all native Jerseymen, but this act has so thoroughly identified them with our state, that we claim their reputation as our own.

ABRAHAM CLARK was one of the two farmers. He was born in Essex county, about a mile and a half from the village of Rahway, on the upper road to Elizabethtown, February 15, 1726, on the farm which he afterwards inherited, and which descended to him by regular succession from his ancestors, who were among the first settlers of the colony. His father, Thomas Clark, was an alderman of the borough of Elizabeth, a man of respectability and standing, and gave his son, what, for the times, was considered as a good education.

Abraham, at an early age, manifested an inclination for study, and devoted considerable attention to mathematics, of which he was particularly fond. He also turned his attention to civil law, and made himself familiar with the principles and so much of the details, as he thought neces-

sary in transacting the ordinary business of life. In 1748, at the age of twenty-two years, he married Miss Sarah Hetfield, who resided in the borough of Elizabeth, and by whom he had a family of children, some of whom were conspicuous actors in the war of the Revolution. Several of his sons were officers in the American army, and, falling into the hands of the enemy, were among those who suffered imprisonment in the celebrated prison ship, Jersey, where they experienced all the hardships and cruelties which at that time marked the policy of the mother country towards her offending offspring. Thomas was a captain of artillery, and his treatment was particularly barbarous. He was immured in a dungeon, and for a long time had no other food than that which was surreptitiously conveyed to him, by his companions in suffering, through the keyhole of the door.

Mr. Clark, the subject of this article, was of a delicate constitution and a slender frame, so that, notwithstanding his agricultural tastes and education, he was disqualified for the laborious pursuits of the field, and was chiefly employed, in the early part of his life, in surveying, conveyancing and settling estates. He was also a frequent arbiter in disputes, was very generally consulted by his neighbors in all cases of litigation, gave legal advice to all who desired it, without fee or reward, and by his generous labors and kindly advice, obtained the grateful appellation of the "*poor man's counsellor.*"

The colonial legislature also manifested their confidence in Mr. Clark's integrity, by appointing him a commissioner for settling undivided lands, and by electing him to the office of clerk of the general assembly, which then held its sessions at Amboy. He was also intrusted with the office of sheriff, and other stations of minor importance in the county of Essex, and appears to have been, in the more tranquil times which preceded the revolution, a quiet, pious, respec-

table and useful citizen, who enjoyed the general confidence of the people.

When the controversy with Great Britain arose, Mr. Clark was in the full vigor of his intellect and usefulness, and able to give weight and strength to the cause which he might espouse. All his interests were with the royal party, but his feelings and his judgment inclined him at once to the popular side, and no one, who knew the probity of his character, would expect Abraham Clark to yield his duty to mere personal interests. He stood forth at once, and took a prominent part against the oppressive claims of parliament, and threw all the weight of his influence and the energies of his mind into the contest.

Mr. Clark was a busy agitator, and a principal actor in all the measures of resistance which preceded the Declaration of Independence. He spoke freely on the subject of American wrongs among his friends, assisted in fermenting the popular feeling in public assemblies, and was an active and working member of the committee of safety.

This long course of patriotic and disinterested services naturally turned towards him the attention of the prominent patriots of that day, and, on the 21st of June, 1776, he was appointed by the colonial convention, then assembled at Burlington, a delegate to the continental congress.

The colony of New Jersey had taken an early stand against the aggressions of the British government. In July, 1774, the people assembled in township meetings and elected delegates to a colonial convention, which had been called for the purpose of choosing delegates to the continental congress. At these primary meetings, resolutions were very generally passed, strongly censuring the tyrannical measures of the British government, in taxing the colonies without allowing them a representation in parliament, and, especially, in closing the port of Boston—and a second convention

met in Trenton, in 1775, which took measures for raising military companies in the several townships, and imposed a tax for their support.

Gov. Franklin was importuned to call the legislature together, in order that the representatives might give these measures the sanction of law, and to adopt others for the further security of the colony; but he refused; and the convention (the Provincial Congress as it was then called) took upon itself most of the authorities of the regular legislative assembly. Mr. Clark received his appointment as delegate to congress from this informal body. His colleagues were Richard Stockton, John Hart, Francis Hopkinson and Dr. John Witherspoon.

The august body of which he had now become a member, was sitting, at the time of his election, in the old Carpenter's Hall, in the city of Philadelphia, and thither he immediately repaired. The subject of declaring the colonies independent of Great Britain had already been introduced, and he co-operated cordially with those who advocated this important and decisive measure, and, a few days after, placed his hand to the instrument as one who was willing to pledge *life, fortune and honor*, in sustaining the just rights of his country.

As a member of the continental congress, Mr. Clark was distinguished for his zeal in the cause of American liberty and his attention and application to the public business. He was appointed on several important committees, and gave to his new and more extended duties all the industry, ability and perseverance which had marked his conduct in a more humble sphere. In the following November, he was re-appointed by the legislature, which had, during the interim, been regularly constituted, under the state constitution, which was adopted on the 2d of July; and he was annually returned until 1783, with the exception of a single year.

Mr. Clark, in assisting to conduct the public business, soon dis-

covered that the articles under which the several states were confederated, were grossly defective in many essential particulars; and when the army was disbanded and the machinery of the government was left to depend on its own intrinsic merits, these defects exhibited themselves in a still more glaring light, and attracted the general attention of our most prominent statesmen. Mr. Clark was among the first to advocate a convention whose duty it should be to organize a more efficient system of government, and when the convention was finally called, in 1787, he was constituted a member, but was prevented by ill health from attending its sittings. The other delegates from New Jersey were William Livingston, David Brearley, William Patterson, William C. Houston, and John Nielson. When the new constitution was published and presented to the states for their adoption, he opposed it, but was fortunately overruled by his state. Subsequently, when the amendments were engrafted upon it, he withdrew his objections and gave it his hearty sanction. In 1787 he was again appointed to a seat in the continental congress, and continued a member until that body was dissolved by the new order, under the federal constitution.

Mr. Clark was a candidate for a seat in the first congress under the new constitution, but was defeated. In the interim of his services in the national council he was generally a member of the state legislature. Here he had been conspicuous in procuring the passage of a bill, which curtailed, to some extent, the fees of lawyers, and which was characterized by the members of the bar as "*Clark's law.*" This at once brought against him the influence of this active and industrious class of citizens. In congress he had also manifested a regard for the most rigid economy, and in carrying out his views, had opposed a proposition for commuting the pay of officers. The officers consequently became his decided opponents. He had, besides, opposed the adoption of the new constitution, which made him obnoxious to another, and still larger class of citizens, and the result was, that for once during

his long political life, he was left in the minority and lost his election.

But Mr. Clark had, by no means, forfeited the confidence of his native state. In the winter of 1789-'90, he was appointed a commissioner to settle the accounts of the state with the general government, and, at the following election, was returned to the second congress, and continued to be re-elected until he voluntarily withdrew from public life, at the expiration of the session in June, 1794.

His health, never very good, had been much impaired by his application to the public business, and, exhausted by his toils and the infirmities incident to his advanced life, he returned to his humble home, to spend the remainder of his days in quiet retirement. His career was, however, drawing to its close. In the following autumn, while engaged about his farm, he received what is commonly called "a stroke of the sun," and in two hours after, he breathed his last, being at the time, in the 69th year of his age.

Mr. Clark, during his life, had bestowed numerous benefactions on the church at Rahway, and his remains were carried thither for interment. Over them is inscribed the following record:

"In memory of Abraham Clark, Esq., who died Sept 15th, 1794, in the 69th year of his age. Firm and decided as a patriot; zealous and faithful as a public servant, he loved his country and adhered to her cause in the darkest hours of her struggle against oppression."

The long public career of Mr. Clark is a sufficient testimony to the confidence reposed in him by the people of his native state, and his high standing as a patriot and statesman. In private life he was reserved and sedate, preferring retirement to company, and always absorbed, apparently, in the affairs of the public. He was, however, a kind husband and parent, and a devoted christian.

His biographer tells us—and the acts of his life confirm the statement—that the distinguishing trait in his character was patriotism. His integrity, sound judgment and devotion to the great

interests of his country, fully justify the high confidence reposed in him by his patriotic countrymen.

It is recorded of him, that although his sons were prisoners, and in the hands of an enemy distinguished for injustice, he asked no special interference in their favor, and when the barbarous treatment which they received, in common with others, came to his knowledge, he only proposed the system of retaliation, which being adopted, had the effect to mitigate their sufferings until the period of regular exchange arrived.

As a member of the old congress—of the state legislature, and a representative of New Jersey under the new constitution, he was distinguished more for his usefulness than his brilliancy, though he often entered warmly into the debates of those exciting times. His long career made him perfectly familiar with the public business and gave him great prominence and influence. In the last congress of which he was a member, he exerted his influence and talents in support of Mr. Madison's resolutions relating to the commerce of the United States, and was considered one of their most powerful advocates.

Mr. Clark was of a slender form, medium height, grave and thoughtful in his bearing, and extremely temperate in his manner of living. In public affairs he had the reputation of being a rigid economist, but in his private relations was liberal and philanthropic. His circumstances were limited, his desires moderate, and being unambitious of wealth, he devoted himself with undivided energy to the good and glory of his country. He was a plain, pious, unambitious man, and in public and private life presents an example of excellence which the American farmer will ever be proud to cherish.

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JOHN WITHERSPOON.

JOHN WITHERSPOON.

Rev. Dr. Witherspoon was appointed a member of the continental congress at the same time and under the same circumstances as Mr. Clark. He was not a native Jerseyman, and besides, was attached to a profession which is frequently thought to exclude men from the honors and burdens of state affairs. But the good Doctor had taken up the cause of the colonies with so much ardor and enthusiasm, and was enabled to bring to it such a weight of influence and talent, as to give him, not only the full confidence of his adopted state, but to make his selection a matter of state policy.

John Witherspoon, whose name is so thoroughly identified with the honor and prosperity of New Jersey, was born in the parish of Yester, near Edinburg, Scotland, on the 5th day of February, 1722. He was lineally descended from the Rev. John Knox, the great Scotch reformer, and his father was also a minister of the church of Scotland. At an early age he manifested a strong inclination for reading and study, and industriously improved the liberal advantages which his father gave him. At the age of fourteen, he entered the Edinburg University, and through his whole course of studies, which were directed with a view to the sacred profession, maintained a high standing and gave evidence of those strong intellectual powers for which he was afterwards so much distinguished.

At the age of twenty-one he left the university, when he was licensed to preach the gospel and became the assistant of his father at Yester, but soon after accepted an invitation from the parish

of Beith, in the west of Scotland, where he was ordained and settled. After residing here a few years, usefully employed in his labor of love, his high and increasing reputation as a preacher induced the congregation at Paisley, near Glasgow, to ask for his removal thither, and, in this wider sphere of usefulness he continued until he was called to the "New World."

During his residence at Beith, he was singularly enough, involved in some of the disagreeable consequences of the war which was then raging in Scotland, between the houses of Stuart and Hanover. The Pretender, as Charles was called, had made himself master of the town of Stirling early in January, 1746, and proceeded in his designs against the castle. Gen. Hawley, the commander of the English forces in Scotland, was dispatched to its relief with a powerful army. The Pretender marched out to meet him, and the two armies met on the 16th of January, at Falkirk, where the English general was totally routed.

The curiosity of the young minister induced him to seek a position where he could witness the conflict between the contending armies, and in the sweep made by the victors, he was picked up, and thrown, with other prisoners, into the castle of Doune. He was confined in a large upper room, next below the battlements, and had for his companions, five members of the Edinburg company of volunteers and two citizens of Aberdeen, charged with being spies.

The quarters of the captives were not particularly agreeable, and as a part of them, at least, had a fair prospect of being hanged, there was not wanting a sufficient motive for prompting them to effect their escape. The sentinel had allowed them to pass freely up to the battlements, which were seventy feet from the ground, and their plan was to descend from this terrific height by means of a rope constructed of strips torn from the bed blankets which had been allowed them by their jailor.

Mr. Witherspoon assisted them in their preparations, but when the plan was about to be carried into effect, had not fully deter-

mined whether to avail himself of it or not. The order in which they were to descend was decided by lot, he being left, at his own request, out of the arrangement. The first four passed down in safety. The fifth man was very large and his descent too much hurried. Just as he reached the ground the rope broke, some thirty feet above him, but he received no injury. The accident was immediately communicated to those remaining on the battlements, but Thomas Barrow, whose turn came next, was so anxious to effect his escape, as to be altogether regardless of consequences, and throwing himself upon the rope, slid down to the end and thence fell to the ground, breaking several ribs and dislocating his ankle. His companions bore him away, however, and they all succeeded in effecting their escape to the Vulture sloop of war, then lying in the Frith of Forth.

Mr. Witherspoon and one of his companions, named Macvicar, were still left on the battlements. They drew up the rope and taking it back to their cell, lengthened it and patched it up the best way that they were able, and returning, Macvicar attempted to follow his companions. He went down very well till he reached a part of the rope so large that he could not easily grasp it, when, letting go his hold, he fell, and was so much injured that he soon after died. These several warnings decided Mr. Witherspoon not to make the attempt and, returning to his room, he patiently awaited his liberation, which was effected as soon as the circumstances could be investigated.

Dr. Witherspoon, during his residence at Paisley, continued to acquire standing and influence, and obtained a high reputation as a scholar and preacher. He was frequently importuned to remove to other fields of labor, and was successively invited to Dublin, Ireland; Rotterdam, Holland; and Dundee in his own country, but all these calls he steadily resisted.

At that time there was a strong bond of union between the Scottish churches and their sister churches of America, and a constant intercourse was kept up between them. Hence it was

that the high reputation of the learned and pious pastor of the congregation at Paisley, found its way to the British colonies in America. His learning, talents and piety, were so well understood and so highly appreciated by the distinguished men of this country that, on the death of President Finley in 1766, he was unanimously elected by the trustees, President of the College of New Jersey, located at Princeton, and Richard Stockton, a member of the board then in England, was desired to see him and urge his acceptance of the office.

Mr. Stockton was not able immediately to visit the Doctor, but the appointment of the trustees was duly transmitted to him and was under consideration for some time. But the reluctance of Mrs. Witherspoon to leave the home of her youth and to dissolve forever the social and domestic ties which bound her strongly to the land of her birth, together with some embarrassments of a pecuniary kind, at length determined him to decline the invitation, and a letter to that effect was communicated to the trustees, who thereupon elected to the vacant place, Dr. Samuel Blair, the Vice President of the college.

Subsequently, Mr. Stockton, in his tour to North Britain, visited Glasgow and Paisley, and was, for some time, the guest of Dr. Witherspoon. Mr. Stockton was in high favor among the distinguished men of Great Britain, and his representations had so much weight with the Doctor and his family, that he finally consented to yield to the solicitations of his American friends. He was also visited by the celebrated Dr. Rush, who urged his acceptance, and whose friends claim for him the honor of changing his determination. Mr. Stockton informed the board of Trustees that the difficulties in the way of the Doctor's acceptance were now removed, and that, on a re-election, he would immediately proceed to New Jersey and take charge of the institution. On the receipt of this intelligence, Mr. Blair voluntarily declined to accept the office to which he had been elected, and Dr. Witherspoon was unanimously chosen. He immediately repaired to Prince-

ton, where he arrived, with his family, in the early part of August, 1768, and on the 17th of the same month was duly inaugurated.

In resolving to come to America, Dr. Witherspoon not only separated himself from all his early associations—his relatives, friends and church, but he also forfeited high prospects of wealth and distinction. We are told by his biographer, that not long before he left Holland, and while in a state of suspense on the subject of emigration, a gentleman possessed of a large property, a bachelor and a relative, agreed to make him his heir, on the condition that he should remain in Scotland. But the Doctor, after looking over all the ground, was fully persuaded that Providence had indicated his course, and like a true christian, he suffered neither the allurements of wealth, nor the persuasions of friends, nor the ties of blood, to interfere with what seemed to be so plainly his duty.

The college, from its foundation at Elizabethtown in 1746, had been struggling with difficulties, and the repeated shocks which it had received in the death of five presidents during the twenty-two years of its existence, its removal from place to place, and the heavy expenses incurred by the erection of the Hall after its final location at Princeton, had all contributed still further to embarrass its finances, so that the bankruptcy of the institution was seriously apprehended.

The acceptance of Dr. Witherspoon inspired the friends of the college with new confidence, and his subsequent administration of its affairs, fully justified their hopes. The high reputation which he had acquired in his own country, then regarded with peculiar veneration by the colonies, enabled him to wield a strong influence in its favor, and his personal efforts, which were extended from Massachusetts to Virginia, soon placed the institution in a flourishing condition.

Before taking his final departure from Scotland, he had visited London and Holland, and had received large presents of books for the institution. He had, at the same time, informed himself

respecting the latest improvements in education and government, by which means he was enabled to introduce many salutary reforms; and his piety, erudition, discretion and knowledge of the world, made him popular both as an instructor and presiding officer, and caused the college to rise rapidly in public favor.

But while thus successfully engaged in the prosecution of his important labors, the storm of the revolution broke over the country, diverting its energies into other channels and unsettling all the business avocations of the people. The number of students soon began to fall off, and when New Jersey became the theatre of contending armies, the college was completely broken up, its shades deserted, and its spacious buildings occupied alternately by the British and American forces.

During the progress of the events which led to the final rupture, Dr. Witherspoon had not been a silent or indifferent spectator; but, casting aside his foreign prejudices and embracing with facility those republican principles which were so congenial to the frame work of his mind, he at once identified himself with the land of his adoption, and through all the stages of the contest, maintained the views and participated in the councils of those who adhered to the rights of British freemen against the aggressions of British power.

The whig citizens of New Jersey who knew his influence and were proud of his reputation, sought to secure his services in the public councils, and sent him to the state convention which convened at Burlington on the 10th of June, 1776, where as a member of committees and a scholar who wielded a ready pen, he soon gave evidence of the same ability in conducting the public business which he had before exhibited as a professor and divine.

On the 21st of the same month he was chosen one of the delegates to that august body, the continental congress—the heart through which the life blood of the nation pulsated, and which gave union and energy to the efforts of those who were struggling in the great cause of human rights.

The delegates from New Jersey were not unprepared for the crisis, which, it was foreseen, was about to arise. The contingency of a final separation from Great Britain had been discussed in the convention by which the delegates were appointed, and they were instructed to unite with the delegates from the other colonies, in declaring the country independent if a measure so strong and decided was found to be necessary for the preservation of their rights.

Dr. Witherspoon took his seat, therefore, with a full knowledge of his position, and was one of the most ardent of those who advocated a complete and immediate separation from the mother country. It is related of him, that when a distinguished member pleaded for delay and urged that we were not yet *ripe* for so bold a measure, he replied: "In my opinion, sir, we are not only *ripe* but *rotting*."

He was annually re-appointed to congress till his final retirement in 1782, with the exception of the year 1780, when the affairs of the college so imperiously demanded his attention, that he was induced to decline the appointment. He resumed his seat, however, the following year, and continued to devote his attention to national affairs with an assiduity and ardor unsurpassed by any member in that body of distinguished patriots. Although the state appointed supernumerary delegates, with the view of relieving the toils and burdens of the regular members, yet the Doctor seldom or never availed himself of this relief, but steadily continued to perform for himself the arduous duties required by his position, and attended in his seat with great punctuality during the whole period of his annual appointments. He was always firm in the most gloomy periods of the war, and had that peculiar quality of great minds, which enabled him to manifest the greatest power and confidence when surrounded with the most embarrassing circumstances.

But, although, thus earnestly devoted to the service of the country, he never forgot that he was a sworn servant to the Most

High. He neither laid aside the robes by which his order was distinguished, nor the duties of the christian minister, but cordially embraced every proper opportunity to preach the Word of Life. Nor did he forget what he owed to the college over which he presided, but continued, even among his nightly vigils and daily toils to cherish it "as the apple of his eye," and to advocate its interests and advance its prosperity.

As a member of congress he was remarkable for his diligence and attention to the duties of his station, and was constantly employed on the most laborious committees. He was a member of the secret committee; a member of the committee appointed to confer with Gen. Washington in relation to recruiting the regiments whose terms of service had expired; he was on the committee which prepared the nervous and eloquent appeal to the public during the gloom and despondency which preceded the battle of Trenton; he was a member of the board of war; he was on the committee which prepared the manifesto respecting the American prisoners; he was a leading member of the committee of finance, and most strenuously opposed the different issues of paper money, which caused so much embarrassment and distress, and which he characterized as "a great and deliberate breach of the public faith;" he was on the committee to devise means for procuring supplies for the army, and steadily withstood the expensive mode at first adopted, of doing the business by commission instead of contract; he was on the committee appointed by congress for investigating the difficulties on the New Hampshire grants, (Vermont,) and which at one time, threatened a civil war; and in all the important movements of congress he appears to have borne a conspicuous part. It is remarked of him, that during his long political course, whenever he differed from his compeers as to the policy to be pursued, or the means most proper to produce any desired result, subsequent events have fully vindicated the accuracy of his judgment and the soundness of his views.

On the subject of the currency, Dr. Witherspoon was what

would, in this day, be termed a radical. He strenuously opposed the different issues of paper money, and urged the propriety of making loans and establishing funds for the payment of the interest, and enforced his views in several speeches of great clearness and power. Afterwards, at the instance, it is said, of some who had opposed his views on this question in congress, he published his essay on the nature, value and uses of money, which is one of the most clear and judicious articles extant on that subject.

In the deliberations for forming the original articles of confederation, Dr. Witherspoon took an active part, and steadily maintained the necessity of a compact union, in order to impart vigor and success to the measures of the government. He complained much of the jealousy and ambition of the individual states, which prevented them from entrusting the general government with powers adequate to the common interest; regarded the original compact as essentially defective; remonstrated against its weakness and inefficiency, and although its adoption was hailed with general joy, lived to see his predictions respecting it but too fully realized.

The temporary retirement of Dr. Witherspoon from congress at the close of the year 1779, was for the purpose of attempting a re-organization of the college. The preliminary steps had been taken at the meeting of the board of trustees in April, 1778; but such was the unsettled state of the country, and the condition of the college buildings, that little appears to have been done. Indeed, the college property was little less than a heap of ruins. Prior to the battle of Princeton, Nassau Hall was used by the British troops as their barracks, and at the time of the battle it was siezed upon by two regiments of Hessians, who knocked out the windows by way of converting it into a fort for their defence. They retreated, however, on the approach of the Americans, but one of the balls fired on the occasion shattered the heavy stonework of the hall, and another entered one of the chapel windows, and singularly enough, tore from its frame the picture of George

II., since most appropriately replaced by that of the great Washington. After the battle the hall was used as a hospital for a number of months, and it continued to be occupied in one way or another by the government troops up to the year 1781. The extent of the devastation can now hardly be realized. The building was torn to pieces, stripped of every thing valuable, the floors broken up, the fences and every particle of wood that could be cut away from the building, removed and burned, the ornaments of the prayer hall and library, the philosophical apparatus, the orrery, &c., all carried away or destroyed.

Without credit or funds it was impossible at once to bring this chaos to a state of regularity and order. Still it was desirable that the course of instruction should proceed, and as the attention of Dr. Witherspoon was chiefly directed to the concerns of the republic, the immediate duty of re-commencing it was committed to the Vice President, Dr. Samuel Smith, who had married Dr. Witherspoon's daughter, and who afterwards succeeded him in the presidency. The college rose slowly from its low estate, and met with another disaster in 1782, when all that was left, after the plunderings of the troops, was destroyed by fire, leaving nothing but the walls of the edifice standing. So late as 1783, only the second and third stories had been so far repaired that parts of them could be used. The lower and fourth stories were still in ruins.

In Dec. 1779, Dr. W. resigned his house on the college grounds to vice president Smith, and removed to his own residence, which he called Tusculum, about a mile from Princeton, where he devoted the time which he could spare from public duties to the pursuits of agriculture, of which he was particularly fond. His name, however, continued to give weight and character to the institution, and he lived to see it regain and surpass its former standing and prosperity.

He appears to have suffered considerably from the ravages of the war, in common with his neighbors, and in one of his letters,

announcing to a friend his removal to Tusculum, says :—" You know I was always fond of being a scientific farmer. That disposition has not lost, but gathered strength since my being in America. In this respect I received a dreadful stroke indeed, from the English when they were here, they having seized and mostly destroyed my whole stock, and committed such ravages that we are not yet fully recovered from it."

After the commencement in 1783, Drs. Witherspoon, Rodgers and Jones, were appointed by the board of trustees, to wait on Gen. Washington, who was present at the commencement, and solicit him to sit for his picture to Mr. C. W. Peale ; and it was ordered in the resolution from which they derived their appointment, " that his portrait when finished be placed in the hall of the college, in the room of the picture of the late king of Great Britain, which was torn away by a ball from the American artillery in the battle of Princeton." The picture was accordingly taken, and in its old, royal frame, still graces the college walls.

At the time of this commencement, congress was holding its sessions in the college hall, having adjourned from Philadelphia on account of the mutinous disposition manifested by a part of the Pennsylvania forces, which had just been disbanded. That august body attended the commencement, which was held on the last Wednesday in September, and Gen. Washington, whose business with congress called him to Princeton, sat on the stage. On that day Rev. Ashbel Green, since one of the presidents of the college, graduated, and on him fell the honor of delivering the valedictory. At the close of his speech he turned towards the commander-in-chief, and congratulated him in a feeling and eloquent episode, on the happy termination of his toils, and thanked him in behalf of the officers and students of the college, for the important services which he had rendered to the country. We are told that this incident produced a thrilling effect on the audience, and was by no means offensive to the honored and successful chief, who before his departure, presented to the trustees,

through the committee of which Dr. Witherspoon was chairman, the sum of fifty guineas.

In the year 1781, Dr. Witherspoon resumed his seat in congress, but it soon became evident that the great contest for liberty was drawing to a close, and as age and infirmities were creeping on him, he felt himself at liberty to withdraw from the public councils of the nation, which he did at the close of 1782. He was, however, permitted to enjoy the retired quiet of Tusculum for a short period only. In 1783, he was induced, contrary to his own judgment, to cross the ocean, and revisit the land of his birth, for the purpose of obtaining funds to advance the interests of the college. He embarked in December, and in the sixtieth year of his age, braved the dangers of the ocean and the prejudices which his public career had engendered against him, to aid the cause of education in his adopted country.

The result fully justified his anticipations. The rebellious conduct of the colonies, the long war which ensued and which had ended in severing us forever from the parent country, had so embittered the feelings of the English against the United States, that he was enabled to procure little more than enough to defray his necessary expenses. He returned previous to the commencement in 1784, and, from this time, withdrew in a great measure from all public concerns, except those which related to his ministerial office, or the supervisorship of the college. He was, however, elected to the state convention which assembled at Trenton, Dec. 11, 1787, for the purpose of acting on the new federal constitution, and had the honor of being one of the signers of that instrument on the part of the State of New Jersey.

“Bodily infirmities began, at length, to fall heavily upon him. For more than two years previous to his death, he was afflicted with the loss of sight, which contributed to hasten the progress of his other disorders. He bore his sufferings with exemplary patience, and even cheerfulness; nor would his active mind, and unabated desire of usefulness, permit him, even in this situation,

to desist from his ministry or his duties in the college, so far as health and strength would permit. During his blindness, he was frequently led into the pulpit, both at home and abroad, and always acquitted himself with his usual accuracy, and not unfrequently with more than his usual solemnity and animation."

He died at Tusculum, in November, 1794, having reached the seventy-third year of his age, and went to his eternal reward "full of days and full of honors." His dust reposes in the grave yard at Princeton, and over it is a stone, bearing in latin the following chronicle of his usefulness, virtues and public services:

"Beneath this marble lie interred, the mortal remains of JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D., L. L. D., a venerable and beloved President of the College of New Jersey. He was born in the parish of Yester, in Scotland, on the fifth of February, 1722, O. S., and was liberally educated in the University of Edinburg. Invested with holy orders in the year 1743, he faithfully performed the duties of his pastoral charge, during five and twenty years, first at Beith, and afterwards at Paisley. Elected president of Nassau Hall, he assumed the duties of that office on the thirteenth of August, 1768, with the elevated expectations of the public. Excelling in every mental gift, he was a man of pre-eminent piety and virtue, and deeply versed in the various branches of literature and the liberal arts. A grave and solemn preacher, his sermons abound in the most excellent doctrines and precepts for the conduct of life, and in the most lucid expositions of the Sacred Scriptures. Affable, pleasant, and courteous, in familiar conversation, he was eminently distinguished in the concerns and deliberations of the Church, and endowed with the greatest prudence in the management and instruction of youth. He exalted the reputation of the college among foreigners, and greatly promoted the advancement of its literary character and taste. He was, for a long time, conspicuous among the most brilliant luminaries of learning, and of the church. At length universally venerated, beloved and lamented, he departed this life on the fifteenth of November, 1794, aged 73 years."

Dr. Witherspoon was married to his first wife, Miss Montgomery, at an early age, and at the time of his immigration had three sons and two daughters. The oldest, James, was a major in the Revolutionary army, and fell at the battle of Germantown. The two remaining sons were bred to professions, and arose to distinction. Ann, the eldest daughter, was married to the Rev. Dr. Samuel S. Smith, who succeeded Dr. W. as president of the college; and Frances, the second daughter, married Dr. David Ramsay, the celebrated historian. After the death of Mrs. Witherspoon, the Doctor, at the age of seventy, married a young

woman of twenty-three, an alliance which occasioned much gossip and noise in the neighborhood and family circle. He was an affectionate husband, a tender parent and a cordial friend.

As a writer he was deservedly celebrated. His principal works have been published in a uniform edition of four volumes, and will continue to be consulted as long as the English language remains. They consist chiefly of sermons and essays. His lectures on moral philosophy are, we believe, to this day, used as a text book in the college over which he presided.

His eloquence was simple and grave, but at the same time, wanted neither animation nor spirit. His sermons were delivered without notes and were often committed. They always commanded the attention of the audience, though not embellished with any florid flights of fancy. A lady once walking with him through the garden, observed that it was "in excellent order, but without flowers." "True," said he, "I cultivate no flowers either in my garden or in my discourses." But although without flowers, they certainly were not without fruit.

He had an original mind and a talent for wit and satire, which, however, he took no pains to cultivate, but which often showed itself in his epigrammatic style of speaking and writing. Gen. Gates, after the capture of Burgoyne, despatched one of his aids to lay the joyful tidings before congress. The messenger was, however, delayed by so many attentions on the way, showered upon him as the bearer of good tidings, that the news reached Philadelphia several days in advance of the courier. Still it was of too grateful a character to permit the messenger which bore the particulars to be overlooked, and some member of congress proposed to vote him a sword. Dr. Witherspoon arose, and in his quiet way, begged leave to move that instead of a sword they should present him with a pair of *golden spurs*.

On another occasion, in speaking of the church of Scotland, which was divided into factions, and one party of which was distinguished as the *moderate party*, he was asked if a certain

minister was a *moderate man*. "Oh yes," he replied, "*fierce for moderation.*" At another time during the disputes in the Scottish churches, deputies were sent to congratulate George III. on his accession to the throne, and Dr. W. managed to have such delegates sent as were favorable to the views which his party represented. One member who was desired to vote for them, observed that "his light" would not suffer him to do so. "Your light," replied the Dr. "is all darkness." After the result was declared, his opponent playfully congratulated him at his success, but reminded him that although the defeated party was in the minority, it was not for lack of tact or management. "Certainly not," said the Doctor, in the same playful strain, "there is an authority which says that, 'the children of this world are always wiser in their generation than the children of light.'"

His person was large, well formed and finely proportioned. He was dignified in his intercourse with the world and it was difficult to trifle in his presence. He was exact in his habits, punctual to his engagements and unremitting in his observances of his christian duties in the closet, in the family and in the pulpit. It was his established custom to observe the last day of every year with his family as a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer, and he was also accustomed to set apart other days for fasting and prayer as the occasion seemed to require. Family religion he regarded as an excellent incentive to the cultivation of piety in the heart, and he enjoined it, both by precept and example.

He was attentive to the young, and rendered himself exceedingly agreeable to them, which was probably the secret of that unbounded influence which he swayed over their conduct and opinions. A profound theologian, he was perspicuous and simple in his manner—a learned and industrious scholar, he was deeply versed in the knowledge of human nature—a statesman of high intellectual powers, he gave himself up to the service of his country, and, in short, employed his time and talents to advance the temporal and spiritual interests of mankind. G.

FRANCIS HOPKINSON.



FRANCIS HOPKINSON

AMONG those who contributed to bring on the crisis of the revolution, were to be found men of all classes, conditions and grades—men of leisure and of toil, of wealth and poverty, of mere physical energy and of high intellectual endowments and refined and cultivated tastes.

In the last mentioned class Francis Hopkinson occupied a conspicuous and commanding position. He had a mind highly gifted by nature with understanding, wit and genius, and stored by assiduous cultivation with the riches of science and the arts and the graces of poetry and music. With such advantages he entered the political arena and used his polished weapons against the enemies of liberty.

He was born of respectable and influential parents, who emigrated to this country from England and settled in Philadelphia. His mother, whose name was Johnson, was a niece of one of the high dignitaries of the English church, the Bishop of Worcester, and was, beside, a woman of superior piety, intellect and education. His father, Thomas Hopkinson, was also possessed of a good education and a superior mind. He was not rich, but having the favor of many of the great men of England, he was enabled to procure from the British government such important and lucrative stations as enabled him not only to maintain a most respectable position in society, but also to provide handsomely for the wants of a large and increasing family.

He was the friend and companion of Franklin and assisted him in many of his philosophical experiments. It is said that he first communicated to the American philosopher the fact, afterwards found to be so important, that the electrical fluid may be drawn from a charged body without sparks or explosion, by means of metallic points. He was cut off in the prime of life, leaving his excellent and accomplished wife to educate and provide for a large family, with an income by no means the most abundant.

Francis, the eldest son and the subject of this notice, was born in Philadelphia in 1737, and was only fourteen years old at the time of his father's death. From the unwearied and pious instructions of his mother, he early imbibed a strong attachment to a life of purity and virtue, from which he never departed in after years. His whole career was unsullied by a blot or stain.

He was a member of the first graduating class of the college of Philadelphia, (afterwards the University of Pennsylvania,) which his father had been active in founding and having obtained his degree, entered the office of Benjamin Chew, Esq., as a student of law and passed through a regular course of study under the direction of that distinguished jurist, then Attorney General of the state.

As a lawyer he arose to considerable eminence and had the reputation of being a learned and able counsellor. He held an appointment for several years in the loan office and was appointed to succeed George Ross, Esq., as a judge of the admiralty court of Pennsylvania, a place which he held till the office was abolished by the new Constitution in 1790, when he was appointed by president Washington, judge of the district court for the district of Pennsylvania. He was also appointed, during his residence in New Jersey, September 4, 1776, an associate justice of the supreme court of this state, but declined to accept the office.

It is evident from these important appointments that he stood high in the profession to which he belonged, and we may

add, that his decisions as judge have been published since his death and received by the bench and bar with marks of particular favor. Still it was not in the sphere of professional learning that he acquired that distinction which entitles him to rank among the patriotic fathers of the revolution.

The duties of an arduous profession had not prevented him from following the bent of his inclinations, so far as to cultivate his natural taste for painting, poetry, music and the practical and useful sciences, in all of which he was a proficient and took particular delight. To these he also added a keen sense of the ridiculous, a brilliant imagination and a chaste humor, which gave him great freshness and vividness as a writer and made him the centre of every social circle in which he chanced to fall.

In 1766, at the age of 29, he paid a visit to his relatives in England, where he remained about two years. Prior to his departure the trustees of the college of Philadelphia testified their respect for his character and talents, by recording on their minutes a resolution, "that, as Francis Hopkinson, Esq., who was the first scholar in this seminary at its opening, and likewise one of the first who received a degree, is about to embark for England and has done honor to the place of his education by his abilities and good morals, as well as rendered it many substantial services on public occasions, the thanks of this institution ought to be delivered to him in the most affectionate and respectful manner."

During his stay in England, he was mostly the guest of his great uncle, the Bishop of Worcester, with whom he became a particular favorite, and who held out to him very flattering motives to induce him to remain and fix his permanent abode in the parent country. His attachments to the land of his birth were, however, too strong to be broken and he returned, enriched by much additional information and a more intimate and practical knowledge of the world and of the feelings and dispositions

of the leading men of England towards his country, which were of great use to him in the subsequent struggle.

Soon after his return he married Miss Ann Borden, of Bordentown, Burlington county, in this state, and thereupon removed to New Jersey and was still a resident of Bordentown when the discontents of the people ripened into civil war. He at once espoused the cause of the colonies, although his most powerful friends were arrayed on the other side, and commenced wielding his pen against the preposterous claims of the British government.

In 1774 his pamphlet entitled "A Pretty Story," made its appearance and was widely circulated. In it was portrayed in the form of an allegory, some of the many grievances under which the colonies labored, and in a free and humorous strain the author depicted the absurd claims of the British government and her high handed attempts to coerce the colonies into a compliance therewith. It was a production precisely adapted to the state of the times and produced a powerful effect.—Subsequently it was followed up by other articles from the same polished pen, in which the shafts of his keen wit and dry humor were most successfully levelled at the "mother country," at once giving firmness to the public mind and infusing decision into the public councils. So great was the effect produced by his skilfully wrought missives, as to draw out from Dr. Rush an expression, "that the various causes which contributed to the establishment of the independence and federal government of the United States, will not be fully traced unless much is ascribed to the irresistible influence of the ridicule which he poured forth from time to time upon the enemies of America."

By this vigorous and successful use of his pen, Mr. Hopkinson soon became extensively known as one of the staunchest whigs in the colonies and, at the colonial convention which met at Burlington, in June, 1776, he was regarded as eminently fit to

meet the crisis which was evidently about to arise and was hence selected to represent New Jersey in that august congress, which declared that "these united colonies are, and of right ought to be, FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES."

His name stands, along with his noble compeers, firmly subscribed to the immortal "declaration," and the acts of his life afford the amplest testimony, that there was no faltering in his subsequent career.

After the close of the congress of 1776, his name does not appear on the records as a delegate from New Jersey, and his public life was chiefly identified with his native state.

In 1778, when a marauding party of the enemy ascended the Delaware and landed at Bordentown, to pillage, murder and burn,* Mr. Hopkinson and his family were absent, but his dwelling was honored with a passing visit, though it does not appear that any outrages were committed upon it. Miss Mary Comely, the house-keeper, was left in charge of the building, and provided for the officers a plentiful repast, which, it is said, they ate with a keen relish, notwithstanding it was spread in the house of so distinguished a rebel.

It was in January of this year, that the incident occurred which gave rise to "*The Battle of the Kegs*," one of the most popular songs of the day. The British army were quartered in Philadelphia, and their ships were moored in the Delaware.

* At this incursion four men were murdered in cold blood after they had surrendered, in the vicinity of what is now Hilton's tan yard, at the foot of Walnut st. Their names were Gregory, Isdell, Sutton, and one unknown. Also an old lady by the name of Isdell, who was shot in a dwelling opposite the post office, in Main street. The dwelling and store of Mr. Joseph Borden, a relative of Mrs. Hopkinson, were burned and many indignities heaped on the dwelling of Mr. Emley, an influential whig. Miss Comely was only 18 years of age, but by her good conduct and heroism she saved the property of her mother and grandmother from plunder, and brought about the restoration of many things which had been taken from her neighbors. While the officers were at dinner she went across to the house of her mother and secretly cut a piece from the coat of one who was engaged in carrying off the plunder, and reported his conduct to his superiors, producing the piece from his coat as an evidence of his identity, and he was compelled to restore his ill-gotten gain.—[See Historical Collections of New Jersey.]

opposite the city. Some ingenious Americans up the river formed the project of making war on these vessels by means of kegs of powder, in which were placed certain machines, so artfully constructed that any sudden jar would cause the explosion of the powder. These were set afloat in the night, at the flood of the tide, in the hope that some of them would strike against the ships and produce such an explosion as would injure or destroy them.

It so happened, however, that the vessels were, that very evening, hauled into the docks and hence the whole scheme failed. But still it was not without some serious and amusing results. A letter in the *New Jersey Gazette* of that day, tells us that some men in a barge attempted to pick up one of the kegs, when it suddenly exploded, killing four persons and wounding others; and another account mentions that one of the kegs exploded in consequence of coming into contact with a dock at Philadelphia. But whatever may have been the particular incident which made known the dangerous character of these floating kegs, it is certain that they became the objects of very peculiar distrust on the part of the British sailors and soldiers.

The captured city was thrown into a state of great alarm—reports of the attempted strategy spread like the wind—the wharves were filled with armed troops—the suspicious kegs were assailed at a most respectful distance and every stick, chip or log of wood that ventured to thrust its unoffending head above the surface of the water, was the target for a dozen British muskets. This valorous war is said to have been carried on for a whole day, but whether it was successful in exploding a single keg our chronicles do not inform us. We copy the amusing verses which Mr. Hopkinson penned on the occasion, as they will serve to illustrate the readiness with which he availed himself of the passing incidents of the times and, by means the most simple, wielded them in the cause of his country:—

THE BATTLE OF THE KEGS.

BY FRANCIS HOPKINSON, ESQ.

Gallants, attend, and hear a friend
Trill forth harmonious ditty:
Strange things I'll tell, which late befell
In Philadelphia city.

'Twas early day, as poets say,
Just when the sun was rising,
A soldier stood on log of wood,
And saw a thing surprising.

As in amaze he stood to gaze,
(The truth can't be denied, sir,)
He spied a score of kegs, or more,
Come floating down the tide, sir.

A sailor, too, in jerkin blue,
The strange appearance viewing,
First d——d his eyes, in great surprise,
Then said, "some mischief's brewing.

"These kegs, I'm told, the rebels hold,
Packed up like pickled herring;
And they've come down t'attack the town
In this new way of ferry'ng."

The soldier flew, the sailor too,
And, scar'd almost to death, sir,
Wore out their shoes to spread the news,
And ran till out of breath, sir.

Now, up and down, throughout the town,
Most frantic scenes were acted,
And some ran here and others there,
Like men almost distracted.

Some fire cried, which some denied,
But said the earth had quake-ed;
And girls and boys, with hideous noise
Ran through the streets half naked.

Sir William† he, snug as a flea,
Lay all this time a snoring;
Nor dreamed of harm, as he lay warm
In bed with Mrs. Loring.

Now, in a fright, he starts upright,
Awak'd by such a clatter;
He rubs both eyes, and boldly cries,
"For God's sake, what's the matter?"

At his bedside, he then espied
Sir Erskine,† at command, sir;
Upon one foot he had one boot,
And t'other in his hand, sir.

"Arise, arise!" Sir Erskine cries;
"The rebels—more's the pity—
Without a boat are all afloat,
And ranged before the city.

"The motley crew, in vessels new,
With Satan for their guide, sir,
Pack'd up in bags or wooden kegs,
Come driving down the tide, sir.

"Therefore prepare for bloody war—
These kegs must all be routed,
Or surely we dispised shall be,
And British courage doubted."

The royal band now ready stand
All rang'd in dread array, sir,
With stomach stout to see it out,
And make a bloody day, sir.

The cannons roar from shore to shore:
The small arms loud did rattle;
Since wars began, I'm sure no man
E'er saw so strange a battle.

The rebel dales, the rebel vales,
With rebel trees surrounded,
The distant woods, the hills and floods,
With rebel echoes sounded.

The fish below swam to and fro,
Attacked from every quarter:
Why sure (thought they,) the devil's to pay,
'Mongst folks above the water.

The kegs, 'tis said, though strongly made,
Of rebel staves and hoops, sir,
Could not oppose their powerful foes,
The conqu'ring British troops, sir.

From morn to night, these men of might
Display'd amazing courage;
And when the sun was fairly down
Retired to sup their porridge.

A hundred men, with each a pen,
Or more, upon my word, sir,
It is most true, would be too few
Their valor to record, sir.

Such feats did they perform that day,
Against these wicked kegs, sir,
That, years to come, if they get home,
They'll make their boasts and brags, sir.

The miscellaneous works of Mr. Hopkinson, prepared by himself, were published after his death in three volumes, and are still much consulted. There was a variety and versatility in his genius which were peculiarly fitted to the stirring times of the revolution and which, added to his biting satire and

† Sir William Howe.

† Sir William Erskine.

dry humor, made his writings, in the day of their glory, altogether irresistible. But, being written generally to accomplish some special object, and often containing local allusions not now to be appreciated, they were not calculated to give him a reputation among critics or literary pretenders. Still, they are not without interest even at the present day. His "Specimen of a Collegiate Examination," and his "Letter on Whitewashing," have been plundered by foreigners and published as productions of their own distinguished writers.

Mr. Hopkinson took a deep interest in the formation of a federative union and in remodelling the general government and placing it on a basis more worthy of our extended and extending empire; and, with Mr. Witherspoon, advocated a closer union and a firmer compact than was brought about by the original articles of confederation. His "New Roof," was the result of his deliberations on this subject, and has been characterized by a distinguished Pennsylvanian as an article which "must last as long as the citizens of the United States continue to admire and be happy under the present national government of the United States."

He died suddenly and, like his accomplished father, in the meridian of life. He had been subject for many years to periods of occasional illness, but for some time had enjoyed a considerable respite from his accustomed attacks. On Sunday evening, May 8th, 1791, he complained of indisposition, but arose as usual on the following morning and breakfasted with his family. At seven o'clock he was seized with a fit of apoplexy, which in two hours terminated his existence, in the 53d year of his age.

In person he was below the common size; he had small features, a quick, animated eye, was rapid in his movements and in his speech and possessed a muscular activity according admirably with the readiness and versatility of his mind. Dr. Rush thus sums up the characteristics of this amiable and excellent man.

“Mr. Hopkinson possessed uncommon talents for pleasing in company. His wit was not of that coarse kind calculated to ‘set the table in a roar.’ It was mild and elegant and infused cheerfulness and a species of delicate joy, rather than mirth, into the hearts of all who heard it. His empire over the attention and passions of his company was not purchased at the expense of innocence. A person who has passed many delightful hours in his society, declares that he never had once heard him use a profane expression or utter a word that would have made a lady blush, or have clouded her countenance for a moment with a look of disapprobation.”

He appears to have been one of those fortunate men, who live to enjoy their own fame. His society was courted in every circle and his pleasing qualities made him generally loved and admired. He left two sons and three daughters. The late Joseph Hopkinson, distinguished at the bar and as an orator in the halls of congress was his eldest son and author of that favorite national air, ‘Hail Columbia.’”

JOHN HART.



JOHN HART

IN the history of nations, the most prominent figures presented for the admiration of the world, are kings, generals, orators, poets—those who have been in lofty stations, who have dazzled by their genius or astonished by their feats of arms. But there is a large class of men in every nation, and especially in republics, whose patient virtues and conscientious rectitude, give, as it were, strength and tone to society, and whose firmness, patriotism and unostentatious wisdom, really do much more to advance the good and glory of their country than many whose more brilliant qualities elicit such frequent bursts of admiration.

Such was JOHN HART, one of the two farmers from New Jersey, who placed their names to the declaration of our national independence. His paternal inheritance was a few hundred acres of wild land in the township of Hopewell, Hunterdon county, where he resided during his life, and where his ashes still repose.* Being an unobtruse farmer, who devoted himself entirely to the cultivation of his acres and deriving his enjoyments chiefly from the domestic circle and the unvarying rounds of a quiet country life, his habits, tastes and interests were so many pledges to the policy of peace, and naturally placed him in that conservative party, which preferred submission to resistance. But although he had every thing to lose and nothing to gain by a breach with the parent country, yet he was one of the earliest and steadiest friends of that movement which resulted in our final separation, and his patient labors and still more patient sufferings in the

* The township of Hopewell is now in Mercer county, having been detached from Hunterdon by legislative enactment.

cause of human liberty, claim for him the admiration of all who prefer virtue and duty above the base and sordid claims of interest.

John Hart was born at Stonington, Connecticut, but precisely at what time is not known. His bible, which contains the family record of births and deaths, in his own hand writing, is still in the possession of his grandson, Mr. David Ott, but the dates are so defaced as not to be legible. His father and mother, Edward and Martha Hart, removed from Stonington with their children, John, Daniel, Edward and Martha, and settled in Hopewell, probably about the year 1720. They were also accompanied by the brother of Edward Hart, whose name was Ralph and who settled in the township of Ewing.

In that early day the country was very thinly settled and consequently good schools could not be maintained. The more opulent sent their children to the mother country to be educated, while the middling classes were content to bestow on their families such advantages as could be provided in the colonies where their lots had been cast. The children of Mr. Hart had, therefore, no other advantages than those afforded by the neighboring schools, in which were taught only the plainest rudiments of learning.

Mr. John Hart shared in these early disadvantages and his letters and writings bear abundant testimony to the deficiency in his primary instruction. Indeed, Mr. Sedgwick, in his life of Livingston, quotes a letter of his, written in 1777, when he was speaker of the New Jersey assembly, on account of its bad spelling, to show the imperfect attainments of some of those who composed the celebrated congress, which so boldly proclaimed our independence and pledged *life, fortune and honor* in its support.*

* Mr. Sedgwick found this note in the collection of autographs made by Dr. Sprague, of Albany. It is directed to Gov. Livingston and is as follows:

Sir—The House of Assembly Request that your Exelency Direct Mr. Collings (Collins) to print fifty Coppies of the Law for purching Cloathing for the New Jersey Redgment, and transmit the same to your Exelency as soon as possible.

I am Sir Your Humble Sevant,

JOHN HART.

To his Exelency, William Liveingston.
Princetown, November 25th, 1777.

But, although thus deficient in education, he possessed a sound understanding, a kind heart, an incorruptible virtue and an unconquerable spirit. His father, Edward Hart, was evidently a man of great respectability. He held from "his majesty" the commission of justice of the peace, took an active part in the military operations of the colonies and was one of the most prominent of those brave and loyal subjects, who, in the war with France, did so much to advance the military glory of England. He raised a company of volunteers in the county of Hunterdon, to which he gave the name of JERSEY BLUES and marched to Quebec, in Canada, where he participated in the battle of September 13, 1759, which ended so gloriously for the arms of Great Britain, and in which fell the gallant and lamented Wolf.*

In these events John took no part. He was at this time about 44 years of age, and was settled on a farm of 400 acres in Hopewell, which he had purchased, and was endeavoring to bring into a state of cultivation. In the year 1739 or '40, he married Miss Deborah Scudder, a young lady of respectable connections and great amiability of character, who was, at the time of her marriage, about eighteen years of age; and, engrossed in the cares and pleasures of a large family,† he had no ambition

* This was, I believe, the first military company which bore the name of "Jersey Blues," since so favorite a military designation. The origin of the name as set forth in the *New Jersey Historical Collections* is probably erroneous. The name of "Blues" appears to have been adopted from a military regiment in England, and only Americanized by adding the word "Jersey."

† Mr. Hart had by his wife thirteen children who, according to a record in his own writing, now in the possession of his grandson, Mr. David Ott, were born in the following order:

Sarah, (Mr. Wikoff's mother) October 16, year illegible.

Jesse, November 19, 1742.

Martha (Mrs. Axford's mother) April 10, 1746.

Nathaniel, October 29, 1747.

John, October 29, 1748.

Susannah, August 2, 1750.

Mary, April 7, 1752.

Abigail, February 10, 1754.

Edward, December 20, 1755.

Scudder, December 30, 1759.

A Daughter (nameless) March 16, 1761.

Daniel (lives in Virginia) August 13, 1762.

Deborah (Mrs. Ott, living) August 21, 1765

for military fame, and no thought that he was destined to participate in a field of enterprise far more glorious than that which had crowned the ambition of the gallant commander of the "Jersey Blues."

But the neighbors of Mr. Hart did not overlook his quiet and unobtrusive virtues. He was often called on in the settlement of difficulties about property, was a justice of the peace under his majesty's government from an early period of his life, till that government was cast off by the colonies, was an active member of the Hopewell church and regarded with universal respect and esteem.

His biographer in Sanderson's lives, remarks that this "was a period of great simplicity in manners and very general purity of life, yet he had so conducted himself in his dealings among the people of New Jersey, as to have acquired the familiar designation of HONEST JOHN HART, a distinction of which his descendants may be more reasonably proud than if his lot had been cast where he might have acquired all the stars, crosses and garters that royalty could bestow upon its favorites."

In 1761, about two years after the battle on the Plains of Abraham, in which his father had shared, he first took his seat in the colonial legislature. To this body he was annually returned for ten successive years, for the counties of Hunterdon, Sussex and Morris, which at that day comprised one district, sending two members.

In his long legislative career he maintained the same character for purity and uprightness, which he had maintained at home, and in the spirited conduct of the New Jersey legislature, in reference to the stamp tax, he bore an honorable share. He does not appear to have been a leading member, but the judgment and opinion of "Assemblyman Hart" was always regarded by his constituents with the highest respect.

At length the royal assent was obtained for a change in the legislative representation, and in 1772 each county sent members

separately. In that year Mr. Hart was a candidate for Hunterdon, where he resided, but was beaten by Samuel Tucker, who afterwards presided over the provincial congress, which met at Burlington, in 1776.

It is stated in a note to Sedgwick's life of Livingston, that on this occasion Mr. Hart was supported chiefly by the Presbyterians and Tucker by the Episcopalians. During the first two days of the election Hart was ahead, but on the third day Judge Brae came up to the polls with a strong reserve of church of England men and so successfully turned the tables on him as to secure Tucker's election.* Mr. Tucker continued to represent the county for several years, during which time Mr. Hart's name does not appear on the records. A more important post was, however, soon awarded him.

The discontents which originated in the stamp act, continued to deepen and widen as one aggression rapidly followed another. The repeal of the stamp act in 1766, which had been hailed with such universal joy by the colonies, was soon followed by a brood of similar measures, and the contest which had been hushed to sleep for a season, was renewed with increased asperity.

Step by step were the encroachments of British power resisted; and although New Jersey was not in a position to be the principal theatre of disputes arising from questions of commerce, yet she sympathized deeply with her sister colonies, sustained them promptly in all their measures, and when the port of Boston was closed in 1774, responded at once to the call of Massachusetts for a Continental Congress.

When this congress was convened, a separation from the parent country was not contemplated and its action was directed only to a redress of grievances. The delegates from New Jersey were chosen by a provincial congress, which met at New Brunswick and of which Mr. Hart was a member. They were James Kin-

* On this occasion a wag wittily remarked that the Judge was like the Witch of Endor. It was clear that he had raised "Samuel."

sey, William Livingston, John De Hart, Stephen Crane and Richard Smith. In the following year they were all re-appointed, but as the probabilities of a rupture increased and the measures of congress became more decided, some of them manifested a disposition to falter. Mr. Kinsey refused to take the republican oath of allegiance and asked leave to resign. Mr. De Hart also grew weary of so hazardous a position and tendered his resignation.

The delegates returned on the 14th of February, 1776, consisted of Livingston, De Hart and Smith, who were members of the former delegation, and of John Cooper and Jonathan D. Sergeant, new members.

The great crisis was now approaching and the heavy responsibilities which devolved on the congressional delegates, caused some of them to shrink from their momentous duties. A resolution, recommending the several colonies to organize governments irrespective of the crown, seems to have taken the Jersey members by surprise, and the proposition to declare the colonies entirely independent, did not tend to reconcile them to their hazardous position.

Mr. Cooper did not take his seat at all; Mr. Smith alleged indisposition and resigned on the 12th of May; Mr. De Hart followed on the 13th and Mr. Sergeant on the 21st. Mr. Livingston was recalled and placed in an important military command. He retired on the 5th of June in fulfilment of his new duties.

The convention elected in May, and which met on the 10th of June at Burlington, were thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the contest and the selection of the new members was probably made with more regard to their *reliableness* and the steadiness of their principles; and, to fortify them to the utmost, they were instructed, in terms, to join with the other delegates in declaring the colonies independent.

Mr. Hart had been a prominent member of the committee of safety, a member of the different state conventions and his course had been such as to inspire the fullest confidence in his wisdom,

prudence, firmness, patriotism and devotion to the cause. He was, therefore, though an uneducated farmer, thought worthy of being placed in the same category with Richard Stockton, John Witherspoon, Francis Hopkinson and Abraham Clark.*

We believe it is now settled that all the New Jersey members were present in Congress during the discussions which took place on the subject of declaring the colonies independent and fulfilled the wishes of the convention by which they were appointed, in giving to that great measure their countenance and support. They were all among the firmest and most enlightened friends of liberty and in their subsequent career, manifested no disposition to recede from the high and patriotic stand which they took early in the contest.

Mr. Hart was now over sixty years old, and his health so feeble as to make it desirable that his public services might be confined as much as possible to his native state. During his attendance at the sittings of Congress, the colony of New Jersey, had adopted a republican constitution, taken the name and style of a free and independent state, ordered an election under this new order of things, and Mr. Hart was returned from the county of Hunterdon, to the first Republican "General Assembly."

The first legislature which convened under the provisions of the new constitution, met at Princeton, on Tuesday, August 27, 1776, and Mr. Hart was chosen speaker by a unanimous vote.† The new legislature a few days after elected William Livingston, of Elizabethtown, governor, and the new state administration was soon fully organized, and actively engaged in rendering every possible assistance to the republican army, acting under the authority of Congress.

Mr. Hart was again returned to the General Assembly in 1777, and in 1778, and was chosen speaker in both years by the same

* In Sanderson's Lives Mr. Hart is represented to have been a member of the congress of 1774, and all the subsequent congresses up to and including that of 1776. This is a mistake. He took his seat first in the latter part of June, 1776.

† In Sanderson's lives, he is set down as Vice President.

unanimous vote which characterized his first election ; but before the close of 1778, he was taken ill, after which his name does not again appear on the state records.

It was well for the country that New Jersey was, at this critical time, represented in the legislative and executive departments, by men of the greatest firmness and the truest patriotism. After the capture of New York, on the 15th of September, the English army moved towards New Jersey, and when Fort Washington fell, on the 16th of November, there was nothing to obstruct their passing into the state, and it soon became the theatre of the war.

Governor Livingston proved to be eminently worthy of the trust which had been reposed in him, and made every exertion in his power to arouse and keep alive the spirit of resistance. He was nobly sustained by the legislature, with Mr. Hart at its head, which seconded his efforts to the utmost, and did what they could to prevent the state from being crushed beneath the hand of the foreign oppressor.

New Jersey was completely overrun by the enemy, and was the scene of frightful alarms, rapine and blood. The lawless soldiery, who at this period looked on the Americans as rebels and out of the pale of regular warfare, burnt, plundered, destroyed and murdered with a ruthless hand, and the persons of those who had made themselves obnoxious by their prominence in the cause of liberty, were in particular danger. No efforts could control the panic with which the people were seized. The ragged, half-starved army of Washington, was flying before the well-appointed cohorts of the British legions—the smoking ruins of plundered buildings were rising before the distracted eye in every direction—cattle and horses were driven off by scores—defenceless women and children were often obliged to seek safety in a flight at midnight, or in the face of the persecuting foe, and men, instead of holding the shield of protection over their families, were forced to take shelter in the fields and woods, to secure their own persons against captivity or death.

The legislative body over which Mr. Hart presided, attended by the governor, wandered about from place to place, first at Princeton, then at Burlington, then at Pittstown, and finally at Haddonfield, on the utmost verge of the state, where they dissolved on the second of December, for the purpose of allowing the members to look after their families, at a moment when all law was virtually suspended, save the law of necessity, and when their collective efforts had ceased to be of any service to the state.

The country was not only beset with a powerful and open enemy, but it was also infested with tories—men who aided the royal cause in secret—who had been born and nurtured in the state and were familiar with its hills and vallies, its prominent men, its strong and weak positions, and who were constantly giving information where to find the richest plunder and how to capture the boldest patriots of the republican cause.

The residence of Mr. Hart was in an exposed situation and he was extremely solicitous on account of his family. His children had just been deprived of the protecting care of their estimable mother, who died on the 26th of October, 1776 and, alarmed at the approach of the enemy, they did not wait the return of their father, but immediately fled and left the farm and stock to be plundered by the Hessian invader.

Subsequently Mr. Hart collected them together, but he soon found that his home was a very unsafe retreat; the dwelling was beset with spies and his person was in the most imminent danger. On several occasions he saved himself from capture only by precipitate flights in the darkness of the night, or by the most inconvenient and dangerous concealments. He was hunted through the woods and among the hills with the most obstinate perseverance, and was a fugitive, an exile and a wanderer among the scenes of his youthful sports, and manly toils.

When the enemy reached Pennington just prior to the battle of Trenton, he crossed over the Delaware into the state of Pennsylvania, leaving his family behind him. He was, however, too

anxious about them to remain. On his return his household was dispersed and his aged mother and a daughter-in-law had sought safety in a miserable log hovel near the mill of J. Moore, on Stony Brook. He searched them out and tarried with them for a single night only. In the morning he learned that the tories, accompanied by a band of soldiers, were in search of him and he made for Sourland Mountain, where he secreted himself during the day. When night came on he went to the house of a neighboring whig and asked for a place to lay his weary limbs for the night. The request was cheerfully granted, but on consultation, it was thought to be unsafe for him to sleep in the house and he was provided with a temporary bed in one of the out-buildings, and had assigned to him for his companion, the family dog. But in such times the friendship of a republican dog was not to be despised.*

His biographer in Sanderson's lives very happily observes that, "while the most tempting offers of pardon were held forth to all rebels that would give in their adhesion to the royal cause, and while Washington's army was dwindling down to a mere handful, was this old man carrying his gray hairs and his infirmities about from cottage to cottage, and from cave to cave, leaving his farm to be pillaged, his property plundered, his family afflicted and dispersed; yet, through sorrow, humiliation and suffering, wearing out his bodily strength and hastening on decrepitude and death, never despairing, never repenting the course he had taken, hoping for the best, and upheld by an approving, nay an applauding conscience, and by a firm trust that the power of Heaven would not be withheld from a righteous cause."

At length the tide of battle was checked by the brilliant achievements at Trenton and Princeton, and the greater part of the state was relieved from the presence of the invading foe. Mr. Hart

* This circumstance is derived from a letter of R. Howe, of Pennington, to Thomas Gordon, of Trenton, who had it from Mrs. Ott, the youngest daughter of Mr. Hart, who still survives, being in her 80th year.

bad, however, but a brief space to gather his scattered household and repair the injuries done to his farm. Although his locks were whitened with age, and his body bent beneath the weight of his infirmities, yet we find him immediately after the dispersion of the enemy, calling together the assembly and taking the promptest means for repairing, as far as possible, the disasters which had befallen the state.

Mr. Hart employed the intervals which he could spare from his public duties in restoring to order his injured estate, and in giving advice and relief to his neighbors, who, in their affliction, naturally sought his aid and counsel.

The ruthless devastations of the Hessians, bad as they proved to be, were, however, much more easily repaired than the injuries sustained by his shattered constitution. Indeed his frequent exposures and great anxiety of mind, had seriously undermined his health, and although the restoration of comparative quiet, brought some temporary relief, yet there was not sufficient elasticity in his constitution, to bring back the current of life to its original vigor. His health continued to sink till, in 1778, he was obliged to resign the speakership, vacate his seat in the house, and retire from all public duties. In the joint-meeting of that year, another person was made chairman, for the reason, as is stated in the minutes, that Mr. Hart was sick. He died soon after, but precisely at what time, we have not been able to ascertain.*

Mr. Hart, as a member of the colonial legislature, the committee of safety, the several colonial conventions, the continental congress and the state legislature, developed a character so unsullied, a patriotism so free from selfish ambition, and an integrity so

* In Sanderson's lives, his death is said to have taken place in 1780. In Sedgwick's life of Livingston, it is placed in 1778, at which time we know that he was sick. We learn from Mrs. Ott, his daughter, that he was a long time ill and suffered much from gravel. She cannot tell the precise time of his death. Another member of the family, Mr. Samuel S. Wyckoff, of New York, writes us that his father, John Wikoff, (now spelled *Wyckoff*) is the grandson of Mr. Hart and resided with him at the time of his death. He is still living (eighty-two years of age) and thinks that Mr. Hart died in 1778.

incorruptible, that he must always be regarded by Jersey men with peculiar interest.

He was a patriot in the best sense of that word. He neither sought public honors, nor shunned the dangers or difficulties with which they were, in his day, so abundantly prolific. He was a republican from principle, and through the long preliminary contest, as well as in the war which followed, adhered with singleness of purpose to the cause which he had espoused, and in the midst of doubt and danger, when the American army had dwindled to a handful of men, the enemy swarmed on every side, and he himself was the object of bitter persecution, and hunted from one hiding place to another, he did not despair of the republic—he did not think of submission.

His personal appearance is said to have been highly prepossessing. He was rather above the common height, straight, and with dark hair and a complexion to correspond. He was distinguished among his neighbors, and in his family, for the kindness of his heart, and the justice which characterized his dealings. He was a member of the Baptist church at Hopewell, gave the ground on which the present edifice stands, was a sincere and devoted Christian, and went to his rest with strong confidence and a “well grounded hope.”

A number of anecdotes respecting Mr. Hart, are still told by the old people in the neighborhood of Hopewell. One of them gives us a very pleasing idea of the simplicity of the times in which he lived. He wished to go to Burlington in pursuance of some public duty, probably to attend the sittings of the legislature or the convention. There being no public conveyance, he went on horseback and having reached the place of his destination and fed his horse, he tied a card to the headstall of the bridle, stating that the horse was on his way home and turned him loose. He arrived safely at Hopewell.

Another is mentioned, which shows that he was not entirely free from a love of humor. A man by the name of *Stout* applied

to him as magistrate, to be defended against a neighbor with whom he had had some difficulty and who had threatened his life. Mr. Hart was not disposed to grant his application. "Surely," said he, you are not afraid of that fellow. You seem to be a smart, strong, *Stout* man. I rather think you can take care of yourself." Stout sprang to his feet, declared that he did not fear the face of clay and went away satisfied.

An aged matron of the Stout family, now ninety-two years of age, who in her youth was intimate with Mr. Hart's family, represents him as a fine looking man, lively and cheerful in his disposition and, to use her own words, "fond of plaguing the girls."

Mr. Hart resided near the Hopewell church, on the farm now occupied by William Phillips, Esq. His ashes rest in the old burying ground on the farm of John Guild Hunt, but in what particular part we cannot ascertain, as no stone has been raised to mark the spot.

He who stood by his country in the hour of her peril—who placed his hand to the instrument which declared her free and independent, who sacrificed time, and health, and life in her cause, is suffered to sleep in neglect, beneath rank weeds and tangled under brush, without even a stone to say to the curious stranger, "Here lies the body of HONEST JOHN HART."

RICHARD STOCKTON,

RICHARD STOCKTON.

THE family to which the subject of this sketch belonged, is one of the most ancient and widely extended which the country contains. Richard Stockton, the great-grandfather of the patriot, who placed his name to the declaration of independence, immigrated to the new world from England, prior to 1670, and settled on Long Island, near New York. About ten years later he came to New Jersey and purchased six thousand four hundred acres of wild land, lying in the counties of Somerset and Middlesex, and extending from the province line between east and west Jersey, to Millstone Creek. Mr. Stockton soon after erected a dwelling near the centre of his purchase, and in 1682, about forty-five years after the first Danish colony was planted on the Delaware, removed his family to his new abode and gathered around him a settlement, which formed the basis of the present borough of Princeton, now one of the most delightful villages in the state. He died at Princeton in 1705, leaving several children.

His son, Richard, inherited a large portion of the estate and the family mansion at Princeton. He died in 1720, leaving a numerous family, and devising the Princeton estate to his youngest son, John, who was an eminent patron of science and one of the

founders of the college of New Jersey. He was a man of piety and influence, and held from the crown the office of presiding judge in the court of common pleas for the county of Somerset. His death occurred in 1757.

Richard Stockton, the subject of this sketch, was his eldest son. He was born at the seat of his fathers, in Princeton, on the 1st day of October, 1730, and received the best opportunities for education which the colonies then afforded. The Rev. Dr. Finley, afterwards president of the New Jersey college, for many years conducted a celebrated academy at Nottingham, P^a., and here Mr. Stockton received the rudiments of his classical education. He entered the college of New Jersey before it was removed from Newark, and graduated with the honors of his class, at Nassau Hall, in 1748, at the first commencement after the removal of the college to Princeton.

Soon after the completion of his college course, he commenced the study of law, in the office of the Hon. David Ogden, at Newark, and was admitted to the bar in 1754, and to the grade of counsellor in 1758. He then established himself at Princeton, and rose rapidly to the first rank in his profession.

His brilliant talents and high professional acquirements, not only brought to him a large and profitable practice in his native colony, but they also secured celebrity abroad. He was often invited to conduct suits in the neighboring provinces, and enjoyed the friendship and esteem of the greatest and best men in the new world. In 1763 he received the degree of Sergeant of Law.

At length he resolved to suspend his professional toils for a season, and visit the land of his forefathers. He accordingly embarked at New York, in the month of June, 1766, and arrived in safety after a prosperous passage. Although not yet 36 years of age, the fame of his high character had preceded him, and he was received with flattering attention by the most eminent men of the kingdom.

He carried with him an address to the king, from the trustees of the college, lauding the condescension of his Majesty towards the colonies, in granting a repeal of the odious act for imposing stamp duties, which he presented in person, having been formally introduced at court by one of the king's ministers.

He was consulted on the state of colonial affairs by the Earl of Chatham and other distinguished members of parliament, friendly to conciliatory measures, and enjoyed the hospitality of the Marquis of Rockingham for several days, at his seat in Yorkshire, to whom he frankly communicated the determined hostility of his countrymen to the oppressive measures which had lately characterized the policy of Great Britain towards her colonies.

In the early part of the year 1767, he extended his visit to Scotland, where he was met with the same flattering marks of respect and esteem, by the distinguished nobility and gentry of that part of the kingdom. The Earl of Leven, who was commander-in-chief of Edinburg castle, made him a partaker of his princely hospitality, and the Lord Provost and City Council complimented him with a public dinner, congratulated him on his safe arrival in the northern capital, and conferred on him the freedom of the city.

From Edinburg he passed over to Glasgow, and thence to the residence of Dr. Witherspoon, at Paisley, to whom he bore a message from the trustees of the college, and who was induced by his representations to reconsider his determination in regard to the presidency of the college, and finally to accept the office and remove to Princeton.

In the progress of his tour he visited Ireland, and it is said that the want and misery which he witnessed in that fine country, so evidently the consequence of its dependent condition, had a powerful influence on his subsequent political career, by opening his eyes to the importance of placing his country beyond the

reach of all foreign control, the effect of which, he clearly saw, was to depress and degrade mankind.

During his subsequent stay in London, Mr. Stockton was a frequent attendant at Westminster Hall, which, at this brilliant period of British history, was particularly famous for learning and ability. "Here," says his biographer, "he listened to the arguments of Sir Fletcher Newton, John Dunning, Chas. Yorke, Moreton, Eyre, Wallace, Blackstone, and other celebrated sergeants and lawyers, distinguished for their forensic eloquence and learning." He also studied the decisions of Mansfield, Camden, Yates, Wilmot, Bathurst, &c., witnessed the eloquence of Chatham, Burke, Barre, and other celebrated members of the British parliament, and so far indulged his curiosity as to see the splendid delineations and great histrionic powers of the inimitable Garrick.

Among those to whom he was introduced, was the celebrated Earl of Chesterfield, connected with the world of politics, but still more extensively known as an accomplished gentleman, whose polished and fascinating manners were the admiration of his time and the model of English elegance in the world of fashion. Mr. Stockton spoke of him as an infirm old man, who had lost his teeth and his hearing, and whose person was by no means prepossessing, but whose irresistible manner won the hearts and charmed the senses of all who fell within the circle of his extraordinary fascination.

The biographer of Mr. Stockton, in Sanderson's lives, mentions two instances during his tour, in which his life was placed in the most imminent danger. While at Edinburg he was attacked at night by a desperate robber and a severe contest ensued, Mr. Stockton defending himself with a small sword, which, by the fashion of the times, he was accustomed to carry, and which is still in the possession of the family. The robber was wounded in the affray, and fled. Mr. Stockton happily escaped without injury.

His second escape was not in consequence of any skill or foresight on his part, and he always regarded it as a providential interference. He had engaged his passage in a packet across the Irish channel, but, by some accidental detention, his baggage did not arrive in time and he was, consequently, obliged to remain and suffer the vessel to sail without him. It was well for his country that he was not on board. The ill-fated ship encountered a violent storm soon after leaving port, was totally wrecked and every soul perished. Mr. Stockton, a few days after, prosecuted his journey in safety.

Having now been absent more than a year, his heart, notwithstanding the attentions bestowed so profusely upon him in his father-land, began to yearn for the familiar scenes of home—for the country of his birth, and the delightful family circle from which he had been so long separated. He accordingly embarked for New York, in August, 1767, and arrived safely in the following September. On approaching the vicinity of his ancient home he was met by a large body of his neighbors, relatives and friends, who assembled to welcome his return and escort him to the embraces of his delighted family.

Mr. Stockton's professional business had been conducted, during his absence, chiefly by his brother-in-law, the late Elias Boudinot, but on his return, with a mind invigorated and strengthened by his intercourse with the mightiest intellects of the old world, he entered anew on the career of business and was soon, again, in the whirl of professional excitement.

His high character and commanding influence were not long in attracting the attention of the Royal government, and in 1768, only one year after his return to America, he was elevated to a seat in the "supreme royal legislative judiciary and executive council of the province," and in 1774, he was appointed one of the judges of the supreme court, where he was an associate of his distinguished preceptor, the Hon. David Ogden.

The storm cloud of the revolution was now gathering, and be-

gan to assume a most portentous and threatening aspect. It found Mr. Stockton strong in the confidence of the ministry—a recipient of the king's bounty—a member of the executive council—a judge of the royal court, and the possessor of a princely estate, on which he resided, in the enjoyment of every domestic blessing and in constant intercourse with those who sustained the unrighteous claims of the British King.

Thus linked in, as it were, with the royal government, he was obliged to make great sacrifices of feeling and of interest, in connecting himself with the revolutionary movement, which resulted so happily for his native land. His position was a painful one, but his convictions of duty were too strong to admit of hesitation. He had contributed his best efforts in the first stages of the controversy, to effect a reconciliation between the belligerent parties, but now that the councils of Rockingham and Chatham were abandoned, he determined to enroll himself among the defenders of American rights, and at once separated from his fellow members of the royal council.* Accordingly he appeared in the popular assemblies of the people and exerted himself to procure the organization of a well directed opposition to the measures of the British ministry.

His course was viewed with the highest satisfaction by the patriots of the colony, and the confidence which they reposed in his abilities and firmness was soon manifested by his appointment, at a most important crisis, to a seat in the continental congress. We have elsewhere explained the circumstances under which the five delegates from New Jersey, to that congress which issued the declaration of independence, were appointed,† and they show that, notwithstanding the official favor and personal attention which Mr. Stockton had received from the British king and many eminent British statesmen, he had not been pre-

* Lord Sterling and John Stevens were, I believe, the only members of the executive council, beside Mr. Stockton, who espoused the republican cause.

† See Life of John Hart.

vented from taking a most decided stand against the ministry and was prepared to go with the most radical in opposing their tyrannical measures.

Immediately after his appointment, on the 21st of June, he repaired to Philadelphia, and took his seat in congress, while the debates were still in progress to which the proposed measure of declaring the colonies independent had given rise. He and his colleagues had been fortified by the instructions of the convention, presented by Francis Hopkinson, on the 28th of June, which empowered them to "join in declaring the united colonies independent of Great Britain, entering into a confederation for union and common defence, making treaties with foreign nations for commerce and assistance, and to take such other measures as might appear necessary for these great ends."

As it regards his course on this great question, his biographer says:—"It has been remarked by Dr. Benjamin Rush, who was a member of the same congress, that Mr. Stockton was silent during the first stages of this momentous discussion, listening with thoughtful and respectful attention to the arguments that were offered by the supporters and opponents of the important measure then under consideration. Although it is believed that, in the commencement of the debate, he entertained some doubts* as to the policy of an immediate declaration of independence, yet in the progress of the discussion his objections were entirely removed, particularly by the irresistible and conclusive arguments of the Hon. John Adams; and he fully concurred in the final vote in favor of that bold and decisive measure. This concurrence he expressed in a short but energetic address, which he delivered in congress towards the close of the debate.

* In a note of Gordon's History of New Jersey, the author says:—"It may be true, but is not probable, that Mr. Stockton doubted when in congress, on this measure. It is certain that he was instructed by the convention which appointed him, to support it, and in so doing, performed a delegated trust which he was too honest to betray. The state had decided this question before she sent him to announce her consent."

As a member of Congress, Mr. Stockton sustained the high reputation which he had acquired in his professional career. He was habitually diligent and his acute perception, keen sagacity, easy elocution, and great knowledge of men, made him one of the most practical and useful members of that distinguished body. Endowed by nature, not only with a vigorous intellect, but with great personal courage and commanding influence over the opinions and actions of others, he sustained with strength and boldness those measures which his judgment sanctioned, and impressed the energy of his own mind on the great council of the nation.

On the 26th of September he was appointed on a commission to inspect the northern army, and immediately set out for Albany, in connection with his colleague and friend, Geo. Clymer, Esq., of Pa. Here they met Gen. Schuyler, then in command, who received the commissioners cordially, and rendered them every assistance in his power. They were authorized to contract for provisions, provide barracks and clothing for the troops, make hospital regulations, assist in devising some mode of re-enlisting the army, and were to make a full report to Congress, with such suggestions and regulations as they deemed proper. This important commission was discharged with ability and success, and on its completion, Mr. Stockton again resumed his duties in Congress.

The republican constitution which had been adopted by the State of New Jersey, while Mr. Stockton was discharging his important duties in the high council of the nation, devolved on the state legislature the appointment of the Chief Executive officer. The first meeting of this body was convened at Princeton, on the 27th of August, 1776. John Stevens was chosen Vice President of Council, (Senate) and John Hart, Speaker of the Assembly. On the 31st of the same month, the two Houses assembled in joint ballot to elect a governor, and on counting the vote, it was found that Richard Stockton and Wm. Livingston,

had received an equal number, and that there was no choice, in consequence of a tie between them.

The joint meeting, on ascertaining the result, adjourned to the following day, when Mr. Livingston was duly elected. At this time, we have no other knowledge of the cause which operated to produce this result, than the facts themselves. The incident related by Dr. Gordon is now universally discarded and is, doubtless, entirely devoid of truth.* The fact that Mr. Stockton was, on the same day, elected Chief Justice of the state, furnishes us with the only means of solving the difficulty.

Both of these men were scholars and patriots—both had been bred to the law, and both were eminently qualified to fill the office of Governor and Chancellor which, by the Constitution, had been combined in the same person. But there was a manifest fitness in the course taken by the joint meeting, which is honorable alike to themselves and to the patriotic individuals,

* Dr. Gordon (*Hist. Revolution*, vol. II. page 300) says: "There was an equal number of votes for him and Mr. Stockton, but the latter having just at the moment refused to furnish his team of horses for the service of the public, and the legislature coming to the knowledge, the choice of Mr. Livingston took place immediately."

Mr. Sedgwick, in his life of Livingston, well remarks, that "this accusation, on its face not very probable, would almost appear to be refuted by the hereditary character of the family." The biographer of Mr. Stockton, in relation to it says:—"Connected with a work so pregnant with fables and misrepresentations as the letters of Dr. Gordon, this passage might have been permitted to pass without animadversion, but it assumes a more important character in relation to the special biography of Mr. Stockton. It charges him with a lukewarmness in the cause of his country, which he was incapable of feeling, and burdens his character with the indirect displeasure of the legislature, which, it is expressly proved, by the subsequent measures of that body, was never entertained. The circumstance which is related by Dr. Gordon never occurred; its absurdity is rendered palpable by a reference to the records of the day, which prove the unanimous election of Mr. Stockton as chief justice of the state, by the identical legislature which is supposed, on the preceding day, to have so highly disapproved of his conduct as to reject him as governor. When, to this mark of confidence, is added his reelection to congress on the 20th of November, about three months subsequent to this hypothetical occurrence, we are enabled properly to estimate the assertion of Dr. Gordon.

[There is no evidence on record that the vote was unanimous. The minutes only say that he was "duly" elected. I find, also, by consulting the record, that Mr. Stockton's election was on the same day with that of Mr. Livingston.]

who, in those trying times, had been singled out from among their compeers, to guide the destinies of the new state.

Mr. Livingston was about seven years the senior of Mr. Stockton—his habits of life had connected him more with the masses of the people—he had been a large contributor to the public journals, and had held a high military station. Mr. Stockton, on the other hand, had devoted himself very much to his profession—he was particularly eminent as a jurist—had been raised to the bench of the supreme court under the royal government, and in the administration of that office had commanded the respect and admiration of the people.

The election of Mr. Livingston, therefore, probably resulted from a compromise between the friends of the two candidates. The more active was designated for Governor, and the more studious for Chief Justice. The election of Mr. Stockton to the first place in the State Judiciary, on the same day, is a strong circumstance in proof of this conjecture, and shows also the high confidence reposed in his integrity and patriotism by the representatives of the people. There was evidently no serious difference of opinion between those members of joint meeting who had originally divided on this question, and the facts prove that the legislature were exceedingly desirous to retain Mr. Stockton in the public service.

He did not accept the appointment thus conferred upon him but continued to discharge his duties in Congress, and in the following November suffered himself to be re-elected. His labors in that body were, however, interrupted by the ravages of the enemy.

New Jersey soon became the scene of strife, and Mr. Stockton's duty to his family required his temporary withdrawal from the public councils. His residence was in the direct route of the triumphant enemy, and he returned home to convey his wife and family to a place of greater safety.

“After remaining in his dwelling to the latest period that the

safety of his family would admit, in order to afford the remnant of our distressed army as it passed, in its retreat, through the village of Princeton, such assistance as was in his power, he started with his wife and young children for the county of Monmouth, and took up his temporary abode with his friend, John Covenhoven, about 30 miles from the supposed route of the British army.”*

But men who had been conspicuous in the public service were no where safe. A tory who had become acquainted with the place of his abode, gave information to a party of refugee royalists who, on the 30th of November, the very day on which he was re-elected to the continental congress, surrounded the house at night, dragged him from his bed, plundered him of all his loose property and carried him, by the way of Amboy, prisoner to New York.

“ At Amboy,” says his biographer, “ he was exposed to the severity of extremely cold weather; in the common jail, which barbarity, together with his subsequent treatment in New York, laid the foundation of the disease which terminated his existence in 1781. On his removal to New York he was ignominiously consigned to the common prison, and without the least regard for his rank, age and delicate health, for some time treated with unusual severity. He was not only deprived of the comforts, but the necessaries of life, having been left more than twenty-four

* This John Covenhoven was taken prisoner at the same time with Mr. Stockton, and took a protection from the British authorities. He was a member of the legislature at the time, and on the 4th of March, 1777, was ordered before the House to answer for his conduct. The record says; “He was called in and heard respecting his being taken prisoner by the tories and carried to New York; and it appearing, by Mr. Covenhoven’s own confession, that he had taken the oath of allegiance to the king of Great Britain, and had given security to remain inactive during the contest between Great Britain and the United States,”

Resolved, That Mr. John Covenhoven has thereby rendered himself unfit to take his seat in this House, and that his seat be vacated accordingly.—
[Journals in the state library.]

hours without food, and afterwards afforded a very coarse and limited supply.”

It is probable that Mr. Stockton remained a prisoner for several months, and that he was ultimately released through the interposition of congress. On the third of January, 1777, that body, having heard a report of his capture and cruel treatment, directed General Washington “to make immediate inquiry into the truth of this report, and if he finds reason to believe it well founded, that he send a flag to General Howe, remonstrating against this departure from that humane procedure which has marked the conduct of these states to prisoners who have fallen into their hands; and to know of Gen. Howe whether he chooses this shall be the future rule for treating all such, on both sides, as the fortune of war may place in the hands of either party.”

On returning to his estate after his imprisonment, he found that, by the wanton depredations of the British army and the depreciation of continental money, his ample fortune was very considerably impaired. His large library, one of the richest possessed by any private citizen in the new world, had been ruthlessly laid in ashes, his papers had shared the same melancholy fate, his farms were laid waste, his fine stock of horses had been carried off, and his personal property had nearly all disappeared; indeed he found himself only the proprietor of his devastated lands, and was even compelled to have recourse to the temporary aid of his friends for the present supply of his pressing wants, and for restoring to order the wreck of his estate and what remained of the mansion of his fathers.

These depressing circumstances, together with the hardships he had suffered during his imprisonment, so materially impaired his constitution, that he was never again able to serve in the public councils of the nation. He withdrew altogether from congress, and being attacked in his neck by a cancerous affection, he sank gradually, with great suffering, to a premature grave. He closed his short, but brilliant career at the family mansion

in Princeton, on the 28th of February, 1781, in the fifty-first year of his age.

Had Mr. Stockton lived, he would probably have risen to a much higher place in the affections of the American people. His intellect was vigorous and well balanced, and his firmness and love of justice commanded the respect of all who knew him. For the Christian religion he entertained the most sincere and becoming reverence, and strove to regulate his life by its requirements, without yielding to those strong sectarian prejudices which too often mar the beauty of the Christian character.

He was, from his youth, a member and a liberal supporter of the Presbyterian church, and evinced, both by his life and death, the sincerity of his profession. The Rev. Dr. Smith, in the discourse which he pronounced at his funeral, remarked, that "neither the ridicule of licentious wits, nor the example of vice in power, could tempt him to disguise the profession of it, or induce him to decline from the practice of its virtues."

This feature in his character is strongly and beautifully portrayed, in the care which he took to impress religious truth on the minds of his children. In the will by which he disposed of his large estate, he also left his offspring a rich legacy of good counsel. He says:—"As my children will have frequent occasion of perusing this instrument, and may probably be particularly impressed with the last words of their father, I think it proper here, not only to subscribe to the entire belief of the great and leading doctrines of the Christian Religion *** but also in the bowels of a father's affection, to charge and exhort them to remember that 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.'"

On the subject of attachment to particular divisions of the Christian Church, he holds the following liberal language: "As Almighty God has not been pleased in the Holy Scriptures to prescribe any precise mode in which he is to be publicly worshiped, all contention about it generally arises from want of

knowledge or want of virtue. I have no particular advice to leave to my children upon this subject, save only that they deliberately and conscientiously, *in the beginning of life*, determine for themselves with which denomination of Christians they can most devoutly worship God, and that, after such determination, they steadily adhere to that denomination, without being given to change, and without contending against or judging others who may think or act differently, in a matter so immaterial to substantial virtue and piety."

During the time that he was actively engaged in his profession, his reputation was so great, that the first gentlemen of the country regarded it as important to the future success of their sons that they should pursue their legal studies under his supervision. In passing through the old mansion at Princeton, now in possession of Commodore R. F. Stockton, the grandson of Richard Stockton, the writer was pointed to a room, which still bears the name of *THE OFFICE*, in which he was told that some of the brightest ornaments of the bar had taken their initiatory lessons in the legal science. Among the number was the Hon. Elias Boudinot, Gov. Patterson, Jonathan D. Sergeant, Hon. Jonathan Rutherford, Vice President Burr of N. Y., Gov. Reed of Pa., Col. Wm. Davis, of Virginia, and others.

His biographer, who appears to have known him well, thus sums up his character:

"He was a profound and erudite lawyer, and his decisions and opinions while on the bench, in committees of congress, on admiralty questions, and in the high court of errors of New Jersey, were considered of high authority. His study of the great orators of antiquity, with whose writings, in the original languages, he was familiar, his acquaintance with the best writers of modern times, and his practical opportunities of hearing the Ciceros' and Demosthenes' of Great Britain, uniting with his native genius, invested him with a superior and powerful eloquence, which has rarely been exceeded in this country. He

also possessed a natural inclination towards music, and a refined taste for poetry, painting, and the fine arts in general.

“ Mr. Stockton, when unadorned by the gorgeous robes of judicial office that prevailed previous to the revolution, was neat but simple in his dress. Before the revolutionary contest he lived in a state of splendor, frequently adopted by distinguished men under the royal government, which the advantages of a country residence and the possession of affluence, rendered easy and agreeable. Every stranger who visited his mansion was cordially welcomed in the genuine style of ancient hospitality, and it was customary in those days for travellers and visitors to call upon men of rank.

“ Mr. Stockton possessed a generous and intrepid spirit ; he was naturally somewhat hasty in his temper, and quickly inflamed by any attempts to deceive or oppress him ; but he was placable, and readily pacified by the acknowledgment of error. Revenge, or permanent malice or resentment, were never harbored in his breast. He was an affectionate father, a tender husband, and an indulgent master ; mild and courteous to his equals, and just and merciful to his tenants, debtors and dependents. To his inferiors, and those who sought his favor and conciliated his affections, he was affable and kind ; but to those who supposed themselves his superiors, his carriage was stern and lofty, and if their self-sufficiency was manifested by any want of decorum or personal respect, it was, perhaps, his foible to evince an unnecessary portion of haughtiness and resentment.

“ He was a man of great coolness and courage. His bodily powers, both in relation to strength and agility, were of a very superior grade, and he was highly accomplished in all the manly exercises peculiar to the period in which he lived ; his skill as a horseman and swordsman was particularly great. In person he was tall and commanding, approaching nearly to six feet in height. His manners were dignified, simple though highly polished, and to strangers, at the first interview, apparently reserved ;

but as the acquaintance advanced, they were exceedingly fascinating and accomplished, which appeared particularly conspicuous towards his friends and companions.

“ His eyes were of a light gray colour, and his physiognomy open, agreeable and manly. When silent, or uninterested in conversation, there was nothing remarkably attractive in his countenance, but when his mind was excited, his eyes instantly assumed a corresponding brilliancy, his whole appearance became excessively interesting, and every look and action strongly expressive of such emotions as he wished to produce.

“ His forensic career was attended with unrivalled reputation and success, and he refused to engage in any cause which he knew to be unjust, invariably standing forth in the defence of the helpless and oppressed. To his superior powers of mind and professional learning, he united a flowing and persuasive eloquence, and he was a christian who was an honor to the church.”*

* Biography in Sanderson's Lives, of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.



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