

Jos. Wetterspoot







*Geo. Willmington*

# John Witherspoon

By  
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NEW YORK    CHICAGO    TORONTO  
Fleming H. Revell Company  
LONDON    AND    EDINBURGH

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New York: 158 Fifth Avenue  
Chicago: 80 Wabash Avenue  
Toronto: 27 Richmond Street, W.  
London: 21 Paternoster Square  
Edinburgh: 100 Princes Street

*To*  
*My Father*  
*and the Memory*  
*of My Mother*





## PREFATORY NOTE

WITHERSPOON'S life is notable in connection with four important movements: the struggle for popular rights in the Church of Scotland; the administration of Princeton College; the organization of the American Presbyterian Church; and the American Revolution. I have tried to tell the story of his life simply and accurately. As I have avoided the use of footnotes I shall indicate here the sources of my information. For the Scotch period these were Cunningham's "History of Scotland," "Autobiography of Rev. Alexander Carlyle," and the Minutes of the General Assembly; for the American period, Bancroft's "History of the United States," "Sprague's Annals," Sander-son's "Lives of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence," Tyler's "Literary History of the American Revolution," McLean's "History of the College of New Jersey," John Adams' Diary, the Writings of Washington. But in all cases I have also used the original documents. These are the minutes of the Board of Trustees of Princeton College, the minutes of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, of the Synod

of New York and Philadelphia, and the records of the Presbyterian Church ; the minutes of the Provincial Congress and Council of Safety of New Jersey ; the Secret Journals of Congress ; Thompson's Journal ; Wharton's edition of the "Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution." For both periods I have used the American edition of Witherspoon's Works, my own collection of his manuscripts, and letters found in various publications.

I here express, also, my grateful appreciation of many courtesies extended to me by the librarians of Princeton University and Theological Seminary and Pennsylvania College ; by the historical societies of New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and by the state librarians of these commonwealths. I am also indebted to the late Senator M. S. Quay for printed copies of government documents.

*Houck Memorial Manse,  
Gettysburg, Pa.*

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## THE SCOTCH PERIOD



# John Witherspoon

## I

### EARLY YEARS AND ENVIRONMENT

JOHN WITHERSPOON was born February 5, 1722, in the manse at Yester, East Lothian, Scotland, the son of a parish minister of the established church. According to one account, the father, naturally a very gifted man, was too lazy to use his endowments of mind. He had been well educated, was fond of reading, especially the sermons of the French Calvinistic preachers of the day. These he translated into excellent English and delivered from his pulpit with great acceptance and even with an eloquence that brought him some repute. In general he was very popular and his family were so highly esteemed that when the son was ready for ordination he might have become his father's successor. To the elder Witherspoon a good dinner with such wine as he liked commended itself more highly than the scholarly pursuits of the study. He was a very large man; "a mountain of flesh," one writer calls him. When

the young candidates for ordination came to Rev. James Witherspoon to be examined they were most hospitably entertained at the Yester manse, and doubtless enjoyed the good cheer of the table. But the examination of a student was too arduous a task for the inert minister. He enjoyed their company and made life very pleasant for them. Severe examinations were not to his mind. Other accounts of the Rev. James Witherspoon omit any references to the sensual qualities of his nature and emphasize his abilities as a clergyman.

John Witherspoon inherited his father's fine mind and the scholarly tastes which were afterwards so conspicuous in his career. Family tradition likewise kept alive in the boy whatever pride and ambition might arise from the knowledge that he was a lineal descendant of John Knox, the greatest man Scotland ever produced, and of John Welch, who had married a daughter of Knox, and whose conspicuously brave and brilliant championship of religious liberty is the pride of every Protestant Scotchman.

Witherspoon's mother was a woman of more than ordinary force of character, well educated and deeply spiritual in her nature. To her training he seems to have owed his love of lib-



erty, his devotion to duty and his lofty conceptions of personal conduct.

How much interest Witherspoon's father took in the education of his son we are not told. The clergy were the best educated men in Scotland, and James Witherspoon was not an exception. A high degree of intellectual culture was required of them. A candidate for holy orders was obliged to pursue a classical course in college, which was followed by three years in the divinity school. Before he could be ordained he must then spend two years as a licensed probationer under the care of Presbytery. This discipline was intended to secure an educated and orthodox ministry, and was generally effective in doing so. Most clergymen read the Bible in the original Hebrew and Greek and were equally familiar with Latin. As in our day theological ideas are largely derived from Europe so in that day the Protestant preachers and teachers of France and Switzerland were the guides of Scotch ministers. That this intellectual culture and orthodox discipline did not always produce an equally high degree of piety and conscientiousness, Witherspoon's father is an evidence.

Whether the son was from the first destined to become a clergyman or not, he was given a

liberal education. Early in his boyhood he was sent to Haddington to attend a first rate preparatory school, one of the many that had originally been established by Knox all over the kingdom. Doubtless the high degree of literacy among the people of Scotland is due to these schools.

Leaving Haddington young Witherspoon entered the University of Edinburgh at the age of fourteen. He was a precocious boy, naturally endowed with a good mind, and, unlike his father, a diligent student, quickly taking rank among the best in his class. At that time the faculty of the university was small so that each professor had to teach several subjects, but the students numbered less than a hundred and fifty. While none of the professors ever attained scholarly distinction, one of them at least had the rarest and best gift of a teacher, the power of imparting enthusiasm. The students who came under the influence of Colin McLaurin, professor of mathematics and the physical sciences, quickly caught from him the desire for knowledge. He was continually urging the authorities of the university to increase its equipment and touching his pupils with the never dying fire of the love of learning.

The boys must have needed such an influence

to carry them through the classroom of John Stevenson who taught logic, metaphysics and the ancient languages, apparently all at the same time. One of his pupils has told us of Professor Stevenson's methods. His lectures were delivered in Latin, with which language every boy was supposed to be sufficiently familiar to understand what the good doctor was saying. He referred frequently to Cicero, Quintilian and Horace as familiarly as if these authors were the daily reading of the students. Or perhaps he would devote the morning to a book of Homer's "Iliad" which the students would read in his presence while he commented in Latin on the beauties of it, comparing it with the works of Virgil, Milton and others. The "Iliad" disposed of they read and translated Aristotle's "Politics" or Longinus' "Essay on the Sublime." Out of all this the boys learned not only Latin and Greek but also as much of logic and metaphysics as could properly be drawn from such writings.

A very important feature of the university life outside of the classrooms was furnished by the flourishing literary clubs which were common not only among the students but also with the professional men of Edinburgh. Wither-  
spoon was active in the work of these societies,

being especially proficient in debate. Students whose interests have been enlisted in organizations of this sort gladly confess to the invaluable benefits in trained alertness and clearness of mind derived from them. Doubtless the recollection of such an influence in his own university course led Witherspoon to encourage the two famous literary societies of Princeton, one of which, Whig Hall, was reestablished on an earlier organization by James Madison shortly after Witherspoon became president of the college. This society, and the other, Clio Hall, are acknowledged by many students as having had for them as great an educational value as the regular curriculum of the classrooms.

Having completed with marked credit the regular four years' classical course in the university, Witherspoon was graduated into the divinity school. It is not my purpose to attempt any detailed account of his life there. In 1741 the famous George Whitfield preached in Edinburgh, crowds flocking to hear him. But it does not appear that his preaching made much impression on Witherspoon. Yet the freshness and warmth of his preaching were much needed to transform the homiletic methods of the Scotch preachers. There was little originality or vital

force among these. They usually followed a settled routine, lecturing through the Assembly's Catechism or the less formidable Shorter Catechism in the course of the year ; employing far-fetched allegory in their treatment of Scripture, giving exhibitions of clever jugglery with theological dogmas, but failing to apply the living truths of the gospel to the moral needs of the times. An exception was found in William Wishart who had become principal of the university in 1731, the year of Witherspoon's matriculation. He was also the pastor of the Tolbooth church. By the freshness and force of his treatment of theological subjects and the originality of his thought he gave a new impetus to the religious life of the city. The people crowded the church when it was known that he would preach. For the students he remained the model minister for many years, and was the most popular pulpit orator in Edinburgh. His preaching was plain and direct, dealing with immediate problems of life, and lighted with pleasing illustrations. Without forsaking the beaten paths of orthodoxy, he made them attractive, adorned them with a charming style, freshened them with colour. Witherspoon's sermons give evidence of an influence of this sort of preaching. They are vigorous, direct

and full of life. Of them, however, I shall speak later. It is not my purpose to follow him through his divinity course which he completed in 1743. After the prescribed two years of service as a licensed probationer, during which he preached in various churches, he was finally installed, 1745, minister over the parish church of Beith, the congregation unanimously accepting his appointment by the patron, the Earl of Eglinton.

Just here it may be well for us to have an account of the method of settling a minister over a parish in that year of grace 1745. Among us in America a congregation of Presbyterians calls the minister of its choice and the Presbytery will install him if there are no objections on the score of his moral character or ministerial standing. The responsibility rests with the people of the church more than with the Presbytery. The latter would not refuse to present a minister with the unanimous call of a congregation; much less would there be any attempt to install a pastor against the expressed wishes of the people, nor even of a large minority. Quite otherwise was it with the Presbyteries of Scotland in Witherspoon's day, when a very complicated condition existed. The landed proprietors claimed the right to appoint ministers

to the churches on their estates as is now done in England. This right, however, had been abolished in 1690, and the call vested in the congregation. Clergymen were, nevertheless, ministers of the established church and their salaries, or stipends, were fixed by law. Twenty-two years later, in 1712, the call had been vested again in the proprietors or patrons, as they were called, and then began the struggle in which, later, Witherspoon took a prominent part and which continued for more than a hundred years, until in 1843 the present Free Church of Scotland was formed by ministers who voluntarily resigned their pastorates, and organized churches supported wholly by the voluntary subscriptions of the people, and organized Presbyteries, Synods and a General Assembly altogether independent of government control.

When the act restoring patronage first became effective in 1712 a large majority of the General Assembly opposed its operation. Ministers declined to take charge of churches against the wishes of the people. Strong efforts, which, if continued, might have been successful, were made to break down the power or evade the provisions of the law. But gradually the temper of the clergy changed. A majority became willing to accept the nomination of the patron

and to install a minister, often against the wishes of the people, frequently in spite of their violent opposition, and sometimes with the aid of soldiers. Some of the majority even went so far as to place upon a committee appointed to install an objectionable minister, one who was known to be conscientiously opposed to the system, which added to the bitterness of it. At one time committees were appointed to act upon pastoral settlements during the intervals between the meetings of the Assembly which were known as "riding committees," travelling on horseback from place to place to do their work.

An account of one of these disputed settlements will serve to illustrate the working of the system. The patronage of the parish of Lanark was claimed by Lockhart of Lee, by Lockhart of Carnwath, by the magistrate of the borough and by the crown. Lockhart of Lee presented a Mr. Dick; the borough and the crown concurred in presenting a Mr. Gray. The Presbytery found from their records that Lockhart of Lee had become infert in the patronage in 1647 and had drawn the stipend during a vacancy. The case seemed to be clear and the Presbytery proceeded to install Mr. Dick. But the people took a hand in the matter. They disliked the Lockharts and had an intense hatred of the



system of patronage. The magistrates who had been set aside were angered and refused to suppress the mob which assembled when the Presbytery attempted to carry out their decision. The people held the church and assured the ministers that any attempt to enter would be resisted even to bloodshed. The case was finally taken into the civil courts, which decided against Mr. Dick who was compelled to withdraw, receiving no pay for the four years of his service while the case was in process.

Such occurrences were not unusual. More than fifty similar cases were brought before the General Assembly between 1740 and 1750. Many churches were without ministers for years, the congregation divided all the while into hostile factions. In the decisions of the Assembly no uniform rule was followed. Sometimes the patron was supported and the minister installed against the wishes of the people who not infrequently left him to preach to empty pews. Or perhaps the patron was persuaded to withdraw the minister of his choice. Litigants before the church courts appealed to varying precedents and confusion increased.

Many attempts were made to simplify the matter. Nobody thought of disestablishment. The patrons and such ministers as enjoyed

their favour formed one party ; the people and the pastors who sympathized with them composed the other, with here and there a nobleman on the popular side, exercising his rights in a conciliatory spirit. In 1731 an attempt was made to straighten the tangle which seemed promising. An overture was brought before the Assembly providing that when a charge became vacant and the patron failed or refused to present a minister, the landholders and elders in the country parishes, the town council and elders in the towns, should make out the call to a minister. If the congregation approved he should be installed ; if not, the Presbytery was empowered to determine the matter and set him aside or install him as seemed best. As was required by law this overture was sent down to the Presbyteries for their action. The next year, although a majority of the Presbyteries had failed to act upon it, the Assembly passed it into a standing law. Such a stretch of authority was itself a violation of a law known as the Barrier Act, designed to protect the Presbyteries from coercive measures by the Assembly. The latter justified its course on the specious plea that the eighteen Presbyteries which had failed to report should be counted in favour of it. This decision was not allowed to pass

unchallenged. Ebenezer Erskine, who had once before resisted an arbitrary ruling of the Assembly, not only protested against this stretch of authority, but, on retiring from the moderator's chair of his Synod, denounced the proceeding so bitterly that the Synod censured him. From this censure he and three of his friends appealed to the Assembly. But the temper of that body had been aroused, the censure was affirmed, and Erskine was summoned to appear for rebuke. He went, nothing daunted; but the rebuke having been publicly administered, he at once proceeded to enter his protest against this last act, a right clearly belonging to him in a church which he himself had declared to be "the freest society in the world." Yet for thus exercising his undoubted right under the law, a right growing out of the inmost spirit of Protestantism, he was deposed from the ministry. The deposition was a blunder soon repented, but too late to repair the damage done by it. Erskine and his three friends, who seceded from the established church, formed what has since been known as the Seceder church, which has produced some of the finest men, both in Scotland and America, among those who accept the doctrines of Calvinism. Nine years later these

men were joined by another, John Gillespie, who was deposed for refusing to assist in settling over a parish a minister to whom a large majority of the people were violently opposed.

The recital of these instances has seemed to me to be necessary in order to afford the reader some idea of the background and atmosphere of Witherspoon's life. It is evident that the issues thus drawn were not doctrinal but ecclesiastical. The question was not one of orthodoxy versus heresy but of authority versus liberty; of tyranny acting under cover of the law, too often arbitrarily enacted, interpreted and enforced on the one side; and of popular rights, as yet accepting the established church, making no attempt to abolish it but claiming justice and freedom within it, on the other side. This was the condition of affairs in the church of Scotland in the first half of the eighteenth century.

## II

### BEITH

WITHERSPOON was minister of the parish of Beith for twelve years, devoting himself diligently to the duties of his office. From the beginning of his ministerial career he conceived a high idea of it. He was fond of study. His sermons were carefully prepared, being fully written, committed to memory and delivered without notes. He was not a pleasing speaker, his voice being somewhat harsh, but he was a good preacher. When he exchanged pulpits with neighbouring clergymen he was always heard with acceptance, and his own parishioners were devoted to him. It does not appear that he ever made any attempt to be transferred to another parish. His work at Beith was done in the spirit of one who expected and would be glad to spend his life there. Although a studious man with a well-trained mind, he wrote little for publication in the earlier years of his ministry at Beith. The children of the parish were duly well catechized, their parents teaching them first the Shorter Catechism, and later the longer, of the Westminster Assembly, the

minister visiting their homes stately and testing the knowledge of the boys and girls. Those visits for catechizing were ordeals not relished by the youngsters, but Witherspoon was fond of children and got along well with them.

His theology was the strict Calvinism of the Westminster Confession of Faith from which he never departed. That he was sincere in his adhesion to its doctrines is beyond doubt. But he was not unacquainted with other teachings. His correspondence and literary productions, as well as his sermons, show that, for the times in which he lived he was a wide reader. History was one of his favourite fields. Of course he was thoroughly acquainted with the Greek and Latin classics, quoting them with easy familiarity. He was as easily at home in the realm of French literature and philosophy. Montesquieu was his favourite French author. He also knew the works of German writers. But for the most part he was happiest in preaching to his people the familiar doctrines of his church.

Shortly after going to Beith he was married to Elizabeth Montgomery, of Craighouse, Ayrshire, whose father, Robert Montgomery, was a distant kinsman of the Earl of Eglinton, by whom Witherspoon was appointed to the parish.

A story has come down to us which makes him a side hero of the battle of Falkirk. Because of his remote descent from the royal house of Stuart the incident has been used as evidence of his sympathy with the Pretender, while others have gone so far as to say that he led a company of volunteers against him. The truth seems to be that, prompted by curiosity, he went upon a hill in the neighbourhood of the battle-ground or, more probably, along the line of retreat followed by the Pretender's army. Lest he should give information to the English forces he was made prisoner by the rebels and confined for some days in the neighbouring castle of Donne. Some of the thinner men among the prisoners escaped by creeping along the coping of a wall but Witherspoon was too large for the narrow and perilous space and was obliged to remain behind until his release by the collapse of the rebellion.

With this exception his ministerial life at Beith was uninterrupted by any unusual event. But his activities were not confined to his profession as a clergyman. For a short time he was one of the overseers of the highway in the parish. In the discharge of the duties of this office he showed the same zeal and the same independent spirit which he manifested in every

situation of his life. In 1754 the commissioners of the county proposed a new scheme for repairing the roads, assessing the tax and requiring the labour of the people. This made necessary a list of every farmer together with the number of horses owned and the number of servants employed by each. The commissioners also announced, as the first step in their plan to build good roads, that the most public roads would be repaired first. Witherspoon and his associates proceeded to comply with the demand to send in the lists asked for. But upon undertaking to make these, many difficulties were encountered. And when they carefully examined the new plan they found many objections to it. It was not possible for a man like Witherspoon, nor any other high-spirited Scotchman, for that matter, to submit without protest to what he regarded as an injustice. He called his fellow overseers together and prepared a paper to be sent by them to the approaching meeting of the justices of the peace and commissioners of the highway, these officers being entrusted by Scotch law with the management of the shire. In this paper he objects to the scheme as proposed. It is difficult to send lists of owners of horses because



many men buy horses for their necessary work and sell them again in a short time, not finding it profitable to feed them through the winter. Servants also are hired for short periods, so that it is impossible to give an accurate list of those who, being employers, would be required to pay a larger tax or do more work upon the roads than others. He will, however, endeavour to make as careful a list as possible and await the action of the meeting. A more serious objection lies against the scheme. The failure of former schemes for making good roads is not due to the common people but to the gentry who absent themselves from meetings and fail to fulfill their obligations. Further, what assurance have we, he asks, that the officers under the new scheme will be any more zealous and diligent than they have been under others? But the most serious objection is that there is no agreement as to what are the most public roads. Some of the so-called public roads ran through great tracts of land from which the noblemen had removed the tenants and which were little used by the common people as they travelled to market, or they were roads which ran from one county to another, and these should be kept up by those who travel greater

distances than the small farmer who seldom goes farther from home than to his neighbour's or to church.

This paper shows where Witherspoon's sympathies were. On broad grounds he contended that not only popular rights, but also the nation's strength, demanded that the gentry should not compel the tenant to bear the greater part of the expense, but that this should be distributed equably. Holding his position by the grace of a noble patron, he knew his rights under the law of Scotland, and feared not to protest against injustice whether it bore upon himself in the church or upon the people in their business and on their farms. This fine spirit, so far from bringing him the enmity of the nobility, won for him respect. His opinions were always expressed with courtesy. He found no fault with the social order of his day. But he plead for justice to all alike. He believed and taught that religion will enable a man, whatever be his station, to conduct himself, both towards superiors and inferiors, so that their relations shall be harmonious and mutually satisfactory.

The church, however, was Witherspoon's most congenial field. Nor was it merely as a parish minister that he regarded himself. He

belonged to the church of Scotland ; its honour was partly in his keeping ; for its ministers a high standard of character must be maintained. Such events as have already been described were recurring in the church. They were unusually numerous during his residence at Beith and his indignation rose higher with each fresh case of injustice. People were compelled to accept as ministers men whom they did not like, or could not respect. It goes without saying that a clergyman who would accept a charge under such circumstances was hardly fitted to assume its duties. His ministrations would accomplish little good, his presence tended to excite enmity and to alienate people from religion. Witherspoon and men of his stamp found graver fault. Many of the ministers who were thus installed were unorthodox. They were obliged to declare upon oath that they believed and accepted doctrines which they privately repudiated and publicly ignored or criticised. Whatever one may think of the doctrines themselves such conduct was nothing else than dishonest.

Besides this many of the ministers were otherwise morally unfit for their duties. Total abstinence was rare among any class in those days. Everybody used wine and Witherspoon himself liked the best he could get. But many

of the ministers, courting the favour of the patrons of vacant churches, acquired habits of intemperance. When there was a meeting of Presbytery or Assembly to act upon cases of disputed settlements, the patrons interested in the litigation often opened public houses to entertain the ministers and elders. Everybody drank freely and one can readily imagine the effect. The ministers were a jovial set, fond of drinking, seeking the loose society of the wild young bloods. It is related of one of them that "he could pass at once from the most unbounded jollity to the most fervid devotion; yet I believe," says the writer of this account, "that his hypocrisy was no more than habit grounded merely on temper and that his aptness to pray was as easy and natural to him as to drink a convivial glass." This itself is the judgment of a clergyman and indicates the mildness with which the practice was regarded by many of the clergy. Not such was the temper of Witherspoon whose sense of decency was outraged by the vulgarity and coarseness of these scenes. To an orthodox clergyman who had a high conception of the ministerial office hypocrisy and drunkenness were shocking. It grew out of the evil system of patronage. On every possible occasion Witherspoon

combated the practice of forcing objectionable ministers upon unwilling people. In all the meetings of the church, where protest was proper, he championed the cause of popular rights against those who, because of their loose and easy theology, were called Moderates, and who were almost always in a majority in the General Assembly.

It must not be inferred that all the Moderates were men of low character or inferior abilities. They numbered among them such a man as William Robertson, principal of St. Andrew's University, a polished and courtly gentleman, an historian of note, with a character above reproach. The fault lay in the system by which it was possible for a man of gross habits and inferior ability to be placed in charge of a Christian church through the influence of a patron who had no further interest in religion. That there were incompetent men who shirked their duties, neglected their parishes, and disgraced their office, is evident not only from Witherspoon's writings but from the newspaper press of the day, from the pictures of the times in Scott's novels, and from the minutes of the General Assembly. In 1751 it was necessary for the Assembly to order the Presbyteries to inquire whether the Lord's supper was adminis-

tered at least once a year and if not what excuse could be given for the omission. Parishes complained to Presbytery of the inattention of their ministers.

The establishment, it may be remarked, worked harm in another way. It imposed upon the clergyman a creed from which he could not conscientiously depart so long as he held his office, within the limits of which all his thinking must be done, beyond which his mind might not range. This fettered the mind. It made originality impossible and was in itself a form of intellectual tyranny which the Moderates combatted. Commenting on this phase of the situation, Cunningham remarks that few Scotch ministers have dared to think for themselves. The two conditions of compulsory orthodoxy on the one hand and loose living on the other makes applicable to a certain type of Scotch minister Milton's famous line,

“New Presbyter is but old Priest writ large.”

Whatever lack of originality might be found in Witherspoon there was no lack of sincerity, conscientiousness or high principle. One wonders, after all, not merely at the necessity but at the possibility of originality in one who devotes his life to proclaiming the principles of the Ten

Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. As the evil continued from year to year and seemed to be increasing, Witherspoon fought it with all his power. Loyal to the doctrinal standards of his church he was not content to rest under an execution of the ecclesiastical law which manifestly worked a wrong, and while he did not attempt to change the law, he strove hard to combat the evils of its working. In the Presbytery he was usually successful, but on appeal, the General Assembly, as has been already stated, almost invariably decided in favour of the patron against the congregation. That it was not altogether the system itself but its abuse, of which Witherspoon and his friends complained, seems evident from the fact that he himself had accepted, and later accepted again, an appointment by a patron ; but in his case the appointment was confirmed each time by the congregation. The positions of the two parties have been so admirably stated by Cunningham that I can do no better than to quote his words.

“When men are considered as individuals,” said the Moderates, “we acknowledge that they have no guide but their own understanding and no judge but their own conscience ; but when joined in society the right of private judgment is superseded the conscience of the individual is

merged in that of the community and the minority must yield to the dictates of the majority." Think of the spiritual descendants of John Knox using an argument which is one of the strongholds of Roman Catholic logic! "These maxims," they continued, "form the basis of Presbyterian church government. The two capital articles, by which Presbytery is distinguished from every other ecclesiastical polity, are the parity of its ministers and the subordination of its courts. By the one, individual ministers are prevented from exercising lordship over their brethren; by the other, confusion and anarchy are prevented. Wherever there is a subordination of courts, one must be supreme; and though it be not infallible, yet its sentences must be absolute and final. No inferior court may disobey its mandates with impunity, or all government is at an end; no individual may set up his own scruples against the decisions of the whole church or authority sinks into contempt. Accordingly every minister is required at his ordination to vow that he will submit himself to the discipline and government of the church. Submit himself, therefore he must, or if he cannot there is but one remedy, he must withdraw himself from its communion."

"The popular party argued that this was to



introduce despotism into the church—to subject the servants of God to the rigours of a military law. They did not deny the necessary subordination of the ecclesiastical courts ; but so long as the General Assembly was fallible, they demurred to its sentences being absolutely binding. The Church of Scotland, said they, is but a branch of the Church of Christ, and within it the law of Christ must be paramount. God alone is Lord of the conscience. He who sins against his conscience sins against God ; and no order of a superior court can make good evil or evil good. No man, no Christian, can resign the right of judging for himself. Is the General Assembly, they continued, resolved to compel Presbyteries to execute its sentences at all hazards ? is conscience to be stifled ? is the strong conviction of duty to be disregarded ? is everything that is sacred to be sacrificed to the single principle of submission to authority ? What will be the result of such compulsory measures ? The honest and the brave will be compelled to seek for liberty of conscience without the pale of the Establishment ; the unprincipled and the cowardly may remain, but they will remain with consciences debauched by the high stretch of church authority, by being compelled to do what their hearts tell them they

ought not to do. We plead not for license to every man to do as he pleases, but we plead that we may not be bound hand and foot by a crushing despotism; that the law may relax something of its sternness in cases where conscience is concerned."

These principles of the Popular party Witherspoon afterwards expressed in the preliminary principles drawn up by him and prefixed to the constitution of the American Presbyterian Church, which has not always acted in their spirit nor in conformity to his ideas of the best manner of mingling authority and liberty. The question in the Scotch Church was more than an academic one. The Moderate majority in the Assembly continued to drive their measures through by the sheer force of numbers. Two men were deposed from the sacred office for nothing worse than refusing to serve upon committees appointed to install unacceptable ministers over protesting congregations. Protests were answered by censures and threats of removal. It became unsafe for men to oppose the will of the majority, and all this, it will be remembered, was in Protestant Scotland.

Failing to make any impression by appeals to reason and justice Witherspoon determined to try the power of ridicule. In 1753 he issued,

anonymously and so safely, a little book which he entitled "Ecclesiastical Characteristics, or the Arcana of Church Policy," in which he pretended to give "a plain and easy way of attaining to the character of a moderate man as at present in repute in the Church of Scotland." After a short introduction wherein he declares his purpose "to enumerate distinctly and in their proper order and connection all the several maxims upon which moderate men conduct themselves," he propounds twelve of these, following each maxim with an explanation and illustration of its meaning. The maxims profess to show that all ecclesiastical persons of whatever rank that are suspected of heresy are to be esteemed men of great genius; when any man is charged with loose practices or tendencies to immorality he is to be screened and protected as much as possible, his faults being regarded as good humoured vices; it is a necessary part of a moderate man's character that he always speak of the confession of faith with a sneer; a good preacher must take such subjects as "social duties," quote as little Scripture as possible and be very unacceptable to the common people; he must cultivate the air and manner of a fine gentleman; he must have no learning but the works of Leibnitz, Shaftes-

bury and Hutcheson. Here is inserted what he called "The Athenian Creed," to be believed by every moderate man. I quote it in its entirety.

"I believe in the beauty and comely proportions of Dame Nature and in Almighty Fate, her only parent and guardian ; for it hath been most graciously obliged (blessed be its name) to make us all very good.

"I believe that the universe is a huge machine, wound up from everlasting by necessity, and consisting of an infinite number of links and chains, each in a progressive motion towards the zenith of its perfection and meridian of glory ; that I myself am a little glorious piece of clockwork, a wheel within a wheel, or rather a pendulum in this grand machine swinging hither and thither by the different impulses of fate and destiny ; that my soul (if I have any) is an imperceptible bundle of exceedingly minute corpuscles, much smaller than the finest Holland sand ; and that certain persons in a very eminent station are nothing else but a huge collection of necessary agents, who can do nothing at all.

"I believe that there is no ill in the universe, nor any such thing as virtue absolutely considered ; that those things vulgarly called sins

are only errors in judgment, and foils to set off the beauty of Nature, or patches to adorn her face ; that the whole race of intelligent beings, even the devils themselves (if there are any) shall finally be happy ; so that Judas Iscariot is by this time a glorified saint and it is good for him that he hath been born.

“In fine I believe in the divinity of L. S. (Lord Shaftesbury) the saintship of Marcus Antoninus, the perspicuity and sublimity of Aristotle, and the perpetual duration of Mr. Hutcheson’s works, notwithstanding their present tendency to oblivion.”

The remaining maxims show that the moderate man must endeavour, as much as he handsomely can, to put off any appearance of devotion ; in church settlements, which are the principal causes that come before ministers for judgment, the only thing to be regarded is who the patron and the great and noble heritors are for ; the inclinations of the common people must be utterly despised ; the unpopular candidate must be praised for remarkable abilities ; but if, after being settled, he shall succeed in gaining the people’s affections he must be despised ; orthodox opposers must be compelled to assist in installing the unpopular minister, especially if they have scruples of conscience

against it; moderate men must always speak of their opponents as knaves and fools; they must have great charity for atheists and deists and for persons of loose and vicious practices, but none at all for the pious and strictly moral; all moderate men must never fail to support and defend one another to the utmost.

Many of these maxims have little point for us. The moderate men, however, were stung to madness by them. They stirred up as much clamour among the clergy as Erasmus' New Testament did among the monks. Dire were the threats made against the author, should he be discovered. Witherspoon was not the only man suspected of having written it. A certain Mr. Johnson was accused but he easily disproved the charge. The publisher kept the secret well. The book took at once. It was eagerly read and thoroughly enjoyed by the popular party. The great cry raised by the moderate men was regarded as evidence of the truthfulness of the satire. Following each maxim were the promised elucidations and illustrations, but as there was not a single personal allusion no suit for slander or libel could be brought against the publisher. Five editions of the book were issued, each edition increasing the rage and fury of the pilloried men. As

Witherspoon said, "A satire that does not bite is good for nothing." This one bit and stung. As suspicion pointed more and more to the real author, his enemies tried to fasten it upon him, but without success. Nor could they discover any way to revenge themselves upon him, until, in 1757, when he was called to Paisley, they attempted to prevent his transfer.

The method of transferring a minister from one church to another required that the church desiring to call him should present the call to the Presbytery in which it was located; the Presbytery presented the call to the minister, if he were one of its own members, or to the Presbytery to which he belonged, and that body presented it to him. If all the legal proceedings were regular and the church of which he was the pastor consented, the transfer would be made. No Presbytery had the right to refuse to call a minister if he were in good standing, no charges pending against him. The Laigh (or Low) Street Church of Paisley, Presbytery of Paisley, issued a call to Witherspoon who was a member of Irvine Presbytery. When the call came before the Paisley Presbytery, that body, a majority of whom were moderates, refused to send it over to Irvine, charging that Witherspoon was the author of a book which damaged

the reputation of ministers before the people. The Paisley congregation and their pastor-elect appealed to the Synod of Glasgow, which had jurisdiction over both Presbyteries.

He had no standing in the Presbytery of Paisley and could not plead his cause there. It would have been futile to do so in the face of the prejudice against him. His only course was to appeal to the Synod. There he presented a masterly statement of his case. He declares that it is painful for him to stand before the Synod's bar in some sense an accused person, for he had been represented as "a firebrand, as violent and contentious, unfit to be a member of any quiet society." He demands evidence of this, appealing to his acquaintances, even among the moderates in his neighbourhood, with whom he lived on friendly terms. Protesting against their associating his name with any book when they have no proof of his authorship he says, "It looks as if they themselves were struck at in the performance and acted as interested persons," and asks if it is fair that they his accusers shall be likewise his judges, a thing contrary to law. That there is nothing criminal in the book may be inferred from the commendation it has received from so eminent a personage as the Bishop of London. The charge made in the



book must have been just or it would have been treated with contempt. Professing himself amazed at the boldness of his accusers, considering the land in which they lived, he asks, "Is it not, and do we not glory in its being, a land of liberty? Is it then a land of liberty and yet a land of ecclesiastical tyranny? Must not a man have equity and justice in the church as well as in the state?" He defends satire as a proper mode of writing in that it serves to bring objectionable men and practices into deserved contempt. Moreover, "if in any case erroneous doctrine, or degeneracy of life, is plain and visible, to render them odious must be a duty." His enemies had "acted in a most unjust and illegal manner in passing the sentence they have done in my absence, and without any examination; . . . whatever were their particular intentions, by their violent and illegal stretches of power in falling upon it, they were plainly of the worst kind; and it always put me in mind of a Fryer of the Inquisition, with an unhappy person before you, whom they want to convict that they may burn him, stroking him, and saying to him in the spirit of meekness, 'Confess, my son, confess.'" In conclusion he appeals to the laws of the church which they had not proved him to have violated, but

which, by proceeding in this inquisitorial way, without giving him an opportunity to be heard in his own defense, they had violently and arbitrarily set aside.

The Synod overruled the action of the Presbytery and ordered that Witherspoon be transferred and installed over the church which had called him.

Literary work of a more serious kind than the satire had occupied him while he was still at Beith. The year before his removal to Paisley he had published an essay on Justification; a little book which had a wide sale not only in Great Britain; but also among the English speaking churches of the continent, at Rotterdam, Geneva and elsewhere, as well as in America. The year of his transfer to Paisley another and more pretentious work on Regeneration came from his pen. This book met with even a better reception than the first. The two gave him high rank as a theological writer. He was the foremost man of his party in the Church of Scotland.

### III

#### PAISLEY

WITHERSPOON began his ministry at Paisley in the fullness of his reputation, the recognized leader of the section which stood for orthodoxy and liberty. An ardent and sincere Calvinist, he accepted the Westminster Confession of Faith as his own personal belief. That creed, so far from binding men's consciences and minds, in his opinion liberated them. It has been wittily said by another Scotchman that "Calvinism is a sheep in wolf's clothing." Its doctrine of predestination has been represented as relentless and inescapable fate ; foreordination has been supposed to destroy the freedom of the human will. It is not my purpose to discuss these dogmas. A study of Witherspoon's sermons and correspondence, a close following of his career, show that in these teachings, he found for himself, and believed the world would find, the strongest basis for hopefulness in that predestinating love and that foreordaining grace which mark believing men as the children of God and intend them to be transformed into the image of His Son. To the teaching of these

doctrines he joyously and earnestly gave his life. His writings and sermons betray strength and sincerity of conviction. He does not search for arguments to bolster a belief, but for the best manner of presenting what are to him necessary and eternal truths. These doctrines are worthless in his opinion unless they produce strong and pure characters. In his controversy with the Moderates he said, "It is dangerous to claim respect for a creed if its teachers are not men of pure Christly life." A year after his transfer to Paisley he was chosen Moderator of the synod. His sermon on retiring from the chair in 1759 is a plea for high character in the minister of Christ. Personal character is worth more than intellectual zeal. "Is any minister more covetous of the fleece than diligent for the welfare of the flock ; cold and heartless in his sacred work, but loud and noisy in promiscuous and foolish conversation ; covering or palliating the sins of the great because they promote him ; making friends and companions of profane persons ; though this man's zeal should burn like a flame against antinomianism, and though his own unvaried strain should be the necessity of holiness, I would never take him to be any of its real friends." "If one set apart to the service of Christ in the gospel, manifestly shows his

duty to be a burden and does no more work than is barely sufficient to screen him from censure ; if he reckons it a piece of improvement how seldom or how short he can preach, and makes his boast how many omissions he has brought a patient and an injured people to endure without complaint ; however impossible it may be to ascertain his faults by a libel, he justly merits the detestation of every faithful Christian." "Nothing does more hurt to the interest of religion, than its being loaded with a great number, who, for many obvious reasons, assume the form while they are strangers to the power of it." "As the gospel is allowed on all hands to be a doctrine according to godliness, when differences arise, and each opposite side pretends to have the letter of the law in its favour, the great rule of decision is, which doth most immediately and most certainly, promote piety and holiness in all manner of conversation."

Take these words from a sermon on the sacrifice of Christ. "Make no image of the cross in your houses, but let the remembrance of it be ever in your hearts. One lively view of this great object will cool the flames of unclean lust ; one lively view of this great object will make the unjust man quit his hold ; one lively view of

this tremendous object will make the angry man drop his weapon ; nay, one look of mercy from a dying Saviour will make even the covetous man open his hand." He was not a mystic but he had a genuinely devotional spirit. "Idleness and sloth," said this practical preacher, "are as contrary to true religion as either avarice or ambition." And on the other hand he says, "True piety points to one thing as its centre and rest, the knowledge and enjoyment of God." "Man was made for living upon God." Speaking of the temptations that beset humanity he said, "If sin give a man no rest, he should give it no quarter."

The Presbyterian form of government was believed by many men of that church a hundred and fifty years ago to be divinely ordained and the only proper system. Witherspoon believed it to be more Scriptural than any other, but he had the utmost charity for other branches of Christ's church, and his relations with men of other types of Protestantism were friendly. His essay on Justification was published with a prefatory note addressed to an English clergyman, Rev. James Hervey, rector of Weston-Favel, Northamptonshire, which is a sort of dedication to him. His devotion to the Presbyterian polity was grounded not only on his belief

that it is apostolic, but more particularly because he believed it best served the two ends of articulated authority and well-regulated liberty. Side by side upon the bench of elders in the church of Scotland sat the noble earl and his tenant farmer, equally office holders in the church, equally chosen by the free vote of the people. No orders of the ministry put one man in authority over another and a layman represented every church at every delegated gathering, thus making clerical tyranny an impossibility. This conception of church government was inseparably connected with the creed which taught that God alone is Lord of the conscience, that men are responsible primarily not to each other nor to any religious teacher, but to God Himself. In the presence of the Almighty there are no personal distinctions. Superiority of character and individual ability make the only valid title to leadership. In all his contentions before the church courts Witherspoon insisted on the untrammelled liberty of the people to choose their ministers and he did this in the face of a legal establishment which permitted a patron to appoint. Not, however, against the wishes of the people, said Witherspoon. For over ten years he continued, in Paisley, to proclaim his faith and to contend for popular rights.

The duties of a parish minister were not light. There were no Sunday-schools. Whatever religious instruction the people received was given by the minister, with here and there a schoolmaster to teach the Shorter Catechism. Every Sunday there were two sermons, one in the morning, another in the afternoon. During the week, day in, day out, the conscientious pastor was among his people, watching over their spiritual interests and advising them in their business affairs. No vacations broke the monotony of the routine, unless the annual visits to Presbytery or Synod might be regarded as such. There were few things to distract him except the trials in the church courts. Life was not so restless as it has since become. Innovations were few, changes in modes of living, even of thinking were rare. The book agent had not been created. There were no "problems." His was, however, a full life in every sense. As a minister of the church of Scotland he took a prominent part in endeavouring to settle the questions of the day.

To the seven deadly sins of the church of Rome the Puritans had added three, dancing, card-playing and theatre-going. In the early eighteenth century the church severely disciplined those members who were guilty of any



of them. George Whitfield preached against a new playhouse being erected in Glasgow, July, 1753, with such warmth and force that, before his departure from the city, workmen were employed to take it down to prevent its destruction by the mob. When the tragedy "Douglas" was presented in Edinburgh, in 1755, there was great indignation both among clergy and people, because its author, John Home, was a clergyman. The Presbytery of Edinburgh condemned both the play and the writer of it. A minister, who had gone to see it acted, endeavoured in vain to excuse himself and escape the censure of the church, by saying that he had taken a back seat and remained in the shadows where he could not be seen. In Witherspoon's opinion it was a serious breach of church discipline and an offense against the Christian religion for any one to countenance stage plays. So important did he deem it that he wrote a book against it, "A Serious Inquiry into the Nature and Effects of the Stage." Much of this little book is interesting to-day because of the clever way in which the arguments are presented. It may cause a smile to read that he is induced to take up the subject in view "of the declining state of religion, the prevalence of national sins and the danger of deso-

lating judgments." One wonders whether some modern writer of kindred spirit has not inserted in the essay "that such a levity of spirit prevails in this age, that very few persons of fashion will read or consider anything that is written in a grave or serious style. Whoever will look into the monthly catalogue of books, published in Britain for some years past, may be convinced of this at one glance. What an immense proportion do romances under the titles of lives, adventures, memoirs, histories, etc., bear to any other sort of production in this age." Romances and novels were seldom found in the strict Presbyterian household in a land that produced the greatest romantic writer of the English tongue. Witherspoon failed to perceive the value of fiction even as mental recreation and the power of the English literature of his day was lost upon him. It is not surprising, however, that writers like Fielding and Smollett, the most popular authors of that period, failed to win the favour of a Puritan like Witherspoon. As for the drama, he knew nothing about the stage of his own day from personal attendance. In spite of this lack of experience he declares in his essay that the theatre is immoral in itself and by its influence. One of his objections is that the chief end is to amuse,

not to afford recreation, the real value of which he clearly appreciates. He insists that mere amusement saps the strength and undermines the foundation of character, both individual and national. "It gives men a habit of idleness and trifling, and makes them averse from returning to anything that requires serious application." "No man who has made the trial can deliberately and with good conscience affirm that attending plays has added strength to his mind and warmth to his affections in the duties of devotion; that it has made him more able and willing to exert his intellectual powers in the graver and more important offices of the Christian life; nay nor even made him more diligent and active in the business of civil life." Plays he condemns as pernicious, exhibiting and arousing the lower and baser passions of men, exposing them to temptation unnecessarily, emphasizing the immoral and cultivating the frivolous sides of human nature.

What astonishes the modern reader of this old-fashioned essay is the author's thorough and even intimate knowledge of his subject. He seems to know his ground. He is familiar with Greek and Latin, French and English plays; he quotes from numerous authorities, ancient and modern, even including "the Phil-

adelphia newspapers." He knows the names and reputations of the famous players of his own day and of other periods. His book is not a ranting tirade of ignorant, even if unsympathetic, prejudice, but the scholarly reasoning of a well-informed student. His charges against those who frequent the theatre are too sweeping and much of his reasoning falls through. But the book had a wide circulation and brought him praise from the people whose good opinion he valued most, although his was a temper of mind which led him to speak his opinion regardless of popular favour.

That the essay ever reached the eye of the author of "Douglas" does not appear. The play had a successful run in Edinburgh, despite the action of the Presbytery against its author, a man so much esteemed by his parishioners that on his retiring from the ministry they voluntarily hauled the stone for the house which he built for himself.

Shortly after going to Paisley Witherspoon took advantage of an opportunity afforded by his being invited to preach the installation sermon of Rev. Archibald Davidson, pastor-elect of the Abbey Church, to reply to the charge of sedition and faction made against his own party by the Moderates. His "Ecclesiastical Charac-

teristics" was a cutting satire, and even the text of this sermon has a sting in it. His friends the enemy were doubtless in his mind when he announced it, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." Deftly he turns the charge against himself into the ranks of his foes. Wicked men are always making such charges against the servants of God, he says, and asks what there is in true religion which gives occasion for it. He finds it in the conduct of Christians which is a continual reproach to others. "The example of good men to the wicked is, like the sun upon a weak eye, distressing and painful." "If I may speak so, it flashes light upon the conscience, rouses it from a state of sensible security, points its arrows and sharpens its sting." The sermon is too long to give even an outline of it, but it is mainly a very strong plea for patience and courage in doing right and suffering wrong, begging his hearers to "forego the hope that by certain prudent compliances" they will "conciliate and preserve the favour of every man and every party."

His increased reputation brought him invitations to preach on various occasions. One of these was the anniversary of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge. It is, I be-

lieve, still in existence and still carries on the sort of work which engaged it then. Not only did it endeavour to evangelize the regions of Scotland not yet brought within control of the church ; it established schools for the education of the people. Antedating by more than a hundred years the industrial features of modern missionary methods, home and foreign, this society undertook to instruct young men in the best methods of farming, taught them useful trades and established schools for girls where sewing and other domestic arts were taught. The Highlands and islands of Scotland were visited by the agents of the society who carried Bibles with them which they distributed, by gift or sale, and taught the people to read. Witherspoon was one of its warmest supporters. It did not confine its efforts to Scotland. A legacy left by Rev. Daniel Williams of London for propagating the gospel in foreign lands had been used by the Synod of New York for its work among the Indians. David Brainerd was partly supported by it. As early as 1748 Ebenezer Pemberton, an American clergyman, had received aid from the society for the education of one young man for the ministry in the college of New Jersey, then located temporarily at Newark. When, in 1739, the Synod of Phila-

delphia sent down an overture recommending the erection of "a seminary of learning," they expressed the hope that two of the men named as a committee to further the project "might be sent home to Europe to prosecute this affair with proper directions." This was not done at once. After the college had become established, in 1749, the Scotch society appropriated thirty pounds for the purchase of books for the college library, and the next year granted it an appropriation for the education of two young Indians. Three years later, upon petition of the Synod of New York, the society asked for a national collection for the American Church. About the same time Gilbert Tennent and Samuel Davies were appointed by the synod to visit Great Britain on behalf of the college. Davies afterwards became president of Princeton. The two men were most cordially received by the Presbyterians of England who gave them seventeen hundred pounds. Upon their appearing before the General Assembly in Scotland, that body ordered the Presbyteries to appoint a day for the collection and urged the "ministers to enforce the recommendation with suitable exhortations." More than a thousand pounds were contributed to the American college by the Scotch Church. I have related this incident to

show the close relations existing between the two countries. Witherspoon's connection with the society for propagating Christian knowledge gave him an opportunity for knowing something about its foreign work and doubtless made him acquainted with the needs and prospects of the college of New Jersey. In America he found many readers of his books which followed one another very closely. In 1764 he collected his essays into two volumes which were published by a London house. In the same year the University of Aberdeen gave him the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

Local church politics demanded his attention. The schoolmaster of his parish was chosen by the church session in conjunction with the town council, the dominie also filling the office of session clerk. Before the appointed time Witherspoon called his session together and urged upon the elders concerted action which would result in securing the man acceptable to the church. In these matters as well as in the larger affairs of the church he proved to be a very clever politician. Such training as he received in Scottish ecclesiastical politics served him well during the troubled times preceding the Declaration of Independence in America. His insight into British politics is shown in a



sermon preached on the occasion of a fast ordered by the government. As a clergyman of the established church Witherspoon fulfilled the duty laid upon him. Great dangers threatened the British empire in 1757. The Seven Years' War had begun with serious reverses to the English arms. In the capitulation of Port Mahon the key to the Mediterranean had been lost; the English army in Germany had been defeated; disaster seemed to be creeping like a shadow over India since Olive had left with broken health; in America Braddock's defeat had been followed by the loss of Niagara, the St. Lawrence and Lake Champlain. England seemed to be on the verge of losing all her foreign possessions; already her American colonies were complaining of the disdain with which certain British statesmen were inclined to speak of them. In view of these things the British ministry ordered that Thursday, February 16, 1758, be observed as a day of public fasting and prayer. Witherspoon's sermon is a reflection of his character. He does not glorify the nation; he looks upon these disasters, real and impending, as those desolating judgments of which he had spoken in his essay on the stage. But their causes he finds in the proper place. Recalling the people to the true mean-

ing of life, which will not be found in mere material prosperity and military success, but in virtue and uprightness, he asks if it is a matter for surprise that failure stares the nation in the face. One is reminded of the Prophet Isaiah. "Instead of any genuine public spirit, a proud and factious endeavour to disgrace each others' measures, and wrest the ensigns of government out of each others' hands." "In the case of disappointments, on the one hand, are we not ungovernable and headstrong in our resentments against men? and equally foolish and sanguine on the other, in our hopes of those who are substituted in their place? We give pompous details of armaments, and prophecy, nay, even describe their victories long before the season of action, and incautiously celebrate the characters of leaders while they are only putting on their harness and going into the field."

In 1762 Witherspoon was a defendant in a suit for libel. His side of the case is given in a statement prefixed to a sermon which he published, the two together being made the basis of the prosecution. A service was held in the Laigh Street church on Saturday, February 6, 1762, the day before the celebration of the sacrament. Some young men, who were present,

went, after the meeting, to the room of one of them to dine, and there engaged in a mock celebration of the Lord's supper. Becoming hilarious their mockery was heard by some passers-by who were scandalized by such blasphemy, especially on the day preceding sacrament Sabbath, a day observed by Presbyterians with almost as much reverence as the Sabbath itself. The men were citizens of Paisley, one an ensign in the army, one a writer, and two manufacturers. Upon hearing of the shocking behaviour, Witherspoon preached a sermon on "Seasonable advice to young people." It made such an impression on some of his hearers, who were indignant at the conduct of the young men, that they requested the minister to publish it. The sermon itself furnished no ground for complaint, but the explanatory note gives a detailed account of the sacreligious scene and specifically mentions the names of the participants. It was addressed to the bailies and town council of Paisley. The accused men promptly brought an action for libel against Witherspoon, who failed to make good his charges to the satisfaction of the civil courts. He was heavily mulcted in damages and would probably have been financially ruined, with the risk of being sent to prison, had not some of his parishioners,

who had urged the publication of the sermon, generously come forward, and obligated themselves for the full amount. So far from the affair doing him any harm, it rather increased his popularity.

In 1764 his publisher told him there was a demand for another edition of his "Characteristics." It was the fifth and proved to be the last. The time had now come for him to avow himself the author. Not only could he do this without fear of being successfully attacked in the church courts, but he also felt that he might give a more serious turn to the whole subject. No apology is made for having treated the situation satirically; he justifies the use of ridicule. This last edition is dedicated "to the nobility and gentry of Scotland, particularly such of them as are elders of the church and frequently members of the General Assembly." "I am not to flatter you," he says with perfect frankness, "with an entire approbation as church members, but beseech you seriously to consider whether you ought any longer to give countenance to the measures which have for some time generally prevailed." In their present temper an appeal to the clergy is hopeless. "When once the clergy are corrupt their reformation can be looked for from the laity only

and not from themselves." "I look upon every attempt for reviving the interest of religion as quite hopeless unless you be pleased to support it." He reminds them that "the laity never lent their influence to promote the ambition and secular greatness of ecclesiastics but they received their reward in ingratitude and contempt." "I humbly entreat you who only can do it with success to frown upon the luxurious and aspiring, to encourage the humble and diligent clergyman."

In the serious apology, which is longer than the satire itself, he congratulates himself in having concealed the authorship, since by those who were stung by it, "the most opprobrious names were bestowed upon the concealed author, and the most dreadful threatenings uttered in case they should be so fortunate as to discover and convict him," as was shown in their treatment of a gentleman whom they suspected. "But though I had by good management provided myself a shelter from the storm, it is not to be supposed but I heard it well enough rattling over my head." He probably enjoyed the noise of it. Nevertheless he affirms that what induced him to write was "a deep concern for the declining interest in religion in the church of Scotland, mixed with some

indignation at what appeared to me a strange abuse of church authority." He refers to the deposition of two men, Adam and Gillespie, for refusing "to join in the ordination of a pastor without a people." As he had been severely condemned for attacking and exposing the characters of ministers he asks why in reason it should not be done if the ministers deserve it. "Where the character is really bad I hold it as a first principle that as it is in them doubly criminal and doubly pernicious so it ought to be exposed with double severity." They had complained that to give clergymen a bad reputation strengthens the cause of infidelity. Of course it does, says Witherspoon; "Men are always more influenced in their regard for or contempt of religion by what they see in the characters and behaviours of men, than by any speculative reasonings whatever." But, he asks, "Was the first information had of the characters of the clergy drawn from that performance? Because a bad opinion leads men to infidelity shall we cover their failings and palliate their crimes?" Rather let the guilty persons be chastised. "Every real Christian should hold in detestation those who by an unworthy behaviour expose the sacred order to contempt." Hundreds of writings, he declares, attacking true

religion have never been condemned by these Moderate clergymen. He quotes the criticism made when Molière's play, *Tartuffe*, was given in France; "That a man may write what he pleaseth against God Almighty in perfect security, but if he write against the clergy in power he is ruined forever." Satire he finds sanctioned by the Almighty who used it against Adam after the fall in the words, "Behold the man is become as one of us to know good and evil."

Then he claims that there is such a spirit of levity abroad that a satire was necessary if he wished to have his opinions read, for men in that frivolous age would pay no attention to serious writing. "Those who have long had their appetites quickened by a variety of dishes and the most pleasing sauces are not able to relish plainer, though better and more solid food." The Moderates had by a course of decisions planted the country with useless ministers and disdained to make any other answer to their opponents than the unanswerable argument of deposition. One great end of the "*Characteristics*" had been to open the eyes of the really good men among the Moderates of whom he acknowledges there are many. But it appears that "the more the complaint of degen-

eracy in the church of Scotland is just, the more difficult it will be to carry a conviction of it to the minds, either of those who are guilty of it, or of those who observe it." He had not cared to mention names, it was not necessary. Everybody could recognize the guilty. "On the other hand though I should produce the names and surnames of those clergy who, mounted upon their coursers at the public races, join the gentlemen of the turf and are well skilled in all the terms of that honourable art; though I should name those who are to be found at routs and drums and other polite assemblies of the same nature, and can descant with greater clearness on the laws of the gaming table than the Bible; instead of being commanded to produce a proof of the facts I should expect to find many who denied the relevancy of the crimes." He thinks that if a man were to publish a book that had in it a tenth part of the truth about the manners and morals of some ministers, he ought to have a ship hired to fly to another country. Simony, a vice not strange among gambling clergymen, had begun to creep in, so that men tried to secure parishes not only by flattery and loose living, but even by purchasing the goodwill of those who had influence with the patron. As early as 1753 the practice became noticeable



and in 1759 the evil was so notorious that the General Assembly enacted a law against it, providing that "no minister shall make any composition with his heritors." Even as late as 1820 the evil had not been uprooted. It is not a pleasing or hopeful picture, nor does Witherspoon overdraw it. Nevertheless he is not a pessimist. Recalling the successes of past reforms he believes that "religion will rise from its ruins."

One other satire he published, "The History of a Corporation of Servants," but it was not a success. Among some manuscripts of Witherspoon, I found a set of verses originally intended to accompany the apology. Fortunately for the author's repute he finally withheld them. There are too many to reproduce here, but it may interest the reader to see a specimen of the verse, wretched doggerel though it is.

" You know it is in vain to think  
That men of sense and spirit  
Will ever cease to swear and drink  
While as their purse will bear it.

" Nay even when the money's scarce  
We drink to bear down sorrow,  
For all the world's but a farce  
And we may die to-morrow.

“ The way for clergymen to win  
A sweet delicious dinner,  
Is still to wink and spare the sin  
And justify the sinner.”

Other verses contain the initial and final letters of names, doubtless of the most notorious of the convivial, sporting parsons, but they would not interest the modern reader.

In more serious ways the popular party strove to secure a reformation of the church. Seldom were they successful in their politics. But upon finding that the Moderates were accustomed to instruct their friends in the Presbyteries to send up commissioners favourable to them, and in the Assembly to pass the word around as to the measures to be supported, Witherspoon and his friends caught them napping on one occasion and contrived to secure a majority in the Assembly. Dr. Robertson, leader of the Moderates, for whom Witherspoon had the greatest personal respect, congratulated the latter saying, “ You have your men better disciplined than formerly.” “ Yes,” replied Witherspoon, “ you have taught us how to beat you with your own weapons.” But the shrewd Moderates were not caught again. They increased in power; they carried through repressive measures at their will; they were never conciliatory and

continued to alienate the popularists more and more. Under these circumstances the invitations that came to Witherspoon, if not very tempting must have been very consoling. Dundee greatly desired to have him as its minister. From the English Church of Rotterdam came an earnest invitation for his pastoral services. An urgent call was sent by the most important church in Dublin. They were all declined. He seemed wedded to Paisley. As the recognized leader of his party, in the maturity of his powers, he seemed to feel that his best work could be done there and he elected to remain.

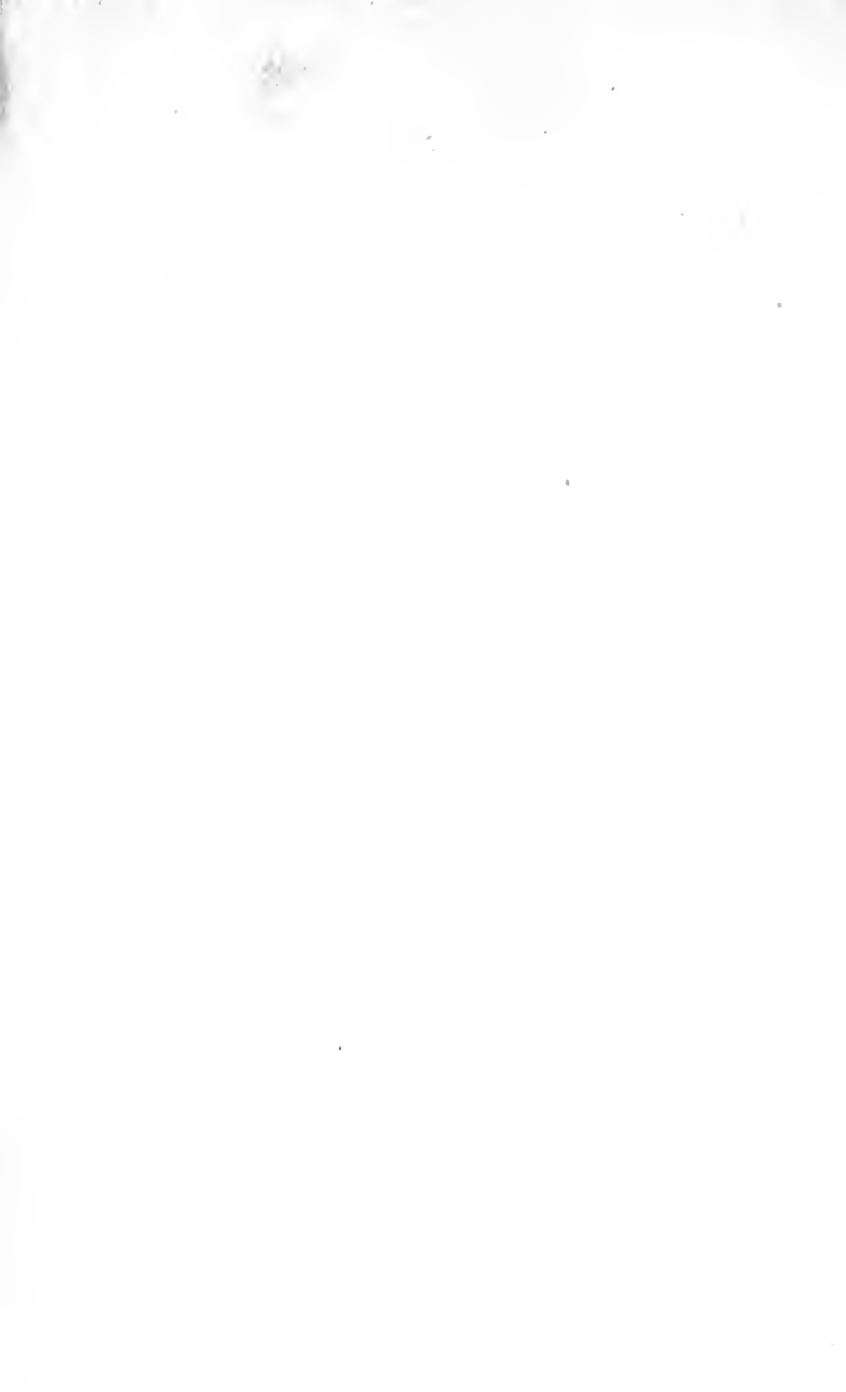
In 1766, however, came an invitation which was destined to change the scene of his activities. Richard Stockton, an American gentleman, and a trustee of Princeton College, then on a visit to England, was instructed by the trustees to go to Paisley and urge upon Witherspoon the acceptance of the presidency of the college, to which office they had elected him. Witherspoon had in the meantime been notified of the election by letter. Mr. Stockton was unable to persuade him to accept. Mrs. Witherspoon seemed particularly averse to the idea, and was even rude to the American visitor, so that he cut short the interview and beat a hasty

retreat from the manse. Later she apologized for her discourtesy saying that she was ill at the time, and the thought of going so far away from her home and friends made her very unhappy. Her husband wrote declining the office. The next year, Rev. Charles Beattie, another trustee of Princeton, visited Paisley. Instead of going to the manse, dreading the danger of offending Mrs. Witherspoon, he first secured quarters at the inn, and sent a note to Dr. Witherspoon, asking for an interview. The hospitable Scotchman, urged by his wife, who was greatly distressed over her former rudeness, hastened to the inn and carried Mr. Beattie home with him. He was so delighted with Mrs. Witherspoon's courtesy and gentle manners that he was ready to doubt the story of her treatment of Mr. Stockton. More delighted was he when Witherspoon told him that the college had been much on his mind and that, were the offer renewed, he should be very glad to accept. Beattie wrote at once to the trustees. From other Scotchmen letters had gone to America intimating that Witherspoon would welcome an opportunity of changing his mind. Whereupon at a meeting in December, 1767, "The board, receiving the intelligence with peculiar satisfaction, proceeded immediately to a

reelection." The sum of one hundred guineas was voted him for the expenses of removing to America. Upon receiving notice of his reelection, Witherspoon asked the Presbytery to relieve him of his charge and dismiss him to the new land. In May, 1768, he preached his farewell sermon, characteristically choosing as his subject, "Ministerial Fidelity in Declaring the Whole Counsel of God." He dwelt at great length upon the character and duty of a good pastor. In the closing paragraph of this, the longest sermon he ever preached, doubtless feeling deeply the strain of separation, he bids farewell in these words. "For what I have to say with regard to the present dispensation of providence that puts an end to my ministry among you, I shall bring it within very narrow bounds. It were easy by saying a few words to move the concern both of speaker and hearers; this I have hitherto chosen to avoid; this I shall only say, that I am deeply sensible of the affection and duty of the congregation that attended my ministry, and others under my charge. I cannot express my sense of it better than in the words of the late eminently pious Dr. Finlay, my immediate predecessor in this new office, who, on his death-bed said to those about him, 'I owe a long catalogue of

debts to my friends which will not be put to my charge; I hope God will discharge them for me.' The only further request I have to make of you is that you would give me and my family an interest in your prayers. Intreat of God that we may be preserved from perils and dangers and carried to the place of our destination in safety; and that I may be assisted of Him in every future duty, and not fall under the terrible reproach of agreeing to make so distant a removal and then being found unfit for the important task." The people of his church and his friends throughout Scotland were reluctant to let him go. A rich kinsman, an old bachelor, promised to make Witherspoon his heir if the minister would remain. But the die was cast. Leaving Scotland he went to London, where he secured a number of books for the college library, and settled accounts with his own publisher. Then on the 20th of May, 1768, he and his family sailed for Philadelphia where they arrived on the 6th of August. Here he was the guest of Mr. Hodge, a friend of the college. They went to Princeton towards the end of the month, making their home with Richard Stockton for a few weeks, until their own house was ready for them.

THE AMERICAN PERIOD





# I

## PRINCETON COLLEGE

UNTIL the founding of Princeton there were in the American colonies of Great Britain only three colleges where a young man could receive a good classical and scientific education. Two of these were in New England ; Harvard had been established at Cambridge near Boston in 1636 under a charter from the General Court ; Yale, beginning in 1701, moving about from place to place, was finally located at New Haven in 1718 ; William and Mary College, in Virginia, had been chartered by the crown in 1693. The middle colonies were practically destitute of the means of higher education.

The desire for a college which would offer a comprehensive course of study was particularly strong among the Presbyterians of this section, so that they might not only educate their sons but also in this way procure suitable candidates for the ministry of their church, for which they were dependent on New England or the old country. For this purpose William and Mary was not only too far away in the days when the

stage coach was the speediest method of travel ; it was too largely under Episcopalian influence to suit the orthodox Calvinists of that day of denominational suspicion and exclusiveness. Harvard and Yale were both satisfactory on the score of orthodoxy but the distance was too great for the boys of Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey and even of New York. There was great need of a college where "religion and sound learning should receive equal attention." The Presbyterians did not wish a theological seminary, but a school of high moral and religious tone. Religion without learning, they said, produces fanaticism ; learning without religion produces skepticism. They desired the purest Christian doctrine and the best secular scholarship, both classical and scientific. At that time there was a faction in the Presbyterian church who laid the emphasis for ministerial qualification on religious experience. Rev. William Tennent and his two sons had opposed a rule of the synod providing that young men applying for licensure, not being graduates of college, should undergo an examination on the arts and sciences before the synod. Against this rule the Tennents protested and for this protest the synod, by a stretch of authority, censured them. Thereupon the members of three

Presbyteries from the vicinity of New York withdrew and formed a separate synod. The members of the new Synod did not all agree with the Tennents on the question of education ; they thought the Philadelphia men had gone too far in condemning the Tennents for their opinion. Believing in education as well as in ecclesiastical justice they determined, if possible, to establish a college. The partisans of fervid piety had been alienated from Yale by the expulsion of David Brainerd from that college. Brainerd was a religious enthusiast of rare spirit, warm heart and strong mind. He could not endure the cold-blooded manner of some of the New Englanders. In a moment of passion he told one of the tutors that that learned gentleman "had no more of the grace of God than a chair." Although he publicly confessed his fault he was promptly expelled. His expulsion was regarded as too severe a punishment and served to strengthen the determination of the New York men to establish a college where religion should not be discounted.

The Philadelphia men had tried to establish a school at New London, Pennsylvania, but it amounted to little and after a struggling existence became what is now Newark Academy, Delaware. Over in East Jersey Jonathan

Dickinson opened a private school at Elizabeth where he did his best to prepare young men for the ministry. Aaron Burr had a classical school at Newark, N. J. These were private schools and did not meet the large need. Dickinson and Burr consulted with two others, John Pier-son and Ebenezer Pemberton, as to the best way to establish a good college without any further makeshifts. Pemberton was the man to whom the Scotch society for propagating Christian knowledge sent money for work among the Indians. These four men, not as representatives of the Synod, but on their own account, tried to obtain a charter for a college in New Jersey. Lewis Morris, Governor of the Province, refused to grant one in 1745. Why he refused is not stated. But his honour had a hearty dislike for dissenters, as he regarded these Presbyterians. The British Government had instructed the Provincial Governors that religious and educational matters were under control of the Bishop of London, and no schoolmaster was to be permitted to keep school in the province without his permission. The rule was not always enforced, but the Governor found it convenient to observe it in this instance. Thwarted as they were in their good enterprise the ministers did not abandon all hope. Perhaps they felt that

a college was predestinated. They waited and watched. One fancies that they did not lament sorely when Governor Morris died on the 21st May, 1746. It was not until the 22d October, however, that they renewed their application to John Hamilton, who, as President of the Provincial council, held the government until King George should appoint a new Governor. The council promptly granted the application, an action which does not surprise us when we learn that four of the councillors were Presbyterians.

The charter conferred upon twelve trustees the right to conduct such a college as they desired, at the same time securing the liberties and privileges of other Christian denominations whose members might care to patronize it. Although the charter was granted in October, 1746, the college was not advertised until February, 1747, the trustees making ready their plans in the interval. When all was ready the school of Jonathan Dickinson, at Elizabeth, was made the foundation of the new college and he became its first president. The advertisement announced that students would be admitted the fourth week of May, 1747, and the college started on its career. The first commencement was to have been held in May, 1748. But in October,

1747, the president died. Whether the trustees took any immediate steps to appoint his successor does not appear, but the students of the college went over to Newark and there completed their course under the care of Aaron Burr, one of the applicants for the charter.

During the summer of 1747, the newly appointed governor of the province, Jonathan Belcher, arrived in New Jersey, having had an experience of twenty years as governor of two New England provinces, during which time he had shown a marked interest in Harvard College, where he had graduated in 1699. The trustees of the new college of New Jersey were, therefore, hopeful of his favour. Soon after his arrival they applied for a new charter, some doubt having been cast upon the validity of the first one, which had been granted by the president of the council without the assent of the Assembly or the Crown. Before they should fix upon a permanent location for the college or expend money upon buildings, the trustees wished to secure a perfectly valid charter. Governor Belcher met them more than half way and granted them a new charter for which he also secured the sanction of the Crown. It could not be got ready in time for the graduation of the first class in May, 1748. Lest the

degrees of the graduates should not be valid under the old charter it was decided, at the request of the governor himself, who wished to be present at the first commencement, to postpone it, and it was not until the 14th of September, 1748, that it was finally approved; and that is why the commencement exercises of Princeton were held in the fall rather than in the spring for more than sixty years.

The new charter provided that the governor of the province should be ex-officio president of the Board of Trustees. To this proviso the clergymen objected, lest difficulties might arise under governors not in full sympathy with the other trustees, and, as Jonathan Edwards wrote to a friend in Scotland, "Might be men of no religion or Deists." On this point, however, Governor Belcher was firm and to this day, the charter having been confirmed by the legislature in 1780, the governor of the State is president of the Board. The college, however, is not a State institution endowed by public funds and is altogether independent of State control.

Princeton had been selected for the site of the college as early as 1747. No buildings had been erected, however, and in the meantime the school of Rev. Aaron Burr, at Newark, acted under the charter, he being chosen first presi-

dent upon its being granted. The first commencement was held at Newark, November 9, 1748, there being six graduates, one of whom, Richard Stockton, was afterwards a trustee of the college and a colleague of Witherspoon in the Continental Congress. Some of the trustees thought New Brunswick a more desirable location than Princeton and tried to induce the citizens to grant land for the buildings and the president's house. The commencement of 1749 was held there with the design of interesting the people. They seemed indifferent. The trustees in 1750 voted that "a proposal be made to the towns of Brunswick and Princeton to try what sum of money they can raise for building of the college by the next meeting, that the trustees may be better able to judge in which of these places to fix the place of the college." Again the next spring they offer to locate the college in the town on the Passaic if the citizens will guarantee a thousand pounds, ten acres of land near the college and two hundred acres of woodland not more than three miles away. The woodland was wanted to supply the college with fire-wood. The people of Princeton had bestirred themselves and came forward with an offer. The treasurer was instructed to view the land at Princeton as well as that which had at



last been offered by the New Brunswick folk. The latter, however, were unable to make a definite offer. Despite the preference of the trustees for that place the energy of the Princetonians in raising money and obtaining land was such that finally in January, 1753, it was agreed to accept the offer of Princeton, "when Mr. Randolph has given a deed for a certain tract of land." No better situation could have been chosen. Princeton lay near the centre of the province of New Jersey on the main coach road midway between New York and Philadelphia. It stands on high ground overlooking a beautiful stretch of country. Sufficiently in touch with the traffic and news of the day it was sufficiently remote to secure the desirable quiet of college life.

Money was needed for the erection of suitable buildings. Mr. Nathanael Fitz Randolph, who had given the land, also gave twenty pounds and promised to obtain subscriptions from his friends. Governor Belcher wrote to some wealthy men of New England who contributed various sums. There were not more than a thousand pounds in the treasury. People of New York and Philadelphia interested themselves. When the necessary amount could not be obtained in America Rev. Gilbert Tennent

and Rev. Samuel Davies, as has been already told, went "home" to Great Britain armed with letters of Governor Belcher and others as well as with a very earnest address from the Synod of New York. Other letters were sent to individual clergymen in the three kingdoms. The generous response of the people at "home" enabled the trustees to proceed at once with the building for the college and the President's house which were so far completed in September of 1756 that President Burr arranged to have the commencement exercises held at Princeton on the 28th. His own presence was wanting, for on the 24th he died. Good old Governor Belcher, also, had passed away on the 31st of August. So appreciative were the trustees of his kindness that they had proposed to name the new building Belcher Hall. The governor had been a warm admirer of King William III, and requested the trustees to call it Nassau Hall in honour of the king's house. Thus it came to pass that the colours of the house of Nassau, orange and black, are the colours of Princeton College.

There was no delay in choosing another president. Before electing any one, however, the trustees decided that "the salary of the president shall be two hundred pounds procla-

mation money of the province, together with the use of the president's house and improved lands with liberty of getting his fire-wood on land belonging to the corporation." They then elected Jonathan Edwards, the famous New England preacher and theologian. There was some delay in getting him released from his charge at Stockbridge, so that he did not arrive at Princeton until early in February, 1765. The fatality that seems to have pursued the other presidents overtook him. He died of the small-pox on March 22d. The next president, Samuel Davies, held his office less than two years. In September, 1761, Rev. Samuel Finley was introduced to the Board of Trustees, beginning his administration without any further ceremony. Dr. Finley added to the reputation of the college, which became more largely patronized by students and more generously favoured by friends. The funds increased considerably; there were offers of money for the support of poor students; a Virginia gentleman gave a hundred pounds towards maintaining a professor of Divinity, to which chair Rev. John Blair was appointed. Through Richard Stockton, one of the trustees, a petition for a grant of land was presented to the Crown, but it was refused, it was suspected, through the influence

of the Episcopalians. The president's salary had been increased from time to time until in 1766 it was four hundred pounds. In September of that year, Dr. Finley having died in July, before proceeding to the election of his successor, the trustees fixed the salary at two hundred and fifty pounds with the usual perquisites, and on the following day elected John Witherspoon. I have already stated that he declined the first offer. It may be well to give here more fully the reasons for his declination.

The college had been founded by individual members of the New York Synod after the separation of that body from the Philadelphia Synod. The members of the latter Synod had held aloof from the enterprise. In 1757 there was a reunion of the two Synods, upon which the Philadelphia Presbyterians and their friends asked for a share in the government of the college. From gentlemen of Philadelphia and Lewistown, Pennsylvania, had come offers of money upon satisfactory assurances involving this question. Upon the death of Dr. Finley it was hoped that these new friends might have a voice in suggesting or electing the president, but the Board of Trustees proceeded without them. It was represented to Witherspoon that the Presbyterians of America were at logger-

heads over Nassau Hall, and he had no desire to leave the disturbed church of Scotland, where he was a growing power, for a new land and church torn by dissensions, the nature of which he did not fully understand, and in which he might be the greatest sufferer. His own feelings were conservative; he had no sympathy with those who preferred emotional piety to educated, reasonable orthodoxy and without indicating his reason in his letter he simply declined to become entangled in the strife of parties in the American church. His reasons, however, were confided to his friends and some of these learned that there was real unanimity and peace in the American church, that the affairs and prospects of the college were prosperous and all his fears groundless. His regrets at his hasty declination soon became known and the trustees gladly reelected him. In the meantime, however, Rev. Samuel Blair, a graduate of the college in 1760, who had also been a tutor, had been elected president, but with the understanding that he should not enter upon his duties for a year, there being strong hopes of persuading the Paisley pastor to accept. As soon as he learned that Witherspoon might reconsider he withdrew. Witherspoon's election was unanimous, all the friends of the college in

both factions agreeing that his advent would settle many vexed questions. There was no man in America above the suspicion of belonging to one or the other party. No such charge could be brought against him.

The college had been in existence twenty years. From a position which placed it little above a classical school it had now risen to a rank among the best educational institutions in the land. Its curriculum was almost as good as that of Witherspoon's alma mater, the University of Edinburgh, although the faculty was not so large nor the equipment so extensive. There was no divinity school. Few precedents hampered the new president. No principal of a European university had as full liberty as he. The college was controlled neither by the government nor by the church, directly, but by an independent board of trustees, self-governing, self-perpetuating. Among the trustees were not only Presbyterians who were in a majority, but also Episcopalians, Independents and a Quaker. Supported by a reunited church, governed by such a body of representative men, a very promising future was before the college.

The number of pupils had increased until in 1766 there were about a hundred and twenty,

almost as many as there had been at the University of Edinburgh when Witherspoon matriculated there twenty-five years before. The curriculum offered what seems to us a very narrow range of study. During the first three years the Latin and Greek classics were thoroughly read. Orations were delivered by the students, both in Latin and English, public speaking being an art highly prized. Mathematics and the sciences, as much of them as were known, were pursued until the senior year, which appears to have been devoted to criticism and review, with more attention to original composition. How far the educational ideas of Princeton's faculty at that time approximates those of the present day may be seen in the account of Princeton written by one of the tutors in 1766, who tells us that "in the instruction of youth care is taken to cherish a spirit of liberty and free inquiry ; and not only to permit but even to encourage their right of private judgment without presuming to dictate with an air of infallibility, or demanding an implicit assent to the decisions of the preceptor." Each class recited twice a day and "always had free access to their teachers." The day must have been long, beginning at six with morning prayers, at which a student might be chosen to

read a portion of the Scriptures in the original and to translate it. Except for an hour in the morning, two at noon and three in the evening, the boys were kept at work upon their studies. College athletics there were none; no class matches, no intercollegiate games. Handball was the most exhilarating sport. All students were required to board in the college, the table being supplied by the steward, who also furnished fire-wood and candles. The delightful club life so characteristic of Princeton to-day was unknown. Freshmen were required to run upon errands for the boys of the three upper classes, and otherwise be at their service, until, early in Witherspoon's administration the custom was broken up by the trustees. A democratic spirit prevailed in the college, patronized, as it was most largely, by boys from every rank of colonial life, into which few of the class distinctions of the old country had been introduced. Penalties for breaches of college discipline were not the undreaded disorder marks of a later era, but fines of money which must be paid in full by the culprit before he could obtain his degree. The fines, however, were discontinued early in Witherspoon's connection with the college, except where injury had been done to the property. Suspension or expulsion were



extreme forms of punishment seldom inflicted. No cuts were allowed from prayers or recitation, and the president alone could grant leave of absence. Evening prayers were made the occasion for instruction in psalmody. No instrumental music profaned the walls of Nassau Hall's chapel, the voices of men and boys rising in full volume as they sang the paraphrases of the psalms, the leader catching the note from his tuning fork. Even on Sunday work must be done. Disputations on the subject of natural and revealed religion were given publicly in the chapel, the citizens of the town being privileged to attend, "in order to habituate the boys early to face an assembly, as also for other important and religious ends." As there was no church in the town the citizens attended the services in the chapel, where some of them were assigned pews for which they paid a rental.

Examinations were oral, conducted in the presence of the trustees and such visitors as chose to attend, by the president and tutors, and "any other gentlemen of education who shall choose to be present." It is plain that no "shenanigaging" was possible in such an examination. Although the laws required every candidate for a bachelor's degree to reside two whole years in the college, any person might

present himself for examination, and, if deemed worthy, receive a degree upon payment of eight pounds tuition for two years and the customary fees of graduation. Commencement day in September began the long term uninterrupted by vacations. Orations and disputations were given by those who had graduated a few weeks before. No Christmas or Easter recesses broke the routine, for these were popish feasts not observed by strict Presbyterians. A short vacation in the spring and another in the fall, neither exceeding two or three weeks, was all the rest given teachers or students.

Every student was required to pay two shillings sixpence quarterly for the rent of the library, a rule providing that no student might have the key of the library, that being in charge of one of the officers of the college. The total expenses averaged about twenty-five pounds, four for tuition, fifteen for board, three for laundry, two for fire-wood and candles, one for room rent, with six shillings for contingent expenses.

What pranks the students played the minutes of the trustees up to 1768 do not record. It was found necessary to lock the door of the cupola and place the key in the charge of the steward

whose duty it was to ring the bell, and who must permit nobody else to go up. Is it unlikely that even as early as 1766, as in 1876, the boys occasionally rang the bell at night or stole the clapper? There were laws forbidding various offenses, trivial and serious, which might disturb the peace of the Hall or the campus, and occasionally some luckless lad was obliged to pay a fine, which he did with good grace, but there were no expulsions. Several students neglected to pay their fees, which led to a law requiring them all to give bond in the full amount before they could enter college. This rule was found too hard and was amended so that the sophomores paid thirty shillings, the juniors forty, entrance money. A senior in arrears could not receive his degree until all arrears were paid in full.

This brief sketch of the history of the college and its student life gives us some idea of the work which lay before the new president. He faced the task of bringing together in support of the college two parties in the church, formally united but still jealous and watchful of each other. The endowment amounted to less than three thousand pounds, only a small part of that drawing interest. But the college stood high in

the public favour, attracting students from New England in the North and the Carolinas in the South, as well as from the immediate neighbourhood of New Jersey.

## II

### PRESIDENT OF PRINCETON

OF Witherspoon's advent, Moses Coit Tyler has written so well that I can do no better than to quote his words. "His advent to the college over which he was to preside was like that of a prince coming to his throne. From the moment of his landing in Philadelphia to that of his arrival in Princeton, his movements were attended by every circumstance that could manifest affection and homage ; and on the evening of the day on which he made his entry into what was thenceforward to be his home, 'the college edifice was brilliantly illuminated ; and not only the whole village but the adjacent country, and even the province at large, shared in the joy of the occasion.' It is pleasant to know that in the six and twenty years of public service that then lay before him in America, the person of whom so much was expected not only did not disappoint, but by far exceeded, the high hopes that had thus been set upon him. For once in this world, as it turned out, a man of extraordinary force, versatility, and charm had

found the place exactly suited to give full swing and scope to every element of power within him."

The inauguration of Dr. Witherspoon must have been a very simple ceremony. Dr. Ashbel Green, a student at the time, tells us that he delivered an address in Latin on the Unity of Piety and Science, but the address has not been preserved. His first sermon is found in his published works.

The first thing to which he addressed himself was the raising of money to pay a debt upon the college and to increase the endowment. He must have been startled by the statement made to the Presbytery of New Brunswick by the trustees in applying to the Presbytery for aid at the first meeting which he attended. It was frankly stated that unless something should be done speedily the college would have to be abandoned. So little ready money was there, that the trustees were unable to pay Witherspoon the one hundred guineas promised him for his expenses in making the journey from Scotland, and the treasurer was ordered to meet this debt with the first money that should come to hand. What Witherspoon thought of this financial outlook he has not recorded. No complaint was made. With characteristic energy

he took hold of the business at once. Small legacies were received occasionally during the first few years and the friends of the college were active in collecting funds. The churches took collections under instructions from the Presbyteries and Synods. By the year 1772 New Brunswick Presbytery had raised over three hundred and sixty pounds, with two hundred more promised. Soon after his arrival, Dr. Witherspoon himself went to New England to collect money. From one of the founders of the college, Ebenezer Pemberton, now a minister in Boston, he received great help. Pemberton introduced him to wealthy friends. As a result of this visit over a thousand pounds were added to the college funds, a part of this being at the personal disposal of the president, who was authorized to use it as he saw fit. Both before, during and after the war he did what not only every president of Princeton but of every other American college has been obliged to do ; he travelled far and wide seeking money and students for the college. Others helped him in this. A journey to the Carolinas was undertaken by Dr. John Rodgers, of New York, whose pulpit was supplied by the trustees during his absence. And he brought back a considerable sum. Long Island was the self-

chosen territory of Rev. James Caldwell, whose activity there and in Elizabeth, New Jersey, brought him a vote of thanks from the trustees. Having been himself elected a member of the board in 1769 he was authorized to solicit funds in Virginia ; as a result one thousand pounds were added to the treasury. He extended his visit to Georgia, but told the trustees that owing to the scarcity of ready money in that province it would be necessary to accept produce, tobacco, lumber and other things, which the people promised. At his suggestion a vessel was chartered and sent to Georgia, the people having been informed in time for them to bring their gifts to the wharf so that no money was lost by delay. In the spring of 1772 Dr. Witherspoon was requested to visit the West Indies and Mr. Charles Beattie, who will be remembered as the man who finally secured Witherspoon's consent to accept the presidency, was appointed to go with him. Witherspoon was unable to go, although he prepared an address to the people of the islands. Mr. Beattie set out upon his journey but died in the Barbadoes in August before he had entered upon his business.

Dr. Witherspoon was a member of every committee entrusted with financial matters. In 1772 he and Mr. Halsey were authorized to



arrange for the drawing of a lottery at New Castle, Delaware, a bond of fifty thousand pounds proclamation being given to Mr. George Monroe and others, the proceeds to be divided between the college and the Presbyterian churches of New Castle and Christiana Bridge. This method of raising money had been employed before. Mr. Halsey was paid fifty pounds for his services in conducting a previous one. The legislature of New Jersey refused several times to permit lotteries in that province. They were never very profitable. This one gave the trustees no little annoyance. The war came on before it was settled. In 1778, according to the minutes of the Board, Mr. Halsey was ordered "to prepare a just statement of the accounts for the next meeting," and again in 1780 he was ordered to settle the lottery. But it would not remain settled. A certain Mr. Geddes who had drawn a ticket for several hundred pounds clamoured for his money and finally agreed to accept college bonds for a less amount than his claim. But as late as 1786 he was again urging it. When, finally, in 1791, he said that two hundred and twenty-two pounds were still due him, the board ordered the clerk to write him that so far from the college being indebted to him he was in-

debted to it, and we heard no more of him after that.

Until the beginning of the war the finances of the college were in a fairly prosperous condition, little difficulty being experienced in meeting the expenses. In 1771 the trustees felt justified in electing a Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, William C. Houston being chosen at a salary of one hundred and fifty pounds. But when the country became unsettled by hostilities there was little money to be had. From 1778 to 1780 the president's salary was, at his suggestion, paid in Continental currency, but in May, 1781, the Board ordered that he be paid in gold and silver. Accounts could not be kept correctly amid the confusion brought on by the war. For two or three years the trustees could not meet. In 1775 a meeting was held of which there is no record but at which a committee was appointed to examine the treasurer's accounts, the report of which was not finally made until 1793. Dr. Witherspoon was found to be indebted to the college about six hundred and forty-five pounds. The matter had been an annoyance to him and to the trustees. Covering so long a period mistakes had been unavoidable. He asked for a new audit and a few months before his death

the whole affair was finally settled with a balance due him of one hundred and seventy-nine dollars. Ugly rumours magnified by Tory enemies during and after the war had run over the country. At no time had the trustees questioned his honour and again and again the minutes contain records of their confidence in him, their appreciation of his devotion and generosity in the service of the college. So that for every reason they were very glad to exonerate him fully. A very loose and irregular method seems to have been followed in collecting and disbursing the funds. Donations were given sometimes to the treasurer, sometimes to the president, sometimes to a committee of the trustees. It was not until 1786 that the Board decided that all money should pass through the treasurer's hands, in order to avoid confusion and misunderstanding. Some of the money was given for the ordinary expenses of the college, some for special objects and much "for the education of poor and pious youth." A fund for this latter purpose had accumulated from legacies and church collections. Personal fees belonging to the president and tutors were paid to the treasurer or to the person to whom they were due. The accounts of this period are lost, but every

reference to them in the minutes of the Board shows that, while the college was well maintained, confusion of the accounts was unavoidable. Although the institution was comparatively small, the financial management of it was a burden of no small weight, and Witherspoon deserves great credit not only for commanding the confidence of the public and the trustees but also for keeping the college in a prosperous condition and increasing the endowment in spite of a desolating war.

In one respect the college resembled a modern boarding school. Its single building contained the steward's dining-room and kitchen, the rooms of the students, class-rooms, library and chapel. The president's house was a separate building. Every student was expected to live in college and board at the steward's table, with whom the trustees made a contract. The contract of 1768 provided that Jonathan Baldwin the steward, "should furnish the students such meat and drink, including small beer as had formerly been served up to them, at the rate of six shillings sixpence proclamation per week and should find and provide firewood and candles at the current prices and keep a proper number of servants for doing the ordinary business, including the ringing of the bell,

and at the end of the year take all the kitchen furniture at a fair price." Each scholar must pay the steward seven pounds half yearly in advance, and one shilling per week for every week of absence after the opening of college, and be responsible for any damage he might do to the steward's property. The president, Tutor Joseph Berrian and Trustee Richard Stockton were a committee for advice and direction in the management of the stewardship. Mr. Baldwin gave them trouble the next year. It was found that he owed the college over a thousand pounds, and he finally gave bond and security for seven hundred. He remained in office, however, and a year later agreed "that the galleries (halls) shall be swept twice a week and washed and sanded once a month in the summer, and once in two months in the winter." Tuition fees were paid to the president who was diligent in keeping an account of them. To him also was paid the money for the board of "the poor and pious youth" being educated for the ministry. The money for this purpose came from the Presbytery, or Synod, or from individuals sometimes in amounts to be used at once, sometimes as legacies to be invested for an income. Students failed to pay their fees both to the steward and to the president.

It would require an expert accountant to keep a clear record of all these sums, and I do not propose to drag the reader through their labyrinth.

The selling of the choice of rooms had become an abuse as early as 1771. Upper classmen adopted the arbitrary custom of selecting the best rooms and ousting the lower classmen from them willy-nilly. This abuse was corrected by the energy of Witherspoon's personal attention, but it became so deeply rooted that to this day the college law is evaded.

Governor Belcher had begun the foundation of a library by a gift of books, other friends had added more. Witherspoon himself had brought with him about three hundred volumes the gift of friends in Scotland, Holland, and London. New books were added from time to time. Evidently the students were careless in their use of the library. Very strict rules were made by the librarian, such as would discourage the most zealous student, but by Witherspoon's direction the boys learned to avail themselves of the scanty shelves with very good results. In a baccalaureate address he said, "There is no circumstance which throws this new country so far back in point of science as the want of public libraries where thorough researches might be made, and the small number of

learned men to assist in making researches practicable, easy, or complete."

Princeton was very proud of its scientific apparatus. Two hundred and fifty pounds had been appropriated for the purchase of it, at the president's suggestion, and doubtless against the protest of some who thought this a large sum for such a purpose. Visitors were usually taken to see the apparatus, which John Adams declared was the most complete and elegant he had ever seen. Two orreries, arrangements of spheres showing the relations of the planets to one another, were also exhibited. Another New England visitor thought little of either library or scientific equipment. The scientific spirit was fostered by Witherspoon who believed in the broadest and most liberal education.

While recognizing the rights and responsibilities of the trustees he claimed and enjoyed the greatest freedom in his management of the college. They usually met twice a year when the college bell was rung ten minutes to summon them to the session. They usually dined together. At first these dinners were held at the tavern but the bills grew so large that a rule of the board was finally passed requiring the steward to serve the dinner in the college,

and thereafter the trustees continued to dine together, a custom still followed by them.

The faculty of the college was small in 1766. When Witherspoon arrived the chair of Divinity and Moral Philosophy was filled by Rev. John Blair. But as there was not enough money to support it he resigned a year later. His departure released some of the funds and enabled the trustees to increase the president's salary, with the understanding that he take the duties formerly performed by Professor Blair. Two tutors assisted the president and Professor Houston so that the entire teaching force during Witherspoon's presidency of twenty-six years never exceeded four or at most five in any year. Most of the teaching fell to Witherspoon. In 1772 he offered Hebrew to those students who intended to become ministers, teaching this in addition to the advanced Greek and Latin. He also lectured on Divinity, Moral Philosophy and Eloquence. These lectures, making due allowance for the nature of the subjects must have been truly delightful. Witherspoon is always perfectly clear. No ambiguity clouds his style. He knows the subject thoroughly and is familiar with all the literature of it. The lectures abound with quotations and references to other writers and are lighted with pleasing illustrations. As



they were not written in full they are not satisfactory to the modern reader. The lecture as given by him was not a droning deliverance, the students nervously taking such notes as were possible. It was rather a free conversation, the lecturer first stating his subject and his opinion of it, the students afterwards questioning him at their pleasure and being in their turn questioned by him. In a modern classroom such a method might subject an ordinary lecturer to an endless fire of questions designed to waste time. Nothing of that sort was attempted with Witherspoon, who never lost the respect of his pupils. They felt in his presence an unembarrassed freedom which never degenerated into familiarity. His dignity might at first inspire a freshman with awe, for he was the most dignified of men, with a stately manner. But that feeling soon left the boy. To his students he freely accorded every right. Naturally passionate, he had the greatest kindness of heart. A family tradition relates that as he was leaving the college building one morning, a boy threw from a window a basin of water intended for a fellow student who was just about to emerge from the door but who drew back to let the president pass out. The water drenched the doctor's new coat, to the dismay of the

youngster who, having leaned from the window to see the effect upon his mate, was recognized. He retreated at once to his room. Witherspoon called upon him and, the door being opened by the frightened culprit, remarked, "D'ye see, young man, how ye wet my new coat?" That was all. Of course the boy went to the president's house and apologized for his unintentional act, which was nevertheless a breach of college law. It was not reported, however; the boy was forgiven and was forever a devoted admirer of Witherspoon. James Madison, who graduated in 1771 testifies to Witherspoon's character as at once strong and gentle. Long after graduation his students endeavoured to keep in touch with him. Those who had been employed as his secretary, writing letters for him and attending to some minor details of college business by his direction, spoke warmly of his consideration and kindness. This was especially the case in the later years of his life when his eyesight had become impaired. No president of Princeton ever won the personal attachment of his students as did John Witherspoon unless we may except John McLean and James McCosh.

Besides doing his work in the college he preached every Sunday in the chapel, long ser-

mons, one in the morning, the other in the afternoon. The Sunday that John Adams spent in Princeton in August, 1774, he records in his diary, he "heard Dr. Witherspoon all day," a remark which may have been nearer the truth than Adams intended.

There were no first-class preparatory schools in the American colonies in those days. Many clergymen conducted classical schools in connection with their churches, which afterwards became fine academies. The public school was far in the future. Those private academies did most of the work of preparing boys for college. The preparation was not always well done. Schoolmasters who taught the parochial school attached to many a Presbyterian church, while not expected to send boys up to college, sometimes chose to put extra time upon some promising pupils. But many of the boys who came up to Princeton were deficient even in reading and spelling. So serious was the fault that in 1774 Witherspoon addressed a public letter to schoolmasters, both in America and the West Indies, urging them to be more careful in the preparation of students, specifying the textbooks best adapted to a course looking to Princeton. There was, as yet, no printed annual catalogue of the college, indicating require-

ments for entrance. Boys were expected to be well-grounded in the rudiments of English and mathematics ; to be able to read Latin readily, having gone through Cæsar, Virgil and Cicero, perhaps further. A knowledge of Greek was also essential.

During the first eight years the college grew rapidly in the number of its students who came from every part of America. Witherspoon's fame added to Princeton's repute and his graduates sent up more students and encouraged gifts of money. The trustees were beginning to enlarge the faculty. Then the war came on. As early as the fall of 1775 there was a noticeable decrease of students. Troops on their way to Boston during the summer were quartered in and around the college. From these, if not from Witherspoon himself, the boys caught the military spirit, some of them enlisting. In the fall of 1775 there was not a quorum of the trustees present to transact business and confer the degrees, but those who were there passed such measures as were necessary, trusting that a future meeting would approve them. Nor was it possible to hold a meeting in the fall of 1776, but they adjourned for a month, only to find that the invasion of the province by the British kept the members away. Witherspoon

himself was obliged to flee for his life. His experience is preserved in a letter to his son written from Baltimore in January, 1777. In a letter to his son-in-law, Rev. S. S. Smith, in whose Virginia school the young David Witherspoon was teaching, he had given one account. In this letter he says, "I gave a very full and particular account of our flight from Princeton and the situation of your mother as well as myself. She is at Pequa (the home of Rev. Robert Smith, father of S. S.) I hope well, but I have not heard from that place since I left her. We carried nothing away of all our effects but what could be carried upon one team. Benjamin Hawkins drove your mother in the old chair and I rode the sorrel mare and made John Graham drive the four young colts." His experience was similar to that of many other Jersey men. The trustees of the college, determined to have a meeting, assembled at Cooper's Ferry on the Delaware in May, 1777. Governor Livingston, ex-officio president of the Board, found time to be present. With him were eleven others and Dr. Witherspoon, now a member of the Continental Congress. He told the trustees that it was impossible to carry on the college. When Washington's army, retreating from New York, had passed through Princeton in Decem-

ber, 1776, the soldiers had found in the students' rooms softer beds than had been their lot for many a day, nor did they hesitate to use them. Their example was followed by the Hessians and British who were in close pursuit of them. On their return the next January while there was little time to stop for rest, the Continental troops drove the soldiers of Cornwallis out of the college and as quickly departed themselves, ragged, cold and footsore, but triumphant, for they had slipped out of a trap and won a notable victory. By the cannonading the building had been so badly damaged as to be unfit for use. All that the trustees could do was to appoint a committee to attend to such repairs as were absolutely necessary, while Dr. Witherspoon should collect as many students as possible and either instruct them himself or get some assistance. He was also requested to ask the Congress to forbid the quartering of troops in the college. By the next year it was possible to hold a meeting at Princeton, although some of the trustees were detained by the enemy in their homes, one of them being shut up in Philadelphia, which was then in possession of the British. The legislature of New Jersey was requested to confirm the charter of the college with some desirable changes, and to exempt

the students from military duty, which was done. Such good prospects were there of doing the work of the college that advertisements were inserted in the New Jersey, Fishkill and Lancaster newspapers, stating that "due attendance will be given to the instruction of youth in the college after the tenth day of May." For a year and a half Witherspoon and Professor Houston were able to teach their classes in the badly damaged building, waiting for their salaries until the trustees could collect money to pay them. At the commencement of September, 1779, there were six graduates. Thereafter the classes were held together.

From Virginia, where he had been at the head of an academy, which afterwards grew into Hampden-Sidney College, came S. S. Smith to take the chair of Moral Philosophy. This addition to the faculty was made possible by the generosity of Dr. Witherspoon, who offered to divide his salary with the new professor and to give him the president's house while Witherspoon went to live upon his farm, about a mile north of Princeton, where he had built a comfortable house. In accepting this generous offer the trustees agreed to permit Dr. Witherspoon, Professor Houston and Professor Smith to divide the tuition money among them for the

coming year. At the end of that time they added two hundred pounds to Professor Smith's salary. For two years during the war the president's salary had been paid in the depreciated Continental currency, but in 1781 the trustees decided that he should be paid in gold and silver. Such generosity as is shown in these acts of Witherspoon won the cordial appreciation of the trustees and of other friends of the college. Some of these gave their notes for money to be used in repairing the college building and in meeting the necessary expenses. It was difficult to recover the funds of the college which had been placed in the Continental Loan office during the war and Witherspoon was ordered to compound, or to sell the certificates to the best advantage.

In the disturbed period of the war Witherspoon had assumed the responsibility of providing teachers, but when peace came he requested the trustees to resume that duty. But he agreed to continue to pay half of Professor Smith's salary as long as he shall remain in the college. Up to this time there had been no faculty organization in which the government of the college was vested, all authority apparently resting with the president. Discipline was seldom administered. The minutes of



the Board make no mention of the system of fines formerly in operation. But there are accounts of three cases of insubordination among the students. The first of these had some political significance. In December, 1773, Paul Revere had ridden post-haste through the town bearing to Burlington and Philadelphia the news of the Boston tea party. Of the crowd that gathered about the tavern door no doubt a goodly number were students who listened eagerly to the stirring story. They sent the courier on his way with a cheer, bidding him Godspeed, and then set about the usual way employed by college students to show their enthusiasm and their sympathy. Boston folk had set them a worthy example in burning an effigy of the stamp collector and the devil; New Yorkers seizing Governor Colden's coach had placed in it the figure of an imp and burned it before the governor's residence. Princeton students needed no better examples. An effigy of Hutchinson, royal governor of Massachusetts, was soon ready. The boys formed a procession, marched through the town and on to the campus, where a spirited oration was made. Probably John Dickinson's song of Liberty was sung, and the whole hideous figure set on fire. Such conduct was scarcely a breach of college discipline

—not being directed against any of the college authorities. Witherspoon himself did not interfere nor reprimand the students, but Richard Stockton, one of the trustees of whom we have heard before and shall hear again, one of the finest men in the province of New Jersey and a high-minded patriot, felt it his duty to stop the unlawful proceeding, for it was unlawful, and might get not only the boys but the college authorities into trouble. But when Mr. Stockton undertook to remonstrate with the excited young patriots and put a stop to their serious sport, one of the students, Samuel Leake, dared to accuse him of cowardice and even of treason to the patriot cause; and upon Mr. Stockton's rebuking him for using such language, and endeavouring to send the students away, young Leake promptly took him by the shoulders and hustled him off the campus, telling him to go about his business. Needless to say his dignity was ruffled. If he reported the affair to the president of the college we have no record of it. At all events Dr. Witherspoon failed to administer any rebuke or inflict any punishment. On the other hand, Mr. Samuel Leake, being one of the best students in the class of 1774 and an orator of college reputation, was awarded the salutatory for the commencement exercises.

Such appointments, however, must receive the approval of the Board of Trustees, and when Mr. Stockton told his story and protested against the honour being bestowed upon Leake, the trustees refused to sanction the award, although they permitted him to graduate. The account is interesting because it throws a side light upon Witherspoon's sympathies.

The second case was entirely different in its nature and occurred in 1787. Seven luckless seniors having refused to prepare the pieces assigned for commencement were called before the board and ordered to ask the pardon of that body and of the faculty. They were then sentenced to "be reprimanded by the president in the presence of the whole college." Moreover they were refused permission to pronounce any honorary oration at commencement. Not long afterwards a rule was made forbidding any student to speak before his oration had been passed upon by the faculty. And when some of the boys inserted in their commencement deliverances some sentences which had not been found in the manuscript submitted for inspection the trustees made a rule that such conduct would deprive the offender of his degree.

A third instance can hardly be called an act of insubordination, yet shows the necessity for

some authority in the hands of the faculty. In the summer of 1783 a Frenchman had gathered a dancing class at Princeton, many of the students joining. It proved disastrous to discipline and interfered with the college work. Since coming to America Witherspoon had not changed his mind as to the evil effects of amusements. And it was plain that attending the dancing class involved some of the boys in more expense than they ought to incur, not only for the dancing lessons but for the jolly suppers which followed. The class was held at the tavern where the boys were tempted to drink too freely. After the late hours so spent they came to their recitations the next day with sadly muddled ideas about Greek construction and moral philosophy, the effect of too much wine and too little sleep. The reputation of the college suffered by the tales of these midnight gaieties. They were regarded by the faculty and trustees as "circumstances very unfriendly to the order and good government of the institution." Looking upon "a dancing school as useless to them in point of manners, they being generally past that period of youth in which the manners are formed," the board forbade the students to attend the dancing school.

Such cases having arisen the board, at the meeting in the fall of 1788, formally vested in the faculty the government of the college "whose authority should extend to every part of the discipline of the college except the expulsion of a student which shall not take place unless by order of the board or six of them convened and consenting thereto."

Two years later this authority was tested by Mr. Robert Stockton, who complained by letter to the trustees, "that his son, Job Stockton, had received personal violence and abuse from Dr. Smith in a cruel and illegal manner and had been sent from the institution in an arbitrary and unprecedented manner." After hearing all parties in the case the trustees sustained Dr. Smith as quite within bounds in dealing with the young man "as so high an offense merited."

The government of the college gave the Board less trouble than the raising of money to meet expenses. This was far more difficult after the war. The endowment of the college had suffered the loss of funds in the Continental Loan office, by the depreciation of the paper currency and by the general financial depression following the war. It was almost impossible to collect debts. The courts were in confusion.

There was no source of national revenue. Business was timid in the uncertainty of laws governing both foreign and domestic trade. Those who had hoarded gold and silver used it sparingly. Nevertheless, as before, so now, Witherspoon indefatigably set to work to raise money. So successful was he that in the ten years following the war more than twelve thousand dollars were added to the funds of the college, truly a marvellous sum under the circumstances. And yet it was not sufficient, although it brought the endowment up to twenty thousand dollars. By 1784 it became imperatively necessary that something should be done. No friend of the college had been more generous than Witherspoon himself. Half of his salary had been relinquished to keep Professor Smith in the chair of Moral Philosophy; the expenses of many a poor student had been borne by him. Of course he expected to be reimbursed from the fund for educating poor and pious youth, but he was greatly imposed upon. He frequently obligated himself for the tuition and boarding of a student who never paid the debt. So flagrant became the abuse of his good nature that he was obliged to notify the public through the newspapers that he should not comply with requests to advance

money to the students or make himself responsible for them in any way. Friends of the boys sometimes bought articles of clothing expecting Witherspoon to pay for them out of what they seemed to regard as an unlimited fund for maintaining needy scholars. Among the papers in my possession is the following note :

2 ¼ yards of corduroy @.....	\$2.20	\$4.95
2 pair of stockings.....		2.80
1 yard of linen .....		.75
		<hr/>
		\$8.50

*Doctr Witherspoon,*

SIR :

I have bought the above Articles for my Br John Blair, and when Mr. Saml Smith was in Town he desired me to call on you for the money which you will please to be so kind as to leave with Mrs. Irwin and oblige Sir your Humble

Servt,

BETSY BLAIR.

Many a poor boy owed his education to Witherspoon's generosity. He broke his own rules when to keep them would deprive a boy of his education. But he could not afford to carry such a heavy burden as was laid upon him. He bore expenses for which the trustees were not directly liable and they testified to his magnanimity on several occasions. His own private

fortune while not large was enough to maintain him in a manner befitting his position. But the college itself was sorely in need of funds to repair the damaged building and to carry on the work.

Before the war there had been many friends of Princeton in Great Britain who had contributed generously to the college. At an extra meeting of the Board of Trustees in October, 1783, the suggestion was made that perhaps these former friends and others abroad might help them out of their difficulties. It was hoped that Witherspoon's popularity at least in Scotland had survived the bitterness of the struggle by which Great Britain had lost her American colonies. During the war many Englishmen and Scotchmen had openly avowed their friendship for America, their belief in the justice of her claims. Even if Scotch newspapers had called Witherspoon such names as knave, fool and traitor, his experiences during the excitement that followed the publication of the "Characteristics" thirty-five years before, seemed to show that these were the words of enemies and his friends were numerous. Besides, his correspondence brought him assurances of friendship and continued interest in his career. Others among the trustees cherished the belief that those



who had sympathized with America would respond to an appeal from the college to help them restore it and continue the work. As we look at it now, we wonder how they could have persuaded themselves into such a belief. But they did, and the trustees permitted Dr. Witherspoon and General Reed, who had commanded the Pennsylvania line during the war and was president of the Assembly of his state, to go to Europe to solicit subscriptions. General Reed generously offered to bear his own expenses and Mr. Bayard and Mr. Snowden advanced the money to pay Dr. Witherspoon's. There was no money in the college treasury. The mission, it is needless to say, was worse than a failure. It exposed the college to unkindly criticism. It was, indeed, felt by some of the American patriots to be a disgrace. Witherspoon through a friend applied to Franklin and Jay asking for letters of recommendation and approval to their friends. Franklin replied, "The very request would be disgraceful to us and hurt the credit of responsibility we wish to maintain in Europe by representing the United States as too poor to provide for the education of their own children. For my part I am persuaded we are fully able to furnish our colleges amply with every means of public instruction and I cannot but

wonder that our legislatures have generally paid so little attention to a business of so great importance. Our circumstance in the application here made me somewhat ashamed for our country. Being asked what sums had been subscribed or donations made by signers to a paper I was obliged to reply only one."

John Jay wrote, "While our country remained part of the British Empire there was no impropriety in soliciting the aid of our distant brethren and fellow subjects for any liberal and public purpose. It was natural that the younger branches of the political family should request and expect the assistance of the elder. But as the United States neither have nor can have such relations with any nations in the world, as the rank they hold and ought to assert implies ability to provide for all the ordinary objects of their government, and as the diffusion of knowledge among a republican people is and ought to be one of the constant and most important of those objects, I cannot think it consistent with the dignity of a free and independent people to solicit donations for that or any other purpose from the subjects of any Prince or state whatever."

Witherspoon was much depressed by the failure, more particularly by the sense of aliena-

tion from his former friends in Great Britain, although some of these wrote him most kindly regretting his mission and sympathizing with him in his disappointment. To us it is astonishing that he should permit the trustees to persuade him or himself to cherish the idea that his request would be agreeable or even his presence acceptable to many in Scotland. Five pounds was the munificent sum remaining after the expenses of the trip had been paid.

The commencement of September, 1783, was probably the most memorable in Witherspoon's administration. The Continental Congress had been in session at Philadelphia endeavouring to hit upon some measures for raising money to pay the soldiers who had helped to win the independence which the colonies enjoyed. Some of these soldiers were in the city and wished to hurry the deliberations of the Congress, which they did with such good effect that, disturbed by the threats of the soldiers, the dignified delegates took horse and, at Witherspoon's request, fled to the quiet shades of Princeton, where they might continue their discussions in peace. On commencement day the Congress adjourned to attend the exercises. Gen. George Washington was also present, as was likewise an English officer who had received permission to

go through the lines to travel for a while before the British troops finally evacuated New York. He was treated with every possible courtesy, and from his letter to a friend we have a description of the scene. Of course Washington had the seat of honour. The letter is so interesting for so many reasons that I insert here that portion of it which refers to Witherspoon and the commencement:

“DR. WETHERSPOON.—An account of the present face of things in America would be very defective, indeed, if no mention was made of this political firebrand, who perhaps had not a less share in the Revolution than Washington himself. He poisons the minds of his students, and through them, the Continent.

“He is the intimate friend of the General, and had I no other arguments to support my ideas of Washington’s designs, I think his intimacy with a man of so different a character of his own (for Washington’s private one is perfectly amiable), would justify my suspicions.

“The commencement was a favourable opportunity of conveying certain sentiments to the public at large (for even women were present) which it now becomes important to make them familiar with. This farce was evidently introductory to the drama that is to follow.

The great maxim which this commencement was to establish, was the following : ‘A time may come with every republic, and *that may be the case with America*, when anarchy makes it the duty of the man who has the majority of the people with him, to take the helm into his own hands in order to save his country ; and the person who opposes him deserves the utmost revenge of his nation—deserves—to be sent to *Nova Scotia*. *Vox populi, vox Dei!*’

“These were the very words of the moderator, who decided on the question was Brutus justifiable in killing Cæsar. Or they thought us all that heard them blockheads, or they were not afraid of avowing their designs. This was plainer English still than the confederation of the Cincinnati.

“When the young man who, with a great deal of passionate *claquere*, defended his favourite Brutus, extolled the virtues of the man who could stab even his father, when attempting the liberties of his country, I thought I saw Washington’s face clouded ; he did not dare to look the orator in the face, who stood just before him, but, with downcast look, seemed wishing to hide the impression which a subject that touched him so near, had, I thought, very visibly made in his countenance. But we are so

apt to read in the face what we suppose passes in the heart, maybe that this was the case with me. But if ever what I expect should happen, I shall think that moment one of the most interesting ones of my life.

“The orations of the younger boys were full of the coarsest invectives against British tyranny. I will do Mr. Wetherspoon the justice to think he was not the author of them, for they were too poor, indeed; besides, they evidently conveyed different sentiments; there was one of them not unfavourable to liberal sentiments even towards Britons. But upon the whole, it is but just to suppose that Wetherspoon had read them all.”

At this meeting of the trustees Dr. Wetherspoon was requested to ask Washington to sit for his portrait to be painted by the well-known artist, Charles Wilson Peale, “and 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.” Washington promised to accede to the request and his full-length portrait now hangs upon the south wall of the hall, in a room at present used as a museum of natural history, in which are also hung the portraits of the

presidents of the college. When Dr. Wither-  
spoon reported to the trustees that Washington  
would grant their request he added that the  
general had also given him fifty guineas for the  
college.

After the disheartening failure of the European  
mission a very strong plea was made to the  
American Presbyterian Church which was, after  
all, the best hope and surest support of the col-  
lege. A little money was realized from the sale  
of Rocky Hill lots and of land in Philadelphia,  
the legacy of Dr. William Shippen, a warm  
friend of the college. But as long as Wither-  
spoon lived and for many years afterwards the  
most perplexing question for the trustees was  
how to raise money enough. No college then or  
in our own day has always been fully maintained  
by the fees of the students. So that endowments  
whose income is intended for the maintenance  
of needy students does not greatly increase the  
efficiency of the college equipment or assist in  
the support of the teaching force. A generous  
legacy from a certain Leslie for this purpose,  
while welcomed by the church and the college  
did not help the solution of the financial prob-  
lem. In order to avoid confusion, as far as  
possible, the trustees, in 1786, finally made a  
rule that all money should pass through the

treasurer's hands, he to receive all fees, rents, donations and legacies and pay all bills, the salaries of the officers first of all. Thereafter the financial affairs of the college appeared in better order.

One of the causes of annoyance had been the necessity of renewing the furniture in the students' rooms, which had been originally provided by the college. The first step towards bringing this detail into some shape was taken in 1789, by the appointment of an inspector of rooms, whose duty it should be to take account of the furniture in each room, to prevent its removal from one room to another, and in general to assign rooms to the students. The system, or lack of it, hitherto in vogue had been a mild form of anarchy. The upper classmen selected the rooms which they preferred, sometimes ousting a freshman or a sophomore, appropriating the best pieces of furniture and bidding the unlucky under classmen shift for themselves. The unwritten rules of honour among the students forbade a boy to appeal to the college authorities. The boy who complained to the president at once lost caste. He found it best to submit until time gave him an opportunity to despoil those below him. The new rule of the trustees obliged a student to



keep the room assigned, and in 1791 the trustees ceased to provide furniture, each student being obliged to furnish his room himself. The assignment of rooms remained nominally in the hands of the faculty, but so deeply rooted had the custom become that to this day in Princeton College the students always find the way to avoid the college rule. If a senior wishes to sell his room he knows how to do so without an open violation of it. For a while the faculty tried to assess upon the whole student body the amount of any damage done by one or more of their number. But it was found impossible to enforce such a regulation which died of neglect. The number of students had increased rapidly since 1789. The country had begun to recover from the disastrous effects of the war. Free tuition afforded by the Leslie fund and others attracted boys, who, ambitious for an education, were unable to bear the expense of it. The graduating class of 1791 numbered twenty-five; the next year there were thirty-seven, the largest class in the history of the college up to this time.

For several years, however, Dr. Witherspoon had left the more exacting details of the administration to Professor Smith, who had been made vice-president in 1786. Six or seven

years before that he had removed to his farm about a mile and a half north of the college where, as he wrote to a friend in Scotland, he played the rôle of a scientific farmer. He was not a successful farmer. Nor was he fortunate in his land speculations in Vermont. Ever since the depressing failure of his European mission his health had been failing. In spite of this and the burdensome, often discouraging, aspect of the college, he brought his indomitable energy to the task. Upon him rested the care of the Presbyterian church in Princeton, although he had never been formally installed as its pastor, a statement which surprised the Presbytery when, in 1793, the congregation came up with a request for a duly installed pastor, Dr. Witherspoon having declined to serve them any longer in that capacity. Even as early as the sessions of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia John Adams thought Witherspoon's memory was failing. He had fallen in a faint several times as he was about to leave the pulpit. The amount of labour undertaken by him was enough to break down the strongest constitution. His duties in the college, always heavy, were supplemented by his services in the Continental Congress. He served upon many committees of Presbytery

and Synod and General Assembly. Although not more than seventy-two he could no longer sustain these labours. He was well enough to preside at the commencement of September, 1794, but died on the 14th of November following.

His service to the college had been incalculable. Although the least he did was for the financial endowment, that in itself was considerable when one reflects upon the scarcity of money in colonial times, its practical absence from public channels during the war, and the depreciation of the currency, the panic and stagnation in business which followed. A college, which sent the new president to the first meeting of his Presbytery in 1769 with the statement that the trustees feared it would have to be closed unless the money to carry it on were supplied, had been brought by this new president, undismayed, resolute, resourceful and energetic, into such a sound financial condition that it never again faced such a crisis. By his personal self-sacrifices of money, his patience in waiting for his own salary sometimes two or three years in arrears, by faithfully performing that most disagreeable duty of soliciting money from private individuals often strangers to himself, and whose respect and

admiration he won, "by journeyings often," never uttering a word of complaint or giving a sign of discouragement, this stranger in a strange land, practically saved the college from threatened bankruptcy, and in spite of war and financial depression in the land made it financially one of the strongest institutions in America.

Better than this, under Witherspoon's guidance, the educational facilities of the college were enlarged and its standards exalted. The purpose of its founders, to educate men for the ministry, was more than accomplished. From its halls there went a large proportion of men who achieved distinction in public life, in the learned professions and in business. It was a thoroughly democratic institution, Indians and free black men finding there an equal opportunity with Witherspoon's own sons and with boys from the best families in America. Many students whose usefulness in after life fully justified the practice, received their education as a free gift. Witherspoon was probably the most scholarly man in his church at the time, enjoying great fame as an author, regarded as a model writer with a clear and forceful style, having a wide acquaintance with literature, master of five languages, speaking

French and Latin as easily as English, and an authority in Greek and Hebrew. His theological writings had a wide circulation, bringing commendation from the universities of Europe as well as from his own church. John Adams called him "a clear and sensible preacher." Although not a great orator, he had no superior in the pulpit. All of these abilities he employed directly or indirectly in the service of Princeton.

### III

#### THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

IN quaint phrase the clerk of New Brunswick Presbytery records that when Witherspoon presented his credentials from Paisley Presbytery and asked to be received "the Presbytery did with the greatest cheerfulness receive him as a member with them." His first duty in the Presbytery was to urge the claims of Princeton College which he did with such force that the Presbytery pledged its members, in a long and earnest series of resolutions, to exert themselves in collecting money. With what success they did so, we have already seen. Except at an adjourned meeting held in Philadelphia a few days later, during the session of the Synod, Witherspoon did not attend Presbytery again until the spring of 1771. Such meetings required more time than the busy president could well spare so early in his connection with Princeton. The necessary journeys were made on horseback and Witherspoon made it a rule never to ride faster than a walk, for he was too corpulent for rapid riding. Until 1777 he was

absent from Presbytery almost as often as he was present, and he did not attend a single meeting from October, 1777, until October, 1781, being engaged at the Continental Congress during those four years. Of the twenty-six subsequent meetings he was present at twenty-four. These seemingly unimportant details I mention as showing how intimately he was identified with the work of his church. As a member of Presbytery he served upon several important committees, such as were appointed to straighten out the tangled affairs of churches at Trenton, Nolton and elsewhere, to install ministers, some of them young men from Scotland, for whose orthodoxy he became sponsor. He supplied vacant churches even during the four years of his absence from Presbytery, not only within the bounds of his own Presbytery, but beyond those, in New York and Pennsylvania. Twice he visited David Brainerd's school for the Indians and agreed to look after the education of those Indians who might be sent to Princeton. Although not the regularly installed pastor of the Princeton church he attended to all the duties of such an office in the town. Indeed until 1784 the Presbyterians worshipped in the college chapel, some of them having regularly assigned

pews for which they paid rent, and one of them, Mrs. Stockton, was permitted to build a pew to her own liking. After the people of the town had built a church for themselves upon land donated by the college, he continued to act as their pastor, as has already been stated. The difficulties faced by the church of that time were those ordinarily found in newly settled lands and were shared by government, commerce, education and society. Intercourse was necessarily slow. The postmaster's duties were light. The roads were soft and heavy. There was little money and its circulation sluggish. Populations shifted unsteadily so that a church which was hopefully strong one year went to pieces the next as the people followed the rumours of better lands to be had practically for the asking. The numbers of ministers could not at first keep pace with the number of settlements, some of which called earnestly for preaching, while others were indifferent; but all appealed to the church which made strenuous self-sacrificing and devoted efforts to follow the ramifying roads which penetrated the dangerous and difficult, but alluring, fascinating wilderness of rich soil. With what fidelity, even enthusiasm, the Presbyterian ministers laboured cannot be told within the limits of this



sketch. Witherspoon's most effective work for his church was done, of course, at Princeton where he lectured on Divinity and taught Hebrew to those students who intended to become ministers. But from New England to Virginia he preached by appointment of Synod, not merely to present the educational advantages and financial needs of the college, but in the discharge of his duties as a supply. In the cities large audiences greeted this "strong and sensible preacher" as John Adams called him, and in the country churches his visits were proportionately appreciated.

At that time the government of the Presbyterian Church was not so tight as it afterwards became. The Synod of New York and Philadelphia included most, but not all, of the Presbyteries in America. No formal declaration of principles of government or of creed had yet been made. The creed, to which every minister was obliged to assent, was the Westminster Confession of Faith, which was accepted also by the New England Congregationalists. Each Presbytery was independent of every other, and sometimes defied the Synod, reserving to itself the right to ignore it. The Synod was not a delegated body but was composed of all the ministers of all the Presby-

teries with a layman from each church. So that when the Synod met it not only represented the entire church; so far as the clergy were concerned it was the entire church, although the complaint was often made that many of the ministers absented themselves.

Witherspoon's first appearance in the Synod was at Philadelphia in May, 1769. He was more diligent in his attendance upon the meetings of Synod than upon those of Presbytery, missing only five of a possible twenty-seven, but being invariably late. Probably his horse did not walk at a very rapid gait. That was not an age of fret and haste. None the less was it an era of earnestness and intensity of conviction. Most tenaciously those ministers clung to their orthodoxy, but just as charitably did they regard other Christian churches, with the exception of the Roman Catholic and, possibly, the Episcopalian. They were alert to discover any sign of Roman encroachment, or any threat of Episcopal domination. Of the former there was never any great danger, even when George III confirmed the Catholic Church in its long established rights in Canada. But of Episcopal supremacy there was no little dread, if no great danger. Other writers have called attention to the attempts of the estab-

lished Church of England to include the colonies in its jurisdiction, as Gladstone a century later partially enabled it to accomplish in other English colonies. The feeling on this point is made clear in a hitherto unpublished letter of Witherspoon, written in 1772 to secure the aid of a Scotch peer in obtaining a charter for a corporation fostered by the Presbyterians of America. Its story may be told here. The corporation was known at that time as the Widow's Fund and was in its essential features a life insurance society, which, if I am not mistaken, afterwards became what is claimed to be the oldest life insurance company in America, The Presbyterian Minister's Fund. Its affairs came before the Synod almost every year, Witherspoon being frequently a member of the committee appointed to examine its accounts. The ministers and laymen who composed the corporation, Witherspoon being one of them, had endeavoured in vain to secure a charter from the royal governor of New Jersey, William T. Franklin. One had been granted by Pennsylvania early in 1759, but a charter granted by one province did not entitle a corporation to the benefit of the laws of another. It was necessary to obtain a charter in New Jersey. The letter, which follows, entire,

throws light upon the ecclesiastical rivalries of the time.

“My Lord, though I have not the honour of being personally known to your Lordship, I am encouraged to this application by your character which has been long known to me. As to myself, I shall only say that after having been twenty-three years in the ministry of the Church of Scotland, I was persuaded to remove to America to take the charge of a college with a royal charter in this province. By the goodness of God, the friends of the college and the number of scholars have increased since I came here beyond even our most sanguine expectations. There are at this time under my tuition young gentlemen of the first fortune and expectations from almost every province on the continent, as well as several of the West India Islands.

“This I only mention briefly by way of introduction to the chief subject of my address. Your Lordship may please therefore to know, that in all the middle colonies from Maryland northward, the Presbyterians are a great majority and including the other subdivisions of non-Episcopals, Baptists, Quakers, etc., are to the Episcopalians at least ten to one in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York, and

possibly twenty to one in New England. Yet in all the royal governments the most illiberal and unjust partiality prevails in favour of the Church of England. This is the more shameful that Pennsylvania is before their eyes, which though the last settled of any of them is already greatly superior to them, not in numbers and value of land merely, by the principles of its settlement and in a particular manner by the equal and impartial support it gives to every religious denomination. Every religious society there has the rights, including property, of a corporation.

“In this province though the non-Episcopals are so great a majority and though the lower house of assembly consists of a majority of Presbyterians, yet it is impossible to obtain a charter for any Presbyterian society. While any inconsiderable number of Episcopalians, though utterly unable to maintain a minister, but having a minister from the London Society, can obtain everything of that kind they see proper to ask, and though they sometimes grant such favours even to small societies of Baptists and Dutch with the politic view of alienating them from the Presbyterians with whom by principles they are otherwise connected.

“To get charters for houses of worship we have long despaired of, but lately applied to the governor for a charter of incorporation to raise a fund for the support of the widows and children of Presbyterian ministers; the council recommended to him to pass it on two conditions, that it should be wholly confined to the charity and made accountable to the governor and council. These we readily complied with, never having had any other view but the charity, and being of opinion that any manager of a charity should be willing to account to the whole world. Yet though the governor at first seemed to be friendly he has all along put it off, and not daring, we suppose, to refuse it himself lest he should provoke the assembly of the province, he has sent it over by the last packet to ask advice in England upon the subject. As it is possible, a partial representation may accompany it and by party influence it may be rejected at home, as was done in a similar case of a charter to a Presbyterian church in New York, I could not think of any person so proper to apply to as your Lordship, of whose regard for religion in general, and attachment to the Church of Scotland, I have had so many proofs.

“ May I therefore beg the favour of your Lord-

ship if it can possibly comport with your conveniency to attend the Privy Council when this matter comes before them. The equity and justice of the demand is such that I cannot easily divine what will be offered against it. I can know of nothing on this side of the water but resentment against the Presbyterians for opposing the coming over of a bishop. As to this province there has not been to my knowledge any disturbance upon this subject, but whatever has been said or written in any other province, I can assure your Lordship, arises entirely from an apprehension of its influence upon these our civil and religious liberties, and not from any narrowness of mind in matters of faith or worship. This may be clearly seen from the late transactions in Virginia, where the laity of the Episcopal persuasion are making a fiercer opposition to the measure than ever was made in colonies consisting chiefly of Presbyterians. But supposing improper liberties to have been taken in speeches or writing by a few particulars, in which they have been far outdone by their adversaries. Can it have any other effect than to exasperate the evil to treat so great a body with partiality and injustice?

“In the government of Pennsylvania the Episcopalians and Presbyterians have each of

them such charters as are desired, and the Episcopalians have in this government, and in New York, and indeed wherever they have applied for it.

“I am unwilling to detain your Lordship by long reasoning or tedious narratives unless I knew beforehand that it were agreeable ; but as American affairs seem now to be of some importance in the government of Great Britain, if your Lordship desires information on the state of this country with respect to politics, religion, professions, trade or cultivation, as I live in the centre of it, equally distant from the cities of New York and Philadelphia, and have now a very considerable connection with many gentlemen of weight in all the provinces, I flatter myself I am able and shall certainly be very willing to inform you.

“There are now under my care many who in a very short time will be at the head of affairs in their several provinces, and I have already and shall continue to temper the spirit of liberty which breathes high in this country, with just sentiments, not only of loyalty to our excellent sovereign, in which they do not seem to be defective, but with a love of order, and an aversion to that outrage and sedition into which



the spirit of liberty, when not reined, is sometimes apt to degenerate.

“If your Lordship should be in Scotland when this letter reaches you it will certainly be in your power by a letter to prevent the prohibition of our charter by the influence of party and the inattention by persons of high rank to things of this nature. I have written the above entirely of my own proper motion, and shall not communicate it to any person whatever till I know of its effects.”

Witherspoon and Elihu Spencer, pastor at Trenton, were the applicants for the charter, the trustees named including other Presbyterians and, as he says in his letter, Governor Franklin himself. The application was successful, in spite of the half-hearted letter of Governor Franklin, and his slurs at the Presbyterians which might have defeated it. In November, 1774, Witherspoon thanked the noble earl for his influence in another letter, entreating Lord Marchmont to exert it again in securing a charter for a church in New York, which was likewise successful, although Franklin had written that it was inexpedient to grant the Presbyterians any further privileges.

Both of these letters give us an inside view

of the ecclesiastical situation in America, where the coming of a bishop was eagerly demanded by the Episcopalians and as ardently opposed by the Presbyterians.

As a member of the Synod, Witherspoon took a foremost place, willingly performing such duties as were assigned to him. The mission to the Indians received attention every year. This was in charge of John Brainerd, a brother of the celebrated David Brainerd, whose untimely death, in 1747, had been a severe loss to the church in its work among the savages. John Brainerd did not show the hot enthusiasm of his brother, but he laboured faithfully as long as he lived, not only among the Indians, but also among the white settlers, having seven regular preaching stations. He conducted a school for the Indians every summer, and often throughout the year. Witherspoon's interest in work among the Indians had been shown long before in Scotland. In America it was not diminished. He inspected the school, and later, as treasurer of the Synod, an office which he held from 1773 till 1789, he transmitted the money annually voted for Brainerd's support. Even in the exciting year of 1776 he was made chairman of the committee on the Indian school, although he had leave of absence

from Synod, sitting at Philadelphia, May 22d, to attend the meeting of the Assembly of New Jersey, which a few weeks later sent him to the Continental Congress.

At that time the American Presbyterian church followed a custom of the Church of Scotland in appointing a commission to attend to the business of the Synod, carrying out its orders, hearing complaints, settling difficulties and acting with all the authority of the Synod itself. Witherspoon often served on this commission. By some of the ministers its usefulness was questioned. These brought in a motion designed to test its continuance in 1774, but the Synod voted to continue it. It appears, however, to have been permitted to die, none having been appointed after 1783.

The session of the Synod usually began at nine o'clock. About one adjournment was taken for dinner, a function so important that the afternoon session did not begin until three, but lasted until candlelight. The luckless committee on overtures, annually appointed after 1769, was ordered to meet at six o'clock in the morning, to prepare whatever might be submitted to it for the meeting of the Synod at nine. This committee, which saved so much time to the Synod, was the beginning of a

method followed by the church assemblies with great success, and is an essential adjunct of deliberative bodies when speedy work is desired.

With other Protestant churches in the colonies, the Presbyterian was on the best of terms. As yet there were few Methodists. The eloquent fervour of Whitfield had roused the slumbering fire of the Presbyterians twenty years before Witherspoon's arrival in America, and the preaching of Jonathan Edwards was not yet forgotten. The Congregationalists of New England differed from the Presbyterians in only one particular, that of church government. Both churches received the Westminster Confession of Faith. Delegates from the Presbyterian Synod sat in the general convention of the New England church. Witherspoon was frequently a delegate to this gathering. He was thus brought into touch with the men of New England, and we have already learned that some of them gave him money for the college, and others sent their sons to Princeton. This close intercourse between the two churches was kept up for many years. Four or five times Witherspoon was a delegate to the general convention. In 1792 the committee of correspondence, of which he was a member, re-

ported a suggestion of the joint convention which tended to relieve friction, and even to promote union. As a result of this, each church appointed three members to sit in the highest court of the other without the right to vote, although this right was mutually conceded in 1795. Witherspoon, ever active in any plan to promote union, was one of the first three delegates chosen, and attended the meeting, co-operating heartily with Timothy Dwight, whose efforts among the Congregationalists equalled his own among the Presbyterians. The mutual arrangement continued in operation until the division of the Presbyterian Church, in 1837, into the Old and New School branches.

This is not the only evidence of his desire to bring about a union of the Reformed churches in America. In 1784 a committee had been appointed to meet the classis of the Dutch Reformed church at New Brunswick to compromise some differences. The Dutch brethren were uneasy about the orthodoxy and conduct of some ministers of the New York Presbytery. This church was at that time one of the strictest Protestant churches. Witherspoon had many friends among its ministers and members, some of whom were trustees of Princeton college. Before coming to America he had visited Hol-

land, where he received a gift of books for the library, and on his less fortunate visit in 1783, he enlisted the sympathy of his friends in the Low Countries. It will be remembered that he had been invited to become pastor of a church in Rotterdam. He was just the man to bring about closer relations. The conference, which met at New York October 5, 1785, was joined by representatives of the associate Reformed Church with which, through Witherspoon, some correspondence had been irregularly kept up since 1769, the year after his arrival in America. Much was done to bring about closer relations. Each church agreed to maintain its creed for the sake of the other two, so that no unworthy minister might pass from one to either of the others. A later agreement brought about that mutual confidence which has continued ever since, by which the ministers and members of the several churches are cordially and freely recognized on the common basis of Christian faith. It is to be regretted that the devoted efforts of such men as Witherspoon and his associates did not result in a formal union which at this distance of time would seem to have been so easy and desirable.

For many years whatever could be done to preserve the union of Protestantism and main-

tain close relations with foreign churches, was entrusted to certain members of the Synod. Witherspoon was usually one of the committee to prepare the draft of the letter sent almost every year, and he looked after the letters to Scotland and France, sometimes also that to Holland.

The American Church found it necessary to guard its congregations against unworthy ministers from abroad. Scotland and Ireland seem to have furnished the larger share of these. Clergymen who had been deposed for heresy, immorality, drunkenness or conduct unbecoming the calling, or any other for that matter, came to the colonies, told a smooth story of having lost their credentials or even presented forged credentials. Sometimes a foreign Presbytery was suspected of having given a good character to some pestiferous fellow merely to get rid of him, although that was never proven. It was necessary to examine these men, and as Witherspoon was fairly well acquainted with the clergy of the Scotch church, this duty often fell to him. Occasionally a young licentiate brought letters of introduction from Witherspoon's friends. The house at Princeton was a mecca for many a Scotch lad. For some of these he secured churches and, as in the case of

Rev. Walter Monteith, who became pastor at New Brunswick, he preached the installation sermon. Once during the confusion of the war, when he could not wait upon the uncertainty of a meeting of the Synod or Presbytery, he gave a letter of general good standing to a young minister who went to the Carolinas and proved himself worthy of Witherspoon's good words in his favour. It may seem strange to us that clergymen from abroad applied in the first instance to the Synod. But the Synod frequently acted in a Presbyterian capacity, assigning supplies to vacant churches, as when Witherspoon was ordered to preach for Mr. Azel Roe in New York. Another time he was sent to Bucks County, Pennsylvania, to preach and collect money for the college. Ministers who offered their credentials to the Synod were ordered to connect themselves with a Presbytery, but were frequently sent on evangelistic journeys through the territory covered by several of the frontier Presbyteries. Some members of Synod were so fearful of unorthodox and unworthy ministers that in 1773 an overture was passed forbidding the Presbyteries to receive a minister or give him any appointment until the Synod should pass upon his credentials. Some members dissented against the overture, but their objections



were withdrawn when Synod agreed that it should not apply to ministers from any part of America, and was later amended so as to permit Presbyteries to employ the foreign clergymen in vacant churches, but not to admit them to full membership until Synod approved. Witherspoon fully approved of these watchful measures. When the Synod reversed itself on the question the next year, he with six others protested against the reversal so strongly that a new overture, covering the disputed points, was adopted. It urged Presbyteries to be very careful in receiving ministers from abroad, and not to be satisfied with formal credentials, but to require also personal letters, and further directed the Presbyteries to bring these credentials and letters to the Synod following the reception, that they might be fully examined by the Synod. This overture saved the authority of the Presbytery of which many ministers were jealous, but guarded the church against the danger so much dreaded by men like Witherspoon. His zeal for orthodoxy almost made him forget the freedom for which he had contended in Scotland.

When the Synod met at New York, May, 1775, the colonies had already entered upon the struggle which has ever since been called the

American Revolution. Presbyterians, almost to a man, sided with the colonies. The exceptions we shall have occasion to note as we follow Witherspoon's course in the struggle. It may be said here, however, that those exceptions did not include a single Presbyterian minister. All of them espoused the cause of the colonists, many of them became chaplains and a few raised companies of troops which they led to battle. In view of the serious aspect of public affairs the Synod thought it prudent to issue a pastoral letter to their people. Its preparation was committed to seven ministers of whom Witherspoon was the first mentioned. While it is fatuous praise to attribute the whole composition of the letter to him, it is equally impossible to overlook the many instances of entire sentences which are duplicated in sermons and addresses by him written before this time.

After urging the people to remember their dependence on God and to turn to Him with sincere repentance, the letter, noting the fact that "hostilities, long feared, have now taken place," declares that "if the British ministry shall continue to enforce their claims by violence, a lasting and bloody contest must be expected." Ardently had the ministers hoped that the unhappy differences might have been

accommodated ; none of them had ever, either in the pulpit or public press, inflamed the minds of the people. But protestations of this sort could not conceal the real sentiments of Witherspoon and his associates, he especially being already known as "an ardent friend of liberty" in America, and suspected of being "a turncoat and traitor" in England. The letter itself goes on to say, "Let every one who from generosity of spirit or benevolence of heart offers himself as a champion in his country's cause, be persuaded to reverence the name and walk in the fear of the Prince of the kings of the earth." Then they offer some further advices. First that every opportunity be taken to express their "attachment and respect to our sovereign King George, and to the revolution principles by which his august family was seated on the British throne." Here appears that point in the American contention which has so often been emphasized. "It gives us the greatest pleasure to say, from our own certain knowledge of all belonging to our communion, and from the best means of information, of the far greatest part of all denominations in this country, that the present opposition to the measures of administration does not in the least arise from disaffection to the king, nor

a desire of separation from the parent state." The people are exhorted "to continue in the same disposition." But when the letter was read in open session of the Synod, Mr. Halsey, one of the committee, dissented from these declarations of allegiance.

Then the people are urged not only to treat with respect the Continental Congress then in session, and to encourage them in their difficult service, but to adhere firmly to their resolutions, "and let it be seen that they are able to bring out the whole strength of this vast country to carry them into execution." To guard carefully their morals, conscientiously pay their just debts, cherish a spirit of humanity and mercy since "that man will fight most bravely, who never fights till it is necessary, and who ceases to fight as soon as the necessity is over," and to continue in the habit of prayer are the suggestions of this pastoral letter. The last Thursday of June was appointed as a general fast day with the proviso that if the Continental Congress appoint another day the congregations should observe it instead. On Friday, May 17th, the day selected by the Congress, Witherspoon preached a sermon which will be noticed in another place.

The next year when the Synod met in Phila-

delphia, May 22d, Witherspoon did not arrive until half-past three in the afternoon and at nine the next morning was excused, going at once to the meeting of the committee of correspondence of Somerset County by which he was elected a delegate to the Congress of New Jersey. As the Synod met in Philadelphia in 1777, New York being an impossibility because of the presence of the British, Witherspoon, who was attending the Continental Congress, left that body long enough to sit in the Synod, and make his treasurer's report. In 1778 the Synod could sit neither in New York nor Philadelphia, those cities being in possession of the British. By the advice of several ministers the moderator advertised in the newspapers that the Synod would meet at Bedminster, Somerset County, N. J. Witherspoon, at York, Pa., whither the Congress had fled as the British approached Philadelphia, was not able to attend the Synod. But the next year, Philadelphia having finally got rid of the British, and the Congress having returned to the State House in Independence Square, he could easily walk across to the First Church, where he reported that he had "lately received a legacy, left by the Rev. Mr. Diodati Johnson, of New England, to be deposited with this Synod at their disposal, and that there is now

in his hands three hundred and thirty-two pounds, twelve shillings, belonging to the Synod." The Synod, whose funds were in gold and silver, still spoke of pounds and shillings, but the Congress spoke of dollars and cents. The exact sum left by Mr. Johnson was not stated by Witherspoon in his report, and the next year Mr. Spencer was ordered to ask the Doctor how much it was and report at the next Synod if the treasurer should not be present. Mr. Spencer reported that according to the treasurer's account the legacy amounted to two hundred and seventy-eight pounds, three shillings and fourpence, and after paying bills by order of Synod he had two hundred and thirty-nine pounds, three shillings and four pence, "together with fifty-four pounds, nine shillings, five and a half-pence, the good money above mentioned" as a balance due the Synod. Dr. Witherspoon, who was present, confirmed the correctness of the report. Little business was transacted. Reports of the distressing condition of the country, of a few ordinations and censures, fill up the brief minutes. Dr. Sproat, pastor of the church in which the Synod was meeting, was ordered to draw upon the treasurer for three dollars specie to pay the janitor. The year before they had paid him two hundred

dollars paper money. The stated clerk received forty shillings specie for transcribing the minutes. These bills were paid out of "the good money above mentioned."

Comparatively few ministers attended the Synod for several years. Entire Presbyteries, as many as four or five at a time were noted as absent. The Synod recommended to the Presbyteries, in view of the scarcity of money and the increased price of living, as well as the meagre salaries of the ministers, that some measures be taken for paying the expenses of those who attend Synod. But the evil was not abated, less than half the ministers being present at any meeting until the formation of the General Assembly. Some of the Presbyteries were too remote for a journey which must be made on horseback and required, in some instances, two weeks at least, and in others more than that. An elder could not leave his business. If he was a farmer he could not afford to be away from the farm at the busiest season of the year. Many of the elders were as poor as their ministers. Not until the Synods covered a smaller territory and met at more convenient places could the members attend with regularity. Witherspoon himself, living midway between New York and

Philadelphia, where the Synod met alternately, could better afford to attend than almost any other member. Although usually tardy he was seldom absent altogether. Every year, except in the midst of the war, he was appointed upon the committee to dispose of the funds in the hands of the college for the education of "poor and pious youth," the committee usually meeting at Princeton on commencement day. During the latter part of the war he consented to serve on the commission and even to supply vacant churches.

In 1782, probably at Witherspoon's suggestion, a committee of three, himself the chairman, brought in a letter to the minister of France. I give here a copy of the original in Witherspoon's handwriting. "The Synod of New York and Philadelphia beg leave to address your Excellency on the auspicious birth of a Dauphin of France and by your means to communicate to your sovereign the interest which they take in every event with which his honour, or happiness, is connected. They have the rather chosen to embrace the opportunity offered them by their being met at this particular season that they might counteract the insidious designs of the common enemy and defeat the attempts now making to divide in



order to destroy us. It is their wish therefore that this address may be considered as a public testimony of their approbation of the French Alliance and their sense of the advantages which America has already derived and still hopes to receive from it. They will not cease to pray to the God of all grace that the illustrious ally of these States and his posterity to the latest ages may be distinguished at home and abroad as the supporters of liberty and justice, as the friends of mankind and deliverers of the oppressed." Witherspoon was one of the committee who accompanied the moderator to present the letter. He was personally acquainted with the French minister, having several times acted as interpreter for the Congress in the negotiations between France and America, and served on the committee of foreign affairs.

An affair of quite another sort engaged the attention of the Synod the next year. It appears that in 1781 a declaration of tolerance had been entered upon the minutes but in 1782, had been expunged. For some reason other denominations, especially the Episcopalian and some Methodists, had accused the Presbyterians of intolerance. The Synod felt called upon to declare that, "It having been represented

to the Synod that the Presbyterian Church suffers greatly in the opinion of other denominations from an apprehension that they hold intolerant principles, the Synod do solemnly and publicly declare that they ever have and still do renounce and abhor the principles of intolerance; and we do believe that every peaceable member of civil society ought to be protected in the full and free exercise of their religion." It is perfectly absurd to suppose that the Presbyterians had any idea of attempting to urge upon Congress or any state the establishment of Presbyterianism. The mere charge of intolerance is easy to make. Firmness of conviction and maintenance of belief does not prove a man intolerant. It is quite true that what those men of the Synod believed they believed with all their heart and preached with all their might. But they did not dispute the right of others to believe differently.

One notes in the minutes of this year Witherspoon's influence in having the most important actions of Synod printed and sent to the members that thus "the whole body may be brought to operate with concert and vigour and that none may have ignorance as a plea for the neglect of duty." Twice he was on the

committee to print these and the custom of issuing the minutes of the General Assembly is due largely to his influence.

More important than anything else acted upon by the Synod of 1783 was the draft of a pastoral letter which Witherspoon helped to make. The immediate reason and the one given in the minutes for preparing it, was found in the difficulties under which gospel ministers labour for want of a liberal maintenance from the congregations they serve, but a pastoral letter may cover more ground than the salaries of the ministers. The war had closed with the triumph of the American arms. Independence had been won after long and severe years. This pastoral letter, like that of 1776, could not avoid reference to the war. It shows the same religious feeling, the same patriotic spirit. "We cannot help congratulating you," say these ministers (of course they couldn't; some of them had fought in the war), "on the general and almost universal attachment of the Presbyterian body to the cause of liberty and the rights of mankind. This has been visible in their conduct, and has been confessed by the complaints and resentment of the common enemy. Such a circumstance ought not only to afford us satisfaction on the review as

bringing credit to the body in general, but to increase our gratitude to God for the happy issue of the war. Had it been unsuccessful we must have drunk deeply of the cup of suffering. Our burnt and wasted churches, and our plundered dwellings, in such places as fell under the power of our adversaries, are but an earnest of what we must have suffered had they finally prevailed."

Bibles were very scarce in America in 1783. Before the war efforts had been made by the Synod and several Presbyteries to supply the lack of them. There were few printing houses in America to publish them. As soon after the Declaration of Independence as practicable, Aitken, of Philadelphia, and Collins, editor of the *New Jersey Gazette*, and state printer, had made impressions of the Bible. The Presbytery of New Jersey, urged by Witherspoon, had recommended the people to patronize Mr. Collins. In 1783 the Synod in session at Philadelphia "Ordered, That every member of this body shall use his utmost influence in the congregation under his inspection, and in the vacancies contiguous to them to raise contributions for the purchasing of Bibles." Three Philadelphia ministers were charged with the duty of obtaining the Bibles with the money collected

and sending them to the most needy districts. "And as Mr. Aitken, from laudable motives, and with great expense, hath undertaken and executed an elegant impression of the Holy Scriptures, which, on account of the importation of Bibles from Europe, will be very injurious to his temporal circumstances: Synod further agree, that the above committee shall purchase Bibles of the said impression and no other, and earnestly recommend it to all to purchase such in preference to any other." So far as I know this is the first protective act passed by any American legislative body since the Declaration of Independence, and it is indicative of the temper of the people at the time. How effective it was I cannot say. Two years later the Synod felt obliged to renew the recommendation as to the collection for the purchase of Bibles.

In spite of the war, and in some respects because of it, Presbyterians had increased in America. There was, of course, very little immigration. Statistics are not to be had. But the frontier had been penetrated and pushed further west and south. New Presbyteries had been formed. The Synod was too large and too cumbersome. Members of remote Presbyteries were unable to attend.

There was, however, a spirit of union stronger than ever before. The church had won great prestige for itself as the friend of liberty. Some other churches envied the Presbyterians their popularity, strength and influence. The ministers who came to Philadelphia in 1786 were ready to hear the report of Witherspoon and others who had been appointed to "take into consideration the constitution of the Church of Scotland and other Protestant churches, and agreeably to the general principles of Presbyterian government, compile a system of general rules for the government" of the church, and also to act upon an overture which had been sent to the Presbyteries the year before to divide the Synod into three or more and form a General Assembly. It appears, however, that an overture did not mean then what it means now. It was not sent down for the adoption or rejection of the Presbyteries. It was nothing more than a notice to the Presbyteries that such action was intended at the next Synod. The charge has been made that the Synod acted beyond its just rights. Only a minority were present, it is true, probably less than one-fourth of the ministers, and only about a dozen elders. But every Presbytery had received notice and every minister knew what was going

to be done. The Synod of 1786 did not exceed its delegated powers in the case. The very day, Friday, May 19th, had been stated in the notice sent to the Presbytery as the time when the question would be considered. Ministers who stayed away probably felt that the work would be done quite as well without them as with them. It was not indifference that kept them away, but a physical inability to attend.

No difference of opinion is mentioned. The only amendment made to the motion that the Synod be divided into three was that it be divided into three or more. The reason given was the number and extent of the churches under their care and the inconvenience of the present mode of government. That inconvenience had been felt for many years, and the new form of governing the church would be heartily welcomed by the hard worked ministers, who would be brought into closer relations with each other under three or more Synods than was possible under one. And the motion appears to have passed without a dissenting vote.

At this time the question of union with the Dutch Reformed and Seceder Churches came up again. The Synod instructed its delegates, of whom Witherspoon was one, to inform the other churches of the proposed action of the

Presbyterians to enlarge their form of government and to assure those churches of the continued friendliness of the Presbyterians, but that the question of union could more properly be considered after the proposed changes were made.

The committee appointed to report upon a constitution had not completed their work. As one means of facilitating the work of reorganization each Presbytery was ordered to lay before the Synod the next year an accurate list of their settled ministers in the order of their seniority, with the places of their residence; and also of the probationers, and vacant congregations, under their care. And in order to prevent irregularity, uncertainty and waste of time, that each Presbytery draw up their report in writing and appoint a member to deliver it to the Synod. So began a custom which has continued without any change ever since.

What had been done almost every year and would be done for many years to come was done this year, 1787. It makes one wonder what the members of Synod thought of themselves in acknowledging annually not merely that, in the language of another church, they had done those things they ought not to have done and left undone those things they ought



to have done, but to record in their minutes that they viewed with serious concern the decay of vital religion and the prevalence of immorality, and appointed a day of solemn fasting, humiliation and prayer. Yet these sober faced men were not morbid pessimists. They were on the other hand hopeful enthusiasts. They had helped to create a great nation; were soon to assist in forming a strong government upon the deep and eternal foundations of humanity and righteousness. They believed in God and a straight rifle-barrel, especially those who lived on the frontier. Cities grew by their genius, and the face of nature changed under their hands from a wilderness, peopled by savages and wild beasts, to commonwealths of power, learning and enterprise.

When the Assembly met the next year copies of "the draught of a plan of government" had already been distributed to the Presbyteries which had time to act upon it, if they thought proper, and after a few items of routine business had been cleared from the docket the several Presbyteries were ordered to bring in their observations upon the proposed constitution. Each Presbytery in turn gave its report. Witherspoon wrote the Introduction. The time-worn, slightly faded, but easily legible

copy of the preliminary principles in his hand, which is before me as I write, differs in very slight verbal particulars from the printed sections which compose the first chapter of the present constitution. The first sentence of the introductory paragraph has been changed, but the few alterations made by the Synod in the seven sections have in no case modified the ideas which Witherspoon conceived to be those for the maintenance of which the Presbyterian Church justifies its existence. They express his personal conviction, having first been drawn up by himself alone, then submitted to his colleagues on the committee and finally passed upon by the church at large. It would be fatuous to claim that Witherspoon originated these ideas, it would be false to deny that he believed them. None the less is credit due to him for the greatness of these truths whose value he recognized and which he expressed so simply and forcibly. He declares that God alone is Lord of the conscience and hath left it free from the doctrines or commandments of men. Therefore he considers the right of private judgment, in all matters that regard religion, as universal and inalienable. Here is none of the intolerance so frequently charged against Presbyterians of Witherspoon's stamp.

He repudiates any desire to see any religion established by the State. He believes in a free church as well as a free State. In perfect consistency with this principle, and, he might have added, because of it, every Christian church is entitled to prescribe the terms of admission into it, even though they may mistake in making the terms too lax or too narrow; but even in this case they do not encroach on the rights of others but err in the use or abuse of their own. Here is frank confession; here is no claim to infallibility, no spirit of absolutism. Such a church, nevertheless has a right, should exercise the duty, of censuring the erroneous and casting out the scandalous. Even the civil government deals thus with its offenders. Witherspoon had contended all his life that, as he expressed it in Scotland, "Truth is in order to goodness." Those doctrines are valuable and true which form good character and lead to right conduct. The connection is inseparable between faith and practice. In conformity with his belief in the right of private judgment he declares that all ecclesiastical authority is derived ultimately from the people. And, on the other hand, no church court ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority. Tyranny and

absolutism are abhorrent to this high-minded lover of liberty. His last principle is that since all discipline must be purely moral and spiritual in its object and not attended with any temporal effect it can derive no force whatever but from its own justice, the approbation of an impartial public, and the countenance and blessing of Christ.

These are the principles which Presbyterians had advocated from the beginning, which, now so concisely and plainly expressed by Witherspoon, became the unchanged law of the church for its unfolding life of a century and a quarter. So simple and clear are these vigorous sentences that no further explanation of them is necessary.

Following them, in the constitution of the church, are those details of organization known as Presbyterian, which call for no further recital here. The American church followed in the main the constitution of the established church of Scotland, which had been the ecclesiastical law of that land for two hundred and fifty years.

It is interesting to note, in the record of the discussion, that almost the only thing of importance that interrupted the proceedings of the Synod, was a case of discipline appealed from

the church of Nola Chuckey in the Presbytery of Hanover, Virginia. It is an example of the workings of the Presbyterian system, and the intricate questions involved were fittingly referred to a committee consisting of the ablest men of the Synod, Witherspoon, author of the principles just enacted into the law of the church, Drs. Sproat, Rodgers, Ewing, Duffield and McWhorter, men whose work for Presbyterianism, and the independence of the colonies, gave to the litigants every confidence in their impartial judgment. Three of these men had been chaplains in the Continental army, one of the Continental Congress, and Witherspoon a prominent member of that body. Into the labyrinth of this story of protest, appeal, mob and riot, political discussion, individual rights, defamation of character and breach of discipline, I do not propose to lead the reader. The parties were present and appeared before this committee whose comprehensive report to Synod shows how wisely and tactfully these experienced men dealt with the question so slight in the historical view, so momentous for the persons concerned. The opponents shook hands, accepted the advice of the committee and the decision of the Synod, and went back to Virginia in peace.

Although there is no record of Witherspoon's

personal opinion of slavery, it is fair to infer what he thought from his concurrence in a resolution adopted by this Synod of 1787. The committee of overtures, of which he was not a member, had brought in a resolution stating that "The Creator of the world having made of one flesh all the children of men . . . the Synod recommend, in the warmest terms, to every member of their body, to do everything in their power consistent with the rights of civil society, to promote the abolition of slavery, and the instruction of negroes, whether bond or free." It was late on Saturday afternoon when this was read by the clerk, too late for a full discussion of such an important resolution. It lay over until Monday. On that day a new resolution embodying the same ideas was introduced and passed unanimously, declaring that the Synod highly approve of the interest which many of the states have taken in promoting the abolition of slavery. Then follow those clauses, the sensible principle of which might well have been recognized by the radical politicians who passed the fifteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States. For, had it been recognized, the country might have been saved from the bitterness of sectional rancour and the extreme reaction of disfranchisement which ex-

perience has made necessary if the government of the former slaveholding states is to be kept safe and stable and pure. The Synod wisely go on to say, "yet, inasmuch as men introduced from a servile state to a participation of all the privileges of civil society, without a proper education; and without previous habits of industry, may be in many respects dangerous to the community, therefore they earnestly recommend it to all the members belonging to their communion to give those persons who are at present held in servitude, such good education as to prepare them for the better enjoyment of freedom," and they further recommended masters to encourage their slaves' aspiration for freedom and to "use the most prudent measures to procure eventually the final abolition of slavery in America." We know how fatuous was the hope of abolition; nevertheless it was the part of wisdom in those states where abolition was accomplished to bring it about gradually and not to confer the franchise wholesale on people incapable of using the privilege to good advantage.

Of quite another sort was the very next action of the Synod. The doctrines of universal salvation were being propagated. These the Synod viewed with alarm, and expressed their

utter abhorrence of such doctrines, which they regarded as subversive of the fundamental principles of religion and morality, and warned their people against the introductions of such tenets. Witherspoon fully shared this abhorrence, and it is not impossible that he was the author of this resolution.

The Westminster Confession of Faith was the creed of the American Presbyterian church. Not the least change in its theology was for a moment contemplated by the Synod. But it was necessary to revise those sections of the confession which set forth the relation of church and state. The confession had been adopted originally by the established church of Great Britain, and had remained, since 1647, the creed of the Church of Scotland. No establishment of religion was intended in America, and the revised sections merely state the well-known principles of religious liberty which Presbyterians have always maintained in America, and for which, in essence, Witherspoon had contended in Scotland.

The next year the whole of the Form of Government, Book of Discipline, Confession of Faith and Catechisms were gone over again, in full, except that chapter of the directory dealing with church censures which was referred to



Dr. Witherspoon, Dr. Smith and the moderator to revise and lay before the General Assembly. The same committee were appointed to revise the section relating to public prayer and prayers used on other occasions, without being again considered by the Synod, and to have it printed along with the constitution, so that this may be regarded practically as Witherspoon's work. After finally approving and ratifying their two years' work and attending to some minor items of business the Synod resolved that the first meeting of the General Assembly should be held in the Second Church of Philadelphia, to be opened with a sermon by Dr. Witherspoon, or in his absence by Dr. Rodgers.

The text of Witherspoon's sermon at the opening of the Assembly was 1 Cor. 3:7, "So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth: but God that giveth the increase." Then Dr. John Rodgers was chosen moderator. He immediately made Witherspoon the head of a committee to examine the credentials of the members, and likewise appointed a committee on bills and overtures. These two items attended to, the first motion considered by the newly organized Assembly was that an address be presented to the President of the United States. George

Washington had been inaugurated just twenty-one days before and the Synod embraced the earliest opportunity to present him a congratulatory address. Other churches did likewise and to all of them he replied. The address of the Presbyterians prepared by Witherspoon is not long, for such a document, recognizing the country's debt to Washington and congratulating the country upon his election. It is the dignified and fitting tribute of a great church to a great man.

Witherspoon was not a member of the Assembly of 1790, but in 1791 was appointed chairman of a committee to devise means to prepare a history of the church. But it does not appear that the committee ever did anything. His name is mentioned only three times in the minutes of 1792, first as having, as usual, arrived late, second as being appointed one of the committee to confer with the Congregationalists, and lastly as appointed to supply the pulpit at Elizabethtown the last Sabbath in July, and Mr. Snowden's pulpit the third Sabbath in June. The General Assembly acted in a Presbyterial capacity in this way for several years. In 1794 Witherspoon appeared for the last time at a meeting of the General Assembly. But the minutes do not indicate that he took

any part in the proceedings. The last ecclesiastical gathering he attended was a meeting of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia at New York, October 21, 1794. He died less than a month afterwards.

From the notices of his associates one gains the impression that most of them regarded him with a feeling that was more than respect and amounted almost to awe. It was said of him that he had more of what we might call "presence" than any man in America except George Washington. His manner in the pulpit was both impressive and captivating. John Adams, who heard him several times, regarded him as a very fine preacher, although he tells us that a most excellent sermon on redeeming time which he heard in the spring of 1777, was not remembered so well as others. Adams thought the necessity of speaking without formal preparation in Congress had impaired his oratorical powers, for Witherspoon was accustomed to write and memorize his sermons. That he did not write all his sermons is shown by the bare outlines of several among his manuscripts. In later life his eyesight became impaired and the student who was his amanuensis tells us that after he became partially blind, in 1791, he committed some of his sermons to memory as he composed

them without writing, although he also dictated others. It is unnecessary to attempt any estimate of his influence as a churchman. The minutes of the Presbytery, Synods and General Assembly show us that he was foremost in all the important work of the church. It was by his influence that the American church followed the model of the Church of Scotland. Yet his sincere efforts to win the Congregational and Dutch Reformed churches, prove that he did not lack a conciliatory spirit. Strong in his belief in the Westminster Confession, and attached to the Presbyterian form of government as a scriptural system, he felt justified in urging their claims with all the force of his vigorous mind. His energy, his virile temper, and his genius for organization largely contributed to the Presbyterian church the spirit and ambition which made it so effective in his life and has carried it steadily forward in its work for humanity.

## IV

### WITHERSPOON, THE AMERICAN

#### I. THE NEW JERSEY CONVENTION

FROM the day that he landed in America until the Revolution Witherspoon was a high type of British colonist. Scotchman as he was, he was British in sentiment and devotion. But he was likewise American to the core. He early perceived the possibilities of the new country. Its resources amazed him. The rich fertility of the soil, especially that which lay inland along the streams appealed to him in contrast with the less productive land in Scotland. He was delighted with the men whom he met and with the towns they had built. His admiration was not effusive, but his practical eye saw the evident advantages that would accrue from hard work. Clergyman and educator though he was, following professions not conducive to business sagacity, he had no hesitation in engaging in such enterprises as he thought would be profitable. He became one of a company which obtained from the crown a large grant of land in Nova Scotia. Wither-

spoon appears to have had friends at court to whom, as in the case of the charter for the Widows' Fund, he could apply for aid. Whether he used this friend on this occasion I do not know. But he used his own name freely, as he might very properly, to advertise, not only his land in Nova Scotia but the general advantages in America, for the purpose of encouraging emigration. When John Adams was at Princeton in 1774, Witherspoon said the Congress ought to urge every colony to form a society to encourage Protestant emigration from the three kingdoms of Great Britain. It was this motive more largely than the hope of making money that induced him to join the Nova Scotia land company. When his name appeared in the advertisements in Scotch papers, some of his old enemies in that land took occasion to attack him. Ordinarily he let such things pass, but as injury might be done to possible emigrants induced to come to America by other land speculators and as he was accused of being an enemy to his country, he felt obliged to reply. The charge narrowed down to this, to use his own words: "Migrations from Britain to America are not only hurtful but tend to the ruin of that country; therefore, John Wither-

spoon, by inviting people to leave Scotland and settle in America is an enemy to his country." In a long letter to the *Scots Magazine* he shows the folly of such an argument. His only reason for going into the company, he declares, was "that it would give people, who intended to come out, greater confidence that they should meet with fair treatment, and that I should the more effectually answer that purpose, one of the express conditions of my joining the company was, that no land should be sold dearer to any coming from Scotland than I should direct," surely a fine evidence of his associates' confidence in his integrity. He felt obliged to make this stipulation because many wildcat schemes were advertised abroad offering land at a rental per acre which equalled the value of the acre itself. Land in America was remarkably cheap compared with the price in Scotland, but Witherspoon reminded his readers that the value of it depended more upon its neighbourhood than upon its quality. The letter displays an astonishingly intimate acquaintance with the details of real estate, most unexpected in one whose chief repute was due to theological learning. Already he caught the import of the drift of population inland to

the rich soils towards and beyond the mountains. As for the charge that he is an enemy to his country he replies, "I cannot help thinking it is doing a real service to my country when I show that those of them who find it difficult to subsist on the soil in which they were born, may easily transport themselves to a soil vastly superior to that." His hope was, not that Scotland should send out men who would take up large tracts and become landed proprietors on a large scale, but that farmers, willing to work the land themselves might take small holdings. It is shameful, he feels, for men to deceive intending settlers, and protests against the unjust charges of his enemies. "For my own part," he concludes, "my interest in the matter is not great; but since Providence has sent me to this part of the world, and since so much honour has been done me as to suppose that my character might be some security against fraud and imposition, I shall certainly look upon it as my duty to do every real service in my power, to such of my countrymen as shall fall in my way, and that either desire or seem to need my assistance."

The result was that many Scotch families settled in Nova Scotia, whose descendants compose to-day the sturdiest and most upright por-



tion of the population. His profits from the venture were not large, but sufficient to induce him to invest again in New Hampshire lands by which he is believed to have lost money. American interests of every kind suffered from the dense ignorance of the British. Not only in political matters, but also in religious, ignorant critics proved very annoying to the American Church. Already I have called attention to the Synod's custom of sending a letter annually to Scotland. The American Presbyterians were independent of the established Church of Scotland, nor did they seek to be placed under Scottish jurisdiction, as the Episcopalians sought to have the Church of England control the colonial church. But they recognized the close relationship existing between the Presbyterianism of the two countries. Witherspoon kept up a correspondence with friends in Scotland, especially those in Glasgow and Edinburgh. The *Scots Magazine* came to him regularly, and his friends often sent him copies of other periodicals which might be of interest to him. In a copy of the *Scots Magazine* late in 1770, was a letter commenting severely upon a sermon preached at Boston by Dr. Joseph Lathrop, on the "outrage" known as the Boston Massacre, which was in reality a justifiable

defense of British soldiers against a Boston mob, but which the overwrought people seized upon as an example of British tyranny. Dr. Lathrop's sermon, which was published and circulated, served to fan the flames. While it was probably correct in its general presentation of the popular feeling about the incident in particular, and towards the British in general, the sermon was unwise and also unfair, in its picture of the occasion itself. John Adams was one of the lawyers who secured the acquittal of all the soldiers but two, who were let off with a light fine. The populace began the trouble, and the soldiers acted in self-defense. The presence of the soldiers served to exasperate the people, but the conflict itself was caused by the latter. In any event the British public condemned the American attitude. But this writer in the *Scots Magazine* made the mistake of using Dr. Lathrop's sermon to strike at the Synod of New York and Philadelphia. The annual letter from the Synod had been received a short time before, "on the reading of which," says the author, "I could not help thinking if we may judge of the American Church from the sample here given that our church derives no great honour from her western progeny; but I hope the stock is better than the sample." That

was too much for Witherspoon. He tells the writer that his criticism has only served to betray his ignorance. The Synod of New York and Philadelphia does not extend as far as Boston. He does not mean to disclaim connection with the churches of New England. "They are a most respectable part of the Church of Christ. Nor do I think that any part of the British empire is at this day equal to them for real religion and sound morals." And he begs the magazine not to publish anything upon American affairs unless the writers understand them.

In private letters also he found it necessary to assure his friends that the people of America were quite as respectable, fully as civilized, and often more learned than many at home in Scotland and England. It was his opinion in 1774 that the Continental Congress might wisely employ capable writers to inform the British public by pamphlets and through the newspapers, of the real condition of American politics. He himself reminded the British that if they persisted in taxing the growing trade of America, which was contributing to British prosperity, more than the trade of any other foreign country, they would lose rather than gain. He defied Great Britain to produce a man more loyal

than himself to the crown, and avows that for this very reason he maintains the rights of America. Instead of distressing and alienating the colonies, the government should attach them to itself. For American strength and prosperity meant British strength and prosperity. "That you may not pass sentence upon me immediately," he says in an article "On Conducting the American Controversy," written in 1773, "as an enemy to the royal authority, and a son of sedition, I declare that I esteem His Majesty King George the Third, to have the only rightful and lawful title to the British crown. . . . I will go a little further and say that I not only revere him as the first magistrate of the realm, but I love and honour him as a man and am persuaded that he wishes the prosperity and happiness of his people in every part of his dominions. Nay, I have still more to say, I do not think the British ministry themselves have deserved all the abuse and foul names that have been bestowed on them by political writers. The steps which they have taken with respect to American affairs, and which I esteem to be unjust, impolitic, and barbarous to the highest degree, have been chiefly owing to the two following causes: 1. Ignorance, or mistake occasioned by the misinformation of interested and

treacherous persons employed in their service. 2. The prejudices common to them, with persons of all ranks in the Island of Great Britain." Ignorance and prejudice lay at the bottom of the whole bad business. Witherspoon said in the same article, "A man will become an American by residing in the country three months."

"I have often said to friends in America, on that subject, it is not the king and ministry so much as the prejudices of Britons with which you have to contend. Spare no pains to have them fully informed. Add to the immovable firmness with which you justly support your own rights a continual solicitude to convince the people of Great Britain that it is not passion, but reason that inspires you. Tell them it cannot be ambition, but necessity, that makes you run an evident risk of the heaviest sufferings, rather than forfeit for yourselves and your posterity the greatest of all earthly blessings." Witherspoon condemns "the shameless, gross, indecent and groundless abuse of the king and his family," but he adds that, "Far greater insults were offered to the sovereign within the city of London and within the verge of the court, than were ever thought of or would have been permitted by the mob in any part of America."

From the outset Witherspoon kept himself well informed on American affairs. He subscribed regularly for three papers, one published in New York, another in Philadelphia and a third, the *New Jersey State Gazette*. Besides these papers he read numerous pamphlets, some of which he bought, others being the gifts of friends who knew his interest in all public questions. Politics, trade, emigration, religion, domestic relation, foreign questions, all the various items presented in a newspaper, even to the personalities and correspondence, were carefully noted by him. He was a frequent contributor to the papers, sometimes over his own name, often using a pseudonym.

From the beginning he perceived the righteousness of the American claims, and the utter futility of the stupid measures adopted by the British government towards the colonies. He abstained from any reference to political matters in the pulpit. In his private letters to friends in Scotland he frankly expressed his opinions, and in personal interviews with other Americans his sympathies for America were freely spoken. The boys of Princeton College knew what their president thought. The trustees might adopt rules of caution to prevent rash statements by the

young orators, but Witherspoon's enforcement of this rule was never beyond the letter of the law. In 1769, while the crisis was still impending, Princeton had taken a middle ground in conferring the degree of LL. D. upon two Americans whose writings had attracted wide attention, John Dickinson, the author of "Letters of An American Farmer," and Joseph Galloway, whose adherence to the British crown carried him over to the Tory side. Dickinson had written most powerfully against the fatal course of England and Galloway had plead most strongly for colonial caution, deploring the sentiment in favour of resistance by force, or of independence. Later as a member of the Congress of 1774 he urged upon that body a union of the colonies in a general congress under control of the crown. But the temper neither of America nor England was ready to entertain that suggestion.

Witherspoon's first public appearance in connection with the American cause was at New Brunswick, where a convention assembled July 21, 1774. He represented Somerset County. Among other members of the convention were Jonathan Baldwin, the steward of Princeton College, Wm. P. Smith, John Kinsey, Wm. Livingston, trustees of the college, Jere-

miah Halsey, a Presbyterian minister, besides other trustees and close friends. Witherspoon and Livingston urged the convention to adopt a resolution against paying for the tea which Great Britain would force upon America. The resolutions as adopted, however, were not as strong as Witherspoon desired. To us who read them to-day, as to the angry ministers of Great Britain, they are strong enough. Of course they declare the loyalty of all Jerseymen to King George, but the men of the convention declare that they feel bound to oppose the measures of the crown by all constitutional means in their power. They announced that, in their opinion, it was the duty of all Americans heartily to unite in supporting Massachusetts in resisting the invasion of her charter rights, the trial of supposed offenders by the courts of other colonies, or of Great Britain. New Jersey pledged herself "firmly and inviolably to adhere to the determinations of the Congress," and earnestly recommended "a general non-importation and a non-consumption agreement" and that the several county committees should collect subscriptions for the relief of the oppressed people of Boston.

Without waiting for the general convention of the province to act, several counties had in-



dependently adopted resolutions, copies of which having come into the governor's hands, he had notified the Earl of Dartmouth of them. His letter betrays no very great alarm. He doubts whether the people of the province will enter into a non-importation agreement and thinks the Congress to be summoned "will apply to his Majesty for the repeal of the Boston Port Act, and endeavour to fall upon measures for accommodating the present differences between the two countries and preventing the like in future." How little he or the British ministers understood the temper of the people is already known to us. But the same mistake is made more apparent by a reading of Witherspoon's opinion, as that is found in a series of suggestions published by him as the proper course for the Congress to pursue. These were written in 1774, two years before he became a member of the Congress. He thinks, "It is at least extremely uncertain whether it could be proper or safe for the Congress to send either ambassadors, petition, or address, directly to king, or parliament, or both. They may treat them as a disorderly, unconstitutional meeting—they may hold their meeting itself to be criminal—they may find so many objections in point of legal form, that it is plainly in the power of

those, who wish to do it, to deaden the zeal of the multitude in the colonies by ambiguous, dilatory, frivolous answers, perhaps by severer measures." "There is not the least reason as yet to think that either the king, the parliament, or even the people of Great Britain, *have been able to enter into the great principles of universal liberty, or are willing to hear the discussion of the point of right without prejudice.*" This estimate of the temper of the British is quite in accord with the conviction which Samuel Adams had reached six years ago, but it seems to have been shared by very few other public men. One of the resolutions adopted by the New Jersey convention had been "That the grateful acknowledgments of this body are due to the noble and worthy patrons of constitutional liberty, in the British Senate, for their laudable efforts to avert the storm they behold impending over a much injured colony, and in support of the just rights of the king's subjects in America." The Princeton Scotchman did not think such a resolution would avail anything in the present condition of English politics. The speeches of Englishmen in favour of granting the American claims were unavailing, nor did the colonists receive any further encouragement from their parliamentary friends, nor much advice as to the

best way to proceed. Of the British statesmen in power Witherspoon said, "They have not only taken no pains to convince us that submission to their claims is consistent with liberty among us, but it is doubtful whether they expect, or desire, we should be convinced of it. It seems rather that they mean to force us to be absolute slaves, knowing ourselves to be such by the hard law of necessity. If this is not their meaning, and they wish us to believe that our lives and properties are quite safe in the absolute disposal of the British Parliament, the late acts with respect to Boston, to ruin their capital, destroy their charter, and grant the soldiers a right to murder them, are certainly arguments of a very singular nature." He thinks, therefore, "that the great object of the approaching Congress should be to unite the colonies and make them as one body in any measure of self-defense; to assure the people of Great Britain that we will not submit voluntarily, and convince them that it would be either impossible or unprofitable for them to compel us by open violence." He submits to the consideration of the Congress resolutions which are unsurpassed for boldness and flat positiveness by any other statements of the period. Profess loyalty to the king, but declare "not only that we esteem the

claim of the British Parliament to be illegal and unconstitutional, but that *we are firmly determined never to submit to it, and do deliberately prefer war with all its horrors and even extermination itself to slavery rivetted on us and on our posterity.*" It is not remarkable, that when the Massachusetts congressmen reached Princeton on their way to Philadelphia, they felt they had come to an oasis in the desert. At New York and several places in Northern New Jersey, they were reviled and hooted, threats were made against them as disturbers of the peace and rebellious advocates of independence. But at Princeton the atmosphere was clear. Witherspoon received them cordially, entertained them at his house with wine, and drank coffee with them at their lodgings. The students showed the influence of their president.

The other recommendations urged the closest union of the colonies, so that none should make a separate peace, "and continue united till American liberty is settled on a solid basis"; that a non-importation agreement, too long delayed, should be entered into immediately, as well as a non-consumptive agreement. After suggesting measures for encouraging desirable immigrants he insists that the legislature of every colony should put their militia on the

best footing ; that all Americans provide themselves with arms "in case they should be reduced to the hard necessity of defending themselves from murder and assassination." These strong resolutions had their effect in further stiffening the backbone of Jerseymen like Richard Stockton and others who had not been ready to go so far, so that eighteen months later Stockton was willing to go to Congress, where he signed the Declaration of Independence. A seventh resolution suggested "an earnest and affectionate address to the British army and navy urging them, as Britons, not to bring reproach upon themselves as the instruments of enslaving their country." And lastly, the necessity of union being so important in his mind, he begs the Congress to see to it that all the colonies effectually coöperate for the common defense.

Witherspoon's resolute and unyielding spirit directed the attention of the country and of the government to New Jersey. The colony moved cautiously, but steadily in the general interest. In Scotland such accounts of Witherspoon's share in the opposition were spread that he was cautioned by his friends and decried as a political firebrand by his enemies.

For the next year and a half Witherspoon

was most energetic as the head of the Somerset County committee of correspondence. This committee kept a watchful eye upon suspicious people in their midst and corresponded, not only with committees of other counties in New Jersey, but also with the Council of Safety in other colonies.

During this time events were rapidly coming to a head elsewhere. The Congress met at Philadelphia September 5, 1774, and for four weeks considered carefully a declaration of rights claiming for the people of America "a free and exclusive power of legislation in their provincial legislatures where their rights could alone be preserved in all cases of taxation and internal polity." They declared that they would never permit themselves to be deprived of certain other rights, demanding the repeal of those acts of Parliament by which these had been infringed. They then formed an association for preventing commercial intercourse with Great Britain and charged the committees of correspondence to inspect the imports at all custom-houses. Three addresses were prepared, one to the king, one to the people of Great Britain, the last to the people of America. After appointing the 10th of May, 1775, for the meeting of a second Congress, inviting Canada

and Florida to join them in that meeting, the Congress adjourned on the 26th of October.

The reception given these proceedings in England was exactly such as Witherspoon had intimated. Chatham might declare the papers of the Congress equal to any state papers ever composed, but he and his friends were unable to change the mind of the House of Commons, which answered the appeals of the Congress by resolving to send 10,000 troops under General Howe to suppress the rebellious colony of Massachusetts. That Howe had declared himself a friend of America and, perhaps sincerely, believed he might be received as the bearer of Lord North's olive branch, did not smooth the feelings of the Americans. The idea of the ministry seemed to be that this method would appease the aroused colonists and save the pride of England. During all this time the men of America were meeting almost daily on the village drill-grounds, and collecting arms and ammunition. New Jersey was not behind the other colonies in this respect, nor Somerset County lacking in military zeal. When news of the engagements at Lexington and Concord spread over the land and troops from every colony instantly began the march to Boston, some of Witherspoon's students hastened to enlist, one of them his own

son James who, however, had been graduated in 1770. Another son, John, of the class of 1773, had studied medicine and became a surgeon in the Continental army, serving from 1776 until near the close of the war. On the 10th of May, 1775, the day that the second Congress assembled at Philadelphia, Ticonderoga was captured and the Congress were under the necessity of providing, not for a possible, but an actual war. The temper of the Congress was shown by the choice of John Hancock as president, upon whose head a price had been set by the king, and in appointing George Washington Commander-in-chief of the Continental forces assembled and gathering at Boston. There on the 17th of June, before Washington could arrive, the battle of Bunker Hill was fought, a dearly bought victory for the British, who began to realize that their task would not be so easy as the confident General Gage had imagined. During the summer of this year Witherspoon worked hard at the effort to furnish the five companies of minutemen allotted to Somerset County and in nominating officers for them. He did not yet feel justified in becoming a member of the New Jersey Congress which met at Trenton in October. He remained at Princeton endeavouring to carry on



the college, but with little success. In the prevailing excitement few students attended college and it was impossible to hold a meeting of the trustees, many of whom were members of committees of correspondence for their several counties.

Little fighting was done during the summer and the following winter, except in Canada. Washington strengthened his positions about Boston without any serious conflict of arms with the British, but pursued such fine tactics that the British were obliged to evacuate the city in March. But Witherspoon was alert in his own sphere and took part in the war of pamphlets, although not so conspicuously as did some others. In January Thomas Paine, held in odium and undeserved horror for his infidel writings, published a pamphlet called "Common Sense" in which, with coarse language and vulgar invective, he defended the American cause. Although not finely written, it was an able paper. Washington said that it "worked a powerful change in the minds of many men." A hundred thousand copies were quickly sold, and its influence was undoubted. Witherspoon was magnanimous enough to acknowledge its merits while he criticised the style of it. And when an attack was made

upon it by another pamphlet, "Plain Truth," the energetic president of Princeton took up his caustic pen to defend "Common Sense." He wastes no words in coming to the heart of Paine's argument—who, says Witherspoon, "wrote it to shew that we ought not to seek or wait for a reconciliation which in his opinion is now become both impracticable and unprofitable, but to establish a fixed regular government and provide for ourselves. 'Plain Truth,' on the contrary, never attempts to shew that there is the least probability of obtaining reconciliation on such terms as will preserve and secure our liberties; but has exerted all his little force to prove that such is the strength of Great Britain that it will be in vain for us to resist at all. I will refer it to the impartial judgment of all who have read this treatise, whether the just and proper inference from his reasoning is not that we ought immediately to send an embassy with ropes about our necks, to make a full and humble surrender of ourselves and all our property to the disposal of the parent state. This they have formally and explicitly demanded of us, and this with equal clearness we have determined we will never do. The question then is this: Shall we make resistance with the greatest force, as rebel subjects of a govern-

ment which we acknowledge, or as independent states against an usurped power which we detest and abhor?" This is Witherspoon's first public declaration in favour of independence.

On the 17th of May, in conformity with the suggestion of Congress already mentioned, he preached a sermon on "The Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men." He began by saying, "There is not a greater evidence either of the reality or power of religion than a firm belief in God's universal presence. The ambition of mistaken princes, the cunning and cruelty of oppressive and corrupt ministers, and even the inhumanity of brutal soldiers, however dreadful, shall finally promote the glory of God." "If your cause is just, if your principles are pure, if your conduct is prudent you need not fear the multitude of opposing hosts. If your cause is just you may look with confidence to the Lord and entreat Him to plead it as your own. You are all my witnesses that this is the first time of my introducing any political subject into the pulpit. At this season, however, it is not only lawful but necessary, and I willingly embrace the opportunity of declaring my opinion, without any hesitation, that the cause in which America

is now in arms is the cause of justice, of liberty and of human nature. So far as we have hitherto proceeded I am satisfied that the confederacy of the colonies has not been the effect of pride, resentment, or sedition, but of a deep and general conviction that our civil and religious liberties, and consequently, in a great measure, the temporal and eternal happiness of us and of our posterity depended on this issue."

Keenly aware of the necessity of union and executive authority he said, "If persons of every rank instead of implicitly complying with the orders of those whom they themselves have chosen to direct, will needs judge every measure over again, if different classes of men intermix their little private views, if local, provincial pride and jealousy arise, you are doing a greater injury to the common cause than you are aware of." "He is the best friend to American liberty who is most sincere and active in promoting pure and undefiled religion." "Whoever is an avowed enemy to God I scruple not to call an enemy to his country."

Nothing is gained, he thinks, by railing at the English "as so many barbarous savages. Many of their actions have probably been worse

than their intentions. I do not refuse submission to their unjust claims because they are corrupt or profligate, although probably many of them are so, but because they are men, and therefore liable to all the selfish bias inseparable from human nature." "If, on account of their distance and ignorance of our situation they could not conduct their quarrel with propriety for one year, how can they give direction and vigour to every department of our civil constitutions from age to age?"

The sermon was published with a dedication to John Hancock, President of Congress, accompanied by an address to the natives of Scotland residing in America. There was some necessity for this. Scotch merchants of Norfolk, Virginia, had refused to enter into the non-importation agreement, and in South Carolina Scotchmen had taken up arms for the king. A printer of Glasgow, Scotland, issued the sermon with embellishments wherein the famous champion of ecclesiastical rights is scarified as a firebrand, rebel and traitor.

## 2. THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Witherspoon had been active in the various meetings of his county almost from the beginning, and had attended one provincial assembly,

as I have already stated. On the 11th of June, 1776, he took his seat as a member of the Provincial Congress of New Jersey, at Burlington, and opened the session with prayer.

The first question of urgent importance to come before this session of the legislature was a letter from the Continental Congress suggesting each colony's quota of militia to be furnished to serve until the following December, New Jersey's number being 3,300, to reinforce the army in New York, now threatened by the enemy. The British were coming close to New Jersey and Washington followed the letter of Congress by an earnest recommendation that New Jersey immediately carry this resolution into effect. A committee to do this was promptly appointed and did its work well.

The fear of tyranny by a few over the many, the dread of power falling into the hands of a small number of men, prompted some of these Jerseymen to move that two-thirds be a quorum of the Provincial Congress. Witherspoon combated that idea. It was difficult to secure so large a quorum, it would be easy for a few disaffected men to stay away and thus prevent the transaction of business, and he himself believed that in such times it was best to dismiss such fears and lodge the power in the hands of a

capable few rather than in the keeping of many. A majority was declared to be a quorum and business proceeded with dispatch.

The royal governor of New Jersey was William Templeton Franklin, son of the famous Benjamin Franklin. As a servant of the crown he endeavoured to fulfill his duties with fidelity. He was a resolute man and the deputies found that he intended to ignore them. He had appointed a meeting of the General Assembly of the province for the 20th of June. The members of this Congress were irregularly chosen and Governor Franklin refused to recognize them. They therefore adopted a series of resolutions declaring that the governor's proclamation ought not to be obeyed, being "in direct contempt and violation of the resolve of the Continental Congress"; that Franklin was an enemy to the liberties of this country; and that his salary should cease. The Congress ordered the various treasurers to account to the Congress for all moneys in their hands. Then Col. Nathaniel Heard was ordered to take a copy of the resolution to Governor Franklin, and in order that the affair "be conducted with all the delicacy and tenderness which the nature of the business will admit" request him

to sign a parole, promising to remain in the province and to keep his engagements with fidelity. Governor Franklin did not appreciate the "delicacy and tenderness" of the Congress and not only refused to sign the parole but ordered Colonel Heard to go about his business. The good colonel thereupon promptly placed a guard of sixty men about the house and sent a courier post haste to Burlington asking for further instructions from the Congress. He was ordered to bring the governor to Burlington at once, and a notice of their action was sent to the Continental Congress asking that body if it would not, in their opinion, be "for the general good of the United Colonies" if Governor Franklin should be removed to some other colony where he "would be capable of doing less mischief."

When Franklin appeared under Colonel Heard's guard before the New Jersey Assembly he denounced them hotly as a rebellious body, so that some of the deputies lost their tempers. Witherspoon so far forgot himself on that warm June day as to taunt Franklin with his illegitimate birth, a circumstance for which the governor was plainly not responsible. Witherspoon regretted his hasty and indelicate language but never found himself in a position



where he could apologize to Franklin in person. On the 20th of June a letter was received from the Continental Congress recommending the Jerseymen to examine the governor and if they conclude that he should be confined the Congress will direct the place of his confinement. He was finally sent to Connecticut to become the charge of Governor Trumbull, never submitting to the American Government. His last days were spent in honourable retirement in England.

On Friday the 21st of June the New Jersey Congress resolved to form a government of their own, but the committee to prepare a draft of the constitution was not appointed until the 24th. In the meantime, on Saturday the 22d, five delegates were appointed to represent New Jersey in the Continental Congress, of whom Witherspoon was one. It has generally been supposed, and has often been publicly said, that Witherspoon had much to do with framing the constitution of New Jersey. I find no evidence to support this statement. He was not a member of the committee, which was appointed two days after his election to the Continental Congress. It is true that he did not arrive at Philadelphia until the 28th. If the committee on the constitution desired to

consult him they might have had opportunity, but they were not appointed until late in the afternoon of Monday the 24th. It is gratuitous to suppose that Witherspoon remained at Burlington long after his appointment, and quite likely that, before proceeding to Philadelphia, he went to Princeton, which would account for the interval of almost a week between his appointment and his arrival at Philadelphia. That he was a slow traveller is very evident from his almost invariable tardiness. Even on the supposition that he remained at Burlington to advise the committee on the constitution, of which I have been unable to find the slightest evidence, he could not at the very longest, have spent over two days with them. It seems, therefore, that with every desire to give Witherspoon credit for all his work, he cannot be said to have had any great share in the actual preparation of the constitution of New Jersey. On July 2, 1776, the day of the adoption of the constitution he was sitting in the Continental Congress at Philadelphia, taking part in the debates upon the resolution for independence which had been brought before the Congress eighteen days previously. His instructions by the New Jersey Congress empowered him and his

associates to vote for independence if they should consider it necessary and expedient, promising the support of the whole force of the colony, but "always observing that, whatever plan of confederacy you enter into, the regulating the internal police of this province is to be reserved to the colony legislature."

On the day of the entrance of the New Jersey delegation into Independence Hall, as it has ever since been called, the postponed resolution came up for consideration. A further postponement was suggested so that the newly arrived members might learn the arguments that had been made upon the question. Witherspoon brushed aside this plea, declaring that the subject was not new, he needed no more time, nor further instructions; he was ready to vote at once. It was decided, however, to postpone the vote until Monday, the 1st of July. On that day, after a Sabbath whose peace had probably been irksome to some of the eager members, the men upon whose decision rested such momentous consequences, which they fully appreciated, assembled again in the hall. The president of the Congress, John Hancock, stated the order of the day, and the secretary, Charles Thompson, read once more the resolution for independence.

“For a moment,” it is said, “there was profound silence.” Then John Adams rose in his place. The hush of that little assembly was so intense as to be almost painful to the overstrained men, but it was followed by a speech, remembered for its impetuosity and power, which seemed to carry everything before it, declaring that “independence was the first wish and the last instruction of the communities they represented.” John Dickinson, celebrated as the author of “Letters of a Pennsylvania Farmer,” fulfilled his promise to the Assembly of Pennsylvania, although he overlooked the popular feeling expressed in conventions and mass meetings, and spoke at length against the resolution. His patriotism and devotion to the American cause were never questioned, but when he said the country was not ripe for it, Witherspoon broke in upon the speaker exclaiming, “Not ripe, sir! In my judgment we are not only ripe but rotting. Almost every colony has dropped from its parent stem and your own province needs no more sunshine to mature it.” The debate continued. On Tuesday the 2d of July the Continental Congress finally voted to sever the connection of the American colonies from Great Britain. A committee, of which Thomas Jefferson was

chairman, was appointed to draw up a declaration embodying the decision and the reasons for it. This was brought in on the 4th to be signed by the delegates. Although the resolution had already been adopted there was some hesitation about finally signing it. Then Witherspoon rose. One writer describing the scene calls him an aged patriarch, a term hardly applicable to a man only fifty-four years of age, with twenty years of active life still before him. Although his hair was tinged with gray and his appearance one of great dignity, he could hardly be called venerable. The only clergyman in the Congress, of most impressive manner and acknowledged learning, he received marked attention as he proceeded in a brief speech of great eloquence to give his opinion. "There is a tide in the affairs of men, a nick of time. We perceive it now before us. To hesitate is to consent to our own slavery. That noble instrument upon your table, which insures immortality to its author, should be subscribed this very morning by every pen in this house. He that will not respond to its accents and strain every nerve to carry into effect its provisions is unworthy the name of free-man.

"For my own part, of property I have some,

of reputation more. That reputation is staked, that property is pledged, on the issue of this contest; and although these gray hairs must soon descend into the sepulchre, I would infinitely rather that they descend thither by the hand of the executioner than desert at this crisis the sacred cause of my country."

The declaration was signed and the colonies finally and forever committed to independence. Everywhere the people received the news with greatest joy, ringing the bells, firing their guns, and building bonfires. The tension was past and great relief was felt.

### 3. WORK IN CONGRESS

The Congress settled down resolutely to the serious business of providing for the army, making strong alliances with foreign nations, and securing recognition from them. Ten days after the declaration was signed Lord Howe, whose brother was in command of the British forces in America, landed at Staten Island where General Howe was awaiting his arrival before beginning the attack upon New York. It was announced that Lord Howe had come as the bearer of an olive branch. The anxious Congress and people feared lest some of the timorous

or time-serving Americans might be induced to withdraw their support of independence. Every state had its British faction, and New Jersey had been made aware of the presence of many tories by petitions from various townships, urging the Provincial Congress not to break loose from Great Britain. That was before the fatal fourth of July. Even later, however, there were not wanting men who clung to the hope that Lord Howe might propose terms which the Americans could accept. Before beginning active military operations, he sent a message to Washington addressing him as a private gentleman. Washington refused to receive it; and after repeated attempts to persuade him to confer, Lord Howe finally made an attack upon the American army on Long Island. The story of Washington's defeat, his masterly retreat and escape without losing a man or a gun, on the night of the 29th of August, is already familiar to every American schoolboy. Among those who had been captured in the battle was General Sullivan, a brave and capable officer. Lord Howe thought that a message to Congress, borne by General Sullivan, might receive some attention. General Sullivan, therefore, having given his parole, appeared before the Congress, with the promise that Lord Howe would use his influence with

the Parliament to have the obnoxious measures repealed, but that he would like to confer with some of the members of the Congress as private gentlemen. Poor Sullivan was roundly rated by John Adams for consenting to bear such a message. The proposal was debated hotly by the Congress. Some were in favour of granting the desired interview. None of them would listen to any basis but the recognition of independence. Witherspoon spoke strongly against the proposal. He felt that nothing would be gained by it. "It is plain," he said, "that absolute, unconditional submission is what they require us to agree to, or mean to force us to. The king has not laid aside his personal rancour; it is rather increasing every day." "It has been admitted that there is not the least reason to expect that any correspondence we can have with him will tend to peace." "Lord Howe speaks of a decisive blow not being yet struck; as if this cause depended upon one battle! Neither loss nor disgrace worth mentioning has befallen us. In short, sir, from anything that has happened I see not the least reason for our attending to this delusive message. On the contrary, I think it is the very worst time that could be chosen for us, as it will be looked upon as the effect of fear, and diffuse the same spirit,



in some degree, through different ranks of men. The tories, our secret enemies, I readily admit, are earnest for our treating. They are exulting in the prospect of it; they are spreading innumerable lies to forward it. It has brought them from their lurking holes; they are taking liberty to say things in consequence of it which they durst not have said before. In one word, if we set this negotiation on foot, it will give new force and vigour to all their seditious machinations. In cases where the expediency of a measure is doubtful, if I had an opportunity of knowing what my enemies wished me to do, I would not be easily induced to follow their advice.

“As to the Whigs and friends of independence, I am well persuaded that multitudes of them are already clear in their minds, that the conference should be utterly rejected; and to those who are in doubt about its nature, nothing more will be requisite than a full and clear information of the state of the case which I hope will be granted them.

“As to the army I cannot help being of opinion, that nothing will more effectually deaden the operations of war than what is proposed. We do not ourselves expect any benefit from it, but they will. And they will possibly impute

our conduct to fear and jealousy as to the issue of the cause; which will add to their present little discouragement, and produce a timorous and despondent spirit."

It was decided, however, against the opinion of Witherspoon and others, to send a committee to confer with Lord Howe. Franklin, Rutledge and doughty John Adams accordingly repaired to Staten Island, where they were most courteously treated by Lord Howe. But as they demanded recognition of independence as a preliminary, before entering upon any negotiations for peace, the conference came to nothing.

Shortly after this the British took possession of New York, and, in a series of operations in which Washington displayed his great military genius, despite the necessity of retiring in the face of a superior force, Lord Howe compelled the Americans to begin their retreat across the Jerseys. The interference of Congress in ordering General Greene to hold Fort Washington at all hazards lost that fort and its reinforced garrison, a disaster which, added to General Lee's treachery, almost brought complete ruin to the American cause. It should have taught the members of Congress what Witherspoon always earnestly advocated, that the com-

mander-in-chief should never suffer interference in military operations by the civilians of the Congress, whose duty was not only to confide in his wisdom, but to respond to his demands for supplies as fully and speedily as possible, and give him a free hand in his direction of the campaign. It was long, however, before Congress learned the wisdom of letting Washington alone.

In those trying days personal anxieties beset Witherspoon. His two elder sons were in the army. James Witherspoon was with the northern army, which had retreated to Ticonderoga. He wrote to his father that he and a companion had gone through the forest to St. John's on a scouting expedition. The place they found in possession of the enemy and they were in great danger of being captured. Finding hiding-places in the woods, however, they succeeded in eluding their pursuers ; but, having lost their way, they nearly starved, having but one biscuit apiece for three days. Witherspoon, however, devoted himself assiduously to the work assigned him, serving, it is said, on more committees than any other man in Congress.

While Washington was engaged in operations about New York, the Congress set about doing what it could to supply the army. Team-

sters charged extortionate prices. Wagons and horses were scarce. The army was in great need. The situation became so serious that Witherspoon and two others were appointed a committee, early in October of 1776, to consider a plan for providing for this part of the public service so that "the demands of the army might be speedily met and all oppression by private persons effectually prevented." Eight days later he was added to the committee on clothing, whose business it was to provide the soldiers with clothing and blankets. It is impossible now to trace the work of these committees. The stories of the sufferings of the Continental army due to scarcity of food and lack of clothing prove that the committee was not able to meet all the demands. But, on the other hand, such information as can now be obtained gives evidence of Witherspoon's indefatigable efforts to obtain the needed supplies, and his appointment on these committees is a tribute to his practical ability in fields where theologians are not supposed to be competent. His was a many-sided nature. Washington thanked him both by letter and in person on several occasions for his efficient services to the army. In a country as thickly settled as the North during the civil war in the sixties of the nineteenth

century, under a government whose organization may fairly be supposed to have gained some ability, and with facilities for transportation vastly superior to that existing at the time of the Revolution, the armies of the North were often poorly supplied. It is greatly to the credit of the Scotch clergyman that he so far succeeded in his efforts as to receive the thanks of Washington.

One of the most important committees of Congress was that known as the Board of War. A section of this board was known as the secret committee of correspondence, to which were entrusted the communications with foreign powers, whose assistance against England might be secured, although they were at peace with that country. France was the traditional enemy of Great Britain, and her foreign minister, Vergennes, had sent to America large sums of money for the purchase of arms. The Congress had appointed Silas Deane its European agent, and in October, 1776, he was joined by Arthur Lee, who had been for many years the English agent of Virginia. At the same time Franklin was sent to Paris, and his place on the secret committee was taken by Witherspoon, who remained a member of it as long as there was any need of secrecy in the relations between

France and America. France was at peace with England, but was ready to assist her foes in every possible way. The delicacy of the position of the secret committee is apparent. Direct correspondence with France was out of the question, and this was carried on through the agents and commissioners of Congress. The secret committee urged upon Franklin to secure from the French government the right for men-of-war and privateers to carry their prizes into French ports and there dispose of them. It was against all principles of neutrality to permit this and might bring France into war with England, as indeed it did at last. Letters between the Congress and the foreign governments went by various routes, sometimes direct to France in an American man-of-war; sometimes by way of St. Eustatius or Martinique, in the French West Indies, either on neutral trading vessels or privateers. In order that these letters might not fall into the hands of the British they were addressed to merchants or other private citizens. Military supplies from France were shipped to similar destinations and afterwards transhipped to America in merchant vessels or men-of-war, which would land at such American ports as were not blockaded by British ships. Flints, powder, blankets, arms,

saltpetre and other cargoes were landed at ports all along the coast from Maine to Florida and from them carried overland. To meet the great expense of these voyages and cargoes, consignments of American goods were often carried to be sold in foreign lands. These were, of course, liable to capture. The secret committee were compelled to trust the details to their agents both at home and abroad, sending men to receive the cargoes on arrival in America and notifying their correspondents of shipments. Tobacco, rice, indigo, wheat and flour were in great demand in France and brought good profits.

Letters were often lost. Silas Deane, the agent in Paris, complains of the committee's failure to write. Carmichael, in Amsterdam, cheered the Congress by the information that the Dutch stoutly informed England that their ports were open to the commerce of all nations on equal terms. America might secure a loan, he wrote, if such success should attend her military operations as to make it evident that independence might likely be secured, or if either France or Spain should acknowledge America's independence. A Swiss banker, Grand, assured him that his banking house would accept American notes at a fair discount.

Information about America was much sought after, its geography, rivers, mountains, wild game, agriculture, industries, seaports. This information must be supplied if possible. The agents, especially Silas Deane, were relied on for credentials of French and other foreign officers coming to seek service in the American armies. For some reason, the committee were unable to get their letters through to their distressed and embarrassed agent at Paris. And the greatest credit is due to him for his untiring and successful efforts in the service of his country. Without frequent instructions, sometimes not hearing from the committee for months, he was thrown upon his own judgment. In 1777, having made offers to French officers unauthorized by Congress he was recalled. One of these officers was de Kalb, who afterwards rendered such valuable aid to Washington, and another more famous, was Lafayette.

Witherspoon could not give all his time in Congress to the work of the secret committee. On the 22d of November he was one of three sent to confer with Washington upon the military situation. The commander-in-chief had asked for authority to appoint officers without the formal approval of Congress. The



civilians, fearful of a military tyranny, even from one so unambitious of power as Washington, jealously guarded their control of the army. Witherspoon did not share this dread. He felt that a commander in the field must be free, as far as possible untrammelled by a civilian body like Congress, whose main duty was to supply the necessary means of support. He so far prevailed upon his associates that they sent with the committee blank commissions for the general to fill out at his discretion with the names of those whom he desired to take the places of the officers whose terms had expired. Witherspoon fulfilled the duty and returned to Philadelphia just in time to join the Congress in their flight to Baltimore to escape the British. Washington, however, saved Philadelphia for the time by his clever stroke at Trenton, his victory at Princeton and escape to the heights about Morristown.

The first letter, now extant, sent by the secret committee to Franklin, Deane and Lee after October, 1776, was written December 21st, from Baltimore. It gave a hopeful account of the war and thanked the commissioners for their labours. If a loan can be procured, it should be done in order to keep up the credit of the paper currency. Two million pounds

sterling at six per cent. is the amount Congress authorizes Deane to secure. On the same date Robert Morris wrote from Philadelphia giving a gloomy account of the war, the fear of the people, the boldness of the Tories and the information that Philadelphia is well-nigh depopulated of all but the Quakers.

For the next few months Witherspoon did no work on the secret committee. In December he went to Princeton to look after his private affairs. In the middle of the night of the 6th he was roused by news of the approach of the British. Hastily summoning his family and servants, they all escaped under cover of the darkness saving only so much of their valuables "as could be carried on one team." His house was left in charge of Mr. Montgomery, a tutor in the college. Although the British ransacked the house and carried off all the cattle from the place, his books were preserved and little damage done to the furniture. That his life was in danger is quite evident from the treatment of another clergyman, whom the British mistook for Witherspoon. Coming upon Rev. Mr. Rosborough near Washington's crossing they "pierced him through and through with their bayonets and mangled him in the most shocking manner," although he had denied the

identity and "fell upon his knees and begged for his life." So Witherspoon wrote to his son. "Some of the people of Princeton," he added, "say they thought they were killing me and boasted that they had done it when they came back."

The intense feeling of hatred and enmity with which the British regarded Witherspoon is shown in an account of an incident said to have occurred in July, 1776. The story is told by Dr. McLean in his history of the college, and is quoted from Frank Moore's "Diary." "Just before the thunder-storm last week the troops on Staten Island were preparing figures of Generals Washington, Lee and Putnam, and Dr. Witherspoon, for burning in the night. The figures had all been erected on a pile of fagots, the generals facing the doctor and he represented as reading to them an address. All of them, excepting General Washington, had been tarred and prepared for the feathers when the storm came on and obliged the troops to find shelter. In the evening, when the storm was over, a large body of the troops gathered around the figures which, being prepared, were set on fire amid the most terrible imprecations against the rebels. One of the party seeing that Generals Putnam and Lee and Dr. Wither-

spoon burned furiously and were almost consumed, while General Washington was still standing with the tar burning off, ran away frightened and was soon followed by most of his companions. Next morning the figure was found as good as it ever was, a fact which caused a good deal of fear among the Hessian troops, most of whom were superstitious, and it was not until some of the officers told them the cause of its not burning that they appeared contented. The reason was that having no tar on it before the rain commenced, it became saturated with water and the tar only would burn."

While the Congress sat at Baltimore Witherspoon visited the military prison in that city. He found it in a wretched condition, unfit for even the worst enemies of the country. He urged Congress to remedy the abuse and was placed upon a committee to do so. With what success he laboured we cannot learn. What a Tory satirist thought of the action and of Witherspoon in particular, is shown in the following lines by Jonathan Odell :

"Known in the pulpit by seditious toils,  
Grown into consequence by civil broils,  
Three times he tried, and miserably failed  
To overset the laws—the fourth prevailed.

Whether as tool he acted or as guide,  
 Is yet a doubt—his conscience must decide.  
 Meanwhile, unhappy Jersey mourns her thrall,  
 Ordained by vilest of the vile to fall ;  
 To fall by Witherspoon !—O name, the curse  
 Of sound religion and disgrace of verse.  
 Member of Congress we must hail him next  
 ' Come out of Babylon ' is now his text.  
 Fierce as the fiercest, foremost of the first,  
 He'd rail at kings, with venom well nigh burst ;  
 Not uniformly grand—for some bye-end,  
 To dirtiest acts of treason he'd descend ;  
 I've known him seek the dungeon dark as night,  
 Imprisoned Tories to convert or fright ;  
 Whilst to myself I've hummed in dismal tune,  
 I'd rather be a dog than Witherspoon.  
 Be patient, reader—for the issue trust ;  
 His day will come—remember, heaven is just ! "

Such diatribes were characteristic of Revolutionary literature. We shall see Witherspoon himself dipping his pen in bitter vituperation. For the present he continued at his work in Congress. His committee for regulating the impressing of wagons into the public service worked as faithfully as they could but made no report. On the 19th of January, 1777, his claim of \$105.78 for wood taken by the troops during their wintry visit a month before was ordered paid. Shortly after this he went to Princeton and from there to Pequea to bring

home his wife and daughter, writing from there to his son David, that they were all well. By the 12th of February he was again at Baltimore, but left for Princeton twelve days later. March 19th finds him in Congress again upon a committee to examine charges made by Silas Deane against Dr. Williamson, an American citizen, whom Deane accused of treachery. The committee carefully sifted the charges without discovering any taint of treason.

Early in the spring of 1777 Congress was again in Philadelphia, but through the summer Witherspoon was seldom present. September found him present in time to join the others in that rapid, panicky ride to Easton, Pennsylvania, when Witherspoon's horse rode at an unaccustomed gallop, his rider being assured that a squadron of British cavalry were close behind. Nor was Easton comfortable, the British following them there, and even towards Lancaster, through which city they passed to their long wintry session at York.

In Congress he continued his unremitting service on various committees. One of these conferred with General Gates as to charges made by that officer against General Schuyler whose command of the Northern Army Gates coveted. The committee discovered the mo-

tives of Gates and exonerated Schuyler, which so angered the former that he forgot himself, or rather betrayed his real self, refused to serve in a subordinate capacity, wrote his infamous letter to Washington, and behaved so outrageously before the committee that he was turned out of the room. Witherspoon never had any sympathy with Gates, nor with that meddling opposition to Washington which was for a time kept alive by the Adamses and Lees. Later, also, in 1779, he was one of those who voted to retain Schuyler in the service, one of the finest generals and noblest gentlemen in America. The news of Burgoyne's surrender reached the Congress at York before the arrival of the courier whom Gates had sent with his report. When the tardy trooper finally arrived some one suggested that Congress should present him with a sword. Witherspoon interposed, saying in his Scotch brogue, "I think ye'll better gie the lad a pair o' spurs." Nevertheless he joined the others in bestowing the sword and in voting to Gates a medal and the thanks of Congress.

While Washington was at Valley Forge keeping a close watch on Howe, shut up in Philadelphia, Witherspoon, with a committee of Congress visited the army by order of Con-

gress "to consult with the general as to the best plans for preserving the health and discipline of the troops." As a result of that visit Congress could do little. How far they fully appreciated the situation is shown in a letter written to the commissioners abroad in January, 1778. "General Washington's army is in huts to the westward of the Schuylkill, refreshing and recruiting during the winter." Witherspoon was nevertheless indefatigable in his all too fruitless efforts to relieve the situation at Valley Forge. Congress was helpless in the face of conditions which made it well-nigh impossible to furnish supplies from a sparsely settled country where there were few roads, the better part of the population unable even in times of peace to produce a large surplus of grain and cattle.

Letters from the commissioners covering their labours at foreign courts continued to pour in upon Congress. These naturally fell to the committee on foreign affairs. No more interesting correspondence can be found relating to the Revolution. But its mass of details would only burden a work like this. The committee of foreign affairs was not well organized. Irregularity of attendance left many letters unanswered, to the excusable exasperation of the



commissioners. But those gentlemen were not left in doubt as to the needs of America. They were urged to use all their ability to secure money. Until 1781, when Robert Morris became Superintendent of Finance, there was practically no other financial policy than to make requisitions on the states which were never honoured in full, sometimes for money, sometimes for supplies. Not infrequently during the entire conduct of the war, a state government paid the quota of money demanded by Congress in military supplies at its own estimate. Paper currency was issued again and again before Morris took charge. Witherspoon and Lovell for the committee of foreign affairs wrote to Izard, the commissioner to Italy, "Our apprehensions of danger to our liberties are reduced to the one circumstance of the depreciation of our currency from the quantity which we have been obliged to issue." Izard is ordered to use every exertion to secure a foreign loan.

Another item of small importance entrusted to the committee was to direct the commissioners at Paris "to apply to the court of France for an extension of the leave of absence to such French officers as may be employed in the service of such state." But the disorganized condition of the committee continued until at

last it became necessary to place the foreign affairs in the hands of a secretary, Robert R. Livingston being chosen to that office in September, 1781.

For good or for ill the thirteen colonies were united in a war for independence, but this union was not regarded by any of them as permanent. Each clung more or less tenaciously to its independence of the others. The evils of this sentiment weakened the discipline of the army, hampered the operations of finance and distracted the diplomacy of the Congress. Without a centralized authority there could be no efficient service in any department. But the best that could be done was to adopt the Articles of Confederation which bound the colonies loosely together during the war, but was not sufficient to unite them after peace was won. The question came before Congress in the fall of 1777. Witherspoon was heartily in favour of a strong and permanent confederation which was opposed by several of the colonies, notably South Carolina, New York, and Massachusetts, under Samuel Adams. These states clung to their independence. As early as July 30th, Witherspoon had said to John Adams that there must be a confederation if the object of the war was to be attained. From the outset he advocated

a strong executive, and deprecated the loose methods which dissipated the energy of the government. All of the delegates felt the need of union for the purposes of the war. Witherspoon plead for a permanent union. Warmly contending for the preservation of the separate states, he plead equally for their close and abiding union. When the various articles came to be voted on he agreed that each state should have one vote, not as some of the larger states would have liked, that the voting power of each state should be proportionate to its population or extent. When it came to determining "the quota to be paid for the common welfare and defense," he supported the proposition that the quota should be proportionately to the value of the land. With equal consistency he opposed the measure which was adopted fixing the number of delegates to represent each state at not less than two nor more than seven. In his opinion, since each state could have but one vote, each state should determine for itself how many delegates to send to Congress. He maintained that enough would be sent to protect the interests of the state, and no more than it deemed necessary or cared to pay for.

But these Articles of Confederation were too loose, even during the war. In 1780 Washing-

ton wrote that there must be a closer union. "We can no longer drudge along in the old way." Of the evils of the system as felt in the army he said, "There can be no radical cure till Congress be vested by the several states with full and ample powers to enact laws for general purposes. In February, 1781, Witherspoon proposed that Congress assume the power to regulate commerce and lay duties on imports. The proposal was negatived, but Congress finally agreed that the several states be requested to vest Congress with power to levy a duty of five per cent. on articles of foreign growth and manufacture. This was the first tariff legislation of the American Congress, although it never was fully enforced. It was not until March, 1781, that the Articles of Confederation were ratified by the last of the states, Maryland, whose neighbour, Virginia, had been one of the steadiest supporters of a strong union, under the lead of Madison, who had been a pupil of Witherspoon at Princeton.

We are fortunate in having a speech by Witherspoon on this subject. Among other things he said, "The absolute necessity of union, to the vigour and success of those measures on which we are already entered, is felt and confessed by every one of us, without

exception; so far, indeed, that those who have expressed their fears or suspicions of the existing confederacy proving abortive have yet agreed in saying that there must and shall be a confederacy for the purposes of, and till the finishing of this war. So far is well; and so far it is pleasing to hear them express their sentiments. But I entreat gentlemen to consider how far the giving up all hopes of a lasting confederacy among these states, for their future security and improvement, will have an effect upon the stability and efficacy of even the temporary confederacy which all acknowledged to be necessary? I am fully persuaded that when it ceases to be generally known, that the delegates of the provinces consider a lasting union impracticable, it will greatly derange the minds of the people and weaken their hands in defense of their country."

He was urgent for an immediate confederacy early in the war. "Every day's delay, though it adds to the necessity, augments the difficulty and takes from the inclination." He looked to the future, saying, "It is not impossible that in future times all the states in one quarter of the globe may see it proper by some plan of union, to perpetuate security and peace: and sure I am, a well-planned confederacy among

the states of America may hand down the blessings of peace and public order to many generations." "Every argument from honour, interest, safety and necessity conspire in pressing us to a confederacy."

In 1777 the committee of Foreign Affairs needed a secretary. Because of his advocacy of independence some one suggested Thomas Paine. Witherspoon opposed Paine, not on account of his infidel opinions, for Witherspoon had commended some of Paine's writings, notably, "Common Sense," but because of his distrust of Paine's character saying to John Adams that he was a drunkard and unreliable. Paine was elected, but gave such poor satisfaction that he was requested to resign.

It was later than this that Witherspoon wrote the piece of invective to which I referred. From the beginning of the agitation that culminated in the Declaration of Independence no man in America had been more fervent in his prayers for the triumph of the cause than Rev. Jacob Duché, pastor of the united parishes of Christ Church and St. Peter's, Philadelphia. So earnest was he that Congress invited him to open that body with prayer. But when the army of the colonists suffered those depressing reverses which withered the courage of the shallow-soiled

type to which Duché belonged, he lost heart. When, finally, the British entered Philadelphia, he opened to them the church in which he had prayed and preached so fervently for the Americans and used his eloquence to laud the British government. Duché was the author of a series of letters purporting to come from a young Englishman bearing the astonishing name of Tamoc Caspipina in which things American are described for titled correspondents at home with all admiration for the new land and everything in it, especially the representatives of the Church of England. But the letter which he wrote to George Washington after the British occupation of Philadelphia, urging the general to persuade Congress to yield, or if Congress will not yield, then to use his power as head of the army to compel them to submission, was his most fatal error. Washington promptly sent the letter to Congress. Duché's somersault disgusted and enraged the hardy patriots. Witherspoon gave vent to his scorn in a series of questions and answers which form a list of epithets which exhaust the vocabulary of opprobrium, which he called Caspipina's Catechism. Witherspoon was not suspected of being its author, but I found the manuscript of it among his papers.

Q. Who is a Fox?

A. The Rev. Jacob Duché.

Q. What is your reason for that opinion?

A. Because he walks the street in the habit of a clergyman with the gestures of a petit maitre.

He is a turncoat, because after being chaplain of Congress he entered the service of Howe; a robber deserving of the gallows because he pocketed the pay of Congress when he was an enemy to their cause; he was a hypocrite, a fool, a rogue, a blasphemer, a pedant; a sycophant, because he licked the feet of the New England delegates; a conceited creature, a liar and an ass. Then the question is asked, "How comes it that so many inconsistencies meet in one man?" It seems to be unanswerable except on one supposition. "I can give no other account of it but that if God Almighty has given a man a topsy-turvy understanding no created power will ever be able to set it right end uppermost." In answer to the last question: "What is your opinion of him now?" the reply is, "That he is a wretch without principle, without parts, without prudence, and that by one unexpected effort he has crept up from the grand floor of contempt to the first story of detestation."



Poor Duché departed for England, not having the courage to face his former friends when they returned to Philadelphia. Nor did he appear there again until 1792 when old, paralytic, broken-hearted, he returned to spend the last six years of his life in the city where he had given such an exhibition of strength and weakness, and to be buried beside his wife in St. Peter's churchyard.

Some of the acts of Congress are excusable for many reasons. But it hardly seems possible to justify the action taken by that body in the case of Burgoyne's soldiers. When that unfortunate general surrendered it was agreed between himself and General Gates that his troops, having surrendered their arms and colours and given their parole, as they all did, should be turned over to General Howe and transported to England. From the victorious army and its officers the defeated British and Hessians had received only kindness. But when the colours of a regiment had been discovered hidden in the baggage belonging to it, and when General Howe suggested that it would be easier to disembark the prisoners at Newport than at Boston, Congress took alarm, and suspected that Howe intended to use the soldiers against New York instead of sending

them back to England. Congress further ordered that the supplies which had been furnished these troops should be paid for in gold, refusing to accept Continental paper money. When Burgoyne wrote to Gates complaining that his quarters were not comfortable he used the expression "the public faith is broke." Upon this some of the Congressmen took alarm, declaring that if Burgoyne considered the agreement broken he evidently would not abide by it. The result was that while Burgoyne was exchanged and permitted to go home to England his soldiers were never sent away. Witherspoon voted on all the questions relating to the convention with Burgoyne as if he believed the British general had violated its terms. One of the worst incidents connected with the affair was that in which the Congress insisted that the supplies furnished the captives should be paid for in gold, not in the paper currency of the Congress. Whether Witherspoon assented to this feature of the case I cannot say, but the resolutions adopted forbidding the soldiers to debark until they should sign a parole giving a description of their place of abode are in Witherspoon's handwriting, he having been one of the committee to consider the matter.

Through the winter he served on various committees, to inquire into the treatment of prisoners and non-combatants by the enemy, to see about the purchase of salt, to examine letters from various persons, to revise the rules for the business of Congress, to consider the best way of securing clothing for the army and to examine the pay rolls and arrearages of the New Jersey militia. As a result of one of these investigations the clothier-general was ordered to suspend the purchase of clothing. There was extravagance and waste, if not fraud, in this department, and the board of war took up the matter and straightened the affairs. Later he served upon a committee to rectify abuses in the post-office. In the spring he spoke earnestly against the custom of creating unnecessary offices, and especially the method of paying commissions for work done in the public service and in the army, maintaining that the practice led to unnecessary expense and inefficiency. For this method he recommended the substitution of the contract system, which resulted in a reduction of five per cent. in the expenses.

When Robert Morris assumed control of the finances he found his own department and many others burdened with so many useless

officials that less than a third were required to transact the business, and the discharge of the others saved great sums of money not only in the salaries but in the more economical service in every way.

Witherspoon was the only clergyman in the Continental Congress and always wore the distinctive dress of his calling. He frequently officiated as chaplain and often preached in one of the Presbyterian churches of Philadelphia. John Adams records his impression of a very excellent sermon "On redeeming time," which he heard with great pleasure in 1777, although he remarks that Witherspoon's memory seemed to be less sure than formerly, which Adams attributes to the necessity of the hasty preparation of his speeches in Congress which he did not have time to write fully and commit to memory. In July, 1778, the question came before Congress whether that body might appoint an ecclesiastic to office. Over the Protestants of that day hung the dread of ecclesiastical domination, and every indication of its possibility was viewed with alarm. Witherspoon, devoted to his own church and uncompromisingly hostile to church establishment in America, did not share the fears of his fellow Congressmen and

declared that Congress had no right to inquire into the church relations of its officers.

From his work in Congress he turned in the fall of 1778 to compose one of his pieces of biting sarcasm in an attack upon Benjamin Towne, publisher of the Pennsylvania *Evening Post*, who had supported the Congress in his paper until the arrival of the British in 1777. Throughout their stay he filled his columns with attacks upon Congress in general and its members and the officers of the army in particular. He courted the favour of General Howe, and conducted the *Post* as a pro-British organ. Upon the departure of the English and the return of the Congress, Towne, instead of leaving as Galloway, Duché and others did, professed to have returned to the cause of America and sought to prevent the confiscation of his paper. Witherspoon entertained nothing but contempt for the cowardly printer. His mock recantation was sent to the Fish Kill *Gazette* where it would be most likely to fall under the notice of the British in New York. It is a covert attack upon James Rivington, publisher of *The Royal Gazette* of New York. Poor Towne is mercilessly scored and presented as a snivelling coward, with no character nor

patriotism, ready to fall in with any man or party, good or bad, who will further his interests. He is made to say, in his recantation that "I never was nor ever pretended to be a man of character, repute or dignity."

An occasion arose in the autumn for testing the hold which Washington had upon the confidence of the Congress. Some time before this he had opposed a suggestion of Congress that prisoners who were willing should be enlisted to serve in the American army. There were numbers of deserters from the British, especially among the Hessians, who were willing to take such service. Washington had opposed this on the very best grounds, and Congress had accepted his view. In the summer of 1778, however, Count Pulaski, the gallant Polish general who had rendered notable service in the American army, formed his famous legion of nondescript men, many of them English and Hessian deserters, reckless fellows, but daring soldiers. They were not easily controlled and often spread terror in the neighbourhood of their quarters, by their bold foraging and riotous ways. Congress wished to call him to account for it, but Witherspoon opposed any interference and supported the advice of Washington who told Congress that despite its contradiction of

his previous opinion, and although he didn't like it and thought it bad discipline, he would let it go, considering Pulaski's energy and bravery. Witherspoon's uniform policy in military matters was for Congress to let Washington alone, as far as was possible, in his management of the campaigns.

In the fall of 1779 Witherspoon refused a reelection to Congress on the ground that he could not bear the expense and, more particularly, that he might attend to his private affairs and his duties at the college. Washington was at Morristown with his army. In the spring of 1780, he made requisitions for supplies from the counties of New Jersey. Witherspoon interested himself in furnishing Somerset's quota and received the personal thanks of Washington, who likewise said he did not like to suggest to Congress what Witherspoon suggested to him, namely, that the certificates or receipts given for supplies might be received as taxes, but he promised to do what he could towards having them redeemed in good money.

Witherspoon was again in Congress in the autumn serving on various committees; helping to prepare Dana's commission, as minister to Russia; conferring with the French minister, Gerard, on the subject of Laurens' mission,

which involved the terms of peace; looking after the publication of two hundred copies of the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, alliances between the United States and France, and the constitutions of the several states, all to be bound together in boards. His attendance upon the sessions was, however, very irregular. Timing his absences so that he might not miss any of the more important discussions, he was present to protest against the practical repudiation of the continental currency by some of the states and to vote a loud ay in favour of some stronger additions to the Articles of Confederation, although he regretted that the union was not closer and more permanent. In one instance his vote was a mistake when he voted against Morris's summary removal from office of the supernumerary clerks, whose presence was crippling the treasury. But his executive ability was recognized by his being chosen one of a committee to devise ways and means to carry on the campaign. This committee suggested that the states should support the treasury of the United States with funds for which the treasurer was ordered to draw upon them for three millions, duly and fairly proportioned. This was all very well, but Morris, with no authority to enforce the decrees



of Congress, the confederacy being so loose, had great difficulty in collecting the quotas. Some of his letters betray the deepest disgust, and he speaks his mind very freely to the delinquent state governments. When some of them, through their representatives in Congress, suggested that contributions of clothing should be credited to them in lieu of money due, Witherspoon joined Morris in opposing such a demoralizing step, and had a very poor opinion of such statesmanship.

Finally when Morris brought in his plan for a national bank, Witherspoon gave his hearty support to this, one of the most efficient of the great financier's plans for placing the finances of the country on a sound basis. Witherspoon's views of finance and of money will be discussed in succeeding pages. An affair of a personal nature demanded his attention this year. He learned that his son, John, had been taken prisoner by the British. I have already stated that John Witherspoon, Jr., was a physician. He served in the Continental army and this year attempted to go abroad to purchase surgical instruments and necessary medicinal supplies. He took passage on the privateer *De Graaf*, which was captured at St. Eustatius by the British. Because of his father's promi-

nence the son was treated with extraordinary harshness in a London prison. When Witherspoon learned of his son's plight he wrote to Franklin, who was able to secure the young man's release, and, when that was, after some trouble, finally effected, took care of him in Paris until his father sent money for his expenses. In November Franklin was able to start the young physician on his homeward way, and wrote to his father, "I hope you will have the pleasure of receiving with this your long absent son, who appears to me a valuable young man. On the receipt of your letter I wrote to a friend in London to furnish him with what money he should have occasion for to bring him hither; and here I delivered to him the second of your letters of credit whereby he has been enabled to repay me."

#### 4. STEPS TOWARDS PEACE

As early as February, 1778, George Johnstone, an Englishman friendly to America, wrote to Robert Morris that the peace party in the Parliament seemed to be in the ascendant. In the same month the British ministry suddenly reversed its policy, repealed all the obnoxious acts, resistance to which had caused the war, and sent three commissioners to treat for peace.

They came too late, nor did they offer acceptable terms. The same year Spain's offer to mediate in the struggle was rejected by England, and the war went on. But in March of the next year the French minister in the United States, Gerard, suggested to the Congress that they draw up instructions for their plenipotentiaries, setting forth what they would demand and what they would yield. Then began a very earnest debate. Of course the one thing which they would never yield was independence. What Witherspoon wrote from his quiet home at Princeton in 1780 was felt by every member of the Congress in 1779, that they would never give up "though our condition were ten times worse than it is." Then came the question of boundaries and of certain other rights. Witherspoon was not present during the earlier discussion, when it was decided to insist on what is practically our present northern boundary, the free navigation of the Mississippi, and the privilege of fishing on the coasts of Newfoundland. The first point was claimed by Virginia, because of her supposed interest in the north-west territory, and especially because nobody wanted England on the upper Mississippi. The second point was felt to be necessary for the trade of the western territory, while the third

was made in the interest of the fishermen of New England. Later in the spring Spain gave notice that she would not grant any rights on the Mississippi. A committee, of which Witherspoon was one, was appointed to consider this delicate question, and, as a result of the deliberation, Congress agreed not to insist on this right but only to insist that England be shut out of the Mississippi altogether. Until peace was finally secured the terms were discussed in all phases and with varying modifications. John Adams, who had been sent to Holland in 1777 to treat with that country, was later appointed a plenipotentiary to negotiate for peace with England and make a treaty of commerce. It was expected that he would confer with the French, but he proceeded at first without reference to France. By the terms of the French alliance America was under obligations to make no terms which did not include France, but the Americans did not know that the French had a secret treaty with Spain, which country had been dragged into the war. Adams' positive and independent manner gave offense to the French court, which tried to have him recalled. Failing in that, which was opposed by the Congress, Gerard was ordered to secure such modification of his instructions as would make him

subject to the directions of the French court. The story of all this negotiation is told by Witherspoon in a manuscript which I have found among his papers and which, so far as I know, has never been published. He speaks at first hand, for he was one of the committee to examine the correspondence between Adams and the Duke de Vergennes, foreign minister of France, and to confer with Gerard upon many features of the delicate situation. His account of it is as follows:<sup>1</sup>

Sir, I now sit down agreeably to your request to recollect and commit to writing the circumstances most worthy of notice at the time of Congress in agreeing to the final instructions to our commissioners for negotiating peace, and to point out the views which seemed to me chiefly to have governed that body and induced them to direct our commissioners to be ultimately guided by the opinion and judgment of the court of France.

It will not be improper to premise some short remarks upon the state of things from the beginning of the war both before and after the French alliance.

<sup>1</sup>The words which I have been unable to decipher with certainty I have placed in brackets [ ]. The italics and spelling are Witherspoon's.

It was from the first appearance of things coming to extremities admitted by all that the chief if not the only quarter from which we were to look for foreign aid was France, as also that foreign aid was *necessary*—that is to say that unless we had foreign aid we could not expect to establish our independence but after many years of suffering, a depopulated country and a deluge of blood and that most probably some of the states themselves might have been lost.

I do not remember any difference of opinion worth mentioning upon either of these two points. Therefore our views were directed to France—there was a much greater difference of opinion whether we should offer our alliance to any other Power.

When application was made to France that Court proceeded with the utmost caution. It was easy, however, from the whole intercourse to perceive two things. (1) That both the court and nation of France were very desirous that we should be supported and succeed. (2) That at the same time they were exceedingly doubtful whether it was safe for them to involve themselves much with us, or openly to take a part.

This backwardness was plainly from two different causes which seemed to have almost equal influence. (1) Jealousy of us lest we should not

adhere to our resolutions but draw back and make peace with England. (2) Necessary fear of the power of England and particularly its naval force. They have hardly even yet been *wholly* free from either of these apprehensions.

The affairs of the United States were never in a more critical situation than in December, 1776, when Congress went to Baltimore. There never was a greater need for, or greater anxiety to obtain, foreign aid. The number that attended Congress then was small, but their measures were decided and, I believe, judicious. I do not remember one word of despondency to have fallen from any member or the most distant hint of a desire to make submission to England, but the means of persuading France to interpose effectually were the great subject of deliberation and discussion. At that time there was a letter or letters mentioned from a person in France which intimated that we should make propositions to France to induce them to support us in an effectual manner and even this sentiment, was spoke of as coming from that quarter, that if we would put France in the place of England they would certainly protect us. This came from no official persons, nor was directed to any official body, nor had we any reason to suppose that it was done at

the suggestion of the Court of France. I do not believe it was. The proposition was not worthy of being taken into consideration.

There were, however, some persons in Congress who reasoned in this manner: It is plain we cannot be supported without foreign aid. There is no place to which we can apply with probability of success but France. We know she is disposed to assist us, but we have given no sufficient inducement to that power to interfere. We have offered nothing to France but what we have offered to every other nation. The proposals mentioned were to offer France an exclusive trade with the United States for a limited time or to offer them an exclusive trade in some particular articles or to offer them in distinction from other nations a promise of freedom from imposts, etc.

After a very deliberate and accurate discussion it was the opinion of a very considerable majority of Congress to make no such proposals; that they were contrary to the very spirit of our undertaking, that if we were to be independent we would be independent of all the world, that to separate the United States from England was an object of itself sufficiently interesting to France, that it did not appear from any communications made to our com-



missioners that the Court of France desired any such preferences, but that their slowness and caution were from other causes.

Therefore Congress sent the most solemn assurances that we never would give up or, in the least degree, recede from the Declaration of Independence. Soon after this instructions were given to our commissioners to propose to the Court of France that if they would enter into the war with us we would assist to the utmost of our power in the conquest of the West Indies by furnishing provisions and stores for the fleets and armies of the King of France and by any other way in our power and that all such conquests should remain with France. One of the copies of these instructions was taken on the passage, published in London, republished in Charlestown, South Carolina, and from these papers published in Philadelphia, yet neither friends nor enemies discerned or suspected from them the nature of the important debate which had preceded them.

Soon after the capture of Burgoyne, the Court of France came to a determined resolution to support us vigorously ; the first authentic assurance of this was contained in letters from our commissioners of date December 6, 1777, and reached us about the last of January, 1778,

though the treaty was not subscribed till the 6th of February that year.

It is easy to see from the treaty itself that the French Court were still somewhat apprehensive of the issue, for they put in the eighth article that they were not to lay down their arms till the Independence of America shall have been formally or *tacitly* assured, etc.

In the year 1779, when the first proposal was made of attempting a treaty of peace under the mediation of the Emperor and King of Spain, Congress was called upon to consider and determine upon what terms of peace they would be willing to accept, and at the same time to be prepared for war. At that time, in a very large and full conference with M. Gerard, the French minister, he particularly and strongly recommended to Congress not to be too high in their demands and indeed discovered an apprehension that we might mar the treaty by being so. Probably this might be occasioned or augmented by some rash publications at that time insisting that we ought not to make peace without having Canada, Florida and Nova Scotia added to us. The minister took great pains to represent to Congress that much would depend upon the opinion the mediating powers might form of our temper and disposition,

and that it was plain England took all possible pains to represent us as an ambitious people that wanted to extend their bounds, and would be dangerous to other nations. In this conference also he told us that the events of war were uncertain, that, therefore, we ought not to be too confident and particularly he used the expression that it was hard to say what might be the effect of a decisive victory at sea. If Rodney's victory in the West Indies had happened two years sooner than it did its effect would have been perhaps fatal to us.

From this state of things, and all that followed, I am convinced that nothing could be more false than the supposition of some persons that France wanted the war to continue for the purpose of ambition and the greater humiliation of her enemy. On the contrary, France always discovered a desire to have the war terminated, and listened to any proposal for this purpose, perhaps prompted or suggested the offers of mediation from Spain, the Emperor and Russia. This was the natural consequence of the two causes above assigned for her slowness and caution in entering upon the war.

Mr. John Adams was chosen for the purpose and a commission for negotiating a peace with Great Britain was given to him alone. The in-

structions at first sent to him contained descriptions of our claims as to territory and made the following particulars essentially necessary to our making peace:—the extension of our bounds to the forty-fifth degree of latitude north and to the Mississippi westward—the right of fishing on the banks of New Foundland and a free navigation of the Mississippi to the mouth.

When Mr. Adams was in France he thought it best to intimate to the Court of England as from himself that he had a commission for negotiating peace. The Court of France was of opinion that that term was not proper, that things were not sufficiently ripe for it and that no such separate intimation should be made and that it might encourage England in the expectation of England's making a separate treaty with America and dividing the allies, a thing which they earnestly desired and made repeated attempts to accomplish. In a correspondence between Mr. Adams and the D. de Vergennes on this subject and also on the subject of the act of Congress of the 18th of March, '80, estimating the continental currency at forty per cent., Mr. Adams mentioned his opinions with a tenaciousness which gave great offense to the Court of France, and indeed such was the manner of his entering upon these subjects that he

was finally forbid to continue it by an express order de par de le Roi.

In the year 1781 Congress entered upon the reconsideration of the instructions formerly sent to Mr. Adams, particularly the making essential conditions of the [ ] boundary, of the fishing in Newfoundland and the free navigation of the Mississippi—the last of these we learned from our ministers was very disagreeable to the Court of Spain, another one, the fishing, not very agreeable to the Court of France, who had not the right by treaty themselves and the other we had reason to suspect that England might be very timorous upon, nor did we know what might be the sentiments of the mediating powers or the Powers of Europe in general as to our right or the expediency of our having such extensive dominions. It was also to be considered that as none of these particulars was specified in the alliance with France the question was necessarily reduced to this form, whether though France should not support us in these claims we would continue the war ourselves unless they were granted.

In this situation after much and long discussion it was at last resolved as to all the three to depart from making them absolute and

essential conditions lest at our distance it should be a bar to an otherwise honourable peace.

The spirit, therefore of the final instructions was that [high claims] should still serve to them what we wished and thought we ought to obtain but from a desire of peace we left it to our ministers in conjunction with our allies to do what circumstances should discover to be wisest upon the whole. When these matters were interesting them the minister of France often intimated both to committees in conference with him and to particular members of Congress that it would be highly agreeable to his court that Congress should leave nothing in general or undetermined but say expressly upon any particular what they would or what they would not yield. It could not surely be known with certainty whether this arose chiefly or only from their jealousy of Mr. Adams or whether they preferred upon the whole that as little should be left discretionary as possible lest blame should be laid upon themselves.

When the instructions were therefore agreed upon communications were made of them to the minister of France and the directions were given in the same manner as always had been done to our minister to make the most free and

candid communications of all his proceedings to the Court of France and to avail himself of the assistance, friendship and influence of that court in all his transactions. Then a difficulty arose which was trying indeed ; it appeared that this was not sufficient in the present instance—the minister read to the committee the letters of the D. de Vergennes upon the subject of Mr. Adams, complaining of him in the strongest terms and expressing their fears of the negotiations being marred by his stiffness and tenaciousness of purpose. It was natural to suppose and probably was supposed by the members of the committee that the minister wished Congress would take that commission from Mr. Adams and give it to some other though no such thing was read to the committee from D. de Vergennes nor proposed by the minister himself.

When this matter was reported to Congress a very serious deliberation was taken upon it. What Mr. Adams had done by which he had incurred the displeasure of the minister of the king of France had been undoubtedly from his zeal and attachment to the interest and honour of the United States, his ability and his unshaken fidelity were well known. In such a case to displace a minister merely because he had

given umbrage to some at the court where he resided by an excess of well meant zeal seemed to be a most pernicious example and possibly would have the worst effects upon succeeding ministers and therefore ought not to be done. The writer of this memorial of facts in particular was clearly of opinion that Mr. Adams judged [wrong] *in bello* the points which he contested in his correspondence with the D. de Vergennes the reasons for which need not be mentioned yet he was clearly of opinion to sacrifice a minister of unquestionable integrity ought not in any event to be submitted to merely because he had had more zeal than good manners and [assuring presence]. Therefore it was proposed that a clause should be added to the instructions to this purpose and that he should *do nothing without the consent and approbation of the Court of France.*

Another committee was appointed to confer with the minister and make this communication. But in conference this also was in his opinion insufficient. He repeated the fears they had of difficulties with Mr. Adams and insisted that by this new clause he was only bound negatively, that he could not indeed do anything without the consent of the Court of France but he might obstruct every measure and unless he



was perfectly satisfied effectually prevent anything being done.

When this was reported to Congress the matter appeared exceedingly delicate and difficult. It was discussed at great length. All the objections against removing Mr. Adams were argued in their full force. But on the other hand it appeared humiliating at least if not dangerous to deliver ourselves entirely to the Court of France. However after full deliberation it was agreed by the majority in Congress that he should be *absolutely guided by the opinion and judgment of the Court of France.*

As this particular resolution appeared so dubious to several worthy members of Congress and there were so many attempts to reconsider and revoke it and as it [in the meantime] was the subject of discussion by the public at large, it seems necessary to recollect, while circumstances are fresh in our minds and to record, the necessity or the reasons that induced the plurality to embrace it. It is not intended in this [rather long] memorial to attempt distinguishing between the opinions of one member and another, but just to mention as many as possible of the sentiments that were proposed and advanced by those who finally voted for it.

It was plain that from the first rise of the controversy we had been greatly indebted to the Court of France. They had interposed effectively and seasonably in our cause. They had exerted themselves with much vigour and zeal. They had put themselves to very great expense upon our account. At the very time when this debate was agitated our most necessary expenses were supported by them, and even the subsistence and support of many delegates in Congress was from bills drawn upon France. We had accustomed ourselves by many public and authentic acts to call the King of France our great and generous ally. Perhaps there were as humiliating expressions in many of the public acts and proceedings as could be in this resolution which might well be considered as the effect of grateful and generous sentiments.

Let us now follow Witherspoon's course as we can trace it through the journals of Congress. When, in June, 1781, it was proposed to associate other commissioners with Adams, Witherspoon opposed it in a very vigorous speech, as he had opposed the recall of Adams. He was very grateful to the French, as he tells us in the memorial just quoted. But he was not willing that the Congress should be bound hand and

foot to them. He contended that one commissioner was sufficient and that Adams was the proper one. He had earnestly opposed Vergennes' suggestion that they might enter into a truce with Great Britain for twenty years, New York to be given to the United States, Georgia and South Carolina to the English. In the end it was determined to associate four others with Adams, only three of whom joined him, namely, Franklin, Jay and Laurens, although the latter arrived just in time to sign the preliminary treaty. Witherspoon had nominated Reed of Pennsylvania.

On the 6th of June, 1781, Witherspoon offered the following further instructions to the minister who was to negotiate on behalf of the United States :

“ But as to disputed boundaries and other particulars we refer you to our former instructions, from which you will easily perceive the desires and expectations of Congress, but we think it unsafe at this distance to tie you up by absolute and peremptory directions upon any other subject than the two essential articles above mentioned (namely, the navigation of the Mississippi and a free port or ports below the thirty-first parallel of latitude). You will therefore use your own judgment and prudence in

securing the interest of the United States in such manner as circumstances may direct and as the state of the belligerent and disposition of the mediating powers may require.

“You are to make the most candid and confidential communications upon all subjects to the ministers of our generous ally, the King of France, to undertake nothing in the negotiations for peace without their knowledge and concurrence, and to make them sensible how much we rely upon his majesty’s influence for effectual support in everything that may be necessary to the present security or future prosperity of the United States of America.”

After this motion had been debated all day it was lost by a very narrow vote. But the whole question was referred to a committee which, the next day, reported it favourably with the following additions :

“1. You are to use your utmost endeavours to secure the limits fixed exactly according to the description in your former instructions.

“2. If that cannot be obtained it is the wish of Congress that a peace be made without fixing northern and western limits, but leaving them to future discussion.

“3. If that is also found impracticable and boundaries must be ascertained you are to ob-

tain as advantageous a settlement as possible in favour of the United States."

To the first of these additions every member assented ; the second received the vote of every state except New Hampshire and half of Massachusetts, while the third was lost by a narrow vote.

Then Witherspoon's original motion came up again, and after being vigorously threshed over, both sections were adopted. This did not end the matter. On the 9th of June he moved to instruct the commissioners that they might agree to a truce with England "provided that Great Britain be not left in possession of any part of the thirteen United States." The negotiations dragged along and the war continued. In May, 1782, Congress felt that England was trying to detach France, not suspecting the French agreement with Spain. By August the attitude of Spain was so suspicious that Jay was authorized to sign a treaty with her "or go to any part of Europe his health might demand," which meant a breach of negotiations. About the same time Lee endeavoured to have the instructions of July, '81, reconsidered, with the result that finally they were practically unchanged. A further discussion of Witherspoon's position is not neces-

sary. But from a study of his action it is plain that with the others, he was tenacious of every right for which the war had been waged, that he strove to avoid any claims which might endanger the prospects of peace, and that he thought the Congress in honour bound to be guided by their ally, France. How the American commissioners finally broke their instructions and made a separate treaty with England regardless of France is no part of this story. When the news of it first reached the Congress many members, Witherspoon among them, as also were Madison, Livingston and Hamilton, were ready to censure the commissioners. "When, however," says Wharton, "the treaty of peace in itself so advantageous arrived, and when it appeared that France made no official complaint of the action of the commissioners, and was even ready to make a new loan to the United States, then Livingston, Madison and Hamilton concurred in holding that no vote of censure should be passed." Witherspoon held the same opinion.

Certain writers have condemned the Congress as composed of stupid blunderers, commenting upon their weakness, pointing scornfully at their mistakes. Such criticism is unfair. When one considers that these men were

practically untried novices in the larger affairs of statesmanship and diplomacy it is marvellous that they succeeded as well as they did. Of public finance they had known little; of military operations on a large scale they knew less. The difficulties of Congressional direction of warfare are the common experience of revolutionists. Cromwell had to deal with them. The commander-in-chief of the Confederate army, Robert E. Lee, felt their hindering clutches. But such experiences are inevitable in a representative government. A government as well organized as that of the United States at the time of the Spanish war, of England during the Boer war, was unable to maintain a perfect commissariat. The men of the Continental Congress deserve all praise for their fidelity to the trust reposed in them. Had they not been ready to sacrifice their private business, and run the risk of losing, as some of them did lose, their private fortunes, the struggle for independence would never have succeeded. Without the Congress there would have been no Confederacy; there would have been no treaty making power; there would have been only a military dictatorship which disunion and the lack of foreign support would have broken to pieces. As Witherspoon him-

self said, "Those who know how fluctuating a body the Congress is and what continual changes take place in it, as to men, must perceive the absurdity of their making or succeeding in any such attempt" as the war for independence. That they did succeed is due to the ability and fidelity of men like Witherspoon as well as of men like Washington.



## V

### THE LAST YEARS

WITHERSPOON'S first public utterance after the attainment of peace was a sermon preached on the Thanksgiving Day appointed by the Congress. In keeping with his personal religious belief his text expressed his own feelings. "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord." "He who confesses that salvation belongeth unto God will finally give the glory to Him. Confidence before, and boasting after the event are alike contrary to this disposition. If any person desires to have his faith in this truth confirmed or improved, let him read the history of mankind in a cool and considerate manner, and with a serious frame of spirit. He will then perceive that every page will add to his conviction. He will find that the most important events have seemed to turn upon circumstances the most trivial and the most out of the reach of human direction. A blast of wind, a shower of rain, a random shot, a private quarrel, the neglect of a servant, a motion without intention, or a word spoken by accident and misunderstood has been the cause of a victory

or defeat which has decided the fate of empires.” He considers the interposition of Providence under three heads. 1. “Signal successes or particular and providential favours to us in the course of the war. 2. Preservation from difficulties and evils which seemed to be in our situation unavoidable, and at the same time next to insurmountable. 3. Confounding the councils of our enemies and making them hasten on the change which they desired to prevent.”

He speaks of the general unpreparedness of the country for war. “There was a willing spirit, but unarmed hands.” To the militia who contributed so much to the success of the American arms he gives generous praise. Regarding Washington’s leadership “as a favour from the God of heaven” he pays his tribute in these simple words. “Consider his coolness and prudence, his fortitude and perseverance, his happy talent of engaging the affection of all ranks, so that he is equally acceptable to the citizen, and to the soldier—to the state in which he was born and to every other on the continent. To be a brave man or skillful commander, is common to him with many others; but this country stood in need of a comprehensive and penetrating mind, which understood the effect

of particular measures in bringing the general cause to an issue. When we contrast his character and conduct with those of the various leaders that have been opposed to him, when we consider their attempts to blast each others' reputation, and the short duration of their command, we must say that Providence has fitted him for the charge and called him to the service."

The union and harmony of the several states, and of these with their allies is another proof. For the patience and devotion of the people he has nothing but praise. "It is true that Congress has, in many instances been obliged to have recourse to measures in themselves hard and oppressive and confessed to be so; which yet, have been patiently submitted to, because of the important purpose that was to be served by them. Of this kind was the emission of paper money; the passing of tender laws; compelling all into the militia; draughting the militia to fill the regular army; pressing provisions and carriages; and many others of the like nature. Two things are remarkable in this whole matter: one, that every imposition for the public service fell heaviest on those who were the friends of America; the lukewarm or contrary-minded always finding some way of

shifting the load from their own shoulders. The other, that from the freedom of the press of this country there never were wanting, the boldest and most inflammatory publications, both against men and measures. Yet neither the one nor the other, nor both united, had any perceptible influence in weakening the attachment of the people." He speaks of the barbarity of the British both towards non-combatants and prisoners of war; of the splendid courage of the soldiers both under privation and in battle. The sermon is a fine summary of the elements of character which finally brought victory. As to the future he thinks that "a republic once equally poised must either preserve its virtue or lose its liberty." Public office demands high character. "Let a man's zeal, profession, or even principles as to political measures be what they will, if he is without personal integrity and private virtue, as a man he is not to be trusted." "Let us endeavour to bring into and keep in credit and reputation everything that may serve to give vigour to an equal republican constitution. Let us cherish a love of piety, order, industry, frugality. Let us check every disposition to luxury, effeminacy, and the pleasures of a dissipated life. Let us

in public measures put honour upon modesty and self-denial, which is the index of real merit."

Early in the struggle he had said that the American Revolution "would be an important era in the history of mankind." "Happy was it for us," says Tyler, "that this clear-headed thinker, this expert in the art of popular exposition, was in full sympathy with those deep human currents of patriotic thought and feeling which swept towards an independent national life in this land. Happy was it for us, also, that while he was capable beyond most men of seeing the historic and cosmopolitan significance of the movement for American independence, he had the moral greatness to risk even his own great favour with the American people by telling them that the acquisition of independence was not to be the end of their troubles, but rather in some sense the beginning of them; since greater perils than those brought in by Red Coats and Hessians were then to meet them, in the form of shallow and anarchical politics, corruption among voters, unscrupulous partisanship, new and hitherto unimagined forms of demagogism, and the boisterous incompetence of men entrusted with power in the regulation and guidance of the state." "I am

much mistaken," said Witherspoon, "if the time is not just at hand when there shall be greater need than ever in America for the most accurate discussion of the principles of society, the rights of nations and the policy of states."

To that discussion he contributed one of the clearest, most forceful essays on the subject of finance that will be found in the literature of our country. In the Continental Congress he had lamented, where he could not prevent, the emission of paper currency, speaking against it frequently. To the sound financial measures of Robert Morris he gave his unstinted support. In the leisure of his retirement at Princeton after the war he gathered together his speeches made in Congress and issued them in the form of an "Essay on Money." Many of the states were carried away by the paper-money fever and were issuing it freely. He deprecates this. Carefully discussing the nature of money and the history of finance, he points out the dangers attending a depreciated currency. "It is," he says, "an absurdity reserved for American legislatures." "For two or three years we constantly saw and were informed," he humorously remarks, "of creditors running away from their debtors, and then pursuing them in triumph, and paying them without mercy."

“Tender laws, arming paper, or anything not valuable in itself with authority are directly contrary to the very first principles of commerce.” “All paper money increases the price of industry and its fruits.” “It annihilates credit.”

Other subjects also claimed his attention. During the year 1781, Witherspoon employed his leisure in writing for a periodical, which I have not been able to identify, eight articles which he called “The Druid.” In these he treated different subjects. In the first he defends the dignity of human nature against the habits of prejudice and slanderous statements. He appeals to the love of truth, to honour and to the nobler effects of justice. “The greatest strength of a people is in their virtues.” “He who makes a people virtuous makes them invincible.” The second paper pleads for as much gentleness and humanity as is possible in carrying on war. Wanton destruction of property, assaults on non-combatants, brutality towards prisoners should be discountenanced. His fourth article is a capital plea for the exercise of plain common sense in the affairs of life. It has touches of humour. He begs parents to make “a moderate estimation of the talents of their children.” His concluding sentence is,

“Let all, therefore, who wish or hope to be eminent, remember, that as the height to which you can raise a tower depends upon the size and solidity of its base, so they ought to lay the foundation of their future fame deep and strong in sobriety, prudence and patient industry, which are the genuine dictates of *plain common sense*.” The remaining numbers treated of polite speech under the heads of Americanisms, vulgarisms, cant phrases, etc., of which, he says, he has made a collection for several years. An interesting statement made by him is that “the vulgar in America speak much better than the vulgar in Great Britain,” his reason being that the settlers have not lived long enough in isolated communities to acquire dialects. But he thinks, on the other hand, that while some British “gentlemen and scholars speak as much with the vulgar in common chit-chat, as persons of the same class do in America, there is a remarkable difference in their public and solemn discourses” in favour of Great Britain.

Unfortunately few of Witherspoon's letters have been preserved. He carried on a very active correspondence with his youngest son, David, while the young man was teaching school in Virginia. These letters show his solicitude for his son's welfare, especially his



piety and attendance upon religious duties. They give news of the family and of public affairs. In order to encourage the boy in scholarly efforts his father writes sometimes in Latin, or in French, and requests his son to do so. But after David Witherspoon became secretary to the President of Congress, these letters ceased and I have not been able to find any of later date.

His relations with his eldest son, John, were not happy. For some reason not now discoverable, the young man took offense at his father and refused to hold any intercourse with him or to answer any letters. He died in South Carolina, leaving no family.

During the last ten years of his life Dr. Witherspoon continued to serve as the nominal president of Princeton, but the duties of that office were performed by his son-in-law, Rev. Samuel S. Smith, D. D., who became his immediate successor. As has already been related, Witherspoon resided on his farm, Tusculum, about a mile above Princeton. His interest in public affairs continued until the end of his life. When the Georgia legislature proposed to introduce a clause in its constitution excluding clergymen from public office, he wrote to one of the newspapers protesting against such a dis-

crimination. His tone is serious, but he could not avoid the sarcasm which he knew so well how to use. He wishes to know why a minister is disqualified and whether it is a sin to seek the office. "Does his calling render him stupid or ignorant?" He closes by suggesting the following paragraph as sufficiently covering the subject :

"No clergyman, of any denomination, shall be capable of being elected a member of the Senate or House of Representatives, because [here insert the grounds of offensive disqualification, which I have not been able to discover] provided always, and it is the true intent and meaning of this part of the constitution, that if at any time he shall be completely deprived of the clerical character by those by whom he was invested with it, as by deposition for cursing and swearing, drunkenness or uncleanness, he shall then be fully restored to all the privileges of a free citizen ; his offense shall no more be remembered against him ; but he may be chosen either to the Senate or House of Representatives, and shall be treated with all the respect due to his *brethren*, the other members of the Assembly."

Other literary work produced a series of Letters on Marriage and on Education, both col-

lections full of pungent, practical suggestions on these topics.

So little did he anticipate the growth and future necessities of the government of the United States that he was opposed to the movement to select a Federal city for the permanent seat of government. In an article giving his views he resents criticism of the salaries paid congressmen. "I hope few persons will ever be in Congress, who, devoting their time to the public service, may not well deserve the compensation fixed for them for their character and talents." But he adds, "I should also be sorry to hear of any member of Congress who became rich by the savings above his expense. I know very well, that there have been congressmen and assemblymen too, who have carried home considerable sums from less wages; but they were such generally as did more good to their families by their penury than to their country by their political wisdom."

These remarks having been offered he states his objections to selecting any particular city or erecting buildings for the Federal government, because it is not necessary. In the light of subsequent history the good doctor's acrid criticisms are doubly amusing. "Does it," he asks, "appear necessary from the nature of things? No.

The weight and influence of any deliberative or legislative body, depend much more on the wisdom of their measures than on the splendid apartments in which they are assembled."

One remark is especially interesting in view of what has occurred since it was written. "If the American empire come to be one consolidated government, I grant it would be of some consequence that the seat of that government and source of authority should not be too distant from the extremities, for reasons which I need not here mention. But if the particular states are to be preserved and supported in their constitutional government, it seems of very little consequence where the Congress, consisting of representatives from these states, shall hold their sessions." So little did he, or anybody in his day, anticipate the centralization of power and expansion of territory which has placed America in the forefront of the nations. There were not wanting, however, men who foresaw the future greatness of the new nation. The Spanish ambassador wrote to his king, "This federal republic is born a pigmy. A day will come when it will be a giant. Liberty of conscience, the facility of establishing a new population on immense lands, as well as the advantages of the new government, will draw thither farmers and

artisans from all the nations. In a few years we shall watch with grief the tyrannical existence of this same Colossus." Little did the Spaniard perceive that liberty of conscience and tyranny are impossibilities in the same nation.

One of the annual commonplaces of college life is the baccalaureate sermon. Of those which Witherspoon preached only one has been preserved. So far as we know this one was delivered twice; once in 1775 and again in 1787. He urges upon his young auditors three important considerations, their duty to God, the prosecution of their studies or improvement of their talents, as members of society, and prudence in their intercourse with the world. Religion should be as much a part of the business man's life, he thinks, as of the clergyman's. One does not go to heaven or hell as minister, lawyer, physician, soldier, or merchant, but as a man. "He must have a very mean taste indeed, who is capable of finding pleasure in disorder and riot." "If I had no higher pleasure on earth than in eating and drinking, I would not choose to eat and drink with the drunken," he tells them, in urging them to be decent and orderly. "Order, neatness, elegance, and even moderation itself, are necessary to exalt and refine the pleasures

of a sensual life." Warning them against pride and superciliousness, a disposition to judge others, he says, "It is not only lawful, but our duty, to have a free communication with our fellow citizens, for the purposes of social life; it is not only lawful but our duty to be courteous, and to give every proper evidence of respect and attention to others according to their rank and place in society." "We see sometimes the pride of unsanctified knowledge do great injury to religion; and on the other hand, we find some persons of real piety, despising human learning, and disgracing the most glorious truths by a meanness and indecency hardly sufferable in their manner of handling them." "Multitudes of moderate capacity have been useful in their generation, respected by the public, and successful in life, while those of superior talents by nature, by mere slothfulness and idle habits, or self-indulgence, have lived useless, and died contemptible." "Persons of the greatest ability have generally been lovers of order. Neither is there any instance to be found, of a man's arriving at great reputation or usefulness, be his capacity what it might, without industry and application." "Whatever a man's talents from nature may be, if he apply himself to what is not altogether un-

suitable to them, and holds on with steadiness and uniformity, he will be useful and happy ; but if he be loose and volatile, impatient of the slowness of things in their usual course, and shifting from project to project, he will probably be neither the one nor the other." Such was the advice given to young men by one whose own life was its best illustration. "True religion should furnish you with a higher and nobler principle to govern your conduct, than the desire of applause from men. Yet, in subordination to what ought to be the great purpose of life," said this man among men, "there is a just and laudable ambition to do what is praiseworthy among men. This ought not to be extinguished in the minds of youth ; being a powerful spur and incitement to virtuous or illustrious actions." "A man's real character in point of ability, is *never* mistaken, and but *seldom* in point of morals. That there are many malicious and censorious persons, I agree ; but lies are not half so durable as truth. Therefore reverence the judgment of mankind without idolizing it." He was no recluse. "As to piety," he said, "nothing is more essential to it than social communication." As to their intercourse with the world in general he gives them many nuggets of practical sense. "The moral

virtue of meekness and condescension is the best ground work even of worldly politeness, and prepares a man to receive that polish, which makes his behaviour generally agreeable, and fits him for intercourse with persons in the higher ranks of life. The same virtue enables a man to manage his affairs to advantage. A good shopkeeper is commonly remarkable for this quality. People love to go where they meet with good words and gentle treatment; whereas the peevish and petulant have a repelling quality." Warning them against talkativeness he says, "There are some persons who, one might say, give away so much wisdom in their speech, that they leave none behind to govern their actions." Speaking of the sort of friendship to be formed he remarks, "There never was a true friend who was not an honest man." "Think of others as reason and religion require you and treat them as it is your duty to do, and you will not be far from a well polished behaviour." He is sure that the best manners can be learned only in the best company, and recommends a study of Rochefoucauld's Maxims and Chesterfield's Letters. He himself was always the most courteous and dignified of men, but with an undefinable charm which drew all classes to him. As to their judgments



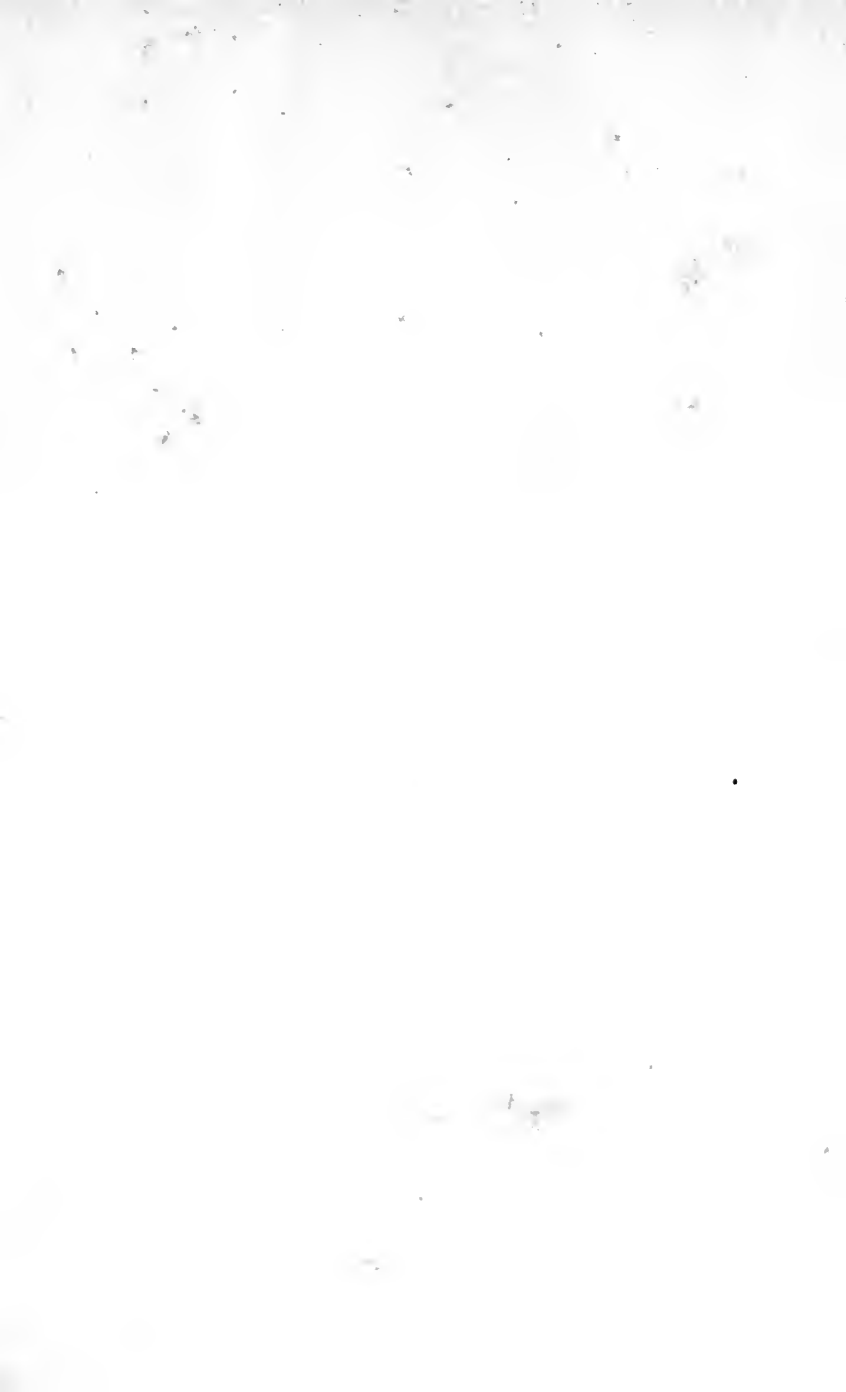
of others he bids them remember that "Probably men are neither so good as they pretend nor so bad as they are often thought to be." In his opinion the one great virtue is truthfulness. "Let me, therefore, commend to you a strict, universal, and scrupulous regard to truth. It will give dignity to your character—it will put order into your affairs; it will excite the most unbounded confidence, so that whether your view be your own interest, or the service of others, it promises you the most assured success. I am also persuaded that there is no virtue that has a more powerful influence upon every other, and certainly there is none by which you can draw nearer to God Himself whose distinguishing character is, that He will not, and He cannot lie."

Witherspoon thought that family religion was of quite as much importance as public religion. In his own household family prayers were said morning and evening. Saturday evening was set aside for the meditation deemed necessary as a proper approach to the Sabbath. Holy days there were none in that Puritan home, but on the last night of the year he called his family together and impressed upon them the precepts of religion and right living.

In 1789 his wife died leaving him altogether alone, as all his children had by that time left home. In a year and a half he married a young widow of only twenty years of age, Mrs. Ann Dill, of Philadelphia. By her he had two daughters, one of whom died in infancy.

To the last of his life he took a keen interest in all sorts of matters, writing letters, preparing articles for the papers, looking after his private business and lecturing in the college. On the journey to Europe in 1784 during a storm he had been thrown against the side of the vessel and received a blow which so injured one eye that the sight of it was impaired. The other was bruised by a fall from his horse while riding over land which he had bought in Vermont. The second accident occurred in the summer of 1791. From that time he was unable to read or write and was obliged to employ a secretary, usually one of the students. One of these has left an account of Dr. Witherspoon's habits during the last three years of his life. He continued to preach, being led into the pulpit where he delivered verbatim a sermon of his own composition which had been read to him by his secretary. Nor did he absent himself from the meetings of his church, attending them regularly up to the last. His

correspondence was large and two days of each week were generally devoted to it. For some time before his death he was obliged to give up preaching because of fits of dizziness which his physician regarded as threats of apoplexy. "On the 15th day of November 1794, in the seventy third year of his age, he retired to his eternal rest, full of honour and full of days."



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