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LAUREL HILL

AND SOME COLONIAL DAMES
WHO ONCE LIVED THERE

BY
WILLIAM BROOKE RAWLE

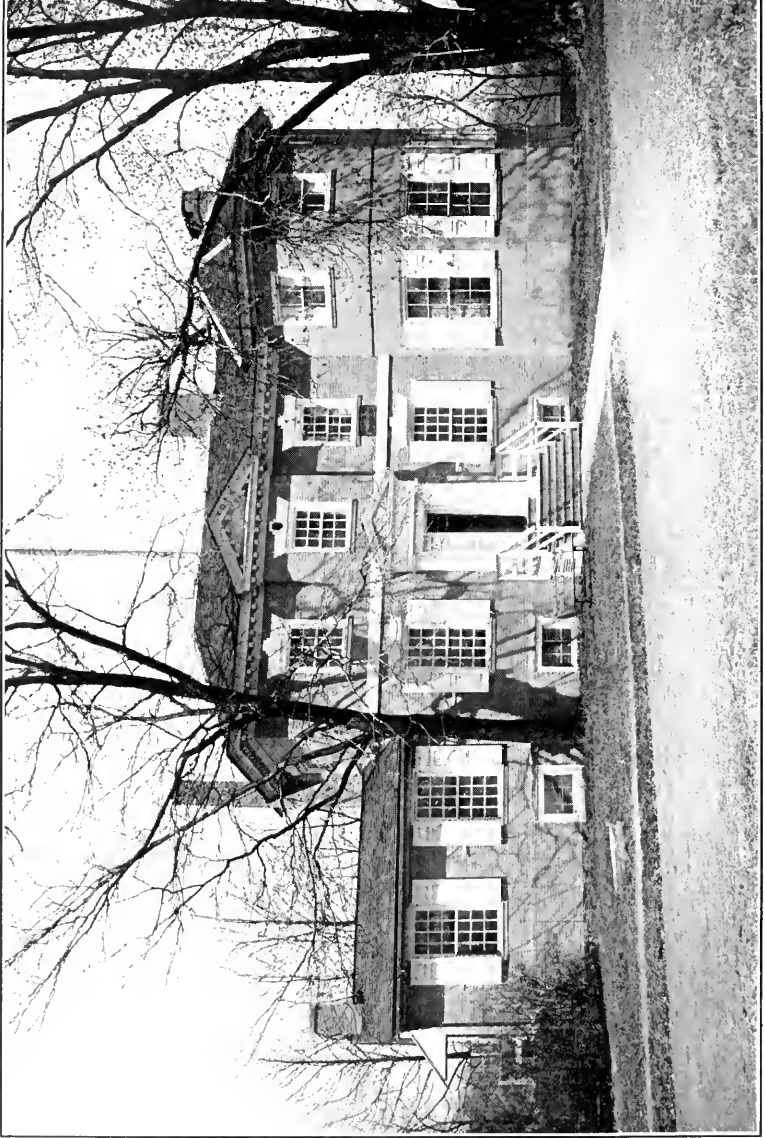
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LAUREL HILL
NOW KNOWN AS
THE RANDOLPH MANSION, EAST FAIRMOUNT PARK, PHILADELPHIA
FRONT VIEW FACING EAST

LAUREL HILL

AND SOME COLONIAL DAMES WHO ONCE LIVED THERE

BY WILLIAM BROOKE RAWLE.

A PAPER READ MAY 1, 1901, BEFORE THE SOCIETY OF THE COLONIAL DAMES OF AMERICA, CHAPTER II, PHILADELPHIA, UPON THE OPENING OF THE RANDOLPH MANSION (AS IT IS NOW CALLED) IN EAST FAIRMOUNT PARK, PHILADELPHIA, BY THAT ORGANIZATION, IN WHOSE CARE AND CUSTODY IT HAD BEEN PLACED BY THE PARK COMMISSIONERS FOR RESTORATION AND OCCUPANCY.¹

*Members of the Society of The Colonial Dames of America,
Ladies and Gentlemen:—*

It is a common custom in these United States of ours to treat as almost antediluvian the events which occurred before the American Revolution. The result of that glorious struggle for liberty and the rights of man was certainly a deluge—political and social. But a mistake is made, I think, in ignoring, to the extent which our people generally do, the history of our country before that great *bouleversement*. Especially in the minds of your charming sex—whose thoughts, happily, are more apt to be concerned with the present and the future than with the past—there is a certain angelic halo of—what shall I term it?—mistiness—vagueness—concerning the historical

¹Some of the following matter appears also in the account of "Laurel Hill and the Rawle Family," in the Second Volume of "Some Colonial Mansions and Those who Lived in Them," edited by Mr. Thomas Allen Glenn. At the outbreak of the Spanish-American War Mr. Glenn entered the Military Service, leaving the article unfinished, and Mr. Henry T. Coates, the publisher of the book, requested me to finish it, which I did. I have not had any hesitancy, therefore, in repeating to some extent in this paper what I myself wrote for the work mentioned.—W. B. R.

sequence and co-relation of events, which strikes with perplexity those of us mere men who are inclined to indulge in historical research and to study the philosophy of history. Among other things, we would suppose that a Society of Colonial Dames would devote itself more than it does to the study of the people of Colonial times, and to the publication of the manuscripts left by them, the preservation of the places, and the commemoration of the events connected with the history of the American Colonies *prior* to the day upon which their system of government as Colonies came to an end—the Fourth of July, 1776. And is not the motto of your Society “*Colere Colonialium Gloriam*” ?¹ When we see the very laudable and patriotic steps taken by societies of Colonial complexion and name in the way of commemorating events which occurred *after* the Continental system had been inaugurated, we are apt to ask ourselves whether those objects do not rather come within the field of work of the Societies of the Sons, and of the Daughters, of the Revolution? And this reminds me of the reply of a bright young lawyer whom we all know, when he was asked if he knew what name, as contra-distinguished from that of your older organization of Colonial Dames, a certain “other” Society proposed to adopt—a Society strongly based on the memories of the American Revolution—“Why, the ‘*Continental Dames*,’ I suppose!”

“Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Askelon!”

It is therefore in the spirit of the motto of your Society that I propose, in response to your invitation to say something about the house in which we are assembled to-day, and the people who lived in it in the long ago, to tell you of some Colonial Dames of a Colonial family who lived in Colonial times in this Colonial Mansion as

¹ To cherish the glory of the Colonies.

their summer home. . But their Colonialism was taken away from those ladies against their wills. There is *no* necessary and inseparable connection between matters Colonial and Toryism, as many people suppose, but in their hearts those ladies remained loyal to the *status quo ante bellum*, and Colonial Dames to the end of *their* chapter.

Some years ago I amused myself by bringing together and having copied, and to some extent editing, such family letters and diaries of my Colonial Dames as had been preserved, and from that interesting collection I have taken much of what I shall read to you to-day. The papers had been divided in bulk among the different members of the family, without regard to form, subject-matter, or chronological sequence, and it was no light task, I assure you, to arrange them in order, for ladies then, as now, had a way, most perplexing to men, of not always fully dating their letters.

This house, which has been placed in the care and custody of your Society by the Commissioners of Fairmount Park, was built, it is said, in the year 1748, and was owned by one Joseph Shute, from whose estate it was purchased in the year 1760 by Francis Rawle of Philadelphia, jointly with his brother-in-law Joshua Howell, together with the seventy-six acres of land surrounding it extending along the Schuylkill River from the glens dividing the property from the Strawberry Mansion tract on the North East and the Ormiston tract on the South West, and running back to a lane then called the Wissahickon Road, which communicated with the Ridge Road. The title was taken in Mr. Howell's name, and a few days subsequently he conveyed to Mr. Rawle the South Western portion, thirty-one acres of land with this house upon it, then and for nearly eighty years afterwards known as "Laurel Hill." Mr. Howell retained the remaining forty-five acres of land and there built for himself a country house, to which and its sur-

roundings he gave the name of "Edgely." The latter house remained standing until after its acquisition by the City of Philadelphia for park purposes.

By way of explanation let me state that it was not until the year 1837 that the Cemetery Company was incorporated, which gave the name of Laurel Hill to the tract about one mile above this, now North Laurel Hill Cemetery, and which had at one time been the country seat of Joseph Sims, called "The Laurels." In former days these bluffs along the river were noted for the luxurious growth of the laurel, and hence the name. Central Laurel Hill Cemetery was formerly the country place of George Pepper, and known as "Fairy Hill," while South Laurel Hill Cemetery was at one time the country seat of William Rawle, the son of Francis Rawle just mentioned, and called "Harleigh."

Francis Rawle was born in Philadelphia in 1729. He was an only child whose mother died at his birth, and whose father died when his son was but twelve years of age. He was a well educated, cultured gentleman of ample means, and upon his reaching manhood he made the "Grand Tour" of Europe, travelling extensively and through various countries, as was the custom with those of his station in life whose financial circumstances allowed them to do so. Shortly after his return home he married, in 1756, Rebecca, daughter of Edward Warner, a wealthy and prominent citizen of Philadelphia, who while a member of the Assembly was associated with Isaac Norris, the Speaker, as a committee to obtain the bell for the State House—that "Liberty Bell" with its wonderfully prophetic legend selected by them:—"Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land, unto all the Inhabitants thereof."

Francis Rawle did not live long to enjoy his beautifully situated country home, for in June, 1761, he was mortally wounded by the accidental discharge of his fowling piece while shooting upon the meadows of another estate of his, situated on the Delaware River at Point-no-

point below Frankford. He left to survive him besides his widow, three young children, all under four years of age—Anna Rawle, who afterwards married John Clifford, William Rawle, and Margaret Rawle, who afterwards became the wife of Isaac Wharton.

By his Will Mr. Rawle left all his property, including "Laurel Hill," to his widow, and there during the summer months she and her infant children resided. In 1767 she married her first husband's intimate friend, Samuel Shoemaker, himself a widower with several children—none of whom, however, except his son Benjamin, to be mentioned hereafter, survived the Revolution. Between "Laurel Hill" and Mr. Shoemaker's own beautiful country seat, "Pomona Terrace," in Germantown, the united families divided their time in summer.

Mr. Shoemaker was a charming, thoroughbred, well educated and accomplished gentleman, of much culture, fine presence and large means. He was the son of a Member of the Governor's Council, and held many important offices in Philadelphia under the Royal and Proprietary governments. From 1755 to 1776, the end of Colonial times, he was continually in office, during much of the period holding several offices at the same time. He was a Councilman, Alderman, Assemblyman, City Treasurer, Mayor, Judge of the County Courts, and Justice of the Peace. He and his father between them, in those days of good municipal rule, when if they got good men they kept them, held the office of City Treasurer of Philadelphia without a break for twenty-five years—from 1751 until the fall of the Proprietary government in 1776.

He was devotedly attached to his step-children, and they to him. Brought up as they had been under his immediate care during the formative period of their minds and characters, they could not but be influenced by the example he set before them and the teachings of the principles up to which he lived. They all by inheritance

were members of the Religious Society of Friends. An officer under the Royal Government for such a length of time, and in so many capacities, in the filling of which he had again and again pledged his allegiance to the King, it could scarcely be imagined for an instant that a man of his conscientious principles and integrity would prove false to his liege lord. Nor could the children and their mother but absorb much of the atmosphere of loyalty to the Crown, in which he lived and moved and had his being. Like many others of his class and station in life, he fully appreciated the errors into which those obstinate and misguided men at the head of affairs in England had fallen, and he joined in the signing of the celebrated Non Importation Agreement of 1765. But when, according to his views, affairs began to go from bad to worse, he held back and stood aloof.

There are many, as I said before, who are inclined to think that there can be no distinction between matters Colonial and Toryism. If I linger awhile with you to-day in the society of my Colonial Dames, do not accuse me of endeavoring to inoculate you with any of their Tory ideas or of attempting to give you a screed of Tory doctrine. But there are two sides to most questions, and in an impartial study of our history one cannot but look behind the curtain which has been drawn around some of the events which occurred here in Philadelphia during the Revolutionary War. It does not do even now, in public, to delve too deeply into the subject, and stir up things which have been allowed to slumber for so many years, for the people generally will not realize the fact that here—I am confining myself to Philadelphia, for elsewhere the case was different—the majority of the men and women of education, refinement, wealth and high social position, among both Churchmen and Quakers, remained more or less loyal to the Crown—passively so, or apparently neutral, for the most part to be sure—and that they did not “give in their adhesion,” as the expres-

sion was, to the new government until its establishment had become an assured fact.

With the young men of the same social circles, however, the spirit of liberty and independence, of military excitement and glory was in the air, and many of them, not only among those who had no religious handicap, but also among the Quakers themselves, joined the Revolutionary colors.

Under the old regime Philadelphia had surpassed all the other cities of America in growth, prosperity and success. It had the best local government of them all. It was the leader in every element of progress, and the equal of any of them in educational development. It was the most advanced of them all in the refinement and social culture of its upper classes. It was the metropolis of the American Colonies. For the practical enjoyment of life, liberty and happiness, of freedom of thought and religious belief, and the security of worldly possessions, Philadelphia had not its equal, far less its superior, elsewhere. And all these things it owed to the liberality and wise forethought vouchsafed by the Charter which King Charles the Second of England had granted to William Penn, and the Constitutional Privileges which Penn had under it granted to its people. Is it to be wondered at, therefore, that so many persons thought that they had everything to lose and nothing to gain by so complete a subversion of affairs?

When in September, 1777, the British Army took possession of Philadelphia, Mr. Shoemaker having twice previously served as Mayor of the City, and also having been a Judge of the County Courts and a Justice of the Peace, was prevailed upon by General Sir William Howe to take charge of its civil affairs in association with Joseph Galloway, one of the leaders of the Bar. This act rendered them both especially odious to the Whig or Revolutionary party, and was the cause of the grievous sorrow and trouble which soon after came upon "Laurel

Hill" and my Colonial Dames, and the consequent sweeping away of the ample means which had once been theirs.

Mr. Galloway was an intimate friend of Mr. Shoemaker. Their country places, "Laurel Hill" and "Ormiston," adjoined each other, and we can picture to ourselves these two old eronies wandering or sitting on the banks of the Schuylkill, or in the glen separating the places, or among these lovely old trees, admiring the beautiful landscape and condoling with each other upon the sad state of affairs which, as they thought, their misguided countrymen had brought to pass.

The members of a united family living together in harmony have but little occasion to record the details of their daily lives, so there is not much preserved relating to "Laurel Hill" and its occupants until the troublous times of the Revolutionary struggle came upon them. During the first years of the Revolution the Rawle-Shoemaker family continued to reside in Philadelphia, spending, as usual, much of their time at "Laurel Hill." Until the occupation of Philadelphia by the British, Mr. Shoemaker had taken practically no part in the struggle. But his association with Mr. Galloway in the Civil Government of the city during its occupation by the British Army in the winter of 1777-78, to which I have referred, brought matters to a crisis, and on March 6, 1778, the State Legislature, then sitting at Lancaster, had declared them and other prominent citizens guilty of high treason and all their estates forfeited to the State, unless they surrendered themselves by the twentieth day of April following. This they did *not* do, and suffered the consequences. On June 17, 1778, a few days before the evacuation of Philadelphia by the British Army, Mr. Shoemaker sailed for New York with the fleet, accompanied by his step-son William Rawle, then a lad of nineteen years of age. The latter went at the urgent request of his mother. Some idea of the discomforts which the unfortunate refugees must have endured in travelling is afforded by a letter of William Rawle to one of his sisters,

in which he states that they were two days and nights on board a small sloop on their way down the Delaware River to Reedy Island, near which they found the fleet lying, and thirteen days on the passage from Philadelphia to the Capes.

No sooner had the Revolutionary authorities returned to Philadelphia than they proceeded to carry out the strenuous measures against the Loyalists that the Confiscation Act had provided for. As we learn from the diary of Charles Willson Peale, the artist, who was an ardent patriot and one of the agents for securing and selling the forfeited estates, they immediately after the evacuation set about fulfilling the duties of their offices. They began, he says, with the property of those who were of the *most consideration* among the unfortunates. Mrs. Joseph Galloway, who remained after his departure in the house of her husband, one of the attainted ones, was the first to be visited. When they went there to dispossess her, they found her counsel, Mr. Elias Boudinot, with her. Against her will, and, at first, her physical opposition, Peale succeeded in conducting her to General Arnold's carriage, which was at the door, having been supplied for the occasion. "The same sort of business," he writes, "they were likely to have with Mrs. Shoemaker, but on that occasion Mr. Boudinot agreed to give peaceable possession on the morning following, which terms were accepted by the agents, as they wished to make things as easy as they could with those whose misfortune it was to come within their notice."

The Act provided that after twelve months the real estates of the attainted Tories should be sold. Consequently, all of Mr. Shoemaker's landed property, which was extensive, was on April 12, 1779, ordered to be sold at public sale by the State agents for the confiscated estates, among the rest his delightful home on the north side of Arch (then Mulberry) Street above Front, one of the finest residences in the city. In their eagerness they

likewise seized and sold much of Mrs. Shoemaker's *own* property, as well as that which had come to her from her first husband, Francis Rawle, who had made her the sole devisee of his estate, including "Laurel Hill."

In those days ("unenlightened"—"barbarous"—days you will probably call them), all the property of a married woman, even her spring bonnets and frocks and jewelry, belonged to her husband. Her personal estate upon marriage became his absolutely, her real estate his for his life. The handsome fortune which Mr. Rawle had left to his wife was unfortunately not preserved for his children, and in consequence it was almost entirely swept away by the zealous action of some of the Revolutionary party, all because of the political difficulties which had come upon Mr. Shoemaker.

After the breaking up of the family home communication between those who went to New York and those who remained in Philadelphia became exceedingly difficult. The sending of correspondence through the military lines without permission was prohibited, and much of theirs was seized and destroyed. Notwithstanding this, however, frequent opportunities were taken to elude the authorities. Fictitious names were used and many of the allusions and messages are now unintelligible. There was one method of communication which seems to have been winked at, if not allowed—that of sending the local newspapers from New York to Philadelphia, and from Philadelphia to New York. Advantage was taken of this to convey to each other information of different sorts. Many numbers of Rivington's "Royal Gazette" which Mr. Shoemaker sent to his wife, with brief messages written on the margins, have been preserved, and are now in the Loganian Library in Philadelphia.

Mrs. Shoemaker was a woman of decided character, strong in her feelings, and apparently of great fluency in expressing what she wished to say, and she was an ardent Loyalist. Women then, as now, were apt to go to extreme

lengths in their feelings and expressions in times of great political excitement, and were thus apt sometimes to get themselves into trouble. After her husband and son had been some months in New York Mrs. Shoemaker applied to the State authorities for permission to join them there. This was refused, and refused again in May, 1779, as it would be, they said, "inconsistent with the interest of the State." She was summoned before the Supreme Executive Council in March, 1780, in consequence of the interception of some of her journals, which showed that she had assisted prisoners and other enemies of the Government to pass clandestinely to New York. What was done with her is not recorded in the Minutes of the Council, but when, two months later, she again applied for leave to go to New York and to return in one year, she got more than she asked for, and was told to *go* and give security that she would not return at *any* time without leave first obtained from the Council. She remained in New York for a year, and returned to Philadelphia, presumably by permission, in April, 1782. There she remained until April, 1783, when she again went to New York, and stayed there until November 7 following, a few days before her husband and their only child, Edward, then a lad in his fourteenth year, sailed for England, just before the evacuation of New York by the British Army.

The correspondence between the separated members of the family, some of which took the form of diaries, is, as I have stated, in part preserved, in manuscript, chiefly that written between the years 1780 and 1786. We cannot read some of it now after the lapse of more than a century of time without smiles of complacency, and indeed even of amusement. Covering as it does a most eventful period of history, and treating of the events of those days from the Loyalist point of view, it is both valuable and interesting. While Mrs. Shoemaker was in New York with her husband the correspondence was chiefly between herself and her two daughters, Anna and

Margaret Rawle. There is preserved the complete series of Mrs. Shoemaker's letters to her husband after he had sailed for England in November, 1783, until his return to America in May, 1786, as also a concise diary kept for the entertainment of his wife by Mr. Shoemaker from the day they parted in New York until October, 1785.

Many of the letters treat of business matters, and show the great losses and terrible sufferings which the Loyalists endured; others are in a lighter vein and give us vivid pen-pictures of Philadelphia and New York society of that day. In this correspondence fancy or fictitious names, as was common in social circles during the Revolution, were frequently given to the different members of the family and their friends. Thus William Rawle was known as "Horatio"; Anna Rawle as "Fanny"; Margaret or "Peggy" Rawle as "Adelaide"; and Sally Burge, their intimate friend and subsequently the wife of William Rawle, as "Juliet." In memory of the days of their youth Mr. and Mrs. Rawle accordingly named their two youngest children "Horatio" and "Juliet." But this is anticipating. The scope of this paper and the time at disposal preclude the possibility of giving more than a very few extracts from the letters and diaries.

After the breaking up of the family home, which had been Mr. Shoemaker's house in Arch (then Mulberry) Street, Mrs. Shoemaker, while in Philadelphia, and her daughters lived sometimes with Mrs. Edward Warner, Mrs. Shoemaker's mother, in her house, which was directly opposite their former home in Arch Street; at other times with Benjamin Shoemaker, who was Samuel Shoemaker's son by his first wife (Hannah, daughter of Samuel Carpenter, and who lived on the South side of High (now Market) Street below Eighth; and also at times in the house adjoining, this last also belonging to Benjamin Shoemaker. Mrs. Benjamin Shoemaker was Elizabeth Warner, the sister of Mrs. Samuel Shoemaker, his step-mother.

In the spring of 1780, as has been mentioned, Mrs. Shoemaker journeyed to New York to visit her husband. Her stepson Benjamin Shoemaker accompanied her as far as the British lines. Her daughter Anna Rawle writing to her from Philadelphia under date of June 30, 1780, says:

“By the person who brought thy letter from Rahway I wrote a long one which he promised, if thee should be gone from there, to forward into New York * * * * Peggy and I staid with my Aunt till B[enjamin] returned. Tho’ so little in the house belonged to us, packing them up furnished employ for several mornings; one day, when thus engaged up stairs, Polly Birk, [one of the servants] who was the only person with me in the house, exclaimed, ‘Bless me if there is not a whole company of soldiers at Mr. S[hoemaker]’s door!’ I was frightened, and was going down to my aunt and sister, when at the foot of the stairs I observed a man placed, rattling the lock of his gun, as if trying to alarm. I ran up again, and in a few minutes two men entered the room, and I soon found their business was to search for arms. They looked in the closet, and desired me, not in the mildest terms, to unlock my trunks. I told them they were already undone. They then put their canes in, and by the greatest good luck in the world, the little plate that belonged to me remained undisturbed at the bottom of the trunk; they would have taken it, I am certain, from their behaviour. Not finding arms they went away. They treated my Aunt in the same manner, rummaging the closets and drawers, and placing a guard at the stairs. One of them said, when Peggy went up, that it was to hide guns. There were but one or two houses where they treated people with so little ceremony. At other places they took their word.

“But of all absurdities the ladies going about for money exceeded everything; they were so extremely im-

¹ See Wm. B. Reed's *Life of Joseph Reed*, vol. ii, p. 260, &c., and 429, &c.

portunate that people were obliged to give them something to get rid of them. Mrs. Beech [Bache] and the set with her, came to our door the morning after thee went, and turned back again. The reason she gave to a person who told me was that she did not chuse to face Mrs. S. or her daughters.

“H[annah] Thompson, Mrs. [Robert] Morris, Mrs. [James] Wilson, and a number of very genteel women, paraded about streets in this manner, some carrying ink stands, nor did they let the meanest ale house escape. The gentlemen also were honoured with their visits. Bob Wharton declares he was never so teased in his life. They reminded him of the extreme rudeness of refusing anything to the fair, but he was inexorable and pleaded want of money, and the heavy taxes, so at length they left him, after threatening to hand his name down to posterity with infamy.”

Under date of November 4, 1780, she says: * * *
 “Speaking of handsome women brings Nancy Willing to my mind. She might set for the Queen of Beauty, and is lately married to Bingham, who returned from the West Indies with an immense fortune. They have set out in highest style; nobody here will be able to make the figure they do; equipage, house, cloathes, are all the newest taste,—and yet some people wonder at the match. She but sixteen and such a perfect form. His appearance is less amiable.”

From New York, Mrs. Shoemaker writes to her daughters, January 8, 1781:

“P[eggy] A[rnold] is not so much admired here for her beauty as one might have expected. All allow she has great Sweetness in her countenance, but wants Animation, sprightliness and that fire in her eyes which was so captivating in Capt. L[oyd’s] wife. But notwithstanding she does not possess that Life and animation that some do, they have met with every *attention indeed*, much more than they could have promised themselves, and the very genteel appointment which he [General Benedict Arnold] holds in this [the British] Service, joined to a Very large

present, (which I am told he has received,) is fully sufficient for every Demand in genteel life." Speaking of Mrs. Arnold again, Mrs. Shoemaker writes that she attended a ball at head quarters in New York, and that "she appeared a star of the first magnitude, and had every attention paid her as if she had been Lady Clinton. Is not this fine encouragement for generals to follow A[rnold's] example?"

The letters contain many similar references to events, and allusions to well known people, and a good deal of gossip too.

The Act of Attainder and Confiscation further provided that the President, or Vice-President, and Supreme Executive Council might rent out forfeited real estates for a time not exceeding two years, paying the taxes and other expenses, and managing them until they should be sold in the manner thereafter directed. As "Laurel Hill," which had belonged to Mrs. Shoemaker's first husband, Francis Rawle, had been left by his will to her, Mr. Shoemaker, as her second husband, had a life estate in the property as "tenant by the curtesy." In their patriotic zeal the people in authority disregarded the principle of law that the sale of such a life estate had no other effect than to free a wife's houses and lands from all of her husband's estate when he had been attainted for high treason, and to vest the title in her to as full an effect as if he had died. The State agents took possession of "Laurel Hill" before its sale, and apparently allowed the President of the State, General Joseph Reed, to occupy it as a summer residence. Reed was the most ardent and active of the persecutors of the Philadelphia Loyalists. His animosity had been particularly visited upon Mr. and Mrs. Shoemaker and her children, and the letters often refer to him in a manner far from affectionate or complimentary.

Anna Rawle writes to her mother under date of September 20, 1780: "The wife of a certain person can never

spend another summer at Laurel Hill. Her pleasure there had a melancholy and short termination. She is dead, and of a disorder that made people whisper about 'that she eat too many of Mr. S. . . 's peaches!' Her husband fainted at the grave." The person here referred to was no other than the wife of President Reed himself. She had died in Philadelphia two days previously, September 18th, having shortly before been brought there from "Laurel Hill."

The diary of Miss Anna Rawle (which she kept for the information and entertainment of her mother in New York) gives a very characteristic account of the effect of the arrival in Philadelphia of the news of Lord Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown and the great consternation it created among the Neutrals and Loyalists, between whom the mass of the Revolutionary party could see no difference, for it considered that all who were not with it were against it, and acted accordingly.

"October 22, 1781.—Second day. The first thing I heard this morning was that Lord Cornwallis had surrendered to the French and Americans—intelligence as surprizing as vexatious. People who are so stupidly regardless of their own interests are undeserving of compassion, but one cannot help lamenting that the fate of so many worthy persons should be connected with the failure or success of the British army.

"Uncle Howell¹ came in soon after Breakfast, and tho' he is neither Whig nor Tory, looked as if he had sat up all night; he was glad to see all here so cheerful, he said. When he was gone Ben. Shoemaker arrived; he was told it as he came along, and was astonished. However, as there is no letter from Washington, we flatter ourselves that it is not true. * * *

"October 24.—Fourth day. I feel in a most unsettled humour. I can neither read, work or give my atten-

¹ Joshua Howell, who had married Mrs. Samuel Shoemaker's sister Catharine, daughter of Edward and Anna (Coleman) Warner

tion one moment to anything. It is too true that Cornwallis is taken. Tilghman is just arrived with dispatches from Washington which confirm it. * * *

“October 25.—Fifth Day.—I suppose, dear Mammy, thee would not have imagined this house to be illuminated last night, but it was. A mob surrounded it, broke the shutters and the glass of the windows, and were coming in, none but forlorn women here. We for a time listened for their attacks in fear and trembling till, finding them grow more loud and violent, not knowing what to do, we ran into the yard. Warm Whigs of one side, and Hartley’s of the other (who were treated even worse than we), rendered it impossible for us to escape that way. We had not been there many minutes before we were drove back by the sight of two men climbing the fence. We thought the mob were coming in thro’ there, but it proved to be Coburn and Bob. Shewell, who called to us not to be frightened, and fixed lights up at the windows, which pacified the mob, and after three huzzas they moved off. A number of men came in afterwards to see us. French and J. B. nailed boards up at the broken pannels, or it would not have been safe to have gone to bed. Coburn and Shewell were really very kind; had it not been for them I really believe the house would have been pulled down. Even the firm Uncle Fisher¹ was obliged to submit to have his windows illuminated, for they had pickaxes and iron bars with which they had done considerable injury to his house, and would soon have demolished it had not some of the Hodges and other people got in back and acted as they pleased. All Uncle’s sons were out but Sammy,² and if they had been at home it was in vain

¹ William Fisher, merchant, who married Mrs. Samuel Shoemaker’s aunt, Sarah (Coleman). He, also, lived in Arch Street between Front and Second Streets. He was a member of the Common Council of Philadelphia from 1767 to 1770, of the Board of Aldermen from 1770 to the fall of the Charter government in 1776, and Mayor of the City 1773-1774.

² The late Samuel W. Fisher, President of the Philadelphia Insurance Company, and President of Select Council 1811-1813.

to oppose them. In short it was the most alarming scene I ever remember. For two hours we had the disagreeable noise of stones banging about, glass crashing, and the tumultuous voices of a large body of men, as they were a long time at the different houses in the neighborhood. At last they were victorious, and it was one general illumination throughout the town. As we had not the pleasure of seeing any of the gentlemen in the house, nor the furniture cut up, and goods stolen, nor been beat, nor pistols pointed at our breasts, we may count our sufferings slight compared to many others. Mr. Gibbs was obliged to make his escape over a fence, and while his wife was endeavouring to shield him from the rage of one of the men, she received a violent bruise in the breast, and a blow in the face which made her nose bleed. Ben. Shoemaker was here this morning; tho' exceedingly threatened he says he came off with the loss of four panes of glass. Some Whig friends put candles in the windows which made his peace with the mob, and they retired. John Drinker¹ has lost half the goods out of his shop and been beat by them; in short the sufferings of those they pleased to style Tories would fill a volume and shake the credulity of those who were not here on that memorable night, and to-day Philadelphia makes an uncommon appearance, which ought to cover the Whigs with eternal confusion. A neighbour of ours had the effrontery to tell Mrs. G[alloway] that he was sorry for her furniture, but not for her windows—a ridiculous distinction that many of them make. J. Head has nothing left whole in his parlour. Uncle Penington² lost a good deal of window-glass. Aunt Burge³ preserved hers thro' the care of some

¹ See Journal of Elizabeth Drinker, p. 137, for her account of the same episode.

² Edward Penington, who had married Sarah, the sister of Samuel Shoemaker.

³ Beulah Burge, a sister of Samuel Shoemaker, widow of Samuel Burge. Their daughter Sarah married, in 1783 William Rawle, the elder, who was a brother of the diarist.

of her neighbors. The Drinkers and Walns make heavy complaints of the Carolinians in their neighbourhood. Walns' pickles were thrown about the streets and barrells of sugar stolen. Grandmanumy was the most composed of anybody here. Was I not sure, my dearest Mother, that you would have very exaggerated accounts of this affair from others, and would probably be uneasy for the fate of our friends, I would be entirely silent about it, but as you will hear it from some one or another, not mentioning it will seem as if we had suffered exceedingly, and I hope I may depend on the safety of this opportunity.

"People did nothing to-day but condole and enquire into each others honourable losses. * * *

"October 26.—Sixth day.—Neighbor Walm and Ben. Shoemaker were here in the afternoon. Juliet, Polly Foulke and James Fisher came to see us in the evening; the conversation as usual on the late disturbances. It seems universally agreed that Philadelphia will no longer be that happy asylum for the Quakers that it once was. Those joyful days when all was prosperity and peace are gone, never to return; and perhaps it is as necessary for our society¹ to ask for terms as it was for Cornwallis. Juliet says all Uncle Penington's fine pictures are broken; his parlour was full of men, but it was nothing, he said, to Nancy's illness, who was for an hour or two out of her senses and terrified them exceedingly."

It was not until February 20, 1782, that Mr. Shoemaker's life estate in "Laurel Hill" was sold by the State agents, and on March 20, the Patent therefor was executed by the President of the Supreme Executive Council, William Moore, to Major James Parr, the purchaser, in consideration of £5,000 Pennsylvania money. Parr was an extensive investor in the confiscated estates. Before,

¹ The Quakers.

however, the title had been actually conveyed to him, Major Parr, on February 26, 1782, in consideration of £500, gold or silver money, had leased the place to "His Excellency, the Chevalier de Luzerne, Minister of France" to the United States, for the term of five years thence ensuing, "if the said Shoemaker should so long live." In her diary Mrs. Shoemaker, then in New York, pathetically writes, February 4, 1782: "I see [from the newspapers that] our last little spot, poor 'Laurel Hill,' is to have another possessor. We cannot see any more advertised; they have sold all." And her daughter Anna, writing to her two days later, says: "The P[resident] has not given up his town house, as my dear Mother imagined; he still keeps it, the wife of his successor being one of those simple hearted women who chuse to live in nobody's house but their own. I must confess that I am not sorry that 'Laurel Hill' is to have another master; he never was a favourite of mine. They say he pays his addresses to Belle White. I shall think the girl out of her senses if she has him."

The Chevalier of course had his French cook, and the French cook his truffle-dog, which, in the pursuit of his vocation in life, is said to have discovered truffles in the grounds around the house, much to the astonishment and delight of his master—one of the few instances, and it is believed the first, of the finding in this country of that delicious article in its natural state. Mr. Hazard, in his third volume of *Watson's Annals*, quotes this family tradition; but, as has been suggested, whether the tradition is truthful or not, or whether the absence or scarcity of truffles in America is to be attributed to the shortcomings of the comparatively few enterprising French cooks who bless us with their presence, or to the absence of truffle-dogs, has not been ascertained.

When the fanaticism against the Loyalists had somewhat abated after the Peace, the civil authorities seem to

have come to view in the proper legal light the matter of the sale of Mrs. Shoemaker's property in consequence of the attainder of her husband. The learned in the legal profession gave it as their opinion that the only effect of the sale was to vest the title to the property in her clear of any of her husband's rights therein. Some years subsequently this principle was affirmed by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania when a similar question arose concerning the estate of Mrs. Joseph Galloway.

Major Parr also seems to have appreciated the doubtful element in his title, and to have been not unwilling to consider proposals from the family for a surrender of his interest in the place. But the lease to Luzerne apparently complicated the matter. "Major Parr," as Mrs. Shoemaker wrote from Philadelphia to her husband on January 14, 1784, "has offered Laurel Hill for £400—but that is certainly too much, as the minister has three years yet to come, and I believe is so well pleased with it that he does not wish to part with it."

The enjoyment of "Laurel Hill" by His Excellency was not, however, to continue the full length of his lease. The failure of his government to appropriate the means for the support of his office, it has been said, caused him to contemplate a return to his own country. A satisfactory arrangement of the matter of the lease was eventually arrived at, and Parr, in consideration of £300, silver money, on February 27, 1784, by endorsement upon his Patent, conveyed to William Rawle all his estate and interest in "Laurel Hill," irrespective of the remainder of the Chevalier's term. (I may here state that William Rawle had returned home in January, 1783, after having spent nineteen months in Europe, studying law in the Middle Temple in London and travelling on the Continent.)

"I believe I mentioned," wrote Mrs. Shoemaker on May 12, 1784, "that the Minister of France was going home soon; it is fixed for next month, and I have had a

specimen of French generosity in an Ambassador bargaining with the owner of a little country house for the remainder of a lease. Nothing less than the rent he gave will do, and I must agree to that or not have it. I suppose he will think he has been extremely liberal and genteel in agreeing to be paid yearly as rent, and not insisting upon the money down as he paid it. He keeps possession until the 10th of June."

On June 16, 1784, she again wrote: "Benjamin, William and myself took a ride last week to Laurel Hill, the first time I had been there since the year 1779. I am now tenant to the Minister and have engaged to pay him the yearly rent of £100 per an. for the remainder of his lease, almost three years to come. * * * * Thee expected the Minister would have been so generous and liberal, if he was made acquainted with the real circumstances of it, as to restore it. A[nthony] Benezet who was intimate with him was the person who called on W[illiam] R[awle] and told him that the Minister was going home and desired to see some of the family. William went there twice with Anthony, and as he, William, speaks French, gave him the fullest information respecting it. He said he had several applications for the place, but he chose to offer it to the family, and I am to consider myself favoured in having it upon rent instead of paying the money down. I myself had a good deal of conversation with A[nthony] B[enezet] about it. I told him how contrary this was from the language they spoke when they first came here, of the bad policy and illiberality of the Americans to sell estates; that their court would not have done so, but now I found it was all talk. Poor A[nthony] could not say much but that his countrymen did not love to part with their money for nothing, and he must own it was inconsistent from their sentiments; he was very partial to his own Nation."

While in New York Mr. Shoemaker did much to alleviate the miseries of the prisoners in the hands of the

British and in obtaining the release of many of them. Charles Biddle in his autobiography mentions the kindnesses which he himself experienced at his hands. After he went to England, where, chiefly in London, he spent two years and a half, Mr. Shoemaker and his home seem to have been the centres of attraction for those of his countrymen who took advantage of the restoration of peace to visit that country. He was closely thrown also with many of those of his own political faith, who, like himself, were refugees from their native land. Men of refinement, of culture, and of education, there mingled with officers of high rank and other persons of prominence whom they had met in America. Among Mr. Shoemaker's valued friends was Benjamin West, the Artist. It is related that West when a plain country boy living near Philadelphia had inspired Mr. Shoemaker with much interest in the evidences of his artistic talent and that the first painted picture that West ever saw had been shown to him by Mr. Shoemaker. He and other affluent citizens of cultured tastes had encouraged West in his early crude efforts at painting, and by concerted action made it possible for him to go to study in Europe. While Mr. Shoemaker was on a visit to West at Windsor an interview took place between the King and himself in the presence of the Queen and the Royal Princesses. He gives a full account of it in his diary:—

“First Day, Octo'r 10, 1784. This morning at 8 'Clock thy son accompanied B. West's wife to the King's Chappel where he had the opportunity of seeing the King and several of the Princesses. They returned before 9 when we were entertained with breakfast, at which we had the Company of Mr. Pogy the Italian Gent'n, Mr. Trumble, Mr. Farrington, and West's two sons. About 10 thy son accompanied Farrington, Trumble, and West's eldest son in a Ride through Windsor Forrest, having first been with West and I to his Room in the Castle to see a picture of the Lord's Supper which he had just finish'd for the

King's Chappel. After part of our Company were gone to take their Ride, West informed me that the King had order'd him to attend at his Painting Room in the Castle at one 'Clock, when the King and Queen and some of the Princesses, on their return from Chappel, intended to call to see the Painting of the Lord's Supper which he had just finished, and West told me it would be a very proper time and Opportunity for me to see the King, Queen, and the rest of the family, as they came from the Chappel, and therefore requested me to accompany him and his Wife, and walk at the Castle near the Chappel, till service was over, when he must repair to his room to attend the King, and would leave me with his Wife in a proper Station to have a full view of the King and family.

“Accordingly, a little before one O'Clock, West and his Wife and I, walk'd up to the Castle and there contin'd walking about till the Clock struck One, when we observ'd one of the Pages coming from the Chappel. West then said he must leave us; presently after this two Coaches pass'd and went round towards the Door of the Castle leading to West's Room. In these two coaches were the Queen and Princesses; presently after the King appear'd, attended by his Equery only, and walk'd in great haste, *almost ran* to meet the Coaches at the door of the Castle above mentioned, which he reach'd just as the Coaches got there, as did West's Wife, and I, when we saw the King go to the Door of the Coach in which the Queen was, and heard him say, '*I have got here in time,*' and then handed the Queen out, and up the Steps, into the Castle—the Princess Royal, Princess Elizabeth, Princess Mary, and Princess Sophia, with Col. Goldsworthy, the Kings Equery, the Hanoverian Resident, and Miss Goldsworthy, sub-Governess to the two young Princesses, followed. They all went into the Castle, when I hear'd the King say, '*tell him to come in,*' *but little did I think I was the Person meant*, and West's Wife and I were about going off, when West came out of the Castle and told me the

King had order'd him to come out and bring me and Mrs. West in. I was quite unprepar'd for this; however, it was now too late to avoid it. West and his Wife and I went into the Castle and were ushered up to the Room where the King and Royal family were, and there introduc'd. *Flattered and embarrassed thou may suppose*, on my entering the Room, the King came up close to me, and very graciously said 'Mr. S. you are well known here, every body knows you,' &c. (complimentary w'ch I can't mention). He then turned to the Queen, the Princesses, &c., who stood close by, and repeated, 'Mr. S.' I then made my bow to the Queen, then to the Princess Royal, to the Princess Eliza., Princesses Mary and Sophia. The Queen and each of the Princesses were pleased to drop a Curtesy, and then the Queen was pleased to ask me one or two Questions; the King and Queen and the four Princesses, the Hanoverian Resident, Col. Goldsworthy, Miss Goldsworthy, West and his Wife and I were all that were in the Room. The King condescended to ask me many questions, and repeated my answers to them to the Queen and to the Hanoverian Resident, and when to the latter, I observ'd he spoke it in German, which I understood. Among other Questions, the King was pleased to ask me the reason why the Province of Pennsylvania was so much further advanc'd in improvement than the neighbouring ones, some of which had been settled so many years earlier. I told his Majesty (thinking it w'd be a kind of Compliment to the Queen's Countrymen) that I thought it might be attributed to the Germans, great numbers of whom had gone over in the early part of the settlement of that Province, as well as since. The King smiled and said, 'it may be so, Mr. S., it may in some measure be owing to that, *but I will tell you the true cause*,—the great improvement and flourishing State of Pennsylvania is principally owing to the QUAKERS' (this was a full return for my compliment to the Queen's Countrymen) for whom I observe the King has a great

regard. Finding the king so repeatedly mention'd what I said to the Hanov'n Resident and to the Queen, *in German*, on the King's asking me a particular question, I took the liberty to answer in German, at which the King seemed pleased, and *with a smile*, turned to the Queen and said, 'Mr. S. speaks German,' and also mentioned it to the Hanoverian Resident, after which the King was pleased to speak to me several times in German. Then the Queen condescended to ask me several Questions, one of the last, *whether I had a family*. On my telling her that I was once bless'd with a numerous family, but that it had pleased Providence to remove them all from me, *except a Wife and two Sons*, this *visibly* touched the Queen's delicate feelings, so much that she shed some Tears, at which I was *greatly* affected. She is a charming woman, and if not a Beauty, her manners and disposition are so pleasing that no Person who has the Opportunity that I have had can avoid being charm'd with the sweetness of her disposition. The Princess Royal is pretty, has a charming Countenance Indeed; the Princess Elizabeth very agreeable, but rather too fat or bulky for her height. Mary and Sophia are pretty, but being so young their looks will alter.

"After being graciously indulged with the opportunity of conversing with the King and Queen, and being in the Room with them three-quarters of an hour, they all departed and went to the Queen's House.

"I cannot say but I wished some of my violent Countrymen could have such an opportunity as I have had. I think they would be convinced that George the third has not one grain of Tyranny in his Composition, and that he is not, he *cannot* be that bloody minded man they have so repeatedly and so illiberally called him. It is impossible; a man of his fine feelings, so good a husband, so kind a Father, *cannot be a Tyrant.*"

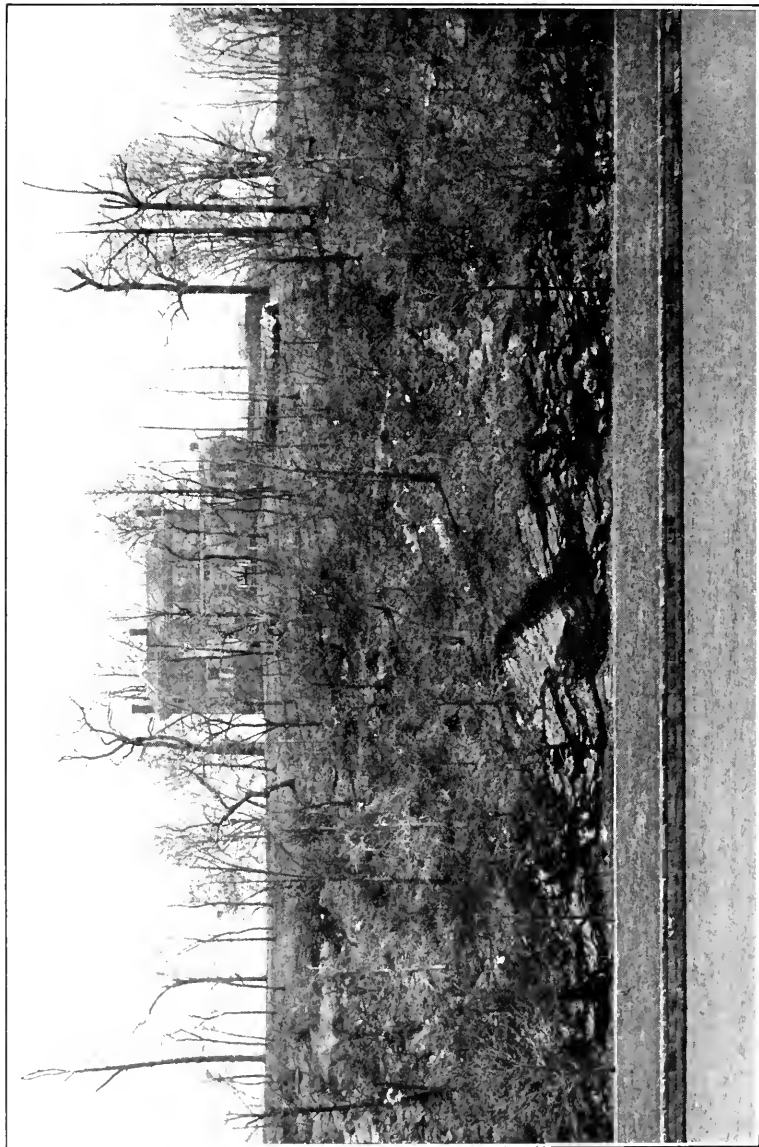
As the animosities engendered by the War had subsided to a considerable extent Shoemaker and his son Edward

sailed homeward from England on April 21, 1786, and arrived in New York on May 7th. They at once went to Burlington, New Jersey, where Mrs. Shoemaker met them. There they resided for a while and then moved to Philadelphia, where, and at "Laurel Hill," they lived happily in peace and quietness. During his later years Mr. Shoemaker's means had become much straitened by reason of the losses he had suffered owing to his loyalty to the King, but these were in a measure recouped by the compensation voted to him by the British Parliament. He seems to have made a favorable impression upon the King, for in 1787, "as a token of the high respect His Majesty had for his character," to use the words of the letter accompanying it, Mr. Shoemaker, after his return to America, received from him a copy of a very scarce engraving by Sir Robert Strange of West's painting of the "Apotheosis of the King's Children Octavius and Alfred," which is now in the possession of Mr. Shoemaker's descendants in Baltimore.

Mr. Shoemaker died in Philadelphia on October 10, 1800, "In the seventy-sixth year of his age, after a short illness, which he bore with Christian and manly fortitude. Samuel Shoemaker, Esquire," as a published obituary notice of him continues, "was highly respected by all who had the advantage of cultivating his acquaintance, not only on account of his private virtues, but of his unshaken integrity and firmness in the arduous administration of various public duties, to which he was called, in the most critical times, by the approving voice of his Countrymen, to exercise his great talents, on the most important occasions; in particular, before the late revolution, he executed the office of Mayor of Philadelphia, in a manner which reflected reputation upon his character, and dignity on those who appointed him to fill that honorable station. During the existence of the revolutionary war, he was continued the first Magistrate of the Police of Philadelphia, by an appointment from the King of Great

Britain, to whom he never forfeited his fidelity; but, in the execution of his offices he proved that Loyalty to his Sovereign was not incompatible with acts of friendship, civility and kindness to the inhabitants of his native city; for the truth of this we can appeal to the memory of numbers yet living who received marks of his attention:—they will not fail to acknowledge it, when their memory awakens to the recollection of the services he rendered them, abstracted from that spirit of envy, which the fervor of political opposition too often engenders. Few have distinguished themselves more than he has done in private life, by an affable, courteous and obliging behavior to all his neighbors, and none have sustained with greater propriety in their families the amiable character of an affectionate husband, father and friend.”

Mrs. Shoemaker survived her second husband nineteen years, surrounded by her devoted children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. She died at her home, in Sansom below Eighth Street, Philadelphia, on December 21, 1819. A writer of an obituary notice of her, published in one of the Philadelphia journals of the time, wrote:—“The grave ought not to close over the remains of this excellent and admirable woman without some public memorial of her life and character. A life which, protracted beyond the usual term allotted to our species, and passed amid trials and vicissitudes of no ordinary nature, was marked by the exercise of every virtue, and a character as entirely faultless, so free from even the trivial blemishes of human nature, that to know her, and not to love and respect her, was impossible. It is seldom indeed that such a mind and such a heart have been joined in any individual, and still more rarely has Providence permitted them to continue unimpaired to such an age. The intellectual faculties of Mrs. Shoemaker were in every stage of her life remarkable. Her understanding, originally clear and powerful, was improved by a thorough acquaintance with books and mankind. She



LAUREL HILL

NOW KNOWN AS

THE RANDOLPH MANSION, EAST FAIRMOUNT PARK, PHILADELPHIA

VIEW TAKEN ACROSS THE SCHUYLKILL RIVER FROM THE WEST BANK

had read and observed much; her memory was uncommonly retentive, and never perhaps was any mind less clouded by prejudice. These circumstances, with a native grace of manner, rendered her conversation unusually attractive to the last moment of her existence. Over her warm and generous heart too, age had stolen with light and printless feet. Nothing of the selfishness, nothing of the moroseness, none of the gloom, which often accompany advanced years, existed in her. The moral sensibility which time (happily perhaps for mankind) almost always deadens, was in her undiminished and unaltered. The interest she felt for her numerous descendants (of whom she lived to see the third generation), was deep, tender and anxious, and it was requited by those who were the objects of it, with all that 'honour, love and obedience' of which the great poet speaks as the dues and accompaniments of old age. To this imperfect sketch of the character of one so truly lamented, it may be added, that she was sincerely and unaffectedly pious, and without the slightest taint of bigotry or austerity."

In the letters and diaries to which I have referred the writers make frequent mention of the beautiful aspect of "Laurel Hill," their much loved country home; of the charming meadow along the river, which has now disappeared; of the many beautiful trees, some of them of great size; of the fine apples, peaches, cherries, and strawberries. But beautiful and charming as it still is, a great change from those days has come over the lovely scenery of this part of the "Hidden River," as the Indians called it of old. The building of the dam at Fairmount, which was completed in July, 1821, stopped the ebb and flow of the tide which had extended up as far as the Falls of the Schuylkill. As a result the country places along its banks became so unhealthy that their owners could live in them no longer. In 1828 William Rawle, as Trustee under his Mother's will, sold "Laurel Hill" and its surrounding acres

to Dr. Philip Syng Physick, the celebrated surgeon, from whom the place passed to his descendants the Randolphs, and was sold by them in 1869 to the City for park purposes.

I have not been able to learn much about its intervening history. I fancy that there is little to relate. For some years this house was occupied by the Quoit Club, a mildly athletic association of our fathers and grandfathers, who found the exercise of pitching quoits such a thirst creating one as to require them to indulge in a plentiful consumption of the fluids with which they stocked the house, and this they did with much conviviality. After them came a series of equally thirsty Germans, who used the place as a beer garden and mitigated their sufferings in a similar manner. Hereafter, I trust that under your fair auspices and hospitality "the cup which cheers but does *not* inebriate" will ever be at hand, as it was with those ladies to whom I have introduced you to-day, to welcome you and your friends within these walls. May I express the hope that in the long time to come this little country home, now yours, will be cherished and cared for by your Society, and that once in a while your thoughts will go back to the Colonial Dames of old who lived here and endured and suffered so much in the cause which, to *their* cost, but to *our* and *our country's infinite gain*, proved *not* to be the right one, in the stirring and eventful days of the American Revolution.

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