

AN

**ADDRESS**

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

**PHILOMATHEAN AND PHRENAKOSMIAN  
SOCIETIES**

OF

**PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGE.**

BY

**JAMES C. BIDDLE.**

JULY 4, 1838.



**Gettysburg:**

1838.

*Pennsylvania College, July 4th, 1838.*

TO JAMES C. BIDDLE, Esq.

Dear Sir,—The Literary Societies of Pennsylvania College cheerfully acknowledge their indebtedness to you for the patriotic and excellent address which you did them the honour and the kindness to deliver this morning, and through us they respectfully and unanimously solicit a copy for publication.

Yours, truly,

JAMES L. SCHOCK,  
CHARLES L. BAKER,  
M. L. STOEVER,  
A. GEBHART,  
JAMES M. CRAPSTER,  
JAMES R. KEISER,

Joint Committee of the Philomathean and  
Phrenokosmian Societies.

*Spread Eagle (Gettysburg), July 4, 1838.*

GENTLEMEN,—It will give me great pleasure to comply with the request contained in your kind note. I feel deeply sensible of the distinguished attention you have bestowed on me, since my arrival; and beg that you will, for yourselves individually, and for the Societies you represent, accept my sincere thanks.

Your friend,

J. C. BIDDLE.

To Messrs. JAMES L. SCHOCK, CHARLES L.  
BAKER, M. L. STOEVER, A. GEBHART,  
JAMES M. CRAPSTER, JAMES R. KEISER,

Joint Committee of the Philomathean and Phrenokosmian Societies.

## ADDRESS.

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GENTLEMEN OF THE

PHILOMATHEAN AND PHRENAKOSMIAN SOCIETIES,—

Liberty is inseparably connected with the moral and intellectual improvement of mankind. It is a theme on which historians, philosophers, poets, and orators, have delighted to dwell. Its true nature and character have often been lost sight of in the halo of its effulgence. It consists not in permitting all to indulge their passions and gratify their inclinations, without control. Such a state of society never did, and could not long exist. Different persons desire the possession of the same thing; that which pleases one, displeases another; all cannot be gratified; some will prevail, others must yield. If there were no permanent rules for the government of the community, the strong would overwhelm the weak; the cunning would circumvent the simple-minded; and wrong would often prevail over right. No tyranny was ever more arbitrary, no despotism ever more cruel, than man left entirely to himself. Every one the judge and vindicator of his own rights; the redresser of his own wrongs; society would be convulsed by perpetual violence.

If men were not mortal; if all were in sincerity

and in practice Christians, seeking to do the will of their Creator; and every one to do unto others as he would they should do unto him; then indeed might mankind live in security, under no other than a self-imposed restraint.

“Then birds in any space might safely move,  
And timorous hares on heaths securely rove.”

But, unfortunately, such is not the case. Control is necessary—without it there can be no rational liberty.

Law is indispensable to the subsistence of our civil rights. All should acknowledge its authority; none be raised above its reach; none be depressed beneath its protection: the rich man and the poor man; the great man and the beggar; should be equally conscious that they enjoy its protection, and cannot violate its injunctions with impunity. The man in office should feel that every power, with which his station invests him, imparts an obligation to act in accordance with that law whose authority he wields. By day and at night; abroad and at home; in the gay pursuits of pleasure; amid the cares of business, and the perplexities of life, the citizen should be sensible that its panoply affords him a sure protection against injustice.

“To civilize the rude unpolish’d world,  
And lay it under the restraint of laws;

'To make man mild and sociable to man;  
 To cultivate the wild licentious savage  
 With wisdom, discipline, and liberal arts,  
 Th' embellishments of life! Virtues, like these,  
 Make human nature shine."

The difference between a despotism and a free government consists, chiefly, in this; that in the former, power is arbitrarily exercised; while in the latter, the people are governed by laws proceeding from themselves.

Good government must depend on the good intentions and the capacity of those who govern. In a free republic like ours, where almost every citizen is entitled to vote, and each exercises an influence on the well being of the community, it is obviously important that the people should be instructed in the knowledge of their rights, and be guided by virtuous principles in the exercise of their power. Where the people generally are ignorant and degraded, it cannot be hoped that they will establish a good government, make wise laws, select judicious public functionaries, or act with advantage to their best interests.

The first great step, therefore, in a democratic republic, to secure its permanency, should be the establishment of schools and seminaries of learning, so universally, that no hamlet should be so obscure, none so densely shaded, that the light of education should not penetrate, cheer, and invigorate its in-

mates, enlarging their mental faculties, improving their morals, and fitting them to enter on life, prepared to perform their duties as good men and good citizens.

Contrast the situation of the altogether uninstructed being, whose range of knowledge is limited to that which he has learned from his own observation, with that of the laborious and well instructed student, whose mind is enriched with the accumulated wisdom gathered by the experience of ages—Compare their relative happiness, value and power; and how vast, how immeasurably great the distance that separates them.

Instruction should not be confined to the rudiments of learning. There is no reason why its refinements should not be placed within the reach of the diligent, who shall eagerly aspire to elevate themselves to the enjoyment of the pure pleasures that scientific and literary excellence impart. No form of government is more favourable, than a republican, to mental cultivation. Merit, superior excellence, exalted goodness, should be the passports to public favour; and the young should be thus stimulated to persevere in well doing, as the best means of obtaining approbation and reward. In ancient Greece and Rome, nature profusely showered the choicest gifts; and there genius delighted to linger and to produce the fairest fruits. They

have long since passed away; and while their deeds of martial prowess have sank into obscurity, they have left intellectual trophies, enduring monuments of their greatness, which, surviving the wreck of time, give them an immortal fame, and fill the bosom of the student of modern days with a generous glow, as he contemplates the memorials of their glory. Already our country has produced bright examples of eminence in science, the arts, and in literature, achieved by those who were unaided by powerful connexions or by wealth, and who were truly the architects of their own fortunes: and our poor boys, our common schoolboys, have graced the halls of legislation, the bar, and the pulpit, richly repaying to society the benefits conferred upon them. Let the lamp of liberty be kindled and supplied with an emanation from that pure spirit, which seeks to open to all, freely, the untold treasures of wisdom, and it will continue to burn with spotless lustre. Education is a perennial spring, constantly diffusing happiness and prosperity.

'The best estate of which a young man can be possessed, in our country, is a good education, integrity of purpose, and industry. Riches may take unto themselves wings, but these will never fail him.

The capacity of mankind to maintain a democratic form of government for a long period of time, over an extensive and thickly peopled country, has



not only been doubted, but utterly denied; and when our republic has been pointed to as a triumphant refutation of the fallacy of such views, every disorderly movement among us has been referred to by the advocates for monarchical power, who have urged that our experiment is not yet fairly tried. Let it be our duty not to disappoint the just expectations, the brightest hopes of the friends of freedom, throughout the world. Let us, by our long continued maintenance of order, by our respect for the supremacy of the laws, and our just regard for the rights of all nations, show that though, like others, we may be agitated by occasional tumults, our liberties have taken a deep root; and that time, so far from weakening, has only confirmed their security.

On the young men of our country, especially on such as participate in the advantages you possess, a responsible duty is devolved. On the right use of that education which you are here deriving, or on its abuse, must rest the question, whether your lives will be a benefit or a calamity to your country. Your portion is not one of obscurity, or even of mediocrity. To you many talents are entrusted. The means within your reach, of becoming public benefactors, are abundant. Your example will operate widely. Take heed that its influence be salutary. The duties of life are active. No one performs well

his part, who is a passive spectator of events. All receive protection from society, and every one is bound to contribute his proportion to the general prosperity. The indolent will be neglected, and, in their mortification, they cannot lay claim to the consolations of an approving conscience. Your spheres of action will be different; but in all there will be space for the display of your faculties in promoting the happiness of mankind. We have no right to be indifferent.

Our ancestors have done much for us: we owe them a heavy debt of gratitude. They have transmitted to us the blessings of civil and religious liberty. Under the guidance of a kind Providence, they not only accomplished our independence, but bequeathed us a legacy more valuable than was ever before bestowed on any nation. Our posterity have a right to expect that we will not waste or impair this rich inheritance. Our children expect, and they expect justly, that we will hand down to them, at least as good a government, at least as many political blessings, as our fathers established for them, no less than for us. If we shake the pillars of our political fabric; if we undermine its foundations, we are guilty of treason to our own offspring.

These are not times in which sentinels may slumber at their posts. There are signs in the horizon portentous of a storm; tumults have arisen in

different quarters of our country. In the North, the East, the West, the South, and I deplore to add, among ourselves, mobs have trampled on restraint, and defied law with fearful impunity. Lynch law has raised its bloody hand, and its blows have already defaced the temple of liberty. Its faithful guardians are called on to gather around it, and protect it from the rash assaults of mad invaders. The more plausible the excuses, the more specious the pretexts with which some would extenuate the guilt of such outbreaks of popular fury, the more dangerous their influence becomes. Where violence is without a shadow of excuse, all condemn, and the voice of censure is a corrective of the evil. When lawlessness is countenanced and upheld by the sanction of the well disposed, it then becomes formidable. On public opinion our institutions depend for their stability. Let the general confidence be withdrawn from the ability of the laws to furnish protection to all in the exercise of their rights, and the best days of our republic will have gone. Let all good citizens then unite in reprobating and repressing acts that endanger our continued existence as a free and orderly community. Every form of government has its antagonist power: that of a republic is a tendency to popular violence. Let the latter prevail, and anarchy must speedily ensue, which, by an easy transition, will lead to despotism.

Among other heresies, that it will become you to discountenance, you will hear it proclaimed, that the voice of the people is the voice of God: and that the people can do no wrong. The people are the only true source of political power; this no good American citizen will question: but it is not true that the people can do no wrong. They not only can err, but they frequently do err. Every individual among us is a sinful and corrupt creature; there is none perfect, no not one; we often go astray, when we would do good; human selfishness and passion mark our progress from the cradle to the grave. If such be our individual characters, if such be the parts, how is it possible that an aggregate so composed will be one harmonious, consistent, beautiful whole. We are no more perfect as a community, than we are separately. But what is meant by the people? Is there any such thing as their collective sentiment? Do they see with the same eyes? Judge with one mind? Speak with one voice? This is so far from true, that there is not an important question in religion, politics, morals, literature or taste, on which the greatest variety of conflicting opinions are not held and maintained. By the people, is it intended to include only the people of this country, or of the world? Would they embrace the benighted heathen, offering up a human victim to appease the anger of a false god? Would they take, in all time, from the

earliest glimmerings of the social compact down to the latest improvements that time and experience have matured? If the people cannot err, if the people can do no wrong, it follows that they never have erred, they never have done wrong; that their deliberations have been always wise, their doings perfect; and that there is not, and never was, room for improvement, unless they would make perfection more perfect. The blasphemous cry that the voice of the people is the voice of God, has often been raised by demagogues, and it was never more loudly proclaimed, than when, in the midst of the volcanic heavings of the French revolution, human arrogance and human might, had it not been for human impotence, would have deposed the great God himself, and seated the usurper Reason on his throne. What impiety can be more daring than that which calls the voice of the mutable, sinful, and feeble creature, the voice of the immutable, all-just and omnipotent Creator? We know that we are; but we know not that the next moment will be ours. That now, on which we set so much value, is gone even as we utter it. The presumption and vanity of man are truly great.

Where no class is recognised as entitled to superior privileges, and every man must consequently be equally subject to general laws, it will naturally follow, that all having an interest in the well being of the community, there will be a general disposition to

maintain good government. As some mode of selecting those who are to be entrusted with authority, and of arranging differences of sentiment, must be established, none will be so readily acquiesced in, or can be fairer, than submission to the will of a majority; and into this, at last, is the voice of the people resolved.

There is nothing more inconsistent with republican simplicity and real dignity, than a spirit of subserviency and a disposition towards flattery. We are ready enough to bestow our contempt on those "who hang on princes' favours." Adulation is not, however, the less mean because it cringes, bends, and pours out its fawning accents to propitiate the favour of a multitude. A slave is not the less a slave, because he has many masters. A truly independent spirit would scorn to humble itself before either one tyrant or many sovereigns. The man, who sacrifices his principles to the popular will, if he lived under a monarchy, would be among the most pliable of courtiers. Individual self respect, a frank, manly bearing, are essential ingredients in an elevated tone of national character. The true friend of the people will address them in the language of sincerity, and if he be trusted, it will be because he is trustworthy. Not so with the mere seeker for office: he will be lavish in his expressions of devotion to the people; he will profess to consult their wishes as the guide of his

conduct, the rule of his conscience; his principles will be as variable as the vane on the housetop. Governed by no enlightened or stable rules of action, he will ever be occupied in watching the gales of popular impulse, and in calculating the chances of the wind. He may succeed: favouring breezes may waft him to place and to power, but he can never be a great statesman, nor deserving the name of a patriot.

The good opinion of our fellow men is not to be held in slight estimation: there is a popularity that may well be desired; the approval of the good, the reward of virtuous conduct and distinguished worth. It is, in the words of Lord Mansfield, “that popularity which follows, not that which is run after—that popularity which, sooner or later, never fails to do justice to the pursuit of noble ends, by honourable means.”

Every good man respects himself, and it becomes us to cherish a just respect for our country. Understand me not to encourage that idle vanity which leads to individual and national boastfulness. True greatness is not given to vaunting. Those who possess real merit are content with the consciousness of well-doing, and are not the heralds of their own exploits. They need no such auxiliary. Let us illustrate national character by our nice regard for justice; by our philanthropic institutions; by our seminaries of learning; by the advancement of science;

by the virtue of our citizens. Let these be our jewels, and in their brightness let us rejoice.

While it is our duty to cherish a strong attachment to the Union, to consider that we are one nation, the citizens of each state entitled to the privileges of citizens in all the states; and to cultivate a cordial allegiance to the United States, regarding every attempt to alienate our affections as deserving indignant rebuke; it becomes us, as Pennsylvanians, and you, especially, as students of Pennsylvania College, to feel that we are bound by a strong obligation to promote the prosperity of our own Commonwealth. She is well entitled to our respect and regard. In her history there is much on which we may reflect with honest pride;—Her settlement was characterized by justice;—The soil was purchased fairly, not wrested by force from the aboriginal red men—the now fast fading away race of Indians, soon to be remembered as that which was, and is no more; a tale of wild romance, belonging to by-gone times. In Pennsylvania, all men have been permitted “to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none to make him afraid;”—Persecution and oppression have been scarcely known;—She has taken the lead in mitigating the severity of the penal code, and has administered justice in mercy, seeking the reformation not the destruction of the offender;—She has



maintained her faith inviolate; respected the obligation of contracts; and her credit has never been questioned;—She has supplied the nation with her full proportion of valuable citizens;—She possesses a hardy, industrious, moral, and intelligent population. Her soil, her agriculture, her salt, her lumber, her coal, her iron, her water-power, all in course of being daily more and more developed by a scientific geological survey, and brought into a wider usefulness by the steady and systematic prosecution of an expanded system of internal improvement, are sources of immense wealth and prosperity. Intersected by noble rivers that open to her, on the east by the Susquehanna and the Delaware, a communication with the Atlantic ocean; and on the west by the Ohio and the Mississippi, with the Gulf of Mexico, her citizens have opened to them an abundant market for her rich harvests, her vast treasures, and the productions of their industry. Her scenery is unsurpassed in richness and variety—Nature and art lend their blended aid to adorn the diversified prospects that gratify the eye of the traveller at almost every turn as he passes through her territory. The right use and development of these advantages must depend on ourselves.

While modern improvements and discoveries are giving a mighty impulse to all around us, we must not, we cannot stand still. Steam is annihilating

time and space; the most distant parts of the country are, as it were, made one neighbourhood. Intercommunication is softening prejudices and producing a community of feeling; friendships and alliances are taking place, and a bond of union is thus being formed which, it is fervently hoped, may be indissoluble.

You have well chosen this day, the anniversary of our national independence, for your celebration. It is pleasing and profitable at stated times to assemble together and unite in commemorating great events. The occasion we this day celebrate is well calculated to awaken the purest and the loftiest patriotism. The American revolution forms a bright era in the history of the world. It was a magnanimous struggle against the arbitrary exercise of power in support of free principles and the rights of man. It differed widely from other revolutions. It was not a wild effort to throw off law and to subvert order, nor a commotion created and violently carried on by designing and ambitious men, nor by a disorderly multitude. It was a deliberate and determined assertion of their civil and religious liberties by a people who understood their rights, and were determined at every hazard to uphold them. Their conduct corresponded with the elevation and dignity of their cause: private rights were scrupulously respected, and turbulence and disorder were promptly repressed and punished. Our ancestors were among the earliest and most re-

solite assertors of civil and religious freedom. They abandoned the comforts, the luxuries and the refinements of Europe, and sought on this continent, then a vast wilderness, the abode of savages, an asylum, where, uncontrolled by tyranny, they might enjoy their inalienable rights. They willingly encountered and surmounted toils and dangers with invincible fortitude; and, by their perseverance, effected a permanent settlement in this, their adopted land. Although the colonies had been settled under different circumstances, the same adventurous spirit characterized all. Having sought liberty at the sacrifice of the dearest ties that bind man to his native home, they hoped to enjoy it unmolested by European interference. Their hopes were vain. As they grew in strength and increased in importance, they excited the attention and the jealousy of Great Britain, then styled the mother country.

Surely I need not recapitulate the wrongs they endured, nor the forbearance with which they sought redress, until accumulated injuries, and daily extending encroachments, left them no alternative save a recourse to open resistance and to arms.

Let us pause and contrast the situation of the two countries at this time. The power of Great Britain was the most formidable in Europe; her resources were vast; her armies were brave and disciplined; her navy covered and commanded the ocean; her

power had attained the proudest height. The population of the thirteen colonies, did not exceed three millions, thinly scattered over this continent from Georgia to Maine, devoted to quiet and peaceful pursuits, destitute of military stores, undisciplined, without a treasury, and in all respects unprepared for war. Added to this, there were among them a powerful body of settlers, holding offices of profit, honour and trust, by loyalty and interest attached to the mother country; and others, who, although sincerely attached to the whig cause, were in principle opposed to warlike resistance. Our ancestors saw and appreciated the inequality of the contest. But in support of their rights and liberties, they were determined to brave every danger, and perish sword in hand, rather than abandon so righteous a cause.

Washington was appointed commander in chief of the American armies. Happy and auspicious was the day, in which the destinies of our country were committed to his guardian care. His youth was characterized by a determined spirit, tempered by that prudence and wisdom, which were conspicuous throughout his life. At the defeat of the gallant but rash and unfortunate Braddock, his character shone forth conspicuously. Surprised by a savage enemy in ambush, their general slain, their officers shot down in quick succession, and their ranks thinned by the unerring aim of an invisible foe, the Indian

war whoop sounding through the forest, the veteran troops of Europe were struck with panic fear, and thrown into irretrievable disorder. Our youthful hero foresaw and endeavoured to avert the calamity. His counsel was unheeded. He did all that skill and valour could accomplish, to retrieve the fortunes of this disastrous day, and to save from destruction the remnant of the army. In a letter to his brother, Washington says: "By the all powerful dispensation of Providence, I have been protected beyond all human probability or expectation; for I had four bullets through my coat, and two horses shot under me, yet I escaped unhurt, although death was levelling my companions on every side of me." May we not believe that the hand of God was mercifully interposed to shield him from the perils of this sanguinary conflict, having thus early marked him for his high destinies?

Washington, at the time he accepted the command of the American armies, well knew the difficulties, the dangers and the embarrassments against which he had to contend. His country demanded his services, and he hesitated not, but accepted the perilous elevation. More than once the deepest gloom of war overspread the country, desolation pervaded the land, and all were bitterly distressed. Despondency had cooled the ardour of many patriotic hearts. Desperate indeed seemed the situation of our affairs, at the

close of the memorable year 1776—Disaster had succeeded disaster, disaffection to the cause was manifesting itself, and hope languished. Washington saw that a crisis had arrived. His enterprise now shone forth with brilliant lustre, and rose superior to the trials by which he was encompassed. He formed the bold design of attacking the enemy, separated and dispersed in different winter cantonments. On Christmas night, the Delaware, filled with floating ice, in a storm of hail and snow, he crossed the river with a part of his army. No sooner had he reached the Jersey shore, than he was informed that the powder had become so damp in crossing, that not one gun in ten could be discharged. Unmoved, he replied, “then we must trust to the bayonet.” The enemy were completely surprised and defeated. Who can describe the feelings of Washington at this trying moment. The success of our cause depended on the issue. I have heard one I dearly loved, and whose memory I revere, describe Washington at this moment. Colonel Baylor, riding up to him said, “Sir, the Hessians have surrendered;” he dropped the reins on his horse’s neck, clasped his hands with fervency, and raising his eyes to heaven, remained for a short space of time in silent thankfulness. That American bosom must be insensible which does not sympathise with his feelings at this moment. Collecting rapidly their scattered forces, the enemy menaced the Ameri-

can army, with a prompt retribution for this startling enterprise.

On the 2d of January, 1777, the British army attacked Washington and his forces at Trenton. Night interrupted the contest. Keeping his campfires lighted to conceal his design, and availing himself of the darkness, he eluded the vigilance of the enemy; and at the dawn of day, while they were preparing to renew the attack at Trenton, the distant roar of artillery announced to them his victory at Princeton. The effect of successes so brilliant and unexpected, was electric; the drooping spirits of the Americans were revived; their courage renovated; confidence restored; and hope again cheered and invigorated their exertions. I would gladly dwell on the succeeding events of his military career, but time admonishes me that I must be brief. The spirit of Washington imparted a portion of his own high qualities to those who surrounded him. In prosperity he was never elated: in adversity he was resolute. When the patience of the army was worn out by fatigue, want of food, and of clothing, and murmurs of discontent prevailed through the ranks, he was present, sharing their sufferings, their hardships, and their privations, and, by his example, rebuking their clamour. When envy and jealousy shot their envenomed shafts, conscious of his purity, and fearless of the assaults of malevolence, he pur-

sued the even tenor of his way, and they fell harmless at his feet, or recoiled on the guilty assailants. Wise and prudent in council; decided and energetic in the execution of his purposes; he commanded the respect of officers and soldiers. By his kindness and attention to the comfort and happiness of all, he conciliated their esteem, and won their affectionate regard.

At one time invested with dictatorial control, the very unlimited extent of his authority made him cautious in its exercise. He never assumed power not delegated to him, and he never evaded responsibility.

When the war was ended, and our independence was acknowledged, his character underwent another test. The resources of the country were drained, the troops were unpaid; their toil, their sufferings, and their valour were without compensation. It was natural they should complain. A few ambitious and dangerous men endeavoured, by artful and insidious means, to inflame their discontent, to exasperate their passions, and to direct their arms against their country's bleeding bosom. The crisis was fearful. Every eye was turned on Washington. He assembled the officers of the army: he addressed them: his appeal was touching; it was indignant; it was eloquent; it was triumphant. "Let me conjure "you," said he in conclusion, "in the name of our



“common country, as you value your own sacred  
 “honour, as you respect the rights of humanity, and  
 “as you regard the military and national character  
 “of America, to express your utmost horror and  
 “detestation of the man who wishes, under any spe-  
 “cious pretences, to overturn the liberties of our  
 “country, and who wickedly attempts to open the  
 “floodgates of civil discord, and deluge our rising  
 “empire in blood. By thus determining, and thus  
 “acting, you will pursue the plain and direct road to  
 “the attainment of your wishes: you will defeat the  
 “insidious designs of our enemies, who are com-  
 “pelled to resort, from open force, to secret artifice.  
 “You will give one more distinguished proof of un-  
 “exampled patriotism and patient virtue, rising su-  
 “perior to the pressure of the most complicated  
 “sufferings; and you will, by the dignity of your  
 “conduct, afford occasion for posterity to say, when  
 “speaking of the glorious example you have exhi-  
 “bited to mankind—Had this day been wanting, the  
 “world had never seen the last stage of perfection  
 “to which human nature is capable of attaining.”

The most dreadful calamity, that of a civil war, was  
 now averted: every murmur was hushed, and the  
 dark clouds which had threatened a devastating  
 storm were harmlessly dispersed. He bade his  
 army an affectionate farewell, resigned his commis-  
 sion, and retired to enjoy the attractive charms of

private life. The measure of his glory seemed to be full. He was, however, destined to rise still higher in the scale of greatness.

New and unforeseen difficulties arose: thirteen independent states, bound together by a slender and precarious tie, the influence of foreign pressure removed, were in danger of falling into disunion and confusion. A new and imposing spectacle was now exhibited to the world—that of a free and sovereign people solemnly deliberating on, and calmly adopting, that form of government which the collective wisdom and experience of the sages and patriots of the nation recommended as best calculated to perpetuate their liberties, and to promote their happiness. Washington presided in this illustrious assemblage. The trust committed to their charge was one of the most delicate and exalted character. There were conflicting opinions and opposing interests to reconcile. Animated by purely patriotic motives, by conciliation and mutual concession, all aiming to promote the general good, they accomplished their great work; and the result was, **THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES**, under which this nation has signally prospered. Long may it last.

The new constitution went into operation on the 4th of March 1789. By the cordial and unanimous suffrages of a grateful people, Washington was chosen the first President of the United States.

His weight of influence and fostering care were required to support, to protect and to watch over the infant institutions of his country. Much depended on the first impulse that should be given to them. A character was to be imparted to an untried experiment. Superior to every selfish consideration, he accepted the arduous and elevated trust. The government was organized and put in harmonious motion: men were, with admirable discrimination, selected for office, with reference solely to their integrity, their public services and their fitness. The vigilant and the faithful were never removed. All were required to perform their duties, and justice was extended with undeviating impartiality to every one. Order and regularity prevailed: the people happy at home, the nation respected abroad, unexampled prosperity ensued; the mildness, wisdom, energy and dignity of his administration, commanded universal confidence. He preserved strict neutrality towards all nations; and having guided the nation in safety and honour, through a period of time replete with danger; having been a second time, unanimously re-elected President, at the end of eight years, he resolutely declined a third election, and retiring from the cares and toils of official life, he sought tranquillity and domestic happiness. In public and in private he was always dignified. It has sometimes been objected, that as a General he was more prudent than

adventurous. Let it be remembered, that an imprudent step, a rash engagement, might have hazarded a nation's liberties. When daring measures were justified by policy, none surpassed him in the boldness and the brilliancy of his military achievements. His character was in all respects so perfect, that no one part shone with particular brilliancy. If there had been any shade, it would have afforded relief to the more shining parts of his portrait; in him all was light. "Washington is not the idol of a day, he is the hero of ages." Although no lofty monument, no splendid mausoleum, marks the grave where his ashes repose, his memory is consecrated in the affections of his countrymen, where it will be cherished so long as virtue and transcendent greatness shall command the admiration of mankind. Every bosom glows responsive to the declaration, that "he was first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." He died on Wednesday, the 18th December, 1799, exhibiting the fortitude and resignation of a Christian. His character would have been imperfect, had it not been adorned by the graces which religion alone can impart. He was devout, but humbly and unostentatiously pious. A nation mourned his death. It can scarcely be hoped that Providence will bestow on us another who shall be his equal.

The American revolution produced an unusual

number of great and good men. The study of their lives, the imitation of their example, may well be inculcated on our rising youth as a salutary lesson. Two bright examples of illustrious men, raised in the school of the revolution, have recently died in our own Commonwealth; Chief Justice Marshall and Bishop White. Two purer, better, greater men, have rarely lived. Chief Justice Marshall, impelled by youthful ardour, took up arms and displayed great gallantry in the revolutionary struggle; and Bishop White, as Chaplain of Congress, incurred all the dangers that attended the issue of the contest. No Judge ever displayed more patience, more learning, more wisdom, more integrity, than Chief Justice Marshall. His expositions of the Federal Constitution will survive him as an invaluable testimonial of the great obligations he has conferred on his countrymen. No prelate was ever more unpretending, more dignified, more sincerely pious, more extensively useful than Bishop White. Both these excellent men were remarkable for the simplicity of their manners. Bishop White presided at a public meeting held in Philadelphia, to do honour to the memory of Chief Justice Marshall. Truly the choice was appropriate. A few years before the death of Bishop White, when political asperity was at its height, and an election was conducted with more than the customary violence, the

windows, at which the votes were received, were crowded with a dense mass of contending citizens, so that it was difficult to reach the polls; Bishop White was seen to approach—Some one called out, “Make way, here comes Bishop White;”—The crowd separated spontaneously, and made a lane for the aged Christian to pass through. He reached the polls, deposited his vote, returned, and not a hand was pressed forward, save to aid him in ascending the steps. No sooner was he beyond reach, than the vacant space was eagerly occupied. The example was salutary. A beautiful illustration had been afforded of the reverence all feel for a long life of exalted piety and active benevolence. Mankind, however they may scoff, respect religion. Hypocrisy has been beautifully called the homage paid by vice to virtue.

My young friends, select men like these for your models;

“Go, study virtue, rugged ancient worth;  
Rouse up that flame our great forefathers felt;”

persevere in diligence; faint not in your aspirations after distinction; and may a gracious Providence richly reward your efforts.