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William Churchill Houston

1746-1788

PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS AND NATURAL PHILOSOPHY AT THE PRINCETON COLLEGE, CAPTAIN OF INFANTRY IN THE WAR OF THE REVOLUTION, DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS, MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATURE OF NEW JERSEY, AND ALSO OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS, AND A DELEGATE TO THE CONVENTION WHICH FRAMED THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES. HE WAS ALSO CLERK OF THE SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY, AND AN EMINENT LAWYER.

By THOMAS ALLEN GLENN

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PREFACE.

In the following pages an attempt has been made to preserve the memory of one of those men, who, by their untiring and unselfish efforts, made the Independence of our country possible, and who crowned their labors by bestowing upon it a constitution which has always been acknowledged by the most eminent statesmen of every land to be the most perfect and splendid one ever devised.

It is to be deeply regretted that the story of the life of William Churchill Houston must be told from a very few remaining records and letters. What has been gathered, indeed, is the result of years of labor by his descendant and namesake, William Churchill Houston, Esq., of Philadelphia. If, however, the meagre data here presented will assist in preserving the memory of an ardent and untiring patriot, who, like Washington, refused to despair when the clouds were darkest and when confronted by difficulties which appeared to many unsurmountable, and will bring additional light to bear, from sources of information now unknown, not only upon his career, but also upon those of his compatriots, the purposes of this work will be accomplished. The thanks of the author are due to Hon. Garret D. V. Vroom, and Foster C. Griffith, of Trenton, N. J., for valuable assistance in the compilation of this work.

THOMAS ALLEN GLENN.

Wynnewood, Pa.

BOYHOOD AND COLLEGE DAYS.

William Churchill Houston, the son of Archibald and Margaret Houston, was born about the year 1746. There is no reason for doubting the definite statement that the exact place of his birth was in the "Sumter District," in South Carolina. Here, on Bull creek, his kinsman, Dr. William Houston, the friend and partner of Henry McCulloch, the land speculator, and a man of considerable prominence and influence in both of the Carolinas, owned a large plantation.

His father, Archibald Houston, however, appears among the first settlers in the county of Anson, subsequently Mecklenburg, North Carolina, and it was in this locality, celebrated as the place from whence that very remarkable document, the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, emanated,* that William Churchill Houston passed his youth, and here, also, under the austere tutelage of those early Scotch and

*The author of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence was Ephraim Brevard, M. D., Houston's class-mate at Princeton.

Captain Jack, who had married William Churchill Houston's sister, Margaret, was the messenger who carried this Declaration to the Congress. Hunter, in his "Sketches of Western North Carolina," says:

"At the Convention of Delegates in Charlotte on the 19th and 20th of May, 1775, Captain James Jack was one of the deeply interested spectators, and shared in the patriotic feelings of that ever memorable occasion. He was then about forty-three years of age —brave, energetic and ready to engage in any duty having for its object the welfare and independence of his country. After the passage of the patriotic resolutions, elsewhere given in this volume, constituting the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, Captain Jack, for his well-known energy, bravery and determination of character, was selected to be the bearer of them to Congress, then in session in Philadelphia."

Scotch-Irish, who raised their rude school-houses upon the extreme margin of the frontier, he received that earlier training which so well prepared him for the career that in after life he elected to follow.

The family from which these Houstons sprang was of Scotch ancestry and bore a name long distinguished in the annals of the Lowland of that country for learning, patriotism and valor, and, like a majority of their fellow countrymen, its members were stern and uncompromising adherents of the Presbyterian Church.

Archibald, the father of William Churchill Houston, first appears upon the records of North Carolina in 1753, in which year he received a patent of land within the county of Anson, and he afterwards, in 1764, patented five hundred additional acres, then in the bounds of Mecklenburg, and acquired other lands adjacent. He was a planter of importance and wealth, superior in education and intelligence to many of his neighbors, and he survived his distinguished son, dying in the county of Cabarras, which had been formed out of Mecklenburg, which, in turn, had been erected out of Anson, in the year 1805, at a very advanced age.

A wilder land than that in which William Churchill Houston was born cannot well be pictured. In South Carolina, the Indians at that time were both numerous and dangerous. The English, as yet, had effected but little foothold beyond scattered settlements along the coast, and those more adventurous planters who had forced their way inland were still struggling desperately with impenetrable forests, impassable swamps and hostile natives.

To the westward, where afterwards were smiling farms, lay the hunting ground of the savage Cherokee, at certain seasons of the year a dreary waste of water and underwood, and further westward still lay a trackless primeval forest through which, generations before, De Soto had chopped his way to glory and death. At the time of Houston's boyhood the Cherokee Nation and neighboring tribes were frequently at war with the settlers and always with each other. Here Cherokee, Creek and Choctaw murdered one another with fiendish ingenuity and unfailing regularity.

James Adair, an adventurous hunter and trader, thus describes a journey which he made through this country in 1747. In his journal under that year he writes:

"Many of the broad, deep creeks that were almost dry when I went down, had now far overflowed their banks, ran a rapid rate, and were impassable to any but desperate people. When I got within forty miles of the Chickasaw, the rivers and swamps were dreadful, by rafts of timber driving down the former, and the great fallen trees floating in the latter, for near a mile in length. Being forced to wade deep through cane-swamps or woody thickets, it proved very troublesome to keep my fire-arms dry, on which, as a second means, my life depended; for, by the rewards of the French, some enemies were always rambling about in search of us.

"On the eastern side of one of the rivers, in taking a sweep early in a wet morning, in quest of my horses, I discovered smoke on a small piece of rising ground in a swamp, pretty near the edge; I moved nearer, from tree to tree, till I discovered them to be Choctaws creeping over the fire. I withdrew without being discovered, and apprehended no danger, as at the

worst I could have immediately inswamped and secured a retreat with my trusty fire-arms and taken through the river and the broad swamp, which then resembled a mixed ocean of wood and water. I soon observed the tracks of my horses, found them and set off. At the distance of a hundred yards from the river there was a large and deep lagoon, in the form of a semi-circle. As soon as I swam this and got on the bank, I drank a good draught of rum; in the middle of the river I was forced to throw away one of my belt pistols and a long French scalping-knife I had found where the Choctaws killed two of our traders. When I got on the opposite shore I renewed my draught, put my fire-arms in order, and set up the war-whoop.

"I had often the like scenes till I got to the Chickasaw country, which was also all afloat. The people had been saying a little before I got home, that, should I chance to be on the path, it would be near fifty days before I could pass the neighboring deep swamps.

"As I had the misfortunte to lose my tomahawk, and wet all the punk in my shot pouch, by swimming the waters, I could not strike fire for the space of three days, and it rained extremely hard during that time."

Adair gives other interesting accounts of similar adventures during succeeding years.

That part of North Carolina, Anson county, into which Archibald Houston removed, was, in some respects, wilder than the Sumter District, where he had first settled. It is true that there were few swamps, but the land was much more rugged and rocky, the danger from the Indians as great, and this region also abounded in all kinds of wild creatures. Always the panther, wildcat, wolf and bear might be found without seeking, and the deadly rattlesnake basked in numbers on each stony hill. Deer were abundant, and on pas-

tures not far distant might be heard at times the thunder of galloping herds of buffalo.

We must suppose, therefore, that young Houston was equally expert with the rifle as with the axe, for these accomplishments went hand in hand in the education of the frontier lad of that day. The family of the pioneer, indeed, depended equally upon both for food, shelter, and often for life.

But amid these wild surroundings the Scotch settler was careful that his children should have as nearly as possible the same advantages of education that he himself had enjoyed.

As William Churchill Houston was appointed a teacher in the Princeton Grammar School immediately upon his matriculation at the College of New Jersey, it is evident that he must already have acquired a classical education of no mean order, and also have been well schooled in mathematics and in English literature.

It cannot, indeed, be questioned that the facilities for rudimentary education in North Carolina were, in the days of Houston's boyhood, equal, if not superior, to those existing in any other of the colonies at that time.

"This," says an authority, "was due entirely to the influence of the Scotch and Scotch-Irish immigration.

"From the arrival of these immigrants dates the impulse for the establishment of schools throughout the State. It is to the Presbyterian Church that North Carolina owes the establishment of her first classical schools, and during the second half of the eighteenth century the history of education in this state is insep-

arably connected with that of this denomination. Rev. erend Dr. Rumple, in writing of this period, says: 'And so the Presbyterian Church of this age has regarded it as indispensable to her welfare to maintain schools where her sons should learn to read the Latin tongue, the language of Western Christianity, and the Greek, in which the New Testament was written, as well as the mathematics and the liberal sciences—the 'Trivium' and the 'Quadrivium.'

"About 1745 the New York and Pennsylvania Synods of the Presbyterian Church began to send missionaries to North Carolina. Numerous churches were established, and in every instance a school was planted by the church."

"Almost invariably," says Foote, "as soon as a neighborhood was settled, preparations were made for the preaching of the Gospel by a regular stated pastor, and wherever a pastor was located, in that congregation there was a classical school—as in Sugar Creek, Poplar Tent,* Centre," and other places.

It was in one of these primitive, but well equipped schools, either at Sugar Creek or Poplar Tent, but probably the latter, as nearest to his home, that William Churchill Houston commenced his studies.

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*William S. Harris, in his "Historical Sketch of Poplar Tent Church," writes:

"Hezekiah J. Balch, Benjamin Patton, Robert Harris, Zaccheus Wilson, John Phifer, and David Rees, ministers, elders and members of this church, were signers of the Declaration of Independence at Charlotte, May 20th, 1775. (Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence.) William Churchill Houston, of New Jersey, was a native here to the manor born—educated in part in the log-cabin academy of Poplar Tent. He graduated at Princeton in 1768—was elected professor of mathematics and natural philosophy in that renowned institution in 1771, resigned in 1783. He devoted himself to the profession of law and illustrated a splendid career as a lawyer and statesman in his adopted state."

"In North Carolina, as in several other States," says Charles Lee Smith, "the higher education owes its first impulses to the Presbyterian Church and Princeton College."

Presbyterian missionaries, graduates of Princeton, sent to this State in the first half of the eighteenth century by the Pennsylvania and New York Synods, gathered the scattered families of their faith into churches, and by the side of the church was planted a classical school. For more than half a century Princeton influence was predominant in North Carolina. Many of the leading divines, teachers, and politicians were alumni of that institution."

One of the first of Princeton's sons to make a home for himself amid the roughness and perils of a newly settled part of North Carolina was the Reverend Hugh McAden, of the class of 1753, a native of Pennsylvania, who came as a missionary in 1755, and was one of the first organizers of the Presbyterian church in the Southern States.

Following him came Alexander Martin, a native of New Jersey, who became Governor of the state, Reverend Alexander McWhorter, class of 1757, Samuel Spencer, class of 1759, a native of North Carolina, Joseph Alexander, class of 1760, Reverend John Close, class of 1763, Waightstill Avery, class of 1766, a native of Connecticut, afterwards first Attorney General of the state, and many others.

Of these it was probably Joseph Alexander who directed Houston to Princeton, and there can be no doubt that he personally prepared him to enter that college.

Alexander was born near Charlotte, in what is now Cabarras county, within a short distance from Houston's home, and graduated from Princeton in the class of 1760. He immediately returned to his native state and began teaching at Charlotte. In 1766 he opened a large classical school at Sugar Creek, called Alexander's Academy.

A near neighbor of the Houston family and a man popular as a teacher in that locality, he was instrumental in shaping young Houston's career and was, perhaps, the first to remark his extraordinary predilection for study. It was, indeed, Joseph Alexander who prepared for Princeton Houston's classmate Thomas Rees, and these boys had been raised upon adjacent plantations.

There are several traditions which have been handed down to us regarding the commencement of Houston's course at college, and the reason for his separation, at this early age, from home ties.

One of these, which has been often printed, states that his father was a Quaker, and, not approving of higher education, but finding his son determined to become a professional man, presented him with a horse and fifty pounds in money and sent him from home to seek his fortune, thus practically disinheriting him. We know, of course, that Archibald Houston was not a member of the Society of Friends, nor was that Society opposed to education, but, on the contrary, encouraged it in every possible way. A horse and money, however, were absolutely necessary for a journey to Princeton, and so this part of the story seems probable enough, and is, moreover, interesting as indi-

cating what it cost in those days to send a boy to college.

There is no reason, however, to think that young Houston and his father were not on the most friendly terms. We must, therefore, suppose that the project was much talked over and finally decided upon, the necessary money given him and a horse provided

And so he journeyed. With a stout horse under him he rode straight northward through the forest, leaving farther and farther behind him, at every stride of the brute he bestrode, the home, scenes and friends of his boyhood days—and he had bidden these farewell forever. His father's house, the clearings in which as a child he had played, and where later as a lad he had toiled, the live stock which he had helped to raise—the colts, the oxen, the sheep, and the sheep-dogs—all of these he was never again to see.

Before him stretched for hundreds of weary miles an almost unbroken wilderness, dotted only occasionally by the rude cabins and half-cleared plantations of those thrifty countrymen of his, the hardy Scotch and Scotch-Irish pioneers. Beyond these miles the river of the mighty Powhatan—the James—rolled in solemn grandeur to the sea, and after that another stretch of country, more civilized, but as yet thinly settled, and then, at last, across the sands and pines of New Jersey, lay Princeton. Nor was the path without grave dangers. Indians in the pay of the French still penetrated the settlements, and lawless men, half traders and wholly thieves and murderers, abounded everywhere. To accept shelter for a night at an outlying cabin might be courting certain death, and the

alternative was to sleep in the open and take chances with prowling Indians and wild beasts.

Had Houston kept a journal of this trip and had set down an account of his feelings on leaving home, as well as the incidents of travel, it would now, doubtless, be interesting reading. Knowing the man, however, as we do—knowing his unflinching determination and strong self-reliant courage, it cannot be imagined for one single moment that either thoughts of home or friends caused him to swerve one inch from the way he had taken, or lay one hesitating and detaining hand upon his horse's bridle-rein.

He came, indeed, from a race accustomed for centuries to hew its own way—and often that way led far from a home—a people, who, when they once set about a task did it with all their might—a people whose ambitions were never satisfied and to whom each success in life meant but a stepping-stone to something higher—each failure a lesson well learned and not forgotten— a people who would cheerfully suffer and starve for years—if suffering and starving would ultimately assist to attain their most cherished wish. They feared God in their own peculiar way, it is true, but they feared nothing else on earth, with the stubborn characteristics of the race from whence he sprang. Houston rode straight onward to the success that awaited him—the success that awaits all who take the trouble to achieve it.

The recommendations which he carried to President Finley, doubtless from Joseph Alexander, must have been exceptionally strong, and, moreover, fully justified by an examination, for he was at once ap-

pointed a teacher in the Grammar School, and the money which he received for this work must have materially assisted him in the continuance of his studies, and in addition to this enabled him to lay the foundation for the position of Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy in the college which, as we shall see, was tendered to him upon the completion of his course.

At Princeton, Houston was confronted with conditions which were new, and, because of his early surroundings and the freedom of frontier life, must have been at first very disagreeable and irksome to him. The unconstrained and comparatively easy career of a student, as we know it now, was then a thing *unheard* of, and the most rigorous discipline was supposed always to be observed. In addition to this, menial servitude from the lower to the higher class-men was compulsory. "In those days," writes one of Princeton's sons, "college life was a little more stately than this irreverent age would be inclined to favor. It must have been a goodly sight to see the President, tutors and students, all seated together in the wide dining room, clad in the scholastic gown, and arranged according to rank and seniority. They lived very substantially on 'almost all the variety of fish and flesh the country here affords, and sometimes pyes.' At dinner they drank small beer or cider; and supper milk or chocolate. Young gentlemen who chose to indulge in that luxury were occasionally permitted to make 'a dish of tea' in their apartments. At five o'clock in the morning a large horn was blown in the entry, which, as a Freshman of the day sadly remarks,

sounded like the last trumpet. This blast summoned the students to morning prayers. The students were not allowed to leave their rooms without permission except for half an hour after morning prayers or recitations, an hour and a half after dinner, and from even prayers until seven o'clock." Is it little wonder that many of the graduates of this time died before their prime, or at least those who attempted to keep such rules. Athletic sports, of course, were not only unknown, but any physical exercise appears to have been frowned upon. The playing of games of hazard, of course, was a matter for especial oversight. A college rule of old Nassau Hall reads:

"None of the students shall play at cards, or dice, or any other unlawful game, upon the penalty of a fine not exceeding five shillings for the first offence; for the second offence, public admonition; for the third offence, expulsion. No jumping, hallowing, or boisterous noise shall be suffered in the college (meaning also the college grounds and campus) at any time, or walking in the gallery in the time of study. No member of college shall wear his hat in the college at any time, or appear in the dining room at meal time, or in the hall at any public meeting or knowingly in the presence of the superiority of the college, without an upper garment, and having shoes and stockings tight. Every scholar shall rise up and make obeisance when the President goes in or out of the hall, or enters the pulpit on days of religious worship.

"Every Freshman sent on an errand shall go and do it faithfully, and make quick return. Every scholar in college shall keep his hat off about ten rods from the President, and five rods to the Tutors."

Nice rules like these, however, have rarely been kept in any college, or by any boys, since the days of

Athens to the present time, and so it was at old Nassau Hall. Traditions come down to us from the hazy mists of those good old times, of doings in the town the very relation of which should make the old Presidents turn over in their graves were it not for the fact that they themselves seem to have been given considerably to conviviality, if not exactly on the sly at least without the knowledge and consent of their pupils. Witness a bill rendered to the trustees of the college, for thirty-seven dinners, twenty-three bottles of wine, eight of porter, six of beer, three double bowls of punch extra brewed, and three bowls of toddy.

But, as we observed, the students had their own times. Washington Irving and Paulding have left us the "Lay of the Scottish Fiddle," in which is pictured an old time scene in Princeton town, at the Nassau Hotel, kept by mine host, Jolne, "as arrant a tavern's keeper as any in Christendom."

The course of instruction at Princeton at that time is thus outlined by Dr. Finley, then President of the College. He writes:

"As to the branches of literature taught here, they are same with those which are made parts of education in the European colleges, save only such as may be occasioned by the infancy of this institution. The students are divided into four distinct classes, which are called the Freshmen, the Sophomore, the Junior, and the Senior. In each of these they continue one year, giving and receiving in their turns those tokens of respect and subjection which belong to their standings, in order to preserve a due subordination. The Freshman year is spent in Latin and Greek lan-

guages, particularly in reading Horace, Cicero's Orations, the Greek Testament, Lucian's Dialogues, and Xenophon's Cyropedia.

"In the Sophomore year they still prosecute the study of the languages, particularly Homer, Longinus, etc., and enter upon the study of sciences, geography, rhetoric, logic, and the mathematics. They continue their mathematical studies throughout the junior year, and also pass through a course of natural and moral philosophy, metaphysics, cronology, etc.; and the greater number, especially such as are educating for the service of the church, are initiated into the Hebrew. The Senior year is entirely employed in reviews and compositions. They now revise the most improving parts of Latin and Greek classics, part of the Hebrew Bible, and all the arts and sciences. The weekly course of disputation is continued, which was also carried on through the preceding year. They discuss two or three theses a week, some in the syllogistic and others in the forensic manner, alternately, the forensic being always performed in the English tongue." There were also public disputations on Sundays on theological questions, and once in every month the Seniors delivered original orations before a public audience, and, with the members of the lower classes, were required to declaim from time to time, in public, at the suggestion of the professors.

Houston has left us no personal narration of his college life. We know, however, that he continued as a teacher in the Grammar School until 1768, in which year, being president of his class, he graduated with the highest honors and was appointed Senior tutor in


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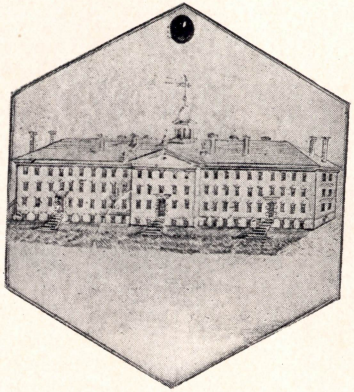

the College. A handsome silver medal, presented to him by the Faculty upon this occasion, is still in the possession of one of his descendants.

His course at the college had been such that he won both esteem and admiration of both the authorities and his classmates,* and which he continued to retain until the end of his life.

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*These were: Robert Blackwell, Ephraim Brevard, Elias Van Bunschooten, Samuel Culbertson, Pierpont Edwards, Adlai Osborn, Thomas Rees, D. D., Michael Sebring, Thomas Smith, Isaac Story, Alexander Hill, Hugh Sim, most of whom were afterwards distinguished in public and private life, and some of whom acquired reputations which have become national.

A PROFESSOR AT PRINCETON AND CAPTAIN IN WASHINGTON'S ARMY.

The coming to Princeton of John Witherspoon, in the year 1768, was an event which must have exercised an enormous influence over Houston's career, and, in fact, absolutely shaped it, at least from a political standpoint. Houston had but just graduated with high honors, and was occupying the position of Senior Tutor, when the great descendant of John Knox succeeded Finley as President of the College of New Jersey.

"Although," says Tyler, "John Witherspoon did not come to America until after he had himself passed the middle line of human life, yet so quickly did he then enter into the spirit of American society, so perfectly did he identify himself with its nobler moods of discontent and aspiration, so powerfully did he contribute by speech and act to the right development of this new nation out of the cluster of dispersed and dependent communities, that it would be altogether futile to attempt to frame a just account of the great intellectual movements of our Revolution without taking some note of the part played in it by this eloquent, wise, and efficient Scotsman—at once teacher, preacher, politician, law-maker, and philosopher.

Immediately upon his arrival at Princeton we find Witherspoon addressing himself to increase the influence of the College in every department.

He "brought about an enlargement of the cur-

riculum by the introduction of new courses, particularly in Hebrew and French and mathematics; and through his own brilliant example as a lecturer on eloquence, history, philosophy and divinity, he encouraged methods of instruction far more manly, vital and stimulating than those previously in vogue there."

In this work he had not only the sympathy, but the active co-operation of Houston, of whom thus early he entertained a high opinion. Thrown into almost hourly intercourse with a man who immediately became active in the highest sphere of American politics of that day, it is not remarkable that Houston should have elected to follow in his footsteps and in the footsteps of his associates; and, possessing many of the same attributes of birth, education, temperament and ability as his preceptor, have reached a plane, if at least not so high, still as active and as useful in many ways to the Revolutionary cause as Witherspoon himself.

It was in the spring of 1776 that Witherspoon commenced his political career by taking his seat as a member of the convention for framing the first Constitution for New Jersey, and, on the 21st of June, was sent to the Continental Congress, in which body he took his place in time to affix his name to the Declaration of Independence, which he also voted for. He remained in Congress until succeeded by Houston.

"At the commencement of 1771," writes MacLean, "there were but twelve graduates; but of these several attained great eminence, and one of them, James Madison, became the fourth President of the United States."

The most important measure adopted by the Board at this time was the establishing of the Professorship of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, and the appointment of Mr. Houston, the Senior Tutor, as the encumbent. The minute relating to this subject is as follows:

"Pursuant to a plan heretofore concerted for the establishment of learning in this College, as soon as funds should be found to admit of their support, the Trustees resumed the consideration of that measure; and conceiving it to be expedient that a Mathematical Professor, as most immediately requisite, be now chosen in the place of one of the Tutors, proceeded to the election of a Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, when William Churchill Houston, M. A., now Senior Tutor in the College, was declared to be unanimously elected to that office. It was then resolved that for the present the salary of the said Mr. Houston, as Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, be the sum of one hundred and twenty-five pounds proc., and that the Board will hereafter provide for him better support, as their funds will admit and the future situation of the said Professor shall reasonably require, as it is intended by the Board that the said Professorship shall be permanent in this college for the future."

This election took place September 25th, 1771. Houston immediately accepted the appointment and conditions.

Two days after this the Trustees of the College gave an elegant dinner, presumably in Houston's honor. The bill for this banquet, which we have al-

ready referred to, yet remains in the Payne-Henry collection in the Princeton library, and reads as follows:

The Trustees of New Jersey College, Dr.
To Wm. Hick.

1771. Sept. 27.	L.	S.	D.
To 37 dinners	4	12	6
To 23 bottles of wine at 5s	5	15	
To 8 bottles porter		16	
To 6 bottles of beer		9	
To 3 double bowls of punch		9	
To 3 double bowls of toddy		6	
To tea for 13 gentlemen		13	
	13	6	6

Below this it is approved and receipted in these words:

"The above amount I believe to be just.
John Witherspoon.

Princeton, 12 Dec. 1771, received of Mr. Seargent the above sum of thirteen pounds and sixpence money, by me, William Hick.

The breaking out of the Revolution saw Houston still a Professor of Mathematics at Princeton. What part he took in the years leading up to the struggle for Independence, or how far he was influenced by the opinions of his friend and associate Witherspoon, we have no means of knowing, but when volunteers were called for he was among the first to take the field.

In the minutes of the Council of Safety of New Jersey, under the date of Wednesday, February 28th, we find the following entry:

"Agreeable to Certificate.

"Ordered, that the following persons be officers of a company in the Second Regiment of foot militia in the county of Somerset, under the command of Abraham Quick, Esq., Colonel, viz: William Churchill Houston, Captain; Aaron Longstreet, First Lieutenant; Zebulon Barton, Second Lieutenant, and James Stockton, Ensign."

From the use of the words "agreeable to certificate" it would certainly appear that the officers named

had been chosen some time before and were now commanding the company.

Captain Houston served until the following August, when he tendered his resignation. The Minutes of the Council, under date of August 17th, 1776, thus refer to the subject:

"A letter was received from William Churchill Houston, captain of a company in the Second Battalion of foot in the county of Somerset, setting forth, that, from his connection with the college in the absence of Dr. Witherspoon, and other considerations, he cannot pay the due attention to his company, and begging leave to resign his commission.

"Ordered, that his resignation be accepted."

Unfortunately, no complete record of the services of this company commanded by Captain Houston, or of the regiment of which it formed a part, remains.

The following, taken principally from Stryker's Officers and Men of New Jersey in the Revolution, and from the History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, throws, however, some light on the subject.

At various times during the war New Jersey, by reason of its being continually exposed to the incursions of the British and the ravages of the refugees and Indians, found it necessary to embody, as occasion required, a certain quota of volunteers from the militia of the different counties. These men were held liable for duty when needed, not only in this, but in other states. In February, 1776, the Committee of Safety of New York called upon the Provincial Congress for a detachment of militia to assist in arresting Tories in Queens county, Long Island, Staten Island, New York. Of the several hundred men ordered out for that purpose, Somerset county furnished one hundred (about three companies). Another detachment was

ordered out February 15, 1776, to proceed to New York.

On June 3d, 1776, the Continental Congress called for thirteen thousand eight hundred militia, the quota of New Jersey being three thousand three hundred. Hunterdon county and Somerset furnished one of the five battalions required in the proportion of five companies from the last named county (Somerset).

On July 16th, 1776, Congress requested the Convention of New Jersey to supply with militia the places of two thousand men of General Washington's army who had been ordered into New Jersey to form the flying camp. Somerset provided two companies of this call.

Whether or not the companies of Colonel Quick's command were included for the duties above specified, has not been definitely determined, but it is presumed that they were, and the statement made by Captain Houston that his company needed more attention than he could afford to give it in the absence of Dr. Witherspoon from the College, would seem to show that it had been in active service during some of the above campaigns, and was likely to be soon again called into the field.

The most interesting, as well as the most important part of Houston's military experience, was, however, during the Trenton and Princeton campaign.

We have seen that Captain Houston resigned his commission August 17th, 1776. Within a very few weeks after this date all work at the College was abandoned, and the students, upon the approach of the British army, scattered in all directions. Dr. Wither-

spoon, who had returned temporarily, and Houston were the last of the faculty to remain. It appears that Houston must have been immediately recommissioned a captain, for we find him, on November, 1776, again in a command of a militia company, in which several of the students were enlisted.

One of these, whose name, unfortunately, is, at present, unknown to us, kept a journal of the campaign under Captain Houston, which is here given at length:

A CAMPAIGN JOURNAL,

From November 29, 1776, to May 6, 1777.

On the 29th of November, 1776, New Jersey College, long the peaceful seat of science and haunt of the Muses, was visited with the melancholy tidings of the approach of the enemy.

This alarmed our fears and gave us reason to believe we must soon bid adieu to our peaceful Departments and break off in the midst of our delightful studies; nor were we long held in suspense. Our worthy President deeply affected at this solemn scene, entered the hall where the students were collected, and in a very affecting manner informed us of the improbability of continuing there longer in peace; and after giving us several suitable instructions and much good advice very affectionately bade us farewell. Solemnity and distress appeared almost in every countenance. Several students that had come five and six hundred miles, and just got settled in College, were now obliged under every disadvantage to return with their effects or leave them behind, which several, through the impossibility of getting a carriage at so confused a time, were obliged to do, and lost their all. As all hopes of continuing longer in peace at Nassau were now taken away, I began to look out for some place where I might

pursue my stdies, and as Mr. J. Johnson had spoken to me to teach his son, I accordingly went there and agreed to stay with him till spring. Next day I sent my Trunk and Desk to his house and settled all my business at College. On Sunday evening Gen. Washington retreated from Brunswick. I then went to Johnson's, and having now no hopes of remaining there was preparing to send my things farther out of the way, but we had not been long talking, before the press men came for Mr. Johnson's wagon and horses, and with much difficulty we put them off for this time; soon after they came again, when we had but little hopes of keeping the wagon and horses; but knowing unless we got off our things while we had our wagons, they must necessarily fall into the Enemy's hands, I took the opportunity while the press men were debating with Mr. Johnson, and took the wagons out of the stable and went off with them into the woods, and though they ran after me, they neither found me nor the horses. After they were gone we packed up our things, I carried them by hand to the woods where we had concealed the wagons. Near Daybreak we got all the things ready to move, and drove to Amwell, where we arrived a little before sundown. December 3d I returned to John Drake's, where Mr. Johnson waited my return. The same day we rode to Princeton, and finding that part of our men made a stand there I returned to Drake's, hoping the Enemy would not advance farther than Brunswick. As I was unwell at this time, I staid at Drake's till Friday, 6th, then rode with Mr. Johnson to his house, staid all night; next day, about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the Enemy came on towards Princeton, and had got as far as Kingston when we set off to Drake's house. In an hour and ½ after we left the house the Enemy were paraded before the door. Next day we went to Amwell and put up at Jacobus Johnson's. I continued here a week and was treated exceedingly kind. Wed-

nesday, December 18th, I went over the River to join Longstreet's Company, found the Company and came back to the River with them the next Day, though I had not joined. The sun set just as we marched from the River after crossing, I marched with them till some time after, then took the road to Johnson's, missed my way some miles, got home next day about ten in the morning. Next day I went to near Princeton within half a mile of the Enemy, got a Gun and Accoutrements. As it was bad traveling I sprained my ankle this day.

Next day, Sunday, I came back to Amwell, intending on Monday to go over the River. But as the Amwell militia were at this time coming back over the River, I, through persuasion, staid and enlisted in the Amwell Battalion. December 24th, Went off immediately with the scouting party, Capt. Houston's. Took our Lodgings in the neighborhood. My ankle was very painful and the bottoms of my feet blistered so as some times while walking to make me cry out. I went to bed after midnight, and before I was up next morning a large body of the Enemy from Princeton was in the neighborhood and by the house where I lay asleep; but did not stop at it. As we sat down to breakfast, tidings of the Enemy came, they were plundering a neighboring house; eleven of us, as there were no more of our body near, went immediately after them, but when we came to the house they had just gone. We then went to our main body and followed them to John Hunt's, from whence they had been gone ½ an hour. In their march they took some of our men prisoners. We then came back to Parker's. It was a severe, stormy day, and I was very wet and lame, and having orders where to meet next day, I came through the storm to Jacobus Johnson's, where I staid that night and felt better in the morning, and set off to meet the Company. Went to the old Meeting house, from whence most of the Battalions had just gone in Sleds. My ankle now grew very painful, still

I followed on two miles, and from there rode in a sleigh, six miles to the Battalion. In the afternoon we marched 10 miles around about road to the River. That night I lodged with part of the Company at Mr. Oakham's; but my ankle was so swelled and painful I could not march with them in the morning, and staid till I recruited. Being recovered, I set on Wednesday morning to look for the Battalion. Came that evening to Benjamin Johnson's, where part of the Company staid all night. Next morning, we marched to Penny Town, drew Rations and marched some miles further towards Trenton, and took Lodgings that night. Set out early next morning, towards Trenton, till sun ½ an hour high, when we heard the Engagement begin towards Princeton; we then immediately marched back to Penny Town waiting some time for Intelligence. Made two or three movements and lay in wait sometime in the woods, for the Enemy; but they, having got intelligence of us by some Tory, returned another road, and so escaped us, we then came to Levy Hart's, took Lodgings, and cooked provisions. I laid about 3 hours with my blankets on cords. At 3 o'clock, set out for Penny Town, after a round-about march we came to the field where the Battle was fought. Had a most dismal prospect of a number of pale mangled corpses, lying in the mud and blood. I felt gloomy at the awful scene. Returned in a rough, tedious march to Hopewell. Such unpleasant marching occasioned my ankle to swell again and grow painful. I, this night staid at Thomas Drake's. Next day went with the Company to Penny Town to take some hides, &c., from Cochran's. Came back to Hopewell that night, next day to Hart's. In the evening set off again with a party to Penny Town, I was pilot to lead them the nighest way through the woods, got in about bed time. I lodged this night at Mrs. Hamilton's, the rest of the Batallion came in next day. We were here employed to take care of the Stores taken from the

Enemy. I was appointed to take care of a Lieut. wounded in the late action, tended him till Friday night, when he died. The night we received orders to march to join Gen. Washington. Most of this Battallion went off early next morning. I was appointed Lieut. (protempore) to take some prisoners to Trenton. Had orders to press 2 waggons and horse to ride. Set off with 4 men for my Guard. Took 10 regulars, 2 Hessians, and two Tories, delivered them to Major Vance at Trenton. Returned the same night towards Amwell with my Guards and horse next day (Sunday) came to Jacobus Johnson's, staid all night, came next day to Flemingtown where the Company had orders to meet. Lodged at John Hevilon's. Next day in the afternoon we marched from Flemingtown to Reddingtown; but here we met with an Express from G. W. ordering us to go towards Boundbrook along Raritan, and took our lodgings about Diken's Mills. Next morning marched on to the place appointed. Our Company took Lodging at Mr. Samuel Queman's on Thursday, Jan. 16. Here we continued until Saturday, 18th; we were then obliged to move our Quarters to give place to the Light horse and took our Quarters at Mr. Van Nostrand's. Staid here in peace till Monday morning, we then received an Alarm and were ordered to march to Boundbrook, we arrived there between 11 and 12, then hearing that the Enemy was plundering at Millstone, we immediately marched for that place, being joined by a considerable body at Boundbrook, we marched on till we passed Raritan Bridge, hearing several Cannon fired, while on the way. After crossing the Bridge, the Battallion I was in was taken off for the left wing, I crossed Millstone, some distance below the Bridge, wading through the water, more than knee deep. We immediately marched towards the road, and fired upon the Baggage Guard, who were retreated that way. They immediately left horses, wagons and plunder, and retired with the greatest precipitation. The main body

of the Enemy lay just over south of the Bridge. Before we crossed the River below, our main Body began the Attack at the Bridge with one Field piece and made the Enemy give way. They continued their fire upon the Enemy some time. Our wing, after driving the Baggage Guard, pursued on and flanked the Enemy. After a short engagement, finding ourselves greatly overpowered with numbers, we received General Orders to retreat, having had 1 man killed and 2 wounded, and we had taken 2 of the Enemy prisoners. We then retreated back to the River, lest our retreat should be cut off. But finding the Enemy did not pursue, we rallied again, with as many of our men as we could collect, and marched on towards the Enemy the second time; but when we came in sight of them, they got possession of an eminence in the end of a clear Field, with one or more Field pieces and poured down their Grape shot upon us briskly. Then finding it in vain to attack them with our little Body under so great a disadvantage, we immediately retreated back and most of our men went over the River up into a clear field, to where our main Body had by this time collected. They all formed again, and came round over the Bridge, to take off the plunder. While the main Body were there forming and coming round, 6 of us that remained, thinking our main Body was quite gone off, set to taking off the Baggage wagons by hand, down to the River. We had got off 2 with a great number of Bags, Chains, &c., and were going back for the 3d when our main body came up, and soon took off the remainder. We then all came off with our plunder, to Head Quarters. In this Engagement I could learn of but 3 men killed, besides wounded and prisoners. Though the Enemy had laid their scheme well to get a great quantity of plunder, yet fortunate for us, they were sadly disappointed. They sent 400 men in the morning to Boundbrook, to decoy our army from their other party who were plundering at Millstone, that they might have time to get off their plunder, Af-

ter showing themselves a short time at Bound brook, they went off, but where I have not heard.

Our army got so timely to Millstone that by what I can learn we got ½ of the Enemy's wagons, and plunder; we took several of their English wagons, and others, likewise a great number of new Sacks of wheat, flour, meat, Horses, Cattle, sheep, Hay and several other Articles, which we found scattered every way along the streets and through the woods, where they had thrown them away, in their haste. Some of their horses, in the fright, run their wagons against trees, broke through their gears and got off. Tuesday, next morning about 10 o'clock, we were again alarmed and our men marched towards Boundbrook, and after each party had exchanged a few Cannon shot, went off. Our men all came home without receiving the least damage; but we heard afterwards that one of our Cannon shot killed four of the enemy. Another party of the Enemy that day took a considerable quantity of plunder from near Millstone. The remainder of this week, we lay undisturbed in our quarters. Sunday, Jan. 26th, in the afternoon, we were alarmed and marched down to Raritan Bridge, then hearing the Alarm was false, we marched back again to Quarters. The cause of this Alarm was that some of our out Guard had fired upon a small party of Hessians, who had come ('tis thought) to disturb them. After this Alarm we remained quiet in our Quarters till Wednesday, Feb. 5th, having no other duty to attend but the General's and the Ammunition Guard. This night we were ordered to march at 11 o'clock with the rest of Gen. Dikinson's Brigade and went within ½ mile of the Enemy's Quarters. The roads were now excessively muddy, so that we were over Shoes in mud and water; but towards morning it grew very cold and froze very hard. The design of this march was to take off the horses, wagons, fat Cattle and Sheep from the inhabitants to prevent the Enemy from getting any advantage

of them. We got off a quantity of these Articles, and marched back (the road being now frozen hard) to Head Quarters. When we got home most of us were wearied and stiff, and our feet sore. We took some refreshments and rested about 2 hours, I being very weary and drowsy, had laid down and got in a sound sleep, when we were again alarmed to go and meet the Enemy, who were advancing towards Raritan. We immediately marched down to Raritan Bridge and there waited till our light horse came in, who brought us word that the Enemy had been up as far as Covhoven's, had taken and destroyed a great quantity of grain and hay, drove off a great number of Cattle and were gone back. We then all came back to Quarters, and rested in peace that night. Saturday, Feb. 8th, while we were parading in the morning we were alarmed and ordered to march immediately to Raritan Bridge, where we soon arrived, and marched to near Millstone, then meeting the main Body of our men returning we marched back to the Bridge, and waited for some orders. While we lay here, we heard several Cannons fired towards Boundbrook, as we thought. Our General and some of the light horse were gone that way for intelligence, when they returned we were ordered to march down and cross Millstone. After we had crossed it near ½ a mile, we got intelligence by the Brigade Major that Gen. Warner with his Brigade was engaged with a party of the Enemy (in which he thought himself a sufficient match) at the pines 2 miles below Boundbrook. We then returned to the Bridge where we were dismissed. It now began to rain, and we arrived wet and weary at Quarters, about Dusk. General Warner's party, this day, killed 4 of the Enemy, without receiving any damage on his own side. After this several Skirmishes happened near Quible Town and Woodbridge, between our people posted near these places and some Foraging parties of the Enemy; but our troops along the Raritan lay for some

considerable time undisturbed with little apprehension of an attack from the Enemy, as we were pretty strong. But as a considerable number of the New England Troops, who lay at Boundbrook, had completed their time by the 12th of March, refused to stay longer; and marched immediately home, we were left very naked and much exposed to the Enemy, who (we had the great reason to believe) would make a sudden excursion to some part of our Quarters, as they were very much in want of Forage, and the drying weather now very much favoring such a design. We accordingly kept ourselves in constant readiness to meet them, whenever they should come out, the General having in the orders of the 19th of March addressed the Officers and Soldiers very spiritedly and politely on that occasion. Gen. Dickinson left us March 15, after having politely returned his thanks to the Officers in his Brigade for their spirited conduct, and cheerful compliance with his Orders. Gen. Heard took his place 16th of March. Under Gen. Heard's Command we remained peaceable for some time, our Guards paying the strictest attention to their Duty, by which means several disaffected persons were taken up, who would otherwise have done much mischief. As the discharging of the N. England Troops left an important pass very naked (an advantage the Enemy would doubtless avail themselves of if not prevented) our Battallion was ordered to march down and take post 2 miles below Boundbrook (the 4th of April), there to supply a picket Guard just upon our lines, not far from the Enemy's pickets. About this time our new relief was coming in. Our Quarters tolerably good, but our Duty very hard. At this time all the Troops in town did not exceed 300. In this state we continued undisturbed till Sunday, 13, when early in the morning we received a very sudden and unfortunate attack from the Enemy; they came up ('tis thought) near 3,000 strong, in 2 Divisions, the one

coming the main road from Brunswick to Boundbrook, and after a short firing, drove our picket stationed on that road; the other came up the south side of the Raritan and by the help of pilots came (undiscovered by our Guards) a considerable distance above the Town, then forded the River and marched down the road to the General Quarters. The General fortunately escaped, with only the clothes on his back; they immediately plundered the house; took our 3 field pieces from before the door, and most of the Artillerymen, then drew their Left wing to northward of the upper part of the Town, in order to surround it: the other party had by this time gone up to the lower end of the Town, and had some time kept up a warm fire upon our men, in the half-moon Battery, who behaved with great spirit, not knowing that the Enemy had possession of the upper part of the Town. After a short firing the Enemy drew their right wing by hill, forded the Millstone, some distance above, then marched up back of the Town in order to join the left wing of the party from the upper part of the Town, and thereby to have the whole Town surrounded, but fortunately for us, before their wings effected this junction, our Troops in the Battery received orders to retreat, which they did with the loss of only 3 or 4 killed, and as many wounded, and escaped to the mountain. As our Battallion lay some distance from the Town, below the mountain, we did not receive the alarm till the Enemy had got possession of the Town. We immediately mustered and marched towards the Town, till we came in sight of the Enemy, at one of our Batteries, then finding we were too late to help our men in the Town (if they had been there) we marched along under the mountain towards the upper part of the Town, when we fell in with Gen. Lincoln, and the Troops that had returned from the Town, and we all marched together to the top of the mountain, then divided to secure 2 passes in the mountain. As the

enemy had not yet reached our Quarters, 12 of us came down in sight of them, and brought off our Baggage. We had not lain long on the mountain before the Enemy all left the Town. We then marched into the Town, and staid 2 hours without taking Quarters, when 2 Battallions of enlisted Troops came in, and brought 2 Field pieces with them. We then put out strong Guards, the rest went to Queenston. In this Skirmish we lost 5 or 6 killed, 4 wounded, and between 30 or 40 prisoners; 3 Field pieces, and considerable baggage. 4 of the inhabitants of the town were killed. After this we remained peaceable for some time.

April 26th Our Battallion was ordered to march to Morristown to join Gen. Heard, who had marched with part of his Brigade 2 days before. When we came to Morris, we were ordered on to Pompton, where Gen. Heard was stationed. We marched on some distance from the Town and took Lodgings. Next morning proceeded on to Pompton, arrived there near sunset, took Lodgings, then were ordered, next morning, to Paramus. Drew provisions and ammunition and got some miles on this day. Next day, Tuesday, April 29th, about 10 o'clock we arrived at Paramus, took Lodgings near the Church. I lay with part of the Battallion at Mr. Bogert's. This day moved to Capt. Hopper's, this day sent out a Scout, who had a small Skirmish with the new recruits, and returned next day, Sunday, May 4th, our times being up, we set out for home, Arrived on Monday, about 10 o'clock at Morristown, where I staid, and the Battallion continued homewards. On Thursday, I set out on horseback to Flemington, Robinson's Ferry, Amwell and Princeton, and returned on Tuesday to Morristown. I staid at my Mother's waiting for the Company till Friday, then set out on foot, and travelled to Pompton, where I waited for the men till Saturday night, when they came in; I then took charge of them, this

being the 17th day of May. We continued at Pompton at Mr. Bartolofs till May 27th, having had our Company and Capt. McCullough's joined into a party. Then we were ordered down to Paramus. The Company set off this day; but as the Brigade Major had gone home 4 or 5 days, I was appointed to serve in his place till his return. On the 28th the Major returned, and the 29th I went to Paramus, found the Company stationed beyond the Guards. On Sunday we were removed within Guards to Sebriske's, this day being the 1st of June, Col. Frelinghuysen came to this place, and took the Command, in the room of Col. Steward, who was at this time ill with the small Pox. Col. Frelinghuysen commands this post till June 19th, in which time we had several Scouts towards Bergen, and took several articles from the Tories and some of them were disarmed. On the 10th day of June, 210 of the Green coats (though our first accounts were more than three times that number) came up to Hackensack. We soon got the word of it, and sent down our Light horse, who exchanged a few shots with them, and returned. This we were told afterwards put the Enemy in great consternation. When our Light horse returned the Officers went to consult what was best to be done, and as we had but few men, it was agreed we should make a feint retreat, which we did, about 10 o'clock in the Evening, in such a manner that the whole neighborhood thought we were actually retreating. We had agreed to march towards Pompton, then take a by road, and proceed within 4 miles of Hackensack, to an advantageous station, where by an Express we had requested Gen. Heard to meet us, with his party from Pompton; but the road was so exceedingly rough, the night dark with rain, thunder and lightning, that we got not so far as expected. We took shelter for this night in a large Barn; In the morning, as Gen. Heard did not join us, and as near 100 of our men's times were out, who now refused to march down and meet

the Enemy, we were obliged, being but an inconsiderable handful, to march back again, to our Station, where we arrived about 11 o'clock. June 12th We marched our little Body down to Hackensack, thinking some of those Green Coats might be lurking about, not far from that place, waiting for an opportunity to attack us, which we were resolved this day to give them, if they were there. We marched from Hackensack to the new Bridge, and took Quarters this night. At 2 o'clock in the morning we all marched off to Paramus. Sunday, June 15th, We sent out a Scout of about 30 men, down to the English Neighborhood, having had strait intelligence that the green Coats were to be this night in those parts, express horses, wagons, &c. The Scout having taken 2 Tories, arrived there the same night. Next morning at 10 o'clock as they were fixing them with the Guards ready to march home to Quarters, they were fired upon by a party of the Enemy which was so sudden and unexpected that it threw them into confusion, and although the 2 Officers behaved with the greatest activity and spirit, it was impossible to recover them and form them in rank, and well it was they did not, for, had they not escaped as they did, they would in a few minutes have been all surrounded. Several of our men fired, and it was thought did some execution, 3 of our men were missing, till 2 days afterwards, when they all returned. Monday, June 16th, We received Orders to march our whole Battallion to Pompton where we arrived, about 9 o'clock in the Evening. At Pompton we staid 2 days. This day, June 19th, we received Orders to march down to the lines. We marched at Sunrise, and took Quarters this night, below Morristown; Next day, came in to Bullion's Tavern, where we took Quarters, waiting Orders. The Enemy had, some days before this, removed from Brunswick to Millstone, near the Court house, and it was thought would make an attempt for Philadelphia; This roused the Militia of all the neighboring counties, and they

turned out with such spirit as will do them honor to the latest ages. Never did the Jerseys appear more universally unanimous to oppose the Enemy; they turned out Old and young, great and small, Rich and poor; Scarcely a man that could carry a musket was left at home. This soon struck a panic into the Enemy, for they could scarcely stir from their Camp, but they were cut off. They then fled with the greatest haste to Brunswick; but the Militia pursued them so closely and so warmly, that they made no stay here. On Sunday morning, June 22d, they were driven out of the Town, and chased near to Amboy by the spirited Militia in conjunction with a small party of the English Troops. The Enemy, when they left Millstone and Brunswick, burnt several houses, strangled almost to death 2 or 3 women, and behaved in the most cruel, barbarous manner. After the Enemy where driven from Brunswick, our Army took possession of the Town, and such of the Militia as were called out upon this Alarm, were discharged. Wednesday, June 25th, part of Militia at Bullion's Tavern were discharged and part ordered to march next day for Pompton, which they did. Thursday, June 26th, the Enemy came out with their whole Body from Amboy and proceeded to Westfield, where they plundered and destroyed every thing before them, and distressed the Inhabitants in a manner before unheard of, but before they returned to Amboy numbers of them were cut off by part of our Army, and some Militia. They returned to Amboy, and on Monday Evening, June the 30th, 1777, they all left Amboy and went to Staten Island.

The foregoing narrative gives an interesting account of the duties performed by the New Jersey Militia preceding and subsequent to the battles of Trenton and Princeton, and indicates that Captain Houston's Company was on the right flank of Washington's

army at the latter battle, arriving on the field, however, when the British were in full retreat.

A better understanding of some statements in the journal will be assisted by the following brief, but clear and very accurate account of the battle of Princeton, by Francis B. Lee:

"Washington," writes Lee, "not only to lend encouragement to the reviving spirits of his countrymen, but likewise to pursue his advantage, recrossed the river at McKonkeys Ferry in advance of the troops, and entered Trenton. Until January 2d, 1777, in that village, his headquarters were in the house of loyalist Major John Barnes, near the Assanpink Creek. Fearing the advance of the British from New Brunswick, he moved to the True American Inn on the south side of the stream. Upon its banks he concentrated his troops, a delay having been caused by floating ice rendering their passage extremely difficult and fatiguing. The Pennsylvania Militia, under Generals Mifflin and Cadwalader having crossed the Delaware, Mifflin with eighteen hundred men was posted at Bordentown, while Cadwalader, with an equal number of soldiers occupied Crosswicks.

In the meantime General Cornwallis, joining General Grant at New Brunswick, left that town with eight thousand troops, whose advance was met by General Fermoy taking position at Five Mile Run on the first day of the year 1777. Upon the second day Cornwallis forced back this detachment as well as troops sent to support the slowly retreating Americans.

Fighting desperately between Lawrenceville and Trenton, the Militia and line were driven to the rising

ground south of Assanpink Creek, which the British did not attempt to cross. Had they done so Washington and his army would have been scattered through the southern portion of New Jersey, as the Delaware was impassable by reason of ice.

A council of war called that night in the Douglass mansion was one of the most eventful in the history of the Revolution. To turn the left flank of the enemy, strike a blow at the small garrison at Princeton, and seize the British stores at New Brunswick was decided upon. By increasing his guards and perfecting his defences the American commander made a feint of protecting his position at all hazards. Suddenly at midnight of the 3d of January Washington, having brightened his campfires, marched eastward to Allentown and towards Cranbury. Thence moving across the country, early morning found the Americans directly south of Princeton, General Washington having detailed General Mercer to destroy the Stony Brook bridge, breaking communication with Trenton.

The British garrison at Princeton was small, consisting of the Seventeenth, Fortieth, and Fifty-fifth Regiments and three companies of light horse. In obedience to commands the Seventeenth and Fifty-fifth, the Seventeenth being under the command of Charles Mawhood, had left Princeton to re-enforce Cornwallis at Trenton.

Mercer failing to destroy the bridge, Mawhood had passed over Stony Brook unaware that Mercer lay upon his flank and rear. Discovering his situation, Colonel Mawhood turned his troops toward

Princeton, and a short but decisive struggle took place for control of the rising land east of the stream.

Charged by British bayonets the Militia retreated through an orchard, leaving upon the field their gallant commander, General Mercer, mortally wounded, stabbed with seventeen thrusts.

Here, however, Mawhood found himself in the face of the American army, where unable to hold his position the British retreated toward Princeton. Making but a feeble show of resistance in the town, and occupying for a brief time Nassau Hall, the main building of the College of New Jersey, the British regiments, thoroughly disorganized, sought safety in flight across the Millstone towards New Brunswick. The Seventeenth Regiment was also scattered, and the Stony Brook bridge was destroyed as the rear guard of Cornwallis, which had heard the firing at Maidenhead, appeared."

Although Houston was disappointed in not taking an active part in the battle of Princeton, coming on the field at three o'clock in the afternoon, it appears from the journal that his company was afterwards, on several occasions, actively engaged with the enemy, and the company also, for a time, served as General Washington's Headquarters guard whilst at Morristown.

In addition to his service in the field, Houston was, during a considerable period of the Revolution, a member of the Council of Safety of New Jersey, is mentioned as being present at many of its most important meetings, and for a time served as Treasurer of that body.

DEPUTY SECRETARY AND MEMBER OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS.

The enlistment of Captain Houston's company in the service of the United States expired March 6th, 1777, but many of the company appear to have remained in the service of the State for a longer period, and, therefore, probably volunteered to serve three months longer. Houston, however, returned to civil life almost immediately after the date of the expiration of the first period of enlistment, although there was, doubtless, a delay of some days in making up his muster rolls and turning over his command.

On March 22d, 1777, Congress ordered that a Secretary's office be established, and also the office of Deputy Secretary, the latter to receive a salary of eight hundred dollars per year. There were also to be clerks appointed, as assistants to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, as need might be, at a salary of four hundred and eight dollars per year.

Upon the 25th day of March, 1777, Congress "proceeded to the election of a Deputy Secretary, and the ballots being taken, Mr. William Churchill Houston was elected."

It was provided by the Act that the "Secretary, Deputy Secretary were to well and faithfully to execute the trust reposed in them, in their respective capacities, according to their best skill and judgment, and to disclose no matter, the knowledge of which

shall be acquired in consequence of such their office, and which they shall be directed to keep secret."

The position thus entrusted to Houston was one of the greatest importance, and a very large part of the correspondence usually accredited to Thomson must during the time Houston held the office have passed through his hands.

Charles Thomson was first chosen Secretary of the Continental Congress in the month of September, 1774, Peyton Randolph being at that time President, and he continued to hold that office until the end. The Congress which originally appointed him, however, always held the foremost place in his affections, and it was his firm opinion, often expressed, that as years rolled around the body degenerated. Of Thomson's estimate of the first Congress, there can be little comment, and he is supported in his judgment by no less a keen observer than the great Pitt, who wrote:

"I must declare and avow, that in all my reading and study—and it has been my favorite study: I have read Thucydides, and have studied and admired the master Statesy of the world,—that for solidity of reasoning, force of sagacity, and wisdom of conclusions, under such a complication of circumstances, no other nation or body of men can stand in preference to the General Congress at Philadelphia."

"No longer," says Thomson, "did America exhibit the appearance of rival colonies, piquing themselves on separate rights, and boasting the relative advantages of different charters, and different constitutions; all such sentiments were buried in oblivion."

At the time of Houston's appointment as Deputy Secretary, an element of the Congress of 1775 remained, but it was even then fast deteriorating.

Of the respective duties of the Secretary and Deputy Secretary some uncertainty exists. Dr. Friedenwald, however, has given us a very clear account of the personal work of Charles Thomson.

"The Journals of Congress, with some very few exceptions, are entirely in the handwriting of Thomson. He seems to have been present at every session. The series of the archives of Congress very properly begins with what he termed the 'Rough Journal,' beginning with the proceedings of September 5th, 1774, and ended with the entry of March 2, 1789, and was probably written while Congress was sitting, the entries being made directly after each vote was taken. It is contained in thirty-nine small foolscap volumes. The second of the series is a fair copy of the Rough Journal from September 5, 1775, to January 2d, 1779, in ten volumes folio. From this copy it is stated in a record in the Bureau the Journals were printed; and such portions as were deemed secret were marked or crossed by a committee of Congress—not to be transcribed. This explanation will account for the two Public Journals. The Rough Journal should be regarded as the standard. There is also the secret Domestic Journal, "1775 to 1787," and others. It will be seen from the above that the Journals of Congress were kept by Thomson personally, and by him transcribed; but the nature of his other work detail, from 1774 to 1884, can only be conjectured. Even Harley, after a most careful search, has given us but a few pages to cover this part of Thomson's life.

Of the nature of Houston's duties whilst Deputy Secretary a little clearer glimpse has been afforded us.

Among his labors was the transmission of the resolutions of Congress to the several States, and to individuals, and of these a number bearing his signature as Deputy Secretary of Congress, of which one addressed to General Washington, are extant.*

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*The following instances of William Churchill Houston's services as Deputy Secretary of Congress, are noted, as indicating some of the duties performed by him whilst in holding that office.

Saturday afternoon, 14 June, 1777.

Sir:—

Am directed by Congress to transmit you the enclosed resolution of this day, and

have the honor to be
with all respect,
Your most obedt.
h'ble servant,

WILLIAM CH. HOUSTON.

Directed,

His Excellency the President, of The Hon'ble the Vice President of Council, State Pennsylvania.

RESOLUTION OF CONGRESS, 1777.

In Congress, 14 June, 1777.

RESOLVED,

That Major General Arnold be authorized to take upon him the command of all the militia now at Bristol and on every other part of the River Delaware to the Eastward of Philadelphia, which have been called forth into service by a requisition of the twenty-fourth day of April last, and that he be authorized to dispose of himself, and the troops under his command in such a manner as he shall deem best adapted to promote the publick service.

ORDERED,

That a Copy of this Resolution be sent to the President and Supreme Executive Council of the State of Pennsylvania for their concurrence.

Copy from the Journals of Congress.
WILLIAM CH. HOUSTON, Dep. Sec.
PENNSYLVANIA ARCHIVES, 1st Series, Vol. 5, page 492-3.

In Congress, 29 July, 1777.

RESOLVED,

That an enquiry be made into the reasons of the evacuation of Ticonderoga and Mount Independence, and into the conduct of the General-officers who were in the Northern department at the time of the evacuation.

He had charge, also, of a great part, if not at one time almost all, of the correspondence on particular do-

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That a committee be appointed to digest and report the mode of conducting the enquiry.

JULY 30.

RESOLVED,

That Major-General St. Clair, who commanded at Ticonderoga and Mount Independence, forthwith repair to Head-quarters.

AUGUST 1.

RESOLVED,

That Major-General Schuyler be directed to repair to Head-quarters.

That General Washington be directed to order such General-officer as he may think proper, immediately to repair to the northern department, to relieve Major-general Schuyler in his command there.

That Brigadier Poor, Brigadier Patterson, and Brigadier Roche de Fermoy be directed to repair to Head-quarters.

AUGUST 3.

RESOLVED,

That General Washington be directed to order the General whom he shall judge proper to relieve General Schuyler in his command, to repair, with all possible expedition, to the northern department, giving him directions what number of the Militia to call in from the States of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

That notice be immediately sent to the Executive powers of the said States, and that they be earnestly requested to get the Militia in those parts of their respective States most contiguous to the northern department, ready to march at a moment's warning; and to send, with all possible expedition, such parts of them as the General commanding in the northern department may require, to serve till the 15th of November if not sooner relieved by continental troops, or dismissed by the commanding officer of the department, and be entitled to continental pay and rations.

That the commanding officer in the northern department have discretionary power to make requisitions on the states aforesaid, from time to time, for such additional numbers of the Militia to serve in that department as he shall judge necessary for the public service.

Whereas it is represented to Congress that General Washington is of opinion that the immediate recall of all the Brigadiers from the northern department, may be productive of inconvenience to the public service,

RESOLVED,

That the order of Congress of the first day of this month respecting the said Brigadiers, be suspended until General Washington shall judge it may be carried into effect with safety.

Copy from the Journals.

WILLIAM CH. HOUSTON, D. Sec.

By order of Congress,

JOHN HANCOCK, Pres't.

mestic subjects, and of the printing in the newspapers of such information of an interesting and encouraging nature, as it was deemed wise by Congress to be made public. It also appears that for a time he had partial charge of the printing of the Journals themselves. He was thus actively engaged in the affairs of Congress in the Fall of 1777, and he accompanied that body in its hasty flight when Cornwallis moved upon Philadelphia from the head of Chesapeake Bay.

Like Thomson, Houston preserved none, or very few, of his public papers. That his duties as Deputy Secretary were many and miscellaneous, and that they were faithfully and satisfactorily performed, we know, but of much of their detail we are, and will always, perhaps, remain entirely ignorant.

The winter of 1778 found Houston again at his post as Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy at Princeton, but he was serving as Deputy Secretary of Congress in December, 1778, and in this year he was elected to the Assembly of New Jersey,* and was re-elected the following year.

STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA.

Copies of Resolutions of Congress, etc., signed by William Churchill Houston, as Deputy Secretary, are to be found in Pennsylvania Archives, First Series, Vol. 5, pages 283-286 (April 1st to 7th, 1777), page No. 359 (June 11th, 1777), page 367 (June 14th, 1777), page 493 (July 29th, 1777), page 494 (Aug. 4th, 1777), page 513 (Aug. 12, 1777), page 527 (Aug. 15th, 1777), and page 575 (Sept. 3, 1777). There is also extant a document so signed as late as December, 1778.

*Letter from John Witherspoon to William Churchill Houston, whilst the latter was serving in the Legislature:

Philadelphia, Sept. 16, 1778.

Dear Sir:—Receive enclosed an extract from the minutes of Congress relating to New Jersey. We have not copied the resolution itself as you must have it. I believe there is not another state which has its sense in its own words on the records of Congress the most having generally had only instructions to their

Here he exhibited that energy and patriotism in public affairs which ever marked his career, and he began to give especial attention to the monetary condition of the country, then beginning to become alarming, even to the most sanguine. His disinterested zeal for the success of the American cause, and his unshaken conviction of a final successful issue of the conflict, attracted to him the attention of many of the leading men of his day, whose friendship he continued to enjoy during the remainder of his life.

William Churchill Houston's career in the Continental Congress commenced at Philadelphia, Friday, July 9th, 1779, he having been duly elected for that year. The Journals of Congress state that on Friday, July 9th, 1779, Mr. Houston, a delegate for New Jersey, attended and produced the credentials of his appointment, which were read. He took his seat the same day, and voted in the affirmative to a resolution "That the executive powers of each state be earnestly requested instantly to make the strictest inquiry into the conduct of every person within such state respectively employed."

From this time on he was most regular in his attendance, and took a leading and very active part in all proceedings of that body, serving on many import-

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members. I have no news. It begins to be believed that the enemy are to leave New York and it is thought to be with a view of going to the West Indies. The arrival of the August Packet alone will make that definitely certain. My compliments to Mrs. Houston.

I am, dear sir, your most obedient and humble servant,

JNO. WITHERSPOON.

Endorsed on the back:

To

Willm. C. Houston, Esq.,
Princeton.

ant committees, notably War, Foreign Affairs, the Postal Service and Finance. In the latter subject he was especially interested, and he was most careful to transmit, from time to time, to the Governor of his State detailed accounts of those public matters, which, to use his own words, were "the most material occurrences in the progress of business of Congress." Of these letters, those which have been preserved extend from October 5th, 1779, to June 5th, 1780, and are all addresed to Livingston.

They are here given in full:

To Governor Livingston:

Philadelphia, October 5th, 1779.

Sir: I am sorry that it has not been in my power to command as much time as I should have wished to employ in giving a distinct account to the legislature of the most material occurrences in the progress of business since I came to Congress.

It is certainly the duty of every person in public trust to make those from whom he derives his appointment acquainted with the manner in which he executes it, that they may be able to decide how far he fulfils or deceives their expectations, and to form, at any time, a clear estimate of his character. Next to want of fidelity I look upon the neglect of giving due information to his constituents, the greatest crime in a public man.

The principal intention of this is to point at a question, which, from accidental circumstances, has acquired a magnitude and importance above what, simply considered, it was entitled to.

A question which has excited much inveteracy and ill-blood in Congress, and not a few speculations and suspicions abroad. I mean the recall, or rather

the suppression of Mr. Arthur Lee, Commissioner of the United States at the Court of Madrid.

I have carefully read over the papers and attended to every feasible means of unbiased information relative to this question, and I think I have done it with a temper divested of prejudice. The result is this: I take Mr. Arthur Lee to be a man of jealous and suspecting, difficult disposition; trusty, capable and industrious. Indefatigable above others in procuring and transmitting intelligence; accurate and frugal in expenses and money matters; simple, severe, and republican in his manners, so much so as to be thought by many sour and inimical. This I take to be his character; and in many essentials I am not afraid to call him equal to any person Congress ever employed in a similar capacity in Europe. The story hawked about that his indiscretions prevented the Court of Spain from treating with him I cannot think believed by those who propagate it, as that conduct in the Spanish ministry is ascribable to different reasons which must strike every person at once who has the least knowledge of the state of matters as they respected that power. But admitting he was the best qualified and most meritorious man on earth, is it not my duty to vote for removing him when the funds of Congress are absolutely wasted, and the public business is not only retarded but stopped by unavailing altercations concerning an individual?

When a general offers up a forlorn hope to save an army, the alternative is dreadful; but the principle is defensible and the practice of it often necessary.

I confess that in a republic, where approbation, honor, and praise, more than money and emoluments, are the reward of faithful services, such things ought to be admitted with reluctance and caution; yet still they may not be always avoidable. But, further, should it turn out to be a fact, that France was doubtful of him and that Spain hestitated, it mattered not

how good a man he was, one every way inferior, if free from such exception, would have been preferable for the purpose of treating.

The real cause of delay being now removed, it is to be hoped the gentleman who succeeds Mr. Lee will be successful. As I would ever wish to be simply just, but at the same time to do what is best, all things considered, I have no other request than that this state of facts may be remembered another day, when time will throw light upon what is now dark, prejudice will be extinct, and the means of judging fairly will come within the reach of all. Into what course of conduct, or to what lengths of crimination, resentment may impel this unfortunate man, I am excused from surmising. Whether, as many have done, he will adhere to the part he has taken in spite of what he may think ill-treatment; or whether, as many have also done, he will transfer himself to a situation, where he will expect more attention, does not belong immediately to the present decision; at least, I have taken the liberty to throw it out of the balance. At all events I am happy this troublesome affair is ended, and I hope it will never arise to disturb the counsels of America more. Subjects of contention and animosity are retiring one after another, and unanimity reviving in Congress where it is so essentially necessary.

Trifles have had their day, and a long one it has been; matters of moment have a claim to this, and that it may not only be longer, but perpetual, I am persuaded it is the ardent wish of every honest man. Upon reviewing what I have written, a suspicion occurs that the above representation may imply a reflection on the conduct of some of my colleagues, which is far from my meaning, as it would be repugnant to justice. The time is not the same, other circumstances also disagree; on the contrary, I must declare that I think their situation hard and undeserved.

The whole train of the transaction I can trace

minutely. To the quartet from whence the accusations have originated, the motives which inspired them and the instruments which have been employed for their circulation, I am not a stranger, nor am I surprised at anything thus far.

But that their fellow-citizens should entertain impressions unfavorable to those they once thought well of, and not call for an investigation of their conduct, or suspend their opinions till an explanation should be had, may perhaps be a matter of some discouragement.

If the gentlemen know what is alledged to their charge, I am astonished they do not apply for an opportunity of justification.

Certainly if I should ever be of importance enough to be found fault with, I should expect the liberty of explaining facts and motives; after that it is the part of an honest man to submit in silence to the judgment of those who have a right to pass upon his conduct.

I enclose sundry papers marked from No. 1 to 5, which I have met with since I came to this place, and which I have copied for the sight of such gentlemen of the Legislature as may think it worth their trouble to read them.

They relate to a matter which was before the Legislature at their last sitting previous to the present. One, if not more of them, is on the files of the Assembly. They may be of use on some future occasion, but my principal object in copying them is to communicate the noble and dignified sentiments of the commander-in-chief, and to give some idea of the difficulties he has to encounter.

If ever any man deserved gratitude and confidence he does, and more especially as his modesty will never allow him to be sated with the former, nor his goodness of heart to abuse the latter.

His letter marked No. 2, is an example in its kind. It is necessary that I give you the trouble

communicating to the House the substance of this lengthened letter. I have no idea they will have patience to go over the whole.

I am, with due respect, your obed't and h'mble servant,

WILLIAM C. HOUSTON.

Philadelphia, November 12th, 1779.

TO GOVERNOR LIVINGSTON:

Sir: In may last I was under a misconception relative to the embargo law of the state of Pennsylvania. I find that by a transient attention to it I accidentally mistook for an act a bill printed in the Pennsylvania Packet for public consideration, and which did not pass. The embargo now in operation here is not conditional but absolute as ours. It is my duty to notice the mistake, lest it should be instrumental in giving impressions unfavorable and unjust.

Every day brings me fresh uneasiness respecting the supply of the general treasury. The expectation of Count D'Estaing's visiting our coasts in this quarter has created a flood of expense, and the means of defraying it are narrowing fast. If the taxes for the present year are not fully and punctually paid in, everything but hope holds up discouraging prospects. All the states must see the necessity of exertion, and I dare believe New Jersey will not be behind the foremost. The close of this campaign is set down for the era of reformation in the percentage departments, to say no more, and especially if we are so fortunate as to carry through a limitation of prices. Afterwards, it is to be confided, expenditures will be much less.

As for the payment of the taxes for 1780, I mentioned in my last that it was hardly to be imagined any monthly assessment or collection could be made in our state, though if it were practicable it has its advantages. It is rather to be supposed that the Leg-

islature will lay the amount in two or three payments, and collect the taxes for support of government along with one or all of them. I have before mentioned the case of two payments. If three are preferred, being one million twelve thousand five hundred pounds, each payment, they come, at equal intervals, the first of February, May and August. The Legislature may also probably consider whether taxes are not more easily paid in the spring than in the summer, and lay more at that season. There would also be another advantage in this policy, the money will probably be more wanted at the time these taxes are calculated to begin than towards the middle or latter end of the year.

There is one clear and obvious principle on which all taxation ought to be rested, and if it could be laid as a ground-work, and extend through our tax-laws, payment would not only be practicable, but light and easy; it is that every man be called upon to pay in exact proportion to his ability, all things considered. The practice of this principle, I confess, can never be obtained precisely, but it is a point of perfection to which laws may be directed, and to which they may continually more and more verge. The nearer an assessment approximates to this, the more just it is. Why is it not proper to estimate every part of the whole aggregate estate, be the kind of property what it may, according as it is of use and emolument to the owner or possessor, and all acquisitions currently arising from advantages and opportunities? This maxim is practiced upon in some of the States, and comprehended in the short description of taxing a man according to his family.

The whole debt of the Union does not amount to one hundred dollars a head, and if set off on the scale of strict justice would not perhaps to the poor be more than the price of three or four days' work on a taxable. Our State, it would seem, has always been in

the custom of taxing lands too deeply, and there are many kinds of property and sources of wealth and income which have never paid anything. I enclose for the perusal of such as are curious, and have not seen it, the case of the sloop Active, which has produced a dispute between Congress and the state of Pennsylvania. The nature of this case will be plainly collected from the printed proceedings of the Court of Admiralty before which it was tried. I mention what further is necessary to give an adequate idea of the cause of difference. In the Court of Admiralty the jury gave one-fourth to the insurgents and three-fourths to the libellant, and another cruiser in sight at the time of the capture. From the decision, which is said to be wholly on matter of fact, the insurgents appealed. The Court of Appeals decreed the whole to them, and directed the Judge of Admiralty of the state of Pennsylvania to see their sentence executed. The Judge refused, as the law by which the maritime court is established in that state allows an appeal on matters of law only, and does not permit the facts found by a jury to be re-examined. Much law ammunition has been spent on the occasion, and the difference is not yet adjusted. Certain it is that by the resolutions of Congress of 1775, an admiralty jurisdiction say, the facts shall be established by a jury. Lawyers say there is this distinction between trials by jury and trials by witnesses, that in the former case the facts found are not re-examined, in the latter they are. Our law for erecting a Court of Admiralty, allows an appeal in all cases whatsoever, but it must be acknowledged that an appeal on matter of fact from the verdict of a jury has not a good sound. And yet juries are too often worse qualified to decide in maritime causes than any other.

You have also a report of the commissioners appointed by General Washington in April last to settle a course for the exchange of prisoners with the commissioners of General Clinton. It has been already

published in the newspapers. It is with pleasure I also send an extract from the general orders of the commander-in-chief of 29th July last. The virtues of this amiable man as a citizen are no less conspicuous than his spirit and perseverance as a soldier. To-morrow will be published, by order of Congress, the news from the southward. You will hear it with concern. The raising of the siege of Savannah is not so much to be regretted in itself as the consequent exposure of a large extent of country, the inhabitants of which must unavoidably suffer before succor can arrive to them. Let us however remember what has so often happened, that confidence is the road to disappointment, and where our prospects are least promising from thence success often comes. *Nesquam desperandum est de Republica.*

I am, sir, with due regard, your obed't, h'ble servant,

WILLIAM C. HOUSTON.

TO GOVERNOR LIVINGSTON:

Philadelphia, November 22d, 1779.

Sir: Enclosed you have the result of the deliberations of Congress on the representation of the 7th ultimo respecting a general limitation of prices. We beg leave to say that with attention to the interests of the Union in general and the State in particular, and also to the convenience of the Legislature, we have left no means untried to give success and dispatch to the business. The Legislature, we flatter ourselves, will be disposed to overlook any defects in the plan recommended by Congress compared with the scope and tenor of their representation, when they reflect that different States as well as individuals, however they may coincide in the main substance of a measure, vary often in their ideas on particular parts, and also when they are informed that what we have now the

pleasure to transmit has passed with a great degree of unanimity. For the sake of this and greater expedition, policy dictated to concede a little. From appearances we think ourselves justified to say that the measure recommended will in all probability be universally adopted throughout the Union. The date of commencement is more distant than could have been wished, but when the remoteness of some of the States is considered, as also that many of the Legislatures are not sitting, and that the limitations ought to take place at the same time everywhere, it could not well be gainsayed. Other arguments also have been urged, tending to show that this bill gives fuller efficacy to the measure, by giving people an opportunity to provide against losses and disappointment to their essential prejudice The ratio of prices to those current formerly, though by many thought too large, is set at a limit which we hope will produce an easy turn to the tide of depreciation, and make a further reduction in due time more natural and practicable.

We have the honor to be, with all respect, your obed't h'ble servants,

JNO. WITHERSPOON.
NATH. SCUDDER.
JOHN FELL.
WILLIAM C. HOUSTON.

HIS EXCELL'Y THE GOVERNOR AND
SPEAKER OF THE ASSEMBLY
NEW JERSEY.

Phild'a, 20th Decr., 1779.

Sir: It is with reluctance I trouble you once and again on the critical situation of affairs at this time. To cast round and examine the risques and difficulties which start up every where has a tendency to send the mind in every direction for succor. A treasury without money and an army without bread, is really alarming. I have already observed that the failure

of supplies in the staff departments is unexpectedly great; but so it is, and the question now is, the most immediate means of providing against the worst consequences. In a prospect so embarrassed there is still however hope and encouragement, because the means are among us, and the mode of providing and applying them to the exigency is not impracticable; and when the well being, not to say existence, of our cause depends upon it, importunity will be forgiven and every exertion made.

The Commissary General is now here. I have conversed with him fully. I write on the evidence of his positive declarations, that his supplies are exceedingly small, and what he has cannot possibly get to camp in season to prevent an absolute want of bread. That the army is already at short allowance everywhere; in many places totally destitute. It is not worth while to stand discussing causes when the effect is taking place and the moment calls for interposition. I do not, therefore, want at present to trouble the Legislature with explanations, but do earnestly entreat, that long as they have been together, they will not rise till measures are taken to secure an immediate competent supply of flour, as far as it can possibly be had, and till a plan is adopted to draw forth all the State can spare afterwards. In the request which went from Congress some days since, I could not but be of opinion the quantity was rather large, though it was not disproportionate to what was assigned to some others; however the Legislature can pretty well determine this point. It is to be expected that what has always happened on similar occasions, will again be the case, that many who can spare will not, some for one reason others for another. Impressment has therefore become necessary, and in such connection, if in any, is justifiable. It is confessed to be an evil, but the less of the two. If the Legislature cannot tarry to complete an adequate plan, the

Consitution of the Executive is such that, one would think, the best citizen may feel himself perfectly secure in trusting it even much farther, were it necessary, than an extent like this which involves a little personal property only. The inconveniences which attend the appointment of agents in every county would seem to make four or five active, intelligent men preferable before the largest number. Nor would this prevent the fullest efforts of the disinterested and publick spirited everywhere, or abstract from the use of their services. I am not capable to determine whether, at this time, it would be best to put a stop to the continental purchasers, though I suppose they are as numerous as ever, and do as little good and receive as high commissions. There is at the same time a danger from a competition of prices. The allowance for the flour till the first of February will probably be at the current, or however a generous price, lest complaint and discouragement should take place; and perhaps a prospect of a falling rate will induce a readier supply. This representation has hitherto been confined to flour, but I beg leave to mention that meal is not likely to be more plentiful, though there is a little quantity more immediately within reach. Perhaps sufficient for some weeks without resorting to the salted which is also dispersed and scanty. From the Commissary General I learn, that no considerable purchases are making, his deputies being out of cash. I mention this as it may perhaps be thought advisable to pay a little attention to it also.

It is unnecessary to detain you further than to explain a little more in detail why so much dependence is unavoidably placed on New Jersey, and this interference most immediately requested, New York is nearly drained, not to mention that large detachments of the army are in that State; the Assembly of Pennsylvania are not together, nor could they be convened much, if any sooner, than the time to which they stand

adjourned, and the Executive are not vested with power adequate to the object; as to the supplies bought up in the adjacent States, they cannot be transported so as to reach the army in season, still less so, the navigation of the Delaware being already interrupted. In the Southern Quarter a Post will be wanted for the Troops marching that way.

I enclose the Resolutions of Congress of the 4th and 17 instant, which have probably already reached His Excellency the Governor from the President. Nearly all the radical principles are adopted for a change of those systems which have long been obnoxious to the people. I cannot but hope that the alternative will be approved and useful.

I have only further to beg indulgence for the liberties I have taken, with a sincere intention to do what I thought was right.

Am, Sir, your obed't Serv't,

WM. CH. HOUSTON.

TO GOVERNOR LIVINGSTON:

Philadelphia, May 22d, 1780.

Sir: I have the honour to enclose for the use of the Legislature a Boston paper of the 8th inst., which I have this day received by post, containing the act of the Legislature of the State of Massachusetts bay on the proceedings of the 18th March last relative to finance. I think it my duty to communicate everything on this subject which comes to my hands, as to me the matter appears of the most indispensable importance; but shall not detain further upon it, having already explained myself pretty fully. I only beg leave to observe that if I had not thought the interest of the State deeply concerned, I should not have been explicit, especially since I have heard that a variety of sentiments prevails among those who are certainly capable of judging. This has aroused my caution, but

upon a careful review of the whole subject, and examination of all I have read and heard, I must still venture to say that something is necessary to be done, and that no expedient appears to me so promising and advisable, every circumstance considered, as the one now in question. By communicating the several acts as I receive them, I do not expect that the Legislature will be so much influenced by example as assisted in framing a law in the subject. It may indeed be matter of encouragement that the measure is elsewhere adopted, but as one State cannot be injured by adopting it before another, but rather the contrary, there can be no objection to take early rank in this instance.

I have heard it alleged that these resolutions involve a breach of faith. Though no such thing appears to me, yet if by any construction it is inferred, it will probably operate to induce the Legislature to leave out the comparison between specie and the present bills, and retain only that between the latter and the new bills to be emitted. How far this will be an effectual provision I pretend not to determine, the consequences may be examined, and it is of the highest moment to weigh them.

Lest it should escape the recollection of the Legislature, I take the liberty to mention that the embargo act continued the 25th of December last in consequence of a recommendation of Congress of the 15th of the same month was limited to the first of April last. The expected events of this campaign, the present state of provisions, the prospects of the coming crop, far from being so favorable as could be wished, all conspire to urge the propriety of reviving and continuing that act. The matter was lately agitated in Congress, but as no instance of exportation was known, except from Delaware, and it was said the embargo was in force in the other States, a resolution was extended no further than Delaware. We did not mention New Jersey, because there was no doubt the Legislature on adverting to the

circumstances above mentioned would take the necessary measures.

The State of Pennsylvania has applied to Congress for direction with respect to the propriety of receiving the certificates given in the staff departments in the payment of taxes. As I see the highest probability the measure will be approved and recommended, I take the liberty to apprize the Legislature. I see no prospect of any other answer to the address and representation of the 15th of March last, and am of opinion that time need not be lost in waiting to hear from Congress. No means in the power of the delegates of the State have been omitted to obtain some other mode of discharging the debts due to the inhabitants, and avoiding the necessity of resorting to this expedient, but without effect.

The proceeding of Saturday last you have ere now received. I doubt not the President has suggested the propriety of secresy, for though these things are noising abroad, they are surmises without information. I speak particularly of the contents of the letter. The occasion is highly interesting, and the improvement of it may be attended with the most happy consequences.

I have the honour to be your Excellency's most obedient and humble servant.

WILLIAM C. HOUSTON.

TO GOVERNOR LIVINGSTON:

Philadelphia, Sunday, June 4th, 1780,
12 o'clock at noon.

Sir: A Mr. William Finnie from Williamsburg, in Virginia, is just arrived in town, and brings the following intelligence. That when he as at Baltimore, in Maryland, on his way to this place, a number of letters came to sundry persons there, from Richmond, the capitol of Virginia, informing that Charlestown capitulated on the 12th ultimo. The news is mentioned to

come by an express from Governor Rutledge of South Carolina to Congress, who was ordered to call on his route and deliver dispatches to Governor Nash of North Carolina, and Governor Jefferson of Virginia. This is supposed to be the reason that he has not yet reached Philadelphia. No particulars are mentioned. The speculators, whose riders travel day and night on such occasions, generally precede the publick expresses. By a letter of 31st ultimo from General Washington, I find the capture is credited at headquarters. What to say against report so confirmed I am at a loss. The probability certainly is against us. Nothing but official certainty remains to be expected. If the event has taken place we may hourly expect this, as the express cannot be far off, unless some extraordinary accident has befallen him. I do not like to believe bad news, but we ought to be prepared for it.

The reflections which first present themselves are, that no greater stroke has befallen us since the commencement of the war, and none which has required more active, thorough exertions to recover and repair it, than this will. It is not said on what terms the garrison capitulated, but in all likelihood they cannot be more favorable than prisoners of war. Their service is lost to us, probably for the campaign. The finances evidently mending, will be thrown aback, and without a speedy execution of the system of 18th March, perhaps return to wilder disorder than ever. No subject whatever requires more attention, for money will be more necessary than ever. The effect upon the army, as well as upon the people, will too probably be dispiriting, especially at first; but may be directly opposite, after a little reflection, if the publick movements can all be made to draw together, and no chasm or derangement happen before their thoughts and views have time to collect and accommodate themselves to the exigency. Bold councils are the best in precarious times. I would submit to the Legislature

whether if this intelligence turns out fact, it would not be best to vest in the Governor and Privy Council, or a greater quorum if more proper, powers suited to the cast of the occasion. The capture of Charlestown and the arrival of a French fleet, should it happen, both require it. The utmost reach of the powers of the State will be necessary in a model which can be speedy and effective in execution, either to provide against great evils or to attempt great objects. The Legislature of Pennsylvania, which adjourned last Thursday, before this news appeared in any shape, considering the greatness of the crisis, empowered the Executive to proclaim and establish martial law in case of necessity, during the recess of the Assembly, for limited periods. The Assembly has adjourned to September next. A special council composed of members of both Houses might be more agreeable to many, but I say nothing of the form, only have taken the liberty to say thus much concerning the thing itself. A correspondence between such body and the delegates in Congress for the State, might be of great use to the State, should the Legislature be unanimous in adopting the measure so as to give it weight with the people at large.

It also occurs that early and effectual attention ought to be paid to the State, and preparation of the militia. Great part of the enemy's troops will return to New York immediately on the reduction of Charlestown, though if they knew their true interest they would all leave New York and go to the southward. In the event of their coming back, their disposition to mischief is too well known to believe that they will be pacific toward New Jersey. It is not a far sought reflection that this disaster, though great, it not matter of despondence. Mortals see not futurities, and who can say that Heaven does not mean this to precede something more important to us than it is to the enemy. Things much more unexpected have happened.

The enemy must commit themselves on the ocean before they can appear at New York. Perhaps it is best; history and experience say, that young nations as well as men, are less able than those of riper age, to bear that prosperity which is not dashed with some sharpness of misfortune. These things fulfil the end of God's government, where partial evil is general good. We pity our suffering brethren, but no man despairs of the republick.

I am your Excellency's very obedient servant.

WILLIAM C. HOUSTON.

TO GOVERNOR LIVINGSTON:

Philadelphia, June 5th, 1780.

Sir: You will receive enclosed two resolutions of Congress which have doubtless already gone from the President in the ordinary course of communication. But as papers sometimes miscarry, thought it not amiss to repeat them. That relative to deserters will certainly be of moment, should any French troops or the troops of any allied or co-operating power, ever be landed on the American shores for the purpose of giving assistance in the prosecution of the war. The laws relative to desertion will easily be extended to secure and return them. This is not only the duty of an ally, but it is our interest in many respects and no objection that I know of can be taken to it.

The other, relative to the defence of the interior frontiers against the incursions of the savages is important to us. I understood, when lately at Trenton, that there was a bill before the Legislature for embodying a number of militia to protect the upper settlements. That no hesitation may hereafter be made relative to the allowance of continental pay and rations it would be well to take the step New York has taken, and obtain the approbation and engagement of Congress or the commander-in-chief,—either will be suf-

ficient. Every one must be convinced of the necessity of supporting the settlements over the mountains; for, if they are obliged to remove, double if not treble the number of men will be necessary to secure the country against impressions, and after all it will not be so effectually done in this as in the other mode.

The post established in Ulster will be of advantage in the general protection, and the Legislature will be able to determine in what degree we may be benefited by it. In the resolutions of 4th April last is mentioned the body of men to which this of the 1st inst. refers.

I have the honor to be, with due regard, your Excellency's very obedient h'ble servant,

WILLIAM C. HOUSTON.

It was in 1779 that Houston is credited with having, with Robert Morris and Livingston, made himself responsible for the sum of £7000, to clothe the Continental troops. A brief sketch of him by Cooley thus refers to the incident:

"In 1779, the troops of the State in the Continental Army continued to be in a most destitute condition, especially with regard to pay and clothing, and a touching appeal was made by the officers, at the same time setting forth their grievances. During the recess of the Legislature, the necessities of the troops became so urgent that three individuals—Gov. Livingston, Robert Morris and William Churchill Houston—interposed for their relief, and requested the treasurer of the State to furnish the commissioners of clothing any sum not exceeding £7000, to supply clothing, for which they would be responsible, if the Legislature would make no appropriation."

During the session of 1781, Houston devoted himself largely to a discussion of financial questions, methods of increasing the revenue, preparing the budgets for the appropriations of the Army, Navy and Civil affairs.

In January, 1781, he wrote "Detached Thoughts on the Subject of Money and Finance," which has never been printed, and gives us rather an interesting view of his peculiar treatment of a subject which, at that time, was occupying the attention of some of the greatest minds of this country, both in and out of Congress. This paper is preserved in the collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and reads as follows:

DETACHED THOUGHTS ON THE SUBJECT OF MONEY AND FINANCE.

In modern times the money and finance of a state are matters of so great consequence that too much attention cannot be paid to them.

Perhaps the reason why many mistakes are committed on this subject is, that people do not study it in the proper train. They take up the middle instead of the beginning. Every man is a financier at once, without thought or experience, except that of an hour. There is but one way of comprehending any art or science fully and that is by beginning with the rudiments and first principles, and proceeding to truths and operations less evident, but demonstratively deducible from them.

When the intrinsic value of money does not bear a just proportion to the numerary, everything is set at loose. All transactions of dealing become dangerous and no degree of foresight can ascertain how far the evil extends.

All reasoning upon the subject of circulating mediums and all calculations upon the sufficiency of them, are suspicious, if any thing more is meant than that, other circumstances being alike, when money will not purchase as much in one place as in another, there is, comparatively speaking, too much of it in the place where it purchases less and vice versa. An equilibrium is the natural tendency of money, as well as of water, and is always desirable.

Therefore, bringing money into a State by borrowing from another, unless it will buy more in the borrowing State, other circumstances being alike, than in the leading one, is wrong.

What are we to understand by a medium of trade, or an ade-

quate circulating medium? If there is a given sum of silver in any state and a bushel of wheat sells for eight pennyweights of it, is not this as sufficient a medium, as double the sum, sixteen pennyweights of which will then buy a bushel of wheat? If not, leave things to themselves, and they will soon find their level. Restraint is always fatal and operates against its own views.

When the supreme authority of a State orders the citizens to receive money at a price superior to its real value, the operation is injurious and the risk is dreadful on account of the confusions which must infallibly ensue. It is better, both for the State and individuals, to have recourse to extraordinary taxes and contributions to support the public exigencies.

Too little money may be an evil, but too much is perhaps a greater; because a redundancy destroys one of the essential qualities of money, namely, that it should be so scarce as to be sought after at the value which the authority of the government has placed upon it.

Industry, not money, is the riches of a nation. Spain has more mines, at least works more, than any other State; yet Spain is not rich. Money is got principally by mining and not by agriculture or manufactures; but did individuals get it by industry and the community by taxes, both would be richer. The planter's farm and the manufacturer's shop is a better mine than any in Peru.

Paper circulation is a delusive wealth, as far as it is not the representative of deposited coin. It is an anticipation upon an uncertainty, that is, upon the future industry of the community, and an excess of it destroys that very industry which ought to be its foundation.

Paper money in the American States was introduced and became fashionable in consequence of British oppressions. Their acts for the prohibition of manufactures and the regulation of trade, constantly kept the balance so deep against us that no money, which would pass in any other country, could stay among us. Were trade open and unmolested, as it will be at the conclusion of the war, if the issue be successful to us, paper currency would be unneccessary. No trading country is better calculated to do without it.

Therefore it must be the best policy to draw all the paper money out of circulation at as early a period as possible. It ought to be done gradually and regularly, and, in this way, the sooner the better. The measures of government ought to be pointed at this object and not to lose sight of it till it is completed. If there is not coin enough in the country for what is called a medium of trade and intercourse, there will be a sufficiency before the paper bills are all cancelled, let that event come as rapidly as it may.

The way to keep the expenses of a war at a low amount, is to use nothing but real money; there is nothing else about the value of which people in general are at all times nearly agreed.

All transactions of government ought to be fair and open, but especially those which relate to money and finance ought to be so. Were it ever conceded that there may be subjects and occasions in government, in which a little sleight of hand for the public good, might, perhaps, be in some degree, pardonable, nothing of money and finance can, by any means, be reckoned among them.

It may be said in many cases, but in none with more propriety than in this, that there are principles and impressions which operate secretly and insensibly; all classes of people act uniformly upon them, many apparently without recollecting or even understanding anything about them. As in the growth of vegetables the effect is visible, but the operation of the cause is both imperceptible and mysterious.

W. C. HOUSTON.

January 18th, 1781.

On the 24th of September, 1781, Houston was elected by Congress Controller of the Treasury, he having been previously nominated by Elias Boudinot, but shortly after, October 13th, in a letter to that body, he declined the honor, upon which another ballot was cast and James Milligan was chosen in his place. In the meantime, April, 1781, he had been admitted to the practice of the law.

"As a lawyer he was learned, and at the very threshold of his professional life attached the principle that he would never, in any circumstances, suffer himself to be engaged in a cause of the justice of which he was not conscientiously satisfied. This necessarily limited the extent of his practice, but is an example which commends itself."

He had, for some time, thought of retiring from Congress. As early as March 20th, 1780, Dr. Witherspoon writes to a friend in Scotland: "I have now left Congress, not being able to support the expense of attending it. Professor Houston, however, our Professor of Mathematics, is a delegate this year; but he tells me he will certainly have to leave it next November. I mention this circumstance to confirm what I believe I wrote you formerly, that members of Congress, not only receive no profit from that office, but I believe, five out of six of them; if not more, are great

losers in their private affairs." Patriotic considerations, however, had induced Houston to remain until 1781.

On the 28th of September of that year he was appointed clerk of the Supreme Court of New Jersey, which office he held until his death. He now returned actively to the duties of his professorship, which, however, he resigned in 1783, and devoted himself entirely to his profession, and political duties, although he continued a connection with the college, serving continuously as Treasurer of that institution.

He was appointed Receiver of Continental Taxes in 1782 and continued to hold that office until 1785.

After resigning his professorship in the College of New Jersey he became one of the founders and one of the first stockholders of the Trenton Academy. Shortly after his admission to the bar of New Jersey he had been appointed one of the Commissioners named by Congress to settle the dispute between Pennsylvania and Connecticut regarding the Wyoming lands, the other Commissioners being William Whipple, Welcolm Arnold, David Brearley and Cyrus Griffin. The Commission held its sessions at Trenton from November 12th to December 30th, 1782, and its decision, which was in favor of the State of Pennsylvania, and from which there was no appeal, was so brief and clear as to startle those interested. It has passed into history as "The Trenton Decree."

Mr. Houston delivered many addresses on law at Princeton, and there are also extant several of his opinions in various cases, given at Trenton, also a number of speeches made before the New Jersey Legislature. They mostly consist of lengthy legal questions,

and quotations from authorities here and in England on points of constitutional law. One of these is an address on "Whether the Liberty of the Press ought to extend so far as to justify the Publishing of the name of a Person, with strictures on his conduct, by an anonymous author, or with a fictitious signature," which was delivered at Trenton, 24 March, 1784, and is here given as an example of his exhaustive research in the treatment of such subjects.

WHETHER THE LIBERTY OF THE PRESS OUGHT TO EXTEND SO FAR AS TO JUSTIFY THE PUBLISHING OF THE NAME OF A PERSON, WITH STRICTURES ON HIS CONDUCT, BY AN ANONYMOUS AUTHOR, OR WITH A FICTITIOUS SIGNATURE.

The English Law Doctrine of Libels is so nakedly absurd that it is a matter of surprise they should persist in it. To see such enlightened sages of the law as Hobart, Hawkins, Blackstone or Bacon struggling at the awkward uphill task of showing that a Libel is not the less culpable for being true, nay that truth is an aggravation of crime, cannot but fill us with a kind of indignant sorrow. From the instances which have come to the knowledge of the public, we have good reason to believe that American courts and juries entertain very different sentiments, and view the Liberty of the Press and the Doctrine of Libels through the just medium of common sense; and probably their ideas are nearly similar to those of the ancients upon these subjects. With our venerable progenitors the *Falsehood* or *Malice* of a Libel, constituted the essence of its crime, and the forms of indictment for this offence, which were in use centuries ago, use

the words false, scandalous and malicious. In our own country, if a judgment may be formed upon the apparent principles and impressions of the people at large, nothing would be considered as a Libel unless intentionally false and palpably malicious. These two ingredients make the scandal, and the scandal is the crime and, if anything is settled among us as law in this case, it comports with what I have now mentioned.

Most of the constitutions of the several States in the American Union lay it down as a fundamental principle of Government, that "The Liberty of the Press is essential to freedom and ought to be strenuously supported." Some of them go so far as to add this expression, "and ought not to be restrained." The words have a great latitude and generality, but the meaning is perfectly good. It seems to intend that the common and general law of every State makes provision for the redress of any wrongs which can happen in this respect, by allowing damages according to the demerits of each case, and rendering the printer liable to an action instead of the author, if the name of the latter is concealed.

But will any person say that a writer is not justifiable in writing, nor a printer in printing and publishing anything but what he knows to be true? This would not only destroy the Liberty of the Press, but the Press itself, and at once shut up the avenue of enquiry and discussion, the best and most usual means of finding out the truth. To establish such a doctrine would be to require universal knowledge in men of these descriptions, and to make infallibility indispensably necessary to their professions. Certainly probability is a sufficient ground for them, or in other words, they are only to avoid intentional falsehood, and the emotions of malice. To deny a man the liberty of acting where he may entertain any doubt, or to be at any uncertainty, is to stop and render him a statue. The Doctrine of Law is very different from this, which al-

lows us to undertake a thousand doubtful things; if we are right it is well, if not we must suffer the consequences of our mistakes; but it is ten times better for ourselves as well as others, that we should do this than not act at all.

Some, however, may perhaps go thus far, and then halt and distrust upon what appears to be very plain and easy ground. They will allow that all this is right and pertains to the Liberty of the Press; but then a writer ought not to mention nor a printer to publish the name of any person, while that of the writer is not given. I cannot persuade myself that this opinion will bear reflection and examination. When any class, profession or general description of men are to be animadverted upon, no names need be mentioned; there can be no necessity for it, and if there could, it might not be practicable. But there are thousands of instances in which individuals, single characters, persons or officers of whom there may be but one of the sort, are to be designated and made the subject of remark. What is to be done? Either names or something that will, with equal certainty, point out the person meant, must be used; otherwise we speak not to be understood, which is idle and useless, not to say ridiculous. Will it then be said that a description which will identify the person may be used, but not the name? The English law itself, wrong-headed as it is upon the subject of Libels, does not go as far as this; but explodes the idea of distinction. It is as culpable, say the decisions, to describe the person or persons, who are the subject of this charge, as to name them, because the effect is the same; certainly then, on the other hand, it must be as proper and right to use names as description, which in the end cannot but amount to the same thing. It is a mark of reason and philosophy to distinguish where there is a real difference, and perhaps not less so to regard distinctions where there is no difference.

But the matter being conceded, if so it should happen to be, that there is no difference, in any material respect, between the use of names, and descriptions, as above stated, it is then said that if the names are used those of the writers ought also to appear. This is *ipso facto* begging the question. I never heard any person deny that it is right to publish under a fictitious signature. All that is contended is, that when this is the case, the name of the person, who is the subject of remark, ought not to be made use of. But we have seen before that there is no difference between making use of his name and describing him. It is then the turn of a feather whether a real or a fictitious name be placed at the bottom of a publication. Is it one whit to the merits of the question in the thing which is submitted to the thoughts and enquiry of the public, whether the writers name be John or Joseph? But little do we consider how exactly it is the same to destroy the Freedom of the Press and to say that a writer ought not to sign a fictitious name. Could this doctrine once be established that writing under a fictitious signature is wrong, unlawful and ought to be suppressed, it would require little logic to prove that the Liberties of the people were no more.

W. C. HOUSTON.

Trenton, 24 March, 1784.

Houston joined with others in procuring for John Fitch, the steamboat inventor, the office of Deputy Surveyor. After the treaty of peace with England, the question of how the lands northwest of the Ohio should be disposed of was mooted in Congress. It was thought they would be sold to pay the debts of the Confederacy. Fitch was now a land jobber, and supposed that a good operation might be made by a pre-survey of the county, so that when the Land Offices were opened warrants might be taken out im-

mediately for choice tracts. He found no difficulty in forming a company to forward such an enterprise. It was composed of Dr. John Ewing, Rev. Nathaniel Irwin, Wm. C. Houston, Jonathan Dickinson Sergeant, Stacy Potts, of Trenton, and Colonel Joshua Anderson, of Bucks County, Pennsylvania. These gentlement put £20 each in a fund to pay expenses. John Fitch showed a rough model of his steamboat to Dr. John Ewing, provost of the University of Pennsylvania, who gave him a letter to Houston, dated Aug. 20th, 1785. In this letter Dr. Ewing says: "As you are a gentleman of knowledge in these matters, I make no doubt of his receiving your patronage so far at least as to give him an opportunity of laying his scheme before Congress."

The letter of Dr. Ewing to Houston was delivered to the latter a day or two after it was written, at his house in Trenton. Houston, not being a member of Congress at that time, enclosed the recommendation of Dr. Ewing to Lambert Cadwalader, then a delegate for New Jersey, accompanying it with a letter of his own in the following terms:

"Trenton, August 25, 1785.

"Sir: I have examined the principles and construction of Mr. Fitch's Steamboat and though not troubled with a penchant for projects, cannot help approving the simplicity of the plan.

"The greatest objections to most pretensions of this sort are, the delicacy and complication of the machinery. This does not seem liable to such objections, as to the moving force of the whole, we know very well that the power of steam is beyond conception, it is everything but omnipotent, and almost that.

"The model is plain, and you will at once form a judgment of its probable general effect. The difference produced by standing or running water is to be more attentively considered. I enclose you Dr. Ewing's letter. He is certainly an able judge in these cases, and I cannot help expressing a wish that it may be practicable to do something toward procuring an experiment. The person who offers it you know. He is a man highly deserving, as modest, ingenious, enterprising and of good morals.

"I am sir,

"&c., &c.,

WILLIAM C. HOUSTON.

"Honorable L. Cadwalader, Esqr."

In October, 1784, Houston was again elected to Congress, serving until October 28, 1785.

DELEGATE TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENEION OF 1787.

Of the many and various honors bestowed upon Houston, the greatest, perhaps, was his appointment as one of the delegates from New Jersey to the Convention of 1787, which framed the Constitution of the United States. The part which he took in that Convention has never, until now, been clearly established, and the absence of his name from the original draft of the famous Act has led either to a misrepresentation of his political convictions, or the excuse that ill health not only prevented his signing, but also hindreed his attendance during the sessions, and it has been supposed that for one reason or another he took no active part whatever in the deliberations of that body.

"The Act which was signed at Philadelphia on September 17, 1787," says Hampton L. Carson, in his "History of the Celebration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Promulgation of the Consitution of the United States," "was not so much a sudden creation, an inspired fact of that memorable year, as it was a logical growth out of many years of thoughtful and painful experience. The principles of that nationalized union which the Constitution accomplished had already been stirring in the breasts of the wise and the patriotic for three generations."

If, indeed, we go so far back in the history of the American people for a dawning of "the principles of nationalized Union," perfected by the Constitution,

we may well search still further back, and find, amid the moldy archives of a half-forgotten people, in those utterances and arguments urged for self-government which have for ages been advanced by various statesmen of different nations at different times, and in many tongues, the element from which were forged, in 1787, the most splendid act that ever emanated from any convention, either in this or any other country.

Supposing, however, that ignoring the earlier and crude plans of Franklin and others, we view the Constitution as an act simply and primarly, the direct result of the Revolution, we must also remember that, from the very beginning of the struggle, it had been considered by the wisest of our statesmen of imperative importance that a permanent confederation of the States should be effected at the first possible moment. Thomas Paine, as early as January, 1776, wrote: "We have every opportunity and every encouragement to form the noblest, purest Constitution on the face of the earth." In these sentiments he was seconded by no less a patriot than Washington himself.

As years went by the need of concentration of power became more urgent. The States were beginning to assume for themselves sovereign rule, and this power was strengthened and guarded more jealously as time passed. Congress, indeed, was only the adviser of the States, and its acts could be annulled partly or entirely by any of them. What authority Congress possessed, however, it guarded religiously, entrenching itself as much as possible in the knowledge that it was the highest executive body then existing in the country, and the dignity thus self-bestowed it

was difficult to induce it to surrender. This, more than other reasons, is given for delay of an act so long suggested by many of the purest and most partiotic men that Congress had ever included in its sessions.

The Confederation of 1781, indeed, was a long stride in the right direction, and was received throughout the country in the most enthusiastic manner. It was, however, but a temporary measure, weakly constructed, and it soon ceased to command either the regard or respect from any one or of any State. In the meantime commerce suffered, the business of the country was paralyzed and its money worthless.

"The general situation of the country in the summer of 1786," writes Hampton L. Carson, "was deplorable. From a careful report made to the Count de Vergennes, in September of that year, it appears that the condition especially of New England was sufficient to impart a sentiment of despair. The common masses of the people, driven by distress, demanded the emission of paper money for their relief. Massachusetts had seen its prodigious evils in other States and refused it. These people then took arms and dispersed the courts, demanded their abolition, and that of the State Senate, and cried out for a new emission of paper, and other wild objects from which they imagined relief would come. In New Hampshire three hundred mutineers assembled to break up a court of justice, and intimidated their legislature. Many of the people of Connecticut made efforts for the abolishment of debts and the dissolution of the courts. Hundreds of farms were then offered for sale for the payment of taxes; and specie was

so scarce that they hardly brought one-tenth of their value."

The situation, indeed, was not only deplorable, but alarming and appalling. The losses, by reason of the great and unsecured issuance of paper money, had caused the greatest suffering, not only amongst the poor, but amongst those who before the Revolution had been substantial farmers, merchants and bankers. Those who from the first had publicly opposed the war, and those who from motives of personal or financial safety had been silent to the world, but really adverse to the cause, now began to agitate a discontented people, and clamor loudly for a monarchy; nor would it have taken considerable time to have placed the country in civil strife. In New England, as we have seen, the people were already rising under arms, and in every State were hundreds of desperate men whose late service in the Revolution made them a capable and formidable power. These men were asking for bread.

A member of Congress from Virginia wrote at this time to Washington: "We are all in dire apprehension that a beginning of anarchy with all its calamities has approached, and we have no means to stop the dreadful work." He ends by suggesting that Washington use his influence with the masses of the people to quell the disorder, to which Washington characteristically replies: "Influence is no government."

Amid this disorder, however, there were still left, undismayed, many of those calm minds which had brought the Revolution to a successful issue, and who had never abandoned their firm belief in the final suc-

cess of an independent nation, and in the future welfare of their country.

As a preliminary step, at the suggestion of some of these men, the Virginia Legislature, in January, 1786, passed a resolution proposing a convention of delegates from all of the States. "To take into consideration the trade of the United States; to consider how far a uniform in their commercial regulations may be necessary to their common interest and their permanent harmony; and to report to the several States such an Act, relative to this great object, as, when ratified by them, will enable the United States in Congress effectually to provide for the same."

The Virginia Commissioners finally fixed the first Monday in September following as the time, and Annapolis as the place for the proposed convention. New Jersey was the first State to signify approval and to appoint commissioners, her delegates being Abraham Clark, William Churchill Houston and James Schuurman. Pennsylvania, Delaware and New York were also represented, but the other States either failed to appoint commissioners, or the latter, if appointed, failed or refused to attend. The delegates present at the Annapolis Convention, after some deliberation, agreed to a report to Congress (drawn by Alexander Hamilton) "expressing their unanimous conviction that it might essentially tend to advance the interests of the Union if the States by which they were respectively delegated would concur, and use their endeavors to procure the concurrence of the other States, in the appointment of commissioners to meet at Philadelphia on the second Monday of May following to take

into consideration the situation of the United States; to devise such further provisions as should appear to them necessary to render the Constitution of the Federal Government adequate to the exigencies of the Union; and to report such an Act for that purpose to the United States in Congress assembled as, when agreed to by them, and afterwards confirmed by the Legislatures of every State, will effectually provide for the same."

On the 25th of February, 1787, Rufus King, of Massachusetts, who at first had opposed such a convention, introduced a favorable resolution before Congress, which was adopted, and the Legislatures of those States which had not already done so (except Rhode Island) appointed delegates. It was natural that in the appointment of delegates by New Jersey, William Churchill Houston, now one of her favorite sons, and the intimate of Livingston, Witherspoon, Clark, Brearley, Paterson and Boudinot, should have been selected. He had, indeed, risen to a very high position in the practice of the law, as well as in Statesmanship.

The following are exact copies of the proceedings of the Assembly and Council of New Jersey, both in the matter of the appointment of delegates to the Annapolis Convention, in September, 1786, and that held in Philadelphia, in May following, and whilst the latter was in session:

Votes of Assembly, 1786 (New Jersey).

Minutes and proceedings of the Joint Meeting.

March 21, 1786.

The Council and Assembly met at the house of Mr. Drake in Trenton, when the following gentlemen were appointed Commis-

sioners to meet the Commissioners of the other states upon commercial and other matters, to wit:

Abraham Clark,
William C. Houston, } Esquires.
James Schuurman,

November 23, 1786.

David Bearley,
William Paterson,
William C. Houston, } Esquires, were elected Commissioners to meet the Commissioners of the other states at Philadelphia, in May next, on Commercial and other Matters.
John Neilson,

May 18, 1787.

The Council and Assembly met at the house of Mr. Hutchin, in the City of Burlington.

His Excellency William Livingston and Abraham Clark, Esqs., were elected Commissioners to meet the Commissioners of the other states at Philadelphia, on Commercial and other Matters.

June 5, 1787.

The Council and Assembly met at the Court House in the City of Burlington.

Jonathan Dayton, Esquire, was elected a Commissioner to meet the Commissioners of the other States at Philadelphia, on Commercial and other Matters.

Votes of Assembly (New Jersey), 1786.

November 24, 1786.

Resolved, That the Honourable David Brearley, William C. Houston, William Paterson and John Neilson, Esquires, Commissioners appointed on the Part of this State, or any three of them, be, and they are hereby authorized and empowered to meet such Commissioners as have been or may be appointed by the other States in the Union at the city of Philadelphia, in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, on the second Monday in May next, for the Purpose of taking into consideration the State of the Union as to trade and other important Objects, and of devising such further Provisions as shall appear to render the Constitution of the federal Government adequate to the Exigencies thereof.

Ordered, That Mr. Anderson do carry the said Resolutions to the Council for Concurrence.

Resolved, That the Treasurer be directed to pay to any three of the Commissioners of this State appointed to meet the Commissioners of the other States in the Union upon Commercial and other Matters, the Sum of Four Dollars per Day for every Day they or either of them shall be employed in this Service, upon Account by them to exhibit upon Oath, certifying the Time they have been so employed.

Message from the Council by Mr. Ogden.

Council Chamber, November 24, 1786.

The Council having taken into Consideration the Resolution of the House of Assembly, empowering the Commissioners to meet at Philadelphia in May next, on Commercial Matters, &c. . . . and also the resolution . . . relative to directing the

Treasurer to pay to any three of the Commissioners of this state, appointed to meet the Commissioners of the other States, Four Dollars per Day, &c.

STATE OF NEW JERSEY.

To the Hon. David Brearley, William Churchill Houston, William Paterson and John Neilson, Esqrs., Greeting:

The Council and Assembly, reposing especial trust and confidence in your integrity, prudence, and ability, have, at a joint meeting, appointed you, the said David Brearley, William Churchill Houston, William Paterson, and John Neilson, Esqrs., or any three of you, Commissioners, to meet such Commissioners as have been, or may be, appointed by the other States in the Union, at the city of Philadelphia, in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, on the second Monday in May next, for the purpose of taking into consideration the state of the Union as to trade and other important objects, and of devising such other provisions as shall appear to be necessary to render the Constitution of the Federal Government adequate to the exigencies thereof.

In testimony whereof, the great seal of the State is hereunto affixed. Witness, William Livingston, Esq., Governor, Captain-general, and Commander-in-chief in and over the State of New Jersey, and territories thereunto belonging, Chancellor and Ordinary in the same, at Trenton, the 23d day of November, in the year of our Lord 1786, and of our Sovereignty and Independence the eleventh.

WILLIAM LIVINGSTON.

By his Excellency's command.

BOWES REED, Secretary.

The Convention was called to meet May 14th, 1787, at Philadelphia, at which time some few of the delegates, including Houston, were present. The Con-- vention proceeded immediately to postpone its sessions until May 25th, on which day it convened with General Washington in the chair, a quorum of the States being present. On that day Houston, with the other delegates, presented his credentials and took his seat. There is every reason to believe that from this time on he was in constant attendance.

On June 4th the Legislature of New Jersey passed a resolution, showing that he was then in Philadelphia and at that time engaged in the work of the Convention, and the following, from the Archives of New Jersey is here presented as evidence of his services to this time:

June 4, 1787.

The Speaker laid before the House a Letter from the Delegates representing this State in the Convention now sitting at Philadelphia, desiring a Sum of Money may be paid them for the Discharge of the Proportion of the Expense of Stationary and other contingent Expenses of the Convention; whereupon,

Resolved, That the Honourable David Brearley, William Churchill Houston, and William Paterson, Esquires, or either of them, be, and they are hereby authorized and empowered to draw on the Treasurer for a Sum not exceeding Thirty Pounds, to defray this State's Quota of the general Expenses which may accrue in the course of the Convention; and such Draught, accepted and paid by the Treasurer, shall be deemed a sufficient Voucher for so much of the publick Monies in his Hands.

Ordered, That Mr. Whilden do carry the said Resolution to the Council for Concurrence.

June 5, 1787.

Message from the Council by Mr. Holmes.

Council-Chamber, June 5, 1787.

Ordered, That the Council having taken into Consideration the Resolution from the House of Assembly, relative to authorizing the Honourable David Brearley, William Paterson and William Churchill Houston, Esquires, or either of them, to draw on the Treasurer for any Sum not exceeding 30 Pounds, &c.

Resolved, That the House do concur therein.

On the same day Jonathan Dayton was added to the delegation, as appears by the following from the minutes:

June 7, 1787.

Resolved, That the Honourable Jonathan Dayton be appointed a Commissioner on the Part of this State, in Conjunction with his Excellency William Livingston, the Honourable David Brearley, William Churchill Houston, William Paterson and Abraham Clark, Esquires, to meet such Commissioners as have been appointed by the other States in the Union, for the Purposes mentioned in a Resolution of the Legislature of the 19th May last; and that the Treasurer be directed and authorized to pay to the said Jonathan Dayton, Esquire, the same pay as is allowed to the other Commissioners appointed on the part of this State, upon producing his Account in the same Manner as is directed by a Resolution of the Legislature of the 26th November, 1786.

Ordered, That Mr. Starke do carry the said Resolution to Council for Concurrence.

Council Chamber, June 7, 1787.

The Council having taken into consideration the Resolution from the House of Assembly, relative to appointing the Honourable Jonathan Dayton, Es-

quire, Commissioner, and directing the Treasurer to pay him the same as allowed the other Commissioners,

Resolved, That the House do concur therein.

On Tuesday, July 17th, Houston was still in attendance, and is credited in the "Debates on the Federal Constitution" with a motion, in conjunction with Gouverneur Morris, to postpone the consideration of the words, "For the term of seven years," which motion was carried in the affirmative.

It was Houston, also, who moved to strike out of the proposed draft of the Constitution the clause which made a President of the United States ineligible for a second term, which motion was seconded by Sherman, and espoused by Morris, who declared that "the ineligibility proposed by the clause, as it stood, tended to destroy the great motive to good behavior, the hope of being rewarded by a reappointment. It was saying to him 'make hay while the sun shines.' On the question under consideration of striking out as moved by Houston, it passed in the affirmative. Hampton L. Carson, for some reason, credits this motion to Morris and ignores Houston."

On Monday, July 23d, we find that Houston and Spaight moved conjointly "that the appointment of the executive by Electors chosen by the legislators of the States" be reconsidered. Houston debated this motion, and urged "the extreme inconvenience and the considerable expense of drawing together men from all the States for the single purpose of electing the Chief Magistrate."

On the following day, the appointment of the Executive being reconsidered, Houston moved that he be

appointed by the National Legislature, instead of by Electors appointed by the State Legislature.

He again debated the question, and dwelt chiefly on "the improbability that capable men would undertake the services of Electors from the more distant States." The motion, however, after some further debate, was lost, being strenuously opposed, especially by Gerry.

Evidence can also be produced to show that he continued to attend during the months of August and the early part of September.

It is not our purpose to present here, however, the details of Houston's work in the Convention, but merely to indicate that he was present throughout its sessions, and, with the other members of the Commission from New Jersey, attended with diligence and zeal to the work intrusted to him. Nor do we intend to enter into the conduct of the Convention from day to day. All that has been told, and well told, by many historians.

The Convention closed its labors on September 17th, 1787, and the engrossed draft of the Constitution, as approved, was then signed. Houston's name, however, is not attached to that document. The principal reasons given for this omission are, first, that he was ill and not able to sign, and, secondly, that he was not in accord with some of the sections included in the Act and declined to affix his signature. Both of these reasons are known to be erroneous, and the most simple explanation is that all of the Commissioners of each State were not required to sign.

The following is the report made by the Commis-

sioners from New Jersey to the Legislature of that State that their work on the Constitution had been completed:

THE COMMISSIONERS Appointed by joint meeting of the Legislature to meet Commissioners of the other States in the Union, at the City of Philadelphia, in the Month of May last, for the purpose of taking into consideration the State of the Union, &c., beg leave to report to this honorable House, that in pursuance of their appointment they met the Commissioners of eleven of the other States in Union at Philadelphia, and thereupon entered upon the business of their appointment.

That the Commissioners so convened did after long and serious deliberation & with no small difficulty, finally agree upon a plan for the Government of the said United States, which together with the other Acts of the Convention were by them transmitted to the honorable the Congress of the United States. Copies of the same are hereunto annexed.

All which are, by your Commissioners, most humbly submitted to this honorable House.

Trenton, 25th October 1787.

Wil. Livingston.
David Brearley.
W. C. Houston.
Jona. Dayton.

[A printed copy of the Constitution appended, signed by Livingston, Brearley, Paterson and Dayton.]

It will be noted that Paterson, who signed the Constitution, failed to sign the report to the Legislature, William Churchill Houston signing in his stead.

It will therefore be seen that William Churchill Houston is entitled to rank among the signers of the Constitution even though his name is not attached to the original document.

The Commissioners Appointed by joint meeting of the Legislature to meet Commissioners of the other States in the Union, at the City of Philadelphia, in the Month of May last, for the purpose of taking into consideration the State of the Union &c. beg leave to report to this honorable House, that in pursuance of their appointment they met the Commissioners of eleven of the other States in the Union at Philadelphia, and thereupon entered upon the business of their appointment.

That the Commissioners so convened did after long and serious deliberation & with no small difficulty finally agree upon a plan, for the Government of the said United States, which together with the other Acts of the Convention were by them transmitted to the honorable the Congress of the United States. — Copies of the same are hereunto annexed.

All which are, by your Commissioners, most humbly submitted to this honorable House.

Trenton 25th October 1787.

Wil: Livingston
David Brearley
W. C. Houghton
Jona: Dayton

The Assembly.

October 26, 1787.

His Excellency William Livingston, and the Honourable David Brearley, William Churchill Houston and Jonathan Dayton, Esquires, Commissioners appointed by Joint Meeting to meet Commissioners of the other States in the Union, at the City of Philadelphia, in the Month of May last, for the purpose of taking into Consideration the State of the Union, &c., reported to the House, that in Pursuance of their Appointment, they met the Commissioners of eleven other States in the Union at Philadelphia, and thereupon entered upon the Business of their appointment.

That the Commissioners so convened, did, after long and serious Deliberation, and with no small Difficulty, finally agree upon a Plan for the Government of the said United States, which, together with the other Acts of the Convention, were by them transmitted to the Honourable the Congress of the United States, in the Words following: [*Here follows the Constitution*]

Upon the termination of his work in the Constitutional Convention Houston returned to Trenton, where he now resided, and resumed his interrupted law practice and his duties as Clerk of the Supreme Court, continuing in these occupations with his usual energy and fidelity until the following spring.

And now, at the age of only about forty-two years, before many men have yet arrived at the prime of their life, the work of William Churchill Houston was finished.

He had been a professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy in the College of New Jersey at a very early age, and a few years later had been chosen a member of the Continental Congress, serving several terms. He had fought beside Washington and had spoken in debate with Jefferson, Dickinson,

Adams, Hancock and Madison. His intimate knowledge of finance had led to his selection as Controller of the Treasury, which position, on account of his many other duties, he had been forced to decline.

As a lawyer he had, indeed, been eminently successful and many important cases intrusted to him, both of a public and private nature, he had skillfully and successfully prosecuted. The crowning event of his brief, but brilliant and useful life, however, had been his selection as one of the delegates from New Jersey to the Constitutional Convention of 1787, and we have shown by documentary evidence, that in that Convention he took an active part. Whatever may have been his reason for not affixing his name to that historic document, it is certain that he was not only zealous for its completion, but was also largely instrumental in its ratification, and that he, with the other delegates from New Jersey, reported its consummation to his own State, and under his own signature.

During the course of his whole life he had enjoyed the sincere and beneficial friendship of some of the greatest scholars, statesmen and soldiers of his day; but he has left us but a few lines of writing for all of his life's work. If he had lived another score of years he might, indeed, like Jefferson and Madison and Adams, risen still higher in the ranks of the patriots, or, like Charles Thomson, once his fellow-secretary of Congress, have died unrewarded and forgotten. As it happened, however, death claimed him in prosperity. Overwork, apparently, had shattered his not too vigorous constitution, and consumption laid its fingers upon his throat. Feeling that the end was approaching his thoughts moved from business cares and the affairs of state to his old home in the South, and he set out to visit it again before he died. Arriv-

ing at Frankford, a few miles from Philadelphia, he was taken extremely ill and repaired to an inn kept by Mr. Geisse, on the Frankford road, where he suddenly and unexpectedly expired on August 12th, 1788. His body was removed to Philadelphia, and, the next morning, he was buried from the house of a relative, Mr. Sergeant, on Arch street.

The interment was made in the burial ground of the Second Presbyterian Church, Rev. Ashbel Green officiating.

The Second Presbyterian Church, at that time, was at the northwest corner of Arch and Third streets. It was a brick building, the foundation of which was laid in May, 1750, and the edifice was torn down soon after 1836. Rev. Asbel Green was pastor of this Church from the year 1787. This distinguished Presbyterian divine had been a pupil of Houston's and had graduated from Princeton College in 1783, and in 1803 was elected to the Professorship of Theology in that institution.

It is uncertain whether Houston was buried in the ground immediately adjoining the Church or in the graveyard belonging to the Second Church on Arch street, above Fifth. Both of these grounds were leveled and built upon about 1836, and some of the bodies removed to a common place of interment. His precise resting place, therefore, as well as that of many other distinguished sons of Princeton, is not now known.

In person, Houston, says one of his biographers, "was tall and slender, dignified and graceful, extremely intelligent, grave, serious and uniform. His style of speaking was clear, calm, free from excitement, like

a gentle flowing stream without a ripple or tumult, and yet by its simplicity, truth and earnestness, seldom failed to produce conviction." No portrait of him is believed to be extant.

William Churchill Houston married Jane, daughter of Rev. Caleb Smith, of St. George's Manor, Long Island, and Martha, his wife, daughter of Rev. Jonathan Dickinson, President of Princeton College. She died in 1796, aged 41 years, and is buried in the Lawrenceville Cemetery. They had two sons, George Smith and William Churchill, and three dauhgters, Elizabeth, Louisa Ann and Mary.

APPENDIX.

NOTE ON THE HOUSTON FAMILY.—This family derived its surname from the parish of Houston in Renfrewshire. "That the family of Houston, originally assuming their surname from a place long since called Kilpeter (now Houston), has been a great antiquity in those parts, doth appear from unquestionable documents, and derive their descent from Hugo de Padvinan, who obtained a grant of the barony of Kilpeter from Baldwin of Bigger, Sheriff of Lanark, in the reign of Malcolm the IV, whereupon his descendants assumed appellations (from) their hereditary lands; which barony continueth with them in the male line to this day." This Hugh de Padvinan was a witness to the foundation Charter of Walter, High Steward of Scotland, to the Abbey of Paisley, 1160. His son, Reginald, obtained a charter of the lands of Kilpeter in Stathgrife, and was succeeded by Hugh living 1225. "From these ancient barons of Houston," says the same writer, "descending to the reign of King James the II. that Sir Patrick Houston of that Ilk, departing this life anno, 1450, was buried in the chapel of Houston, where there is a fair monument to the memory of him and his wife." She was Mary Colquhoun, who died 1456.

Sir Peter Houston, a grandson of this Patrick, was in the battle of Flodden and was there killed, who, having married Helen, daughter of Sir John Schaw, of Sauchy, had numerous issue. Sir Ludovick Houston of this family married Margaret, daughter of Patrick Maxwell, of Newark, by whom he had Patrick Houston his successor, George Houston of Johnson and several daughters. Ludovick died in 1662. Patrick, his son, who died in 1696, having married Anne, daughter of Lord Bargany, had issue, Sir John, Patrick, William, James and Archibald Houston, and three daughters, and is suposed to have been the ancestor of the South Carolina famliy. Another branch of this family settled in Georgia.

Archibald Houston, the father of William Churchill Houston, died in 1805 in Cabarras county. His will bears date 10th of May, 1800. His first wife was named Margaret, and his second, Agnes. His children were: Archibald, William Churchill, Margaret, Elizabeth, Rachel, Ann and Grace.

Archibald Houston became a very prominent man in political life in North Carolina.

INDEX.