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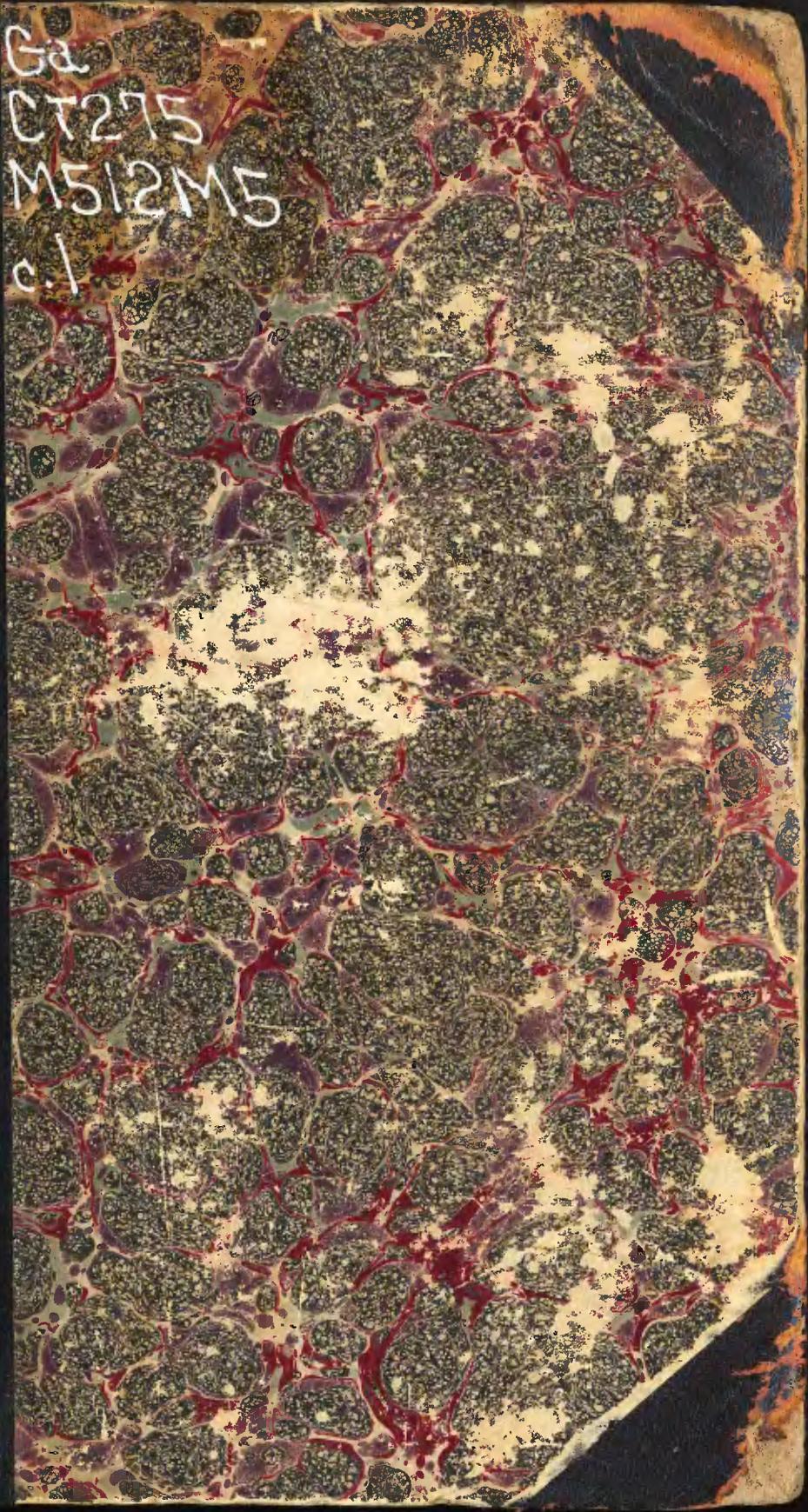
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LIFE

OF

JOSIAH MEIGS

BY

HIS GREAT-GRANDSON.

WM. M. MEIGS.



PHILADELPHIA:

1887.



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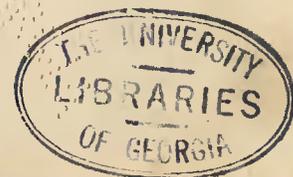
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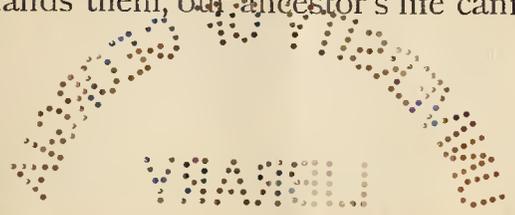
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PREFACE.

THE following sketch of the life of Josiah Meigs was undertaken by the writer a year or two ago, as a part of the study of Meigs genealogy, and without any idea that it would grow to the size it has attained. Indeed, a good part of it was written, when the material in my hands was so small that it would not have reached half of its present size. But new facts continued to come under notice, and it is now more nearly a biography than a sketch. This fact must explain the too great detail, which is probably at times gone into, for it has been a task of no little difficulty, as the newly discovered material appeared, to decide just what portion of the already written matter it was best to cut out and substitute by the new. Moreover, it must be remembered by any reader who is not of the immediate family, that the sketch is intended mainly for those who are descendants of Josiah Meigs, and for this



reason again contains more detailed statements of many points than would otherwise be the case. It represents no small amount of labor; and many long hours have been passed in libraries, and several distant places have been visited—during long journeys undertaken in the pursuit of health—in the often weary search for facts, which would probably have remained buried in oblivion, but for the long sickness which has unfitted the writer for professional work and made it a pleasure to have an occupation that could be taken up or dropped at will. As the history of the trials of my great-grandfather slowly unfolded themselves to me, I felt more and more interest in the subject; and his life seems to me one of stirring event and full of instructiveness. Born just before a period of the utmost importance to mankind, and passing most of his years during one of those times when the world is seething with great thoughts and the great men who seem ever to rise to the surface as the occasion demands them, our ancestor's life cannot be de-



void of interest to his descendants. It was probably not what is called a *successful* life, and he left no wealth behind him, nor did he leave a name which has survived to wide circles of men; but his life was certainly most eminently useful. His instructions must have remained and produced highly beneficial effects in the minds of many who have been alive within twenty-five years, and the admirable example he gave cannot but have influenced for the good large numbers of his co-temporaries and many of the younger in whom he took so kind an interest. It does not seem to me venturesome to say that it is probable he might have made some important discovery, had he but had better opportunity; but the man who struggles all his life with grinding poverty and is able to devote only a small fraction of his time to science, can hardly attain distinction. The harder duties of life demand too much time and effort, and we all know that but very few Americans of his date can be named, who attained scientific fame. It is, however, quite

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possible that Meigs's observations of meteorology—extended as they were, over so wide a space—might in time have led him to some of the important discoveries, which were made but a few years after his death, and which our own day has seen so greatly elaborated, and rendered of practical use, by the very system of organized observation which he tried to have established.

It is my intention generally to give authorities for my statements, but they will all be thrown into the end of the book and not printed at the foot of the page. Authorities will not, however, be given for mere genealogical facts, nor will any actual citation be made, where any one at all conversant with the matter in question would know where to look for the authority. A great many facts are, moreover, drawn from private letters. A large number of these are in my possession, and still larger numbers are owned by R. J. Meigs, Esq., of Washington, D. C., and by Henry Meigs, Esq., of Bergen Point, N. J. To all these I have been allowed free access, and my attention was kindly called

by Prof. Dexter of Yale University to certain very important letters preserved in the Library of the University. All these letters I have gone over with care, and have derived much important matter from them. In conclusion, I will say that I have made every effort to be accurate and to avoid writing a sentence about the subject of the sketch, which would not be easily capable of proof; and in speaking of matters of public history, I have equally tried not to misrepresent actual occurrences, while not hesitating at the same time to speak in plain language as to any matter of history that concerned the life or doings of Josiah Meigs.

WM. M. MEIGS.

PHILADELPHIA, October 12, 1887.

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CHAPTER I.

1757-1778.

Birth—Parentage—Family History—Boyhood and Youth—Goes to Yale College—Life and Associates there—Graduation.

JOSIAH MEIGS, the thirteenth child of Return Meigs and Elizabeth Hamlin, was born at Middletown, Connecticut, on the 21st day of August, 1757, in the forty-sixth year of his mother's age. His maternal grandmother was Elizabeth Patridge, of Hatfield, who married John Hamlin, of Middletown, on May 3d, 1709; Elizabeth, the second child of this marriage and the mother of the subject of this sketch, was born at Middletown on February 12th, 1711-12. Josiah's father, Return, was the grandson of the grandson of Vincent Meigs, or Meggs, who, with his sons John and Mark, had settled at New Haven about 1644, after having (at least some of them) been at Weymouth, Mass., for a time. These immigrants seem to have come from the southeastern part of England, where more than one family of Meggs lived; the earliest mention of any one of the name is an inscription in the church of St. Mary Bredman, Canterbury, to one William Meggs, alderman of that city, who died January 1, 1519. The indications are that they came from Dorsetshire, but I at least have not yet found it possible to trace their connection with any English branch of the family.

JOHN MEIGS, the son of Vincent, moved from New Haven to the East End of Guilford, and later to Killingworth, upon its settlement, and died there January 4th, 1671-2, leaving a com-



fortable estate. His trade was that of a tanner and currier, but he was originally also a dealer in shoes and doubtless a shoemaker. In his latter years, he was probably only engaged in farming, and it seems that he must have been a man of education, for his will bequeaths manuscripts and several books, among others, a Greek and a Latin dictionary.* A record¹ of that ancient day tells us that he was on one occasion of eminent service to the unfortunate hunted regicides, Whalley and Goffe, and probably the means of saving their lives. Very early one Monday morning in March, 1661, he mounted his horse at Guilford and rode with speed to New Haven as a messenger to warn these fugitives that their pursuers were at Guilford, and were on the point of hurrying to New Haven to seize them and carry them off to certain death. Meigs arrived ahead of the pursuers, and the regicides, warned in time, hastened away to another of their mysterious hiding places. John Meigs had four daughters, but only one son, John, who returned about the time of the death of his father to the East End of Guilford, and died there in 1713. This second John had several children, the second of his sons being Janna. Janna lived and died in the East End of Guilford, was a captain in the Guilford train-band, and represented that town in the General Assembly of Connecticut several times: both he and his father, John, were coopers and farmers. He died in 1739, leaving a large estate and a large family. One of his sons, Timothy, graduated at Yale in 1732. Return, the father of the subject of this sketch, was Janna's fifth child and fourth son.

* This is so stated by Savage, but the existence of the *Latin Dictionary* is not clear to my mind. The bequest in question is of "Simpson's English Greek Lexicon and Sham's Dictionary," and all my efforts to learn what Sham's Dictionary was have been unavailing. The will is transcribed in an unusually clear hand in the Killingworth Land Records.

It does not seem that the immigrant members of the family were so saturated with the puritanical spirit, as was possibly advisable in a settler in the colony of New Haven. Though this is not known of the eldest immigrant, Vincent, yet it may be safely said of his son John, for he was frequently in hot water with the authorities of that most blackly puritanical colony, and took an active part against her in the contest with Connecticut. On one occasion at Guilford, he was complained of to the authorities for noisily driving his cart along the road late in the night on the Lord's Day; he appeared and explained (the Court Records tell us) "that he was mistaken in the time of the day, thinking that he had time enough for the journey, but being somewhat more laden than he expected the cattle came more slowly than usual and so cast him behind, it proving to be more late of the day than he had thought. But he professeth to be sorry for his mistake and the offence justly given thereby, promising to be more careful for time to come. The Court considering the premises did see cause (seeing that the matter seemed to be done upon a surprisal and not witting or willingly) to pass it over with a reproof for this first time, enjoining a public acknowledgment of his evil in so neglecting to remember the Sabbath, on the next lecture or fast day, with all the aggravating circumstances in it." Decidedly, this first John did not get along well with the authorities of his adopted home, but the case was different with the second John and with Janna. They appear to have been of some importance in the affairs of the colony, and held positions both of a religious and political nature.

RETURN MEIGS was born at Guilford, March 16th, 1707-8, and the Middletown records tell us that he and Elizabeth Hamlin "ware joynd for Marriage Covenant Feby 1st, 1732-3."

He moved to Middletown and was a hatter there;² in 1745 he was appointed lieutenant of the second company or train-band in the 6th regiment of Connecticut; and in 1747 he was deputy to the General Assembly from Middletown. The large families said to be usual in those days, were strongly exemplified in the case of Return and his wife, for they had no less than thirteen children; but the vigor of constitution also claimed for the children of our ancestors was by no means evidenced in this family, for but four out of the thirteen children attained manhood, and the greater number died in early infancy. Mrs. Meigs died September 17th, 1762, and on March 25th, 1763, Return married a second wife, a widow by name Jane Doane, by whom he had no children. This is nearly all I have been able to learn of Return Meigs. He was a little over sixty-seven years old, when the first blood of the Revolutionary war was shed at Lexington, and therefore past the age when he could well take any active part in that struggle; and there is no evidence to show what opinions he entertained upon the questions at issue. He died poor, if not bankrupt, on the 22d of June, 1782, and is buried by the side of his first wife in the old cemetery at Middletown on the banks of the Connecticut river. His second wife survived him, as did also his four children who attained majority: they were Return Jonathan, Giles, John and Josiah.

RETURN JONATHAN³ was born December 17th, 1740; had been ensign, lieutenant and captain in the Connecticut militia before the Revolution; and, at the outbreak of that contest, after Lexington, marched with a company of men to the neighborhood of Boston. He soon became the Colonel of the Sixth Connecticut infantry, a body which seems to have attained some reputa-

tion and was known as the Leather-cap Regiment.* He went with Arnold, as commander of one of the divisions of the army, through the forests of Maine on the ill-fated expedition against Canada, but was captured in the assault upon Quebec. He was exchanged before very long, and it is of interest to know that Samuel Adams⁴ was instrumental in procuring his exchange. He was to some degree intimate with General Montgomery, and kept a journal of the Canada expedition, which closes with the following entry, made soon after his capture and imprisonment:

"1776, January 1st. This whole day in the Seminary. The first day I knew confinement. I hope I shall bear it with becoming fortitude. Major McKenzie brought Gen. Montgomery's knee-buckles and Mr. McPherson's gold brooch, and made a present of them to me, which I highly value for the sake of their late worthy owners." After his exchange he returned once more to his military duties, led later one of the columns in the assault and capture of Stony Point, and distinguished himself by the command of a very successful secret expedition against Sagg Harbor on Long Island. For his behavior on this occasion, Congress voted him a sword, which was presented after the war and is still preserved (as are also Gen. Montgomery's knee-buckles) by one of his grandchildren, R. J. Meigs, of Washington. He took also an active part in the suppression of

* This is said upon the authority of a letter, dated "Jefferson, Ashtabula Co., January 30, 1819," from one Josiah Atkins to Col. Meigs, in which the writer says:—"Forty years have almost elapsed since I took my discharge from under your hand at Springfield, New Jersey. The acquaintance that I have had with you for three years as a Colonel of the famous Leather-cap Regiment of the Revolutionary Army hath bound me to you by no common tie." The writer then goes on to say that he is in distress and wants to obtain the benefit of the Act of Congress for Revolutionary soldiers, and requests Col. Meigs to send him a certificate.

the famine-caused mutiny among the troops of the Connecticut line in May, 1780; in his efforts to suppress this alarming trouble, Col. Meigs, who was temporarily in command of the brigade to which the regiments in mutiny belonged, was struck by one of the soldiers, but finally induced the great mass of the men to return to their duty; some few had to be arrested and confined. The mutiny, thus successfully averted for the moment by Col. Meigs's energy, gave Gen. Washington "more concern than anything that had ever happened," and was only finally composed after the utmost difficulty.

After the war, Meigs was doubtless penniless and without prospect, and he removed to Ohio, where he played a highly important part in the early government of that new settlement. Henry Meigs* gives a graphic account from boyish memory of his uncle's setting out on his long and wearisome journey through the forests to the Ohio country: he writes as follows:—" [one afternoon] in the year 1788 he [Col. Meigs] with his son R. J. arrived * * * from Middletown at Stratford, and after some refreshments and adieux they mounted their horses, which were hardy Canadian ponies. I went out of doors to them with a pewter mug of Flip (beer, rum and sugar heated by irons); they were in their saddles; they drank it off and said good-bye—it was nearly dark when they left us." Later still, he removed to Hiawassee, Tennessee, where he was commissioner to the Cherokee Indians, among whom he had great influence and was known as the White Path. He had applied without success for office under President Washington and probably under Adams; and received the above appointment within a month of Jeffer-

* Henry Meigs will be so often quoted from in the following pages, that it is best to say at the start that the eldest son of Josiah Meigs is always the person referred to, unless otherwise expressly stated.

son's inauguration in a very kind letter from Secretary Dearborn who signs himself "your old friend and humble servant." He lived at Hiawassee many years and attained the advanced age of eighty-three: to the end he was straight, tall and vigorous. While at the Indian agency he was in frequent communication by letter with his brother Josiah, who was seventeen years younger than he, and who had the highest admiration and warmest affection for his eldest brother. I have often heard it said that Col. Meigs is one of the figures introduced by Trumbull into his well-known painting of the death of Gen. Montgomery, but had always doubted the statement because he was in fact nowhere near Montgomery in the assault upon Quebec. What I have recently learned, however, seems to leave no doubt that Trumbull had allowed himself an artist's license, and that the statement was correct, for Henry Meigs writes that Trumbull personally knew Col. Meigs, and that the latter is in the engraving in his "Rifle dress as a Major—his left hand open and raised on the right [observer's left] of the picture." He also figures as one of the characters in a dramatization, of the Revolutionary period, of the assault upon Quebec: this drama was, I believe, produced in Philadelphia.

Of Giles Meigs, the second son of Return who survived I know but little of interest. Field says of him that he "was a captain of militia in the Revolution and went with his company to New London." He was twice married in Middletown, and probably lived and died there.

The third son to reach maturity was John. At the beginning of the Revolution, he entered the army as a volunteer, was attached to the regiment of Col. Webb, and soon obtained a commission. He was adjutant and later Brigade Major, was wounded during the war, and was the recipient of a pension

from the United States. He is said to have been a very active officer and much beloved by his troops. After the Revolution he continued in the militia as Brigade Major,⁵ and in 1799, when war was thought imminent with France, he was nominated to a captaincy in the army by President Adams. He had moved from Middletown to New Hartford in 1796, and died there in 1826 at the age of seventy-three, leaving a large family.

Of Josiah's early years, but very little is known. He was born in Middletown, and his infancy and boyhood and early youth were passed in the rather narrow atmosphere of that small New England town. He had doubtless been named after his father's brother, Josiah, who represented Guilford in the General Assembly in 1767, and who had been several times an officer in the train-band of that town. When the boy was at the early age of five years, his mother died, and his father very soon remarried, but no further actual knowledge of his boyhood has reached us; we are therefore left altogether to conjecture as to his early tendencies and character. The house of his father, who was a hatter, was probably a plain one even for those simple days, and would certainly to-day be classed as severely plain: the inventory of the father's estate shows that he died poor, owning one picture, a few books, mainly of a religious tendency, and little else but plain household furniture, and the implements of his trade. The apparently boundless store of health possessed by Josiah up to the time of his last and only illness, renders it likely that he was a boy of a stirring disposition, and fond of open air sports and all amusements of an active nature; and it would be no bold flight of the imagination to picture him to ourselves as often taking long boyish tramps over the fields near Middletown, and fishing and swimming in the Connecticut river: thus at the same time laying unconsciously the founda-

tion of his health, and cultivating that love of nature and power of observation, which were destined to play an important part in his not uneventful life. At this time, too, were probably laid the foundation of his life-long political belief, during the days when the English authorities were striving to repress the rising spirit of resistance in the colonists and to reduce them to absolute submission to the will of Parliament. He was not eight years old at the time of the passage of the Stamp Act, and was not quite eighteen, when the first blood of the war was shed at Lexington; so he grew up to youth at a time when political subjects were constantly under discussion, and when the rights of the people and the wrongs committed against them by those in authority were daily talked of with the utmost freedom and warmth. It is true that there is no positive evidence as to the opinions of his father, Return Meigs, upon these subjects, but it is hardly assuming much to say that the earnest espousal of the patriot cause from the very beginning by two of the sons is almost conclusive evidence that Return favored the American side; and that Josiah, therefore, began to imbibe his love of popular government at his father's table, in his early school-boy days. Moreover, the boy must, in any event, have been much influenced by the strongly American views of his brothers Return Jonathan and John, who were respectively seventeen and four years his seniors, and who so early volunteered their services in the field. It is often said that the boy is father to the man, and the boyhood of Josiah seems to have been peculiarly calculated in point of time to lay the foundations of a character entirely American and free from any taint of colonial days. He hardly came into the world early enough even to remember the time, when, in American mouths, home meant England; and from the days when he was first old

enough to observe until he became a full-grown man, his native land was engaged in a desperate struggle for existence with her mother-country. Feelings instilled into the human mind so early and impressed upon it for so many years, are rarely rooted out, and it will be found that he always felt a bias against England and retained to the last a kind spot in his heart for France.

No record tells us of the education Josiah received as a boy, but it is unlikely that it was any better than was given to the average boy of that day, for it was plainly not the original intention of his father that he should be brought up as a student or learned man. On the contrary he served⁶ for a time in some capacity in his father's store, presumably, as an apprentice in the business and with the intention of following it during his life. Whether the business did not succeed or Josiah showed no fitness for it, or whether he was thought to show capabilities for some more intellectual occupation is not known, but he gave it up and went to Yale College, graduating there in 1778, at the age of twenty-one years.

The class, of which he was a member, contained many names afterwards widely known. Noah Webster and Joel Barlow achieved a continental and even yet wider fame, while Oliver Wolcott, Uriah Tracy, Zephaniah Swift, Ashur Miller, and Noah Smith, were all prominent names at a later day in the federal councils and in various departments of the administration of Connecticut. The years which this class passed at Yale were indeed troublous times: in the summer of 1777 the College was entirely broken up because of the dangers incident to the war, and Josiah's class was sent to Glastonbury⁷ under the charge of Tutor Buckminster; and at another time, Webster's diary tells us, the country was so impoverished that "the steward of the college could not supply the necessary provisions of the table,

and the students were compelled to return to spend several months at home." Another matter of interest is told by Webster; in the spring of 1775, General Washington passed through New Haven on his way to assume command of the American army at Cambridge. He passed a night in New Haven, inspected the students, and was much pleased at the precision with which they performed their manual drill; and on his departure, the Yale company escorted him as far as Neck Bridge. Noah Webster says, that on this momentous occasion it fell to his humble lot to lead the company with music, and it is to be presumed that Josiah Meigs and all the class—then freshmen—followed to the strains of the future lexicographer's inspiring notes. Some of the students of that day saw war more closely than on this occasion of boyish parade. Webster, whose father was captain of some volunteer company, shouldered his musket one summer; and Joel Barlow did the same thing more than once, and took part⁸ in the battles of Long Island and White Plains.

During his collegiate life, Meigs was a member⁹ of the Honorary Fellowship Club, a Literary Society of the undergraduates, but no record of interest remains of the society's doings at this time. Until the last year at college, his class was probably chiefly instructed by the tutors, among whom were Timothy Dwight, Abraham Baldwin, and Joseph Buckminster, all men of marked ability and with all but the last of whom he had other relations later in life. Naphtali Daggett was the President of the College during the first part of Meigs's life there, but was succeeded by Ezra Stiles in 1777. The biographer of President Stiles¹⁰ tells us that it was the President's custom to take particular charge of the senior class, and that he instructed them in metaphysics, ethics, history, civil policy, and in theology; using

as text-books Locke on the Human Understanding, Paley's Moral Philosophy, Priestly on History, Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws, and Vincent's Exposition of the Assembly's Catechism. He also taught them Hebrew, exercised them in extemporaneous and forensic and occasionally in syllogistic disputation; lectured to them on ecclesiastical history, and on Saturdays at evening prayers expounded to them the Savoy Confession of Faith, while "on Tuesdays and Fridays the undergraduates in rotation declaimed before him, after evening prayers in the chapel; and he commended or criticised these performances, according to their respective merits." President Stiles's diary¹¹ will also tell the curious with what strange rigor all sorts of academic forms were adhered to at the graduation in 1778, and how, at last, when they had dragged out their weary length, the degrees were conferred and the exercises followed in the chapel; among these¹² were "a ciosophic oration in Latin by Sir Meigs," and various other performances by Sirs Barlow, Webster, and others. *Cliosophic*¹³ was "a collegiate term, applied to an Oration on the Arts and Sciences, delivered annually at an examination in July;" but I have not learned for what special reason the members of the graduating class were given the title *Sir*.

These facts are certainly important as showing the training Meigs received and the men he was thrown with at College, but it must be added that his later life does not show that the branches we are told President Stiles taught made any very deep hold on his mind. It is probable that his inborn tendencies looked in other directions, and that the teachings of some of the tutors had more influence upon him. College life and instruction in his day were so utterly different from what is found in modern places of learning that we can hardly realize just what it was; and the years he passed in his *alma mater* were, moreover, a

period of change, when the restless spirit of innovation was just beginning to make violent assaults on the old cast-iron system of rigidly classical education. In writing of the life of Meigs's classmate, Barlow, at Yale, Mr Todd says¹⁴ that the then advantages of that college, "judged by modern standards, were ridiculously small. Two small buildings and a chapel were all that the pretty campus could then boast. The college butler was still an institution, and the students were still gathered in the Commons Hall, under the eye of tutors. A few young members of the faculty, by strenuous efforts, had just succeeded in admitting English composition and oratory to a curriculum which had before embraced only the dead languages, mathematics, philosophy, and polemic divinity. Poetry, belles lettres, and the modern languages were largely ignored." For a time, at least, Meigs was under the instructions of Tutor Buckminster; and the author just quoted shows¹⁵ that this gentleman, who was a minister of distinction, was more liberal than were most of his cloth: it was his habit to encourage freedom of inquiry among the members of his class, even upon religious subjects, and this he did although he says it led him at times into difficulty. It is not unlikely that these discussions had an influence upon Meigs's mind, but it does not seem easy to show that the general *morale* of the then college life affected his future greatly. It is true that he maintained his classical knowledge all through life and that mathematics was to the end a delight to him—as it seems to have been the branch in which his capacities had been observed¹⁶ at college—but, apart from these subjects, his college studies seem rather to have been wanting in any marked influence on the direction of his studies, or, so far as I can see, upon his mental habits.

CHAPTER II.

1778-1788.

Little known of three following years—Miss Clara Benjamin, of Stratford—Appointed Tutor at Yale—Marriage—Admitted to bar—Residence, and birth of eldest child—Resigns tutorship to establish printing-office and publish *The New Haven Gazette*—That paper's changes, tendencies and circulation—End of its publication.

BUT very little has been found relating to Meigs for the three years immediately following upon his graduation. He doubtless kept up his studies, and it is very likely that he supported himself by teaching, but nothing has been preserved to show positively what he was doing in this interim for his support and advancement. Indeed, only one bare mention of his name occurs in this period, so far as I know: this is contained in a letter from Joel Barlow to Miss Ruth Baldwin, then his *inamorata* and later his wife. Barlow writes, as follows,¹⁷ from Middletown, on July 26, 1779:—"The bearer, Miss Fowler, will tell you what a fine dance we had last night at Captain Starr's. I * * am now with Meigs, who sends love to you." As the writer of this letter and Josiah Meigs were classmates and life-long friends, it may safely be assumed that Josiah is the Meigs referred to, and it may probably also be concluded from it that he, like other young men, indulged in balls and dances, and that he had been present with Barlow at this particularly fine dance at the house of Captain Starr, who was doubtless a relative of the second wife of Josiah's brother, Col. Meigs.

It is probable that it was during these three years after graduation that Meigs made the acquaintance of Clara Benjamin, who became later his wife. Her home was at Stratford, some fifteen or twenty miles from New Haven, and she was the daughter of Col. John Benjamin,¹⁸ who was descended from another John Benjamin, a settler at Watertown, Mass., in 1632. Col. Benjamin appears to have had some education as an engineer and was at least once employed in that capacity in his later years.* He had served in the Revolution and received a bullet-wound in the shoulder at the battle of Ridgefield. During the war he became strongly attached to a Spanish gentleman, and named his youngest son Delucena after him, and the same name was also given later to the third son (Chas. Delucena) of Josiah and Clara Meigs. Col. Benjamin died at Stratford, Sept. 14th, 1796, partly from the results of his wound: he was thrown from a sleigh, tore a blood-vessel near his old wound and bled to death. So far as is known, no portrait exists of Clara Benjamin, but her daughter had at one time a silhouette of her, and it is probable that she was a beautiful woman. A daughter of her daughter, who saw a great deal of her in her latter years, writes, "she must have been very pretty. * * * She had a beautiful profile, blue eyes, brown hair, fair skin, and a good figure, not quite middle height." She appears, too, to have been a woman of some mettle, and tells in a letter written more than

* This is stated upon the authority of a notice in *The New Haven Gazette and the Connecticut Magazine* of July 5, 1787, which reads as follows:—"New Haven, July 5, DESCRIPTION of BENJAMIN'S bridge at NEWFIELD in Stratford. This bridge is 432 feet long between the abutments at each end and each abutment is 45 feet long—so that the whole length is 522 feet—[It] was begun on the 11th day of April, 1786, and finished on the 11th day of September, following, at an expense of 330 pounds. The work was conducted by Col. John Benjamin, of Stratford."

sixty years afterwards, how once during the Revolution her father, having been informed that tories were coming from Long Island to burn his home and carry him off, called her to him at the head of the stair-case and asked whether she would, if he were attacked, hand him cartridges and enable him to defend himself and his house. She replied that she would, and they were prepared for the attack, but, though the tories came to carry out their purpose, they went off without making the attempt.

In 1781, when only 24 years of age, Meigs was appointed Tutor of Mathematics, Natural Philosophy and Astronomy in Yale College; and on January 21st, 1782, he was married to Clara Benjamin. He held his position as tutor for three years, and there is reason to suppose that he filled it with marked success. Holmes writes¹⁶ that he gave at this time ample proofs of his mathematical talents, and it will be seen later that he was chosen to fill a professorship of nearly the same subjects in the College some years afterwards, largely because of the favorable impression he had made during his tutorship. In the first class committed to his charge as a tutor, as he himself tells us many years later, were several older than he; and it contained some forty or fifty students, among whom were Jedidiah Morse, the Geographer, John Cotton Smith, Governor of Connecticut, and several other distinguished men. It is probable that he was at this same time studying law, for he was admitted¹⁹ a member of the bar in New Haven in April 1783. Further than this, no record of him at this time has been found, and nothing shows whether he then practised law or not; but, as it is likely that, in those days of worthless paper-money and extreme and universal poverty, he suffered no little of the *res angusta domi* of which he writes some thirty years later in reference to his son

Charles, it will not be very venturesome to assume that he gladly eked out his Yale salary by private teaching, and by the acceptance of whatever law-cases came to his hands. He lived at this time "in the old double frame house called the Sherman house opposite the southerly end of Yale College buildings;" and here Henry Meigs—his eldest son—tells us he "first saw the light on the 28th of October, 1782, in a heavy gale of wind."

In 1784 Meigs resigned his Yale tutorship and entered upon a new course of life, establishing a printing office and publishing *The New Haven Gazette*, in conjunction with Daniel Bowen and Eleutheros Dana. I am at a loss to conjecture from what source came the money to purchase the plant for this occupation. Meigs's father had died two years before, but had left no estate, if he was not even bankrupt; and, as Josiah appears from the firm's name to have been the senior partner of the publishing house, it can hardly be supposed that the other members furnished all the financial means. During its continuance of four or five years, the paper went through several changes of name and ownership. It was at first *The New Haven Gazette*, and the first number dated May 13th, 1784, contains a notice that the three partners "have opened a Printing Office, a few Rods west of the College, in Chapel Street, where they are ready to perform Printing work of every kind," and asking for useful essays for their paper, which was to be issued weekly to subscribers at the price of 8 shillings per annum. It continued to be published in this form until February, 1786, when Bowen retired from the firm, and the remaining members took entire charge of the printing office and continued the paper under the name of *The New Haven Gazette and the Connecticut Magazine*, in a somewhat different form and at the price of 9 (soon reduced again to 8) shillings per annum. A year and a half later, Meigs

& Dana dissolved partnership by mutual consent, and from August 2d, 1787, Meigs was the sole publisher.

The paper was of rather a literary character, but all papers of that day were very different from those of our time. There were no editorials or leading articles, nor was the reading matter principally made up of articles written by a staff of attachés or reporters. The paper we are concerned with—and I believe it was much the same with all others—contained a request for articles to be sent in by persons not directly attached to it at all; and its columns teem with writings from the pens of Lycurgus, Cato, Agricola, and others of the mighty dead, who, could they but hear their 18th century utterances, would be greatly surprised and mystified at the subjects they discuss and the ideas they express. It contains also mathematical questions to be solved, poems, sonnets, elegies, news from all parts of the world (often or generally in the shape of extracts from private letters), ænigmas for the ladies, and extracts of some length from recently published books—from the Wealth of Nations, then about ten years old, from Jefferson's Notes on Virginia, and from the Marquis of Beccaria's Essay on Crimes and Punishments, among many others;—and scientific observations, and notes of scientific books and discoveries are of constant occurrence. Numbers of letters describe the "Western Country" and its wonders and trials, at least one of which bears the signature of the great pioneer Daniel Boone at "Fayette County, Kentucke;" and the volumes fairly overflow with letters expressing all sorts of opinions on the currency and general politics of the day, and often carried on with much asperity and personal vituperation through several numbers by answer, reply, replication and rejoinder. Some indelicacy is indulged in in puns, verses, and other writings, of a much higher flavor than is to be found in

the papers of a hundred years later; and it is not without interest to find in the number of February 23d, 1786, an account of the operation of transplanting teeth from one mouth to another, with some reference to certain dangers attending it; and in that of November 23d of the same year an account of the far-famed, but still questionable, sea-serpent.*

The events leading up to the adoption of our present constitution are followed with great apparent interest, and there can be no doubt that the paper was conducted with a view to aid in the establishment of a more perfect Union, and that it exercised an important influence in that direction. This tendency is apparent

* I am not conversant enough with the history of dress to feel sure of my ground, but think that the "protuberances," referred to in the following article are the lineal ancestors of the highly-developed *bustle* of our own day. *The Gazette and Magazine* of July 27, 1786, contains the following, dated Paris, May 8:—"The present fashionable protuberances so much in vogue among the females, have by the adroitness of two dressy fair ones of this capital, been turned to a profitable, instead of expensive fashion, and gave rise to a laughable adventure. The females in question had contrived to fill bladders with brandy, which they substituted for cork, wool, wire, &c., and thus equipped in the most *outré* prominence of the mode, they passed several times in a day unsuspected through the gates of Paris, smuggling no inconsiderable quantity of brandy. The frequency of their excursions caused some suspicions among the officers at the gates, who attempted to touch their garments, but this was resisted by the fair ones with every appearance of affected modesty; however one of the officers having sufficient information of what was going forward, determined to detect them, and providing himself with a sharp-pointed instrument he slyly pierced what is nowadays usually made of cork, when lo! a fountain of brandy played from the orifice to the great diversion of the spectators and the no small confusion of the fair one. The result was rather serious, as they were both confined, and there are now actually females at the gates whose business it is as decently as possible to examine into the protuberances of such ladies as appear to be in *outré* of the present fashion. What a pity, as there are so few means to gain a *decent* living, that they should not be permitted to *dress to advantage*, when fashion will admit of it!"

before the meeting of the Convention of 1787, for the paper under the new title in 1786 started off with the first of a series of articles by "Lycurgus" entitled "Observations on the present situation and future Prospects of this and the United States," and evidently intended to favor federal sentiment. Many other articles of the same tendency are printed over other signatures, before that Convention met; while, during its sittings, occasional speculation is indulged in as to its deliberations, and confident opinions expressed of the harmony of its members—so well was the secret of their contests concealed. The Convention finished its labors on the 17th of September, and the newly proposed constitution was printed in full in the *Gazette and Magazine* of the 27th of the same month: and after that date, while the constitution was under discussion by the people and in the State conventions, numerous articles are to be found discussing it, some in high praise and some in severe condemnation: fragments, too, are given of the debates of the Connecticut and Massachusetts Conventions.* Though, as already mentioned, the paper can hardly be said in our modern sense to have avowedly advocated any special course of action, and had indeed no regular editorial page on which to do so, yet the prevailing tendency of its columns was strongly in favor of the adoption of the constitution; and it may be put down with perfect certainty that Josiah Meigs, who was its sole editor from a time some weeks preceding the making public of that instrument, was heartily in favor of its ratification. Another proof that the paper and its editor were in favor of the constitution is contained in a letter of Col. Humphreys to Alexander Hamilton, † dated New Haven, Sept. 16th, 1787.

* See Appendix A.

† See Appendix B.

It is probable that many of the articles signed by high-sounding classical names were in reality the work of the editors and owners, and I had hoped to be able, by some chance internal evidence, to recognize that some of them were from Meigs's pen, and in this way to ascertain further facts in relation to his opinions and style of composition, but have not been able to do so with any certainty. At first I thought that the series of articles above referred to, by "Lycurgus," was from his pen, but came later to think it very unlikely that some of the opinions they contain could be his: while now a more careful reading has made me at least suspect that he wrote both them and another series called "The Friend, by James Littlejohn, Esquire." Both of these productions seem to me very well written; Lycurgus writes in a vein of ironical laudation of the absolute perfection of the Articles of Confederation and of the state of the country under that instrument; while James Littlejohn furnishes essays upon many different subjects, evidently more or less modelled upon the *Spectator* and the *Rambler*. The first-named series contains in its first article, and the last-named in its second, some details of the early lives of the writers, which may very well be Meigs's account of his own childhood, so well do they in general fit in with the little known of him at that time and with the probabilities of the case. But it is necessary to this theory to assume that at least James Littlejohn allowed himself some little freedom and departed in certain particulars from the actual details of his youth. So it will be seen that it is really impossible to do much more than conjecture upon the subject. Chance has preserved the fact that Noah Webster²⁰ wrote some articles for the paper, and it is known that a series of papers, called the "Auarchiad," was from²¹ the joint pens of Barlow, Trumbull, Humphreys, and Hopkins: this, also, was a

pro-Union production, and was much appreciated and widely copied into other papers.

As already said, the paper was a weekly one. It contained about eight pages to the number, for a time after the change in 1786 without advertisements, which were then printed separately, but later were again printed in the body of the paper, as they had been in the earlier days of the Gazette. The printed page was about eight and a half by seven and a half inches with no very large margin, and the type used was fairly good, and some of it larger than papers of to-day bestow on us; but the paper was most wretched, and for this reason and probably from want of proper means of cleaning the type, the printing is frequently so blurred as even to be difficult to read. The paper is at times of a sickly blue tint and varies very greatly in single numbers; and they seem, too, to have been short of type, as its style is not infrequently changed suddenly in the middle of an article. It is, moreover, not quite in keeping with our modern ideas to find a newspaper apologizing twice in one year for issuing but half a sheet, on the 20th of July, 1786, "because of a disappointment with respect to paper," and on the 21st of December, because of "the severity of the weather the week past."

The Gazette and Magazine took for its motto originally, "Non sibi sed toto genitos se credere mundo,"* but later substituted this by the plain English, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased," from the fourth verse of the twelfth chapter of Daniel.

As to the circulation of the paper, some information is obtained from editors' notices printed in it complaining of the neglect of subscribers to pay their dues. From these²² it appears

* The motto was not, however, quoted precisely as it reads in the original (Lucan, Phars. II 383), where it runs:—

"Nec sibi sed toto genitum se credere mundo."

that the circulation, in 1787, was in the neighborhood of nine hundred copies; about half of these were issued to subscribers directly from the office, and the other half were sold by the publishers to "posts," who then disposed of them at their own risk to persons outside of the City. Eight shillings a year for a paper with so small a circulation would have produced a small income, indeed; but it has been seen that even this small sum was collected with difficulty. Nor was this all: such were the circumstances of the times that the publishers notified the public, on January 18th, 1787, that, in order to "accommodate our customers as much as possible, in the present scarcity of cash, we are ready to accept in payment Wheat, Rye, Indian-Corn, Flour, Beef, Pork, Cheese, Hog's Lard, Wood and Flax;—the last of which will be peculiarly agreeable."* I have been unable to learn just when the last number was issued, but the latest seen by me is that of December 18th, 1788, being No. 50 of Volume 3; nor do I know accurately why the publication was stopped. There is no direct evidence as to whether it was financially successful or not: it does not seem very likely that it could have been, when all the country was so pinched as then; but on the other hand, its publication for over four and a half years indicates that it was at least no very great financial failure. The printing establishment was probably maintained as long as the paper and was at least occasionally employed for public printing; there are preserved in the State Library at Hartford, receipts of Josiah Meigs for sums of money received in 1787 and 1788 for printing legislative resolutions. As already stated, the firm's office was originally in Chapel Street, "a few rods west of the College:" later, it was removed to "the south corner of the Green, fronting the Market."

* See Appendix C.

No trace has been found as to how Meigs disposed of the printing establishment or the paper; for *The New Haven Gazette*, which seems to have been started by Abel Morse in the beginning of 1791, can hardly have had any connection with *The New Haven Gazette and the Connecticut Magazine*. It is likely, however, that it was finally stopped with the end of the volume for 1788.

CHAPTER III.

1784-1794.

Elected City Clerk of New Haven—Course of philosophical lectures in Yale College Chapel—Delivers public oration on July 4, 1789—Goes to Bermuda to practise law—Engages warmly in the defence there of American captured vessels—His zeal and success lead to his arrest on charge of treason—Narrowly escapes transportation—Return to America.

DURING the same time at which Meigs had been publishing his paper, and probably also during the last year of his tutorship at Yale, he held the office²³ of City Clerk in New Haven; he was chosen to the office at the first election under the City Government, in February, 1784, and was re-elected for several years; the latest election found of him being in June, 1789. It seems, also, that at some period between his tutorship and the middle or end of 1789, he²⁴ delivered a series of philosophical lectures in the Chapel of Yale College. He was in New Haven at least till midsummer of 1789, and the Connecticut Journal of the day tells of the part he took in the celebration of the 4th of July of that year, an anniversary of that date, of more than usual importance, for the principle of government by the people, but recently re-born to the world, was advancing and spreading over the globe with such vast power and promise, that the ardent admirer thereof might well believe that a new sun was rising to mankind. In our own country, the States had recently adopted the new plan of government, and had thus redeemed themselves from the hopeless slough of bad and ever jarring

government, which had existed under the Articles of Confederation. The great Washington had been, with one voice, called to be the first President under the new government, and had but a few months before, taken the oath to support and defend the present Constitution of the United States of America, and the experiment of a true government by the people was promising such brilliant results, that the coldest of men might well be carried away. And in France, our late ally, to whom gratitude was not yet cold, the inspiring spectacles of the early era of the Revolution were enacting; the States General had met but two months before, for the first time for one hundred and seventy-five years; had entered upon their great work with fine promise, and had begun the task of abolishing the unspeakable wrongs against the people which had grown up under absolute government; while as yet no one could certainly foresee the evils and errors which the revolutionary governments later fell into.

It may well be supposed, therefore, that the 4th of July of that year was celebrated with far more than usual ardor, and that not a little prophesying was indulged in, that has hardly been justified by the experience of ninety-eight years, great and marvelous though the results have been. The people of New Haven were notified by the papers on July 1st, that the occasion would be celebrated by an oration by Mr. Meigs, in the brick meeting-house, at 11 A. M., and that a contribution would then be raised, which, after deduction of expenses, would be given to the poor; there was also to be a procession and a prayer before the oration, and in "compliance with general opinion, the custom of dining in public on this occasion is suspended." After the prayer by Dr. Dana, we are told,²⁵ "a beautiful oration, replete with benevolence and Federal ideas, was delivered by Josiah Meigs, Esq., in a manner which did great honor to himself and

the day. It was calculated not only to preserve and feed the sacred flame of liberty, but to recommend industry, manufactures and the liberal arts, and conciliate all parties to a cheerful acquiescence in the new Federal Government,"—for there were many most earnest patriots, who saw nothing but monarchy and absolutism in the new form of government.

In the latter part of 1789, Meigs left his country and went to live in Bermuda. I and some others had always supposed that he had some official business there in connection with the U. S. Government, but such was not the case. His eldest son Henry tells us, in a sketch of his own life, that his father went to Bermuda upon receiving the offer of some law business in those islands in the hands of the Johnsons of Stratford. He himself writes that he went there in the close of 1789; and a small water-color sketch, made many years afterwards by his son Henry for *his* grandson, teaches us that he lived there in a long house very close to the water, on the island of St. George's. This house is very possibly still standing, and in it was doubtless born his son Charles on February 19, 1792. For the first two or three years of his life in Bermuda, Meigs's life was probably quiet enough. His law practice is not likely to have been large, and it is probable that he often longed for his native land, as he read the accounts of the working of the new government's machinery and received confused stories of the gradual formation of the two great political parties, which soon divided America into two almost hostile camps. He maintained his interest in scientific matters, studied geometry, as is shown by a book on the subject in my possession which he bought in Bermuda; and made observations on the meteorology of the islands: these latter he sent to the Royal Society, in London, as is learned from their letter of thanks to him, preserved among the papers of Henry Meigs.

But, if his first years in those "Summer Islands" were as quiet and uneventful as is the ordinary climate of that almost tropical region, the latter part of his stay there is only to be compared to the outburst of one of the violent hurricanes that occasionally visit them, leaving a trail of ruin and destruction in their path. It was his chance to be there at the time when the ambition and avarice of the English, combined with their dislike of their successfully rebellious offspring and with their almost unquestioned control of the ocean, led to the passage of certain decrees in council and other measures, which simply legalized the plunder and piracy of American and other shipping. American ships were brought into the islands by British privateers, libelled in the Admiralty Courts, and condemned under circumstances which constituted simple robbery. It is likely that Meigs was the only American lawyer in the islands, and thus it came about that most of the unfortunate masters applied to him for legal advice, and that, as Henry Meigs wrote, he "stood alone at the Bar of the Vice-Admiralty Court as their defender." They arrived there captives, without friend or acquaintance, and with no means even of meeting the expenses of legal process, let alone of paying fees; but none the less Josiah undertook their cases, "obligated himself," he had occasion to tell us later on a most important occasion, "in great sums of money for the payment of costs of process, * * and advanced money, even to my last dollar, on the credit of their owners, to defray their expenses home." He was proctor for some forty claimants and obtained favorable decrees for about half of them. It was to be expected that services of this character would not endear him to the men who were engaged in the business of privateering, and we are accordingly told that seventy-four privateersmen came to hate him with a bitter hatred for so interfering with their rich harvest of profits.

But this was not all the trouble. Josiah Meigs, though ordinarily a man of an even disposition and very urbane in his manners, was, when his feelings were aroused, of a very warm temper and exceedingly outspoken in his disapproval of the actions of his opponents. This will be seen more than once in his lifetime, and it is likely that, in Bermuda at thirty-six years of age, he expressed himself with even greater warmth than in his later years. Doubtless, acts of wanton cruelty were often inflicted on the unfortunate American captains and crews by their roving captors, and we are told that he denounced this cruelty as well as the captures in very free and independent language, both in and out of court. So strong did the feeling at length grow against him that the privateersmen trumped up a charge against him on the ground of his outspoken language, and had him arrested for treason; he was detained several days in custody, and narrowly escaped being sent as "one²⁶ of the very first settlers to Botany Bay," but was finally acquitted and released owing to the exertions and influence of the Governor of the Islands, Henry Hamilton, who was his personal friend. Advantageous offers are said to have been then made to induce him to stay in the islands, but he considered war inevitable and would not trust himself in a country at war with his own; so he indignantly refused all the offers and immediately proceeded to embark for America. He put all his family on a small sloop and arrived at New York after a short passage; on the way, the step of their mast broke, and they were in some danger until the mast was re-stepped after a good deal of hard labor. It is probable that the sloop he sailed in was the "Mary," Captain Sands, which reached²⁷ New York, May 13th, 1794. The papers of the day contain²⁸ a note, probably from Meigs, as to the decisions in the Admiralty Court in Bermuda and the

hopeless outlook there for captured American property, and also a list of the libelled vessels in Bermuda, handed in, they say, by Mr. Meigs, who sailed from there on the 5th; but there is some discrepancy in regard to the exact date of his sailing from Bermuda, for his family Bible records that Mrs. Meigs gave birth to a son at sea on the 3rd of May, 1794, in "Latitude 36° Longitude 67° W;" this child they named "Sea," but he lived only eight weeks.

CHAPTER IV.

1794-1800.

Appointed Professor at Yale—Manner as a teacher—Residence and family—His interest in politics—Becomes soon a republican—State of parties and extreme heat of party feeling at that time—Federalist sentiment of Connecticut makes him a social outcast—Nearly dropped from his chair at Yale from same cause—Why he finally left Yale.

THE six months following upon Meigs's return to America were passed partly in New York and partly in Stratford, Henry Meigs writes; and then Josiah was appointed, as will soon be told, to a professorship in Yale College. This position, but for the reasons soon to be narrated, he would probably have held for life; and it would have afforded a man of his tendencies a good field for distinction, and would have freed him from that wandering over the country and that wearisome struggle with grinding poverty and debt, which were his lot for nearly fifteen of the better years of his life.

Ezra Stiles was at this time the President of Yale, as he had been during the latter part of the time when Meigs was there as an undergraduate; and was a very zealous worker in the interests of the College. The institution had had difficulties for some time with the legislature of Connecticut, and had failed to procure from it financial aid; but President Stiles was at length successful in composing the troubles and securing an appropriation. "A part of these funds was at once applied to the support of a Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy. This chair had been vacant since the resignation of Prof. Strong

and was now filled by the election of Mr. Josiah Meigs of the class of 1778. He read his first lecture in the College Chapel November 20th, 1794, and was formally inducted into office the 4th of December following. On this occasion the President publicly delivered to him the keys of the philosophical department, and Mr. Meigs pronounced²⁹ a Latin inaugural address."

The period of Meigs's life, during which he held this professorship, was certainly of very great importance to him; and probably the field was more congenial to his tastes than any other he occupied during his life. But, possibly for this very reason but little is known of him for these six years. Holmes³⁰ intimates that he received the appointment, because his mathematical abilities had been observed during his tutorship; and Professor Silliman gives a slight view of his manner as a teacher: he writes:³¹ "he was a gentleman of great intelligence and had read Chaptal, Lavoisier, and other chemical writers of the French school. From these, and perhaps other sources, he occasionally introduced chemical facts and principles in connection with those of natural philosophy." Silliman then goes on to narrate the interest and curiosity excited in his mind by Meigs's explanation of the laws of latent heat, but my investigations have unearthed nothing further in regard to his connection with Yale College except what will soon be told of the reason for his leaving it, and the fact that he delivered the funeral oration³² upon President Stiles, after the latter's death in 1795. Henry Meigs writes, that they lived at this time "in a frame house on York Street opposite Punderson's Gardens," where they had a large garden in which he and his father worked hard. From the correspondence between Josiah Meigs and his brothers, one or two glimpses of him are obtained in this period, but they are but momentary. His brothers John and Giles still lived in Middletown, and visits

were occasionally interchanged. In July, 1795, the first-named brother visited Josiah at New Haven and says he took part in the celebration of the anniversary of Independence and had the pleasure of meeting his brethren of the Cincinnati. And in the spring of 1796, Josiah and his eldest child Henry (then thirteen years old) spent ten days with John Meigs at Middletown. The latter records this fact in a letter to his brother Return Jonathan, and says that the visitors walked all the way both to Middletown and back to New Haven, refusing all persuasion to take a horse and carriage. As the distance between the two places is about twenty-five miles, it will be seen that it was a pretty good walk for a boy of thirteen years, if not for a learned professor of thirty-nine. The professor's family at this time consisted of Mrs. Meigs who, he writes, had grown "very fat and in good case," and of the following children:—Henry, already in the Freshman class at Yale (he graduated in 1799, at seventeen) Clarissa or Clara, eleven years old, Samuel, eight, Charles, four, and Julia, eight months. He had lost³³ a daughter Julia in 1787, and the son Sea who had been born on the passage from Bermuda.

Josiah Meigs was always deeply interested in public affairs and became soon an ardent republican and follower of Mr. Jefferson. It is evident from his letters that he began early to incline towards that party, and there is proof that he had largely drawn away from the Administration's policy, at least as early as the middle of Washington's second term, about the time of the discussions growing out of Jay's Treaty. On July 23d, 1795, he writes to his brother, the Colonel, expressing regret that the latter had not succeeded as he deserved in his application to government, says he hopes the treaty with Great Britain will fail, and then continues:—"I am displeased with many things

in the administration of Government. They appear to me to have lost sight of the great leading traits of freedom. I may be told that, as I have nothing to lose, I ought not to feel uneasy. I[?] have children and I look with [tender regard] to their future situation and to that of [their] posterity from generation to [generation. I am] not pleased with the moderati[on] prevailing in France.* Moderation [does not] do in the midst of gold, treason, and perfidy."

Many other letters could well be quoted here to show the same drift in his political opinions, but it will be best on the whole to reserve them until later and then produce them all together, both

* The brackets indicate parts of the letter which have become defaced and are more or less illegible. For fear that some reader may carelessly infer that the massacres of the French Revolution were the special cause of Meigs's admiration—as they still compose its principal feature in the minds of many—it will be well to recall to mind the events which were at this particular time occurring in France. It should be remembered, then, that, after the Revolution of the 9th thermidor (1794, 27 July) and the execution of Robespierre, Couthon, and Saint-Just, the fury of the Revolution seemed for the time spent, and there followed a distinct period of reaction, which the French historians call the "Réaction thermidorienne." The condemned and fugitive Girondists were recalled, the Jacobin Club was closed, and steps were taken to abolish the Constitution of 1793, while the expatriated Royalists began to return in some number, and to express more or less openly the hopes inspired in them by the course of public events. A very severe winter and the pressure of famine led to the insurrections of the 12th germinal (1795, April 1st) and of the 1st prairial (20th May), which were violently suppressed by the troops of the Convention. This was probably the latest French news of importance known in America at the date of the above letter. But it is very clear that Meigs took a deep interest in the course of events in France and on the whole fully sided with the revolutionary movement, despite its errors. Henry Meigs gives the following additional evidence of this fact. When they were in Bermuda and he was studying French, he says "my father flattered me that I was being qualified to talk French with "les Enfants de la Patrie," and [to] put in my voice in the mad song of the Marseillais (*sic*)."

because this will avoid repetition, and because the letters, which have been preserved, belong generally to a rather later period. But it will be necessary to say something more here upon the subject and upon the general politics of the day, in order to present clearly to the reader what is to follow.

Meigs was indeed an ardent admirer of the purposes of the French Revolution; and this, as well as his Bermuda experiences and his general democratic proclivities led to his siding with the party in America, whose sympathies were with that country and against England. And it is very evident, too, that his democratic tendencies must have had a deep and firm hold on him; for not only was he absent from his country during the time when the events were taking place which marked and defined the boundary-line between parties in America, but, even upon his return, he was placed in a part of the country where all his surroundings and the vast majority of his old friends were rankly federalist, and where all his material interests called upon him, therefore, to follow with the tide and to cry aloud against change and in favor of the old rigid system, which the worshippers of the English were striving to maintain. He certainly showed no little force of character and true democracy in avoiding this and in adhering to the party, which later crushed federalism and imprinted so large a portion of its own principles on the American government that it has been well said³⁴ of its great leader that, if he was wrong, then America is wrong.

The French Revolution, and the furious wars, which followed it, formed then a sort of centre, around which the politics of the whole civilized world turned; and nowhere was this more strongly the case than in the United States. As these stupendous wars continued year after year and as efforts were made by

the combatants to force our country to take a part in them, the republicans (and, no doubt, Meigs with them) bitterly opposed the at least alleged proneness of the federalists to plunge the country into a war with France, and preferred vastly to side with the republicans of that country in their struggle against the united monarchies of Europe, which had made the war against revolutionary France with the distinct, if not avowed, object of crushing the revolution, and of reinstating and maintaining the special privileges of classes. This was certainly the face the great wars bore at their outbreak and down to about the end of the century, whatever may have been the case later. So great an element in American politics did this feeling for the two great rivals make that "Anglomen" and "the French faction" became, as is well known, usual terms to describe our political parties. The heat of party feeling at that day, too, was more bitter and violent than we can nowadays conceive; it may be doubted whether it was as strong during the civil war. It was a period of veritable cataclysm, and the world's political and social structure were undergoing such an upheaval as naturally shocked and terrified the large class which adhered to the past and to a great extent believed in the system of privileged classes in the political body—that system whose supporters for many years formed a political party in America, and which is not unfairly typified in the efforts made in the Convention of 1787 for a life-tenure Senate to be composed of members, who, as Gouverneur Morris said, "must have great personal property: must have the aristocratic spirit: must love to lord it through pride." The Federalists of that day saw the Republicans siding with and defending the French Revolution, in which *they* could see nothing but bloody crimes and a mad purpose to destroy all existing things and reduce society to chaos: while the Repub-

licans felt that their opponents wanted in effect to overthrow the constitution and to erect an absolute government with privileged classes on its ruins, and were unable to bear with any patience so great a falling away from the spirit of seventy-six. Thus it came that "Monarchists"* and "the aristocratic faction" were terms often bestowed by the one party on its opponents, while these replied by throwing back such then hateful nicknames as "Democrats" and "Jacobins."

It was the ill-fortune of Josiah Meigs at such a time as this and with his opinions and his warm feelings, to be placed in New England and in a part of it where the prevalence of federalist sentiment was not at its weakest, by a great deal. To be a republican in Connecticut at that time was to be branded as an outcast, as a man of an evil and wicked nature, bent on fell purposes; and so it was unavoidable that a person of Meigs's hot temperament and strong feelings, when excited, should get into

* One author, of by no means Jeffersonian tendencies, has seen and put so clearly the fundamental differences between parties at that day that I cannot do better than quote him; in his *Life of Gallatin* (p. 159), Mr. Adams writes:—"The two brilliant men who led the two great divisions of national thought were not mere declaimers; they were in deadly earnest, and no compromise between them ever was or ever will be possible. Mr. Jefferson meant that the American system should be a democracy, and he would rather have let the world perish than that this principle, which to him represented all that man was worth, should fail. Mr. Hamilton considered democracy a fatal curse, and meant to stop its progress. The partial truce which the first Administration of Washington had imposed on both parties, although really closed by the retirement of Mr. Jefferson from the Cabinet, was finally broken only by the arrival of Mr. Jay's treaty. From that moment repose was impossible until one party or the other had triumphed beyond hope of resistance; and it was easy to see which of the two parties must triumph in the end." The quotation in the text from G. Morris is from his speech of July 2, in the federal convention: *Elliot's Debates* V 271.

trouble. And sad trouble he did get into. The slightest part of it was the entanglement in some street row, into which he fell; a far greater must have been daily and hourly fallings out with friends, the breaking up of long-standing acquaintances, and the universal black looks and reprobation which were presumably cast upon him; but the greatest of all was the very serious trouble which he got into with Yale College. The record of the street trouble in which he was concerned is not very clear, but it seems that he and others had been celebrating some patriotic occasion and had all been singing "Hail Columbia" in a spirit of apparent friendship; but, when he later (without any intention of offence, he says, to those around) expressed a wish that the bodies of certain Americans which were lying on Long Island from an English prison-ship of the revolution, should be decently buried, some friend and classmate—fired at once by any reference derogatory to priceless England which was, to his mind, holding up against French wickedness all that the world contained worth living for—replied at once with anger that he would bury his own bones there rather than submit to the aggressions of France. This little outburst of passion seems to have been followed later by violence between some of the party, but there is no evidence whether or not Meigs was concerned in it; and, indeed, as already said, there is a confusion in the accounts of the matter which makes it impossible to find out exactly what did happen. The first part of the story is, however, well enough ascertained, being based on a statement by Meigs himself in a letter³⁵ soon to be quoted.

But, as already said, this trouble was as nothing compared to that which arose between him and Yale College because of his political opinions. It is perfectly apparent that this difficulty led to his narrowly escaping from being dropped from his pro-

fessorship, and that he was obliged, in order to escape from this danger, to make some formal statement of his political beliefs, which his enemies doubtless looked upon as a recantation. It does not seem to me to have been such, for its expressions contain nothing that any Republican of the day could not have subscribed; but none the less, the position he was put in was certainly humiliating, and might well arouse in him feelings of bitter animosity against those who had forced upon him the dilemma either of so humiliating himself or of being thrown upon the world, penniless and without occupation or reasonable hope of any, and with a family to maintain.

The President of the College at this time and since the death of President Stiles in 1795, was Timothy Dwight, who was a man of ability and distinction but an ultra-federalist and strenuous opponent of everything in public affairs which Meigs admired. He was a brother of Theodore Dwight, the Secretary of the Hartford Convention and author of a history of that body; and it will be shown later that these two brothers had a large hand in Meigs's troubles. But to return,—on Sept. 11th, 1798, Meigs addressed the following long letter³⁶ to "the honored and reverend Corporation of Yale College," being evidently led to do so by the fear of losing his chair. This letter, which will be quoted at some length as giving the best explanation of his trouble with the college, reads as follows:

"I request your attention for a few moments to a subject highly interesting to me.

"I have been, by the public, charged with being an enemy to the constitution and liberties of my country. If this charge can be supported, you would doubtless perform a duty of the highest obligation, should you throw me out of the honorable and important office, to which you have regularly elected me for the

four years last past;—and even that act, considered in the nature of a punishment would be wholly inadequate to my criminality and guilt. Your individual characters * * * preclude all doubt of your readiness and willingness to hear * * * before you pass a sentence, which may, perhaps, be utterly ruinous to me and my family. * * * From 1784 to 1789 I was the editor of a public paper which had an extensive circulation, and that of the most reputable nature. In that employment I exerted myself faithfully and assiduously in recommending to my fellow-citizens the adoption of the present Constitution of the United States; and I have in my possession late and honorable testimonials of the influence of that paper towards the attainment of that great and valuable object. In the close of 1789 I went to the islands of Bermuda, and, in 1793 and 1794, when the British Government authorized depredations on the trade of the United States, I advocated the causes of American claimants of captured property in the Court of Vice-admiralty of those islands. In the course of that employment, I was Proctor for forty-two American Claimants, and, in about twenty of those causes, favorable decrees were obtained. In all of those cases I became obligated in great sums of money for the payment of costs of process. To those who, by decrees, were stripped of everything, I not only gave credit for services in the way of my profession, but advanced money, even to my last dollar, on the credit of their owners here, to defray their expenses home. In some instances, I have been a loser by this eagerness to assist my countrymen. This conduct rendered me displeasing to the Government of those Islands, and to those particularly who were concerned in the business of privateering. When the order of Nov. 6th, 1793, regulated the decisions of their Court, I considered *war as inevitable*, and in this opinion I was supported by

the declarations of most of his Majesty's Council. Not daring to *trust myself* in a country *at war with my own*, I left the islands animated with all those feelings of resentment, which were naturally to be expected. Those feelings, I freely acknowledge, I have indulged too long.

“My expressions respecting the United States have indeed been too free [but probably have been exaggerated] * * * Tho' I have a very small circle of acquaintance, tho' no person converses less with the common people, yet my opinions have had an extensive circulation, and an importance has been given them which I never thought they would deserve to obtain.

“I was indeed a warm friend of the French Revolution, *[but its agents having failed even to discuss their differences with the United States, their conduct is wholly unjustifiable. * * * I supposed my office would be declared to be permanent, as soon as the funds of the college would permit.] The letter notifying my election is on your records. [I have indeed been discouraged by the continuance of *annual* elections, but I do not therefore blame the Board.] * * * Since I have been in this office, I have spent several hundred dollars which I had at the time of my installation; and should the event which I have reason to fear, take place, I shall, after payment of debts for necessaries, be left, I may almost say, without a dollar. . . . Should it be deemed your duty to leave me out of my present office, I shall not indeed despair,” [but the blow would be a hard one.]

Two days after the date of this letter and presumably in pursuance of some verbal agreement from the authorities to continue him in his office on condition of his making the statement referred

* The parts of the letter within brackets are my abbreviations of what the letter itself contains, and give the substance of what is often very much longer.

to, he again wrote to the college, offering to publish in the papers a statement, which should in substance say that he had indeed been a warm friend of the French Revolution, but, since the French refusal of even a fair discussion of the differences between the two countries, he was of opinion that their conduct had justified every measure adopted; that the present condition of the country demanded the support of every citizen; and that "I am determined to support the Executive of the United States in the defence of their Constitutions, their liberties and independence. The substance of this declaration I made to a Committee of the Corporation of Yale College at the late Commencement, and shall not deviate from the sentiments it contains."

I have not been able to find this statement published in the papers of the day, and do not know whether the authorities were in the end anxious that the quarrels inside the College should be so exposed to public view. However this may be, the worst of the trouble seems to have been set at rest for the time, and Meigs held his position for some two years longer, though some family letters make it look as if he still continued to suffer much annoyance from his position in so strongly federalist a community, and as if his final departure from New Haven was not entirely of his own desire. Henry Meigs, in speaking of his father's leaving Connecticut, says that it was "in consequence of the unpleasant political collision to which he was exposed;" and Mrs. Meigs in a letter to her son Henry in 1840, writes that her husband had in those trying times in New Haven been abused by Theodore Dwight and others, and that Theodore and Timothy Dwight were the cause of his being "exiled" from his native State to the "backwoods of Georgia only twelve miles from the Cherokee Indians for no earthly reason but his stern

democracy." Finally, the *Columbian Register* of September 21st, 1822, in a short sketch of his life, has the following:—"He was Professor [at Yale] during the stormy time when the current of party politics raged so violently that no distinguished republican could live unmolested;—at a time when no attainments, however rare, and no conduct, however upright, secured respect to a republican. But for the honor of the College and the State, it is hoped these dark days have gone by."

With this much knowledge, we must be satisfied. All important as the quarrel was to Meigs, and wearying and sickening as many of its details must have been to him, they have, like so much other human suffering, left no record. Possibly, it is after all best that our violent quarrels are so soon forgotten, and do not leave a long and dark record of heart-burning, bitter sorrow and hate.

CHAPTER V.

1800-1811.

The University of Georgia—Meigs chosen a Professor, and its President—His activity there as a pioneer in education—Manner of instruction—Trouble between him and Trustees—He resigns Presidency—Growing estrangement—Proceedings of Board, and his removal by them from professorship—Later opinions of this quarrel, and of the high value of Meigs's work at Athens.

THE name of Abraham Baldwin has already been mentioned in this sketch, as that of one of the tutors at Yale College during the years Meigs spent there as an undergraduate. This gentleman had been invited³⁷ in 1780 to remove from his native State and go to Georgia as the President of the University, which was then in process of establishment in that far south region. He accepted the invitation and removed from Connecticut, but, as the Georgia University did not get into actual operation for some twenty years later, he turned his mind to other things and entered upon his brilliant political career. Just about the close of the century, the University was at length ready to begin its instructions, and its Trustees, probably more or less in pursuance of a recommendation from Mr. Baldwin, who was still their President, chose Meigs as their first Professor: Henry Meigs writes that his father accepted the offer of the new Southern university, in consequence of the already-mentioned political troubles "and of the friendly invitation from Abraham Baldwin and others of Georgia;" and the early minutes of the University, still preserved at Athens, record that Josiah Meigs was, on

Nov. 28th, 1800, appointed by the Board of Trustees of the University of Georgia to be the first Professor of that institution, and to preside therein, in the absence of the President.

Meigs arrived at Athens, the seat of the new University, in the spring or early summer of 1801, and on June 16th of the same year was unanimously appointed President of the University to succeed Mr. Baldwin, who had resigned the same day. It was to be expected of his enthusiastic nature that he would enter at once with great energy into all the affairs of the new seat of learning, and accordingly the very day he was appointed President, he submitted to the Board of Trustees the outlines of a plan of education and a list of what he considered the books most proper for University education. But even before this time, he had written upon University affairs to his eldest and much admired brother Col. Meigs, who was then at Hiwassee in Tennessee (some 125 to 150 miles from Athens) at the Indian agency under his charge there. He says in this letter:—"I arrived at this place two days ago. Here is the seat of the University of Georgia over which I preside. We are making bricks for a large Collegiate Building 120 feet long 40 feet wide and three stories high. We have plenty of timber all around us, and thus far everything looks very favorable to the completion of the Building. Our great difficulty is the procuring of lime;" and then he goes on to urge his brother to use his influence with the Indians to induce them to allow the lime to be carried from their country to the border.

It was, indeed, a great task he had upon his shoulders, and one to be carried out under strangely different surroundings from those he was accustomed to. Having left the social system of New Haven and the halls of the second college of the country, the new president, a descendant of the harsh and forbidding but

iron-strong puritans of New England, came now to take up his abode in a village beginning barely to own a name and where probably the forest had first to be cleared away from the site of each house, and among a new and different people, with other religious views, with other social customs and traditions, and with a widely-extended existence of that African slavery which he had seen gradually dying out in his native Connecticut. In this new home, he found no longer the rough and rocky soil and the bleak, freezing climate of New England: here, too, was none of the varied society and constant interchange of thought of the city life to which he had long been accustomed; and here he could no longer breathe the air of an old established place of learning with its corps of men of wide knowledge, and all its many opportunities for the daily and hourly pursuit and acquiring of science in its many branches. He was situated now in a moderate climate, far down towards the extreme south of the then United States, in the midst of a beautiful and very rolling, but infertile, country; and around him were but few white men, for the modern Athens was founded on the very edge of civilization, and close to it to the west roamed Indians of the Cherokee and Creek nations in a land still almost exclusively their own. Even after the lapse of ten years of the century, the population of the new University town numbered but 135 whites, and up to 1804 or later communication with other parts of the country was certainly very limited, and probably did not exist, except to the sea-coast. About that time a road was in process of construction to the Tennessee, and in 1806 (if not sooner) Athens could boast of a regular post between Washington and New Orleans, which visited it every week.³⁸ The capital of the country was at the distance of 617 miles by this route, and the unhappy traveller by it would certainly have found such an

absence of conveniences and even necessities of travel as would have made the journey seem without end. It is probable that Meigs and his family had come to Charleston by sea, when they left New Haven, but even the journey from the coast to Athens was a severe undertaking in the view of modern luxury; on one occasion in 1804, Meigs had been obliged to go to a distance from Athens, and on August 27th he writes to his son Henry as follows of his return journey:—"I left the sea-coast of Georgia about the middle of July and arrived here on the 5th of this month without an accident of importance. Your good mother had arrived at Augusta from Louisville [Ga.] the day before I arrived in the stage from Savannah." Mrs. Meigs, it seems, had lived for some time in Augusta with the children, while the professor went on to Athens to see to the building of the University and of a house for his family: during the first part of his stay there he had no house of his own, and was living³⁹ as late as August 29th, 1801, in the house of Capt. Easley.

Athens is situated in Clarke County, some two hundred miles from the ocean, on the gradual upward slope to the top of the mountains, and is scattered along the summits and sides of a number of rolling hills, the bases of which are washed by the small and swiftly flowing Oconee river. From many of these hill-tops, distant and beautiful views are obtained of a wide expanse of rolling country; and he, who has seen this country, as the writer has, on a beautiful and balmy day of early spring, will not be at any difficulty to understand how it came that a child of Josiah Meigs, who passed his early boyhood there, retained to the last those happy recollections of the place with which Charles D. Meigs often delighted his children and grandchildren down to the end of his long life. It is a pleasure, too, to know that the institution over whose early years Josiah Meigs

watched, is now a prosperous and important seat of learning; I was informed, when in Athens in the spring of 1886, that there are about twelve hundred students in all the departments of the University in different parts of the State, and that of these some two hundred and fifty are at Athens.

The reader will hardly need to be reminded how typical of the restless energy and ceaseless advance of the American people was the scene to which Josiah Meigs had now removed. As one of that hardy and dogged band of pioneers, who have steadily pushed our frontier onward into the land of the savage, he was doing his part of the work, which was soon to change a forest into the village-home of civilized men and was to plant a great seat of learning where, not many years before, the wigwam had been the only abode of man. We, who have been born and bred in the midst of large cities and long-established communities, can hardly realize the difficulties that are incident to such scenes, and it is well for us at times to stop and try to understand the trials of those who have done so much for us. The establishment of a college, it is true, is not a usual part of their work, but its difficulties may none the less serve well to show their trials and the primitive means with which all their results had to be obtained.

✕ In an address before the Georgia Historical Society, Dr. Church said:⁴⁰—"President Meigs commenced the exercises of the University, when no College Buildings of any description had been erected. Recitations were often heard, and lectures delivered, under the shade of the forest oak; and for years he had the almost entire instruction of the College, aided only by a tutor or some member of one of the higher classes. The institution was without library, without apparatus, without buildings, without productive funds. And yet the President was called upon

to instruct from forty to sixty students, to superintend the erection of buildings, and frequently to meet the Board of Trustees and the Legislature at a distance from the seat of the College, leaving the institution under the superintendence of a tutor, or without any control but the direction of inexperienced youth." There is, also, a vivid picture of the President's difficulties and his methods of teaching at a slightly later period from the pen of his son Charles, who graduated at the University in 1809; he wrote:⁴¹—"Thus in the wild woods of Georgia, by the perseverance of my worthy father, were the blessings of literature and philosophy begun to be scattered abroad in a new country close by the frontiers of the savage Creek and the gallant Cherokee. The high-sounding song of Homer, the sweet notes of Virgil, the stirring narratives of Xenophon and Cæsar, the denunciations, the suasion, and the arguments of Tully, heard no more in the native land of the philosopher, were familiar sounds on the air of Athens. And many was the boy who got under his kind and patient and wise teachings clear views of Kepler's laws, and they knew the risings of the Pleiades and all the gems of Orion's belt and the whole train of Ophiuchus huge. There were taught geometry, trigonometry, and conic sections. There we made beautiful projections of eclipses a thousand years overpassed and a thousand to come, and we painted the bright sun with gamboge to show how yellow its light is, and the shadow of the earth was a great cone of India ink, and the orbit of the earth was Prussian blue. These magnificent results of art were formed on sheets of paper pasted together to make one vast sheet and hung up in the Philosophical Hall, where we had a telescope, an air-pump and several other things to study and practise astronomy withal."

These two quotations make it plain enough that his duties must indeed have been very exacting for some years after his arrival: and, as further evidence on the same point, it may be added that his correspondence indicates that the philosophical department, which was more especially under his charge, was devoid of any regular apparatus until as late as 1808. ✓

Meigs's second son Samuel William, graduated at the University with the degree of Bachelor of Arts, in 1807, and the minutes of the Board of Trustees for July 20th of that year, tell us that, at the commencement held that day, there were, among other exercises, a comic dialogue between Messrs. Hamilton, Green, Meigs, O'Neal, Rutherford and Meriwether, and an oration on "The liberty of the seas," by Sam'l W. Meigs. So it may fairly be assumed that the professor trained his children in the political path he thought they should follow, and no doubt the oration, which concerned a subject of which Americans and all neutrals then knew most by its conspicuous absence, had been largely instilled into the son's mind at the presidential breakfast table from intimate knowledge obtained in Bermuda and from intense feeling inspired by an earnest patriotism.

But Meigs had not held his new position for many years, before he began to have trouble with those around him. It is probable that this trouble, at least in part, took its origin in politics. Such is the opinion of the only present authority of the University, whom I have heard express an opinion upon the subject, and this view coincides, moreover, with not a few of the records touching the trouble, and finds strong confirmation in the political epithets which Meigs applied to his opponents at the height of the quarrel. It has already been seen that he was a strong Jeffersonian, and he moved to Athens, just after a time of the highest political excitement, so that it is not unlikely that

he expressed himself with great warmth upon political subjects. But his views were by no means such as to find favor at that day in the upper counties of Georgia, for it was his misfortune to be once more established in a stronghold of the federalists. It was hardly possible, therefore, that he could live there under his circumstances without some trouble arising between him and those from whom he differed so radically on questions of the utmost public importance. And in addition to this, there was possibly an even deeper-seated source of difficulty, for, as has already been said, Meigs had from his youth lived principally in the society of cities, while his fortune was now cast with those who were pioneers in a new and unsettled country.

✕ He had not been, therefore, many years in his new place, before difficulties and misunderstandings began to arise between him and his co-workers. On February 11th, 1805, he writes to Col. Meigs:—"My situation here is as pleasant as the nature of the people, rude, uncivilized, proud, jealous, etc., will permit, but I very often sigh for the society and the comforts of the society of New York or New Haven or even Middletown. * * * We have lately got an excellent bell, which is heard four or five miles around, and the Quadrupeds, and Bipeds, too, few of whom ever heard a Bell before, prick up their ears in amazement at the Prodigy." The same tone of discontent is also apparent in the following, to his son Henry, dated July 20th, 1806:—"I long to see the civilized part of the United States once more—I have now been five years on the forlorn hope in the most advanced part of the Frontier of land and light and science and civilization—If I plant my standard here I think the Great COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF will grant me a furlough—and honorable mention in the Bulletin." ✕

The first official record of the Board of Trustees, containing any reference to the growing estrangement is in their minutes of July 6th, 1808. These express the Board's regret at the lessening of the number of students from thirty to thirteen, and continue that the Board has no knowledge of the reason of this "other than such as they have understood as the general impression of the citizens at large respecting the conduct of the President, and this they conceive to be too vague and uncertain for them to form a decided opinion upon," yet they think it most proper and most fair to appoint a Committee to inquire into the foundation of the reports, "since it is alleged that a portion of the discontent now prevailing has arisen from causes which affect the reputation of the President of the College, as well as the moral character and discipline of the institution generally." A committee was accordingly appointed, but no record remains of any report from it. The records show an apparent lull in the storm for a couple of years after this time, but there is little doubt that it continued, in reality, to rage: and it was doubtless more or less in consequence thereof that Meigs resigned his presidency of the institution in August 1810. He continued in his professorship, but it is only too apparent that the quarrel had gone so far that an entire divorce was the only solution of the difficulty. Thus the day after his resignation of the presidency, the Board resolved, in a tone clearly indicative of the gravest misunderstanding, "That for the performance of the duty of Professor of Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Chymistry, with attention and diligence, the said Professor shall be allowed the sum of Twelve hundred Dollars *per annum*, and that the duty of the Professor of Chymistry be performed by Mr. Josiah Meigs in addition to the duty already assigned to him."

Meigs's connection with the University continued for one year longer, and the story of the final and public outburst will best be told by the minutes of the Board of Trustees. From them we learn that, on August 8th, 1811, the Board took the affidavits of two of its members in relation to certain conduct of Mr. Meigs; these read;—"Hope Hull, one of the members of this Board gives the following information and exhibits the same as charges against Mr. Prof. Meigs, which he urges should be inquired into by the Board, viz: that to the best of his recollection, the day after the adjournment of the Board in August last and at the door of the printing office, he, Mr. Meigs, addressing himself to Mr. Hull, uttered in substance the following words:—"you have appointed Campbell your Secretary; however, I suppose he will do well enough as a Secretary for the Tories." Mr. Meigs has further said in the presence of Mr. Hull, that the State of Georgia had great reason to thank God for one honest man—Judge Early:—"if it had not been for him, the lands belonging to the institution would have been sold and the money pocketed, and many other expressions and observations of a similar import, but not now precisely recollected." The affidavit of Augustin S. Clayton was as follows:—"In a conversation with Mr. Meigs a few days after the adjournment of the Board, in August last, upon the subject of the Congressional and County elections, he observed in substance as follows:—"You," addressing himself to me, "cannot think to gain the confidence of the people after your conduct relative to the College lands. The facts stated in the piece that appeared in the Express against you last was furnished by me, and there are other facts which I intend to communicate. But I cannot so much blame you, for you are a tool of other *great* men. But for one honest man or the only honest man among them, the Board of Trustees would

have sold the College lands, and would have squandered the money away to their own uses. They were all a damned pack or band of Tories and speculators, and if they had have [*sic*] turned him out of his office, he would have published their villainy and dishonesty to the world and have shown them in their proper colors. They had made him Professor of Natural Philosophy and Chymistry, and given him a poor pitiful salary of twelve hundred dollars—damn them, he reckoned they would make him next Professor of Cabbages and Turnips, and much more such conversation not now detailed, but the above is the substance of the conversation.”

After the reading of these charges, Meigs was sent for, so that the Board might hear his defence thereto, and he denied the substance of them and asked for copies so as to give him an opportunity of answering. These were ordered to be furnished, and the following day (Aug. 9th), the Board heard his defence and had read his affidavits in support thereof. They, then, “having maturely considered the same together with the charges and proofs exhibited against him, are of opinion that he hath been guilty of great misconduct and ought to be removed from his office. Whereupon resolved, eight* members voting in the affirmative, that Josiah Meigs be, and he is hereby, removed from the office of Professor of Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Chymistry in Franklin College;” a copy of this resolution was to be served on him and his affidavits were ordered to be filed, but they have been lost. The last reference to him contained in the minutes is of the same date as his removal from his office, and indicates, as does also his conversation reported in the Clayton affidavit, that he thought himself miserably underpaid for his

* There were nine members present: probably, the chairman did not vote.

services at the University. Doubtless, he was inspired by a feeling of wrath and indignation at what he thought unjust and even niggardly treatment, but one is inclined to smile at reading that the late Professor of highly important branches of science “presented a claim for ringing the bell which was referred to the Prudential Committee.”

With this finally ends Meigs’s connection with the Georgia University; it would now be entirely impossible, even were it desirable, to discover the precise causes and growth of his troubles there, but it may be safely said that the grave charges made on both sides of various misconduct and neglect were entirely unfounded, for none were concerned in the quarrel but men of honor and reputation; it is, though, plain enough that it was time for the connection between him and the trustees to be severed in some way. Whatever may have been the exact nature of the quarrel, and to whatever extent politics entered into it, it is only too apparent that it had been a most bitter one; as late as 1819, Henry Meigs, who had been in Georgia for a time, wrote in very caustic words of the trouble his father had had during his life at Athens. This letter, which is addressed to Josiah Meigs, seems to show that some sort of invitation had been extended the latter at that date, to return to Athens. It is hardly likely that this was any formal invitation from the University, but Henry Meigs’s letter looks very much as if some sort of inquiry had been made of his father, preparatory to such an invitation; and the records of the University show that the chair of mathematics fell vacant by death in that year, and that the presidency was vacant from 1817 to 1819. The son writes as follows;—“The invitation from Athens to you is agreeable to me. Let them invite! * * * * The invitation is agreeable to me, because it constitutes another of your victories over your

Enemies." It should also be mentioned in passing that the circumstances of the University seem to have been such that Meigs's salary was irregularly paid; but this matter will be more fully gone into hereafter.

This chapter of my subject cannot be better closed than by giving the opinions of Meigs's unfortunate quarrel and of the worth of his labors at Athens, entertained by two men, who lived near to his time, were so situated as to be more conversant with the facts of the case than any one can now possibly be, and who can hardly have had any reason to be partial to him. In an oration²² delivered in the College Chapel at Athens on Aug. 3d, 1825, Mr. Wm. Mitchell expressed himself in the following somewhat flowery language:—

"The fortunes and prospects of the College were various from 1803 to 1811. Sometimes it seemed to rise superior to all opposition; sometimes a dark and threatening cloud was ready to overwhelm it: at one moment all was regularity and harmony and beauty, at the next all was confusion, disorder, tumult;—intrigue was raging, malice sat brooding on the hearts of some, while warm feelings deprived others of self-command. To complete the work, the President resigns his trust, the Institution is left like a ship without a Steersman, afloat on the broad ocean of uncertainty.—He resigns, but for what does he resign? Because he was not devoted to the interests of the institution? No, for he afterwards accepted a professorship. Because he was not adequate to the duties of his station? No, for he proved himself indeed a man of no ordinary qualifications. But (shall I proclaim it aloud?) because the good people of Georgia, led astray by misrepresentations, mistook the man, traduced his character, and forgot themselves. He had to oppose single-handed the combined forces of envy and malice: he saw men smile and

smile in his presence, and yet felt that it was not the smile of friendship. For these reasons he relinquished that post which he had for nine years held with honor to himself and advantage to the State. * * * He possessed by nature a mind formed for greatness; his understanding was as strong as Hercules; he was a Samson in science, but withal he had a tender heart—a delicate sensibility.—Misery never failed to draw the tear from his pitying eye, the sigh from his compassionate bosom.—Such is an imperfect account of the man in whose hands the guidance of the College was first placed. I fain would do honor to his name, had I the power; yes, that honor of which he has been so cruelly robbed, not by strangers, not by open enemies, but by pretended friends."

And Dr. Church,* who has already been quoted, continues as follows immediately after what has been quoted from him in relation to Meigs:—

"And yet, because he did not in a few years call together as many students as were found at Harvard or Yale, and give to the College as high a reputation as was enjoyed by those ancient seminaries, he has been thought by some to have been deficient in zeal and talents.

"Few men perhaps ever labored with more untiring zeal and unremitting industry than this faithful pioneer in the cause of learning in our State. His views upon the subject of instruction were enlarged, and the measures which he recommended to the Trustees of the College and to the Legislature were judicious—such as fully to sustain his character as a man of learning and one who had carefully studied the subject of general education.

* Dr. Church was elected Professor of Mathematics in the University of Georgia in 1819, and its President in 1829. I have not ascertained the year in which the address in question was delivered.

The only failure on his part was a failure to accomplish an impossibility—to build up without means, a flourishing College. The Israelites had not a harder task, when required to make bricks without straw than Professor Meigs, when under such circumstances, he was required to raise up in a few years an institution, which would compare with those which had been long established and well endowed.”

CHAPTER VI.

1811–1814.

His family at this time—Soon applies for office from U. S. Government—Appointed Surveyor-General—Mr. Jefferson's aid to him in this matter—Family influence—Goes to Cincinnati to live—Acquaintances there—Cincinnati "School of Literature and the Arts"—Appointed Commissioner of the General Land Office, and starts for Washington.

By the loss of his position at Athens, Meigs was once more launched into the world with two young children to care for, without any occupation and almost certainly without five hundred dollars in the world, if even he was not in debt. His son Henry was established as a lawyer in New York; Clara was married to John Forsyth; Charles was in Augusta, Georgia, studying medicine as an apprentice to Dr. Fendall; and Samuel was twenty-three and probably, therefore, supporting himself; but Ezra Stiles was but ten years old and John Benjamin an infant of three years. The next fifteen months—during which period I have been unable to find that he had any regular occupation—must have been a time of great hardship to Meigs and his family. It is very possible that he taught among the families of some of his friends, but even supposing this to be so, it seems almost certain that he must have suffered a great deal from pressing poverty. Very little record of him during this time has been preserved, and his correspondence only shows that he was in Georgia until as late as November 17th, 1812, at which date he was in Augusta, then the home of his daughter Clara.

It is likely that he had applied for office from the federal authorities soon after he lost his position at Athens, and in this matter Mr. Jefferson was of material aid to him. It seems that there had been some prior acquaintance between them, but this is not certain. A letter of Jefferson's to him dated May 20th, 1803, shows that Meigs had shortly before that time written to Jefferson, expressing his approval of the latter's course as President, and seems to indicate an earlier acquaintance. However this may be, other letters show that in August, 1812, he wrote Jefferson for his aid in obtaining governmental employment, mentioning the Chair of Experimental and Natural Philosophy in the West Point Military School,* but evidently glad enough to accept any honorable office. Jefferson † wrote⁴³ Madison upon the subject and mentioned Meigs's name to the authorities of William and Mary College in Virginia. Jefferson's reply to Meigs bears date October 2d, 1812, and about the 14th of the same month a commission as Surveyor-General was sent Meigs, during the recess of the Senate. He was finally commissioned, with the advice and consent of that body, on Nov. 16th, 1812. His predecessor in the office, Col. or Gen. Mansfield, who was at the same time transferred to the Chair at West Point, became later a valued friend and correspondent. Mr. Jefferson's recommendation had doubtless been an aid to Meigs with the Cabinet, but it seems that other influences had been brought to bear, and it is also very evident that the family, of which he was a member, had a large share of power with the early democratic administrations. The appointment received by Col. R. J. Meigs almost immediately upon Mr. Jefferson's inauguration has

* The West Point Military Academy was established, during Mr. Jefferson's administration, by the Act of March 16th, 1802.

† See Appendix D.

already been spoken of, and this gentleman's son, R. J. Meigs, Jr., was successively Judge of Michigan territory, of Louisiana territory, and Postmaster-General of the United States, under federal appointments, in addition to several offices he held in the State of Ohio. It is presumable that the family's influence took its origin in the very distinguished services of Col. Meigs during the Revolution, and after that time R. J. Meigs, Jr.,* gained marked prominence through the important political services he rendered in Ohio. He was a leader on the republican or democratic side, and must have had a very large hand in the overthrow of the federalists in that State: he was elected Governor of the State in October, 1807, by the popular vote, but it was contended he was ineligible, and the legislature passed a law to try the question, which was decided against him. He was again elected in October, 1810, and was qualified.

There is reason to think that, during all this time, Meigs's wife and younger children were still at Athens, and he seems to have gone there once again about the end of 1812, probably to dispose of his few possessions and remove his family to the place where his new duties called upon him to live. This is said upon the authority of a letter, dated Jan'y 12th, 1813, and *addressed to him at Athens*, from his son Charles, then a medical student at Philadelphia in deep poverty and recently recovered from an attack of pleurisy. From a statement in this letter, it is likely that Josiah removed soon after this time to Cincinnati to live, but there is no proof of his being there until August 5th, 1813, on which day he wrote to his son Henry in New York. On the 10th of the same month, he shows that he had not yet lost his interest in public affairs by a letter addressed to Charles J.

* See Appendix E.

Ingersoll, M. C. from Pennsylvania, speaking in high terms of praise of a recent open letter of the latter's upon the war.

During his residence of something less than two years in Cincinnati, Meigs became very intimate with Dr. Daniel Drake of that city, and they maintained a frequent correspondence from the time Meigs left Cincinnati down to his death. His interest in scientific matters did not by any means flag; a letter to his son speaks of a visit he made from there to Big Bone Lick and of the large number of remains of the mammoth he found; and his later correspondence with Dr. Drake indicates that the friends had often taken walks together through the country near the new City of the West, studying geology and other scientific subjects. There existed at Cincinnati then another field of scientific instruction and intercourse—the “School of Literature and the Arts.” This, Dr. Drake writes,⁴⁴ was “an association for literary and scientific improvement: composed chiefly of young men, who formed themselves into a society in 1813, and elected Josiah Meigs, an accomplished scholar, their first President. Their constitution provides for frequent meetings, at which the exercises are of three kinds: a lecture from the President—an essay from one of the members—and a poetical recitation from another.” It is certainly pleasing to find that a man, who had attained fifty-six years of age and had lived no life of ease, had still left in him the vim and interest to join a society made up, as this was in the main, of young men and to take an active part in its proceedings. Meigs seems, indeed, to have entered into it with all the ardor of early youth: in an anniversary address⁴⁵ delivered before the society on November 23d, 1814, Dr. Drake, who had just succeeded him as its President, says:—“Our first year's labors were closed, by the interesting discourse, which has just been read. During that period, we have assembled, for literary

exercises, more than twenty times; and our President has delivered, on Astronomy and Natural Philosophy, a variety of Lectures, equally eloquent and perspicuous. He has deduced from them sentiments both amiable and exalted, such as a philosophical survey of the works of God invariably excites; and has interspersed them with many impressive recommendations of the pleasure conferred by the acquisition of knowledge. Thus, from his labors have resulted both instruction of the understanding and improvement of the heart.” It seems that, about the time he left Cincinnati, Meigs wrote a valedictory address for the society, which was probably read after he had gone. His letters show that the manuscript was later sent him in Washington, and that he intended to make additions and then return it, but I have been unable to find any trace of it.

On October 11th, 1814, he was appointed Commissioner of the General Land Office of the United States, *vice* Edward Tiffin resigned, and the latter was appointed Surveyor General *vice* Josiah Meigs resigned. Tiffin had been the first Commissioner of the General Land Office, which had been created by Act of April 25th, 1812. This exchange of offices is said⁴⁶ to have been proposed to Meigs by Tiffin, who had become anxious to return to the West; and it was arranged without difficulty to have the new appointments made by the federal authorities. As the Land Office was established in Washington, Meigs had of course to take up his residence in that city; he accordingly left Cincinnati and arrived safely in Washington with his family on the 26th of November, 1814, “after a journey of 28 days and 600 miles at least * * * over mountains and bad roads.”

CHAPTER VII.

At length in Washington, his wanderings and struggles at an end—Details of his thoughts and character—Political views he held during life—Opinion of Adams's administration—Of the Hartford Convention and its supporters—Of the Connecticut Federalists—Manners at home and with his children—Friends—Joel Barlow and others—Urbanity, and general evenness of temper—Occasional outbursts—Not fond of general society—Interest in young men—Mrs. Meigs—His long struggle with poverty and debt—Indifference and carelessness about money—Personal narratives of him—His learning—Natural Sciences—Classics—Meteorology and his plan for the establishment of a Weather Bureau in 1817—Congress failing to approve this plan, he collects and publishes results by voluntary work—Interest in mechanical matters, and forecast of steamboats—Religion—Portraits, and personal appearance.

FROM the date of Meigs's arrival in Washington until his death in 1822, his life was uneventful. He had at last, if it may be so expressed, reached port, and he led the calm and quiet life of one who has wandered and struggled enough in his years to know and enjoy the pleasures of repose. No more bitter contests raged around him, and he did not any longer hold a position where political or other reasons placed him in the ranks of those who are the objects of the hatred and attacks of nine-tenths of the people around them. A series of letters, which will be hereafter quoted at some length, give an excellent picture of the life he led in Washington, and afford many interesting details of his habits of thought and mode of life during these last eight years of his life. But, before these are introduced and while he is for the first time for many years breathing the quiet air of rest and peace, it will be best to stop and look back, often over many years of his life, at various points in his character, and at

some features of his trials, which could not well have been brought out heretofore.

In the first place, it will be necessary to speak again of his political opinions, which had so unfortunate an influence on his success in life upon one or two occasions. And let it not be forgotten that the very misfortunes these brought down upon his head furnish the strongest proof of the heartfelt devotion of the man to his principles, and of his earnestness and firmness in the maintenance of that which he believed to be right. It has already been shown that he began early to drift toward the republican party; and it is perfectly apparent from what his letters tell us, that he must have heartily disapproved of much that was done almost at the very outset of the new government. The elaborate study of etiquette, the lofty elevation above the people of those in high office, and the sonorous titles desired by or at least proposed for them—of all of which our country saw and heard so much during the first three administrations, before we had finally broken away from English traditional feeling and started off on our own democratic pathway—must have found in him a strong disapprover; and the Alien and Sedition Laws and other measures of their ilk must have been veritable *bêtes noires* to him and typical of the worst sort of tyranny. Henry Meigs writes of his father that he "was distinguished among the most zealous Republicans for his enthusiastic attachment to liberty and for the warmth of his hatred of tyranny;" and it has already been seen that Mrs. Meigs spoke of the suffering he endured on account of his "stern democracy." In a letter dated April 13th, 1802, and addressed to Col. Meigs, he writes as follows:—"I am told that the present Congress are now making thorough work and sweeping away the cobwebs of the administration of Adams;" and again on August 19th, 1803,

he writes to the same correspondent;—"I could never believe even during the tyrannical period of the Adams administration that you and thousands of others had bled and toiled in vain—for surely it would have been worse than in vain, if the plans and views of Adams and his infamous junto had been carried into effect."

Of the Hartford Convention and all who were concerned in that first of our disunion bodies, he can never speak without a fling, nor does he by any means spare the people of his native State for their so general and bitter opposition at that time to the federal government. On February 15th, 1815, about three months after his arrival in Washington, he writes to Dr. Drake, "I have only time to say that Mr. Carroll arrived last evening with the treaty of Peace. It will be read in the Senate, within two hours of this time. It is, I firmly believe, such as you and I and your good spouse and General Mansfield and all good men and women, who have a PATRIA, will approve. Most unfortunately for the GHOST OF THE HARTFORD CONVENTION, their delegates* arrived yesterday. They will not be able, I trust,

* These three gentlemen arrived at Washington just after the Treaty of Peace, which had ended the war and thereby removed any pretext for New England's unpatriotic hostility to the federal authorities. The Convention they represented became a by-word; and they themselves, creeping home without even an attempt to effect the purposes for which they had been sent, were the objects of the scorn and ridicule of the American people. Ingersoll (Second War 1814, p 241) writes of them:—"Whatever were their undivulged instructions, their aim, object, and insolent assurance were the overthrow of the administration; or, failing to effect that, the dismemberment of as many Eastern States as could be misled from the Union. * * * Before they reached Washington, the missionaries of disunion were still further confounded by news of peace, dropping its charitable mantle on whatever were their surreptitious designs. In the flush of consternating triumphs in which they could not sympathize, and exultations of peace, universal but for them, the agents of a

to separate the Great Family." And again in August of the same year, he ironically writes, "The President and all the Heads of Departments have been absent from the City for some time past. What a fine opportunity for a Hartford Conventionist to usurp the Government, if he could but find Partisans sufficiently numerous and brave." On May 27th, 1815, he writes to his brother R. J. Meigs, "I congratulate you on the return of Public Confidence. You will see by the Nat. Intellig. of this day that the *wise men*, or rather the *silly fools* of the East are mortified at the prosperity of the Government. How weak! how wicked! how atrociously corrupt! must be the hearts of the Federal leaders of New England. * * Time will, I hope, bring them [New England] to their reason, but really their prejudices are dreadfully obstinate and perverse." These letters are all about the time of the Treaty of Peace closing the war with Great Britain, which he hails with as great a degree of delight as did the rest of the country.

In 1817, he found occasion once more to express his opinion freely to his brother on the doings of the opponents of the War of 1812. It appears from this letter that, at that time, Connecticut claimed some \$145,000 from the United States for the services of her militia during the war, but their claim was opposed by the republicans, who maintained that the militia had been by no means used in the service of, but rather against, the authorities of the United States. The Con-

disastrous attempt slunk home by illuminated roads and cities, hiding themselves from a delighted and exultant people; degraded butts of derision and abhorrence, beacons of future factionists, scorned as traitors wherever they went. They were advertised in the newspapers as having absconded or lost themselves. The National Advocate of New York * * * advertised * * * offering a reward for three unfortunate gentlemen from Boston, who had missed their way to Washington in the service of the Hartford Convention, and it was feared had met with some mishap, perhaps drowned themselves."

necticut federalists obtained about the time of the election in that year a warrant for \$50,000 from the federal treasury which they heralded broadly as the first instalment of their much larger claim, hoping by this bait to attract many votes. The republicans in the State, being alarmed for the possible effect of this, wrote to Meigs, and he obtained from the Department of War a statement that the \$50,000 had been paid for services of certain Connecticut militia while acting under the federal authorities, and that nothing would be paid for the services of that militia (the quoted words are Josiah Meigs's and not the War Department's) "while acting under the command of Gov. Smith *in defiance of the Laws of the United States.*" This explanation of the payment was spread widely and had great political effect, Meigs says. After expressing his content with the State of the country and speaking of the success of the republicans in Connecticut, he goes on to say to his brother:—"The conduct of the Ruling Party in that State during the War was absolutely *rebellion* against the United States, and instead of being *rewarded* for it they ought to be *hanged*. You and I love our native State and we respect the character of the *true-blooded yankees*—they are a brave, an honest, and a *virtuous* people, and ought not to be imposed upon by designing hypocrites of any description either of *Laity* or *Clergy.*"

These extracts will serve to give a good idea of his opinions upon politics, and especially of New England Federalism; and, though his views are doubtless at times somewhat colored by party feeling, yet they may aid in calling attention to a chapter in the history of our country which has not generally been written with that openness and candor, which are so desirable. It may be added that he was clearly very full of the idea of the national grandeur and glory of the United States, and evidently looked

more to the federal government than did most of the leaders of his party. He would probably have been in favor of the general government's management of many departments of affairs, which they maintained were not and ought not to be, within its sphere; and I think there can be no doubt that he would, in his latter years, have hotly opposed almost any attempt by the States openly to defy the federal authority. This is, however, merely my individual judgment drawn from the general tenor of his letters, and it is in the highest degree probable that he had maintained his party in the resistance it offered through resolutions of certain State Legislatures in 1798-9 to the policy then dominating the Federal councils. He was usually very well contented with the course of affairs in America, if not even oversatisfied and more sanguine than circumstances justified, but he had his moments of depression, as well as others. Thus he writes in 1804, referring to some recent elections, "some of these things make me sick of representation, but *nihil est ab omni parte beatum*;" and in 1816 he writes from Washington, "I fear that the National Bank will fail at last." * * * "*De republica nunquam est desperandum*, but I think it a serious hardship to live on *hope*—and to be always on the border of despair." In April, 1822, he writes:—"This Congress are in my opinion seriously injuring the respectful feelings which people should have for the government."

Of his inner life at home and of his manner with his children, some record remains, though not very much. In addition to his wife and children, Mrs. Meigs's youngest sister, Miss Emily Benjamin, formed a part of their family circle for a good many years. She was with them at least in Athens, and in Washington where she died unmarried. With his three children, of whom most is known, he appears to have always been a most kind father and to have left a memory of great respect and affec-

tion. His daughter and he are said to have been most devoted to each other until the end of his life: his eldest son speaks of him constantly in terms of affection and respect, and they maintained for years a most frequent correspondence; and his son Charles always spoke of him to his children with the utmost respect, and has already been quoted as writing of him in the same terms. Of his household habits, Henry Meigs gives the following interesting account: "I had been always allowed by Father the privilege of sitting up late, provided I was out of bed by sunrise! This soon made going to bed by nine p. m. an inevitable necessity. I have maintained that habit to this day. * * * * Father always rose first in his house, made the fires and all the little domestic work before he called up servants and family. He said the servants never learned to make fires—it was a philosophic work: first shavings: next splinters: next small wood: last large wood—all scientifically adjusted—lastly a Tinder Box and three inches of waste paper. Quotient a brilliant fire on a Zero-ic morning in three minutes." When this son Henry had recently recovered from some sickness and was about leaving Georgia to settle in the north, his father wrote him on December 4th, 1803, as follows:—"I have hoped that all my family would have continued to enjoy that high and almost unparalleled health with which we have been so greatly blessed. I see very clearly that you are not to be a fixed and permanent Citizen of Georgia. Wherever you may be, it is in your power to be as happy as any one can be whose education has been equal to yours. Perhaps this may be the last letter you will ever receive from me. On this supposition let me charge you to persevere with undeviating steadiness in that virtuous conduct, which I believe you have hitherto practised. All the experience of all ages has proved that, on the whole, honesty is the

best policy. We are too apt to think of others, and to neglect the examination of our own hearts. I think my own experience is a full proof of this:—it is, at least, such to me. Without a love either of wealth or glory, and perhaps even with a culpable disregard to the acquisition of property, I have a family which you know is in most respects one of the most excellent.—We have had an unparalleled degree of health.—We have had as few disquietudes as fall to the share of the most favored of the millions of the families of the human race. Permit me to say that at this midnight hour my heart expands with gratitude to the Great Father of the whole human Family for his kind and tender care—he has taken me in his arms and carried me in his bosom. This goodness I have not indeed deserved, but I will say to you before God—That I have never violated the Chastity of woman—that I have never willingly withheld a debt which I was able to pay; nor have I ever been guilty of a malicious or revengeful act. In this view, perhaps a false and partial view, I consider myself as having been peculiarly protected by our [Great] father. I need not detail [to you] your particular duties. You [know] them well. I cannot wish [you] to be happier than I have [been]. I do not think it falls [to the] lot of man to be more so."*

Again, on October 15th of the next year, when this son was studying law in New York, his father writes him another letter of advice. After counselling against marrying until his position was such that he could support a family, he adds: "Study your profession as if to be eminent in it were the only object of your life, and without any regard to the good derivable from the profits of it. In short you must study law as moralists say

* The words enclosed in brackets are more or less illegible in the original letter.

we must practise virtue, for virtue's sake, and not for its rewards." His letters show also that he not infrequently sent gifts of money to aid his son in that devoted pursuit of the study of the law, which he advised.

An incident in the life of the younger son Charles furnishes a curious illustration of the rather adventurous tendency of our pioneer class. Probably many of the descendants of Josiah Meigs would hardly approve of sending off one of their children of but thirteen years of age into the forest for several weeks, in the custody of a half-breed Indian, yet such was the adventure on which Charles was allowed to go in 1805, and there can hardly be any question that the experience was of eminent use to him. One Jim Vann, a fair type of the half-civilized, semi-Indian of our borderland, having some virtues and not a few strongly developed vices, was at that day a trader and quasi chief among the Cherokee Indians not very far from Athens. Often leaving his home and journeying to a distance to make purchases, he had met and conceived a strong fancy for Charles and had offered to take him some day into the Indian country, show him much of interest, and above all to give him an Indian pony. The boy, eager to accept the chance for adventure, urged and begged his parents for permission to go, and at last prevailed; so, at Vann's next trip, Charles followed him far into the Indian country and saw and learned much which served a half century later for tales, delightful, indeed, to the boyish ears of his descendants. His father writes on February 24th:—"Charles has just returned from the Cherokee nation where he has been about seven weeks with J. Vann at Vannstown, on the Eutowah River, in the heart of the Cherokee country, about 150 miles from Athens. Mr. Vann has given him a fine little pony and Indian stockings, a belt of wampum, and other Indian

knick-knacks. He has taught him the Indian songs, etc., so that on the whole Charles has a tolerable Indian education." It is curious also to note that this journey made through the forest in single file, and much of it probably along merely blazed trails, lay on the very route upon which modern times seem to have projected the building of a railroad.

As to Meigs's friends, it will appear later that he had a good many, and that he kept up his relations with them for many years and was in the constant habit of corresponding with them. But in addition to those to be named hereafter, Joel Barlow should be mentioned. They had been classmates at Yale, and they remained friends until the death of Barlow, and after that time Meigs apparently lived near Mrs. Barlow in Washington, and his letters contain the kindest references to her and express deep feelings of sorrow at her death in 1818, in her home near Washington. Poor Barlow, stung to the quick by the bitter and cutting notices of his *Columbiad*, with which the federalist pens flooded the country, while no republican review worthy of mention was written, wrote Meigs in 1810 urging him to carry out—what Barlow seems to have thought had been Meigs's intention, if not his agreement—his plan of reviewing the poem. He wrote upon this subject more than once, pressing Meigs upon the ground that there was no one so fit as he to write a fair and judicial review of the work, but Meigs does not seem to have complied with the request—possibly the state of affairs at Athens at that time was not such as to permit the occupation.

As to Meigs's manners with his friends and in general society, everything shows that he was ordinarily most gentle and kindly, and very popular. It has already been seen, on the other hand, that he was at times, when greatly excited, altogether carried away by the warmth of his feelings, and that he would then break out into violent and denunciatory language of the

cause of his wrath or indignation. He was not, it seems, at all fond of general society; this will appear again from his letters, but the following to his son Henry, written from Washington on March 12th, 1816, had better be introduced here; he writes on this occasion:—"I was at Mrs. Monroe's Drawing Room last evening. It was crowded with the Great and the Gay and the Idle—and was as splendid as I wish to see—I go to such places on principles of duty not of choice. I prefer my own fireside with a book to all the parade." A most amiable trait in his character was his interest in younger men, and his pleasure in associating and studying with those of them who were anxious to increase their knowledge. More than one page of this sketch shows this, and none more strongly than those where we find him in 1813 a man of 56 years, meeting in the evening with the very much younger men,* who composed the Cincinnati School of Literature and the Arts, acting as their president, and delivering to them lectures on Astronomy and Natural Philosophy, inspired merely by the love of the subjects or by an active and kindly interest in young men.

Mrs. Meigs was clearly far more than a helpmate to him, and must indeed have been so essential a part of the household that it would have hardly been able to go on without her. She appears to have been a woman of admirable health, and I find but one record of her having a serious illness, and that a violent one that nearly ended her life at Athens in 1807. She was evidently the financial manager in the household—and it will be seen later that, though there were no large sums to be accounted for in the professor's home, yet a financial manager was very necessary, and one especially of the sort endowed in a high degree with the

* Dr. Drake, who succeeded Meigs as the President of the School in 1814, was then only 29 years of age.

virtue of economy. In 1805, Josiah wrote to his son Henry as follows:—"Your mother has about forty pigs *in esse* and expects in about three months to have as many more. She is hearty and strong and healthy and cheerful as you can imagine a person to be, and if I had half a dozen slaves and five hundred or one thousand acres of good land, I would put her to work as Overseeress, and I dare say she would maintain in all the substantial articles of living, the whole of her children with their families."

From at least a few years after his return from Bermuda down to within six or eight years of his death, Meigs was battling with poverty, and it is plain enough that the battle was often one wherein it was all he could do to keep his head above water. These troubles, strangely enough, seem to have begun during the time of his professorship at Yale, for his letter to the College in 1798 has told us that, in the first four years he was there, he had spent a prior accumulation of "several hundred dollars," and that he had hardly a dollar above his debts. It is likely that his salary was very small, but I do not think it at all improbable, from what is known of his character and his money habits, that he had spent part of his salary in purchases to enable him to give a better course of instruction. Whether or not this guess has any foundation in fact, his later letters show that he left Connecticut with a good many debts hanging over him, and that they were still unsettled as much as five years afterwards. He had, moreover, been unable to recover sums due to him by others, and I find that in 1805 he had the great good fortune to recover a debt of nearly \$200, which had been due him in Connecticut for eighteen or nineteen years. This must have been a very Godsend to him, but he at once sent an order for nearly the whole of it to his son Henry, and urged him to get it into

his hands "as soon as possible; otherwise it may be taken as my property—and you know I owe some money in Connecticut."

While at Athens, he appears not only to have been pressed by old debts, but to have been unable at times even to get his salary and to have been forced by sheer necessity to borrow more in order, as he says, "to keep the pot boiling." In sending his son the sum just mentioned, he writes on February 10, 1805:—"as to myself I find I am more and more embarrassed every day. I dispose of more than my income, and make scarcely any perceptible impression on my debts—nor do I see that I shall ever be able to send to the Red Sea or to any other receptacle of Ghosts, that Spectre of debt which has so many years haunted me and destroyed all the happiness of my life." On another occasion he writes to the same correspondent that he can send no money: "there is no money in the Treasury—our great building has absorbed all, and I can scarcely get enough to buy butter and other necessaries of life. I have considerable faith in the doctrine of destiny—and that mine was from the beginning to be never able to have a Guinea of my own at command. * * * I wish you would hit on some way of getting money, for I would rather you had never been, than that you should suffer one-half of that vexation and pain which the want of it has always made me suffer." One other proof of his poverty there, is derived from a story,⁴⁷ with which his son Charles D. Meigs often delighted an admiring circle of his children or grandchildren. During the times when his father was still a professor at Athens, "Charley," then a young and active boy, having become possessed with a wild boyish desire to purchase from its owner a fish of stupendous size recently caught in the waters of the Oconee river, rushed off to his mother to beg of her the dollar, which the owner demanded for the treasure. She demurred at first on the ground that

there was but twice that sum in the house, but finally gave him the dollar; and the story then went on that Charley lost the money on his way down to the Oconee river, but finally secured the prize by getting from his mother the second and last dollar in the house.

When he moved from Cincinnati to Washington, he borrowed of Dr. Drake some \$200 or \$300, which does not seem to have been finally repaid until early in 1816. It will be seen later, too, that he found his salary* in Washington no more than enough to maintain him; and it had better be added here that he left no property behind him. The settlement of his estate shows that he left personalty appraised only at the sum of \$1,007.17, and it is not likely that he left any real estate which was not included in the inventory; the articles appraised were almost entirely of household use, but there was "one lot of books" which sold for the small sum of \$24.65, and some valuable work by Humboldt, which Mrs. Meigs disposed of later for about \$200; it had apparently cost \$300.

Meigs himself speaks on one occasion of his having possibly a culpable disregard to the acquisition of property, and it seems to me that it must be admitted that such appears to have been the case, though the evidence upon the point is by no means clear and precise. Henry Meigs writes of him as follows upon this subject:—"His liberality prevented his accumulating any property. He left none behind him. He was only anxious to

* The Act of April 25th, 1812, which first established a Commissioner of the General Land Office, provided that his salary should be the same as that of the Auditor of the Treasury. At this time, the latter officer's salary was \$2250; and I think that no increase was made, while Josiah was Commissioner. He had, also, the franking privilege. The Act of May 18th, 1796, providing for the appointment of a Surveyor General, fixed his salary at \$2000, and this was, I think, the salary of the Office as late as 1815.

be and to be thought generous and honest." And a letter of his son Charles to Henry Meigs gives an amusing instance of this indifference to monetary affairs. The letter is dated shortly after the date of Josiah's appointment to the Surveyor Generalship, and narrates that the father, upon telling the son of his appointment, instead of rejoicing at his escape from what must have been extreme poverty, had clasped his hands and exclaimed "My God! Charley! what fine instruments we shall have." Charles goes on to say that he believes that the pleasure his father derived in anticipation from his mathematical speculations was far greater than that furnished by the prospect of independence.

The following personal narrative of him was told his grandson Gen. Meigs, by a gentleman who had lived in Washington at the time and seen the occurrence. It was repeated to me as having taken place upon the occasion of one of our naval victories in the war of 1812, but no brilliant naval victory occurred so near the close of the war as Meigs's arrival in Washington, so it may be conjectured that the battle of New Orleans* was the

* Since writing the above it has occurred to me that the battle of New Orleans was almost altogether wanting on our side in the *death* for one's country, which was evidently uppermost in Meigs's mind. On the other hand the capture of the "President" by the English—the only naval engagement the narrative can well concern—was very bloody to the Americans but was a defeat. In this uncertainty it seems best to me to let the story stand as it is. Of the capture of the "President," Ingersoll (Second War, Second Series I p. 22) writes:—"On the tempestuous night of Jan'y 14th, 1815, in a snow storm, Decatur escaped to sea from New York in the frigate President but * * * ran aground * * * when, as alleged by many, treacherous lights from the shore apprised the enemy of her emergency. Next day four ships of war * * * were under all press of sail in pursuit. At midnight * * * three * * * overtook the President, *mobbed* her, as our consolatary phrase was at the time, and Decatur proudly surrendered his sword, not to any single conqueror, but to the commander of the squadron; after attesting

event in question. At some evening entertainment in Washington, the news was rather suddenly and unexpectedly brought of this superb triumph of American arms. Of course, all Americans present were in a high state of excitement and delight, and full of congratulations to each other. Meigs was certainly no less pleased than the rest, but seems to have been rather overwhelmed by the triumphant news, and not to have joined at once in the exultant feelings of those around him. He was before long observed by some friend to be sitting all alone, with his eyes looking far away and his whole expression so rapt, that his friend seems to have feared he was not well, and went up to speak to him. Upon being addressed, he looked up in a few moments, and showed what had been the course his thoughts were pursuing, as he replied solemnly "dulce et decorum est pro patria mori."

It is amply evident that Meigs was a student upon many subjects, and a deep and thorough one on more than a few. His favorite pursuits were Mathematics, Astronomy and Meteorology. It seems his aptitude for mathematics had been observed while he was still a student at Yale; and he did not by any means give up the study with graduation. A copy of Euclide's Elements,* with his name written in it by himself in Bermuda, on September 11th, 1792, has survived to the present day, and

like Porter [in the Essex] a noble spirit of resistance, which would not yield till more would have been worse than useless. The destruction endured in the Essex and the President exceeded that on board any English vessel of war before she struck her flag."

* "Euclide's Elements with Archimedes's Theorems of the Sphere and Cylinder investigated by the method of Indivisibles by Isaac Barrow, etc., to which is annexed Euclide's Data with Marinus's preface, and a brief Treatise of Regular Solids."

exhibits his careful reading of it in some geometrical figures, and in calculations in his own handwriting upon e. g, the relation between the diameter of a sphere and the side of the cube inscribed; and a copy of Paradise Lost shows his fondness for figures by his marginal calculation* of the distance through which the falling angels passed in their nine days' descent. Henry Meigs writes of his father that "his greatest pleasure was in the application of the latter [mathematical science] to astronomy, the sublimity of which he felt with unusual force;" and his letters show that he often observed astronomical phenomena and corresponded with his son upon what he saw. Meteorology was also a very favorite pursuit with him, but this will be gone into more at length shortly. I believe also that to him is largely due the system⁴⁸ of the survey and division of our public lands, which is much the same to-day as in his time—but of this point I speak with hesitation from want of the necessary knowledge.

But he by no means confined himself to these subjects. In the natural sciences he cultivated several other branches besides those mentioned; and everything proves him to have been an excellent classical scholar. Not many men, whose occupation does not call upon them to do so, would be competent to make an address in Latin sixteen years after leaving college, as Meigs did upon beginning his professorial career at Yale; and his letters show that he had a fondness for and familiarity with the dead languages, and at least with French of the living ones,

* This note reads:—"Spaces passed over by falling bodies are as Squares of the times—the space in the first second is sixteen feet: therefore the angels in nine days fell through a space of 1,832,308,363 + miles."

to the end of his life. His son Charles, who was himself a voracious and thorough student upon many subjects, wrote⁴⁹ of him as follows:—"He was an excellent Greek and Latin and French scholar, and made high attainments in mathematics. He cultivated with some success a love for the sciences of botany and geology, and as a general littérateur and scholar had few superiors, so that take him all in all, it will be rare to meet with a person of more extensive and diversified knowledge than was possessed by that gentle and good man."

Meteorology was one of his favorite studies, and one which he pursued for very many years of his life. In Bermuda, it has been shown that he kept some regular sort of observations of weather, and he seems to have continued for the rest of his life to do so, and to collect observations taken by others at different points. But one of his efforts in this direction should be gone into at some length, as it shows that he was far ahead of the average of his day and generation upon the subject of the observation and organized study of the phenomena of nature; and as it has a striking interest to us, who live some seventy years later and have before us daily the results of a system similar to that which he wished to establish. His plan was to establish a regular series of daily meteorological observations to be taken at different points in the country, under the direction of the Commissioner of the General Land Office, similar to those now taken by the Weather Bureau. He appears first to have thought of this in 1817, and he writes to Dr. Drake at different times as follows:—

"February 1, 1817.

"* * * * I, yesterday, suggested in a note to an influential member of Congress, whether a Resolution might not pass, authorizing the President of U. S. to cause *Meteorological Reg-*

isters to be kept at each of the Land Offices of the U. S., under the direction of the Commr. of the G. L. Office, and that the Meteorological Observations should be returned *monthly* to the G. L. Office with their Official Returns. Detroit, St. Louis, Opelousas, New Orleans, Saint Stephen, &c., &c., are in an area of about ten or thirteen degrees of Latitude and Longitude, comprising Hill, Mountain and River, &c.

"You will see with a *glance* of your bright mind that something very clever might be made of this. If my plan be adopted, and the *Registers* be furnished with the requisite Instruments for *Temperature, Pressure, Rain, Wind, &c.*, the expense of which would be a mere trifle compared to what YOU and I, at least, think the *value* of the object, we may in a course of years know more than we shall be able to know on any other plan. I shall prefer the Centigrade Thermr."

"June 13th, 1817,

"* * * * I am glad that you and Dr. Mitchell and other *intelligent* men are pleased with my effort to obtain Meteorological information. It is certainly a good plan, and I shall persevere in it, until it shall have become a matter of course. I mentioned the matter to some influential members of the National Legislature, but they were so deeply occupied with more important subjects that nothing was done. I shall however pursue it next winter; without some system of this kind, our Country may be occupied for ages, and We the people of the U. S. be as ignorant on this subject as the *Kickapoos* now are, who have occupied a part of it for ages past.

"The expense of the instruments for the Regrs. ought not to be regarded. The stationary character of the Office of Regr., with the constant opportunity he has of conversing with applicants for Lands from all parts of the Land District, promise not only exactness but multifarious information * * * * *

"My son the Doctor [Charles D. Meigs, later of Philadelphia] * * * sailed from Charleston, S. Ca., on the 5th of this month, and in *three* days arrived in New York; at least seven hundred miles in seventy-two hours. We knew he was to sail at that time and as *we* had a *North-East* Storm on land at that period, we predicted for him a boisterous and tedious passage—but he writes me that, from Charleston the ship was immediately placed Eastward of the Gulf Stream, and took a *South-East Current of Atmosphere*, which drove her like an arrow from the bow thro' the whole transit without variation of *force* or *direction*; this is a curious *Meteorological Fact*."

The effort to have the observations taken under the sanction of public authority failed, but Meigs did not by any means give up his efforts to advance the interests of science. On the 29th of April, 1817, he addressed a circular⁵⁰ to the Registers of the Land Offices, requesting them to take regularly, certain meteorological observations and forwarding blanks to them for the purpose; thus, the plan had to be placed entirely on a voluntary basis, and of course it was not possible to obtain barometric observations; Meigs himself does not seem to have had one of these so important, but at that time expensive and still rather rare, instruments; and it is very unlikely that any of the Registers had them. The blanks sent out were prepared for three daily observations of temperature, wind and weather; and contained a column for general observations, wherein the Registers were asked to note unusual weather phenomena, facts relating to the time of the migrations of birds, the earliest appearance of flowers in the spring, the hibernation of animals, seismic disturbances, unusual states of public health, and anything relating to the antiquities of the country. His request appears to have met with a favorable reception, and the public papers for some few

years contain notices furnished by him upon "the distribution of caloric" and kindred matters. The observations⁵¹ he obtained covered often a wide area, and he more than once notices that almost universal prevalence of cold over the country at a particular date, which we have become so familiar with under the name of a "cold wave;" thus, we learn from him, for example, that one of these outpourings of polar air occurred shortly before Christmas, 1818, for he records that the 21st of December had been the coldest day through the whole of the space "between Detroit and Augusta * * about six hundred and fifty miles, or about nine degrees twenty-one minutes of latitude." The observations at the Land Offices were continued for a few years, and Meigs says, in 1819,⁵² that the politeness of the Registers of the Land Offices and of others had enabled him to collect observations for nearly twenty years. He writes twice to Dr. Drake that he was thinking of using this material to prepare an article upon the subject for the American Philosophical Society, but he died before doing so. The mass of observations he had collected upon the subject came into the hands of Henry Meigs, and was by him presented, in 1858, to the American Institute of New York, where, I believe, they are still preserved.

In matters of mechanical improvement, also, Meigs was always interested, and his letters refer occasionally to great engineering operations as of no serious difficulty and likely to be accomplished in a very short time. It is curious, too—and seems almost prophetic, with the world standing, as it did then, on the very threshold of the stupendous improvement he refers to—to find him writing to his brother, on Aug. 19th, 1803,—“I am so enthusiastic in matters of mechanical improvement as to believe that the means of ascending the Mississippi and Ohio will in a very short time be pointed out. This being once done,

it follows that on the banks of the Mississippi will be founded a City—the seat of the Government of a community bounded by the North Pole, the Atlantic and Pacific and the Isthmus of Darien, viz;—the whole of North America.” As will be shown later, he lived not only to see the introduction of steamboats, but to travel on them nearly the whole way from Baltimore to New Haven; he did not, however, see the vast empire he predicted, and, though our country has since his day acquired no inconsiderable portion of the territory he foresaw as forming a part of it, yet we Americans of eighty-four years later may still be permitted to doubt the desirability or present probability of the complete fulfilment of that which he predicted.

It is apparent that Meigs was a man of deep religious feeling, though it may be doubted whether he was in full accord with the tenets of any particular sect. Mrs. Meigs had presumably been brought up as an Episcopalian, as her father belonged to that body⁵³; and their son Charles was baptized in the English Church in Bermuda, but it is not clear of what sect they were members. Mrs. Meigs wrote many years later that they had gone to the Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, and a letter of Charles D. Meigs shows that Josiah had endorsed notes for some church in Washington shortly before his death; but I do not know to what denomination this belonged.

At least two paintings of him remain, one owned by the grandson of his son Henry, showing a half-full face and a half-length view of him seated, and another showing a small profile view of the head only. The original of the latter, I believe, is in the possession of Henry Meigs Aubrey, grandson of Josiah's daughter Clara, for whom it was probably painted about 1819, when she was going with her husband, John Forsyth, to Spain. Three other copies or originals of it exist, one owned by Gen. Meigs of

Washington, one by the University at Athens, and one by Henry Meigs, grandson of Josiah's eldest son Henry. The silhouette, a reproduction of which forms the frontispiece of this sketch, was given by Dr. Drake to the youngest daughter of Charles D. Meigs in 1851 : in the letter sent with the gift, he writes that, at the time it was cut (probably 1813 or 1814), it was thought a very good likeness. From these portraits, there can be obtained a fairly accurate idea of his personal appearance ; he was tall and spare, and is remembered by a grandson as wrapped in a long frock-coat ; he had a large and capacious head with a high forehead, a long and prominent chin, a square mouth and a rather long and pointed nose ; and his eyes were mild, but bright, and of a blue tint. In general effect, his face has certainly marked power and is very alive and of a peculiarly benevolent appearance.

CHAPTER VIII.

1814-1822.

Washington in 1814—Land Office, duties of—His occupations in Washington—Extracts from his letters.

IT must be remembered that, when Meigs came to Washington in the end of 1814, that city was in reality but a small and scattering village, to which the government had been removed only fourteen years before. The fortunes of war, too, having placed it in the hands of a conquering army a few months earlier, Ross and Cockburn had barbarously burned some portions of it, and the blackened ruins still remained. The era in our history marked by the war of 1812, too, was not yet closed ; active hostilities were still going on, and the bitter opposition and unpatriotic conduct of New England were threatening our country with all the dangers of a division of the confederacy ; but affairs were destined soon to take a turn that made the English authorities glad to be freed from the burden of the war, while all America hailed the honorable Treaty with one voice as a priceless boon. It did not only relieve us from the weight of a war, which had, with many a glorious success, brought many a disaster to American arms, but it nipped in the bud the plans and plots of the Hartford Convention and its supporters, and covered them with an odium and ridicule from which they never recovered.

The date of his arrival there was indeed an epoch in our history, and many references to the interesting historical events enacting around him are to be found in his letters ; but he looked

at these now merely as an outsider, but rarely, it seems, mingling in any political strife; he was at last out of the battle and at rest, and he devoted himself almost entirely to the duties of his office and to the studies he took pleasure in, only watching public events from a distance. Though the routine of his office made large demands upon his time, he does not seem to have found it burdensome except during the sessions of Congress, when all sorts of demands for information were made upon him by that body: during one of these periods, when it is likely that much unnecessary labor had been put upon him by hasty and ill-considered Congressional requests, he groans to his friend Dr. Drake over the confinement to his office caused by the very inquisitorial tendencies of Congress and sighs, in the language of Horace:—
“O rus, quando te aspiciam?”

When he took charge of the Land Office in the end of 1814, ten clerks were constantly employed in it: in January, 1818, he writes that he is “extremely occupied—the business of Military Land Bounties, superadded to the ordinary business is almost too much for me. For more than three months, I have been confined six hours a day in the office, yet I am in perfect health and I am astonished at myself, and I hope grateful to the Giver and Sustainer of life when I reflect that no pain or sickness assails me, while so many around me droop and die.” At this time there were eighteen clerks employed in his office. In May of the same year, he writes that he has written his name officially at least fifty thousand times within six months, and in 1821, he writes to Dr. Drake, excusing himself for neglect to write to him and other friends, on the score of age and increase of public business, his office then involving (he says) a correspondence with thirty-two Land Offices, about twenty of which had been established since he became Commissioner in 1814. The Land Office

had a good deal of patronage at its disposal, if we may rely upon the opinion of John Quincy Adams, who writes⁶⁴ in his diary as follows, in referring to the appointment of John Forsyth as Minister to Spain;—“His wife is daughter to Josiah Meigs, who is at the head of the Land Office, and niece to R. J. Meigs, Postmaster General. These are both offices having extensive patronage scattered all over the Union, and their influence was perhaps not without its weight, in forming Mr. Crawford’s estimate of Forsyth’s fitness for the mission to Madrid. I have not formed a very exalted opinion of Forsyth’s principles or of the loftiness or delicacy of his character.”*

We should be very much in the dark as to these last years of his life, and should have much less knowledge of his pursuits and his character in general than we have, were it not that a good many of his letters at this time have been preserved. To our knowledge, he corresponded with Dr. Drake of Cincinnati, with Dr. Abbot at Washington, Georgia, with Col. Mansfield, with David Daggett, who was at different times U. S. Senator and Chief Justice of Connecticut, and with several members of his family. Most of this correspondence is probably long since lost, but the letters to David Daggett are preserved in Yale College Library, and those to Dr. Drake are in my possession and have been carefully read by me, as have also those to Mr. Daggett and to many of his family. They are written in an easy style, and touch upon all subjects; scientific matters are constantly noted, new publications and other matters of literary

* Adams goes on then to criticise Mr. Forsyth for an alleged uncivil tone of independence of the Executive the preceding winter, when seeking the appointment; and says that, since accepting the office, his conduct in the Senate has been such as to embarrass the Executive. Mr. Forsyth’s Spanish mission was conducted with such eminent success that his reputation will not be materially injured by the diarist’s disapproval.

interest referred to, and politics and the public men of the day and customs of Washington society occasionally discussed; they indulge in pleasantry occasionally, and at times use with great apparent facility, in quotation or otherwise, the Latin and Greek, as well as the French tongues. These letters are not in such shape that they can be moulded into a continuous narrative, but they will be used almost exclusively to tell the story of his life in Washington; and it is believed that they will serve admirably to depict his character, and will have an even broader use in showing the mode of life and the customs of the few citizens who then lived in that small embryo of our modern federal capital. The letters to be quoted are all addressed to Dr. Daniel Drake, and extend from a few days after his arrival down to within five months of his death; they read as follows:—

“Washington City,

“Dec. 3rd, 1814.

“We arrived here on the 26th of November and terminated without accident a Journey of about 600 miles over stony mountains, muddy roads, and rapid rivers. * * * * We did not find the mountains so formidable as our apprehensions had painted them.—It indeed requires patience and moderation to get over them without the fracture of Bones. From the top of Laurel Hill the prospect to the West is very extensive, sublime, and if the day had been clear, would have been very beautiful.

“This City answers my expectations as to its Extent, and the Ruins of the Public Buildings prove that it was once a beautiful City. The people are mostly of that class who are born to live on the labours of others—*Fruges consumere nati*, like the suitors of Penelope.

“I believe there is a greater product of industry in Cincinnati in one month than in this Metropolis in as many years.

They are idle, luxurious, and fond of show, especially in furniture; for example, at the sale two days ago of the Russian Minister's (Dashkoff) Furniture, a pair of looking Glasses went at the trifling price of \$600!!; the Glasses were of Paris plate, to be sure, but what is of more value, they had been the property of a Foreign Minister. The Market of Cincinnati in Quantity, Quality, Price and in all other attributes of a Market is incomparably superior to the Market of W. City. It is unfortunate for the present Congress that the Yankees cannot transport their eatable Notions by water. I have been introduced to the great Men, and after attending Mrs. Madison's drawing room next week shall judge myself acquitted of most of the burden of Etiquette. We have taken private Boarding in the same apartments with my Nephew, the P. M. General. When Congress rise, viz. :—about the 1st of March, I shall take possession of the house * on the hill next to Barlow's, and go to planting cabbages, etc.

“I have not yet visited the Fathers of the Country in Grand Council. It is lamentable that so many of them are Step-Fathers. The dispatches last received have raised the hopes of

* I have not ascertained in what part of Washington Meigs's permanent residence was. The Barlow referred to, so far as I know, can only be Mrs. Joel Barlow, but it seems very unlikely that Meigs lived far ont near Georgetown, where Barlow's country seat (Kalorama) was and where Mr. Todd seems to think Mrs. Barlow lived after her husband's death. One of Meigs's meteorological notices (Niles's Register, 1819, Vol. XVII p 80) says the observations of temperatnre at Washington were taken in a house “on the north side of F St.” and it is *likely* that these were taken by him in his own house. Mr. R. J. Meigs, Jr., of Washington, informs me that the Postmaster-General (my informant's great uncle) lived upon the lot of ground now constitnting No. 509 N. Seventh St. N W., and occupied by the Second National Bank of Washington.

many who wish for Peace; others can see no hope; time will, like Death, teach us more than we now know." * * * *

"Dec. 10, 1814, 10 A. M.

"* * * * It is high time for you Patriots in Cincinnati to form a Plan for a Bridge over the Ohio—an easy Job.

"* * * * We have a Report this morning to which considerable Credit is given that Preliminary Articles of Peace have been signed. *Certain it is that an Express arrived last Evening, and that those who ought to be good judges are very cheerful this morning.* * * * * When the *Muses* return with Peace, I hope to be able to amuse you more agreeably."

"Feby. 18, 1815.

"The Treaty * with G. B. was ratified by the Senate (unanimously) on the 16th. Last Evening at 8 o'clock the British

* Josiah's nephew, Return Jonathan Meigs, Jr., then Postmaster-General of the United States, seems to have been the second person in Washington to hear of the peace. The following curious account of an unsuccessful effort made at that time to draw him into a most improper and corrupt use of his public position is given by Mr. C. J. Ingersoll in his pamphlet on Gen. Jackson's Fine (p 22):—"Intelligence of the Treaty of Ghent reached Washington on the 14th February. It was taken there clandestinely by a merchant, brother of an Eastern Member of Congress, who imparted it in strict confidence to Jonathan Meigs, the Postmaster-General, having first exacted a promise from him not to divulge certain highly important information, which, on that condition alone, would be made known to him. The scheme was to precede the mail, by delaying it one day, in order to speculate in cotton, tobacco, sugar, and other southern produce, then at low prices, to be immediately and greatly enhanced by peace. Perplexed between a promise to a Member of Congress and a sense of public duty, the Postmaster-General thought proper confidentially to advise with James Monroe the Secretary of State and War, as to what was right to be done in such dilemma. Mr. Monroe had no hesitation in determining that such a promise to secrecy was not binding; forthwith, on his own responsibility, carried the news to the President, who, with as little hesitation, made it public. It was soon followed by authentic conformation." See also Parton's Life of Gen. Jackson Vol. II p 251.

messenger (Mr. Buckner) arrived; the Ratifications have been exchanged and this morning (by daybreak) the Treaty was published. We have an Illumination this Night by order of the Civil Authority. I hope you will not, at *Cincinnati* set the *River Ohio on fire.*"

"March 7, 1815.

"* * * * I had yesterday the pleasure of hearing the eloquence of William Pinkney at the bar of the Supreme Court of U. S. in a very interesting Prize Cause,* and hope, this day, to hear Mr. Emmott the celebrated Irish Counsellor for the Claimant. Mr. P. was Counsel for the Captors; the Cause is of great pecuniary consequence—say \$100,000—but what is of more importance, the decision of the Court will be of great importance to this and all other maritime Powers. * * * * The Court is really respectable and venerable; their decision, I am *confident*, will be in favor of the Captors. But my *confidence* in many cases has been heretofore so frequently proved to be unfounded that I shall not break my heart if it should prove to be in this case also unfounded, altho' a considerable practice in the Admiralty Court of Bermuda led my attention to the general subject of the Rights of Neutrals and Belligerents. * * * *

* This was doubtless the case of the *Nereide* (9 Cranch 449), which involved the highly important question of maritime law, whether the goods of a neutral, captured in the vessel of an enemy, are lawful prize or not? The decision of the court was that they are not lawful prize, i. e. the decision was in favor of the claimant and against the captor, so that Meigs's confidence turned out to be unfounded. It is probable that his belief that the decision would be in favor of the captor, is to be explained by the fact that his knowledge of the subject had been derived from practice in English Courts, where (I think) the capture would, at that time at least, have been sustained. Judge Story dissented from the decision of the court, and one other member of the court agreed with him.

I have here found La Lande's Astronomy in French—in 4 Vols. Quarto—it was sent to me by Mr. Mouroe, Sy. of War.”

“May 6, 1815.

“* * * * What are we to think of *Napoleon*? Mister John Bull seems to me *like unto* an ignorant Clodhopper at the exhibition of a Juggler, expecting his Cake or Gingerbread to be immediately secure in his Pocket, when—lo! Master *Presto*, the *Chief* of the *Magi*, has apparently swallowed it.”

“Dec. 28, 1815.

“I present you the Compliments of the Season, viz: I congratulate you and all my fellow-beings from *Man* to *Insect*, on the return of the Sun to re-animate our hemisphere, which I take to be the true and philosophic cause of Christmas rejoicings, and to be of an antiquity far beyond 1815 years.”

“January 29, 1816.

“* * * * But not every man has the Qualities of Mr. Randolph—I have heard him for about one hour.—He does not equal the ideas I had formed of him—He is not dignified, either in manner or matter. His figures are frequently low, or trifling, or disgusting, and I firmly believe that the little influence he had obtained before the interregnum, is much diminished. Those who love to hear the administration abused, I presume are willing to listen to him, but he attracts the attention of the *Gallery* more than of the *House*. It is said that when he finished his *Three days* speech (last Saturday) there was not a quorum of the House present.

“If I were perfectly independent, and at my own disposal, I would immediately place myself in your Scientific Atmosphere at Philadelphia. You, I know, will breathe it to valuable purpose. I am here surrounded with Books, but they are, in great measure, Forbidden Fruit. My official duties and company,

especially during a session of Congress, render it almost impossible to avail myself of the pleasures of reading. I think I know less of the current of Public Business and passing events than if I were in Cincinnati.

“We have sixty-three Mails arrive here every week, and in fact it is a sort of Chaotic State of things. I endeavor to manage my own *little bark*, and keep her steadily in the stream. The business of the L. Office is well organized, and seldom does any case of difficulty present itself. The sale of Public Lands increases in every Land Office District. * * * * If ever I visit Philadelphia, I shall of course seek the acquaintance of Dr. Wistar and the other Genii of that lovely City. Have you not observed that a great proportion of Persons of eminent Science have reached great age? Look into the Biographic articles in the Encyclopædia or in Bayle. This is an inducement to me to read and to know every thing. * * * * Your Patient, my little John [his youngest son, John Benjamin Meigs] has been *vaccinated*,* and I flatter myself it will prove beneficial to him. * * My Stiles [his next to youngest child, Ezra Stiles Meigs] has grown astonishingly. He bids fair to approximate the height of Giants.

“This is a healthful place: the water is of the best quality.

* Meigs seems to have taken a great deal of interest in the subject of vaccination. His name heads a memorial to Congress dated January 1, 1820, and asking for the appointment of a national vaccine institution for the United States. It seems that a public meeting upon the subject had been held in Washington, and a committee appointed (of which Meigs was one), which was to act in conjunction with Dr. Jas. Smith, who had been appointed to some position relating to the subject, under an Act of Congress entitled “An Act to encourage vaccination.” The memorial in question was read in the Senate and referred to a special committee, but I have not found any report upon it. Ex. Papers. No. 29, 16th Congress, 1st session Vol. II January 5, 1820.

"I am told that the knowing ones here laugh at the Spanish Chevalier de Onis."

"Feb. 7, 1816.

"* * * * We are all well, viz:—as well as can be expected in a State of Society like this during a session of Congress, and I, at least, shall rejoice, when they rise."

"Feb'y 20, 1816.

"Yours of the 17th is received. We had seen a Notice two or three days ago of the sore affliction which it has pleased God to give as a trial of your virtue. On this occasion our tears are mingled with yours. Consolation is vain; *time* only *can*, and *time* only *will* give it, but condolence is useful; my heart assures me while I write this that our Condolence will, in a small degree at least, soften the pangs you suffer. * * * * Much *evil* is the order of Nature, but surely there is much more *good* than *evil*."

"March 1, 1816.

"I received this morning the Book [Dr. Drake's View of Cincinnati], for which I thank you. I have already sent the Copy to the President, to the National Library, and to Mr. Jefferson. I have told Mr. Jefferson that I am sure he will be gratified with the work. I have given him a history of your Mind, in less than three lines, and have observed to him that it is pleasant to know that the best disciplined minds are friendly to our free Institutions."

"March 4, 1816.

"* * * * I know less, I think, of the Politics of the day, than if I were in Philadelphia or New York or Cincinnati. Of Caucus business I know nothing. I think that the *feeling* of the Great Family of the United States is for Monroe as next Chief Magistrate, and, since *feeling* and *thinking* are much the

same thing, I suppose that the *thinking* will produce *acting*, and that the result will be as above, viz:—for Monroe."

"April 30, 1816.

"* * * * I find that nothing [*i. e.* no portion of his income] will be saved here. All Life is a contest, but here, Living, in its trite acceptance is peculiarly a contest.

"Have you remarked a large Spot on the Sun? I viewed it this morning thro' our telescope. It is a very irregular Figure, and I think unusually large. What is it other than a Solar Volcano?"

"July 7, 1816.

"It seems indeed strange that when you was in Baltimore, you could not direct your course thro' our City. I hope we shall yet see each other. The facilities of travelling are every day increasing, and, when the great Cumberland Road is finished, visits of the *Trans*, & *Cis Alleganians* will be but parties of pleasure. * * * *

"I have lately made an Excursion to the North East. I left this City on the 6th of June, and returned on the 24th. During that period of eighteen days I visited most of the interesting objects in Philadelphia, New York and New Haven. Dr. Dwight and the Professors (at Yale College) received me with distinguished politeness and humanity. I visited the Chapel, the Laboratory, the Library, &c., &c., and was much pleased to find that all was as it should be. If Dr. Dwight * could but be willing cordially to approve our Civil Institutions nothing would be left to be desired. In my tour I travelled from Baltimore to New Haven in Steam Boats, excepting only the passage of the

* Dr. Dwight, it has already been said, was then and had been since 1795 President of Yale College: in politics, he was an ultra-federalist.

Isthmus from Frenchtown to Wilmington and from Trenton to New Brunswick.”

“Sep. 30, 1816.

“ * * * * My son, Charles, of Augusta, Ga., is determined to attend the Lectures in Philadelphia next winter. His *practice* has, no doubt, qualified him to receive a greater benefit from the Lectures, than he would receive if he had not practised. * * * * I do not think we have a single really accomplished Physician in the City, but I am not personally acquainted with half of them. * * * * I have lately wrote [*sic*] to Dr. Mitchell and to some other of the *literati* wishing a satisfactory solution of the Halo of Sept. 8—an account of which I wrote for the National Intelligencer, which was published on the 12th. I enclose with this a representation of its *Phenomena*. We understand the Ordinary Rainbow (I think) perfectly; it is one of the most *beautiful Solutions* of perhaps the most beautiful object in Nature, but the *Halo* or *Corona* is yet unexplained. I do not know how to enter even the threshold of its Solution.”

“Jan’y 30, 1817.

“ * * * * I suppose, that by this time you have received the *Fac Simile* of *Asiatic Brick*. My son Henry has amused himself on the subject, and Dr. Mitchell has complimented him in a Note, which you will see in the Journal accompanying this. My son Henry is an ingenious young man, but, as he has a number of children, I am more gratified with his appointment as *Notary* of the *U. S. Branch Bank of New York*, than with the most excellent Doctor’s compliments on his acumen as an Antiquarian. * * * * Henry has addressed to me a *Benedictionary Letter* in *Chinese*—the first Chinese Epistle perhaps written in North America;—the *Graphic* part is beautiful, and I am much obliged to him for giving me the *substance* of it in

English, with the manner of pronouncing the Words by the *China Man*. * * * * We have nothing very interesting. The *Corps Diplomatique* are exceedingly polite to everybody. They give (especially the Ministers of France and Great Britain) superb drawing Rooms and Suppers and Card tables, &c., &c., &c. They *plaister* their *fronts* and *tails* with *Gold Lace*, and at Mr. Madison’s who wears plain black cloth, they look, in my opinion, very silly *Quoad* their *Costumes*. I have as completely *satisfied the sentiment* as to Courts and Courtiers, here, in two years as Yorick’s [?] French servant, La Fleur, did the sentiment of *Drumming*, after having beaten one for ten years in a marching Regiment.”

“Feb. 7th, 1817.

“I enclose with this three English News Papers * * * * If we can preserve Peace about 10 or 15 years, and our attachment to *our Country* continues, we may have another War, which will open a safe road to Quebec.”

“June 13th, 1817.

“I have always had apprehensions that your *Intellectual* man would claim too much from your *Corporeal* man. Juvenal said 2000 years ago, very properly, that it is folly

‘propter vitam vivendi perdere causas:’—

a sentiment well illustrated by an old *Sailor*—he was sitting astride of the main top-gallant *yard*; his Captain on the quarter-deck ordered him to go to the extremity of the yard to reeve a halyard. Jack saw that if he attempted it he should fall, and after hearing the Curses of his Captain for some time, he said, ‘I’ll tell you what, Captain, I have been a Sailor, man and boy, these 40 years; I always made it a rule never to kill myself for the sake of living, and by — I won’t go!!!’ I recommend the story to your attentive consideration, and I dare say that Mrs. Drake will join me * * * *

"I am acquainted with M. Correa the Portuguese minister. He is a veteran in science of all descriptions; he knows more of the U. States as a subject of scientific contemplation and observation than both houses of Congress; he is the only learned man of our *Corps Diplomatique*, and I have much satisfaction in his conversation. * * * * We have no news. The President, you know, is on a tour to the East and North and West. It is considered by some republicans as of *doubtful policy*: if he could escape the folly of *parades* and *addresses*, &c., &c., his journey would be much more easy and pleasant—and perhaps more useful in a political view."

"Jan. 8th, 1818.

"* * * * Your Western World will be a highly *interesting* object, at all events, and it remains to be proved whether that *interest* will be joyous or grievous. M. Correa says that the Atlantic States are to be merely the Portico of the *Great Political Temple* of the West. I feel more anxiety now than I ever before experienced relative to our vast country.

"The Public Papers inform you of all that is going on here. I bought last Evening 2 Vols. of a new Work by my merry Friend, Mr. Paulding, author of John Bull & Brother Jonathan, and now Secretary of the Navy Board. It is written well so far as I read; it kept me up an hour or two later than my usual hour of rest, and I had all the benefit of laughter. * * * *

"The death of the Princess Charlotte of Great Britain is of course a very interesting topic of conversation. Had that poor child been educated to take care of the Dairy, she might have been the Mother of a dozen Children. I think I am not superstitious, but there seems to be an awful fatality in the present State and future prospects of the Royal Family of Great Britain."

"Jan. 27th, 1818.

"* * * * death of Dr. Wistar. I regret that I had not the pleasure of an acquaintance with him in this state of being. I hope to be acquainted with him hereafter.

"We are well, except Miss Emily. Poor child, she has approximated to the last day of life. She has a Cancer. * * * * She is serene and calm, and even cheerful in so alarming a condition. She has founded her faith and hope on the Rock of Ages.

"* * * * M. Correa is greatly afflicted on account of the death of Dr. Wistar; he was confined to his room yesterday. I intend to call on him to-day."

"July 24th, 1818.

"* * * * You have done right in leaving Lexington, and in declining an Invitation to return. I have little hope of anything really clever in States which permit Slavery.* * * *"

"You see by the *length* of this that I am an old man. I am am now almost 61 *Ætatis*. I have never had one sick day. I was the 13th child of my mother and was born in the 49th[†] year of her Age.

* This and one or two other sentences in his letters show that, at least in his latter years, Josiah Meigs thought the system of slavery highly detrimental to the best interests of a community. I do not know, however, whether he had always been of this opinion: during his residence at Athens, he owned slaves, as is learned from his writing to Col. Meigs on Aug. 19th, 1803, "we have had no death except of my favorite Negro female slave and her child, an infant."

† It will have been observed that I have said he was born in the forty-sixth year of his mother's age. It seems audacious to contradict a man upon such a point at this distance of time, but, as the official record of his mother's birth only makes her forty-five at the time of his birth, I cannot but think that he fell into error, writing from hearsay and so long after the death of all who would have been likely to have accurate knowledge of the subject.



"Nov. 10th, 1818.

"On my arrival here after an absence of more than three weeks on a visit to Philadelphia, New York and Connecticut, in company with Mrs. Meigs, I found yours. * * * * I had a very interesting visit to my friends and Children in Philadelphia, New York, and Connecticut. I had not been at Middletown, the place of my nativity and the land of my forefathers' sepulchres, for nearly 20 years. I spent several days there, and many a pleasing *reminiscence* I had—true *reminiscences*, for many a pleasing idea was recalled by objects, which to mere memory would have been forever lost.

"I was happy to find my son the Doctor rising rapidly in the estimation of the good people of Philadelphia. * * * *

"I have placed my son Ezra Stiles with his Brother at Philadelphia to attend the Lectures of the Medical School. Stiles is an extraordinary young man—I call him my Giant—on the 1st of last August he completed the 17th year, and then measured 6 feet and half an inch; he is straight as a Reed, and as strong as Hercules, and, what is better, he has a fine mind. How we do love to talk about our Children!"

"Feb. 5, 1819.

"* * * I too can give you pleasure by the information that the *Columbian Institute*, of which I have the honor to be President this year, has good prospects.

"I have little doubt that this Congress will, before they rise, give the Institute a few acres of ground for our building and for a Botanic Garden.

"Mr. Barlow made great efforts to obtain this object eight or ten years ago—he could do nothing—but prejudices which *then* were of the *density* of a thunder cloud are now as *tenuous* as the train of the Comet. The gentlemen here all know and feel that I

have not, nor can have, any *selfish view*, in advocating the interest of the C. Institute; they believe that I love Science and Literature for their own sake—as the moralists very properly say, we ought to love *Virtue* for *its own sake*. I tell those gentlemen who hold in their hands the destinies of our beloved country that *Knowledge* is *Power*—if not even *Virtue*. * * * *

"I hope yet to pass from Cincinnati to Kentucky with you, over a *good bridge*, and revisit *Big Bone Lick*.

"Our Congress are yet engaged in the Seminole War, and if they were not limited by the Constitution and Laws, would spend, perhaps, more time in *talking about* the war than Jackson did in finishing it. * * * *

"These diplomatic gentlemen I am pretty well acquainted with, they are very civil and well behaved Gentlemen, but really (except M. Correa) they are no great things; it requires dozens of them to balance a Franklin, or a Jefferson, or an Adams, &c.

"I send you De La Plaine's book. He has persuaded a large number of folks here (and me among the rest) to sit before his Portrait Painter. Correa says De La Plaine's Repository is only a *History of Beasts*. I hope he (De La Plaine) will be satisfied with my Portrait in *Oil*, and say nothing about me in *Printer's Ink*."

"Feb. 25, 1819.

"* * * * This morning is announced the ratification of a Treaty with Spain, with the unanimous consent of the Senate.

"The Gulf Stream is ours. My Western friends are secure. The Bulwarks of our Holy Religion * must now pray *double tides*, as Seamen say.

* This expression might be supposed to refer to Spain, only that Meigs twice uses it where it can only mean England. On one of these occasions, he writes that "The Land Laws of the United States were all burned in the conflagration kindled by the "Bulwarks of our Holy Religion" i. e. at the time Washington was captured by the English.

"My son *Forsyth* will embark for Spain about the first of April. If Spain should refuse, or even hesitate to ratify, we have an Andrew Jackson."

"March 3, 1819.

"On Monday I wished you were present to view the Launch of the Columbus seventy-four (nominally)—but really more than one hundred.

"It was a *perfect Launch*. This ship is two hundred and ten feet in length on her upper deck. She carries long thirty-two pounders on her first and second decks, and forty-two pound carronades on the upper deck. I do not suppose that in her movement to her element, her stern varied an inch from the plane of the Vertical Circle passing thro' her Stem, Keel, and Stern Post.

"She was born into her *Life (Water)* in about fifteen seconds. It was a happy delivery and did the highest honor to the Wood and Iron Accoucheurs."

"May 11, 1819.

"* * * * My son Forsyth had made half his passage from Boston to Cadiz on the 8th day. Our nautical skill is superior to that of any other people. A ship, a few days ago made her passage from New York to Savannah in 84 hours—i. e. three and one-half days;—this is at the rate of about eleven miles an hour! May *God* grant us a sufficient degree of wisdom and prudence, &c., &c., to conduct us as a Nation, to the dazzling destinies which seem to await us."

"June 11, 1819.

"* * * * In our Colleges of the *old school costume*—for example Yale College—the Tutors have been always young men. I was twenty-four *Ætat*, when appointed Tutor in Y. C.; in the Class committed to me (forty or fifty) were several older than

I. I do not recollect any Tutor advanced in years. In that, my first Class of Pupils, were David Daggett late Senator of U. States, Abiel Holmes, now of Cambridge, Massts., Doctor Morse the Geographer, J. Mastess M. C. from N. York, John Cotton Smith late Governor of Connecticut, and, with at most two or three exceptions they were, and the living are, worthy men."

"Oct. 4, 1819.

"* * * [death of Perry *] for one, I will consent that his family be protected and nourished at the Public Expense."

"Nov. 4, 1819.

"* * * I do not yet believe that in any Slaveholding nation or state, any thing truly valuable relative to Science either Physical or Moral can or will ultimately prosper. A new *Boston* or *Philadelphia* will not be found either in Virginia or Kentucky or Carolina for many ages, nor *ever* until they are freed from the deep curse of Slavery. * * * * *

"We are now looking to the meeting of Congress—to me it is always a very pleasant thing when I can say, that in *three weeks* they will *go home*. I have, since my residence here, felt very sensibly the truth of the remark "No man is a Hero to his Valet de Chambre." In fact, I have seen many more *big* folks than *great* folks—the difference between *big* and *great* you can define better than I. * * * * I have very little society here of a literary character; we are a miserable crew in that respect, but I have a tolerable supply of Books, and am thankful that I can enjoy the passing hours, *alone*, and *without* a Book, much better than in the company of Ninnies and Blockheads of either Sex."

* This letter is addressed to Henry Meigs, and is the only one in this series not addressed to Dr. Drake.

"Sept. 3, 1820.

"You will see by the N. Intr.* of this day that I have paid some attention to your requests. I regret that G. and S. objected to the publication (*in extenso*) of the discourse. * * * G. and Seaton are very obliging, and do all in their power to make their Paper respectable—occasionally I endeavor to aid them." * * *

"Sept. 8, 1820.

"Our City (Village) is as quiet as any other village. Not one of the Magnates, except the Secy. of State, is here. The Simplicity of our system is, to me, beautiful; I see no Centinel around and on guard; The President's house is as accessible as any other. Europeans wonder at this simplicity, and doubt the permanence of our Institutions; and they are as excusable as the poor savages who view their Deities as cruel and revengeful beings.

"* * * * A few days ago I dined at the French Minister's with our worthy *Correa de Serra*. The old Gentleman is appointed a Counsellor of State and is about going to Rio Janeiro: I have had much intercourse with him on our Land System. He informs me that his Sovereign is introducing its principles into Brazil."

"Oct. 19, 1820.

"* * * * Mr. Clay possesses more than common talents. He is doubtless unsatisfied with the present condition, but I think it very doubtful whether he can obtain anything greater than Kentucky can bestow." * * * *

"Dec. 14, 1820.

"* * * * The Missouri question is hitherto *sub judice*. It is a good maxim in pleading, that a plea in abatement must be

* This is, of course, an abbreviation for the well-known newspaper, the National Intelligencer of which Gales and Seaton were the publishers.

accompanied with a suggestion of a better plea. The opposers of the Missouri constitution * will, I trust, be able to suggest such a Plea as will quiet all the alarming agitation of this day." * * * *

"Feby. 26, 1821.

"* * * * My line of knowledge of Literary characters has been growing indistinct since 1801, when I left Yale College. I advised the Govr. and the Judges to apply to the Principals of the Northern Colleges for recommendation. It is wholly vain to look to Southern Colleges. Where Slavery is admitted, Literature and Science will never flourish. The muses hate the Lash and Whip; they are of gentle mind.

Convestit omnia perfundens sua luce Sol;

The overflowing Sun clothes all things with his Light. The idea is more elegantly expressed by Homer, Milton, Thompson, but I cannot now turn to the passages or exactly recollect them.

"In the 8th book of Iliad, Line 1st, we have

"*Ἥως μὲν χρυσοπέπλος ἐκιδνατο πάσαν ἐπ' αἶαν,*"

which Pope has wretchedly translated

'Aurora, now, fair daughter of the dawn

'Sprinkled with rosy light the dewy morn.'

"Our Florida business is settled and the Missouri (MISERY) business is unsettled; the Civil death of this Congress takes place at Midnight between next Saturday and Sunday. I fear this corporate body is badly prepared to die, either *civilly* or *physically*.

"I have had some hints that I might amuse myself and possibly do some good to Society by acting with the Commissioners of Spain in defining the Boundary, by the Red River, etc.; Astronomical Skill will be necessary to ascertain Latitudes and Longitudes. If I were 15 or 20 years younger than I am I

* See Appendix F.

should gladly undertake the work, but 64 years admonish me to seek repose.

“We have had a severe winter—the Quadragesimal. Can you or your Scientific friends assign a probable cause? If it were a period of 20 years, it would seem to have some connection with the Lunar Cycle—the Saros of the Greeks—I know nothing about it.”

“April 8, 1822.

“* * * * The avidity for office is of the highest grade of Mania here. I have at least 100 applicants for a single clerkship in the G. L. Office of the lowest grade of compensation—viz.: \$800—and I am confident I could raise in ten days a Regiment of 800 clerks at \$400.” * * * *

CHAPTER IX.

Further details of his last years—President of the Columbian Institute—Professor in Columbian College—Application to Mr. Jefferson in regard to professorship in University of Virginia—His great health—Final and only illness, and death—Mrs. Meigs writes of the final scene—Funeral—Obituary notices—Membership of various societies—Mrs. Meigs survives him many years—Children they had lost—Sketches of lives of the children, who survived Josiah.

Not much more remains to be said of my subject. His own words have given an idea of his Washington life and furnished many details of his thoughts and aspirations down to within five months of his death, and it is only necessary now to sum up a few points and give a short account of some matters which do not appear from his letters.

In the last few years of his life, he took some interest in the Columbian Institute, and was its president from 1819 until his death apparently, when John Quincy Adams⁵⁵ was elected in his place. Upon the foundation of the Columbian College in the beginning of 1821, he was one of the original corporators and a trustee, jointly with his nephew, R. J. Meigs, Jr.; and he was elected Professor of Experimental Philosophy in the institution in 1821. It is probable, therefore, that he delivered a course of lectures in it the last winter of his life. Both of these Institutions, it need hardly be said, were in Washington, and the latter one has now become a University and a place of learning of much importance. He wrote also in 1820 to Mr. Jefferson asking as to the mode of application for a professorship in the University of Virginia; but Mr. Jefferson replied that the institution was not yet advanced to that stage, all its

funds having been applied to building purposes. These facts appear to indicate that Meigs longed at times for a place where he could devote himself more entirely to purely scientific pursuits.

It has already appeared that Josiah Meigs was a man of great health, and it is likely that he might have lived many years more but for some violent attack of illness, which terminated his life in the short space of eight days. This seems to have been the only illness he ever had, but I have been unable to learn its nature. In August of 1822, he had visited Philadelphia and does not seem to have been very contented there; on his return to Washington, he writes on August 15th to his son Henry that he is glad to return from Philadelphia to his home, where, he says, "I can breathe a pure air—and am not compelled to suffer Noise and Noisomeness. I lament that the Daemon of Yellow Fever has appeared at all. * * It is very hot. * * We suffer severely by drought—and it is less healthy than it has been. * * We are well." This is the last letter of his that has been in my hands, but from other sources it appears that he was taken sick in the last few days of August, rapidly grew dangerously ill, and died in the night * between Wednesday and Thursday the 4th and 5th of September, 1822, at the age of 65 years and two weeks; he had been ill but eight days. Mrs. Meigs wrote her son Henry not long after that his father had said from the first of his illness that he should not recover, and that he had died without bodily pain. She added that her only alleviation in her great sorrow flowed "from the confidence ex-

* His tombstone records that he died Sept. 5, 1822, but it seems from other sources that his death occurred on the evening of the 4th. Ezra Stiles Meigs wrote his brother Henry on Sept. 5, 1822, that their father "expired last night at a quarter before eight o'clock;" and the National Intelligencer of Saturday the 7th says that he had died "on Wednesday night last."

pressed [by Mr. Meigs] three days before his death of a blessed hope through the merits of a Redeemer, when with overflowing tears he repeated the 51st psalm * which is in Watts, which she quotes. Charles had gone down to Washington from Philadelphia, upon hearing of his father's illness, but did not get there until after his death; he writes Henry Meigs as follows:—"I found the house in deep mourning, for the body of our parent had not yet been removed to its last abode. The external marks of respect were decent and proper. There was no pomp, except that which sprang from the voluntary and respectful attendance of a large number of people of rank and though they are in general not so good and honest as people who have no rank, yet they show the state of the public mind as to his character."

On the Saturday (7th) following his death the National Intelligencer had the following short obituary notice of him:—" * * Few persons have lived more esteemed, or died more regretted, by those to whom they were known, than this venerable and excellent man. The purity, philanthropy, and simplicity of his character, were proverbial, and rendered him an object of general respect. * * * It is a remarkable fact, that although the deceased reached the age of sixty-five, he had never suffered a day's sickness before the attack which terminated his life." Niles's Register, of Sept. 14th, noticing his death, spoke of him as "one of the best of men and most faithful of officers;" and the National Gazette, of the 9th, said of him:—"He was passionately fond of scientific pursuits to which he has devoted a large portion of his life. He was universally respected for his mild and unassuming manners." The members of the Columbian Institute resolved⁵⁵ to wear crape for one month as a mark of respect to his memory, and the clerks in the Land Office resolved⁵⁶ to do

* See Appendix G.

the same and to attend his funeral in a body. He was buried in Holmead's Cemetery in Washington, but, that having been given up as a burying-ground, his grave was removed in July, 1878, to the lot of his grandson, Gen. M. C. Meigs, in Arlington Cemetery.

Josiah Meigs was a member of the American Philosophical Society and of the American Academy of Languages and Belles-Lettres, and apparently a Doctor of Laws: his name is at least often written with LL. D. after it, though there is nothing to show by what institution the degree was conferred. I know nothing about his connection with the second-named society, except the fact of his membership, which appears from his letters, but on October 19th, 1821, he sent to the American Philosophical Society a paper called "Geometric exemplification of temperature, wind, and weather, for 1820, at Washington:" this was referred to a committee and its report thereon adopted, but no other trace of the paper has been found: it was not printed by the Society, but its title makes it likely that it was not of a nature capable of being printed. The following is also worthy of mention here to show how late his scientific interests kept up and to what a distance he sent his results, though I do not know just what is referred to. Henry Meigs writes him on July 13th, 1822, "I see that your honors flow not only from the Columbian Institute of which you are President, but also from the Northern Czar, whose Imperial Academy is pleased to learn from so remote and unknown a region as this."

Mrs. Meigs survived him many years, living the greater part of the time with her daughter, Clara Forsyth. Her latter years must have been saddened by poverty and separation from most of her children, but she is said to have been bright and cheerful and fond of company to the end. She died in 1850(?) at the

advanced age of 88 years, and was buried in Columbus, Georgia, which was then her daughter's home. She was evidently most loyal to her husband in all his troubles, and her letters exhibit far more feeling in speaking of them than do his own. As late as 1840, she writes with no little asperity of the Dwights who had been largely instrumental in Mr. Meigs's troubles in New Haven, and then goes on to tell of the already-mentioned movement of the tories against her father's house, and closes by saying, "and now the families of these very tories are called Whigs." It may safely be concluded, therefore, that not only was she a devoted and faithful wife and mother, but that she was very full of that intense devotion to her husband's interests and that certainty of his being in the right, which many women exhibit and which has, probably, much to do with the complete happiness of a family.

In addition to the children already mentioned as lost by Josiah and Clara Meigs, they lost a daughter Juliana at Athens in 1809; she died after some long illness, which her father says she endured like a heroine. In 1818, their son Samuel William died, who appears to have been a young man of good promise but only attained the age of thirty. He had apparently some unfortunate love affair, as I find a cousin of his writing in the end of 1816, that Samuel had gone to Georgia and that his marriage difference was not yet made up. His father writes shortly after his death, that "his reason had been wholly destroyed by an accumulation of various misfortunes and ills both physical and mental * * * * he was always distinguished for his good will and benevolence and obedience." He died in an asylum at Baltimore and was buried in Holmead's Cemetery in Washington, but was removed with his father to Arlington in 1878.

The children who survived Josiah were Henry, Clara, Charles Delucena, Ezra Stiles, and John Benjamin. The first named settled as a lawyer in New York, was at one time President of the Board of Aldermen of that City, and a member of the New York Legislature in 1818, and represented a city district in the 16th Congress: it has already been told in an appendix how he came to lose his district, through his independence of character. He was a man of learning on a very wide range of subjects and a student of very many of the oldest known languages; his letters to his father show him discussing subjects which reach from the dust of languages dating thousands of years ago down to the living natural sciences of his day. A very striking evidence of his foresight is given by the fact that he wrote to the public papers in 1816 or 1818, predicting the extensive use of steam as a motor on iron rails—and was of course ridiculed for his prophecy. He was also a very active member of the American Institute in New York, and died May 20th, 1861; it may be judged that he inherited his father's health, for "it was said of him as something remarkable, that he never wore an overcoat, never had a sore throat, or headache, and, when seventy years of age, did not wear glasses."⁵⁷ He left numerous descendants.

Clara married John Forsyth of Georgia in 1801, or 1802, probably at Athens. Her husband was for many years very prominent in the public affairs of the country. Their home was in Georgia (Columbus, latterly), but they were of course much of the time in Washington. Mr. Forsyth died October 21st, 1841, and Mrs. Forsyth July 17th, 1853, leaving both sons and daughters surviving her. The sons are now dead, and have not, I think, left descendants bearing the family name, but there are numerous descendants of the daughters.

Charles Delucena studied medicine in Philadelphia and settled there (where he had already married) in 1817, after having practised for a time in Georgia. After having been for many years a most successful practitioner, he was elected in 1841 to a professorship in the Jefferson Medical College in that city, then the leading school of the country. Here, again, he had a very marked success, and became widely known throughout this country; while his writings on medical subjects penetrated to far greater distances and made his name familiar among all English-speaking medical men; he died June 22d, 1869, at the age of seventy-seven years, leaving nine children surviving, of whom all but one have married and left descendants. He, too, had always been a great student even while in the active practice of a most harassing profession. Both he and Henry adhered to their father's political faith, Henry, I think, dying in it, and Charles only leaving it, after tremendous struggles, when the war broke out and the country was threatened with the awful evil of disunion.

Ezra Stiles has been several times named in these pages. He appears from several sources of information to have been, as a young man, not only remarkably handsome, but of an unusually good mind and full of all promise of future usefulness, but he became a hopeless victim of drink. This began during his father's latter years and caused Josiah Meigs endless trouble: and, though many efforts were made to stop the evil, they all failed, and his history was as painful to himself and others as is to be supposed. After having studied and practised medicine for a time, and held a federal position at Pensacola, he volunteered as a private in the army and served many years, part of the time in the Seminole War. An officer who knew him in the army told one of his nephews that he had in him the making of

a good soldier and was as strong as ten men, but half a drink of whiskey made him crazy. His life, which might certainly have been of positive benefit to the world, was thus ruined and came to a sad close in 1842, by drowning in the docks of Baltimore. He was never married.

John Benjamin is still living in Florida, at the age of seventy-nine.

AUTHORITIES.

1. Palfrey's New England II 499—502. Atwater's New Haven 426. Hollister's Connecticut I 239. Collects. Mass. Hist. Soci. XXVIII 325.
2. Sketch of Charles D. Meigs by John Forsyth Meigs, read before the Philadelphia College of Physicians on Nov. 6th, 1872, and printed (I think) in their proceedings; this sketch has also been twice privately printed. David D. Field's address at the Middletown centennial. And see also inventory of the estate of Return Meigs.
3. The facts in relation to the lives of Josiab's brothers are principally drawn from the following sources:—Sketch of R. J. Meigs by H. P. Johnston in the Magazine of American History for April, 1880, Vol. IV p 282.—Field's address at Middletown Centennial pp 70, 80-84: Irving's and Marshall's Washington. R. J. Meigs's journal of the Canada expedition has been privately printed, and is also printed in Mass. Histor. Collects. II (2nd Series) 227. I have omitted to make a memorandum of the title of the drama of the Revolution in which Col. Meigs is introduced as one of the *dramatis personæ*, but think it was "The Death of Montgomery." There is a copy in the New Haven Colony Historical Society.
4. Life and Public Services of Sam'l Adams by Wm. B. Wells, II 442.
5. Military notices published in The New Haven Gazette and Connecticut Magazine e. g. 1787 pp 79: 88.
6. Sketch of C. D. Meigs already quoted.
7. The Yale Book by Wm. L. Kingston I 312-3; Scudder's Noah Webster p 7. The following quotations from and facts relating to Webster are also from Scudder's Life.
8. Todd's Joel Barlow pp 4-5.
9. The Yale Book I 312-3.
10. Holmes's Ezra Stiles p 360-1.
11. Woolsey's Historical Discourse before Yale graduates, delivered August 14th, 1850, pp 120-1.
12. Ibid.
13. Holmes's President Stiles p 13.
14. Todd's Barlow p 3-4.

15. Todd's Barlow pp 11 : 86.
16. This is stated partly upon the authority of his being so early appointed Tutor of Mathematics. See also Holmes's President Stiles p 341.
17. Todd's Barlow p 22.
18. About the Benjamins see Orcutt's Stratford, and the sketch of Chas. D. Meigs. Some facts are also drawn from a MS writing of Henry Meigs.
19. I found the original minute of his admission to the County Court (now the Superior Court) at New Haven, it reads as follows:—"Mr. Josiah Meigs of New Haven is admitted an Attorney at the Bar of this Court and Sworn accordingly." New Haven County Court Records 8 (1776-1783) p 627.
20. This is stated upon the authority of a copy of Vol. I, of the Gazette and Magazine, once owned by Webster and having his initials written by himself at the foot of two or three articles. The volume in question is owned by Mr. Hoadley of the Conn. State Library, who kindly showed it to me.
21. Todd's Barlow p 51.
22. See numbers for January 11, Aug. 9, and June 14, of 1787.
23. The Centennial of New Haven, and notices of election printed in the Gazette and Magazine.
24. Holmes's President Stiles p 341.
25. Conn. Journal of July 15, 1789. I do not know why, on this occasion, the actual celebration was postponed until July 7th, as it was.
26. This quotation and all my facts in regard to Meigs's stay in Bermuda are derived from Henry Meigs's sketch, with the occasional aid of a letter from Josiah to Yale College soon to be quoted.
27. New York Daily Advertiser for May 14, 1794.
28. N. Y. Journal and Patriotic Register of May 17, 1794.
29. Sketch of History of Yale College by Kingston I 109-110. It is evidently by a mere misprint that the work quoted gives 1792 as the year in which Meigs read his first lecture, and I have therefore changed it to 1794 in my quotation.
30. Holmes's President Stiles p 341.
31. Quoted in the Yale Book I p 211; and see Fisher's Life of Silliman I p 33 and 89.
32. Annals of Yale College by Baldwin p 120. The oration or panegyric in question is constantly quoted, in the Life of President Stiles, by Holmes, who must have had Meigs's manuscript—I think it was never printed.
33. Notice in Gazette and Magazine for 1787 p 295.
34. By Parton in the preface to his Life of Jefferson.

35. This letter seems to indicate that the disturbance in question occurred in New Haven on the 4th of July, but I was unable to find any account of it in the New Haven papers near that date. As Meigs says, however, in the letter, that a false account had been published in the *Daily Gazette of New York*, it seems not impossible that it occurred in that city. If such is the case, it is probable that the disturbance in question was the one of which accounts are given in the N. Y. Daily Advertiser of July 30, 1798, and in the N. Y. Journal and Patriotic Register of August 1, 1798.

36. This letter and the one next mentioned are in the Library of Yale University, where my attention was kindly called to them by Prof. Dexter.

37. G. P. Fisher's Discourse in Yale College Chapel Nov. 22, 1857, p 22.

38. The facts in the text in relation to Athens and its early history and means of communication are principally derived from letters of Josiah Meigs. Some are also taken from the sketch of Charles D. Meigs by my father, who writes:—"I could not find the population [of Athens and of Clarke County] in the census of 1800, but in that of 1810 the population of the county is set down at 7628; and that of the town at 273: of these latter 95 were white males, 40 free white females, 134 slaves, and all other free persons, excepting Indians, not taxed, 4."

39. Letter from Meigs printed in Conn. Journal of Oct. 7th, 1801.

40. Historical Collections of Georgia by Rev. Geo. White page 397-8.

41. Sketch of Charles D. Meigs.

42. This oration is contained in MS in a letter from Mrs. Josiah Meigs to Henry Meigs dated Sand Hills March 11th, 1826; she writes: "I received the above oration from my old friend Mrs. Cole who lives near Athens. She is sister to Tom Cobb's wife, of the Senate. * * * * It is strange that this oration has not been made known to Mr. Forsyth * * * * the youth who delivered it deserves your and Charles's thanks * * * * It must have keenly touched many of his hearers." The catalogue of the University shows that William L. Mitchell, later a trustee of and professor of law in the University of Georgia, graduated there in 1825. The address is certainly very undergraduate-like, so that it is likely that this William L. Mitchell was the author of the address, though it was certainly a bold one for him to deliver under the circumstances.

43. See Madison's reply to this letter of Jefferson's in Writings of Madison, published by Congress II 548-9.

44. Drake's picture of Cincinnati page 161.

45. A copy of this address exists in the Historical and Philosophical Society at Cincinnati.
46. So stated in Ford's History of Cincinnati.
47. Sketch of Charles D. Meigs.
48. See Niles's Register for 1819 page 362, where a letter from Meigs describes the system used in the survey of the public lands, and says that "So wise, beautiful and perfect a system was never before adopted by any government or nation on earth. He attributes the credit of it to Gen. Mansfield, who had preceded him as Surveyor General; but a letter published later in the same paper (page 376) over the signature of "Hampden" (Mansfield?) gives the greater part of the credit to Meigs.
49. Sketch of Charles D. Meigs.
50. Niles's Register for 1817 page 167.
51. I think these results were first sent to the National Intelligencer, but they are most easily found in Niles's Register, on account of its index. See that publication for 1818 page 152 (where the cold wave is noted) and for 1819 pages 234, 320, 362, 400 and Supplement to Vol. XV page 16-23.
52. Niles's Register for 1819 Supplement to Vol. XV page 16-23.
53. Orcutt's Stratford; I have failed to make a memorandum of the page of this reference, but the index will discover it.
54. Diary Vol. IV page 262-3.
55. National Intelligencer of September 11th, 1822.
56. Nat. Intell. of Sept. 7th, 1822.
57. Lanman's Biographical Annals page 289.

APPENDIX A.

It is likely that many matters of value could be found in the columns of this and other papers of the day, if there were only some less laborious way of getting at them than by looking over every page. I own the volumes of the *Gazette and Magazine* for 1786 and 1787, and have looked over them with a good deal of care at different times; among matters which I have found and which seem to me of interest or importance are the following:—

The volumes for 1786 and 1787 contain reports at some length of the Debates of the Legislature of Connecticut: e. g. upon the proposed Tendry Bill, upon the appointment of Delegates to the Federal Convention of 1787, and upon a proposed change in the basis of representation.

The volume for 1786 contains at some length (pp. 261 and 270) the arguments of Jedidiah Morse and of David Daggett, upon their receiving the degree of Master of Arts at the Yale Commencement that year, upon the affirmative and negative respectively of the question, "Whether sumptuary laws ought to be established in the United States."

In the number of March 1st, 1787, a person, who signs himself B—, writes;—"As the general analogy of the language is pleaded for the novel pronunciation of the words either and neither as if they were spelt eether and neether; I beg leave to suggest the following authorities against that pronunciation of the diphthong *ei*:" and he then gives a list of words in which *ei* is differently pronounced. Are we to conclude from this that the pronunciation of these words which is now so general in America, began about this time to come into vogue?

The number of September 20th, 1787, contains statistics of the population, etc., of New Haven, "the result of an accurate enumeration, made by a number of gentlemen in this city." The number of inhabitants of all ages was 3364, of which 1657

were males, and 1707 females, and it gives, too, the number at each age from 1 to 90. The number of families was 614 (very closely $5\frac{1}{2}$ persons to the family) and the number of houses 466, of stores 103, and of "barns and shops" 324. The annual number of deaths was about 50, or one in 70 of the population (not quite $1\frac{1}{2}$ per centum). The article containing the statistics says that, "While it [the article] gives satisfaction to those who are now living, it cannot but be considered highly useful to posterity, as it furnishes sufficient data on which at any future enumeration several valuable and instructive calculations may be made. * * * * This shows the salubrity of the climate, and the healthfulness of New Haven in particular. Indeed for temperature and purity of air, it is the Montpelier or Florence of America."

APPENDIX B.

See this letter in Hamilton's Works by J. C. Hamilton, volume I, pp. 442-4. It reads in substance as follows:—Colonel Wadsworth communicated to me your inquiry concerning a certain political letter circulated here. I cannot trace it to its source, but it was probably first seen in the hands of one Jared Mansfield, who, I think, is reported to have been formerly a Loyalist. It has been circulated with avidity by that class of people. Before I saw it, a passage had been published by Mr. Meigs "giving an account of it, and attempting to excite the apprehensions of the Anti-Federals with an idea that the most disastrous consequences are to be expected, unless we shall accept * * * * [the constitution] * * * * Some think this was the real design of the fictitious performance, but others, with more reason, that it was intended to feel the public pulse, and to discover whether the public mind would be startled with propositions of Royalty. The quondam Tories have undoubtedly conceived hopes of a future union with Great Britain, from the inefficiency of our government, and the tumults which prevailed in Massachusetts during the last winter. I saw a letter written at that

period by a clergyman of considerable reputation in Nova Scotia to a person of eminence in this State," looking in that direction and mentioning how instrumental thereto the Cincinnati might be.

The passage in Meigs's paper referred to is no doubt the following contained in the issue of August 2, 1787;—"A circular letter is handing about the country, recommending a kingly government for these States.—The writer proposes to send to England for the Bishop of Osnaburgh, and have him crowned KING over this continent. We have found by experience, says he, that we have not wit enough to govern ourselves—that all our declamation and parade about Republicanism, Liberty, Property, and the Rights of Man, are mere stuff and nonsense, and that it is high time for us to tread back the wayward path we have walked in these twelve years. This plan, we are told, gains friends and partisans rapidly, and it surely is necessary for the great body of the people to be on their guard.—The Federal Convention may save us from this worst of all curses (A ROYAL GOVERNMENT) if we are only wise enough to adopt their recommendations when they shall be communicated to us."

This notice is, according to the strangely inconsequent customs of newspapers of that day, followed directly and without break or separation by a notice of a marriage; and then there follows a notice of another marriage, of a Miss Hoyt "eldest daughter" we are told, "of Captain James Hoyt, a lady endowed with every accomplishment that can render the marriage state agreeable."

APPENDIX C.

The following may not be without interest as a sample of the style of pleasantry of the day, and as one of the many dunning notices which the non-payment of dues called for: it is in all probability from the pen of Josiah Meigs, as it is contained in the issue of August 9, 1787, after he had become the sole pub-

lisher:—"NEW HAVEN, AUGUST 9. TO the READERS of this PAPER. The Printer wishes to suggest to you, that when Meigs and Dana adopted the motto of the First Volume, "NON SIBI SED TOTO GENITOS SE CREDERE MUNDO"—they only meant to express their wishes to advance the interest of the PUBLIC, so far as they could in connection with their OWN PRIVATE INTEREST—which they conceived to be the true modern meaning of the word PATRIOTISM.

"But it seems the line has been taken in its literal sense to wit: That the printers were under no obligations to themselves nor their connections, but that they meant to devote their industry and the best part of their lives to the public, without any compensation.

"This is a capital ERRATUM in construction, which, with numerous ERRATA in their printing, you are intreated to correct.

"I know of but one servant of the public, who has been so great as to refuse all reward for his services,—and he is utterly beyond the reach of imitation: Nature has not been vigorous enough to produce his like since the creation.

"The present motto was as unluckily chosen as the other. The prophecy of DANIEL is fast fulfilling. The Printers have let 'MANY RUN TO AND FRO' all over the country, 'AND' their 'KNOWLEDGE' of the worthlessness of newspaper debts has been indeed vastly 'INCREASED.'

"It appears to be a matter of no small consequence to adopt proper mottoes—and there is in an old author, a line of plain English, which cannot be perverted or misunderstood,—a line which has excited more vivid and powerful emotions than any one in Homer, Virgil, Milton, Trumbull, Dwight, or Barlow, which perhaps may be adopted for the motto of the Third Volume of this paper—it is the following: "PROMISE AFORESAID NOT REGARDING, HATH NEVER PERFORMED THE SAME."

"All persons indebted to the late Partnership of Meigs, Bowen and Dana, or Meigs and Dana, are requested to make imme-

diately Payment to the Subscriber, that he may be enabled to discharge the demands against the said Partnerships. Any kind of country Produce or manufacture will be received. They are particularly intreated to make use of the opportunities they may have of forwarding their respective balances at the approaching commencement."

"The PRINTER.
"New-Haven, August 8th, 1787."

APPENDIX D.

The two following letters from Jefferson to Meigs had better be printed here, to show more accurately what is stated in the text:—

"Washington, May 20, 1803.

"Your friendly letter of April 12th was not received till the 11th of this month. The approbation, which you are pleased to express of my efforts in the public cause are highly acceptable, the concurrence of our fellow-citizens of understanding and good principles being more than a countervail with me for all the dirty ribaldry and falsehoods with which the tory papers are constantly filled. We are giving a fair course to the experiment whether an honest government can stand against the licentiousness of the press—a fair one, I call it, because we do not deter them by prosecutions even under those laws against libels established by the states, whose authority to establish such we always affirmed to be exclusive of that of the general government. I believe we shall succeed in the experiment and that it will appear that the people will consider the acts of the government which they see and feel, as better evidence than the falsehoods which they read. It is with great pleasure I learn that the college of Georgia is under your care. Science is indispensably necessary for the support of a Republican government, and it is to the middle and southern States we must look for support until the clerical chains in which the New England states are bound can

be broken or lightened. This will be done in time. Two of those states are already with us. In Massachusetts we continue to gain, and even in Connecticut where we have lost in the house of representatives, we have gained in the mass of the people. In 1802 Trumbull and Kirby had 12,000 and 4523 votes, to-wit: out of every 100 Trumbull had 71 Kirby 29. In 1803 the votes are 14,300 and 7848, to-wit: of every 100 Trumbull has 65 and Kirby 35. People of that country move slowly but steadily. I pray you to accept, &c."

"Monticello, Mar. 16, 1815.

"Your favor of Feb. 15 has been received, and I cordially reciprocate your congratulations on the great events which have taken place in the South, and the peace which has followed them. The latter, altho' desired, is rendered infinitely more acceptable by the former, which indeed was necessary to impress on both parties a just idea of the bravery of both: but most especially to let England see she can gain nothing of us by war. I hope her government will now have the wisdom as well as justice, by a satisfactory provision against the impressment of our citizens to convert into a permanent peace what is really but a truce without that provision. Still her loss by the war will be incalculable, as it has planted all the important manufactures so firmly in our soil as never again to be eradicated. I am confident that two-thirds of the articles we formerly took from England, will now be furnished among ourselves. We shall hardly again send our cotton to England to be spun, woven, and returned for our own wearing.

"I am particularly to thank you for the kind expressions of your letter towards myself, and for the opportunity it gives me of assuring you of the friendly interest I take in your happiness and success. This pleasure will be greatly increased, if an opportunity should be afforded me of doing it in person, should your passage thro' this part of our country permit me to see you here, in the course of the ensuing summer, as your letter flatters me. With this assurance be pleased to accept that of my friendly esteem and respect."

APPENDIX E.

There is quite an extensive sketch of the life of R. J. Meigs, Jr., who was the eldest son of Col. R. J. Meigs, to be found in Campbell's biographical sketches (Columbus, O., 1838). He is often spoken of as the "Postmaster-General," on account of his having held that federal office for many years, and also as the "Governor," because he had held the gubernatorial office in Ohio; he had also been a Judge of the Supreme Court of that State and one of her earliest U. S. Senators. Some of his letters appear to me to show so well the state of political and social feeling of the day as to make it advisable to print them. The few following extracts are reproduced here, and will serve to show (what I have already had occasion to mention) that party spirit was at that time at white heat. The letters quoted are all written to his father, Col. Meigs:

"Marietta [Ohio]

"Sept. 19th, 1796.

"The Executive Directory exhibit firmness with prudence and the *nation of republicans* will triumph and the nation of pirates (I hope) be humbled."

"Marietta, Jan'y 31, 1802.

"Herewith you will receive the Ohio Gazette containing the statement of votes. The Feds here by every art and falsehood kept me out of the Convention, although I attended at Chillicothe for my own satisfaction. But we have fairly beat them at last by large majorities, and they are raving worse than ever and fulminating their anathemas against the administration with the malice and Fury of Bigots in despair. It is impossible to detail the political occurrences here; every railing accusation has been brought against me, even the Ladies of the Town were prohibited from visiting us, and attempts were made to exile us from society. But with a hand steadily reaching to its object, I have nearly prostrated their Temples of Federalism. The Putnam influence is nearly done. By returns from the other counties I find that in both houses of the Legislature consisting of

54, there will be but 4 Federals. Mr. Tiffin will be Governor; it is generally intended by Republicans to appoint me Chief Justice of the State for 7 years with a salary equal to the Governor's, which will be better for me settled as I am in Marietta than to go to Chillicothe."

"Cincinnati, March 5, 1802.

"I wrote you by Mr. Frye, since which time I went to Washington City, stayed there about ten days, and attended the debates of both Houses of Congress. Col. Worthington and Judge Symmes were there. Mr. Jefferson sent for me and made many inquiries concerning the Territory; a few days after I dined with him at his house in company with several leading republican Characters of both Houses. Mr. Jefferson is plain in dress and manners, affable and inquisitive, where he wants information."

"Richmond, Va., Sept. 26, 1807.

"I have been here 6 weeks as a witness in the Trial of Col. Burr. * * * * The intention of dividing the U. S. has within a few days been satisfactorily proved. Burr is as subtle as ether and seems to avoid all touch; you may as well grasp a Shadow. * * * * It is astonishing what support Col. Burr receives here from Federal Influence, Exertion, and Intrigue; almost every Fed. seems to identify himself and his fate with Col. Burr."

APPENDIX F.

It will be remembered that the opponents of the further extension of slavery made their first violent contest at the time Missouri desired admission into the Union. They proposed to require an amendment to her Constitution, prohibiting forever slavery within her limits; and the whole country was divided at once into two hostile camps, North and South. The letter in the text shows that Josiah Meigs, though strongly disapproving of slavery, was opposed to the proposed restriction; and his oldest son Henry lost his seat in Congress from entertaining the

same opinions and acting upon them in opposition to the will of his constituents. He was a member from New York, the Legislature of which State had requested her representatives to vote in favor of the restriction; but he voted in favor of the State's admission without the restriction, thus distinctly violating the Legislature's request. This excited a great deal of severe criticism of him in his State, and possibly John Quincy Adams was not altogether in the wrong when he wrote in his Diary (IV 518) that he supposed certain resolutions in favor of emancipation introduced by Mr. Meigs were intended as "an apology to his constituents for voting against the restriction." The resolutions in question were as follows, and were presented by Mr. Meigs, on February 5, 1820:

"Whereas slavery in the United States is an evil of great and increasing magnitude, one which merits the greatest efforts of this nation to remedy: Therefore,

"Resolved, that a committee be appointed to inquire into the expediency of devoting the public lands as a fund for the purpose of

"1st, Employing a naval force competent to the annihilation of the slave trade.

"2ndly, The emancipation of slaves in the United States; and 3dly, colonizing them in such a way as shall be conducive to their comfort and happiness, in Africa, their mother country."

"The said preamble and resolutions were read: and, on motion of Mr. Walker, of North Carolina, laid on the table." (Benton's Abridg. Debs. Congr. VI 502).

At the next session, on February 16, 1821, Mr. Meigs rose to call the House's attention to his above resolutions. In the course of his remarks he said:—

"He was aware that on the first mention of this subject, unpleasant feelings might be excited in one part of the House, but he trusted on examination of the proposed plan, it would appear less objectionable than was believed; and he ardently hoped indeed, that ultimately it might be found the means of closing forever, by one of the most glorious acts of legislation that ever proceeded from any legislative body, the growing controversy

between the North and South, acknowledged on all hands to be of a most serious and alarming nature. When, he said, it was considered that in the certain increase of our population, doubling in 25 years, we should see in half a century not less than forty millions of people in the United States, of which perhaps twenty would be inhabitants of the vast country beyond the Mississippi, we cannot fail to admit that the five hundred millions of acres, contemplated to be devoted as a fund for the emancipation of slaves, will have had a value more than competent to the redemption and colonization of all such of our slave population as it shall be found expedient or desirable to part with. * * * * Mr. Meigs said he had witnessed with constant anxiety, the progress of the great controversy which now agitates us, and had from the beginning of his career, as a member of this House, determined, if it should become necessary, to devote himself a sacrifice for the great object if possible, of keeping the two great parties in peace. I do not know, said he, whether I have made such a sacrifice. It is probable I have by the well-known course which I have pursued upon this subject. But sir, if indeed I have lost the confidence of those whom I represent, I will, before I leave my present station, at least make one effort for the purpose of uniting the parties by the only measure which appears to me to be calculated to unite them; one, too, in which both may participate, and in which they will, as I repeat, perform one of the most noble acts of legislation; one which I would not exchange for all the laws on our statute-books from 1789 to this day." The resolutions he then offered did not differ very materially from those presented at the prior session; they proposed the appointment of a committee to consider the expediency of devoting 500 millions of acres next west the Mississippi (1) to the employment of the same naval force before proposed; (2) to gradual emancipation "by a voluntary exchange of the lands for them (the negroes);" and lastly, to colonization, but no exchange was to be allowed except upon the perfectly ascertained consent of the slave proposed to be colonized, and no separation of husband and wife or parent

and child was to be allowed "contrary to their well-ascertained consent." By 63 votes to 50, it was at once decided to consider the resolutions, and they were then on motion of Mr. Clarke, of New York, laid on the table by a vote of 66 to 55. (Benton's Abridg. Debs. Cong. VII 122-3).

Mr. Meigs's vote against the restriction excited the utmost opposition to him in New York; he writes: "I suffered purgatory for thirty years after my votes on the Missouri question; I lived armed night and day with my heavy pistols each loaded with balls and slugs—threatened with assassination many times a day by anonymous writers."

As already said, his votes upon this subject cost him his seat; but, whatever any one may think of the question, which was at the bottom of the matter, his bold independence must excite admiration. Mr. C. C. Cambreleng was, I think, his successor.

APPENDIX G.

This psalm reads as follows:—

1. Shew pity, Lord; O Lord, forgive;
Let a repenting rebel live:
Are not thy mercies large and free?
May not a sinner trust in thee?
2. My crimes are great, but can't surpass
The power and glory of thy grace:
Great God, thy nature hath no bound,
So let thy pard'ning love be found.
3. O wash my soul from ev'ry sin,
And make my guilty conscience clean;
Here on my heart the burden lies,
And past offences pain mine eyes.

4. My lips with shame my sins confess
Against thy law, against thy grace ;
Lord, should thy judgment grow severe,
I am condemned, but thou art clear.
5. Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must pronounce thee just in death :
And if my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well.
6. Yet save a trembling sinner, Lord,
Whose hope, still hov'ring round thy word,
Would light on some sweet promise there,
Some sure support against despair.

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