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JEREMIAH T. CHASE.*

Maryland boasts of no purer patriot than JEREMIAH TOWNLEY CHASE, who was born at Baltimore, May 23, 1748.

Schools were then rare, and conducted on a very limited scale, and his education, like that of Washington, was by no means liberal. His mind, however, being naturally strong, overcame the difficulties and impediments arising from the want of early culture. Certain it is, that no bosom ever glowed more intensely with the fire of patriotism; for in the dawn of our revolution, young Chase is found among the foremost of those gallant spirits who resisted the tyranny of Great Britain, and swore that they would be free. He was a member of the first committee of observation for Baltimore, whose duty it was to watch the movements of the enemies of liberty, and with vestal vigilance, guard the rights of their oppressed country.

When the tidings of the battle of Lexington reached Baltimore in the spring of '75, Mr. Chase enrolled himself as a private in the first company of militia raised in the state, and thus contributed to call into action that indomitable spirit of the Maryland line, which afterwards won for itself imperishable laurels at Cowpens, Guilford and Eutaw.

In the summer of '76, the convention met at Annapolis, to establish a form of government, and continued its session until August 14th, when the bill of rights and present constitution were adopted; founded on the principles of Magna Charta, the Petition of Right, and other bulwarks of English freedom, and beyond all, on the inalienable right of self-government. They declared that the people alone were the true fountain of all power, and could alter or abolish their form of government at their sovereign will. This was a new and untried experiment. History furnished no parallel: it shed but feeble light on their path. Yet did this assembly, amid the din of battle, proclaim to the universe, that they would maintain their rights, or die in the struggle. They undertook the enterprize under a perfect conviction that they must expiate their offence on a gibbet, if victory did not settle on their banner. I find, on examining the journal, that Mr. Chase was in constant attendance on all the deliberations of the convention.

From this period until 1779, when he removed to Annapolis, he represented Baltimore in the House of Delegates. During these three gloomy and appalling years, when the stoutest hearts were almost ready to despair, Mr. Chase cheered and animated the House with his powerful and eloquent speeches. "Our cause," he would say, "is just: Heaven is on our side: it is the conflict of liberty with tyranny: innocent blood has been shed: our cities are conflagrated and our temples profaned: helpless families are flying at midnight from their homes: misery and wretchedness now clothe our land with sackcloth and ashes. Behold, the haughty foe now holds in his grasp the cities of New York and Philadelphia, while disease, exposure and famine daily waste our little army at Valley Forge! See them, naked and exposed to snow-storms, while the heart of their chief is dissolved in sorrow! That illustrious man now looks to us for aid; let it not be in vain. Cast your eye to the prison ship. Hear ye not the groans of our starving brethren, held in cruel captivity since November '76. The genius of America cries to us for their relief. Now is the time to strike for our country. Tell me not of the portentous cloud hanging over us: look beyond it. The time will arrive when our fears shall vanish; when war shall end, and peace spread her balmy wing over this once fair, but now desolated land. Forget not that in August, '76, we proclaimed to the astonished world, that we would lay down our lives in defence of our dearest rights: that we would 'do or die.' Shall we now shrink from the contest and leave Washington to perish? The eyes of unnumbered millions are upon us: let us do justice to our posterity: the gratitude of future ages shall constitute our rich reward. It is true that our resources are scanty: our soldiers are undisciplined: munitions of war are hardly to be obtained: yet will aid come from unexpected sources. He who rules human destiny, will awaken the sympathy of European nations, who will supply our necessities and assist us in this mighty conflict." This appeal was irresistible—under the energetic administration of Thomas Johnson, first governor of the state, supplies of cattle and flour were sent to the army: troops were recruited and disciplined: the energies of war called into action: and the unsubdued spirit of Maryland felt in the cabinet and the field, until the banner of America floated on the heights of York Town. Mr. Chase was universally esteemed one of the most conspicuous actors in the war of independence, which terminated with the treaty of peace in '83. He was a member of Congress at Annapolis, when on the 23d of December of this year, the father of his country surrendered into the hands of that august assembly, his commission as commander-in-chief of the armies of the United States, which he had received in June, '75. He was now in his fifty-first year, in the full possession of all his powers; enjoying unbounded fame: the army, which he had just left at Newburgh, ready to clothe him with the imperial purple. Disdaining the proudest trophies of ambition, he comes before Congress, and begs them to receive the insignia of his authority. He is dressed in his military costume, surrounded by his aids de camp Walker and Humphreys; and in the presence of Howard, Smallwood, Williams, and the now venerable Mayor of Baltimore, who had fought by his side, and well knew the toils and perils he had encountered, he asks to become a private citizen of that country for

* We are indebted to a gentleman of Maryland for the Sketches of Jeremiah T. Chase, Daniel Sheffey, and Roger B. Taney. We are also promised for our July No., from the same pen, Memoirs of Judge White and of Samuel Cooper, of the revolutionary army, both of whom are now living in Georgetown, D. C.

whose independence he had oft perilled his life. Carroll of Carrollton, Madison and Monroe beheld the scene—the admiring nations of the earth echoed his praise, as he retired from public admiration to the enchanting lawns of Mount Vernon. Charles the 5th resigned his crown to Philip, only when he was incapable of wearing it: Cincinnatus surrendered his second dictatorship of Rome, after holding his power only fourteen days: but Washington for more than eight years reigned in the hearts of his countrymen with unexampled sway, during which period it might be supposed that lust of power had obtained such an ascendancy as would have tempted him to enlarge and perpetuate the influence which he now possessed. By this single act alone, he at once descends from the pinnacle of glory to his own peaceful fireside.

Having served with much honor in Congress the term for which he was elected, Mr. Chase engaged extensively in the practice of law, and occupied a very distinguished rank in his profession. The reports of Harris and M'Henry show that his cases were argued with much ability, evincing great labor in the examination of authorities: his profound learning, combined with distinguished clearness of reasoning, adorned with a manner plain and persuasive, always delighted and instructed the court and jury.

The constitution of the United States had been adopted by the convention at Philadelphia in September, 1787. Washington, who presided over that illustrious body of statesmen, with all the weight and simplicity of his character, recommended it to the ratification of Congress, with an affection and earnestness which equalled the great law-giver of the Jews. Like him he had led his countrymen from bondage to liberty, and like him now gave them the law of their future action. When this constitution was submitted to the people of Maryland, in convention assembled, Mr. Chase was its ardent, untiring, and able advocate. He coincided with Hamilton, Madison and Jay, in the fundamental doctrines contained in their joint work, and was eminently useful in removing the doubts and quieting the fears of his fellow-citizens as to many portions of that extraordinary charter of their political rights. From 1794 to 1805, Mr. Chase acted as chief judge of the general court of Maryland. During this period, no state in our Union beheld a more brilliant constellation of professional talent, than was now exhibited at the bar of this court; yet the decisions of judge Chase were not only admired by all, but very seldom reversed by the appellate tribunal. On the abolition of the General Court, he was appointed chief judge of the third judicial district, comprehending the counties of Anne Arundel, Calvert and Montgomery, and presiding judge of the Court of Appeals, which station he filled with consummate ability until 1824, when he resigned his commission.

It was in the fall of 1809 I first saw this venerable man at Rockville, where he was holding court. His locks were white as snow, floating on his shoulders; his countenance that of an angel: his brilliant eye combined the fire of genius with the meekness of the dove: his form bent under the weight of years: his voice feeble and tremulous: he seemed the representative of both worlds. When the prophet arose on the night previous to the battle, to admonish the ill-fated Saul of the disastrous end which so soon awaited him on the mountains of Gilboah, he could not have exhibited an appearance more awfully enchanting, than did the judge in his address to the grand jury on this occasion. The silence of death reigned through the house, as he commenced his charge. The subject was duelling. His mind had been led to its contemplation from the recent death of a son of Robert Bowie, Esq. then governor of the state, and a friend of Mr. Chase. The youth was an officer in the army of the United States, of noble form, chivalric spirit and amiable bearing, who fell in the morning of life on the banks of the Mississippi, at the shrine of this cruel and gothic custom. His melancholy end filled Prince George county, where he had been reared, with undissembled sorrow. As the judge progressed, you saw before your eyes the bleeding corpse of the unfortunate man consigned to the lonely grave in a distant land; the forms of his mourning parents were visible: instantly the jury and audience were dissolved into tears. Presently he spoke of the Divine law, and how the shedding of blood was denounced at the death of the first martyr: that the Saviour of the world had inculcated peace and good will among men, and the forgiveness of injuries; and that he had died on the cross praying for his enemies. The laws of our country, too, said he, solemnly forbid this savage practice, which desolates our firesides, and drives the happiness of society far from the haunts of man. I invoke you, then, in the name of all these high and holy considerations, to rally round those laws which you have sworn to sustain, and assist the court in extirpating this wide-wasting iniquity. The charge continued for an hour: its effect was thrilling and pathetic.

On the 23d May, 1828, this pious judge was no more. In his lofty and useful career, he had pronounced the law affecting his fellow creatures, with the abiding conviction that he was himself soon to be passed upon by the Great Judge of both quick and dead: "Thou, God, seest me," was written on all his decisions. In his last hour, Addison called to his bedside an infidel young man, and requested him to witness how a christian could die. Judge Chase might not only have imitated the example, but have appealed to the whole world to point to any act of his well-spent life which fell short of the most perfect purity of intention, or which did not aim to promote the welfare of his fellow-men.

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DANIEL SHEFFEY.

Daniel Sheffey was born in Frederick, Maryland, in 1770. His education was inconsiderable. At an early age, his father taught him the trade of a shoemaker. He continued to work with him until he attained manhood. The house yet stands, where he spent, in this occupation, many long and wearisome years of his life. While engaged on his bench, he was frequently observed, during leisure moments, to be intensely occupied in the perusal of some author for his instruction or amusement. By moonlight he was to be found in his father's garden, making observations of the heavenly bodies, with telescopes, which he had borrowed: and then again he was buried in profound meditation, while detecting