

### XIII THE SPIRIT OF '76

disinterested patriotism; while no pleasure arising from the advancement of his fortune, to the neglect of a superior obligation, can balance the upbraidings of that faithful monitor.

VII. In every vote he gives, to be solely directed by the public emolument; and never influenced in his suffrage by motives merely selfish or lucrative.

VIII. To give no leave of absence to a fellow-member on trifling occasions, in hopes of the same indulgence in return; but to be strenuous in supporting the rules and orders of the House, (which are the life of business) tho' he may thereby disoblige an irregular, or disappoint an home-sick individual.

IX. Inflexible in his resolution of acting agreeably to the dictates of his conscience, — to be utterly regardless of the applause or censure, that may ensue upon the discharge of his duty.

X. Never to be instrumental in promoting to any office or trust, his dearest connections or intimates, whom he believes not qualified for the department; nor ever to oppose the promotion of any that are, from personal pique or resentment.

XI. As the best calculated laws will be found ineffectual to regulate a people of dissolute morals, he will recommend by his conversation and example, virtue and purity of manners; and discountenance all irreligion and immorality, as equally fatal to the interests of civil society and personal happiness.

XII. Serenely to enjoy the praises acquired by his merit, as an additional testimony to the approbation of his own heart, of the rectitude of his conduct; but from the public clamour and obloquy, to retire *within himself*; and there to feast on his own virtue, without seeking to retaliate the ingratitude of unreasonable men, save only by putting their malevolence to the blush, by fresh and more extensive services to his country.

CATO<sup>2</sup>

1. That is, the regulation of the state with regard to the health, morals, welfare, and safety of the public.

2. In style of writing and manner of argument "Cato" is reminiscent of John Witherspoon, who, though not a member of the assembly, surely devoted considerable thought to the responsibilities of a representative; he was a delegate to the Continental Congress from 1776 to 1782. Moreover, in another instance Witherspoon almost certainly employed the pseudonym "Cato" (see Doc. 3, note 2.)

### 3 "Cato" on the "Importance of a Liberal Education to Civil Society"

[*New-Jersey Gazette*, January 14, 1778.]

## NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

The rapid proliferation of educational institutions was a tangible sign of the resurgence of intellectual activity that accompanied the Revolution. Grammar schools and academies tripled in number during the 1780s. Even night schools for adults and finishing schools for girls made an appearance. In some East Jersey communities, where the New England tradition of government-subsidized education was strong, the schools were public, but in most parts of the state they were private institutions financed by tuition and donations or operated by sectarian groups such as the Society of Friends. The College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) and Queen's College (now Rutgers University), which had maintained a tenuous existence during the war, flourished after peace once again made study and contemplation possible. The two institutions of higher learning not only provided most of the instructors for the lower schools but also set the tone for the entire educational process in the state. In appealing to the legislature to exempt college students from military service, "Cato" in the following essay voices the prevailing assumptions about the advantages to republican society of an educated citizenry. Indeed, the primary reason for the magnitude of the scholastic revival was political: only an informed citizen could effectively discharge the responsibilities of voting and officeholding and rise to the level of public consciousness and civic virtue necessary in a democratic republic. Predictably, in time one of the most important functions of schools in America came to be instruction in matters pertaining to citizenship.

[January 14, 1778]

Whoever considers the importance of education in a political light, will readily acknowledge it worthy the greatest encouragement from the public. The superior advantages derived to the community from men of letters, in the various offices of government, and especially in the character of legislators and magistrates, to what are to be expected from those who have neglected the cultivation of their minds, are too numerous to be recounted. Impressed with a deep sense of the happy effects of literature upon civil society, the wisest lawgivers have ever been studious to promote and encourage it. For this purpose, they have founded seminaries, endowed colleges, pensioned men of eminent erudition, and explored even foreign nations for the ablest professors in every science.

Of the advantages that have already redounded to this State from the college of New-Jersey, many of the gentlemen who have been there graduated, and since preferred to different offices, have afforded us abundant and striking proofs. We cannot, therefore, compare the late flourishing figure of that institution, (in which the means of education were perhaps not inferior to those in the most celebrated universities of Europe) with its present deplorable condition, without lamenting the change; and feeling ourselves deeply affected for the interests of posterity. Nor can it be expected, that parents will put their children to college, while they are subjected, in the course of their studies, to be called out in the militia; which not only endangers their morals, but must of necessity obstruct their progress in learning. And indeed to oblige matriculates to perform military duty, is a thing so unexampled, that there is perhaps not an instance of it in history. They are, I believe, universally excused from war; and for that reason not treated as men bearing arms, when their country is invaded by an enemy.

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Considering, therefore, the unspeakable importance of a liberal education to civil society, the impossibility of obtaining it under its present embarrassments, and how highly it becomes the legislative body of a free people to encourage the liberal arts, (which naturally inspire the most exalted love of our country) and by that means nurture for the succeeding age, a race of sages and patriots to carry to full perfection, that illustrious fabric of liberty, the foundation of which has been laid by the present. — Considering these things, I say, I flatter myself that our superiors will not, for the comparatively trifling service which the Collegians are capable of rendering the public in the capacity of soldiers, continue the present embargo upon the seat of the muses; nor compel the arts and sciences, against which none ought to wage war, to war against any.<sup>1</sup> And should I be disappointed in my expectations, the disappointment will be greatly alleviated by the pleasing reflection of having discharged my duty, in endeavoring to encourage the advancement of learning; which, next to religion, deserves the most serious attention of the guardians of the people.

CATO<sup>2</sup>

1. On March 17, 1778, the Reverends John Witherspoon and Jacob Rutzen Hardenbergh, presidents of the College of New Jersey and Queen's College, sent separate appeals to the legislature requesting that college students and grammar school pupils be exempted from military service. The request was denied later that same day. *Votes and Proceedings, October 28, 1777-October 8, 1778* (Trenton, 1779), p. 82. But on December 10, 1778, a law was passed which exempted teachers and students from militia duty. "An Act for the Encouragement of Education," *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of New Jersey, November 20-December 12, 1778* (Trenton, 1779), Chap. XII.

2. Is "Cato" John Witherspoon? The writer was obviously intimately involved with the College of New Jersey and apparently acquainted with European universities (Witherspoon came to Princeton from the University of Edinburgh); moreover, Witherspoon did make a formal appeal to the legislature for student exemptions as noted above. Whoever the author might have been, it is uncertain whether he was seeking to identify himself with Marcus Porcius Cato (the Elder, 234-149 B. C.), Roman statesman and champion of republican ideals, or his great-grandson, Marcus Porcius Cato (the Younger, 95-46 B. C.), Roman Stoic philosopher and patriot whose deeds inspired later republicans.

#### 4 "An Elector" Compares the British and American Systems of Government

[*New-Jersey Gazette*, March 4, 1778.]