MEMORANDUM.

I.

DEDICATION OF THE NEW COURT ROOM IN PHILADELPHIA.

The New Supreme Court Room in the Public Buildings at Broad and Market streets, Philadelphia, was formally dedicated to the use of the court on Monday, January 1st 1877, in the presence of a large assemblage of members of the bar and prominent citizens.

When the court opened the Hon. Benjamin Harris Brewster delivered the following address :—

May it please this Honorable Court, the Commissioners for the erection of the Public Buildings have requested me to express, on their behalf, their gratification that the rooms first completed for public use have been those for the accommodation of the highest tribunal of the State. That request I gladly comply with.

On the fourth day of July 1874, the corner-stone of this great structure was laid, and now, on the first day of January 1877, two years and six months since that occasion, the Supreme Court of this Commonwealth dignifies the work, and dedicates the building to the most august and solemn of human purposes. The Commissioners, and the people represented by them, may alike congratulate themselves on this happy and auspicious beginning, ominous of good to all. To remove the courts from the narrow and miserable apartments now provided for the administration of public justice, was one of the chief

causes that induced the law that authorized the erection of these buildings. The pressing necessities of our people for suitable places for the transaction of public affairs became a cause of reproach. Soon that will be done away with by the completion of this vast building, intended for practical uses, but to become the ornament and glory of our city. No such structure exists on this continent. To fully and practically understand its dimensions, we must remember that, if it were extended in one straight line, it would be more than half a mile in length and 115 feet average height, with a tower 510 feet high.

When it is completed it will properly represent the majesty of the law and the majesty of the people. The temple into which you enter to declare the public will, and to dispose of human rights and determine human duties, should be grand and solemn in its proportions and adornments. The simplicity of your form of proceedings is ever marked with dignity and order—dignity without pomp, and order without vain ceremony. The outward acts, as well as the surroundings of such a place for such a holy purpose, should both inspire a serious influence. And this, with patient and wise thought, the architect has studied to express. The very precepts that adorn the stairways and entrance declare with grave significance the great duties that are here enforced: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor;" "The way of the transgressor is hard."

The architectural ornaments symbolize the end and purpose of this place. The keystone of the arch by which you enter represents the head of Moses, the inspired lawgiver, and on the keystone of the inner arch of the vestibule is to be the head of Justice, blindfolded, expressing impartiality. Over the arch of the western entrance, the way to the Criminal Court, is to be the head of a beautiful woman, representing Sympathy, and on each side are the scales of Justice and the anchor of Hope, and on the keystone over the corridor is to be the head of Pain, her brow bound with a chain. All of these significantly decorate and wisely admonish.

The beautiful proportions and arrangements of these apartments are adapted for your uses; the railway and telegraphic connections make the place easy of access, and convenient for those who are called

here. The court, the bar and the public, are alike provided for, and soon these commodious rooms and their familiar use will show how proper and necessary it is for this tribunal to convene here, and all will be reconciled and gratified with the change.

I have been deputed to perform a pleasant and simple duty—to welcome you to your new home. As I began, I will conclude, your presence is auspicious of good. May the solemn and pure purposes to which you now dedicate this building keep it sacred for ever!

To these remarks Chief Justice AGNEW replied in these words:—

We have listened with pleasure to the appropriate address just delivered upon the interesting occasion of our first entry into this new structure, which, though unfinished, gives evidence of the beauty and fair proportions of the place intended for the use of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. No one, perhaps, could have been selected, Mr. Brewster, better than yourself, whose refined culture, graces of oratory and eloquent diction, would have more happily represented the event which introduces the ministers of Justice into her new and choicest temple.

Yet the occasion is not without a regret, that a suitable reply has not been prepared on our part, who are the *dramatis personæ* of the ceremony. As the organ of the court, I feel that more justice might have been done to its dignity and importance, had notice of an intended address been given. Yet the regret is, perhaps, more my own than that of others, for where expectation prevails not, disappointment will not be felt, and a voice from western wilds, probably, will not be missed where so much refinement, culture and customary courtesy exist.

But the occasion, in itself, presents much food for useful thought. Here, on this spot, which the foresight of Penn, the founder of this great city, and of a state equally grand in all that constitutes a state, selected as one where the freedom of the city might be enjoyed by a numerous people in times when his prophetic eye, looking into the distant future, saw millions gathered there—here that people have

planted a temple dedicated to Justice, and have ordained that its priests shall, for all time, go in and out before them, enforcing their rights and ministering redress to their wrongs.

No more beautiful conception of the high qualities of justice has ever been presented to the world since ancient thought gave birth to that which robes the purity of woman as a priestess of impartial righteousness, in the attitude of deep attention, listening with all her faculties, and with intensest interest, to the plaints of the injured and the oppressed. Feeling keenly for their wrongs, yet blinded by the thick bandage of impartiality to the persons and conditions of those suing before her, carried away by no prejudice, swayed by no feeling of fear or favor, she stands in a posture of dignity and grace, holding in her hands steadily, and with untrembling nerve, the eternal balances of her divinity, equally poised, and only knows the truth when the scale descends upon one side or the other. Such is the justice which love of mankind, fear of Heaven, a conscience void of offence and patriotism demand at the hands of those who take their places at her altar.

Like the storm-driven mariner, who at the first glimpse of sunshine takes his altitude and reckons his place on the deep, it is well for judges also, when an occasion arises to enforce upon them the duty of taking their reckoning, to see that they are pursuing the true lines of their voyage upon the broad sea of right, guided by the great circles of the Constitution and Laws, and to know that they are preserving these cardinal points which alone will conduct them to that port which is the rightful haven of every cause.

It is sometimes difficult to do this amid the throes of popular upheavings, carried onward by the strong impulses of passion. Yet in this tumult it is a consolation to know that conscientiousness and honesty of purpose will in the end be rewarded. For a time the storm will rage, and the fate of the ministers of Justice will seem to be engulfed, ready to be shipwrecked in an instant; yet the storm will pass, the sun will break out in his sereneness, and the ways of Providence will be justified to man. Then comes a calmness and a consciousness of rectitude rewarded, and the course of justice runs smoothly again.

We who now occupy these seats, once filled by men of brilliant, or gigantic, or passionless intellects, as each in his place was wont to be, may not come up to the measure of their exalted minds; yet we may hope and believe, we may at least endeavor to equal, if we cannot excel them, in that moral worth which lies at the foundation of all true greatness.

Ill fares that people where brilliant or profound intellects, unfounded on principle and uncurbed by conscience, sway the multitude to their unscrupulous schemes, or wield their feelings to selfish and corrupt ends. Of all the types of man—of a gentleman—the Christian type is the truest one. It is not outward finish, or well-bred suavity, or courteous bearing, or the most refined culture, essential as they are, which makes the highest type of man. But when inwrought principle, conscientious regard for the rights of others, a deep sense of justice with godlike charity, are combined with the outward finish and the inward culture of the mind, the acme is reached at which all good judges and men should seek to arrive.

Then let it be the prayer of all here or elsewhere that kind Heaven will vouchsafe such men to fill all your benches. That many do I fully believe; some I know. Long may the judiciary of Philadelphia continue to deserve the approbation and the gratitude of all right-thinking men. And let me fondly hope, while I shall soon close a long and laborious term, that this bench shall have hereafter, as in the past, the favor and kindly support of the friends of justice. With this aid they will, I doubt not, fill their stations wisely and well.

Before closing, it is proper to say that we ourselves have not sought the transfer to this building, but have followed only the indications of those having the affairs of the city in charge. Speaking for myself, and probably others on this bench, I may say I fear that the separation of this court from the locality of all the city courts will be inconvenient to the bar. Poor as our former room is, I would have been willing to suffer its inconvenience until the removal of all the courts would have lessened the inconvenience of remoteness.

And now, regretting that these hastily written words do not reach

the high standard of the occasion, I at least may rejoice that they will set off the beautiful address to which we have listened.

The court will now adjourn.

B. M. Smith, Esq., a native of Connecticut also, who, like himself, as a student at law, both becoming afterwards prominent in their profession.

Judge WILLIAMS, I think, studied law under the late Chief Justice WALTER H. LOWRIE, then a leading practitioner in Pittsburgh. I know he became his partner, and continued so until Judge LOWRIE was appointed to the bench of the District Court of Allegheny county. Afterwards Judge WILLIAMS became the leading partner in a firm composed of himself and the late William M. Shinn, Esq. In October 1851, at the election under the amendment to the Constitution of 1850, he was elected one of the Judges of the District Court, and sat with the late Walter Forward, who was chosen President. Judge WILLIAMS filled that position with great acceptability and credit. The Nisi Prius and before a jury was his forte, and greatly preferred by him. He has often said to me that he loved to begin a cause, and going step by step with the evidence, build it up from the foundation. His mind was peculiarly receptive and retentive of facts, and his memory one of the most tenacious. He seemed never to forget a case he had once heard; nor was this peculiar adaptation to the trial of causes at all destructive of his power of analysis and sound judgment. He seized the leading points quickly, and with a strong grasp. His oral arguments and his charges were always clear, pointed, discriminating and forcible. He was re-elected to the District Bench, and was far in his second term when he was appointed by Governor Geary, in the latter part of October 1868, to fill the vacancy on our bench caused by the resignation of Judge WILLIAM STRONG. He took his seat immediately, at Pittsburgh, the court being then in session there. In the autumn of 1869 he was elected by the people, and continued in service, with occasional interruptions of sickness, until the third or fourth of January 1876, when he left for home, as I have stated. Our Brother WILLIAMS was a man of great probity and firmness of character, of conscientious convictions, and strict notions of duty. Of the old New England stock, he was reared, and continued to live, a consistent member of the Presbyterian Church, siding with the New School, and yet coming into the union with the

Old School with satisfaction. In purity and singleness his mind was especially conspicuous, swerving neither to the right nor to the left, so far as he knew himself. This was eminently so in the performance of his judicial duties. In consultation he was of great assistance to his brothers, his broad views and vigorous logic making his judgments valuable aids to correct conclusions. But it was not by these qualities alone he became endeared to us. His was a genial and kindly nature, filled with wit and good humor, poured out often in a sonorous voice, and with a liberality which made his intercourse enjoyable. We have, on like occasions, listened with sorrow to the announcements of the deaths of those who had sat on this Bench; but this is the first time, since the death of Judge GIBSON, in 1853, that the bench lost a member by death. It is sad, indeed, to know that a brother has been cut off from our midst, but so it is—so it must be. Still more keenly does this penetrating thought come to us, who, from the very character of our bench, must have passed the zenith of life, and are on our descent to that broad horizon where all must come at last—where darkness settles and the wave of death engulfs. We pour out this tribute from full hearts, yet knowing that sorrow cannot chain the parting breath, or our voices call back the spirit from its flight; we must bid our friend and brother our last adieu.

At the conclusion of his remarks the Chief Justice ordered an adjournment of the court till Saturday morning next, at 10 o'clock.