

MEMORANDUM.

INSTALLATION OF THE HON. GEORGE SHARSWOOD, AS CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA.

AT the opening of the January Term of the Supreme Court at Philadelphia, on January 6th 1879, the commissions of HON. GEORGE SHARSWOOD, as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, and of the HON. JAMES P. STERRETT, as an Associate Justice of said Court, were read by the Prothonotary. As the new Chief Justice was about to proceed to the business of the Court, GEORGE W. BIDDLE, Esq., on behalf of the Bar of Philadelphia, addressed him as follows:—

Chief Justice SHARSWOOD: The members of the Philadelphia Bar have deputed to me the very agreeable duty of expressing their high satisfaction in seeing you to-day in the seat of the Presiding Justice of the Supreme Court of this Commonwealth. Perhaps, in one respect, the selection of me as their organ is not inappropriate. Whilst others, from seniority or greater prominence of position, might with more propriety have been selected as the representative of the profession on this occasion, *none* can, I think, claim a longer or a steadier intimacy with you than he who is now standing before you. For a greater length of time than I care to state—for years even before that comparatively early period of your life when you were first called to the Bench—our relations have been warm and close. If you were not literally the first of my forensic companions, yet you were, perhaps, the most intimately connected with

me by similarity of tastes and pursuits. Can I not say that we have often together broken the lingering day of legal studies, when stripping off the professional gown, with its cares and its formalities, we have delighted to bathe ourselves in the refreshing waters of friendly polemical discussion, and in the ardor of youth have confidently traversed the whole field of political and social knowledge, whilst we were busy with plans for the improvement of our country, our profession and ourselves? Delicious hours, when each prompting and aspiration sprang up unbidden to the lips in unstudied words, and we laid bare to each other our very heart of heart!

How well do I remember the warmth of congratulation with which we greeted you, when that good man, Governor SHUNK, sent down to you the commission for the place on the Bench just made vacant by the voluntary retirement of Judge PETTIT. Your seventh lustre had scarcely been completed, and yet you had so thoroughly established your title to the name of an accomplished jurist, that your appointment seemed but the reflection of the wishes of the Bar. Carefully employing every moment of those irrevocable precious hours of early manhood, and "hiving wisdom with each studious year," at the age of thirty-five—far within the prescribed limit when the scholar is usually considered entitled to appear in the robes of the master—you were prepared, when summoned, to discharge all the duties of Associate Judge of the District Court of this city and county.

It is said of Lord ELDON, that before he had ever pleaded a cause he was fit to preside upon the Bench, which he afterwards adorned. Of his wonderful acquirements in the law, too much cannot be said; but I will not offend your modesty by a comparison of the living with the dead. Suffice it now to say, that when you first came to sit in the court in which all the great civil pleas of this great county were then being tried, you showed yourself instantly equal to any draft upon so much of the patience, the learning, the ability and the knowledge of business, as, in about equal proportions, go to the making up of the character of the complete judge.—But I must hasten on.

In 1848, upon the withdrawal from the Presidency of the court of that excellent magistrate, the late JOEL JONES, the voice of the profession pointed to you with remarkable unanimity as its new chief, and Governor SHUNK almost instantly gratified its wishes by naming you as his successor. This was a rapid stride of advancement; but that it was fairly earned was shown three years later, when a change in the Constitution gave us an elective judiciary. The Supreme Court was to be recomposed, and you were prominently spoken of for one of the vacant places on that Bench. A writer in a daily paper of the time, forecasting by a score of years what we are witnessing to day, pronounced you, in the general voice of the profession, then worthy to receive the judicial mantle, which had been worn successively by a SHIPPEN, a TILGHMAN, and a GIBSON. Fortunately for the people of Philadelphia, fortunately, no doubt, for yourself, you were continued in the District Court for more than sixteen years, until the year 1867. The amount of thoroughly good work done there, during that period, by you and your able associates, was something stupendous. I cannot pause here to speak of it in detail. There are many now near me who could, were it necessary, bear willing testimony that I but speak forth the words of truth and soberness, in characterizing it as I have done.

In 1867, the wishes of the entire Bar of the State were finally accomplished. As the result of a very warm and close political contest you were elected to a seat on this Bench. The judicial character established in the District Court was too strong to be overcome, and you were successful over a most estimable competitor, himself afterwards one of your able and honored associates, but who has not outlived his term of office.

And now, to-day, the whole Bar of Philadelphia, by a spontaneous outflow of feeling, welcomes one of her own sons to the highest judicial place in the Commonwealth, and rejoices to witness the fulfilment of its own cherished hopes and of your honors. Many of your old companions at the Bar—would alas, that they were more—have been permitted to behold this complete rounding to your legal and judicial life, and to see in this the last step of your

professional career, the proper consummation of a life of study, of duty and of virtue. That you may continue to exhibit during the full term of your Chief Justiceship all the qualities which have made your judicial name conspicuous, is the ardent desire of all here present, who through my lips now offer to you their words of gratulation, and ask God to speed and prosper to the end, the good and faithful servant.

At the conclusion of Mr. BIDDLE's remarks, Chief Justice SHARSWOOD said: "I can only say that this tribute is entirely unexpected and undeserved. I can merely add that I have tried to do my duty to the best of my ability."