0162

"Biographical Sketch of Caspar Morris, M.D." MS 1994

enjoy the greatest possible freedom of thought and action consistent with the maintenance of social order and justice. To mention such names as those of Priestley, Pym, Zinzendorf, Rittenhouse, Franklin, Hopkinson, Rush, and Wistar, will be sufficient to give an idea of the intellectual elements which went to the formation of the mode of thought of the Province of Pennsylvania. It was no mere accident of central position which made Philadelphia the spot chosen for the assemblage of the representatives of the Colonies when they came together to consider what was to be done for the redress of their grievances and the future development of their country. On the contrary, it was then as now to a certain extent the centre of orderly thought and quiet but determined material progress. Here were to be found the leaders of every phase of opinion; and the various schools and colleges struggling nobly for existence and advancement amidst all the difficulties and disadvantages incident to an almost frontier life, and with the effervescence necessarily arising from clashing views, gave rise to a race of men habituated to searching far down into the nature of things that they might reach sure foundations on which to base their opinions and build the fabric of their lives. The successful close of the Revolutionary War and the inauguration of the new government were followed by an expansion of ideas of life, and of commerce.

Such was the condition of affairs when Caspar Morris, the subject of this memoir, was born, May 2, 1805. He was the third son of Israel W. Morris, a broker and commission merchant, and his wife Mary, the daughter of Levi Hollingsworth, who was also a leading and enterprising merchant, and who lived in a stone house still standing on the west side of Dock Street above Front, while his counting-house and warehouses occupied a large space on the wharf adjacent, extending below Spruce

Street. Mr. Hollingsworth was largely engaged not only in domestic but also in foreign trade with England and France; was a genial man of the highest probity, very highly esteemed by his contemporaries for these qualities. and for his inflexible and courageous maintenance of what he held right, noble, and true. His selection by Washington to carry a considerable sum of money through the wilderness to the troops in Canada under General Montgomery, in 1777, and his conduct when half mutinous and starving citizens tried to seize flour which was in his care, designed for the army, may be cited as characteristic of him. No less decided a woman was his wife, Hannah, a Christian lady of culture and refinement, the daughter of Stephen Paschall, who was by occupation a whitesmith and had his shop at Third and Walnut Streets. He was a zealous student of natural philosophy, alchemy, chemistry, and metallurgy, and possessed a library rich in all the then attainable works on these subjects. A small part of these works, together with some of his note-books, are now in my possession and show him to have been a man of deep reading and earnest thought. As a patriot he was engaged in casting cannon for the United States, and in the construction of the "chevaux-de-frise" in the Delaware. He was a proficient in the tempering of steel, and his manufactures bore a high repute; it is said that the British officers, during the occupation of Philadelphia, declared there were "no swords as good as those of the old Quaker," and furnished themselves accordingly. His test of a blade was to thrust the point into the counter of his shop and bend the heel over until it touched the board; if the blade snapped, or was warped, it was condemned. He accumulated a competence by the employment of his skill and science. It is related of him that Mr. Horace Binney, then a young man boarding at the same house with him, accosted him thus one