

**MARY WHITE-MRS. ROBERT MORRIS: AN  
ADDRESS DELIVERED BY REQUEST AT  
SOPHIA'S DAIRY NEAR PERRYMANVILLE  
HARFORD CO. MARYLAND, JUNE 7TH 1877,  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE REINTERMENT OF  
THE REMAINS OF COLONEL THOMAS WHITE  
BEFORE A REUNION OF HIS DESCENDANTS**

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Mary White-Mrs. Robert Morris: an address delivered by request at Sophia's Dairy near Perrymansville Harford Co. Maryland, June 7th 1877, on the occasion of the reinterment of the remains of Colonel Thomas White before a reunion of his descendants by Charles Henry Hart

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# **CHARLES HENRY HART**

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MARY WHITE—MRS ROBERT MORRIS

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY REQUEST AT

SOPHIA'S DAIRY NEAR PERRYMANVILLE HARFORD CO MARYLAND

June 7th 1877

ON THE OCCASION OF THE REINTERMENT OF THE REMAINS

OF

COLONEL THOMAS WHITE

BEFORE A REUNION OF HIS DESCENDANTS

HALLS—WHITES—MORRISSES

BY  
CHARLES HENRY HART

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1878

TO

**MY MOTHER**

THESE PAGES

ARE

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED





## MARY WHITE—MRS. ROBERT MORRIS.

I have been invited here to-day to perform not an easy task. The life of a woman whose chief distinction is the prominence of her husband, is not likely to be possessed of characteristics and events, apart from him, of sufficient moment and interest to be preserved alive for half a century after her decease, and bear repeating at the end of that time. And yet this is a grateful task; for by performing it I hope to gratify that most laudable desire of man's heart, to know something of his progenitors, that, by imitating their virtues and transmitting the same to his successors, he may help to improve and benefit the human race. With this end and aim in view, I will relate all I know of Mrs. Robert Morris—Mary, youngest child of Thomas and Esther [Heulings] White. She was born in the city of Philadelphia on the 13th day of April, 1749, and on the 21st of May was baptized at Christ Church. Of her maidenhood, no incidents, even by tradition, are preserved, save in the opening verse of Colonel Shippen's "*Lines written in an Assembly Room*,"<sup>1</sup> to commemorate the beauty and charms of Philadelphia's belles, where he says:—

"In lovely White's most pleasing form,  
What various graces meet!  
How blest with every striking charm!  
How languishingly sweet!"

She must, however, have been carefully trained and educated in all womanly accomplishments to have enabled her to fill,

<sup>1</sup> Shippen Papers, edited by Thomas Balch. Phila. 1855.



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with so much ease, and dignity, and grace, the position in which she was afterwards placed.

On the second of March, 1769, before she was twenty, she was united in marriage by the Reverend Richard Peters, to Robert Morris, the future financier of the American Revolution. Mr. Morris was a native of Great Britain, having been born in Liverpool on the 31st of January, 1734. His father, also Robert Morris, came to this country and settled at Oxford, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, where he died July 12th, 1750, when his son was in his seventeenth year. Robert came to Philadelphia, and entered the counting-house of Mr. Charles Willing, the first merchant of his day; and in 1754, at the age of twenty, formed a copartnership with his son, Thomas Willing, which lasted a period of thirty-nine years, and the firm of Willing & Morris became the best known and largest importing house in the colonies. Early taking an active interest in the welfare of the colonies, Mr. Morris was appointed by the Assembly of Pennsylvania one of the delegates to the second Congress, and entered upon a public career so well known as to render a relation of its details on this occasion unnecessary.

Towards the close of the year 1776, when the British approached Philadelphia, and Congress retired to Baltimore, Mr. Morris remained in the city as one of the committee intrusted with plenary power to perform all public acts. Mrs. Morris followed the Congress, and took up her abode at this very house where we are now assembled, and where her mother and father were visiting her step-sister, Mrs. Hall, and here she remained until the early part of the following March. On the 20th of December she writes to Mr. Morris: "I long to give you an account of the many difficulty's and uneasyness we have experienced in this journey. Indeed, my spirits were very unable to the task after that greatest conflict flying from home; the sufferings of our poor little Tom distressed us all, and without the affectionate assistance of Mr. Hall and the skilfulness of Dr. Cole, whose services I shall never forget, I don't know what might have been the consequence, as it was a boil of an uncommon nature, and required

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the surgeon's hand. We had reason to apprehend, too, we should lose our goods; the many circumstances of this affair I must leave till I see you, as neither my patience nor paper will hold out. Only that Mr. Hall was obliged, when in a few miles of his house, to return to Christiana and retake his vessel, which he accomplished by the assistance of Mr. Hancock; . . . but after all the dangers, I've the pleasure to inform you we are safely housed in this hospitable mansion." In another part of the letter she writes: "I thought I was prepared for every misfortune; for, as you observe, of late we have little else. Yet when Lee is taken prisoner, who is proof against those feelings his loss must occasion, and add to that the triumph of our enemy's and the mortification his sensibility must suffer. Mr. Hall has heard it contradicted at Bush, and that Mr. Hancock thinks from the circumstance it's a false report. God send it may be so, but I've observed pieces of bad news are seldom contradicted."

On the 30th of the same month, upon receipt of the news of the victory at Trenton, she writes to Mr. Morris: "We had been for many days impatiently wishing for a letter from you, as the news we hear from any other quarter is not to be depended on; but when the welcomed one arrived, which brought these glad tidings, it more than compensated for what our late unfortunate circumstances prepared our minds to expect, which was nothing more than our Army's being on the defensive, and fearing least their numbers were not even equal to that, but retreat as usual; but I hope, indeed, the tide is turned, and that our great Washington will have the success his virtues deserve, and rout that impious army who, from no other principle but that of enslaving this once happy country, have prosecuted this Cruell War. My father was greatly, *tho' agreeably*, affected at such good news, and I was the happy means of making many joyfull hearts, as we had many guests added to our large Family to celebrate Christmas. Mr. Hall is surprised he has not received orders to March with his Battalion, but only to hold himself in readiness." She again writes to him on the 15th of January, after hearing of the Battle at Princeton: "I have received

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five of your letters since my last, besides Mr. Hall's, the contents of which almost petrified us;—happy had we been had the petrification reached our hearts, and made them proof against our feelings in this day of Triall. I suppressed mine all in my power, as I wish to make myself as agreeable as possible to this family, and as they had invited a party of young folks to a Twelfth Cake, I tryed to be cheerful; how could I be really so when hourly in expectation of hearing the determination of so important a Battle, and when the express arrived and pronounced Washington victorious, would you believe it, your Molly could not join in the general rejoicing? No! nor never can at a victory so dearly bought." In her last letter to him before her return, written on the journey, she writes: "We are all well in health, and in want only of your Dear Company to be as happy as the state of our country will admit off."

On March 15th, 1777, she writes to her "mamma" from Philadelphia, addressed "To Mrs. White, at Aquila Hall's, Esqr., near Bush Town, Maryland."—"Last Wednesday noon I had the pleasure to arrive safe in dear Philadelphia, after a much pleasanter journey than I expected from our setting off, and it made me very happy to find myself at home after so long an absence, with the terrible apprehensions we fled with of never seeing it again." In the same letter she writes: "I suppose Jemmy Hall has told you how everybody exclaims at my thinness; several of my acquaintances did not know me till they had time to recollect, and then declared there was very little traces of my former self." She concludes with: "Duty to my father, and love to sister and Mr. Hall and all the Hospitable Family, whose kindness to me and my exiled family I shall never forget." In a postscript she adds: "Billy has been told that the Congress appoint'd him their Chaplain when in Baltimore, but has not yet heard it from them, and begs it may not be mentioned." The "Billy," here referred to was none other than her brother, the future eminent prelate and father of the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country, Bishop White. In a letter on April 1st, she writes: "Mr. Hancock intends resigning his seat in Con-