

**MEMORIAL ADDRESS ON
THE LIFE AND CHARACTER
OF WILLARD HALL**

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Memorial Address on the Life and Character of Willard Hall by Daniel M. Bates

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DANIEL M. BATES

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PAPERS OF THE ^{13. 1. 1879} HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE.

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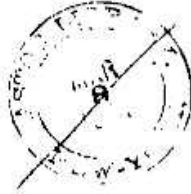
MEMORIAL ADDRESS
ON THE
LIFE AND CHARACTER
OF
WILLARD HALL.

BY
HON. DANIEL M. BATES.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE.

WILMINGTON:

1879.



IMMEDIATELY after the death of Judge Hall, the Historical Society of Delaware requested its President, the Hon. Daniel M. Bates, to deliver a memorial address on his life and character; in compliance with which request the following paper was read before the Society on the 23d of May, 1876.

Compliments of
THE DELAWARE HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE

ADDRESS ON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER
OF
WILLARD HALL.

GENTLEMEN OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY:

THERE are few communities, if any, in which there do not arise, now and then, men whose lives move in a plane above the common level,—men who, besides filling, as others do, some one of the special vocations of business, seem to have it as their life-work to be ever helping the general interests of the age and society in which their lots are cast, occupying such fields of usefulness as their peculiar endowments may fit them for. To such ends as these they bestow their labors and sacrifices, often under discouragements and with little immediate fruit; being sustained in their work by hopes which reach beyond the mental vision of ordinary men. And, what perhaps is hardly of less value to society, these men set before it an attractive example of purity and unselfishness, of powers consecrated to lofty aims, and surpassing in their energy and constancy even the efforts commonly given to sordid ends; and thus, unconsciously, they

raise before the eyes of their contemporaries a higher ideal of humanity,—of its true aims and finer capacities; and so these examples invigorate and render more constant the general aspiration after a better, a nobler career than before had seemed attainable,—an aspiration to the influence of which may be traced the upward progress of human society. These are the men who help the race forward in its slow and difficult advance.

Our own community was long blessed by the presence of one of these exceptionally pure and beneficent lives,—one among the most eminent and useful of all that class of men; and now that he has been removed from among us, and while the light, which death alone sheds, still illumines his career and throws back upon his character that charm which invests the recollection of a cherished object when lost, we are prompted, by a sentiment, both just to the dead and ennobling to the living, to commemorate his virtues and great services. Doubtless, this tribute of our respect—labor as we may to perfect it—will leave us with a sense of still undischarged obligation for his services, and of unexpressed or ill-expressed reverence and admiration for his virtues. But such as it is, we now offer it:

Willard Hall was born in the town of Westford, Middlesex County, and State of Massachusetts, on the 24th of December, 1780. His father, Willis Hall, was born and died in that town; his mother, Mehetabel Poole, was of Hollis, New Hampshire.

He inherited from his ancestry a constitution singularly sound and vigorous in all its parts—physical, intellectual,

and moral. His entire organization—body, intellect, affections, conscience, and will—was healthful, active, and symmetrical,—a remarkable example of the *mens sana in corpore sano*. It is not surprising, in such a case, to find that his progenitors, in all the lines of descent which can be traced, were of strong mental and moral characteristics; that they kept even pace with the culture of the age and society in which they lived—were equals among their contemporaries, and some of them leaders of the thought and enterprise of their day. His mother was of a highly-respected and influential family settled in Hollis, New Hampshire; her father, a deacon in the Congregational Church in that place. He left a large family of children, all of whom held respectable and useful positions in society. One of the brothers became a distinguished leader in the politics of his State, and is said to have been a logical and fluent speaker.*

* Since this address was prepared, Wm. D. Dowe, Esq., has furnished some interesting facts, well worth preserving, respecting the maternal ancestry of Judge Hall. The Pooles, from whom his mother was descended, were an ancient and honorable English family, who derived their name from the lordship or manor of Poole, in the county of Chester, where the family was seated as early as the reign of Henry III. The first of the stock, as far back as can be now traced, was Robert de Pull. The name afterwards underwent several changes, through de la Pole, de Poole, and finally it became Poole. The family were early divided into several branches. One branch settled in Ireland, where they are still lords of the manor. Of the English branches, the eldest line is represented by the present Sir Francis Poole, Baronet, of Poole, in the county of Chester. Another branch was represented by Admiral Sir Charles Morice Poole, K.C.B., of the county of Devon; and another by Sir Peter Van Noltten Poole, Baronet, of Fodenham House, county of Gloucester.

Of the American branches one, Elizabeth Poole, is mentioned as the founder of Taunton, Mass., in 1637. She was born in England in 1589, and died at

On the father's side, Judge Hall was connected with the family of the Willards, from whom he derived his Christian name, and probably the controlling elements of his character. This was an ancient English family, seated originally in the county of Kent. The origin and early history of the Willards are noteworthy, since they were not without their influence upon the family life and character through all the generations following.* Lying upon the southern coast of England, convenient for trade and commerce, fertile, and of beautiful natural features, the county of Kent became in early Anglo-Saxon times the home of a hardy, enterprising, thrifty, liberty-loving race, out of which was developed the strongest and best type of English manhood. They alone in all England, after the Norman conquest, maintained against the Conqueror the ancient rights and liberties of

Taunton in May, 1654. The story is told that she bought of the Indians the whole territory on which Taunton was situated for a peck of beans and a jack-knife.

Another American settler of this stock was John Poole, one of Judge Hall's progenitors. He came from England in 1632, and settled at Cambridge, Mass. He held two hundred acres of land at Lynn. Subsequently he removed to Reading. His only son was Captain Jona. Poole, who was distinguished in the war of King Philip. He was President of the Council in 1675-76, and representative in the General Assembly of 1677. His daughter, Mary, married Deacon Thomas Bancroft, and became the great-grandmother of George Bancroft, the historian. Jona. Poole left an only son, viz., John Poole, who had five sons, the youngest of whom, William Poole, was the father of Mehetabel Poole, Judge Hall's mother.

* These incidents in the history of the Willard family are taken from the "Willard Memoir," published by Joseph Willard (Boston, 1858)—a book of much interest, even to a reader not connected with the family.

Saxons,—such as the freedom of their lands from the burdens of military tenure; the power to alien their lands at pleasure and to devise them by will, even prior to the enabling statute of wills; the equal descent of lands to all sons; and exemption from the degrading system of villeinage. Such liberties had their fruit in the more general distribution of property, a greater equality in the condition of the people, and a more diffused education and culture; so that by the end of the sixteenth century, as a writer of that date informs us, the revenues of Kent were greater than of any other part of England, and the people were for the most part “acquainted with good letters and trained in the knowledge of the laws.” It is well ascertained that the Willard family were established in Kent as early as the conquest. They held lands as tenants *in capite* of the king, filled various stations of usefulness and honor, and had a substantial stake in society,—sharing fully its interests, enterprises, and struggles for advancement. It is also noteworthy, as indicating the moral and religious elevation of this family, that from the period of the Reformation, in every generation, it gave some of its sons to the holy office.

The progenitors of the American family of Willards were a brother and sister, Simon and Margery Willard, who, in the year 1634, came to this country and settled in Cambridge, Mass. They were among the large number who about that period forsook country, friends, home,—all that this life holds dear,—seeking, as they supposed, freedom of religious opinion and worship, but providentially intrusted with the higher mission of founding a new and better Christian civilization. It would be interesting to follow, if but a