

therefore entreat you by the most sacred of all bonds, the love of virtue, of liberty, and of your country, to forget every distinction, and unite as one man in this time of extreme danger. Let us defend ourselves like men determined to be free!' The other was addressed to colonels of battalions, and, informing them that General Howe with his army was already at Trenton, continued: 'This glorious opportunity of signalizing himself in defense of our country, and securing the rights of America forever, will be seized by every man who has a spark of patriotism in his bosom.' In March, 1776, he was elected a member of the Assembly from the city of Philadelphia, and later a member of the Convention which met July 15, 1776, and drafted the first Constitution for the State of Pennsylvania. No delegate to the Convention was intrusted with more important duties than he, and frequently he presided over its deliberations. He was one of the committee which drafted the frame of government, and subsequently, together with Benjamin Franklin and William Vanhorn, he revised its language. A committee of which he was a member prepared an address to the people setting forth the reasons for the different actions which had been taken. On the 8th of April, 1777, David Rittenhouse, Owen Biddle, Joseph Dean, Richard Bache, and John Shee were appointed a Board of War for the State of Pennsylvania; and in the fall of that year, after the British army had entered within its borders and secured possession of Philadelphia, he was one of the Council of Safety, to whom the most absolute powers were temporarily granted. In order to provide for the preservation of the Commonwealth they were authorized to imprison and punish, capitally or otherwise, all who should disobey their decrees, to regulate the prices of all commodities, and to seize private property without any subsequent liability to suit because of any of their proceedings. Surely no other twelve men were ever vested with greater powers over their fellow-beings than these.