



The Thirteenth Congress

Mathew Carey

This sketch of Mathew Carey is reprinted from the first volume of APPLETONS' CYCLOPAEDIA OF AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY (1888). We found his poem in the Gabriel Duval Papers at the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division. Carey was one of those self-made European misfits who fit in just fine in post-colonial American society, or at least some parts of it. In addition, he was perhaps unique among Founding-era journalistic publishers in his ability to maintain reasonably good relations with both Federalists and Republicans during the politically contentious years at the close of the 18th century and the opening of the 19th. Although that does not mean that he was always a polite person, as his poem reproduced here shows.

– The Editors

CAREY, MATHEW, PUBLISHER, B. in Ireland, 28 Jan., 1760; d. in Philadelphia, Pa., 16 Sept., 1839. He received a liberal education, and when he was fifteen years old his father gave him a list of twenty-five trades from which to make the choice of his life-work. He selected the business of printer and bookseller, and two years afterward brought out his first pamphlet, a treatise on duelling, followed by an address to Irish Catholics, so inflammatory that young Carey was obliged to avoid prosecution by flight to Paris. During his stay there he became acquainted with Benjamin Franklin, then representing the United States at the court of Versailles, who gave him employment.

Returning to Ireland after a year's stay,

he established a new paper called the "Volunteer's Journal," which, by its bold and able opposition to the government, became a power in politics, and eventually brought about the legislative independence of Ireland. A too violent attack upon parliament and the ministry led to his arraignment before the house of commons for libel in 1784, and he was imprisoned until the dissolution of parliament.

After his liberation he sailed for America, reaching Philadelphia, 15 Nov., 1784, and

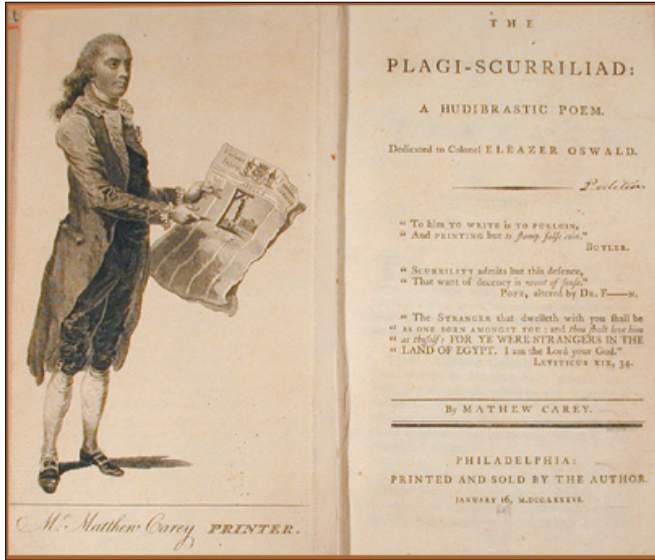


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two months afterward began to publish "The Pennsylvania Herald," the first newspaper in the United States that furnished accurate reports of legislative debates, Carey acting as his own reporter. He fought a duel with Col. Oswald, editor of a rival journal, and received a wound that confined him to his house for more than sixteen months. Soon after this he began the publication of "The American Museum," which he conducted for six years.

at his own expense. In 1814 appeared his "Olive Branch, or Faults on Both Sides, Federal and Democratic," designed to harmonize the antagonistic parties of the country pending the war with Great Britain. It passed through ten editions, and is still a recognized authority in regard to the political history of the period.

In 1819 he published his "Vindi-ciffi Hi-berniae," an examination and refutation of the charges against his countrymen in reference to the butcheries alleged to have been committed by them in the rebellion of 1641. From this time he devoted himself almost exclusively to politico-commercial pursuits, publishing in 1820 the "New Olive Branch," in which he endeavored to show how harmonious were the real interests of the various classes of society, and in 1822 "Essays on Political Economy." This was followed by a series of tracts extending to more than 2,000 pages.



In 1791 he married, and opened a small book-selling shop.

During the yellow-fever epidemic two years later he was a member of the committee of health, and tireless in his efforts for the relief of sufferers. The results of his extensive observation were collected and published in his "History of the Yellow Fever of 1793." In the same year he founded the Hibernian society. In 1796 he was one of a few citizens who, under the direction of Bishop White, formed the first American Sunday-school society.

With characteristic vigor he engaged in the discussions concerning the United States bank, writing articles for newspapers and publishing pamphlets, which he distributed

The object of all these was to demonstrate the necessity of the protective system as the only means of advancing the real interests of all classes in the community.

He was active in the promotion of all the public works of the city and state, and advocated the system of internal improvements that led to the construction of the Pennsylvania canals. He interested himself in forwarding education and in establishing the charitable institutions for which Philadelphia is now famous. In 1883-'4 he contributed his autobiography to the "New England Magazine."



Philadelphia 16th February 1815
Anticipation
March 4th 1815

Last night departed this life,
Amidst the groans and execrations of the good,
and the united plaudits of the wicked.
The detested and detestable
Thirteenth Congress of the United States,
one of the
Most execrable public bodies
ever entrusted with
The destinies of a mighty nation.
The odious imbecility, madness, and folly,
of the
Contumelious majority,
and the
Turbulence, violence, and profligacy
of a
Desperate and factious minority,
Defeated the hopes and expectations
of their
Injured, Insulted, Ruffled and
Betrayed Country,
Which placed reliance upon the broken reed
of this wretched Congress
for protection.
But all its fond hopes were blasted.
While the nation, exposed and defenceless,
was threatened with all the horrors
that an insatiate and powerful foe could inflict.
They spent that precious time
which ought to be employed in providing
for the Salvation
of our fathers and our mothers—our wives and
our children, our brothers and our sisters,
for saving our houses from the flames,
our men from slaughter,
our women from the lust of a brutal
and conquering soldiery,
in idle debates, frivolous amusements, and
wretched cavils.
Had the worst enemy of their devoted country,
of Republican Government,
and of human happiness,
Pierced them for our destruction

They could hardly have performed
the service better.

We wanted soldiers to defend us,
They defeated every attempt to raise them.

The government
By fraud, corruption, and treachery
Was reduced to bankruptcy - and unable to pay
for our defence.

They perverted the land, through the
want of a

Circulating Medium -

A suitable Bank would have restored credit
and confidence,
spread happiness over the country
and enabled the administration to raise
Armies for the general defence.

But they rendered nugatory every effort to
establish one adequate to those great purposes.

The annals of legislation
recorded
so vile, so profligate a session
as the last of this miserable body,
the loathing, the scorn, the abomination of all
good men.

To the end of time,
Wherever the historian shall be desirous
of exciting abhorrence at the
turpitude of any base legislative body,
he will simply state, that it was
as vile, as odious, as abominable, & as detestable
as the Thirteenth Congress,
which will completely stamp it with infamy.

The fervour of language could go no further.

Mathew Carey is the Author

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