

## STORIES of New Jersey

declared. "We perceive it now before us. To hesitate is to consent to slavery." The resolution of independence was passed July 2.

The war forced the College of New Jersey to close, and though it opened at intervals during the hostilities it functioned only in a desultory manner. Witherspoon was able to give his whole attention to governmental matters for the balance of his term in Congress and served on several important committees. His final act as a Congressman was to draft the proclamation of thanksgiving celebrating the successful course of the Revolution.

Back in Princeton in 1782 after his term in Congress, Witherspoon began his task of educating men to be capable of strengthening and extending the democratic principles which he preached. The business of administering the affairs of the college became increasingly difficult. In not very many years he was blind as the result of an accident suffered on an unsuccessful money-raising trip to Europe in 1784. Though he had to give up his favorite sport of horse-back riding, he continued lecturing to his classes in history, Hebrew, French and literature. In his country home, "Tusculum," which still stands about a mile outside of Princeton, he often interviewed prospective students, all of whom had to be examined by him.

Until almost the month he died, blind and suffering from dropsy, he attended meetings of his board of trustees and sessions of New Jersey's General Assembly, though in the latter years, because of his infirmity, no additional duties were laid upon him.

Until the very last moment he remained alert. On a Saturday evening, November 15, 1794, he was sitting in his chair in the study at "Tusculum" waiting for Doctor Smith, vice president of the college. The latest newspaper that he had at home was being read to him, but he insisted on having a still later edition sent for. His wife left the room for a short while, and when she returned, Witherspoon was dead. The errand boy had taken too long; the old, blind man never heard the very latest news.