

COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY

Last of the Britains

EVENING COMMENCEMENT

SEPTEMBER 1851

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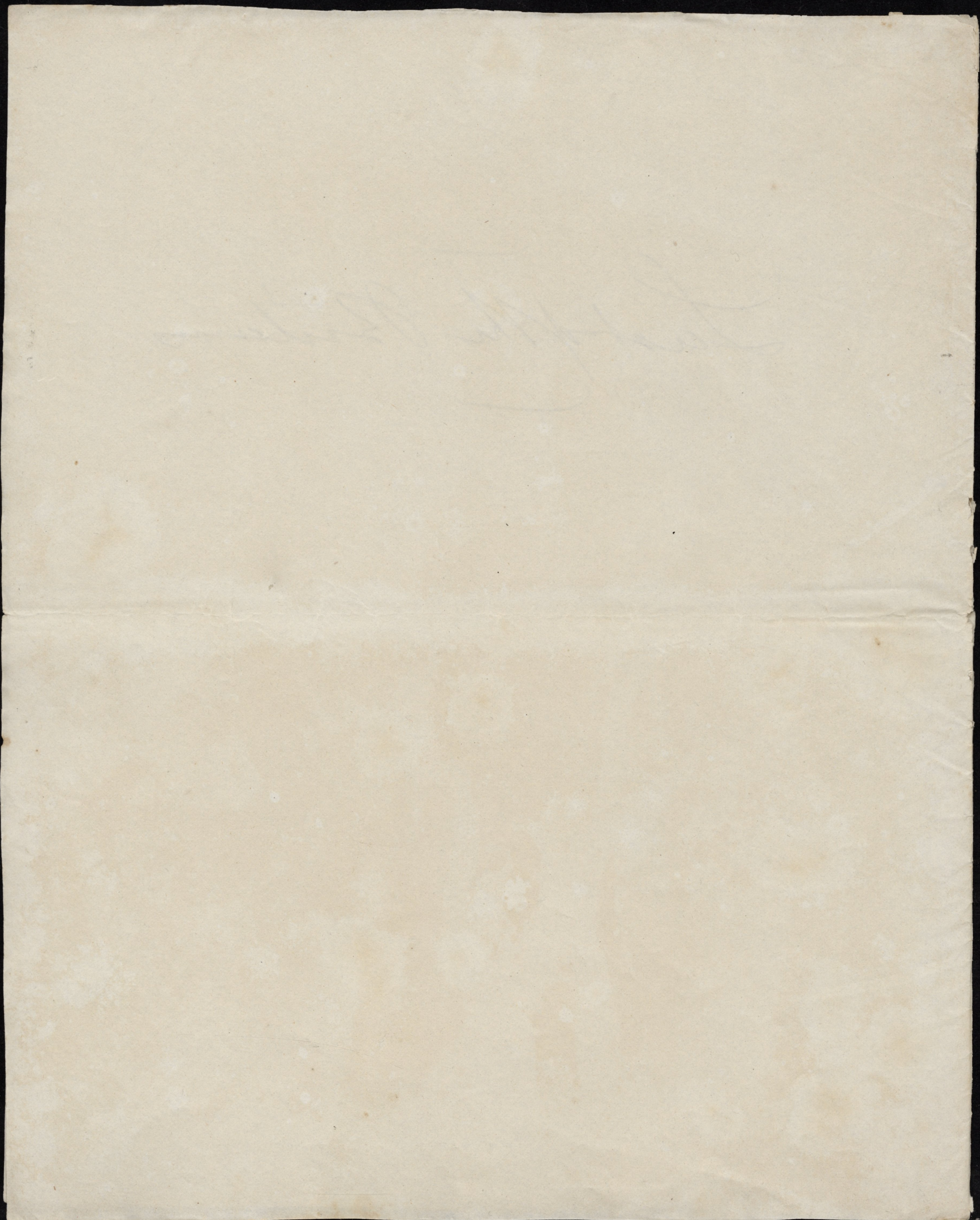
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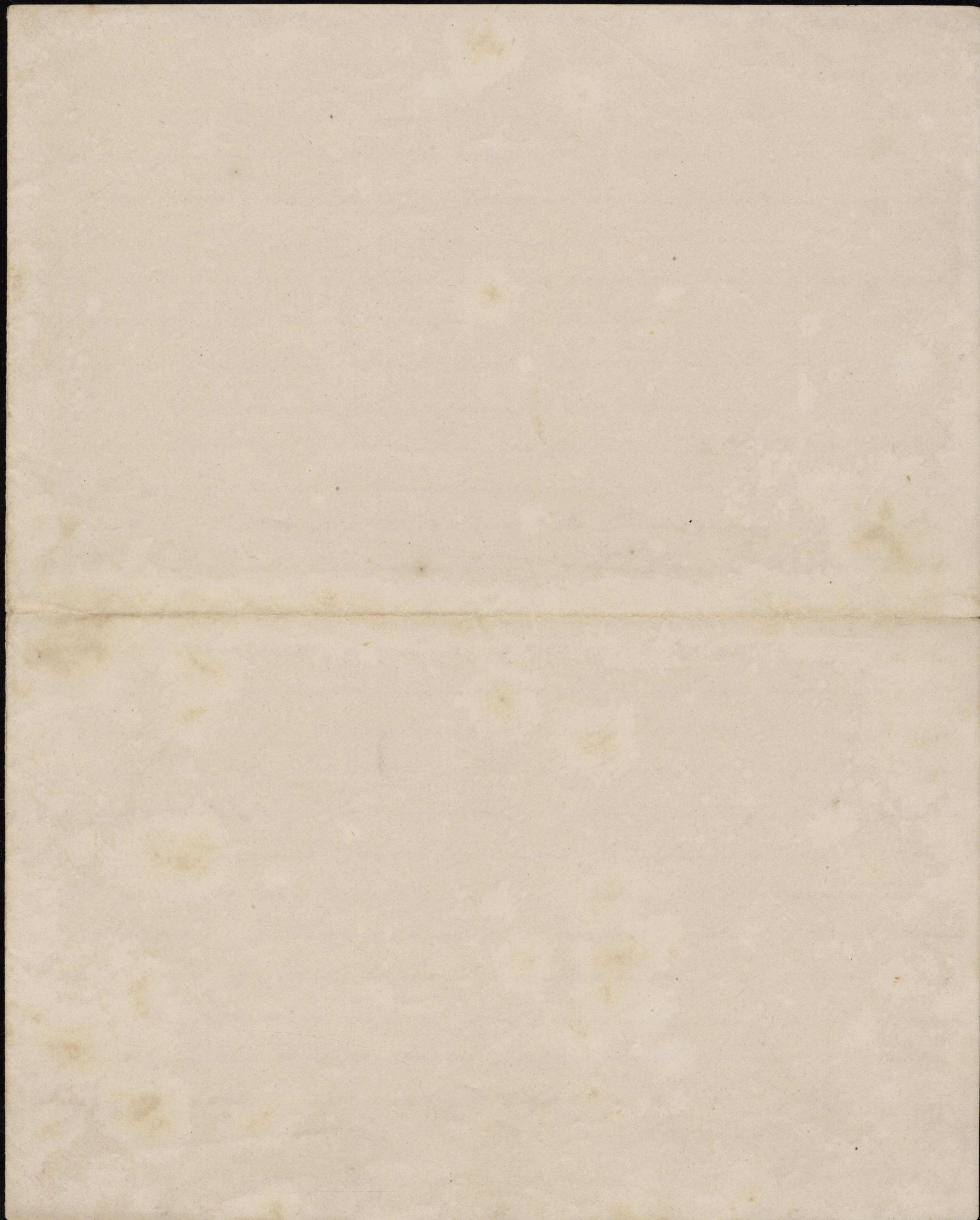
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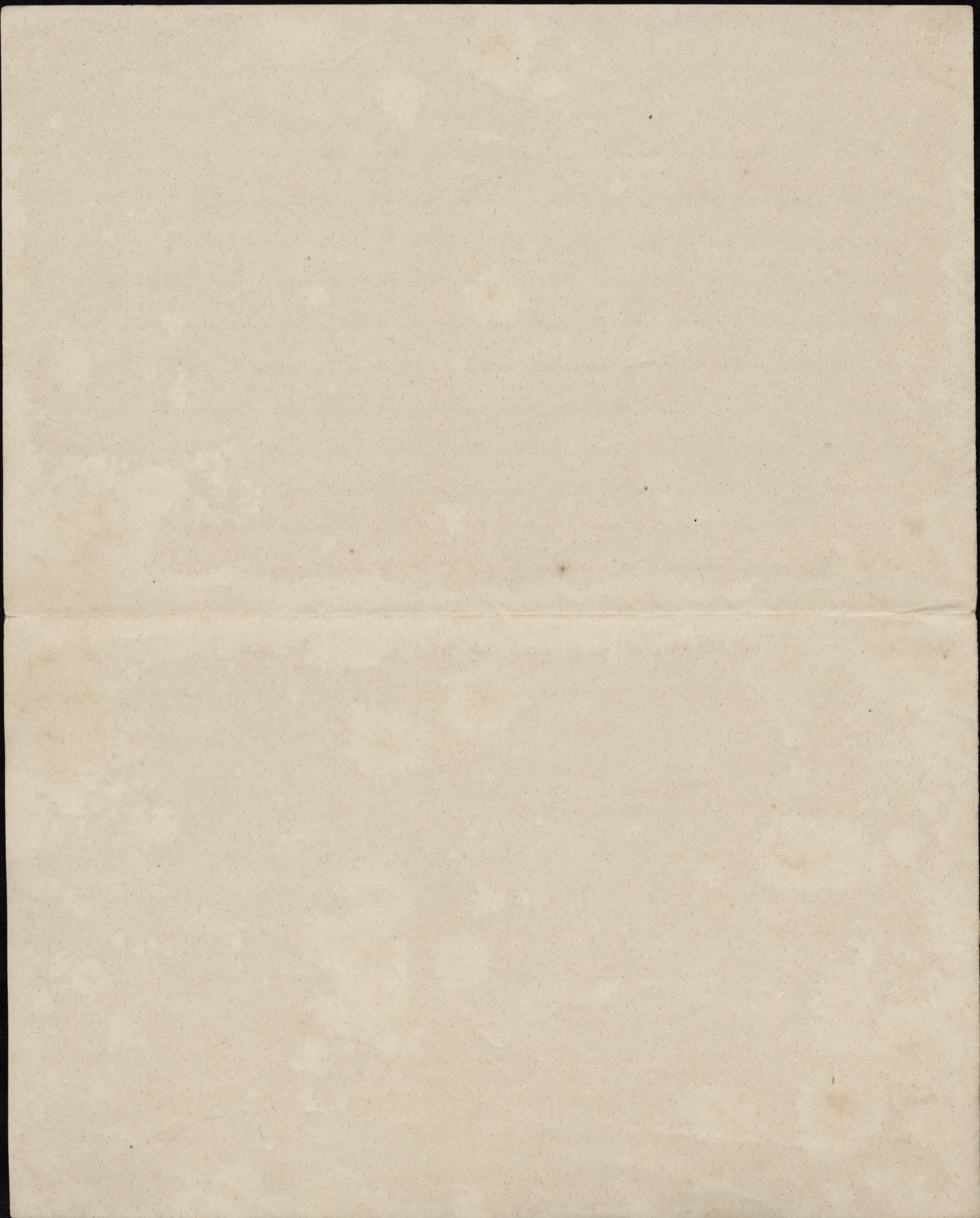
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Last of the Britons.
Their Mountains & Their Bards.

Liberty has always found a home among the mountains. Nature seems to have reared their lofty summits, as bulwarks, to shelter the oppressed in the hour of adversity and of danger. When hope has fled; when friends have deserted; when strength and numbers have been wanting, the last sad remnants of decaying Liberty, have always sought a refuge in the mountains. There has freedom ever flourished, and mocked its proud disdain the myrmictons of tyranny and oppression. There has been for ages the resting place of independence, and the seat of unconquerable hostility to its foes.

Thus were the almost inaccessible mountains of Wales the last retreat of the Ancient Britons. When deprived of the fairest portions of their beautiful Island by the desolating invasions of our Saxon forefathers. When driven step by step from the lands which their ancestors had so long possessed, every eye was directed to the rugged hills of Snowdon. Thither they sought security in flight & here the tide of adversity was checked.

There they rested from their misfortunes, and
 lived as free and fearless, as the eagle that
 built her nest among their rocks. Their pa-
 cred groves were once more vocal with the wor-
 ship of their divinity, and the praises of their
 heroes and warriors. Ages passed away, & found
 them in possession of their religion, their liberties
 and their laws. The Saxon ceased his vain at-
 tempts at further subjugation. The Norman
 came in his majesty and power, but the
 progress of the conqueror was suddenly arrest-
 ed. The Welsh lived independent still. That
 spirit of liberty still animated, and that fear-
 lessness of danger and bold defiance of their
 enemies still burned within them, which they
 had received from their fathers as a glorious
 inheritance. And who is there that can fail
 to admire this spirit, wherever it is found?
 Who is there so lost to the principles of humanity,
 as not to sympathize with those who are too
 proud and too manly, to become the subjects
 of tyranny and oppression? Where is the breast,
 that does not swell with rapture at their deeds,
 however daring, however adventurous, however
 rash? "Is that passion which we deem divine,
 which makes the timid brave, the brave resistless—
 makes men seem heroes—heroes, Demigods—
 Apollons, mere mortal feeling?—No! 'tis false!"

'Tis this that prompts us to admire the brave but simple son of Wales, as he laughed at danger and triumphed in the grasp of death. We may call it heathen philosophy - brutal indifference, the desperation of madness - may call it what you please! Yet these are nature's truest noblemen. They are actuated by the prompting of a brave and magnanimous spirit. There's a secret divinity within, an heroic inspiration, which are far above the common - the meaner emotions of the mind. A spirit which teaches as its fundamental doctrine, that man is not to be trampled in the dust by the superiority of his fellows. A spirit, which bears the impress of divinity, and looks above the misfortunes of the world. Call it what you will, it is this spirit and none other, ~~that~~ ^{that} has scattered the light of liberty throughout the world.

How enthusiastic, how transcendent is this passion, when fanned & kept alive, by the magic influence of traditional song?

He had well observed the secret springs of national feeling, who exclaimed "Let me make the song of a country and I care not who makes its laws."

It is these which elevate and purify the social affections. It is these that endear one to his native land, his kindred and his home. It is these that preserve the memory of other days, of military

valour and ancient glory; impresses them upon the minds of the aged and the young, and transmits them unimpaired from generations to generations. True greatness of soul will never scorn the virtuous deeds of ancestors, but will cherish them, and hold them up as bright examples to posterity. The Welchman loved his country and still more his liberties. But for these he was much indebted their Bards. They enkindled the passion. They were heard mingling their patriot songs with religious rites, and the revelries of gay festivity. They moved in every circle, and walked abroad, like the guardian spirits of the land. The sound of their harps were heard on every cliff, and their loud voices burdened with heroes names and deeds, sang thro' their mountains and their glades. The old men listened with delight, and their rising offspring caught the inspiration and repeated back the lay.

But the onward march to glory & to greatness, is not without reverses. The brave must perish, and the brightest prospects must decay, however green, however flourishing. Pride, and virtue, and intrepidity, must at times submit to the superiority of numbers and of power. Thus at length submitted Wales, tho' with scorn & indignation to the authority of the haughty Edward. Their bidding places, and her steep retreats, could then

afford no shelter, from the hand of her destroyer. Llewellyn fell, and with him perished the independence of the ancient Britons.

Could the veil of obscurity be thrown around the rest, it would conceal a blemish on the character of Edward, which time can never efface. He had reduced the remnant of a nation to submission, but he had not conquered their spirit. This must be chained. The fountain must be broken up, and all recollection of former independence must be effaced. Those songs which kept alive the memory of other days must be forgotten. The bards must die! Yes, these venerable men, at once the priest, the poet & the sage, who had taught the young and stamped in living lines upon their minds, the principles of freedom, these must die! By a cruel and a barbarous policy, which no considerations of expediency can justify they were condemned to martyrdom for their virtues.

They were not permitted like the minstrels of Israel, to hang their harps upon the willows, and sweep over the misfortunes of their country. But chased from hill to hill and from one retreat to another, they fell the victims of devotion to that country's glory. Follow the lone remnant of the mournful band, to his last his only place of refuge. See him as he stands, and

and lonely, on one of the cliffs of his wild
native mountains - his grey hair streaming
in the wind - and turning his harp to the woe
of his country and her faded glories. The names
of her heroes and her prophets pass in swift
retrospect before his mind, and he mourns
"the dear last compositions of his tuneful art."
But the swords of his avengers have found
him even there. The wild notes of the harp
are hushed. The old man dies, and "the lay
of the last minstrel" has been sung.

Wm. Sparrow Jr
Sep 11th 1841.

COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY.

EXERCISES

ON THE

EVENING BEFORE COMMENCEMENT.

SEPTEMBER 28th, 1841.

MUSIC.

WM. P. ROSS, CHEROKEE NATION.—*The Last of the Stuarts.*

MUSIC.

MONROE J. M. MURPHY, S. C.—*Instability of Government from Perverted Intellect.*

MUSIC.

CHARLES ABERT, D. C.—*Improvement of Genius.*

MUSIC.

A. W. PAULL, V A.—*Romance of American History.*

MUSIC.

B. T. PHILLIPS, N. Y.—*“Prodesse Quam Conspici.”*

MUSIC.

J. S. TELFAIR, N. C.—*English Domination.—“The Sacred Isle.”*

MUSIC.

THOMAS SPARROW JR., N. C.—*Last of the Ancient Britons.*

MUSIC.

JAMES B. EVERHART, P A.—*Painting.*

MUSIC.

COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY.

EXERCISES

ON THE

EVENING BEFORE COMMENCEMENT.

SEPTEMBER 20th, 1811.

MUSIC.

W.M.P. ROSS, CHEROKEE NATION.—The Last of the Strangers.

MUSIC.

MONROE J. M. MURPHY, S. C.—Instability of Govern-

ment from Perverted Interest.

MUSIC.

CHARLES ABERT, D. C.—Improvement of Genius.

MUSIC.

A. W. PAUL, V. A.—Romance of American History.

MUSIC.

B. T. PHILLIPS, N. Y.—"Professor Quana Conspiret."

MUSIC.

J. S. TELFAIR, N. C.—English Domination.—"The Sa-

cred Isle."

MUSIC.

THOMAS SPARROW, JR., N. C.—Last of the Ancient

Britons.

MUSIC.

JAMES B. EVERHART, P. A.—Painting.

MUSIC.