

THE
BIOGRAPHICAL
ENCYCLOPÆDIA
OF
PENNSYLVANIA
OF
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.



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ALLEN, WILLIAM HENRY, M. D., LL.D., President of Girard College, was born near the city of Augusta, Maine, March 27th, 1808. He is the son of Jotham and Thankful Allen, and his paternal grandfather was a descendant of the Braintree branch of the Allens of Massachusetts.

His early life was spent at home on a farm until he entered the Wesleyan Seminary (Maine), where he received his education preparatory to entering Bowdoin College, which he did at the age of twenty-one, graduating therefrom after a four-year course. Immediately after leaving college, he was called to take charge of the Greek and Latin classes at the Oneida Conference Seminary, at Cassanovia, New York, where he remained for two and a half years; when his worth and ability being appreciated by his own towns-people, he was invited to return to Augusta, and preside over the High School in that city. He remained in this latter locality, however, but six months, as he had been tendered the Professorship of Chemistry and Natural Philosophy at Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, which he accepted. This chair he occupied for ten years, and was then transferred to that of English literature in the same institution, which he filled for three years. During much of the time he resided in Carlisle he was a regular contributor to the *Methodist Quarterly Review*. He also wrote and delivered numerous addresses and lectures on educational and general subjects. He has delivered lectures in several cities of the Union—among them, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and Indianapolis. In January, 1853, at the request of the municipal authorities of Philadelphia, he pronounced a Eulogy on America's greatest statesman, Daniel Webster. This eloquent and able discourse was highly esteemed by the public. It was published, and took rank with others delivered by prominent men throughout the country. In January, 1850, he was appointed President of Girard College, succeeding Judge Jones, who had held the position from the opening of the institution two years previously. The Board of Directors

found in him a gentleman whose education and superior administrative abilities admirably fitted him to become the Executive of an institution of this peculiar character. His duties there were entirely different from those required in the same position in other colleges. Here he was not only called on to organize and harmonize a staff of professors for the educational department of the college, but there devolved on him also the organization of what may be termed a "household staff" of officers—ladies and gentlemen—whose duties are the care of the pupils when not engaged in school. It was also his duty to officiate in all the religious and devotional exercises of the institution, as the will of Stephen Girard, the founder of the college, prohibited the admission of clergymen within its pale. No sectarian teachings were to be introduced, and the minds of the pupils were to be kept free from denominational bias, so that when they should leave the institution, by reason of their advanced age and education, they could better choose the creed they would adopt for the future. Thus, it will be seen, that there devolved on him the supervision of the school, the home, and the moral training of about five hundred boys. It was a great task, when it is considered that they embraced those ranging from the tender age of eight years to the active and impulsive youth of seventeen. How well and admirably he performed his manifold duties, how complete the satisfaction of the Directors, his long continuance in office testifies; and how well he has succeeded in gaining and keeping the respect and esteem of the numerous professors and officers of the institution is also proved by their many years of service under his administration. Last, but not least, the love and regard in which he is held by hundreds of the graduates of the institution, adds another link to the testimony, all going to show that in him the college has found a man equalled by very few, and surpassed by none in his peculiar fitness for the position. In December, 1862, he resigned the position, which he had filled so acceptably for thirteen years, and retired to the walks of private life, taking up his abode on a farm on the banks of the Delaware, not far from the city. Here he remained for two years, when he received a call from the Pennsylvania Agricultural College to become its President; he accepted it, and continued in the position two years. In 1867, he was recalled to Girard College, thus receiving the most emphatic endorsement of the efficiency of his former administration. In religious belief, he is a Methodist, and has been for many years a member of that church. He was honored, in March, 1872, by being elected President of the American Bible Society, which position he continues to hold. In 1850, the year he was first inaugurated as President of Girard College, the degree of Doctor of Laws was conferred upon him by the Union College of Schenectady, New York, and also by Emory and Henry College of Virginia. He has been married four times. First, in 1836, to Martha, daughter of Bishop Richardson, of Toronto, Canada. His second

wife was Ellen Honora Curtin, of Bellefonte, a sister of Governor Curtin; his third, Mary Quincy of Boston; his fourth and present wife was, at the time of her marriage, Mrs. Anna Maria Gemmill, the widow of one of Philadelphia's most successful and highly esteemed merchants.

