

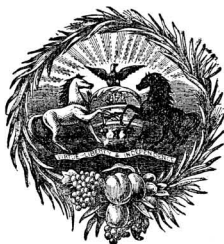
LIVES  
OF THE  
GOVERNORS  
OF  
PENNSYLVANIA,

WITH THE  
INCIDENTAL HISTORY OF THE STATE,

FROM  
1609 TO 1873.

BY  
WILLIAM C. ARMOR.

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## THOMAS McKEAN,

GOVERNOR UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF 1790,

*December 17, 1799, to December 20, 1808.*

**T**HE State of Delaware was originally a part of Pennsylvania, and even after their legal severance the political relations which subsisted between them were intimate. Hence it was that Governor Dickinson represented both Colonies at successive periods in the Continental Congress, and was during the last years of his life a citizen of Wilmington, Delaware, though he was a portion of his time acting as Governor of both States. Governor McKean, likewise, had accorded him a common citizenship—holding the highest offices in both States at one and the same time.

Thomas McKean was born on the 19th of March, 1734, in Londonderry, Chester County, Pennsylvania. He was the son of William and Lætitia (Finney) McKean, both natives of Ireland. After receiving rudimentary instruction in the common branches, he was placed under the tuition of the Rev. Francis Allison, D. D., who acquired a great reputation as an educator and divine. Here young McKean gained a good knowledge of the ancient languages, and of the several sciences which were deemed requisite for a liberal education, and at the conclusion of his course entered the office of his kinsman, David Finney, of Newcastle, Delaware, as a student at law. Not long after commencing his legal studies, he was engaged as clerk to the Prothonotary of the Court of Common Pleas, where he had the opportunity of seeing the practice of the profession, the theory of which he was now intently studying. Two years later he was made Deputy Prothonotary, and Register for the Probate of Wills, for the County

of Newcastle, in which position he carried the chief responsibility, the Prothonotary living for the most part on his estate eighty miles from the County-seat.

Before he had attained the age of twenty-one, such had been his industry, he was admitted to practice in the several County courts, and in the contiguous counties of Pennsylvania. In 1756, he received, unsolicited, the appointment of Deputy Attorney-General, to prosecute the pleas of the Crown in the County of Sussex, which duties he performed with great acceptability for a period of two years, when he resigned.

In 1757, he was admitted to practice in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, and in the same year was elected Clerk of the Assembly. He was re-elected for the succeeding session, after which he declined a further service. In 1762, he was appointed by the Assembly, in connection with Cæsar Rodney, to codify and print the laws of the State passed previous to the year 1752.

Having thus served a good apprenticeship to political life, by the discharge of some of its minor duties, and by laborious service in his profession, he in this year launched upon that stormy sea where, for half a century, with a stout heart and a steady hand, he braved its billows. In the October election he was chosen a representative to the General Assembly from the County of New Castle, and was re-elected for seventeen successive years. For the last six years of this period he resided in Philadelphia, and though his constituents in Delaware were aware of his oft-expressed desire to be relieved, they continued to return him. Finally, on the day of the general election in 1779, he attended at New Castle, where he addressed them upon the questions of the day, both State and National, and concluded by declining to be considered a candidate for re-election. Placing great confidence in his judgment and penetration, a committee of citizens immediately waited on him and requested that he would name seven persons whom he thought most suitable to represent the County in the Assembly. Realizing the delicacy of such

a service, he at first refused to act; but upon the further solicitation of the committee, after consultation with their associates, and upon their urgent appeal, he wrote the names of seven persons, every one of whom was almost unanimously elected.

Recognizing the importance to the prosperity of a young and rising State of extending credit to men of deserving character and promise, the States of Pennsylvania and Delaware had early established public loan-offices. They were the means of effecting vast good, and were at times of incalculable advantage to the State Governments; enabling them to realize money in events of pressing need. In 1764, Mr. McKean was appointed, by an Act of the Legislature, one of the trustees of the loan-office for the County of New Castle, for the term of four years. The appointment was renewed in 1768, and 1772, extending thus through a period of twelve years.

In the Colonial Congress of 1765, commonly known as the Stamp Act Congress, which met in New York, Mr. McKean was a member from Delaware. It was the least in territory of all the States; and had the votes been taken according to number of population represented, its influence would have been insignificant. Mr. McKean saw this, and at the outset insisted that each State should have one vote, giving all the States an equal voice. His influence prevailed. This was the beginning of that jealousy and struggle for power between the small and large States, which has extended to this day, and which is likely to produce convulsions in the future. It was the most difficult question that was met in the Convention which framed the Constitution of the Union. A compromise was finally agreed upon, giving the small States an equal voice in the Senate, but in the House only proportionate to its population. In this convention Mr. McKean was a member of the Committee which drew the memorial to the Lords and Commons, and with Mr. Livingston and Mr. Rutledge, was charged by Congress to revise the minutes of the proceedings.

One circumstance which occurred near the close of the session, so well illustrates the open, manly boldness with which he met every question, that it merits recital. It is given by the author of the sketch of Mr. McKean published in the *Signers of the Declaration*. "When the business was concluded," he says, "and on the last day of the session, the President, and some timid members, refused to sign the proceedings. Mr. McKean then rose, and addressing himself personally to the President, remarked, that as he had not made a solitary objection to any of the measures which had been finally adopted, nor a single observation indicative of disapprobation, he requested that he would now assign his reasons for refusing to sign the petition. To this demand, the President replied that he did not conceive himself bound to state the cause of his objections. Mr. McKean rejoined that the gentlemen present had met together to endeavor to obtain the repeal of an unconstitutional and oppressive act of the British Parliament, and a redress of other grievances; that as unanimity and harmony had hitherto prevailed among them, it appeared very extraordinary that any member should refuse to affix his name to what he had at least apparently approved, without any excuse, or observation, on the occasion; and that, if there was anything treasonable, offensive, or indecent, in their proceedings, he thought it would be an act of comity, nay of duty, to advise his brethren of it. Other delegates spoke briefly to the same purport. Thus pressed to an explanation, the President, after a long pause, observed that 'it was against his conscience.' Mr. McKean now rung the changes upon the word conscience so long and loud that a plain challenge was given and accepted, in the presence of the whole Congress; but the President departed from New York the next morning before the dawn of day." Robert Ogden, a delegate from New Jersey, also refused to sign. His conduct gave great offence to his constituents, and he was burned in effigy in several towns throughout the State.

The nerve and ability displayed by Mr. McKean as delegate

to this Congress procured for him the warm approval of his constituents, and a unanimous vote of thanks from the Assembly. It insured also his rapid rise in public preferment. In July, 1765, he was appointed by the Governor sole Notary and Tabellion Public for the lower Counties on the Delaware, and in the same year was commissioned a Justice of the Peace, and of the Court of Quarter Sessions, for the County of New Castle. It was at the period when the people of the Colonies were greatly excited over the paralyzing blow about to fall in the taking effect of the Stamp Act. By its terms all legal papers, to be of validity, must be executed upon stamped paper. McKean was upon the bench which boldly issued an order for all the officers of the court to proceed in their usual duties, using unstamped paper. This is declared to have been the first court in any of the Colonies which issued such an order.

The early settlements upon the Delaware having been made under the dominion of a government and courts sitting in New York, it became eventually very inconvenient to consult the original records. Accordingly the Assembly, in 1769, appointed him as its agent to proceed thither and make copies of all documents relating to the titles of real estate in the Province. These copies were by law made of equal validity with the original records, thus superseding all further necessity for appeal to them.

In 1771, he was appointed His Majesty's Commissioner of Customs and Collector of the Port of New Castle. But this office was of but limited duration; for the Crown, intent upon asserting the right to tax, imposed an insignificant one to establish the principle. At this the heart of America was aroused and beat in indignation. Tyranny was scented in the breeze, and the patriots in every Colony were in frequent correspondence upon the measures necessary to defeat the fell design. Among the foremost of these was Mr. McKean, and when delegates came to be appointed to the First Continental Congress, which sat at New York in 1774, he was selected to represent Delaware. A little previous

to this he had taken up his permanent residence in Philadelphia; but his old constituents in Delaware still claimed him as their own, and he accepted their choice, and throughout the whole period of the Revolution, and until after the signing of the treaty of peace, a space of eight and a half years, he continued to represent that State in the national council, though residing in another. It is found upon examination that no other member of that august assemblage was a member continuously, from the opening till the closing act. During all this period he devoted himself to the sacred cause of his country, giving the strength of his mature manhood to the discharge of the many duties thrown upon him, and proving himself a power in that body of unequalled men. He was particularly useful in conducting the negotiations of the secret committee charged with procuring arms and ammunition from abroad, and in managing the monetary affairs of the new nation,—two of the most important and difficult of the subjects with which Congress had to deal. He was of the committee which drew the Articles of Confederation that bound the Colonies together, and gave to Congress the little power which it was allowed to exercise.

The Declaration of Independence found no more active advocate, or firm supporter, than Mr. McKean. He believed that the time had fully come for adopting it, and he plead in private, as well as in public, with all the power of persuasion of which he was possessed, to draw those who thought the act premature to accord with him. Singularly enough, though he was one of the most active in securing its passage, and was present when the final votes were taken, affixing his signature to the instrument with the rest, yet in the printed journals of Congress, embracing this document, and in the acts of the several States, his name does not appear as one of the signers. In a letter addressed to Mr. Alexander J. Dallas, in answer to an inquiry made relative to this omission, Mr. McKean says: "My name is not in the printed journals of Congress as a party to the Declaration of Independence, and this, like an error in the first concoction, has vitiated most of the

subsequent publications; and yet the fact is, that I was then a member of Congress for the State of Delaware, was personally present in Congress, voted in favor of independence on the 4th of July, 1776, and signed the Declaration after it had been engrossed on parchment, where my name in my own handwriting still appears." It is interesting to trace the manner in which this error has crept into the public records. It appears that on the 19th of July, two weeks after its passage, Congress directed that a copy of the Declaration should be engrossed on parchment and signed by every member. This engrossed copy was finished, and on the 2d of August was produced and signed. But previous to this day, McKean had obtained leave of absence, being then an officer of militia, and for several weeks succeeding he was not in his place, he being absent on the 2d of August, the day on which the engrossed copy was signed. He returned to his place in October, and then affixed his name to that copy, as he had also to the original one on the 4th of July. It is probable, that in the mean time copies had been taken for publication as signed on the 2d of August, and before his signature was affixed. But his presence was too notorious to occasion any question as to the fact, even without his own testimony. When the preliminary vote was taken on the 2d of July, all the States declared in favor of it, except Pennsylvania and Delaware. The latter State had three members. Of these McKean voted for it, Read against it, and Rodney, the third, was absent. Seeing that the vote of his State was likely to be lost, McKean sent a messenger at his own expense, post-haste, to summon the absent member. He arrived in time to vote for the measure, thus carrying the State in its favor; and some of the opposing members of the Pennsylvania delegation absenting themselves, the vote was finally made unanimous.

Where his influence could be exercised for the furtherance of the cause of Independence, there was his voice heard and his hand felt. In a convention of deputies from the several counties of Pennsylvania, assembled in Carpenter's Hall, in



Philadelphia, in June, 1776, he was chairman, and was a prime mover in securing the passage of resolutions favorable to, and urging the adoption of a Declaration. The regiment of associators, of which he was colonel, passed a similar resolution. He was also chairman of the Committee of Safety of Pennsylvania, and of the Committee of Inspection for the City of Philadelphia.

Having uttered the word Independence, and pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honors to its support, Congress was impressed with the necessity of preparing to strike in defence of their resolves. Accordingly on the 5th of July, the day following that on which the Declaration was adopted, it was agreed between a Committee of Congress and a Committee of Safety of Pennsylvania, that the associated militia, who could be furnished with arms, should proceed without delay to New Jersey, there to remain until a flying camp of ten thousand men could be formed to relieve them. McKean was colonel of one of these regiments, and promptly marched at its head to Perth Amboy, to the support of Washington. The lines of the enemy were about six hundred yards distant. On one occasion several of their shallows were discovered sailing along the opposite shore in the direction of their ships. McKean received orders to have his men in readiness to march at a moment's warning, and they were called to arms. In a letter, written a few days later from camp, he thus describes the event which followed: "I left them," he says, "under Lieutenant-Colonel Dean, to be marched to town, whilst I mounted my horse, and waited on the General for orders. On the road, which is a straight and wide lane, (something like Market Street,) all the way from the camp to the sound, and in a line with the enemy's batteries, about twenty cannon-balls flew close to me, sometimes on the one side, sometimes on the other, and some just over my head. I confess I was not a little alarmed, being the first time that I had ever heard a cannon-ball, but clapped spurs to my horse, and rode on amidst the balls for the General's, where orders had just been issued to halt the

battalion. I was going to execute them, when, on turning round, I saw a horse shot through the neck with a four-pounder within much less distance than the width of Market Street from me. The fire was so incessant, and so direct on the street that I had to return, that some gentlemen entreated me to wait a short time; but, as the troops under my care were in full march, and Colonel Miles' battalion close behind them, I thought it my duty to stop them, as some of them otherwise would probably be killed without a chance of effecting any beneficial service. On my return I found the fire hotter than before, the enemy then playing from three batteries of three or four guns each; but, through God's favor, I escaped unhurt, and marched the troops to the camp."

As had been previously arranged, as soon as the flying camp was recruited, it took the place of the Associators, and they returned home, McKean resuming his seat in Congress, and affixing his name to the parchment-copy of the Declaration which had been generally signed on the 2d of August during his absence in camp. But new cares awaited him. "He found upon his return," says the biographer above quoted, "that he had been elected a member of the Convention for forming a constitution for the State of Delaware. He accordingly departed for Dover on the second day after arriving home. Immediately on his arrival, after a fatiguing ride, a committee of gentlemen waited on him, and requested that he would prepare a constitution for the future Government of the State. To this he consented. He retired to his room in the tavern, sat up all night, and having prepared it without a book or any assistance whatever, presented it at ten o'clock next morning to the House, when it was unanimously adopted." Had a feat like this been performed in the ages of antiquity, it would have been heralded as having been done with the aid of some god, or the favored one would himself have been deified.

The manifestation of ability to perform herculean labors, brought him an endless variety of public employments, and

these not confined to one State. Early in August, 1777, he was tendered the office of Chief-Justice of Pennsylvania. His friends urged his acceptance. "Upon the whole," he says, in a letter to John Dickinson, "to prevent the least suspicion that I was against any government but such as I framed myself, and that I wanted to embroil the State, and occasion disaffection to the common cause, which had been liberally propagated, and to evidence that I had nothing in view but to promote the happiness of my country, I thought it my duty (though manifestly against my interest) to imitate the great Lord Hale, when pressed to the like by Cromwell, and was for the same, and better reasons, prevailed with to accept it." The duties of the office which he thus entered upon, he continued to fulfil for the long period of twenty-two years. He was during the same year chosen President of the State of Delaware, so that, in addition to being a member of Congress and Chief Justice of Pennsylvania, he was at the same time the chief magistrate of another commonwealth. The British army was now occupying Philadelphia; and to discharge the several duties thus imposed, and elude the vigilance of the enemy, required the most untiring circumspection. In a letter to John Adams, written some time afterwards, he says: "I have had my full share of the anxieties, cares, and troubles of the present war. For some time I was obliged to act as President of the Delaware State, and as Chief Justice of this. General Howe had just landed (August, 1777,) at the head of Elk River, when I undertook to discharge these two important trusts. The consequence was to be hunted like a fox by the enemy, and envied by those who ought to have been my friends. I was compelled to move my family five times in a few months, and at last fixed them in a little log-house on the banks of the Susquehanna, more than a hundred miles from this place; but safety was not to be found there, for they were soon obliged to remove again on account of the incursions of the Indians."

On the 25th of December, 1780, he addressed a letter to

the Legislature of Delaware, expressing his "ardent wish" that they would excuse him from further attendance as their delegate in Congress, and that they would elect some person to succeed him. Or, if they desired that he should continue to represent them, that they would appoint some one to occupy his place while he was absent upon the Supreme Court Circuit of Pennsylvania, and to allow him some relaxation from excessive toil at other times, when needed. He pleaded his inability to perform so many duties to his satisfaction, and that the rank he was obliged to maintain was such that his income from all his offices was insufficient. This request was not acceded to, and he continued to represent the State, though the complaint of lack of salary failed to have its effect; for during two years, 1779 and 1780, he received nothing whatever for his services.

The effort to be relieved of his Congressional labors, instead of resulting in his discharge, was followed by an increase of its burdens; for on the 10th of July, 1781, he was elected President of Congress. The duties of this position he continued to discharge until near the close of October, when, the time having arrived for the opening of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, he communicated to Congress his resignation as President. He was, however, prevailed upon to continue to preside until the 1st of November, when he was released, and John Hanson was elected to succeed him.

The period during which McKean exercised the functions of Chief Justice, was one of the most important and trying in the whole course of jurisprudence in the Commonwealth. It was at the time when the laws were unsettled, even the constitutions of States undefined, and national existence itself was in question. The country was in the midst of a revolution when he came to the Bench, and for several years the civil was necessarily subordinate to military rule. Hence the interpretation of organic and statute law had to be made *de novo*, precedents had to be established, and the whole practice of the Courts adapted to the changed relations which existed. The causes which were brought in his Court were

many of them peculiar to a period of war and conquest, causes involving the most delicate questions, vital alike to the rights of the subject, and the vindication of justice. Trials for high treason, for attainder, for the confiscation of property, were frequent. A case, rarely transcended in importance and amount involved in any nation or in any age, was the forfeiture of the Proprietary possessions. The rulings of the Chief Justice throughout all this trying period, and in these difficult causes, were marked by great prudence and wisdom. "Chief-Justice McKean," says a late judge of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, "was a great man; his merit in the profession of the law, and as a judge, has never been sufficiently appreciated. It is only since I have been upon the Bench that I have been able to conceive a just idea of the greatness of his merit. His legal learning was profound and accurate, but, in the words of the poet,—

*Materiam superabat opus.*

The lucidity of his explication, and the perspicuity of his language, which is the first excellence in the communication of ideas, was perfect; but I never saw equalled his dignity of manner, in delivering a charge to a jury, or on a law argument to the Bar. But, what is still more, his comprehension of mind in taking notes, so as to embrace the *substance*, yet omit nothing *material*, has appeared to me inimitable."

In 1787, the Constitution of the United States was submitted to the several States for ratification or rejection. It had met violent opposition in the Convention where it was framed, and many of its provisions were discussed with much heat in the public journals. It was only by the exercise of a sublime moderation and prudence by the leaders in the Convention that it was finally adopted. Opposition was anticipated in the ratifying Conventions. The friends of the instrument were active in magnifying its excellencies and in defending what were deemed its defects. Especial care was exercised in electing the ablest and most prudent men as

delegates. Chief-Justice McKean was a member of the Pennsylvania Convention, and took a leading part in favor of its adoption. In the course of the debates which occurred, he delivered an elaborate and exhaustive argument upon the results which were likely to follow if it should prevail. In concluding his appeal, he said: "The law, sir, has been my study from my infancy, and my only profession. I have gone through the circle of office, in the legislative, executive, and judicial departments of government; and from all my study, observation, and experience, I must declare that, from a full examination and due consideration of this system, it appears to me the best that the world has yet seen. I congratulate you on the fair prospect of its being adopted, and am happy in the expectation of seeing accomplished what has been long my ardent wish,—that you will hereafter have a salutary permanency in magistracy and stability in the laws."

The Constitution of the State, adopted in 1776, proving defective, in 1789 a convention met for remodelling it, or framing a new one. A single Assembly and an Executive Council without a head capable of interposing a negative upon legislation, was in many respects inefficient. Two Houses of Assembly, with a single Executive clothed with the veto power, were advocated and finally substituted. The principal discussion was carried on in committee, and over this Judge McKean presided. Cut off thus from mingling freely in the debates, he contented himself with voting in favor of the features indicated above, only claiming the floor upon points of special importance. He opposed all unnecessary alterations. "In general," he said, "I dislike innovations, especially in the administration of justice; and I would avoid tampering with constitutions of governments as with edge-tools." One of the most important features embodied in the new Constitution, and the one for which its framers will deserve the thanks of successive generations, so long as its beneficent provisions are permitted to hold sway, was that "for the establishment of schools throughout the State, in such a manner

that the poor may be taught gratis." This proposition was introduced and advocated by Judge McKean.

In 1799, the election for Governor resulted in the choice of Judge McKean; whereupon he laid aside the judicial robes, which, for nearly a quarter of a century, he had worn with becoming dignity, and assumed those of the gubernatorial office. In politics he belonged to that school of which Mr. Jefferson was a leading exponent, and the election of the latter was a result of the movement begun in the choice of McKean in Pennsylvania. In reply to an address made to him by an assembly of citizens soon after the result of the election was known, he said: "The Constitution of the United States, and of Pennsylvania, shall be the rule of my government; the security of persons, property, liberty, and reputation, my chiefest care; and my best endeavors shall be exerted to fulfil all your reasonable and just expectations." In a letter to Mr. Dickinson, written not long after being settled in office, he says: "Though my situation in life is changed, my cares remain: I have never had greater employment for body and mind, than for the last six months, unless when I was President of Congress. I have waded through a sea of troubles, and surmounted my principal difficulties. I have been obliged (though no Hercules) to cleanse the Augean stable, with little or no aid; for I am my own minister and amanuensis. A Governor of Pennsylvania has more duty to perform than the President of the United States, or any other Governor in the Union." The particular labor which he refers to in this passage was one which occasioned sharp criticism. The doctrine that in politics "to the victor belong the spoils," was not at that time well established. The early virtues of the republic, which recognized merit in political friend and opponent alike, were not yet entirely discarded. But it was beginning at this period to be warmly espoused, and McKean did not hesitate to act largely upon it, and to openly defend his course. In a letter to Mr. Jefferson, in July, 1801, then President of the United States, he says: "It appears that the anti-Republicans, even those in office, are as

hostile as ever, though not so insolent. To overcome them they must be shaven, for in their offices (like Samson's hair-locks) their great strength lieth; their disposition for mischief may remain, but their power of doing it will be gone. It is out of the common order of nature, to prefer enemies to friends; the despisers of the people should not be their rulers, nor men be vested with authority, in a government which they wish to destroy. A dagger ought not to be put into the hands of an assassin.—Sayings of this import are in the mouths of everybody; and self-preservation seems to demand some attention to them."

His purpose in removing opponents was not to make places merely for political friends, but to secure efficiency and harmony to his rule. For when the affairs of his administration once became settled, he did not adhere exclusively to his own party in making his appointments, but selected from among his political opponents when he could thereby secure a man of greater usefulness. He twice elevated to the position of Chief Justice of the State, gentlemen whose political views were adverse to his own.

During his third and last term of office the Governor was subjected to very severe criticism for some of his official acts, and some alleged to have been committed. Party feeling was never more bitter than at that time. It is doubtful if more acrimony has ever been evinced. Finally, the Assembly preferred articles of impeachment against him. They were chiefly allegations of political offences. They were referred to a committee, and the reports made were debated from time to time, but he was never brought to trial, and finally, as an answer to the charges made and the report of the committee, he submitted to the Assembly an elaborate paper defining in a most lucid manner the powers and duties of the several branches of the government, legislative, judicial, and executive, and defining clearly impeachable offences. This replication was read and ordered by a considerable majority to be entered upon its minutes, and thus the subject rested. The paper which was drawn forth from the Governor is re-



garded with great favor by professional men, and is quoted as authority upon the questions of which it treats.

The Governor was always an earnest advocate of common-school education. As already noticed he introduced the clause into the Constitution authorizing the establishment of a system, and he lost no opportunity of urging the Legislature to action, as his predecessor Governor Mifflin had done before him. In his message of November, 1800, he said: "Considering the diffusion of useful knowledge among the people to be the best auxiliary to the administration of a free government, allow me, gentlemen, to remind you of a constitutional injunction, 'That the Legislature shall, as soon as conveniently may be, provide by law for the establishment of schools through the State, in such manner, that the poor may be taught gratis.'" This recommendation he continued to iterate; but the contentions of party, and the making of provision for the State and national debts consequent upon the war, prevented action from being directly taken thereon.

At the expiration of his third term, after having been elevated to offices the most honorable and dignified known to government, and enjoyed the confidence of his fellow-men in a manner unprecedented in the history of politics, he retired altogether from public employments. In his final message to the Legislature, he said: "In my last personal communication to the Legislature, probably in the last important public act of my life, I shall be indulged, I hope, in claiming some credit for feelings corresponding with the solemnity of the occasion. It has been my lot to witness the progress of our country, from a Colonial to a national character, through the ordeal of many trials in peace and in war. It has been my happiness to enjoy the favor and the confidence of our country, in the most arduous, as well as in the most auspicious stages of her political career. Thus attached by every tie of honor and of gratitude, by all the motives of social interest and affection, I contemplate the future destinies of our country with a proud but an anxious expectation. My day of exertion (of feeble exertion at the best) is past; but for our fel-

low-citizens, and for their representatives in every department of the government, I can only cease to implore the blessing of Providence when I cease to exist."

Governor McKean had always preserved an abiding friendship for John Adams. In the trying days of the Revolution they had been in close political accord. In a letter from Mr. Adams, written in 1812, the following testimony to this is borne. "Nearly thirty-eight years ago our friendship commenced. It has never been interrupted, to my knowledge, but by one event. Among all the gentlemen with whom I have acted and lived in the world, I know not any two, who have more uniformly agreed in sentiment upon political principles, forms of government, and national policy, than you and I have done, except upon one great subject; a most important and momentous one, to be sure: that subject was the French Revolution. This at the first appearance of it you thought a 'minister of grace;' I fully believed it to be a 'goblin damned!'" In his reply to this, Governor McKean said: "I declare, with pleasure, and also with pride, that I embraced the political sentiments of none, with more satisfaction (being congenial with my own) than yours; nor do I recollect a single question on which we differed. It is true I was a friend to the Revolution in France, from the Assembly of the Notables (1787) until the king was decapitated (1794), which I deemed not only a very atrocious, but an absurd act. After that, I remained in a kind of apathy, with regard to the leaders of the different parties, until I clearly perceived that that nation was then incapable of being ruled by a popular government; and when a few, and afterwards an individual, assumed despotic sway over them, I thought them in a situation better than under the government of a mob; for I would prefer any kind of government to such a state;—even a tyranny to anarchy. On this subject, then, I do not conceive we differed widely. I do assure you that I venerate our early friendship, and am happy in the continuance of it."

In a letter to Mr. Adams, written in June of the same year, he said: "Three years ago I shook hands with the world,

and we said farewell to each other: the toys and rattles of childhood would, in a few years more, be probably as suitable to me, as office, honor, or wealth; but (thank God) the faculties of my mind are, as yet, little, if anything impaired, and my affections and friendships remain unshaken. Since my exemption from official and professional duties, I have enjoyed a tranquillity never (during a long, protracted life) heretofore experienced; and my wealth and comforts are sufficient for a moderate man."

For a man of so varied and such great labors his length of life was remarkable, and illustrates the maxim that sloth, like rust, consumes faster than labor wears. He died on the 24th of June, 1817, aged eighty-three years, two months, and sixteen days, and was buried in the grounds of the Presbyterian church in Market Street, Philadelphia. "In person," says his biographer, "Mr. McKean was tall, erect, and well proportioned. His countenance displayed, in a remarkable manner, the firmness and intelligence for which he was distinguished. His manners were impressive and dignified. In the month of July, 1762, he married Mary, the eldest daughter of Joseph Borden, Esq., of Bordentown, New Jersey, who died in February, 1773, leaving two sons and four daughters, the youngest of whom was only two weeks old. On Thursday the 3d of September, 1774, he was again united in marriage to Miss Sarah Armitage, of New Castle, in Delaware; five children were the offspring of this union."

Of Mr. McKean's character, Lone knew better than the great compatriots with whom he acted, and who have left ample testimony. Mr. Jefferson, in a letter written in April, 1824, but two years before his own death, says of him, "The general remembrance can never be obliterated, that he was among the soundest and most zealous of the republicans, with whom it has been my fortune to act through life." And President John Adams, in a letter written in the same year to Mr. McKean's son, says: "Your father and Cæsar Rodney were among the Patrick Henrys, the Christopher Gadsdens, the Thomas Jeffersons, the Samuel Adamses, the Roger

Shermans,—the best tried and firmest pillars of the Revolution.” In the course of his life Mr. McKean was made a member of many learned societies, and associations devoted to the amelioration and advancement of mankind. In 1781, the degree of Doctor of Laws was conferred upon him by the College of New Jersey, and in the following year the same degree was conferred by Dartmouth College, New Hampshire. The Trustees of the latter institution, in communicating the bestowal of the honor, said: “Impressed with an exalted opinion of those singular talents which nature has allotted you; of those acquirements which you have gained by application; and of that patriotic virtue, which has remained inflexible through the storms of adversity, the honorable Board of Trustees of this University request your acceptance of a feeble testimonial of your merit.”

It is rare, and perhaps unexampled, that a man has public offices heaped upon him as they were upon Thomas McKean. He was President of Delaware, and Governor of Pennsylvania; member of Congress from Delaware for a period of over eight years, and Chief Justice of Pennsylvania for twenty-two,—offices each in itself of sufficient dignity to satisfy the ambition of the most gifted; and yet to him they seemed appropriately awarded; for in an age of giants he appeared among the most conspicuous. The services of such a man are the proud heritage of Pennsylvania, a heritage that illumines some of the brightest pages of her history.