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THOMAS MELLON.

HON. THOMAS MELLON, a prominent banker and business man of Pittsburgh, for many years a distinguished member of the bar in that city, and

during ten years a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, was born at Camp Hill Cottage, on his father's farm, Lower Castletown, parish of Cappagh, County of Tyrone, Ireland, February 3, 1813. He is of an old and worthy Scotch-Irish family, which traces descent from Archibald Mellon and his wife Elizabeth, both natives of Scotland, who, about the middle of the seventeenth century, were among those who emigrated from that country to Ireland and took up the large tracts of land left vacant by the flight of the Catholic Irish before the victorious onslaughts of the English troopers in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. A direct descendant of this couple, also named Archibald Mellon, was the grandfather of the subject of this sketch. He disposed of his property in Ireland in 1816 and emigrated to the United States, making his new home in Westmoreland Co., Penn., where he spent the remainder of his life in comfort, content and usefulness, dying sincerely mourned by all who knew him, September 5, 1835. His son Andrew had married, in 1812, Miss Rebecca Wauchob, "a descendant of a noted and honorable Holland family," and was already a man of family at the time his father sailed to America, and when his eldest son, Thomas, the subject of this sketch, was about five years of age, he concluded to follow the example of his parents and other members of the family in going to America, and in 1818 sailed with his wife and child for Saint John, New Brunswick, direct intercourse with ports in the United States being then difficult, if not impossible, owing to the unfriendly mood of England after the war of 1812-15. This voyage, made in a sailing vessel, consumed about three months, and was followed by another, made in a coasting vessel, to Baltimore, at which port landing was effected October 1, 1818. Two days in Baltimore sufficed to give the family all the rest they needed, and to enable him to charter a Conestoga wagon and team of horses to convey them to Westmoreland Co., Penn. It was a journey of no little moment in a strange land and presented many novel features to persons previously unaccustomed to travel. The wagon was shelter for all at night. At fires by the roadside, kindled as occasion required, the meals were prepared and cooked. Slow and at times toilsome, the journey was finally completed in safety, and the travelers were cordially welcomed by their kin in a flourishing settlement near Greensburgh, where the winter was spent. In the following spring he purchased a farm in Franklin township and moved thither with his family. Some years afterwards he removed to Allegheny Co., settling at Monroeville, where he died October 11, 1856. He was a man of strict integrity, and, although a hard-working farm-

er, paid a great deal of attention to reading, and was much further advanced on all questions than was customary at the time among agriculturists. He was a Whig in politics and a Presbyterian in religious faith, but in neither politics nor religion was he narrow or bigoted. His wife was a noble woman, tender-hearted and self-sacrificing to the last degree. She died May 9, 1868, in the seventy-ninth year of her age, having lived to see her eldest son wear the judicial ermine with honor, learning and dignity in one of the most advanced and enterprising cities on the American Continent. Thomas, their son, enjoyed no other educational advantages in his early youth than those which came from association with his honest, industrious and pure-minded parents and relatives. All the solid virtues were taught him by example. His "reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic" came piece-meal, but were mastered sufficiently for all practical purposes. At twelve years of age he took his place in the field, following the plow and doing such other work as the cultivation and care of a farm demands. When an interval of leisure occurred he turned to an old pamphlet copy of Shakespeare that good fortune threw in his way, or studied with interest a dilapidated copy of the Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, a favorite book in his secular collection. Over and over again he read the latter work. It opened up to his young mind the possibilities of life even for the child of humble parentage, and begat in his heart a hope, if not a determination, of moving upward as well as onward in his journey through life. As he grew older he became an omnivorous reader, and as his intelligence and experience increased he found himself acquiring a distaste for the routine duties of farm life. His father believed it was the true, manly, independent, ideal life, and wished his son to follow it, but when at length he saw that his determination was for intellectual effort, he wisely withdrew his opposition, and Thomas was permitted to attend more freely the schools of the district with a view to perfecting himself for college, it having been deemed advisable at last to let him enter a profession. In the fall of 1834 he entered the Western University, and although unable to continue his studies with regularity, he was successful in graduating with the bachelor's degree in the fall of 1837. Easy-going students of the present day rarely do better, even with every facility. His college life was frequently broken in upon by the demands of farm labor, and it was no uncommon thing for the young lad "to walk home from the city, eleven miles distant, between sundown and midnight, to be ready for work in the harvest field on the following day." During one summer vacation, to assist

in meeting his college expenses, he organized a pay school on the south side, Pittsburgh, and netted by the venture the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars, a magnificent sum at the time, for which he had many uses. After he graduated at college, having decided on the profession of law, he entered the office of Hon. Charles Shaler, ex-Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny Co. In March, 1838, he secured a position in the prothonotary's office, where, besides earning a little needed money, he acquired a valuable knowledge of the intricacies of law and the methods of court procedure, which greatly facilitated his studies. In December, 1838, he was admitted to practice, after passing "a most creditable examination." He opened an office in Pittsburgh in June, 1839, and had no reason to complain of neglect. He had already shown himself to be a diligent and worthy student, and had made a good impression on the lawyers and litigants, while attending to his employment in the prothonotary's office. His modest sign first made its appearance over offices at the corner of Fifth street and Market Alley. "Fifth street, now Fifth avenue," writes Mr. Mellon, in an article describing the location of the lawyers and law offices in those early days, "was not then a business street, and mine was the first law office opened on it. The law offices were chiefly on the west side of the Diamond, behind the court-house—some few on Fourth street, between Market and Wood. It was before the courts were removed to Grant's Hill. That location, on which the new court-house was afterwards built, was yet a part of Lawyer Ross's apple orchard, and rather out of town. The old court-house stood where the Diamond market house, on the west side of Market street, now stands. It was an ancient-looking, square brick structure, with a cupola and bell on top, and a low one-story building on each side. That on the north side contained the office of the prothonotary and clerk of the orphan's and criminal courts, all in one room, which was convenient enough, as those different official functions centered in one individual. The building on the left side contained the Register's and Recorder's office in one room and with one individual officiating for both purposes." Fairly launched in his profession, the young lawyer made rapid strides in public esteem. Gifted by nature with admirable common sense, well educated, a close student, and acquainted to a considerable extent with the routine of the courts, he conducted cases committed to his care with remarkable success. The business community, in particular, seemed to appreciate his worth, and before long he was one of their favorites. In a comparatively short time he had all the business he

could attend to, and was making money. His acquaintance enlarged, his fame extended, and for a score of years he was one of the busiest and most esteemed lawyers in the city. He became noted for the speedy manner in which he hastened proceedings to a termination. The tediousness of the "law's delay" was reduced to a minimum in cases under his management, as he espoused the cause of his client as though it were his own. His legal practice increased so rapidly that, in order to obtain some professional help, he admitted as a law partner Mr. Wm. B. Negley, a nephew of his wife, who had been his student. This connection was maintained during seven years. The burden of professional cares, however, finally becoming too heavy for him, he decided to give up the practice of law. But while he was putting his house in order to take this step, his fellow-citizens were making arrangements to place him in nomination for a highly important judicial position, which had been created by the General Assembly of Pennsylvania. This was the office of Assistant Law Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, who was given equal salary and powers with the President-Judge. "The two were authorized to hold court separately or jointly, in all cases except for murder, in which they were required to sit jointly." The sense of the legal profession was very largely in favor of Mr. Mellon being placed in this position, and a committee of prominent lawyers called upon him and requested permission to use his name. Never having sought any office, nor taken any share in party politics, he was at first disinclined to accede to the proposition, but at length yielded to the demand and entered the field on the Republican ticket. Another strong man was nominated for the office, and the contest was a lively one. Mr. Mellon took no part in it personally, but his friends were active, the general public sentiment was in his favor, and he was elected. He assumed the duties of his position on the first Monday in December, 1859, his colleague on the bench being the "Hon. Wm. B. McClure, a gentleman of the old school, pure and honorable, and of fine literary and legal attainments." Three years later Judge McClure died, and was succeeded by James P. Sterrett, who was associated with Judge Mellon until the close of the latter's term. Later in the term a third judge was added—Edwin H. Stowe. Judge Mellon's judicial career was marked by conscientious application and the strictest integrity. He devoted himself without reserve to his official duties and earned the encomiums of people in all walks of life by the singular purity, good sense and impartiality with which he discharged them. The War of the Rebellion filled fully half of the years of

his term and, as a loyal citizen and an honored Judge, he unswervingly supported the Union cause. But before the close of his term of office his private interests had grown to such importance, and his boys, verging on manhood, being so desirous of entering into business, that, at the close of his term of office he firmly declined to accept a renomination, and returned to private life at the opening of 1870, bearing with him the honor and respect of all. The bar of Pittsburgh tendered him a complimentary banquet on the occasion, "at which he was given renewed evidence of his high standing in the opinion of his professional associates as a lawyer, as a judge, and as a man." The foundation of Judge Mellon's fortune was laid by the judicious investment of his early savings as a lawyer. As the city grew in population, wealth and importance, his possessions increased by natural causes. For a time he was interested to some extent in the coal business at Tarentum, Allegheny County, his partner being a gentleman named Benjamin Patterson. In 1859 he became a silent partner in the firm of J. B. Corey & Co., extensive producers and shippers of coal. Towards the close of the war he purchased the Osceola Coal Mines, and also became interested in the foundry and machine-shop business at Braddock. After leaving the bench he decided to engage in the banking business, being influenced in this direction by the design of providing position and employment for some of his younger sons. His banking house, situated on Smithfield street, was opened for business January 1, 1870. In the following year he purchased the lot on which now stands his present banking house, that of T. Mellon & Sons. Gradually he became interested in other important financial and business enterprises, among other things investing largely in coal lands on the lines of many of the railroads entering the city, and constructing some of the most extensive coal works now in operation. His judgment in business affairs was rarely at fault and this fact, together with his large fortune, early made him a potent commercial and financial factor in the forces which have been and are still at work in the great industrial city of Pittsburgh. Judge Mellon married Miss Sarah J. Negley, a daughter of one of the oldest and best families of Western Pennsylvania, on August 22, 1843. A large family blessed this union. Several of the sons are among the best and most substantial business men of Pittsburgh. Thomas A. and James R., composing the firm of Mel'on Brothers, are engaged largely in the real estate and lumber business; Andrew W. is manager of the extensive banking business of T. Mellon & Sons, and Richard B. and George N., the latter now deceased, constituted the firm of Mellon

Brothers, Bismarck, Dakota. In company with his son George, and for the benefit, largely, of the latter's health, Judge Mellon made a trip to Europe in 1882, taking occasion while absent to visit his birth-place, and to spend some time beside the hearth where as a boy he used to stir the fire of nights to afford light to his father to read in the American *Gazette* the glowing accounts of the richness and abundance of the lands, and the liberty and freedom of the people in the United States. Judge Mellon has also served his fellow-citizens of recent years as a member of the City Council. His life has been full of activity and good deeds, and it can be said without exaggeration that to the example and labors of such men as he the State of Pennsylvania owes in great measure not only her wonderful material progress, but also the excellence and stability of her institutions and laws.
