

THE TRIAL OF THOMAS COOPER FOR
SEDITIONS LIBEL, PHILADELPHIA,
PENNSYLVANIA, 1800.

THE NARRATIVE.

Thomas Cooper^a was an Englishman, who had inherited a good fortune, had been bred to the bar, but had spent more time experimenting with acids and gases than in perusing law books or preparing briefs. From chemistry he

^a COOPER, THOMAS. (1759-1840.) Born in London, England; educated at Oxford; studied law and then turned to the natural sciences, particularly chemistry, over which he soon obtained a mastery. But he went into politics and got into disfavor with the Government, which made him abandon public life for his chemical experiments, which, however, turned out disastrously, so he emigrated to America. Of his life after he had served his term in prison Dr. Wharton (*State Trials*, p. 680), says: "On coming out of prison, Mr. Cooper found the minority rapidly turning into a majority, and in a short time, the administration which had prosecuted him was overthrown. His untiring industry, his almost universal philosophical attainments, and his courageous temper, but more particularly the sufferings he had undergone in the maintenance of the freedom of the press, placed him high in the esteem of the dominant party. After having been appointed a commissioner to negotiate a settlement of the Luzerne difficulties in Pennsylvania—a duty he discharged with remarkable skill and success—he was nominated by Governor McKean to the president judgeship of a judicial district.

"Mr. Cooper's proceedings after he became the wielder of judicial power, form an odd sequel to his experience when he was its subject. Scarcely five years had passed after he was out of prison, before he was on the bench; and scarcely five years more had passed before he was impeached before the Senate of Pennsylvania, upon charges, which, were it not that they were gravely preferred and amply supported, might be considered burlesques of those upon which he was instrumental in impeaching Judge Chase, in the Senate of the United States. (See *post*, 11 Am. St. Tr.) He was charged with pouncing upon delinquent jurors on the first day of the court, with fines and bench warrants, in violation of the venerable Pennsylvania practice, of giving them the *quarto die post*; with imprisoning a Quaker for not pulling off his hat; with committing three parties for 'whispering,' an offense for which he declared he would hear no apology; with issuing warrants without