

THE TRIAL.¹

In the United States Circuit Court, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1800.

HON. SAMUEL CHASE,²
HON. RICHARD PETERS,³ } *Judges.*

April 11.

An indictment had been found against Thomas Cooper under the Sedition Act which made it a crime to be punished by fine and imprisonment for any one to print or publish any false, scandalous and malicious writings against the Government, Congress or the President, with intent to defame them, to bring them into contempt or to excite the hatred of the people against them, for the following seditious libel against John Adams, President of the United States.

The libelous matter set out in the indictment was as follows:

"Nor do I see any impropriety in making this request of Mr. Adams. At that time he had just entered into office; he was hardly in the infancy of political mistakes; even those who doubted his capacity thought well of his intentions. Nor were we yet saddled with the expense of a permanent navy, or threatened, under his auspices, with the existence of a standing army. Our credit was not yet reduced so low as to borrow money at eight per cent in time of peace, while the unnecessary violence of official expressions might justly have provoked a war. Mr. Adams had not yet projected his embassies to Prussia, Russia and the Sublime Porte, nor had he yet

¹ *Bibliography.* "An account of the Trial of Thomas Cooper of Northumberland, on a charge of libel against the President of the United States. Taken in shorthand by Thomas Cooper."

* Wharton's State Trials, see 4 Am. St. Tr., 616.

² CHASE, SAMUEL. (1741-1811.) Born Somerset Co., Md.; studied law at Annapolis and admitted to bar, 1761; member of Colonial Legislature and prominent in Stamp Act agitation; a signer of the Declaration of Independence; United States Commissioner (with Franklin and Carroll) to Canada; removed to Baltimore, 1786; Chief Justice Baltimore Criminal Court, 1788; member Maryland convention to ratify the Federal Constitution; Chief Justice General Court, Maryland, 1791; Associate Justice Supreme Court of the United States, 1796-1811.

³ See 4 Am. St. Tr., 616.