

Commemorative Biographical Encyclopedia of the Juniata Valley, Comprising the Counties of Huntingdon, Mifflin, Juniata, and Perry, Pennsylvania, J. M. Runk and Company, Publishers 1897

Hon. Alexander Kelly McClure, son of **Alexander** and **Isabella (Anderson) McClure**, was born on his father's farm in Perry County, Pa., January 9, 1828. Here also his youth was passed. For his education he owes but little to scholastic training. His early opportunities were limited to the brief sessions of the county schools; nor did he enjoy even these beyond his fifteenth year. Having attained that age, he became apprentice to **James Marshall**, of New Bloomfield, Pa., in order to learn tanning. The time he could spare from the acquirement of this handicraft was spent very differently from the leisure of most apprentices. His favorite diversion seems to have been a visit to the office of a country newspaper, the *Perry Freeman*, and a chat on current topics—especially political—with its editor. He even wrote some articles for the paper, which were accepted. The owner of the *Freeman*, **Hon. John A. Baker**, perceiving the lad's ability and promise, encouraged these early efforts; and when by a happy concurrence of circumstances, the end of young **McClure's** apprenticeship coincided with the demand of the Juniata County Whigs for an editor who should conduct a paper in their interest at the county seat, this good friend induced him to place himself at their service. Beginning with a modest outfit, he issued the first number of the *Sentinel*, still one of the leading newspapers of Perry County, on December 9, 1846. His ambition led him to master the art of printing; and by the end of his first year as editor of the *Sentinel*, he was able to perform all the work of the office unaided. He seemed to attain to political prominence at a bound. His early career was closely connected with that of Governor Curtin, whose cause he advocated as conferee at a Congressional conference, when the young editor was not yet twenty-one years of age; unsuccessfully, indeed, but so ably and heartily that a strong and lasting friendship was at once cemented between them. One of the first acts of Andrew G. Curtin, on being installed as Governor of Pennsylvania, was to appoint **Mr. McClure** on his staff, as aide. In 1850, Governor Curtin secured his appointment as deputy United States Marshal for Juniata County, for the taking of the census. Soon after this, he sold the *Sentinel*, and purchased a half interest in the *Franklin County Repository*, published at Chambersburg, Pa., which, however, he sold a few years later, strongly reprehending the policy of the Whigs of that county with regard to the "Know-Nothing" movement. Meanwhile, **Mr. McClure** had become a power in State politics, not only through his vigorous and incisive editorials, but by his oratorical powers, which made him a most effective stump speaker. He had also added to his intellectual equipment by a course of legal study, under the late **William McLellan**, Esq., of Chambersburg, Pa., and was admitted to the Bar of Franklin County, June 17, 1856, entering upon practice as the partner of **Mr. McLellan**. For a number of years his life was devoted to a series of public services. He was for a short time superintendent of Public Printing, receiving the appointment from Governor Pollock. He was next superintendent of the Erie and Northeastern Railroad, in which capacity he permanently adjusted the difficulties which had occasioned the Erie riots. He was a delegate in 1856 to the National Convention that nominated John C. Fremont for the Presidency. In 1857 he was elected to the legislature of Pennsylvania, and in 1858, was re-elected by a still larger majority. His nomination to the State Senate in 1859 was followed by his election to that House also. He was the able, determined and brilliant chairman of the Republican State Committee in 1860; and in 1861, in the Senate, his attitude on the war question was so decided, and his views were so far-reaching and so convincingly expressed as to place him at once among the leaders in the war policy of the State. He served as chairman of the

Committee on Military Affairs, and was later made assistant adjutant general, with the duty of supervising the draft in Pennsylvania. The year 1862 left **Col. McClure** once more at the editorial desk of the *Repository*, in Chambersburg, of which journal he continued for several years to be editor and proprietor.

In 1864, he lost the accumulated savings of many years by the Confederate invasion and the burning of Chambersburg. In 1866, for the recovery of his health, which was seriously impaired by his long and engrossing labors, he visited the far west and spent a year in the Rocky Mountain region. After his return he was chairman of the Pennsylvania delegation in the National Republican Convention of 1868, which nominated General Grant as President; and he took an active part in the campaign that followed. **Colonel McClure** next became a resident of Philadelphia, intending to settle down to legal practice. In 1872, he espoused the cause of Horace Greeley, and was prominent in the Cincinnati convention and the succeeding campaign. He was elected to the State Senate in 1872 as an Independent. During his Senatorship he was nominated for the mayoralty of Philadelphia, but was defeated. This defeat led to the establishment of the *Philadelphia Times*, on March 13, 1875, by Messrs. **John** and **Frank McLaughlin**, of that city. **John McLaughlin** died in 1881 and his brother in 1897. From the establishment of the paper to the present time, **Hon. A. K. McClure** has been its vigorous, brilliant, aggressive editor-in-chief, the leading spirit of a well-qualified staff. Years have not cooled his ardor, or dulled the point of his lance; their varied experiences, on the contrary, have only furnished him the more abundantly for the work which he continues with all the force and more than the adroitness of his youth.

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