

Reverdy Johnson once, in a conversation with Judge Buchanan and Judge Chambers, complained of being worn down by hard work, McMahan asked, "Why don't you go on the bench?" "This," says Judge Mason, "instantly fired Judge Chambers, who was very quick in temper as well as in retort, and who fully appreciated the remark as a fling at the court, and he began a sharp reply, but before he had uttered the first sentence McMahan had glided into the adjoining room." Once, indeed, when the judges were slow in filing opinions, and gave many decisions of importance without opinions, McMahan told them to their faces that they were very lazy,²⁶ but this is perhaps to be taken as a mark of McMahan's easy friendship with the judges rather than of boldness on his part, for, with all his strength, he was an extraordinarily timid man in some respects. Out of a strange timidity he shrank from accepting the positions of Attorney General of the United States and Senator, even when his friends expressed something like disgust at his action.²⁷

Judge Mason tells another relevant story which may justify its length.

About the same time, perhaps the following June term, a plain, honest, unsophisticated old German from Washington County named Doub was in Annapolis anxiously awaiting the final disposition of an important case which he then had pending before the court. McMahan was the counsel against him.²⁸ Doub did not confine his importunities for an early hearing to

26. Mason, *Life of McMahan*, 113.

27. *Ibid*, chaps. IX and X.

28. *Doub v. Barnes*, 4 Gill, 1, heard at the June term 1846. Doub was not released from litigation with that case. See *Thomas v. Mason*, 8 Gill 1; *Dodge v. Doub*, 8 Gill 18; *Thomas v. Doub*, 1 Md. 252.