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# CHILD'S HISTORY

OF THE

## UNITED STATES.

BY

JOHN GILMARY SHEA, LL.D.,

AUTHOR OF THE "DISCOVERY OF THE MISSISSIPPI," "EARLY VOYAGES," "HISTORY OF  
NEW FRANCE," MEMBER OF THE NEW YORK, MASSACHUSETTS, MARYLAND,  
AND OTHER HISTORICAL SOCIETIES.

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## MAJOR THOMAS McCLURKEN, ILL. VOL.

MORTALLY WOUNDED AT BELMONT, MO., NOVEMBER 7, 1861.

MAJOR THOMAS McCLURKEN was of Scottish ancestry, and a descendant of the McClurkens of South Carolina, who were prominent patriots in the Revolutionary War. His father, James McClurken, emigrated, in the year 1818, to the promised Canaan, Illinois, settled in the southern part of the State, became a prominent citizen, was a member of the Illinois Legislature, and filled other positions of high public trust. His son Thomas was born at Sparta, in Randolph county, on the 25th day of December, 1827. During his early life but few opportunities were offered to explore the caves of knowledge. The village school was the only spring at which to quench the thirst for intellectual culture. His education, therefore, was not the polished marble of collegiate study, but rather the rough hewn stone, quarried by his own individual effort. Parental love, anxiety, and care, had early sown the seed of good example, to which his early youth paid silent homage.

Accustomed, when quite young, to depend upon himself, he became ripe in the knowledge of men and events, and when but a youth, had spanned a history of experience that might have been credited to sterner years.

He associated himself with his brother, who was then a prominent merchant in St. Louis. It was here he formed the acquaintance with the daughter of the Hon. Sidney Breese, of Illinois, a lady of estimable worth, and was married to her, in the year 1851. His mind having been cast in a mechanical mould, the habits of mercantile life were ill suited to his tastes, and surrendering his connections in St. Louis, he returned to his native Sparta, to assume control of a large woollen manufactory. From this period (1851) to the time when he enlisted in the holiest of holy causes,—the preservation of the American Union,—he was actively engaged in developing the manufacturing facilities of Southern Illinois, and closely identified with every interest of public utility. In his deportment he was kind, genial, and urbane; and in the robe of his character were woven some of those rare qualities which attract, elevate, and adorn. His political persuasions, prior to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, were of the Democratic faith. But, from the period of 1854, he had been an active, earnest, and consistent advocate of the Republican party. When rebellion broke the bonds of thirty years' confinement; when Southern chivalry, drunk with its success at Sumter, rioted in armed legions on the banks of the Potomac, menacing the capital, Major McClurken, sacrificing the comforts and endearments of home, the profits of a growing, lucrative business, gave the weight of his influence to the cause, was soon at the head of a company of worthy men, marched to Camp Butler, Illinois, was attached to the then forming regiment of Colonel Philip B. Fouke, and was commissioned as its major, by the governor of the State. By his energy of character, and earnest solicitude for the comfort of his men, he won the esteem of his whole command. This esteem ripened into admiration by his cool, daring

courage, on the fatal field of Belmont, where he fell, while gallantly cheering his men on to the charge. A ball penetrated his right temple, carrying away a part of the skull. In this dying state he fell into the hands of the enemy, but was the next day recovered by means of a flag of truce, and brought to Cairo, where he expired in the arms of his family, on the 16th of November.

Belmont, like Springfield, and Ball's Bluff, has passed into history; and whatever bearing they may have on the present struggle, a gratified people will long remember their respective heroes. The impartial historic pen, that will record the deeds of the noble Lyon, the gallant Greble, and the daring Baker, will do equal justice to the memory of the subject of our sketch, Major Thomas McClurken.

Some operations took place far away in the South, near the old Spanish city of Pensacola, which French and Spaniards had taken and retaken in the preceding century. Some New York volunteers encamped on Santa Rosa Island, near Fort Pickens, were surprised at night by a Confederate force under General Anderson, on the 9th of October, resulting in an irregular fight; and in November, the United States squadron, with Fort Pickens, for a time bombarded and silenced Fort McRae, and did considerable damage to Warrington, where a number of houses were destroyed.

We will now return to the operations near Washington. After the disaster at Bull's Run, a reorganization of the departments was made, and General McClellan, whose success in Western Virginia had inspired confidence, was called to command the army covering Washington, as well as the whole Department of Washington, and that of Northeastern Virginia. He at once proceeded to organize the forces