

Biography of Jeremiah Sullivan Black
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BLACK, Jeremiah Sullivan, jurist, b. in the Glades, Somerset co., Pa., 10 Jan., 1810; d. at his home in York, Pa., 19 Aug., 1883. His ancestry was Scotch-Irish. James Black, his grandfather, came to America from the north of Ireland, and settled in Somerset co., Pa., where, in 1778, Henry Black, father of Jeremiah, a man of note in his day, was born. Jeremiah's early education was obtained at school near his father's farm. He studied law, was taken into the office of Chauncey Forward, a lawyer in Somerset county, and was admitted to the bar in 1831. In 1838 he married a daughter of Mr. Forward. After an active and successful practice of eleven years, he was raised to the bench. He was a Jeffersonian democrat, and was nominated by a democratic governor, in April, 1842, for president-judge of the district where he lived, which post he held for nine years. In 1851 Judge Black was elected one of the supreme court judges of Pennsylvania. After serving the short term of three years, he was re-elected, in 1854, for a full term of fifteen years. On the accession of James Buchanan to the presidency, in 1857, Judge Black became attorney-general. He was very industrious and successful, in connection with Edwin M. Stanton, in protecting the interests of the nation against false claimants to grants of land made by the Mexican government to settlers in California before that country came under the control of the United States. When the secession crisis arrived, in 1860-'1, Buchanan held that there was no authority for coercing a state, if it chose to secede and set up as an independent government; but Attorney-General Black was of the opinion that it was the duty of the government to put down insurrection, and that the constitution contained no provision for a dissolution of the union in any manner whatever. Gen. Cass having resigned as secretary of state in December, 1860, Judge Black was appointed to fill the vacancy, Edwin M. Stanton taking the post of attorney-general. Judge Black occupied this office during the remainder of Buchanan's administration, and exerted himself to save the government from falling into the hands of the secessionists. In March, 1861, when Abraham Lincoln became president, Judge Black retired from public life. He was appointed U. S. supreme court reporter, but soon resigned that office, and entered again upon the practice of law at his home, near York, Pa. He was engaged in several prominent lawsuits during the last-twenty years of his life, and retained his vigor and professional skill to the close of his career. The Vanderbilt will contest, the Milliken case, and the McGarrahan claim were among the more noted cases in which he was engaged. He was a contributor to periodical literature, furnished an account of the Erie railway litigation, argued the third-term question in magazine articles, and had a newspaper discussion with Jefferson Davis.—His son, Chauncey Forward, was elected lieutenant-governor of Pennsylvania in 1882, and in 1886 was the democratic candidate for the governorship.

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