

Scurrility and abuse. These base and ungenerous Adversaries, have felt the *Lash* of my feeble pen—
But feeble as it was it wounded deep . . .”³³

The quarrel increased in bitterness until it appeared as if the altercation would be transferred from the columns of the newspapers to the dueling grounds on the other side of the Delaware, but this extreme was fortunately avoided.³⁴

He again came into the public eye by championing the cause of two army officers who were fined for assault. The publication of an article signed “A Friend to the Army” brought down upon his head the wrath of Judge McKean who had said, “You gentlemen of the army hold your heads too high; but I will teach you how to behave.”³⁵ Oswald was brought into court and reprimanded and forced to give a bond of £750 for good behavior. However, he returned to his office and printed a description of the scene in court which resulted in his being brought before the judge again. This time he was ordered to give the name of the author of the former article and upon refusing to do so was not released until he gave a bail for £1000. Again Oswald returned to his press and printed another attack on McKean, this time accusing him of being a speculator in soldiers’ certificates.³⁶ It was probably to this affair that Oswald referred in his letter to Lamb on November 26, 1782:

“ . . . If you have not been inform’d of my Exertions in favor of the *Liberty of the Press*, which has been most infamously attacked by the Chief Justice of this State . . . I am to have a public Trial on the 17th of next Month—as a *Libeller*. The infamous English law Doctrine of Libels being introduced by the more infamous Judges and Lawyers, in an American Court—O tempore, O mores!”³⁷

The Grand Jury was summoned and on January 1, 1783 considered a bill against Oswald for printing a libel on September 28, 1782, but after examining witnesses they rejected it with a vote 16 to 3. Two days later they were given another bill against him, this time for a libel on October 1, and again the bill was rejected 17 to 2. Judge McKean then called the jury before him and reprimanded them for not supporting the bills against Oswald. They debated the bills again and came to the

³³ The Lamb Papers, Box IV, No. 123. Oswald to Lamb, Philadelphia, 26 Nov. 1782.

³⁴ See J. T. Scharf and T. Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, Philadelphia, 1884. Vol. I, pp. 424-426. The footnote on page 425 contains an interesting biographical sketch of Oswald.

³⁵ Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, Vol. I, p. 426.

³⁶ Scharf and Westcott, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 426.

³⁷ Lamb Papers, Box IV, No. 123. Oswald to Lamb, Philadelphia, 26 Nov. 1782.