

HISTORY
OF
CLEARFIELD COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES
OF SOME OF ITS PROMINENT MEN AND PIONEERS*

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BIGLER, HON. WILLIAM, the subject of this sketch, was one of a class of men so peculiar to America, who, without the aid of fortune or influential friends, have risen rapidly to distinction and places of trust. He was peculiarly the architect of his own fortune, being destitute of means, and having no one of experience to council him in his youth. He showed himself an apt student in all he undertook, and he had a part in nearly all the departments of practical life, as this sketch will show, and that with remarkable success. One of his strongest characteristics was a clear and forecasting mind, with a sound judgment which was sustained by much energy, zeal and perseverance. He may be rated as having been a wise, rather than a brilliant man. In his intercourse with his fellowmen he was uniformly gracious, showing the nicest sense of propriety, and whilst on all public questions he maintained his own views with much firmness, he always heard with deference and respect the sentiments of others, and for this reason, perhaps, as much as any other, he was always considered and adjudged, even by his opponents, in the midst of heated political campaigns, to be a fair minded politician.

But it was in private conversations and discussions that Mr. Bigler showed to most advantage, by the display of much persuasive power, and a facility in presenting the strong points of his case.

He was born in Shermansburg, Cumberland county, Pa., in December, 1813. His

parents, Jacob Bigler and Susan Dock, were of German descent, and were educated like most of that class known as "Pennsylvania Germans" in the German and English tongues.

While the subject of this memoir was quite young his parents removed to Mercer county, in what proved to be a disastrous attempt to build up their fortunes; for the elder Bigler had been induced to purchase a large tract of wild land, the title to which was defective, and in a short time he found himself bereft of everything but a small farm.

The sustenance of his large family depending upon the products of a new farm in a wilderness country, the father, aided as he was by the labors of his children, was obliged to exert himself too severely, and before he had succeeded in placing his family on a fair footing in the world, he succumbed to disease, and he passed away, leaving his widow and children to wrestle with the difficulties of a backwoods life. If his dying vision could have looked forward a very few years, he would have beheld two of the children, about whom he must have had great concern, filling gubernatorial chairs of two of the most important States in the Union, John Bigler, the eldest brother, governor of California, and William Bigler, governor of Pennsylvania, and very shortly afterward the former representing his country in an important foreign mission, and the latter representing his native State, Pennsylvania, in the United States Senate, and occupying while there the highly honored position of confidential friend and adviser of the president of the United States.

There is much of encouragement to the poor young men of America in the lives of them two brothers. Both of them started life without money, and almost without friends. No academic honors crowned their earlier manhood, no luxurious habits enervated their frames, no wealthy friends encouraged their first essays in life. In the battle of the world they fought with no weapons but those furnished by their own indomitable energies. In the struggles for subsistence they gleaned more knowledge from men than from books. Let the young man who would despond over his own future take heart from their example. Only in a land of equality and free institutions does such energy and worth receive its reward, and in the career of these two brothers the genius and simplicity and truth of American institutions are exhibited in their true and proper light.

Busily occupied with the labors necessary for the support of the family, William Bigler received but a moderate school education, but he graduated in what we believe to be the best school for the development of the talents of a bright boy — the printing office. From 1829 to 1833 he was employed by his brother John in the office of the *Centre Democrat*, published at Bellefonte.

In August, 1833, he felt that the time had arrived when he ought to commence the edifice of his own fortune, and his preparations being made, he started for Clearfield with an old hand press, a set of sheep-skin balls, a font of second hand long primer and brevier type, and twenty dollars of borrowed money, intending to publish a newspaper in his new home. Of so doubtful a prospect was the enterprise that one of his friends, a prominent judge, residing in Bellefonte, felt it to be his duty to utter the well meant warning, "Young man, don't go there, you'll starve."

But others of his friends advised him to go, and among these was Andrew G. Curtin, who also became governor of the Commonwealth.

Young Bigler started with a brave heart, which, however, lost some of its confidence

as he neared his destination, for it is related as one of the most painful of his experiences, that as he approached his journey's end, and reflected upon his utter friendliness, knowing only two individuals in the county of Clearfield, his spirit was overcome by the blank, cheerless prospect, and he sought to bribe his teamsters with his borrowed twenty dollars into concealing the object of his journey, and to return with the goods to their owners in Bellefonte, while he would push on penniless and afoot to the far West. Fortunately his design was frustrated, and he was received by the people of Clearfield with such frank and generous hospitality, that years afterwards, when surrounded by the material comforts of this life, and had been the recipient of many honors from his State and people, any reference to their kindness to him in that trying time would kindle within him the strongest emotion. His press was soon set up and his type distributed, and in a few days he issued the first number of the *Clearfield Democrat*, which he used to say was "an eight by ten Jackson paper, intended to counteract the influence of the seven by nine Whig paper which had preceded him into this mountainous region." Bigler did nearly all the work, writing the editorials, setting the type, and working the old hand press. With all these drawbacks the publication was a very spirited one, and while not a source of immediate wealth, he was speedily enabled by his prudence to pay for his printing material and to repay his borrowed twenty dollars.

He was soon immersed in politics and rapidly gained a reputation for good judgment and sincerity, and his uniform courtesy towards everybody made him a general favorite. His editorial and political fame was not lessened by his great skill as a marksman, for his hunting friends assert very confidently that he never missed a buck, even if it were on the full jump when he fired, an accomplishment of considerable weight with the early settlers of Pennsylvania.

On the 23d day of March, 1836, he was married to Maria J. Reed, eldest daughter of A. B. Reed, one of the prominent and prosperous citizens of Clearfield county, a union which was blessed by Providence in its results to both. Mrs. Bigler was the faithful and devoted helpmeet of her husband through all the remainder of his life, both in the sacred precincts of home and amid the trials incident to public station, the ever ready and efficient counselor in the days of trouble, and in the hours of his triumphs. She still survives, living at their old home in the town of Clearfield, blessed with the comforts of life, the center of a large family circle, and having the love and respect of all who know her.

In 1836 he disposed of his newspaper and entered into a mercantile partnership with Mr. Reed, his father-in-law. He engaged in his new pursuit with his usual industry and energy, and in a brief period placed himself in the front rank of the merchants and dealers in lumber in that section. From 1845 to 1850 he was by far the largest producer of lumber or square timber on the West Branch of the Susquehanna River. His editorial career however had brought his abilities so prominently before the notice of the people that he was repeatedly urged to accept a nomination for the Legislature, which he always declined. About the period of his marriage, and retirement from editorial life, the question of a reform of the State constitution was agitated with great excitement. Into this contest Mr. Bigler threw his whole energies, and did much towards gaining a victory by which a convention was obtained for changing the constitution. As an acknowledgment of his services he was urged by his friends to serve in this important convention, but again refused an election.

In 1841 he was nominated for the State Senate, and though much to his pecuniary

disadvantage, accepted the nomination. The district was composed of the counties of Clearfield, Cambria, Indiana, and Armstrong, and he was elected by over three thousand majority. Though opposed by a regularly nominated candidate of the Whig party, he received every vote in his own county of Clearfield, except one, a result unprecedented in the history of politics. He served two terms as a member of the State Senate, being re-elected in the year 1844, and was twice elected speaker of that body. During his term of service some of the most important events in the history of Pennsylvania transpired, and the activity and ability manifested in the leading part he took in measures which most vitally affected the interests of that great Commonwealth laid the foundation for his subsequent honors. It was during his first term of service that the credit of Pennsylvania was injured by her failure to pay the interest on her debt. While the United States Bank was failing, commerce was paralyzed, and consternation and dismay were prompting dishonest measures of relief, an attempt was made to repudiate the public debt. To this, Mr. Bigler, as chairman of the committee of finance, opposed a most determined resistance, insisting upon maintaining inviolate the honor of Pennsylvania, and laboring day and night for the passage of a law for taxation to meet the public indebtedness. A friend who was present says: "I well remember the first time he addressed the Senate upon these important financial questions. Without the artificial graces of oratory, his speech was the embodiment of plain common sense and conclusive reasoning. He seized the strong points of the argument and discussed them in a masterly and convincing manner. His friends were gratified, and his enemies, if indeed he had any, were silenced." His speech upon the question of resumption of specie payments by the banks was received with great favor, and John Strohm, then a senator from Lancaster, approached him at its conclusion and said: "Young man, that speech will make you governor of Pennsylvania if you behave yourself well hereafter." He was also mainly instrumental in the procuring the passage of a law for abolishing imprisonment for debt.

In his second term of service the State was agitated by questions of internal improvement. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company was seeking the right of way through Pennsylvania to Pittsburgh, a project that was regarded by the people of Philadelphia as prejudicial to their interests, and consequently some of the capitalists of that city applied for a charter to construct a road between the two cities, wholly within the limits of the State. The people of Pittsburgh, on the other hand, holding that a direct route across the Allegheny Mountains was impracticable, and that the Philadelphians were insincere in their advocacy of the work, insisted that the Legislature should grant the right to the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company to extend their road through the western counties of the State to their city. The contest over the two projects soon became animated and attracted to the capital many influential men from all parts of the Commonwealth who were interested in the result. Mr. Bigler was the earnest advocate of the road through the State, and by his active efforts secured the incorporation of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, which has since become the greatest railroad system in the world. We have often heard Mr. Bigler say that he never had a fiercer contest in all his public life than with the advocates of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company, who wanted to give the people of Pennsylvania the privilege of going from the eastern to the western extremity of their State through the States of Delaware, Maryland and Virginia. The contest was finally settled by the adoption of a proposition, which he himself offered, that if a bona fide subscription of three millions of dollars was not

made and paid towards the construction of the Pennsylvania Central Road on or before the first of the ensuing June, then the act granting the right of way to the Baltimore and Ohio Company should become of effect, otherwise it should be null and void. Pending the passage of the bill, Mr. Bigler made an elaborate speech, showing the feasibilities of the route, the advantages of a road through the heart of the State, and estimates of its prospective business. At the time these statements were regarded as visionary, but they now seem insignificant compared with what has been realized.

At the time the subject was under discussion in the Legislature, the people of Freeport, Armstrong county, a part of his senatorial district, not well understanding the merits of the two propositions, and believing that unless the Baltimore and Ohio Company was allowed to build, no road would ever be constructed, held a public meeting, and appointed one of their number, Philip Klingensmith, a strong-minded, honest Pennsylvania German, to go to Harrisburg and endeavor to win Mr. Bigler to the support of their views. He proceeded on the journey, and had several interviews with the senator, and finally returned to Freeport. As the canal boat which bore him homeward neared the landing, Philip beheld the beach lined with his constituents, all eager to learn the result of his mission. Without waiting to salute them, he began to denounce the whole party, first in German and then in English, as a set of d—d fools and enemies to their country; he said that Bigler was all right and so was he, and as for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company, it had better stay where it was.

In his speech Mr. Bigler pointed out, link by link, the great feeder to the Pennsylvania Road, now known as the Tyrone and Clearfield Railroad, which was completed to his own town in the year 1869, mainly under his directorship.

In 1848 his name was presented to the Democratic convention as a candidate for governor; but, though he received a large vote, the choice fell upon Morris Longstreth, then a canal commissioner, for whose success Mr. Bigler labored assiduously, but without avail, as Mr. Longstreth was defeated by William F. Johnston.

In 1849 Mr. Bigler was appointed one of the revenue commissioners, whose duty it was to adjust the amount to be raised by taxation in the different sections and counties of the State.

In 1851 he was nominated for governor by acclamation, and after a contest of unusual severity he was elected by eight thousand majority over Governor Johnston, who was his opponent. At the time of his election as governor Mr. Bigler had not yet attained his thirty-eighth year. He made a large number of speeches during that campaign, the leading issue of which was the administration of the fugitive slave law, about which much bitter feeling was provoked by the tragedy at Christiana, in Lancaster county, where a prominent citizen of Maryland was killed in an effort to reclaim a runaway slave. In his various addresses he maintained the doctrine that, whatever may be individual opinions on the institution of slavery, the faithful execution of the fugitive slave law was a constitutional obligation of the States and the citizens of the States. He also advocated the non-intervention of Congress in the affairs of the Territories, and maintained the equal rights of the citizens of all the States in the Territories, whatever might be the character of their property.

By a remarkable coincidence his own election as governor of Pennsylvania was simultaneous with the election of his elder brother John to the same dignity in the new State of California.

Governor Bigler's administration was characterized by the virtues of the old-time

governors, especially in the maintenance of rigid economy and strict accountability in the use of the public moneys, and while some of his minor acts, in the matter of pardons and appointments, were criticised with severity by the opposition press, in the larger field of public policy his administration stood high with all parties. During the early part of his term of service as governor there was a serious difference of opinion between the Legislature and the executive upon questions relating to State banks and corporate privileges, and during the first session of the Legislature after his inauguration he sent in thirty-two messages, one of which refused his assent to eleven charters for as many new banks.

To his exertions are the people of the State indebted for the overthrow of that demoralizing system of legislation known as "omnibus" or "log rolling" legislation, by which it was only necessary to unite a bad project with a number of good ones in one heterogeneous bill to secure its passage.

In his message to the Legislature in 1854, after commenting upon the magnitude of the evil and its serious interference with the more elevated purpose of legislation, says: "I must claim the privilege of considering each subject of legislation separately, and on its merits, as contemplated by the constitution, and henceforth bills containing a variety of subjects of legislation, dissimilar in their character and purposes, cannot receive the sanction of the present executive." This firm stand taken by the governor had the desired effect. A law was passed forbidding the passage of any act which did not fully state in its title the subject matter, and which contained more than one subject.

In the same message he expresses his views upon other leading questions, some of which have been widely discussed since that time and finally taken shape as part of the organic law of the land. "I have never," he says, "felt willing to see the fundamental law changed for light or doubtful reasons, but I sincerely believe that when the proper time arrives it will be wise so to amend the constitution as to require that each law shall be passed in a separate bill and receive not less than a majority of votes of each House on a call of the yeas and nays; to provide that all laws of a public nature shall be general in their character and apply to the entire State; that municipal corporations, vested with all the power the Legislature could confer, should not have the right to become subscribers to, or holders of, the stock of other corporations; to interdict the creation of debt for any purpose except war; to unite some other functionary with the governor in the exercise of the pardoning power."

In March, 1854, he was again unanimously nominated for governor, and entered upon another laborious campaign; but his health failed him, and he lay sick in the northern part of the State during most of the canvass. He was defeated by the Know Nothing or Native American party by a large majority.

In January, 1855, but a few days after the expiration of his gubernatorial term, he was elected president of the Philadelphia and Erie Railroad Company, in which capacity he evinced his usual industry and energy, and contributed largely to bringing its affairs to a healthy condition. He was also in January, 1855, elected to the Senate of the United States, where he served for six years, his term expiring on the 4th of March, 1861.

Mr. Bigler's career in the Senate, though he did not participate in debate so frequently as many others, was one of much labor and troublesome responsibility. He was placed on the committees of commerce, and post-offices and post-roads, and also of patents, of which committees he subsequently became chairman.

In 1857 he made an elaborate report from the committee on commerce on the con-

struction of a ship canal across the isthmus, with a view of connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and during the same session he made a speech in the Senate favoring the construction of the Pacific Railroad. Both of these projects were regarded by many people, even of that day, as somewhat visionary. The completion of the latter, with two successful rival lines as competitors, has been a thing of the past for many years, and the other is in slow process of construction under the auspices of foreign capital. He was also an earnest advocate of subsidies to the submarine telegraph, as he was also of proper rewards and dignities by the United States government for that band of brave men connected with the Kane expedition to the Arctic region.

Mr. Bigler's term of service in the United States Senate was during one of the most trying periods in the history of our country, being the years directly preceding the breaking out of the civil war. Party spirit ran high, and the feeling between the two great sections of our common country was daily becoming more embittered. On the great sectional controversy of the time, growing out of slavery, whilst he had no partialities for the institution, being a life member of the Colonization Society, his stand-point was obedience to the laws and good faith amongst the members of the Federal Union. He was for the execution of the fugitive slave law because it was provided for in the constitution.

He embraced the doctrine of Daniel Webster, that the constitution to be effective must be observed in all its parts; that if broken in one point it becomes null as to all the others. He held that States were equal within the Union, and that slavery was a domestic institution which each State had a right to establish or reject at pleasure. He was the unfaltering friend of the Union, and never spoke of its maintenance but in the most unqualified terms. He was very earnestly opposed to the extension of slavery into the Territory of Kansas, and in the summer of 1857, before the election of delegates to form a State constitution and government for that Territory, he made a tour of that Territory, exerting his influence to get the free-state electors to go to the polls and secure a majority of members favorable to their views. This they refused to do, and then afterwards sought to disregard the result. Out of these Kansas troubles grew the controversy between him and Mr. Douglass on the floor of the Senate in the following December.

When, after the election of Mr. Lincoln, it became apparent that secession would be attempted, Mr. Bigler was untiring in his efforts to secure an adjustment of our national troubles. He acted with Mr. Crittenden in his efforts to secure a compromise, and held that the people of the Southern States could have no reasonable plea for resorting to violence until they had first exhausted all peaceful means for the adjusting of their grievances.

In the course of an elaborate speech in the Senate in February, 1861, on the very day on which the cotton States senators withdrew from that body, he said: "As for secession, I am utterly against it. I deny the right, and I abhor the consequences. It is no remedy for any one of the evils lamented; it will aggravate rather than remove them, and in addition superinduce others of a more distressing and destructive character."

He was a member of the committee of thirteen to which was referred the famous compromise propositions of Mr. Crittenden, and throughout sustained their adoption. He also presented and advocated a bill providing for submitting the Crittenden resolutions to a vote of the people of the several States, which was rejected, but which has

since been regarded by sagacious men as a remedy which would have utterly crushed secession. He was also a member of the committee of five to whom was referred the proceedings of the Peace Conference, the last of all the attempts made in Congress to settle the strife between the North and South.

Mr. Crittenden, in a speech delivered on the 2d of March, 1861, within two days of the expiration of his term in the Senate, alluded to the efforts of Mr. Bigler in the following complimentary language: "I shall never forget the zeal and industry which my honorable and honored friend from Pennsylvania has displayed in this great matter. With a zeal untiring and a hope inextinguishable, he has toiled on from day to day with a labor few others could have borne."

A writer in *Harper's Weekly*, of June, 1858, thus speaks of Mr. Bigler in the earlier part of his services as senator: "Entering the Senate with the last Congress, he has had little opportunity to distinguish himself in debate. His contest with Senator Douglas at the commencement of the present session has brought him most prominently before the country; but it is in the committee-room, and in the vitally important work of judicious counsel in those unreported conferences which mould the destinies of nations, that he most distinguishes himself. He is less seen and more felt than any man on the administration side of the chamber. He is continually beset by persons who wish to avail themselves of his known intimate relations with the president; and yet in this most trying position of personal friend, adviser, and confidant of the chief executive, he is a model of urbanity and extreme courtesy of demeanor towards those who approach him even for favors. He is one of the rare men whom dignity and fortune do not spoil. His fine appearance and genial countenance are fair indices of his character. We do not think he has an enemy, even among his political opponents."

He was a member of the Democratic convention which assembled at Charleston, 1860, where he took ground against the nomination of Judge Douglas, and he was temporary chairman of the convention at Chicago in 1864 which nominated General George B. McClellan. In the same year, against his wish, he was presented for Congress in a district that had given Mr. Lincoln six thousand majority, and was defeated by only a few hundred votes.

In 1865 and 1866, in company with his wife, he made a visit, by way of the Isthmus of Panama to the Pacific States, where two of his sons were then residing. During the years 1867 and 1868 he devoted almost his entire time and energies, and gave much of his means to the extension of a railroad to the town of Clearfield, and to the erection of a beautiful stone church for the Presbyterian congregation of that place, of which body he became a member some years before.

He was again a delegate to the National Democratic convention of 1868, which met in New York and nominated Horatio Seymour.

In 1872 he was nominated a delegate at large to the convention for the revision of the constitution, and as the convention was to be constituted by a limited vote, his election was certain; but some weeks after the nomination he withdrew from the ticket to give place to Ex-Governor Andrew G. Curtin, as representative of the Liberal Republicans. He afterwards became a member of the convention, being selected to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of S. H. Reynolds, and took a leading part in the deliberations of that body. In November, 1873, at the request of Hon. John W. Forney, he gave to the public, through the columns of *The Press*, his views and explanations at length of the new fundamental law of the State, recently formulated by the convention, and asked its adoption by the people.

He was prominently connected with the Centennial Exposition from its inception to its close, and to him, as much as to any one man, is due the success of that great enterprise. He was selected by the Legislature of Pennsylvania in the spring of 1873, as State centennial supervisor, and in March, 1874, he was elected a member of the centennial board of finance. As fiscal agent he established a branch office of that board in New York City, and in the same capacity he visited many of the States of the Union, soliciting contributions and awakening public interest in an exposition that was to show to the world the wonderful growth of our country in its first hundred years. He was mainly instrumental in procuring the passage of the act of Congress which secured the recognition and aid of the government to the enterprise.

A prominent gentleman still in public life, in a public address, thus alluded to Mr. Bigler's efforts: "In his last official position it was my good fortune to be called by him to his assistance in the work he had so generously undertaken as a member of the board of finance of the centennial enterprise. His services, though appreciated at the time, were never properly recognized or remembered. In the passage of the bill by Congress he did more service and evinced more skill, and infused more earnestness into the friends of the measure than any man living or dead, and I have no hesitation in saying from my knowledge of all that occurred, that to him more than any of the earnest men who bore an active part in that wonderful exhibition of the power and progress of this country, we are indebted for the success at Washington, without which the exposition might have been a failure."

In September, 1875, he was presented in the Democratic State Convention at Erie for the gubernatorial nomination, and from the third to the tenth ballot led all the other candidates. His name was withdrawn after the tenth ballot, and Cyrus L. Pershing, of Schuylkill, was nominated.

In 1871 he manifested a warm interest in the Democratic canvass for the presidency, and when the election was seen to turn upon the disputed votes of certain Southern States, he was requested by Mr. Tilden to go to Louisiana with other prominent and sagacious Democrats to see that the votes cast in that State were fairly canvassed, and that the result was legally declared. His associates from Pennsylvania in this duty were Mr. Randall and Ex-Governor Curtin. Mr. Bigler went to New Orleans, at a great sacrifice of personal comfort and business interests, but in obedience to a profound sense of the gravity of the crisis. In his own words, he felt that he was "a peace commissioner," and being such, could not be influenced by mere partisan considerations. He soon became satisfied that Louisiana had declared for Tilden by a very large majority, and could not for a moment believe that the desperate schemes imputed to them would be carried out by the returning board.

When he saw that he was mistaken in this charitable judgment he was astounded, and fell back upon the hope that there would be such a manifestation of popular indignation against the returning board as would compel it to retrace its steps and prevent the consummation of what he believed to be a great outrage. There could be no better illustration of his strict sense of justice, and his sublime confidence in the policy of law and the integrity of the American people.

In all the proceedings at New Orleans he was a prominent figure, commanding the respect of both parties and consulted as an oracle by those of his own political faith. This was Governor Bigler's last public service, and the last few years of his life was spent at his home in Clearfield, in attendance upon his own private interests, and assist-

ing in the development of the resources of his county. For a number of years prior to his death he had been afflicted with valvular disease of the heart, and the last twelve months of his life was greatly enfeebled. Although every effort was made by the best medical skill, he continued to grow worse, and it became evident to himself and his friends that recovery was impossible. He bore his sufferings with great resignation, and fully conscious of his condition awaited death with the calmness of a true Christian believer. Surrounded by his family and friends he died at his home on Monday, the 9th day of August, A. D. 1880.

Few men who were so closely engaged in party affairs as he was for so many years, have been so thoroughly respected and honored by men of all parties. One of the earliest manifestations of this was when he was taken at the age of twenty-eight from his little country printing-office to be made State Senator, and received every vote but one cast in the county of Clearfield. He always had the confidence and esteem of his immediate neighbors, for he always deserved it, and they were as proud of him as printer, editor, and lumberman, as when he was governor and in the Senate of the United States. It was always a pleasure to him to be doing good turns for the people of his vicinity. Forty odd years ago, when Clearfield had no bank, and when the chief resource for a circulating medium for business transactions was in the payment of lumber sent from the county down the Susquehanna River, he frequently played the part of volunteer and unpaid banker. It was his custom to take all the dirty, ragged, and uncurrent notes received for his own rafts, and considerable sums from his fellow-lumbermen and carry them to Philadelphia and get fresh issues of the city banks, together with coin, to be put in circulation at his home.

His early life of hardship and toil had hardened his muscles and given him a fine physique, and before he had wholly given himself to public life, he could endure as much fatigue as any of the stalwart backwoodsmen, of which class of people his constituency was mainly composed. He was exceedingly fond of hunting, and when he first came to Clearfield its forests were full of deer, bear, and all other sorts of wild game. This gave him frequent opportunity to indulge in this favorite pastime, and as he was known as one of the best shots in the county with a rifle, he seldom returned home without he had with him some evidence of his skill as a successful hunter, and his dexterity as a marksman also generally made him a successful competitor at the shooting-matches, gatherings, and contests which in that early day were as regular and certain as the seed-time and harvest.

In one of his numerous hunting adventures in the mountain wilds of his county, he captured a young bear and brought it home alive. He kept him for some time, an object of admiration as well as a victim to the taunts and tortures of the boys of the town. Bruin never became fully reconciled to his new home, and at times manifested a disposition not in keeping with a civilized life; this disposition brought upon him an early death.

In political life, though Governor Bigler was a decided Democrat of the old school, he was never a bitter partisan. He discussed party topics and public affairs on broad grounds of principle and with the courtesy of a gentleman. No man was better versed in the political history of the United States, and when he was among the active leaders of the party none could forecast the result of a pending election in Pennsylvania with as much certainty as he. This came from his habit of mind, which, while slow in its operation, was calm, clear, comprehensive, and judicial. He was both a good writer and

forcible speaker—forcible not because of rhetoric or showy oratory, but by cogent and persuasive reasoning.

He was a man of kindly social feelings, and irreproachable private character. There was no stain upon his official record. Varying as were the demands made upon his character and ability by many different public trusts, he proved equal to them all, and amply justified the wide confidence the people had so repeatedly reposed in him.

He obeyed the command to love God and his fellow-men, and his life of civic usefulness was fittingly closed by a death of Christian peace.
