

BOOK OF BIOGRAPHIES

THIS VOLUME CONTAINS

Biographical Sketches

OF

LEADING CITIZENS

OF THE

THIRTY-SEVENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

PENNSYLVANIA.

"Biography is the only true history."—Emerson.

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nals of American History, the battle of Gettysburg. He was born in England, December 5, 1825, five months after the demise of his father, and was taken to France and then to America by his stepfather, whom he was led to believe was his real father for many years. It was not until his elder brother became of age that he learned of his true relation to his stepfather, but he continued to treat him as in the past although receiving very ill treatment in return, and advanced him money with which to aid in erecting a home at what is known as Cobham Park in Warren County, Pa. He continued to live with him until 1858, when he manifested his great disgust at the treatment he received and left home. At the outset of the civil strife, in 1861, he warmly espoused the Northern cause, and enlisted in the Army of the Union. He served with great valor, displaying evidence of superior leadership, and rose to high standing in the army. It was immediately after the battle of Gettysburg that the greatest injustice of his life was done him, as will appear from the following article written by a captain who served under him and who desired to right a cruel wrong:

"TRUTH VINDICATED!"

"A Just and True Statement in Correction of
the Official Records, by Captain
James M. Wells."

"On July 8, 1863, twenty-five years ago, in the city of Frederick, Md., Colonel George A. Cobham, Jr., then commanding the Second Brigade, Second Division, 12th Army Corps, and myself held an earnest conversation. Standing in front of me, his hands clasping

We think it not amiss to here relate a few of the events which transpired during the short lifetime of Col. George A. Cobham, a gentleman of the noblest character, who sacrificed his life for the cause of his adopted country, and one who, given his just due, was the real hero and commander of the Second Brigade, Second Division, of the Twelfth Army Corps, in that greatest of battles recorded in the an-

mine, his lips quivering with emotion, he said to me: 'Captain, this is hard to bear. That no wrong may possibly be done, however, I shall be silent.' I answered: 'Colonel Cobham, the truth shall be made known.' To this he answered: 'Not now. At the end of twenty-five years, if either or both of us be then living, let the truth be made known.' I promised to obey his wish, and we moved on with the moving column in pursuit of Lee and his beaten army. The time has come for me to keep my promise then and there given.

"A few days after the disastrous battle at Chancellorsville, Va., fought May 1, 2 and 3, 1863, and lost through the incompetency of Gen. O. O. Howard, commander of the 11th Army Corps, Colonel George A. Cobham, Jr., 111th Pa. Vols., assumed command of the 2d Brigade, 2d Division, 12th Army Corps, Brig.-Gen. Thomas I. Kane, its previous commander, having gone home sick on an indefinite leave of absence. Colonel Cobham commanded the brigade from then, May 9, 1863, to 6 o'clock A. M., July 2, 1863. At that hour, just as the head of the brigade column was turning to the right from the Baltimore pike to take the position assigned to it on Culp's Hill, Brig.-Gen. Kane rode into our midst in an ambulance of the 2d Army Corps and took command of the brigade. Colonel Cobham immediately assumed command of his own regiment, the 111th Pa. Vols. Within a few minutes thereafter, while the brigade was still in motion toward the position assigned to it, Lieut. Thomas J. Laiper of General Kane's staff came to Colonel Cobham and, in my presence, delivered to him an order from Gen-

eral Kane for him, Colonel Cobham, to resume command of the 2d Brigade, as he, General Kane, was too unwell to continue in command. Colonel Cobham went to General Kane for further explanation and received from him, in my presence, a second order to resume command of the brigade. Thus ordered, Colonel Cobham turned over the command of his regiment, the 111th Pa. Vols., to Lieut.-Col. Thomas M. Walker, and resumed command of the brigade. He led it forward to the position assigned to it in the line of battle, conducted the work of the brigade in the construction of breastworks, commanded and personally superintended every movement of the brigade from a few minutes after six o'clock A. M., July 2, 1863, to the close of the battle of Gettysburg. Every order issued to the regimental commanders of the brigade during the battle was given by him. Every change in the line of battle of the brigade was made by his order and under his personal supervision. The fighting of the brigade was done under his eye, under his leadership, in his presence. Its prowess was witnessed by him. Its success on the field was due to his masterly arrangement of the brigade line, to his personal supervision of every detail in the movements of the troops, to his inspiring and steadying presence among the men. The character of the fighting done by the brigade, under his leadership, at that battle, is attested by the punishment inflicted upon the enemy, by their repeated repulses, their overthrow and rout.

"General Kane remained with the brigade during the battle, sitting near Colonel Cob-

ham most of the time. He did not command the brigade, he did not issue an order during the battle, he took no part in the movement of the troops, he in no way influenced the fighting of the brigade; he was simply an on-looker.

"July 4, 1863, was spent by the members of the 2d Brigade, under orders from Colonel Cobham, in the burial of the Union and Rebel dead, thickly strewing the field. On July 5, the brigade, under the command of Colonel Cobham, moved from Culp's Hill, where it had done its duty under his leadership, marched to Littlestown, Pa., and encamped.

"Colonel Cobham accompanied General Sherman in his southern campaign and his famous march to the coast, and just as victory was perching on the banner of the Federal Army, his was the sad misfortune to be slain in battle. At the battle of Peach Tree Creek, July 20, 1864, through the temporary failure of another regiment, he and his brave followers were placed in a position of imminent peril. Being summoned by a rebel officer to surrender, he refused, in consequence of which he was shot through the breast and lived but a few hours. Immediately his fall was avenged by his command, who quickly ended the life of the rebel at whose hands he fell. Thus terminated the beautiful life of one who, though called to his eternal rest at an early age, will live long in the memory of a grateful people."

After his death, Colonel Cobham was made a brigadier-general by Act of Congress.