

HISTORY
OF THE
COUNTY OF WESTMORELAND,
PENNSYLVANIA,
WITH
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES
OF MANY OF ITS
PIONEERS AND PROMINENT MEN.

EDITED BY
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EDGAR COWAN, LL.D., ex-United States Senator.—Senator Cowan is on the maternal side of Scotch-Irish extraction, and was born in Sewickley township, Westmoreland County, Sept. 19, 1815.

The immigrant, Hugh Cowan, came to America at an early day and settled in Chester County, Pa., where William Cowan, the grandfather of the senator, was born on Christmas-day, 1749. He was a man of large stature and vigorous intellectual powers, and was a captain in the Revolutionary army. In the family of his grandfather Senator Cowan passed the early years of his childhood.

Senator Cowan owed nothing to birth or fortune to fit him for his career in after-life, but he had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, and from earliest infancy read everything that came in his way. His first book was the Bible, the historical and legendary parts of which he has never neglected or forgotten. Along with this he had the "Vicar of Wakefield," "Robinson Crusoe," "Life of Franklin," "Pilgrim's Progress," "Afflicted Man's Companion," "Baxter's Call," etc. These were all read over and over again till literally worn out. He also went a few months in the year to the country school, learning a little arithmetic, the horizon of the schoolmaster at that day being bounded by the "rule of three." Grammar and geography were unknown. At the age of twelve he was able to borrow books in a circle of four or five miles, and he exhausted all within this area in a short time. "Rollin's Ancient History," with all its marvels, is still held by him in reverence for the delights it afforded him. "Good's Book of Nature" was his next flame, and it heated him to such a degree that he determined to read medicine.

"Wistar," "Homer," "Meiggs," "Richerand," "Eberle," "Chapman," and others occupied all his spare time as serious studies for some years, but his appetite for all general reading—novels, poetry, history, etc.—greedily devoured the contents of everything readable whenever found.

At the age of sixteen he commenced to keep a school in Elizabeth township, Allegheny County, but after six months it being irksome he quit it and returned back to Westmoreland County. For some time he was engaged in rough carpenter-work, after which he took to the river, building boats and mining coal down the Ohio. About the same time he ran a keel-boat from various places along the Youghio-gheny River which were accessible down to Pittsburgh, carrying country produce and bringing back returns in money or merchandise. Having earned a little money in this way he entered the Greensburg Academy, and there learned the rudiments of Latin. Shortly after this he went back to school-teaching,

first in Rostraver township, and then in West Newton. Early in the fall of 1838 he went to Franklin College, Ohio, and graduated in the fall of 1839, delivering the valedictory. In 1871 his alma mater conferred upon him the degree of LL.D. In December of that year, having concluded to study law, he entered himself in the office of Hon. Henry D. Foster as a candidate for admission to the bar. The law not requiring him to read the first year in the office, he spent that year in West Newton and taught school most of the time. The year 1840 was celebrated for the political campaign in which William Henry Harrison was elected President. Mr. Cowan conceiving that President Van Buren's administration was corrupt, joined the Whigs, and was somewhat conspicuous, along with the Hon. Joseph Lawrence, of Washington County, Hon. James Veech, of Fayette County, and the Hons. Thomas Williams and Moses Hampton and Dr. William Elder, of Allegheny County, as a speaker in that campaign. The second year, 1841, he read closely in the office of Mr. Foster, and at February term, 1842, was admitted to the bar. He was soon successful, and obtained a full and lucrative practice, the profits of which in great part he expended in books or anything else he wanted without purchasing real estate or in any way attempting to accumulate a fortune. In 1850 he purchased the home where he now resides, on West Pittsburgh Street, and which he has improved and made comfortable.

In 1856 he took an active part in the campaign for Fremont in preference to Fillmore and Buchanan, the former of whom represented Know-Nothingism, the latter Indifferentism to the extension of slavery into the Territories of the United States. Mr. Cowan, on the contrary, was of the opinion that Congress was the proper authority to determine the character of new States admitted to the Union, as to whether they should or not allow African slavery. He disclaimed any interference on the part of the free States with slavery as it existed in the slave States, but he contended that those States had themselves decided that negroes were dangerous property; that in order to protect it the slave must be kept in ignorance, the tongues of free men must be tied, and the press muzzled. And when the Northern people took into the Territories with themselves only innocent property, the South ought to enter on the same footing.

Fremont was defeated, and the troubles in Kansas grew worse and worse, until its situation was little better than that of civil war. In 1860 all the elements of the opposition in Pennsylvania united to form a "People's Party," sending delegates to the Chicago Convention which nominated Mr. Lincoln. Mr. Cowan was an elector, and was active in that memorable campaign. In January, 1861, he was elected to the United States Senate, taking his seat on the 4th of March, 1861. Secession was now rife in the cotton-growing States, and the situation was

one of extreme difficulty. The South relied on the "Declaration of Independence" to justify their secession; the North, on the other hand, contended that the Constitution was paramount, and established a "Perpetual Union" of the States, in which the minority of the people of any State had an equal right to maintain it with the majority, that the latter had no more right to secede than the former. Here perhaps it is safe to say that upon a fair count of the Southern people there was a majority for the Union, and upon a poll of the free States a majority would have voted against "war" to compel the seceders to come back. The minds of men everywhere were unsettled, the administration was embarrassed, and hesitated as to the proper course to take.

After five or six weeks of this painful uncertainty South Carolina settled it, 12th April, 1861, by an attack on Fort Sumter, then in the possession of the Federals. The North was ablaze in an instant, the insulted flag was on every housetop, and war was inevitable. It is curious to look back and observe how ignorant even the wisest men were as to the nature of the terrible conflict which was to follow. Jefferson Davis calculated that thirty thousand men could defend the Confederacy, and Mr. Seward predicted that in ninety days the Rebellion would be suppressed. Davis failed with half a million of as brave men as ever lived, and Seward had to wait four years before his prophecy could be verified.

Mr. Cowan, in view of the war, laid down for his own guidance at least certain rules, from which he never swerved, and which in all his speeches he endeavored to enforce:

1. The Union having been created by the Constitution, to violate it was to justify disunion. The North can only justify herself in coercing the South by standing strictly on the Constitution.

2. There are two elements to be conciliated,—First, the Democratic party in the free States; second, the Union men of the border States and the Confederacy. This can only be done by avoiding all legislation offensive to them, and all partisan crimination of which the secessionists could take advantage.

3. Congress should confine itself to providing sufficient revenue and raising armies, ignoring all party politics.

4. The war should be waged according to the rules of civilized warfare and the laws of nations, as became the dignity of the republic.

5. That the war being made to suppress a rebellion and not to make a conquest of the Confederate States, as soon as the rebels submitted the States should resume their functions in the Union according to the pledges of Congress on that subject.

In pursuance of these rules he voted steadily against all unconstitutional projects,—“legal tender,” “confiscation,” “national banks,” “tenure of office,” “reconstruction,” “Freedman's Bureau,” “civil rights,” etc. He also opposed “test oaths,” expulsion of senators

on party grounds, and the giving negroes the right of suffrage, etc.

Mr. Cowan was chairman of the Committee on Patents, a member of the Judiciary Committee, and afterwards of the Finance Committee. He was the author of the three hundred dollar clause in the conscription law, and he was mainly instrumental in preventing the bridge at Steubenville from being built with one-hundred-foot spans only ten feet above high-water mark with a draw. He had it raised to ninety feet, with spans three hundred feet. The original bill had passed the House, and had been favorably reported upon in the Senate before it attracted any attention. Had it passed it would have inevitably destroyed the lumber and coal trade of Western Pennsylvania on the Ohio River.

Mr. Cowan was an "old-line Whig," and was largely instrumental in fusing that element with the "American and Republican" elements in Pennsylvania, on the sole ground of opposition to the introduction of slavery in the Territories of the United States. The canvass in Pennsylvania in 1860 was made on that issue, abolition being repudiated.

When elected to the Senate he was almost entirely unknown, except in Southwestern Pennsylvania, having never held any office higher than that of school director; but he was known then as a leading lawyer, a classical scholar in ancient and modern literature, besides being fully abreast in science and philosophy with the best thought of the time. As a lawyer, in the Senate he took rank with Collamer, Browning, the elder Bogart, Reverdy Johnson, and Trumbull. Governor Hendricks, of Indiana, of Mr. Cowan says, "He was always listened to with interest. He was a dashing debater, and came into any controversy when it was at the highest, and was able to maintain himself against much odds."

A very graphic description of Mr. Cowan is given by the poet, N. P. Willis, in the *Home Journal*, as follows:

"The drive to Hall's Hill was exceedingly beautiful, like an excursion in early October, made mainly interesting to me, however, by the company of the eloquent senator who shared our carriage, the finest specimen I have yet seen of brilliancy and learning, sprouting like luxuriant tendrils upon the rough type of a Kentucky Anak. Of his powerfully proportioned frame and finely-chiseled features the senator seemed as naturally unconscious as of his singular readiness and universal erudition. He comes from the western part of Pennsylvania, and has passed his life as half-huntsman, half-schoolmaster and lawyer, being a distinguished man only because other people were not so, evidently quite unable to help it. His speech for the flags, very flowing and fine, has been reported at length in the papers.¹ It was stirring to watch the faces of the men as

¹ One or two passages from Senator Cowan's speech at the presentation of the flags will show the importance of *flag-influence* in war:

"... I am also further instructed to say to you that by the terms of the law directing the Governor to procure colors for each regiment now in the field for the defense of the Union, it was also provided that when the war was over, and you had returned victorious (as it is the earnest wish and prayer of all the people of our good old Commonwealth that you may), *your gallant feats in arms will be inscribed on these flags*, in order that they may be laid away among the archives of the State, there to remain for all coming ages, a fit memorial of your valor. It may be, too, that *when the republic is again in danger, these standards will be brought out*

they looked on and listened to him. I realized what eloquence might do in the inspiring of pluck for the battle!"

The Washington correspondent of the *Boston Post* thus describes Senator Cowan:

"As Trumbull and Johnson occupied the leading position in the exciting debate on the Civil Rights Bill, I find I have left myself too little space in which to strive to convey some fair idea of Cowan, of Pennsylvania, measuring some six feet three inches, possessed of a voice like the diapason of a small church organ, and a habit of using it in two distinct octaves. Senator Cowan is certainly a most peculiar and impressive speaker, and possesses one great merit, that of never speaking unless he has something to say. When he rises in the central aisle, and with his tall figure dwarfing everything about him, sends his rolling voice sailing on the waves of fetid air that forms the atmosphere of the ill-ventilated chamber, he reminds one of the description Carlyle gives of Mirabeau in the French Convention of 1789. He is to the Conservative Republicans what Johnson is to the Democrats and Trumbull to the Radicals, the oratorical exponent of policy. If he is less philosophic than Johnson, and if he be not as casuistic as Trumbull, he possesses more of that peculiar quality, clear common sense, and a practical way of stating it than either."

A correspondent of the Cincinnati *Commercial* gives the following sketch of Senator Cowan, the accuracy of which will be appreciated by all acquainted with the gentleman. Alluding to the late debate on the Post-office Bill, the writer says,—

"And now a gaunt, angular man at the right of Mr. Doolittle takes the floor. You are struck first with his height, sharpness of visage, and extraordinary powers of voice. In the management of the latter, it seems as if those guttural tones were lowered to the utmost for the express accommodation of men of less altitude and smaller grasp of the perceptive faculties. There is a musical rumble, and a most pleasing diction, however, about every period, and such an assumption of power

and held up before the eyes of your children, so that the glorious record emblazoned upon them may incite them to imitate your example and emulate your courage in the defense of their country and its constitution. . . . What a magical influence that symbol of our country's national honor exerts over us all! In the month of April last the loyal people were plowing and sowing in the fields, hammering in the workshops, and trading at the counters and upon the wharves, incredulous of danger and careless of the coming storm. Suddenly the news came, like an electric shock, that the rebels round Fort Sumter had fired on our flag. Startled and indignant, as if the shot had been directed against himself, every true man was on his feet in an instant, and the banner thus insulted was immediately consecrated the idol of the people. It was everywhere, it waved on every house-top, it fluttered in every breeze, and it was conclusive proof of disloyalty not to bow before it in the day of its first humiliation. The great heart of the nation was stirred to its very depths, and its beating might be heard in the heavy tramp of thousands of armed men hurrying to the field of battle to wipe out the national disgrace and visit dire retribution upon the heads of those who had caused it. . . . These are the flags of that 'destiny.' To your hands I commit them. I know that then they will never be dishonored. You have both of you (Col. Samuel Black and Col. J. W. McLean) long years ago given a soldier's earnest of your fidelity to the Republic. You have already followed its flag in the conquest of an empire. One of you assisted in carrying it in a continued succession of triumphs from the Rio Grande to Buena Vista, through Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, Monterey,—all now names in history, and monuments of a renown in which your share was honorable. The other accompanied it from Vera Cruz to Mexico, and saw the glories of C erro Gordo, Contreras, Molina del Rey, Chapultepec, and Tacubaya by the way, till it waved finally in undisputed mastery over the halls of the Montezumas. Never can they be confided to more deserving hands. Take them, they are still auspicious of victory, and the righteous cause which has hallowed them ever—THE CAUSE OF THE PEOPLE—will hallow them still, and assure it. The spirits of your fathers, mighty dead, will hover over your battle-fields, silent witnesses of your heroism in showing yourselves worthy of such sires. The God of battles, too, watches over the brave and true. His blessing is upon you, and the sheltering wing of his mercy is about you and us, to save us all by you, in this the darkest hour of the nation's peril."

and right, figuring in every gesture and mannerism, that it would not be hard to convince the auditors above the floor that this is the Hercules of senatorial debate. Yet there is one other marked and singular characteristic of the speaker that astonishes and overshadows the whole effect. It is the abandon of declamation, the continual sway of that towering bulk, and a hap-hazard style of putting those stentorian truths, which, in connection with the magnificent roll and volume of voice, cannot fail to completely engross and surprise the hearer. At this time he is taking the majority of his senatorial coadjutors to task for a want of toleration and a lack of respect for the opinions of the minority. The strictures are put forth with such a sweep and power of utterance—just a shade of ironical pomposity in the tone—that one can hardly look upon the subjects of such lordly censure without giving way to a sympathetic influence to belittle and distract from them too.”

Hon. George Sanderson, mayor of the city of Lancaster, in his paper, as below quoted from, describes the speech made by Mr. Cowan in that city Sept. 20, 1868, as the ablest and most telling speech of the campaign :

“The Democratic meeting at the court-house on Monday was one of the largest assemblages of the kind ever witnessed in this city. Every seat was filled, all standing space was occupied, and very many were forced to leave without being able to get inside the large court-room. It was not a mere partisan demonstration. It was an assemblage of the earnest, thinking men of Lancaster, drawn together by patriotic motives and a desire to hear the great political questions of the day discussed by a man of the most marked ability, one who faithfully represented the people of Pennsylvania in the highest council of the nation, a man who could not be lured into the indorsement of unconstitutional measures and pernicious legislation by any allurements of place, power, or pecuniary profit. Hon. Edgar Cowan, the chief orator of the occasion, is respected by honest men of all parties, and esteemed as a truthful, high-minded gentleman, possessing the judgment to discern what the best interests of his country demand, and the resolute will to carry out his conscientious convictions regardless of consequences to himself.

“During Mr. Cowan’s speech he was constantly interrupted by spontaneous outbursts of applause, at one point the audience rising *en masse* to their feet and cheering with full and united voices. We never saw an audience listen so attentively.

“During two hours scarcely a man in the vast throng moved, though many of them were uncomfortably crowded and numbers compelled to stand.”

The Greensburg *Herald* of Dec. 5, 1860, concerning Mr. Cowan’s expected election, has the following :

“It is sad that the ‘hour brings the man,’ so now we have the man for the hour. In Edgar Cowan, Esq., of Greensburg, all the requisites for the position harmoniously combine. Already is he looked upon by those who know him intimately as one, if not the most prominent among the candidates. This being the fact, it is proper that we should now, in brief, give the public at large not so well posted some of the outlines of Mr. Cowan’s fitness.

“He is a native of Westmoreland County, now in his forty-sixth year. From infancy almost he was, like many of the great men of our nation, thrown upon his own resources. At the close of his collegiate course, early in 1840, he commenced the study of law. During that memorable Presidential canvass his eloquent and sonorous voice was often heard in his native county, ably discussing the questions then at issue before the country. He was a decided favorite among those who sang ‘Tippecanoe and Tyler too,’ and could never avoid being compelled to respond to the calls for ‘a speech from Westmoreland’s young orator,’ made by every political gathering where it was thought *he* was one of the number present. His career at the bar has been eminently successful, and we think we will not be charged with making any invidious distinctions when we say that, for his diligence, promptness, and fidelity to the interests of his clients, the power with which he grasps, and the readiness and clearness with which he unravels all intricate legal questions, as well as his fairness towards an adversary, he now deservedly ranks among those at the head of the bar in Western Pennsylvania. Thoroughly booked in all the popular sciences and several modern languages, with great physical and mental self-reliance, he stands forth panoplied to advocate and defend the rights of a free people in every phase of life’s checkered pathway, no matter in how exalted or responsible a position. In short, he is a *self-made* man, who has hewn his way to the position

he now occupies, indebted to nothing *but his own inherent energy and the blessing of health under the free institutions of our country.*

“Politically, Mr. Cowan has all his life been an ardent supporter of the doctrines enunciated in the Chicago platform.”

The *Times* has the following :

“SENATOR COWAN.

“When Edgar Cowan was first mentioned in connection with the United States senatorship, the questions were almost universally asked, ‘Who is he? What is he? and, Where does he come from?’ His was most assuredly not a State-wide reputation; he had been no office-seeker, and very little of a politician, and outside of his immediate neighborhood his name was almost unknown, except, perhaps, to a circle of chosen friends or to the leaders of his political party. We were told, however, by those whose candidate he was that he was a close student; a man of extensive and varied learning; an able, shrewd, and faithful lawyer; a powerful and skillful debater, who would not fail to make his mark in the Senate; and, above all, an honest man, who would yield neither to the blandishments of power nor the lust of gain, but would act on his own convictions of right and duty, be the consequences what they may. So much we were told; and, beyond this, we had a right to infer, from the fact that he defeated David Wilmot in the Republican caucus, that he was conservative in his views. Indeed, this of itself was enough to satisfy those who opposed him. David Wilmot, his radical and fanatical competitor, had been laid on the shelf, for the time being at least, and that was glory enough for one day.

“Mr. Cowan was elected and took his seat, modestly and unassumingly, with no flourish of trumpets to herald his fame. He seldom rose to speak during his first session, and his name was but seldom seen in public print, except in the votes he gave, which generally seemed to be honest and conservative. Yet, though unassuming, his reputation was fast spreading among those around him, and at the second session he was placed on the Judiciary Committee, the second in importance of the committees of the Senate.”

A prominent newspaper of the day has the following notice of Mr. Cowan’s position on the Confiscation Bill :

“HON. EDGAR COWAN ON THE CONFISCATION BILL.—Senator Cowan has received much abuse from the ultra press of the country for his late speech upon the Confiscation Bill of Senator Trumbull. His speech, however, has been indorsed by the President, his Cabinet, a large majority of the leading lawyers and statesmen of Pennsylvania, while Senators Collamer, Fessenden, Doolittle, Browning, and Clarke have expressed upon the floor their hearty concurrence therein. While he has the confidence of such men, he can well await the ultimate indorsement of his course by the whole reading community, which must certainly follow.”

The *Tribune*, of New York, has the following from a Harrisburg correspondent, dated Dec. 19, 1874 :

“Upon the subject of United States senator, within the last week the name of Edgar Cowan has been more frequently mentioned than any other candidate. As a lawyer and a statesman, Mr. Cowan is the peer of any man in the Commonwealth; and if there be a man in the State to whom more than another the Democrats owe a debt of gratitude it is Edgar Cowan. Mr. Cowan has given evidence of more ability, manifested more nobility of nature, and exhibited more nerve and independence than any Pennsylvanian that ever filled a seat in the United States Senate, and his election to a seat in that honorable body at this time would do honor to the Democracy, and be greeted with joy by a large majority of the people of the Keystone State.”

The following is from the gifted pen of Hon. William A. Stokes, editor of the Greensburg *Republican* :

“HON. EDGAR COWAN.

“It is not for us to pronounce the panegyric of a political opponent, but it is our duty to do justice to all men, for *justice* is the supreme and all-pervading element of Democracy. Wherefore we have not hesitated, in regard to some leading Republicans, to express our approval of such portions of their conduct as were entitled to commendation, while, on the other hand, we have, with equal freedom, condemned error, even in our political friends. Devoted during life to the disinterested support of Democratic principles, we are, nevertheless, not insensible to the merits of our opponents or the mistakes of our friends.

“For naught so vile that on the earth doth live
But to the earth some special good doth give;
Nor aught so good but, strained from that fair use,
Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse.”

“In this spirit of independent impartiality we have now both to censure and commend the course, somewhat inconsistent, of our neighbor and friend, Mr. Cowan. For many years this gentleman was the soul of the Whig and Republican parties in Western Pennsylvania. His integrity and intrepidity gave him vast power, and occasional disagreement with his associates—secondary development of his original Democracy—served only to increase his influence and commend him to the kindly feelings of his opponents. Elected to the Senate, he took his seat the same day on which Mr. Lincoln was inaugurated President. He heard from his lips, which had just kissed the Bible as he took the constitutional oath of office, that he had no design, desire, or power to interfere with slavery or to invade in any manner the rights of States or people.

“Nobly, upon many momentous occasions, was he sustained by the patriotic minority of the Senate,—faithful alone among the faithless, powerless in the present, but to whom soon justice will be done, and whose constant virtue will be embalmed in the homage of after-ages. In March, 1863, on the question of indemnifying the President and all others for violation of the *habeas corpus*, he attacked the malignant majority of the Senate, and pointed to the sole path of safety for the republic with power and wisdom in the following language:

“It seems to me that if we of the dominant party were more tolerant of the opposition, and instead of taking pains to insult their beliefs and misrepresent their opinions we should carefully avoid any allusion to them whatever, we would soon disarm that opposition. I have been from the first of opinion that the introduction of any measure, no matter how important it might appear to be in the eyes of its friends, calculated to provoke the hostility of the Democratic party and incite it to opposition was mischievous in the highest degree, and all that we might gain by such a measure would be nothing compared with what we should lose by arousing it to resist it. Their harmonious co-operation with us in the prosecution of the war is worth more to the country a thousand times over than any measure we could propose, and which would tend to alienate them from us. Is there any man living to-day, who loves his country better than his own hobby, who would not be willing and ready to give up all the causes of differences with that great party, composing one-half of our people, for the sake of insuring its hearty and cheerful co-operation with us in carrying on the war? Sir, I had rather have the moral and material aid of the Democratic party in this war than all the legislative projects that could be hatched in the brains of a Congress composed entirely of reformers. One kindly pulsation of its great heart and one sturdy stroke of its mighty arm would do more to put down the Rebellion than all the laws we could possibly pass. I would cheerfully yield all my preconceived notions at any time to secure its aid in this extremity, and with its aid I believe the unity of the republic would soon be restored and the old flag again afloat everywhere, still more the subject of veneration and still more the assurance of safety and protection than it ever was. I would respect the traditions of that party, and deal tenderly with its likes and dislikes, and surely, under no circumstances, would I offend it when it could be avoided.”

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“The Constitution, then, being the charter by which our government is created, it is easy to see that outside of that charter there is not, nor can there be, any government; there may be force and despotism, but there can be no law nor true government. And the man who for a moment thinks the government can be saved by violating the Constitution is guilty of either supreme folly or supreme wickedness. He has never comprehended the principles of a free government, or his moral nature has been so far perverted as to prevent him from distinguishing between such a government and a despotism. Akin to that notion is another, that the authority conferred and the mode of action prescribed by the Constitution are inadequate to the defense and protection of the liberties of the nation. Now, I venture to assert that nothing could be more unfounded than such a supposition. So far from it, I have no hesitation in saying that if, at this time, the nation relied solely upon the omnipotent discretion of its rulers, without a written Constitution at all, that those rulers, if they were wise, would adopt for themselves just such a set of rules for their guidance as we now have in the Constitution. It authorizes every politic and forbids all impolitic measures. It rises like a wall, behind which the wise statesman intrenches himself to resist the madness of faction or the blind folly of the people when, seduced by demagogues, they desire to resort to dangerous though plausible schemes, schemes which for long ages have been tried over and over again, and

always with the same disastrous results; schemes which are sure to find advocates in troubled times, when wisdom stands back fearful of responsibility, and empty, blatant folly rushes forward to offer counsel. Such times we are fallen upon, and our only safety—the ark indeed of our safety—is the Constitution.”

“With what trembling amazement the caiffiffs of the Senate must have heard this indignant condemnation of their conduct, this spontaneous outburst of patriotism, of irrepressible integrity, of almighty truth, coming, too, from Pennsylvania, from a Republican, one of the chiefest among them, but not like them, no public plunderer, no slave of the Executive, no deputy of despotism, no enemy of his fellow-citizens, no perjured traitor, but a man, strong, fearless, and pure, ready to rebuke wrong, and impelled by his very nature to vindicate right against all assailants, exhibiting the occasional weakness of human frailty only in efforts to save those who are predestined to be politically damned, and to preserve connection with a rotten party fast drifting to destruction.

“Thus, and many times, our Senator

“Shed

On ears abused by falsehood truths of power
In words immortal,—not such words as flash
From the fierce demagogue’s unthinking rage,
To madden for a moment and expire,
Nor such as the rapt orator imbues
With warmth of facile sympathy, and moulds
To mirrors radiant with fair images,
To grace the noble fervor of an hour,
But words which bear the spirit of great deeds
Wing’d for the future.”

“The people of Pennsylvania cherish high hopes of the future of Mr. Cowan. Many of them look to him with confidence as the champion of their rights. For ourselves, moved only by the desire to do impartial justice to all men, we are prepared to condemn or commend according to the course which the senator may hereafter pursue.”

We quote from the noted English novel, entitled “The Dobbs Family in America,” written by the correspondent for the Maxwell Publishing Company of London. The book was published in London in 1865, and has the following concerning the scholarly senator from Pennsylvania:

“The tall, fine-looking gentleman, with keen gray eyes and aquiline nose, is Edgar Cowan, of Pennsylvania. A short time ago I heard one of his brother senators say that he was the most talented man who ever came to Congress from Pennsylvania. This is the opinion, too, of one opposed to him in politics, and therefore more entitled to credence than if it were the expression of a partisan. Senator Cowan has come up from the people. At a very early age he was thrown upon his own resources, and has by his indomitable will and talents mounted to his present position. He is the fullest man in this chamber. Although his specialty is the law, it would be difficult to name a science that he is not more or less acquainted with. Nothing delights him more than to tackle with men of science who are able to throw the ball with him, then the riches of his well-stored mind are displayed in profusion. Let the subject be what it may, he always touches bottom. He has the appearance of an indolent man, but is really an industrious one.

“In the casual or running debate that frequently occurs here he does not speak with fluency. There is a degree of hesitancy in selecting or finding his words which falls unpleasantly on the ear, but as soon as he is fully aroused all impediment is removed, and his words roll out in well-rounded sentences, the voice full and deep. Some of his tones are disagreeable and harsh, but his voice has greater volume, when he chooses to employ it, than that of any other senator here.

“His style in one point, classic illustrations, is not unlike that of the Boston senator, Mr. Sumner, but in other respects it is more vigorous and logical than Sumner’s. Cowan is practical and argumentative, a wrangler by profession; Sumner is impractical and visionary, a weaver of finely-spun notions. Sumner lacks determination; Cowan is as brave as Julius Caesar. The one is rhetorical without being wordy, the other is rhetorical and verbose. The style of the Pennsylvania senator is symmetrical, while that of Sumner is inflated and pompous. But they are both fond of tradition and classic lore; here they meet on common ground.

“When Cowan gets well into his subject his face becomes pale and his attitude striking, and he is truly eloquent. He is a conscientious, high-

minded man, who dares to do what is right regardless of consequences. He has never pandered to the views of cliques or factions, but always shown himself bold and independent, never flinching, but always fairly grappling with the question."

The following is part of an editorial from the *Newark* (N. J.) *Daily Journal*:

EDGAR COWAN.

"In point of intellectual and moral status Edgar Cowan is to-day the giant of the United States Senate. Elected as a Republican by the Legislature of Pennsylvania, he has fearlessly, and with a degree of dignity seldom equaled and certainly never surpassed by any statesman of the land, done what he considered to be *right*, and that in the face, time and again, of *party diction*.

"In this Congress there are few men, indeed, who can bear more than a Lilliputian significance when compared with the ripe statesmen of the Clay, Webster, and Douglas school; but Senator Cowan is a towering and noticeable exception to the rule. An independent and original thinker, a profound, logical, sound lawyer, an able and powerful debater, he is the *marked man* of the United States Senate.

"His views on *all* subjects command great respect, and elicit, even from the disunionists, an attention worthy of their force and power. He is a *strict constitutional constructionist*. While watching with argus-eye the interests of the sovereign State of Pennsylvania, he never is unmindful of the rights of *all the States*. His earnest appeal is ever ready to redress a wrong, be it against the North or South, the East or West."

The following is from a Lancaster paper:

"Of course we do not class Mr. Cowan with the Radicals. He is in every sense of the word a national man, and one of the wisest and ablest statesmen of the present day. He was elected as a Republican in the winter of 1861, and took his seat on the 4th of March of that year. Mr. Cowan, though recognized as one of the ablest lawyers and best stump-speakers of this State, was not known outside of Pennsylvania at the time of his election, and even here he was little known as a politician, except in his own section of the State. He had never sought office, had never occupied any official position, and had never filled the *rôle* usual to seeking itinerant politicians. Those who knew him best knew him as a scholar, as a lawyer, as a profound political thinker, as an honest, bold, outspoken man; and they expected and predicted that he would take high rank, even in so exalted a body as the Senate of the United States.

"Those expectations and predictions have been abundantly fulfilled. Mr. Cowan took his seat in the Senate just at the outbreak of the war, at a time when this nation was entering upon a struggle in which both its material strength and the statesmanship of its public men were to be subjected to the severest ordeal. The military power of the rebels was not the only obstacle to be overcome. As is the case in all revolutionary periods, there was great danger to be apprehended from the excesses of excited feeling. In a crisis such as that through which we have just passed that public man is to be esteemed the wisest and most truly patriotic who breathes popular opinion when he finds it taking a wrong direction, and employs all the might that is in his whole nature to protect the Constitution of his country and to preserve the majesty of its laws inviolate.

"Fully as much as any man in the Senate of the United States, Mr. Cowan has proved himself to be possessed of this the highest quality of a great statesman. He not only showed himself to be perfectly familiar with the Constitution of the United States, able to comprehend fully all its provisions, and alive to the necessity of adhering closely to its teachings, but he exhibited an extended knowledge of other forms of government, and an intimate acquaintance with their working, both in times of peace and in the midst of revolutionary struggles such as that through which we were passing. The very first attempt which was made to overstep the limits of the Constitution excited the fears and aroused the opposition of Senator Cowan. It mattered not to him that it was a party measure. Yielding to no man in devotion to the Union, he knew no party when the Constitution of his country was assailed. He always believed and asserted that there was strength enough in this nation and power enough in the hands of the government to preserve the national life and honor without the violation of a single provision of that sacred instrument. Hence he was at all times found battling against every unconstitutional act, whether attempted under the plea of military necessity or the strained inference of powers not granted. How he has labored in that noble work the whole country is well aware. His clear, logical,

and eloquent speeches have been read until to-day there is not a village or hamlet in all this broad land where Edgar Cowan is not known and honored."

The following speech delivered as stated in the introduction, all of which is taken from the *Boston Courier* of Aug. 2, 1864:

"The following is a speech by Hon. E. Cowan, of Pennsylvania, delivered in the Senate of the United States on the 27th of June, a few days before the close of the late session of Congress. The Senate had under consideration at the time Mr. Trumbull's amendment proposing to repeal the joint resolution of July 17, 1862, which qualifies the Confiscation Act and limits forfeitures under it to the lifetime of the offender:

"Mr. Cowan said, 'I think, Mr. President, that our course in regard to the Southern people has been of a character entirely the reverse of that which would have been successful in suppressing the Rebellion. We were filled with incorrect ideas of the work we were engaged in, or of the only methods by which we could perform the gigantic task we had undertaken. We started out with exaggerated notions of our own strength, and we disdained to think that our success depended upon the loyal men of the South; we thought we did not need them, and treated them accordingly. Think of such a proposition as that contained in this law, that if they do not lay down their arms in sixty days they will be punished by loss of their estates! How, pray, are they to lay down their arms? Surely we know enough to know that this is mere mockery, and that the rebel President might as well expect a soldier in our armies to lay down his arms upon a promise of his protection.

"Mr. President, I have sometimes doubted whether we could be serious when we expect any good results to come from such measures as this, which not only exposes us to ridicule but does harm to our cause. What was wanting in this crisis of our history with new criminal legislation when the code was complete before? We had a statute punishing treason with death, a just and proper punishment, one well according with the magnitude of the crime as well as with the majesty of the law which inflicted it. For all those who conspired the dismemberment of the republic, who used the means and perverted the State governments to bring it, this is the fitting punishment, because it is the highest, and falls upon the guilty alone where it ought. I would have had no additional laws; in war they are not needed. I would have contemplated no reforms within the area of the Rebellion; they cannot be made at such a time. What we wanted was men and money; these granted, the true function of Congress was over until peace was restored and all parties again represented. But, above all things, I would not have played into the hands of the enemy; I would not have done that which the rebels most desired to have done, because I have no doubt that this and all kindred schemes have been the very ones which they most wanted us to adopt. I do not know that Jefferson Davis ever prays; but, if he does, I have no doubt that he would pray—'

"Mr. Wade.—'Pray for just such an advocate!'

"Mr. Cowan.—'Pray for such a statesman as the honorable senator from Ohio, the most effective ally he ever had or could have.

"He would have prayed for measures on our part which were obnoxious to all people of the South, loyal and disloyal, Union and disunion. He would have prayed that we should outrage all their common prejudices and cherished beliefs; that we should do these things by giving ourselves over to the guidance of men whom it was part of their religion to hate, to hate, personally and by name, with an intensity rarely witnessed in the world before. He would have prayed for confiscation general and indiscriminate, threatening as well the victims of usurpation as the usurpers themselves, as well those we were bound to rescue as those we were bound to punish. Fervently he would have prayed for our emancipation laws and proclamations as means to fire the Southern heart more potent than all others; they would rally the angry population to his standard of revolt, as if each had personal quarrel. He would then have a united South, while, as the result of the same measures, a distracted and divided North.

"That is the way I think he would have prayed, and would pray now. Is any man so stupid as not to know that the great desire on the part of every rebel is to embark in revolt with him the whole people of the disaffected districts? Is not and has not that been considered enough to insure success to him? And where does history show the failure of any united people, numbering five or six millions, when they engaged in revolution? Nowhere; there is no such case.

"What did we do to bring this unity about in the South? We forgot our first resolve in July, 1861, to restore the Union alone, and we went

further, and gave out that we would also abolish slavery. Now, that was just exactly the point upon which all Southern men were the most tender, and at which they were the most prone to be alarmed and offended. That was of all things the one best calculated to make them of one mind against us; there was no other measure, indeed, which could have lost to the Union cause so many of them. It is not a question either as to whether they were right or wrong, that was matter for their consideration, not ours; for if we were so desirous of a union with them, we ought not to have expected them to give up their most cherished institutions in order to effect it. Unions are made by people taking one another as they are, and I think it has never yet occurred to any man who was anxious to form a partnership with another that he should first attempt to force the other either to change his religion or his politics. Is not the answer obvious, would not the other say to him, "If you do not like my principles why do you wish to be partner with me? Have I not as good a right to ask you to change yours as a condition precedent?"

"So it was with the Southern people; they were all in favor of slavery, but one-half of them were still for union with us as before, because they did not believe we were abolitionists. The other half were in open rebellion because they did believe it. Now, can any one conceive of greater folly on our part than that we should destroy the faith of our friends and verify that of our enemies? Could not anybody have foretold we would have lost one-half by that, and then we would have no one left to form a Union with? We drove that half over to the rebels, and thereby increased their strength a thousand-fold.

"Is not all this history now? The great fact is staring us full in the face to-day, we are contending with a united people desperately in earnest to resist us. Our most powerful armies most skillfully led have heretofore failed to conquer them, and I think will fail as long as we pursue this fatal policy.

"Now, Mr. President, I appeal to senators whether it is not time to pause and inquire whether that policy which has certainly united the Southern people in their cause, and which quite as certainly has divided the Northern people in their support of ours, ought to be abandoned at once? Why persist in it longer? Can we do nothing to retrieve our fortune by retracing our steps? Can we not divide the rebels and unite the loyal men of the loyal States by going back to the single idea of war for the Union? or is it now too late? Have we lost irrecoverably our hold on the affections of our countrymen who were for the Union in 1861, even in 1862? Is there no way by which we could satisfy them that we yet mean Union, and not conquest and subjugation? And what a difference in the meaning of these two phrases! The first offers the hand of a brother, the second threatens the yoke of a master. Or are we obliged now to exchange the hopes we had of Southern Union men for that other and miserable hope in the negro? Is he all that is left of loyalty in the South, and the only ally we can rely upon to aid us in restoring the Union? Ye gods, what have we come to at last? Either to yield to an unholy rebellion, to dismember an empire, or to go into national companionship with the negro! Is this the alternative to which our madness has brought us?

"Mr. President, these things are enough to drive a sane man mad. After all our pretension, all our boasting, how absurd will we appear in the eyes of all other nations if we fail in this struggle! Especially as almost all the measures about which we have occupied ourselves for the last three years have been based upon our success already assumed as a fixed fact. We provided for confiscating the estates of rebels before we got possession, we emancipated slaves before we got them from their masters, and we provided for the disposition of conquests we have not made; we have disposed of the skin of the bear, and the bear itself is yet uncaught. All this we have put upon the record; the statute book will bear witness against us in all coming time, and we cannot escape the consequences if we fail.

"Mr. President, our government was intended to be one of law, pre-eminently of law. There was to be nothing in the administration of it left to the arbitrary will of an individual or individuals. This was its merit, or intended so, *par excellence*. I am for preserving its character in that respect strictly. Let no man, from the President down to the most petty officer, dare to do anything, whether to friend or enemy, except as warranted by law. Let us make war according to law, and let us have peace according to law. If we fight a belligerent enemy, let us do it according to the law of nations. If we punish or restrain a refractory citizen, let us do it by the law of the land, "by due process of law." Had we had faith in our Constitution and laws and our people, we had not been in our present condition. Had we made war and war alone, the loyal people North and South to a man would have been with us. The voice of faction, if not entirely hushed, would have been harmless. The capital of the demagogue would have been worthless, and the nation

would have been irresistible. Had we treated the negro as the Constitution treats him, as a person, as another man, had we made no distinction or difference between him and other citizens, we had not aroused against him that tribal antipathy which will be far more likely to destroy him than a false philanthropy will be likely to elevate him in the scale of being. If he was friendly to us, the same use could have been made of him that we have made; we could have enlisted him in our armies now as we have been enlisting him in our navy for long years. We could have received him as a volunteer, if he was able-bodied, without looking to his complexion, and we could have drafted him without inquiring into the relations which existed between him and his master, any more than we inquire into the relations of the white man of twenty years of age with his parent or his guardian. State laws adjust all these questions, but to the United States it made no difference whether he owed service to individuals or not; he owed his first duty to the republic, as military service was required. All this was lawful, and no loyal man ever did or would have complained of it kindly done in the proper spirit.

"I have only to say in conclusion, sir, that I hope that the joint resolution will not be repealed, and that this and all kindred projects will fail in the future, for the simple reason that they strengthen the rebels by uniting their people with them, and they weaken the Union cause by dividing its friends and distracting them with unnecessary issues. Let us unite upon the single idea of suppressing the armed opposition to the government. Let the energies of the nation be devoted solely to that purpose, and success may yet come, if success is possible."

The following is from the *Pittsburgh Leader*, independent, but generally favoring the Republican party:

"THE COMING CONFLICT.

"THE NEXT U. S. SENATOR.

"It is not from among those who are willing only that a great Commonwealth like ours should make its selection for such an honorable place, now, indeed, sadly dishonored by the character, or rather want of character, of some who now represent many of the States in that body, but it should search until it finds, as fit to be its representatives, men of high and commanding intellect, of earnestness and force, and of sound practical judgment.

"Of all the men named for that position there are none the superior and but few the equal, in point of ability, of Hon. Edgar Cowan, of Westmoreland County.

"Taking his seat in 1861 as a senator of the United States, elected by what was then known as the 'People's party,' this gentleman, while properly enough upholding in so far as was just and right the political interests of his particular party, did not feel bound to follow it in all its windings. Regarding the preservation of the Union as one of the first essentials to the peace and prosperity of the people of both sections, and utterly opposed to every proposition looking to a dissolution of the Union, peaceful or otherwise, Mr. Cowan was ready and earnest at all times in his support of the government in putting down the Rebellion. But believing that *legal* power enough existed, under the Constitution, in the Federal government to enable it to maintain itself, he opposed every infraction of that instrument. The Constitution, he believed, was intended to be maintained inviolate, just as he believed the Union must be preserved; but he could not see, as did the party in power, the necessity of violating the one to preserve the other. A preserved Union with a violated Constitution would be such an Union as heaven and hell, held together only by the power of the strong, the unquestioned masters, the weaker unquestioning serfs. The oaths Mr. Cowan had taken to support and maintain the Constitution were not esteemed by him as idle pledges, to be taken to-day and cast off to-morrow, but obligations binding here and hereafter. All this time, and in all the long years that ran through a fierce and bloody war, Mr. Cowan looked not behind him, and as bill after bill was presented, and law after law was enacted violating the plainest letter and the clearest spirit of the Constitution, he vainly implored his Radical colleagues to stay their mad hands in the work of destroying all that was good and grand in our government, that they might supply its place with an Union broken and a Constitution destroyed forever.

"Against the unjust expulsion of Senator Bright, of Indiana; against the insane schemes of men crazed with the fury of fanaticism, who sought by unconstitutional and wicked confiscation laws to impoverish the whole South and to make private property lawful prize of war; against legal-tender acts, which debased our currency and made the dollar of to-day the half-dollar of to-morrow, changing daily and hourly, with victory or defeat, the standards and measures of value; against the

national banking laws, which substituted for government greenbacks without interest a currency bearing interest against the people as a government and the people as individuals, triplicating gain at the expense of many to the enrichment of a few; against the Freedman's Bureau, which cost the people fifty millions of dollars directly and many hundreds of millions indirectly, with its swarms of carpet-bag Governors and marshals and other Federal office-holders; of and against all these outrages and all others of a kindred scope and design, at all proper times and in all proper places. In his place in the Senate and before the people Mr. Cowan most earnestly, even prophetically, protested and spoke, but spoke in vain. His predictions *then* have become history *now*, and his Republican colleagues of those days can only look back, since the whirlwinds of November have scattered the cohorts of Radicalism like chaff, and with anguish recall to mind how they had been warned of their certain destruction unless they paused in their wild career.

"Is it necessary to remind our people of this? Need they be told that to revenge itself upon him for his manliness in rebuking them for their wrongdoing, even the Senate of the United States, with a petty malignity never before exhibited towards a senator, refused him a confirmation when his name was laid before it by President Johnson as minister to Austria? Happily in their madness they stopped not with a refusal to confirm him alone, but almost every decent name presented for every high office, unless stamped with the seal of Radical subordination, met with the same fate, and that which was intended as a sting and a reproach became, among good men, an honor and a boast. Shall we not now, when in power, repay those who, in the dark hours of our country and our party, toiled for it and us when the toilers were not many, who through good report and evil report held the even tenor of their way, with no thought for the morrow save in so far as the morrow might perchance lift from our heads the load of incompetency and corruption which was daily plunging us downward into the very depths of destruction.

"It has been said, and said truly, that Mr. Cowan is no politician. While this may be weakness, or rather a want of strength among politicians, it is a point that should most strongly commend him to the people. They have wearied of politicians as statesmen. The country has been too long in their hands for its good, and it is time that a little wholesome statesmanship should be infused into our system. With the machinery of political organizations, and the manner and method of organizing and controlling political movements, Mr. Cowan is not familiar, and certainly cannot be called a time-server, else he had not been numbered with the Democracy to-day. Had policy controlled him, he has shown himself a very inapt student, and has read the history of parties with but little profit when he learned only to abandon even a corrupt but still the strong and powerful organization in the very fullness of party strength, and cast his fortunes with an organization then few in numbers, without consolidation or leaders, and loaded down with impracticables who never learned while they never forgot anything.

"What more fitting rebuke to the insolence of fanaticism than to send back to the Senate one who, like Mr. Cowan, has been the subject of their most intense dislike and most rampant hatred? And when our representatives meet together to select one to represent our Commonwealth in the Senate, it does seem to us that personal preferences should be lost sight of, and that freely and with universal accord he should be chosen.

"Much more could be written on this subject, but we have said enough to indicate our views fully and unreservedly, and we trust that our words may bear good fruits."

The following is from the *National Intelligencer* :

"On the outside of to-day's paper will be found a brief but most important speech made in the Senate by Mr. Cowan, of Pennsylvania. Mr. Cowan is one of that large class of Republicans who honestly believed that Republicanism meant reform, and that the war was simply for the restoration of the Constitution and the Union. The change which has taken place in the course of policy adopted must necessarily separate such men from their former political associations, and induce them to act with those who still seek the great and honorable objects which the administration has abandoned. The *National Intelligencer's* description of the speaker will invite attention to what he says: "Entering the Senate at the opening of the Thirty-seventh Congress he early won for himself the admiration and respect of his associates, without distinction of party, by the learning and dignity with which he explained and defended his views of public policy, while the independence and eloquence for which he was conspicuous in debate early drew to him the attention of all who mark with interest the progress of our parliamentary discussions.

"Mr. Cowan, we need not say, is a distinguished member of the Re-

publican party, but in his whole career as a legislator he has made it apparent that he considers his first and highest allegiance due to the country, and therefore never narrows his mind so as to give to the former the homage that should be paid only to the latter."

"'WORDS OF TRUTH AND SOBERNESS.'—Under this head the *National Intelligencer* republishes some excellent remarks of Senator Cowan's during the late session of Congress, which we in turn republish in our columns this morning. The words of the senator are indeed 'words of truth and soberness;' those of Paul before Agrippa were not more so, though doubtless many an abolition Festus will say with a loud voice that the senator is beside himself. But the senator is not mad. What he says is surpassingly just. These things are known to every enlightened patriot; nay, they are known to the President himself, whom we fain would hope that the senator almost persuades to be a conservative.

"Among all the members of the National Legislature who have been called to give counsel for the safety and welfare of the republic in this day of severe trial,' says the *Intelligencer* in introducing Senator Cowan's remarks, 'we know of none who has brought to the discharge of his duties a higher intelligence, a clearer sagacity, or a more patriotic fidelity than the Hon. Edgar Cowan, the learned senator from the State of Pennsylvania.'

"This is deserved praise. If not 'born for the universe,' like Burke, the Pennsylvania senator has not, as Goldsmith said much too strongly of the glorious orator and philosopher of Beaconsfield,—

'narrowed his mind,

And to party gave up what was meant for mankind.'

"Meanwhile, we commend the remarks of Senator Cowan to the attention of our readers. His main views on the fundamental question of the hour are thoroughly sound."

In 1842, Senator Cowan married Lucy, daughter of Col. James B. Oliver, of West Newton, Westmoreland Co. Col. Oliver died in 1873, at the advanced age of ninety-three years.

Senator and Mrs. Cowan are the parents of three children,—Elizabeth, intermarried with J. J. Hazlett, Esq., a member of the Westmoreland County bar; Frank Cowan, a member of the same bar, and a physician, a gentleman of extensive scientific and literary attainments, a world's traveler, who has recently made the circuit of the globe, after thorough visitation of all the most important countries of Europe; and James, who resides with his father.