

ARTICLE III.

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EARLY LIFE AND MILITARY SERVICES OF
GENERAL JACOB DOLSON COX.¹

BY WILLIAM C. COCHRAN.

BECAUSE we do not know on what meat our Cæsars feed, we often fail to derive the inspiration we should from the lives of ancient heroes and statesmen. If we do not know the exact conditions under which their lives were wrought out and success achieved, or if such conditions differ essentially from those of to-day, we are not apt to look to them for guiding principles by which to shape our own lives. If we find that a successful man had great advantages in early life, such as wealth, noble birth, or the commanding influence of family, we are apt to say, "*That* explains his success," and to look no further. Washington, whose natal day we celebrate, was of distinguished lineage, inherited a large estate, and was indebted to the influence of his family for a major's commission at the age of nineteen, and his appointment as commander-in-chief of the Virginia forces at the age of twenty-three. How can a young man without wealth or influence hope to emulate the life of Washington? He is apt to overlook the sterling qualities and marked individuality of the man, as developed in after life, to which alone he owes the greatest title ever conferred on mortal man, "First in War, First in Peace, and First in the Hearts of his Countrymen." On the other hand, no boy born of honest parents ever had a poorer "start in life" than Abraham Lincoln. Not one of us can say, "I could be as great as he was, *if I had his advantages.*"

¹ A patriotic address delivered at Oberlin, Ohio, February 22, 1901.

The subject of this sketch is another man, who, without any advantages of birth or fortune, without any exceptional opportunities, achieved distinction in half a dozen walks of life, wholly unrelated to each other, and served his country well in its greatest hour of need. His career suggests the following questions: How did it happen that a man who had no professional training and no aspirations for military glory, became a Major-General and the most illustrious volunteer officer that the war produced? How did it happen that a man who had not been in the State of Ohio for eighteen months, and did not know so much as the names of party "bosses," was nominated for Governor of Ohio by acclamation in June, 1865? How did it happen that a man who had voluntarily turned his back on politics and devoted himself to the practice of his profession was appointed Secretary of the Interior in 1869? How did it happen that a man who had no previous railway experience and no capital, was elected President of one of the great trunk lines of railway in the fall of 1873? How did it happen that a man who had not made teaching his profession, was tendered the presidency of five different colleges, and became President of the University of Cincinnati in 1885? How did it happen that a man who was not a professional scientist, put to shame German professors, and won the gold medal of honor for excellence in micro-photography at the Antwerp Exposition in 1891? How did it happen that a man who had retired from public life for more than eighteen years was tendered the Spanish Mission on the eve of the Spanish-American war, and was almost forced, against his will, to accept that responsible position? These are interesting questions. I shall not be able to answer them in detail. The very diversity of his employments and achievements makes it difficult to review them in a single address. I can, however, bring out some of the facts and guiding principles of

his early life which throw light on his subsequent career, and tend to explain his success.

Jacob Dolson Cox was born in Montreal, Canada, October 27, 1828. His parents were both native-born citizens of the United States. His mother traced her ancestry back to Elder William Brewster, of "Mayflower" importation, and many strains of early New England blood were mingled in her veins. His father, Jacob Dolson Cox, the first of that name, was of German descent, though born in New York. He was a carpenter and builder of great industry and ingenuity, and had achieved a reputation for his skill in building churches and warehouses, and in roofing great areas without using internal columns of support. This reputation led to his selection, at the age of thirty-three, to superintend the roof construction and carpenter work on the great church of Notre Dame, at Montreal. His integrity, and sense of honor, equaled his skill.

The subject of this sketch inherited from the Coxes his personal appearance, his thoughtfulness, his gentleness, his inflexible integrity, and his unassuming bearing, save when some important work required driving. He inherited from his mother¹ a puritan conscience and religious sentiment, combined with neatness and refinement, a love of art and music, and that sprightliness of temperament which enabled him to converse with ease and to speak and write with fluency and power. We justly attach much importance to heredity and environment in estimating a man's life and character, but they, alone, fail to explain any great man. A man is quite as apt to waste his inheritance of good traits and character as he is to squander a money inheritance. On the other hand, every great man develops qualities which are peculiarly his own. I have searched the family records with great care, but am bound to report that I am unable to find in any of his ancestors,

¹Thedia Redelia Kenyon.

since William Brewster, professional attainments, scholarship, statesmanship, military genius, executive ability, or scientific research, such as distinguished General Cox above most of his fellow-men. There was not a bad citizen among all his ancestors; but the virtues were chiefly negative.

His father returned to New York City in December, 1829, and entered on a prosperous career as a builder and contractor. Dolson's early education was rather desultory and incomplete. A few terms at a private school,¹—where he was taught French as an extra,—a year of study under a classically educated minister, and private reading and study, under the partial direction of a Columbia College student, constitute the whole of his preparation for college. He never thought the world owed him a living, and on his fourteenth birthday entered a law office in New York City as an articled clerk.² Here he became familiar with legal forms, and studied law. Two years later he entered the office of a Wall Street broker,³ and became versed in book-keeping and the methods of business. He was, moreover, gaining almost unconsciously a broad education in all that relates to the affairs of men by his daily walks up and down Broadway and along the wharves, then crowded with shipping from all parts of the world, and by listening to the talk of lawyers and prominent business men. He had for a long time a passionate desire to become a sailor, and finally got permission to go on a voyage with a captain of good reputation. He packed his "kit," stowed it on board, and then, as the Captain said he would not sail for several hours, he went down to Staten Island to take a last farewell of his family. When he returned—all in good time—the

¹ This school was kept by Rufus Lockwood.

² The office of Gouverneur M. Ogden, a reputable attorney, whose father was then Surrogate of New York.

³ Anthony Lane.

vessel was gone, the Captain having decided to take advantage of a favoring breeze and to leave at an earlier hour. It was a great blow; but, when he reflected on the grief his mother had shown at their parting, and the steady disapproval of his father, he accepted the event as a providential indication, and renounced forever his intention to follow the sea.

In the spring of 1842, Rev. Samuel D. Cochran, a graduate of Oberlin College (class of '39) and Seminary (class of '42), was, on the recommendation of Charles G. Finney, invited by Lewis Tappan and others to go to New York City and establish a Congregational church. He met with great opposition from the local clergy, who regarded Oberlin theology as rank heresy, but succeeded, in spite of them, in attracting large congregations and building up a church. He was a man of positive convictions; his logic was flawless; and he had a great warm heart and tender emotions. He began holding meetings in the hall of a medical college in Crosby Street, above Prince, and, as this was near by, the Coxes attended his services, and the mother and two oldest daughters joined his church soon after.

In the winter of 1842-43, Mr. Cochran arranged for a series of revival meetings at Niblo's Theater, in which he was assisted by Mr. Finney. One evening after an impressive sermon by Mr. Finney, all who wished to give their hearts to God were asked to come forward. A tall stripling arose in the rear of the theater and, finding the aisles blocked by the people, came leaping down to the front, using the backs of the seats as stepping-stones. His emotion was so great when he got there that he could not speak, nor even give his name. It was Jacob D. Cox. To all outward appearance this speechless emotion was the only immediate result of Mr. Finney's preaching; but, under the preaching and influence of Mr. Cochran, he was

baptized, and joined the church the following fall, when there was no special religious excitement, and, after his failure to go to sea, resolved to study for the ministry.

A full classical education was, at that time, regarded as an essential qualification. No short-cut, such as an "English Course in Theology," was conceived of as possible. It was still thought that the minister should be the most learned man in his community, as he had been, for the most part, during more than two centuries of New England history. So, in the spring of 1846, he and his younger brother, Kenyon, started for Oberlin College. How came they to this place? Oberlin had no glee club, no football team, no baseball team, alumni associations, endowment, or fine buildings, at that time; and yet the attendance was nearly as large in 1846, thirteen years after it was founded, as it was in 1900. The great attractions were the moral earnestness of the student body, the cheapness of living, the opportunities for self-support in whole or in part,—a prime consideration with Dolson,—and it was the place where Mr. Finney preached and taught.¹ When the boys arrived, after a long and wearisome journey, and were assigned to a room in Colonial Hall, the dismal downpour of rain, the crude aspect of the place, and their utter loneliness overcame them, as they were unpacking, and both broke down and wept. It seemed as though neither had been so wretchedly unhappy before. Kenyon went to bed, sick: but Dolson went to the Treasurer's office and applied for *work*. In an hour's time he was regaining his composure at the bottom of a cistern, which he had been hired to clean out. *Similia similibus curantur!* When letters of introduction they had brought from their pastor to Mr. Finney and to Mrs. Elizabeth Cole had been presented and they had been warmly welcomed, and when the regu-

¹ So great was Mrs. Cox's love and regard for Mr. Finney that she named her youngest son, born January 16, 1846, Charles Finney Cox.

lar routine of study and recitation began, their wonted cheerfulness returned. Owing to incomplete preparation, Dolson entered the Junior Preparatory class. He was, however, so far ahead of his class in many things, and so apt in learning, that he could give more time than his fellows to outside reading, music, and debate.

He inherited from his mother a love of music, and he studied violin and harmony with Professor George N. Allen.¹ He had a rich baritone voice of wide compass, and joined the noble choir. He was soon made assistant conductor, and often led the choir, violin in hand.

All his work as a student was stamped with the one word *thorough*. He shirked nothing. He went to the root of every matter that was discussed, and mastered every subject that was taught. The value of his "picked-up education" was most apparent in his society work. He early joined Phi Delta and, from the first, became its leading and most active member. His fund of general information was superior to that of most of his fellows, and he was an insatiable reader. He could throw additional light on almost every subject that was discussed, and he spoke readily and fluently. He was a keen debater, logical and forcible in presenting his side of a question, and quick to see and expose the weak points in his opponent's argument. But ready as he was, he always strove to improve. Many fail in the art of *expressing* themselves; others, in the duty of *repressing* themselves. He studied both.

I find two letters written by him during his college days. In the first, dated September, 1846, we see clearly the influence of the Oberlin spirit—of that day. He announces that he has engaged a school for the winter, and adds:—"In the district where I am going they have no church, nor any church meeting that I know of; and, as I cannot

¹ Professor of Sacred Music, as well as of Geology and Natural History, and the founder of Oberlin's Department of Music.

of course be sure that I will have any other opportunities of doing good than those which I may have here (for you know I cannot be sure of living even to complete my course), I feel as though this is all for the best, for in it I shall be about my Father's business. So for the winter you may just consider me as at work in a little missionary field, and I pray God I may be enabled to do my duty."

In this boy, eighteen years of age, we find the *sense of duty* which actuated the man in all his after life.

In the second, addressed to his father, September 18, 1848, he says, in answer to a pressing invitation to spend the winter at home:—

"I hardly dare trust myself to think of home, for fear I shall not be contented where I am.¹ As to my health, the state of the case is simply this. I used myself up in teaching last winter. I was tired by study when I commenced, and the care of one hundred scholars was by no means calculated to rest either mind or body. I came back exhausted and have not been strong since. . . . In my anxiety to pay my way here, I consented to take charge of the bread-baking for the boarding-hall, and this I think has done me no good; the heat, added to the labor, which is the hardest I ever did, has been too much for me. I have now, however, determined to give it up immediately. . . . I dread to think of being any more of a burden to you than I have been. Nor can I think of giving up my course of study. It is with me both choice and duty to continue it, and that here—for I am well convinced that it can be done here much cheaper, and in some respects with much better results to both mind and body, than in almost any other place."

In answer to some doubts expressed by his father as to the wholesomeness of Mr. Finney's preaching, he says:—

"Yesterday [Sabbath] and also a week ago, Professor Finney preached the most impressive sermons I ever heard in my life. I never so fully realized the power of eloquence

¹ His brother Kenyon had gone home the winter before, and never returned. He went into a broker's office, and worked his way up to the head of one of the most prominent banking houses on Wall Street.

before. No description could give any idea of it. I wish you were personally acquainted with him. If you could see him around every day and mark his entire consistency and childlike simplicity of character, combined with such a powerful intellect, you could not think for a moment of comparing him with those who are deluding and leading astray the people.¹ He lives what he preaches, and there is nothing like austerity about him. In his family he is all pleasantness—sings and plays with his children and is as one of them. Some of the pleasantest hours I ever spent have been passed with him in his family. He is passionately fond of music, and we can at any time make up a choir in the family.”

The letter suggests a growing intimacy with the family, and the pleasant hours were not all spent with Mr. Finney. The oldest daughter of Mr. Finney, who would have graduated at the age of seventeen if she had not given up her course to marry Professor William Cochran and go with him to New York City, had returned to her father's house—a widow at the age of nineteen. She had a little son who was six months old at the time this letter was written. Some of the “pleasantest hours” of his life were spent in her society, and even the baby proved a strong attraction to the young man, who had not seen his own home and his baby brother for more than two years. There were doubtless wise people in Oberlin in those days—as there have been since—who noted the signs of the times and foretold just what these young people were coming to; but *they* did not know it, until the end of the fall term, 1848, when Dolson came to bid Helen good-by, on the eve of his journey home, and the emotions of both, at parting, were too strong to be concealed. He went home an engaged man—engaged at the age of twenty, to a widow with one child. This insured his return in the spring.

Dolson kept with his class until the fall of 1849. He then felt that he must either go faster, or abandon his

¹ The allusion is to Miller and the Second Adventists.

course and seek employment. One of the reasons for this feeling was the fact that his father, whose business had been falling off owing to the great panic of 1847, had gone to California in a desperate attempt to retrieve his fortunes, and the outcome of this venture no one could foresee. Mr. Finney came to the rescue; and it was agreed that, at the end of the fall term, 1849, he should be married and make his home at the Finney house, study during the winter, take the last two years of his course in one, and begin the study of theology in the fall of 1850. Mr. Finney then started for England, to labor as an evangelist for two or three years. On Thanksgiving Day, 1849, Dolson took upon himself the cares of a husband and father in the presence of two thousand people, who assembled in the First Church to see him married. Dr. John Morgan performed the ceremony. Recitations ceased; but study went on apace. At the end of the vacation and at the end of each term he was examined in the studies pursued by the Senior class and his own class, and passed. He began the study of Theology, and had made satisfactory progress in Greek and Hebrew Exegesis, Harmony, etc., and was deep in the intricacies of Systematic Theology, when Mr. Finney returned in May, 1851. Mr. Finney had had a wonderful series of revivals in England, and converts were made by tens of thousands. Coming back, worn out by his labors, he was disturbed to find a young man in his own family digging deep about the very foundations of religion. Dolson was studying those problems,

"Of Providence, foreknowledge, will and fate—
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,"

which every man who essays to be the religious guide of others should work out, at some time and in some way, for himself. He was debating these questions with himself and with others with intense earnestness. His whole future depended upon his finding sure ground on which to

stand. It is possible that there was more of the *debater*, than the *seeker after truth*, in his manner, and that when he was *testing* doctrines he seemed rather to wish to *overthrow* them. Be that as it may, there came a day, late in the summer, when Mr. Finney said to him, after a particularly warm discussion, "Dolson, you are not *honest*. You do not *want* to see the truth." If he had stabbed the young man, he could not have hurt him more. In that awful moment he saw all his hopes and ambition dashed to earth. If theology was not a science permitting of free inquiry and intellectual apprehension, he could go no further. Whether it was or not, the word spoken had made it impossible for him to continue studying in Oberlin, or to remain in his father's house. No man, then, or thereafter, in all his long and useful life, had the right to call Jacob D. Cox *dishonest*. Dependence upon a man who could think him so, was intolerable. Dr. Morgan, who was present and saw the deadly effect of the words uttered, said, with trembling voice, "Brother Finney, Brother Finney, you must not say that. I believe Dolson is honest"; and for these kind words uttered in the hour of greatest anguish he had ever known, General Cox held Dr. Morgan in loving remembrance ever after. But the blow had fallen. Dolson applied immediately for the position of Superintendent of Public Schools in Warren, Ohio, of which he chanced to hear, secured it, and left Oberlin with his wife, his adopted son, and a little girl of his own, then about a year old.¹

¹ In justice to Mr. Finney, it must be said that he probably never realized what a wound he had inflicted. He always manifested a fatherly solicitude for the young man and his family, called on him frequently when passing to and fro on his journeys East, tendered financial assistance when the pinch of poverty was felt, left his daughter, Julia, in their care for a year or more at a time, and expressed an ever-growing regard for his son-in-law. They discussed freely professional ethics, politics, the practical affairs of life; but Theology was never again the subject of their conversation.

If there had been more patience on one side, or less sensitiveness on the other, matters might not have reached this crisis; he might have solved *his* doubts as many another honest man has done, as Mr. Finney himself did after three years of anxious questioning, during which *he* was regarded as a dangerous infidel, and Jacob D. Cox might have been one of the most polished, cultured, and able preachers of his generation. But preaching is not the only service God calls man to do for his fellow-men. It is not certain even that it is the *highest* service. At any rate, God reserved this man for other service, which no preacher would have had a chance to render, in the great conflict which was near at hand.

Warren was a pleasant village of about two thousand inhabitants, and boasted, in good New England fashion, of its ancestry, culture, and refinement. While teaching, he studied law, and in the summer of 1853 he began its practice. The bar of Warren was at this time quite noted for ability and high professional standing. It included such men as Matthew Birchard and Rufus P. Ranney, ex-judges of the Supreme Court of Ohio; Milton Sutliff, elected Supreme Court judge under the new constitution; John Hutchins and E. B. Taylor, afterward members of Congress; and a number of others who would have taken high rank at any bar in the State. The struggle of the young man to acquire a practice against such odds was severe and protracted, and he felt the pinch of poverty for three years, before he was cheered with the prospect of professional success. In one of his letters he writes:—

“It’s slow business working into a practice which will enable me to live comfortably. . . . Our profession seems to be a practical exemplification of the old saw that ‘one shouldn’t go into the water till he knows how to swim.’ A lawyer cannot get business till he is doing a great deal of it. . . . To do a great deal of business without having it to do; to show people that you can do it, although you

have none of it to do the showing with; and thus to obtain a practice, which nevertheless you must have before people will give it to you! There! Do you comprehend that?"

He had, however, no thought of giving up, or turning aside from his profession, and in 1856 the tide set in, which, for five years, bore him steadily on toward fortune and professional eminence.

His energy was never limited to the bread-and-butter work of the day. As he said, in one of his letters,—

"My life of business and public activity is a thing by itself, and I have another life of thought, study, feeling, which I keep apart from the first jealously."

If he had allowed his duties as teacher to absorb all his time and strength, he would not have become a lawyer. If he had idled away his time while waiting for practice, or had allowed his law practice, when it came, to monopolize his time, he would never have become a scholar, a writer, a general, or a statesman. He led the chorus choir of twelve or fifteen voices in the Presbyterian Church. He organized and led for years the Choral Union. He found an old-school physician who could play the flute, and a homeopathic physician who played the violin, and he accomplished the seeming impossibility of making them dwell together in harmony several hours each week. They met usually at his house; he took down his own violin; and together they played such trios as they could find, or adapt for their instruments.

His fullness of information, readiness of speech, and enthusiasm for everything that tended to the public good were so well known that he was frequently called on for public addresses on all sorts of occasions, and he rarely refused to respond. In the year 1853, alone, he delivered an address on "Music" before a Band Convention held at Warren; an address on "Fairs" before the Trumbull Ag-

ricultural Society, at the opening of their new fair grounds, and a lecture on the "Emancipation of Science" before the Columbiana County Teachers' Association, at Salem. These were all carefully prepared, packed with information, abounding in philosophical reflections, and perfect in their literary finish.

He studied the Pitman system of shorthand and became an expert reporter, taking down the testimony of witnesses, the charge of the Court, etc., in cases where he was not formally retained and his name did not appear as "of counsel."¹ His readiness to serve "without rank or emoluments" gained him many friends, and led to fuller opportunity later on. In the spring of 1854 he organized the "Home Literary Union," composed of six or seven married men and their wives, and eight or ten unmarried people of both sexes. The "Union" met, fortnightly, during the fall and winter, at the homes of the members, and the programs consisted of music, essays, poems, discussions, games, and an "Anonymous Box," to which, under the seal of secrecy as to authorship, the members contributed such little squibs as did not deserve the formal title of essays. Not all of the members were writers. Generous appreciation is ever the complement of genuine effort. There must be ears to hear, as well as words to speak, and responsive applause, if such a society is to be stimulating. Mr. Cox was the leading spirit, and he contributed several articles each year. In response to inquiries, fourteen manuscripts in his handwriting have been sent to me by those

¹In 1855 he attended and reported a debate on "Spiritualism" between J. Tiffany and Rev. Isaac Errett of the Disciples Church, which attracted much attention at the time. The debate lasted ten days, and there were two sessions of two and a half hours each, every day. He reported the whole, wrote it all out, and published it in a volume of 417 closely printed pages (octavo) within three months. It is an interesting book for the student of the spiritualistic movement; but its chief value to us is as a monument to the patience, skill, and unflagging industry of Jacob D. Cox.

who have treasured them for more than forty years. How many more were written and lost will never be known. The "Union" lasted from the spring of 1854 to the fall of 1860, when the shadow that overhung the greater "Union" blotted out the lesser.

In all this life there is not a suggestion of war, or preparation for strife. The men were cultivating the graces and refinements of life in the society of cultured and amiable women. They were neither hazing nor being hazed. They were not making brutes of themselves, or of others. Yet when the shock of battle came, this little "Union" at Warren furnished four splendid officers, whose records will compare favorably with those of any four turned out of West Point during the same period. One became a major-general, commanded the Ninth and Twenty-third Army Corps, and demonstrated his ability to command an army of any size on any field; two became brigadier-generals and brevet major-generals;¹ one was a colonel of cavalry and brevet brigadier-general.² Of the others, one served four years in Congress as the immediate successor of Joshua R. Giddings;³ one has served for fifteen years in the Supreme Court of Ohio;⁴ one became Chancellor of the University of Kansas;⁵ one became general counsel of the Cleveland and Pittsburg Railroad, and moved to Cleveland;⁶ and another became the head of a wholesale dry-goods house in Cleveland.⁷ Was it merely a happy chance that so many of this little club rose to eminence in after life, or was there something in their training and associations that fitted them for grave crises, high responsibilities, and the everlasting struggle between right and wrong?

Mr. Cox took an active part in politics. He assisted in organizing the Republican party in Warren, and stumped

¹ General M. D. Leggett and General Emerson Opdycke.

² General Robert W. Ratliff. ³ John Hutchins. ⁴ William T. Spear.

⁵ James Marvin. ⁶ Henry C. Ranney. ⁷ Comfort Adams.

Trumbull and the adjoining counties in the Presidential campaign of 1856. In 1859 he was nominated for the Ohio Senate, in spite of his earnest protest. He was forced to run, and was duly elected. Among his associates were James Monroe and James A. Garfield. These three were known as the "Radical Triumvirate," and took a leading part in shaping legislation and in the exciting debates that marked the session just preceding the Civil War.

We may glance at his personal appearance as he crossed the threshold of public life and became an object of interest to others than his fellow-townsmen. He was just six feet in height—very erect and very slender—his weight about one hundred and forty-five pounds. His hair was fine, dark brown, worn rather long, and always brushed with scrupulous care. His beard was full and, when allowed to grow long, became wavy. His complexion¹ was clear, and quite pale, the veins showing at the temple. His features were clear-cut and refined. His prominent brow betokened deep thought. The searching, deep-set eye was that of a man who saw everything, and saw clearly. The acuteness of his perception was remarkable. If a picture was hung slightly out of plumb, an ornament misplaced, or the order of his books changed on a shelf, he saw it the moment he entered the room. He was active in his habits, and quick and graceful in his movements. He never lounged, except when seriously ill, and never dawdled along the street. He walked from his home in the suburbs to his office at a four-mile gait, and covered great distances in his Saturday and Sunday afternoon walks through the woods. Even then there was an air of distinction about the man,—an air which grows upon every man

¹ Fullness of habit and the too florid complexion came with old age and exposure to wind and sun, in his summer cruises along the New England coast.

whose thoughts go beyond his immediate surroundings, and rise above the level of mere bread-winning.

At Columbus he met Governor William Dennison, one of the most courteous and refined gentlemen that ever entered public life. Between these kindred spirits it was a case of "love at first sight," and the warmth of their friendship never diminished.¹ In the spring of 1860, Governor Dennison appointed Mr. Cox Brigadier-General of the Ohio Militia. It was intended by the Governor as a compliment, and regarded by his friends at home as a good joke. On his return to Warren, after the first session of the Legislature, they planned a little reception for him at the house of John Hutchins, M. C., and made witty speeches of congratulation, in which the "battle of Quimby Hill," the "crossing of the Mahoning," and the "capture of Stevens Point" were enumerated as achievements of the "future Napoleon." They had ransacked the bookstores and found some old books which they presented him,—*"Army Regulations,"* Muller's *"Field Engineer,"* published at London in 1760, and *"Forbes' Volunteer's Manual."* He accepted their badinage in good part, replied in a humorous vein; then, suddenly changing his tone, he spoke with deep earnestness about the possibility of coming war, foreshadowed by the troubles in "bleeding Kansas," the Wellington Rescue, the John Brown raid, the determination of the South to extend slavery, and their growing arrogance in the Halls of Congress. He made a serious study of these books, presented to him in jest. He read Napier's *Peninsular War* and other military histories. Not finding all he wanted, he purchased Hardee's *"Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics"* and Jomini's great works on *"Grand Military Operations"* and *"Napoleon,"* with their valuable maps and plans of battle. He studied these, as

¹ In honor of this friend, General Cox named his youngest son, born at Columbus, December 8, 1867, Dennison Cox.

he did everything else he undertook, with a determination to master the science. The very landscape took on for him a new interest, as presenting a possible field of conflict. He and Garfield got out their war books and maps, and studied military problems together, during the session of 1860-61.

After the firing on Sumter and the call for troops, he devoted himself day and night to assisting the Governor to enroll and equip the volunteers for service. He was commissioned "Brigadier-General of Ohio State Volunteers," April 23, 1861. If any man had good excuses for not going to war, he was one. His friend Garfield urged him not to go. He had a family, consisting of a wife and six children, the oldest thirteen years, and the youngest three months old. They lived in a house which was mortgaged to secure the payment of a large part of the purchase money. He was delicate in appearance and, two years before, had been for days at the point of death, from quinsy, due to exposure on one of his professional journeys in an open sleigh. He had a serious attack of diphtheria in January, 1861. How long could such a man stand the rigors of camp life and service in the open field?

He was not carried away by enthusiasm. He indulged in no illusions as to the nature of war's perils. He felt that a bullet might find him in the first skirmish and lay him low. What then would become of his family? Nevertheless, some one must go, and who, if not a leader of the Republican party? He resolved to do his duty, and leave all the consequences to his Heavenly Father. He just as truly gave up his life for his country, the day he accepted his commission, as any man who died on the field of battle. He gave it, once for all, and was never troubled, or in doubt about it, afterwards. This was the secret of his steadfast courage and unshrinking performance of duty on many bloody fields and in many perilous situations. His

courage was not whiskey-fed; nor did he work himself up into a frenzy, and go charging about with the "light of battle" in his eye, as many did, who perhaps would have gone to the rear, if they had allowed themselves to think. He felt that the lives and the honor of his men were committed to his care; he must keep a cool head at all times; think quickly; act intelligently; and if the messenger of death came, as it might at any moment, it would find him doing his full duty. His constant study for the welfare of his men and their proper conduct on the march, in camp and on the battle-field, doubtless steadied his nerves. He could not worry about himself, when there were so many others to worry about. It is marvelous how his life was spared. He never received a scratch. He never had a horse killed under him, although at South Mountain, Antietam, Resaca, Franklin, and Kinston officers, men, and horses were killed all around him.¹ A bullet cut off the

¹ At the battle of South Mountain he directed the movements of the Ninth Army Corps from early morning until five o'clock in the afternoon, when General Reno, its commander, came on the field. He spoke a few words to General Cox, rode a little to one side, and was brought back in fifteen minutes—dead. At Resaca, he was conferring with Generals Manson and Harker when a shell exploded in their midst, wounding Harker, and so injuring Manson that he was compelled to retire from the service. In the Atlanta Campaign he was riding with one of his aides through a densely wooded country when they suddenly came out on a rebel rifle pit and were welcomed by a discharge of musketry. His aide fell dead and he heard the scream of bullets all about him, but not one touched him. In the battle of Franklin he rode to the center just as the break occurred. His horse plunged violently and trembled all over with fear. One of his aides was killed at his side. General Stanley came riding up, and in an instant his horse was shot down and Stanley himself received a wound in the neck which bled profusely, compelled him to retire, and practically disabled him for the rest of the war. At the second battle of Kinston, the firing seemed to be concentrated for a time on the General. General Greene, of his staff, had his horse shot under him, one orderly had an arm taken off by a shell, two others were wounded, and several horses were killed. Yet, when it was all over, General Cox sat uninjured and unmoved, peering through his field-glass to see what extra force was needed, if any, to repel the assault.

lower half of his scabbard at Antietam,¹ and that was the only missile of death that ever left its mark on his personal outfit.

The juvenile impression of a general, as one who goes charging about, waving a bloody sword and roaring out commands and oaths learned in Flanders, was also the popular one for a time; and even the soldiers were long in learning that an ounce of quiet thought is worth a pound of swagger and pretense. General Cox was a quiet man and, except in great emergencies, like the crisis at Franklin, issued his orders in writing, and sent them through his aides. There was nothing of the theatrical in his make-up. Transferred from one command to another many times, he had difficulties with both men and officers, who at first misunderstood his manner, distrusted his ability, and supposed they could take liberties. They soon learned that this quiet man had mastered his profession, knew what was due to his position, and was nearly as respectful of *self* as he was of *others*, and, when it became necessary to check presumption, they felt the grip of the iron hand beneath the velvet glove. There were some good officers who were loud and showy, and made splendid figures in battle. Hooker, Hancock, Logan, are types; but as the war progressed, men learned to rely more and more on the quiet men, who applied their hearts unto wisdom and vaunted not themselves—the silent Grant, the modest, unassuming McPherson, the dignified Thomas, the Christian gentleman, Oliver O. Howard. The noisy, fussy “dogs of war” were kept in the backyard. The modest, thoughtful men could be relied on to do their duty; the haughty and vainglorious were apt to wreck the enterprises committed to their care, while puffing themselves, and seeking their personal aggrandizement at the expense of others, chiefly men in the ranks.

¹ In this action his corps lost 2,349 men out of 13,819.

A brief outline of General Cox's more important military services is all that is possible in the space at my disposal. In July, 1861, he was sent to the Kanawha Valley with only 3,400 men, to drive out Wise with 4,000 men. McClellan ordered him to detach one of his regiments to Ripley and another to Guyandotte, places one hundred miles apart by the river, thus reducing his column of attack to about 2,000. Either McClellan had unbounded confidence in General Cox, or he designed that he should be defeated, in order to add lustre to his own achievements. He himself had taken 20,000 troops, the picked regiments of Ohio and Indiana, to oppose an army no larger than Wise's. General Cox advanced as far as Tyler Mountain, where he found the enemy entrenched, and was obliged to wait until his detached regiments could join him. He then flanked Wise out of his position, drove him up the valley, occupied Charleston and Gauley Bridge, and captured 1,500 stand of arms and large stores of munitions of war. Wise was reënforced by Floyd with 4,000 more men. General Cox's force was weakened by the withdrawal of the Twelfth and Twenty-first Ohio. He fortified Gauley Bridge, established advanced posts, kept scouting parties moving in all directions, and by his activity deceived the enemy and kept 7,800 at bay for more than a month with only 1,800. In September General Rosecrans came with additional troops and took command, and, not long after, Floyd occupied Cotton Mountain, on the opposite side of the New River, from which his cannon commanded Gauley Bridge and the road from Charleston by which all the supplies were hauled to the Union Army. Rosecrans sent two large columns to intercept Floyd's retreat and, later, ordered General Cox to attack in front. He ferried his troops across, and with the Eleventh Ohio and First and Second Kentucky scaled the almost perpendicular cliffs, and drove Floyd off—a most remarkable feat of arms—but the other commanders

did not put in an appearance, and Floyd got away. In his official report of this campaign General Rosecrans said:—

“It is a great pleasure to say to the commanding General, that I have found General Cox prudent, brave, and soldierly, and I especially commend his prudence and firmness in occupying Cotton Hill.”

During the winter he was left in charge of the District, with headquarters at Charleston. The time was spent in perfecting the drill and discipline of his troops. At one time he was ordered to take his three oldest Ohio regiments and join Buell in Kentucky, and would have been glad to go; but Rosecrans protested vigorously, saying, among other things, “General Cox is the only reliable man here,” and the order was countermanded, so far as General Cox was concerned. This is one of those circumstances that speak louder than words. No one of his commanders was ever willing to have General Cox leave him.¹

In the spring General Rosecrans was relieved, and General Cox was left in supreme command of the Kanawha district. He reported to General Fremont, in April, that he had 8,500 seasoned troops, fit for any service.

After McClellan's defeat in the Seven Days' Battles, General Cox was ordered to join Pope with one division of 3,500 men, known in the east as the “Kanawha Division.” They marched ninety miles over rough mountain roads with all their baggage and arms, in three days and a half, took steamer down the Kanawha and up the Ohio to Parkersburg, and went thence by rail to Washington, where General Cox was stationed in the forts on Upton's and Munson's hills, the key to the defenses of Washington.

After the defeat of Pope, Lee invaded Maryland, and the Army of the Potomac set out in pursuit—the Kanawha

¹ They all recognized that here was a man of intelligence and high character who would do his duty at all times and places, and do it fearlessly and well.

Division leading the advance. The stalwart appearance of the men on the march, their endurance, their promptness in starting and their freedom from straggling, excited much admiring comment, and this reflected honor on their commander. They encountered the enemy's rear-guard at the Monocacy, and drove it back through Frederick.

On the second day after, they charged and carried the heights of South Mountain at Fox's Gap, about nine o'clock in the morning, and held their ground against repeated attacks, until the rest of the Ninth Corps came up to their support in the afternoon. It was five hours from the time of the first charge, until the first supports reached them, and they had carried the heights and held them against more than double their own force.¹ This habit of taking advanced positions and holding on against all odds, until supports arrived, became characteristic of General Cox. After the death of General Reno,² the command of the Ninth Corps devolved on General Cox, and he retained it until after the battle of Antietam, and directed all its movements on that bloody field. After the so-called "Burnside bridge" had been carried by a gallant charge and the corps placed in battle array on the opposite side of the Antietam, he advanced steadily, driving the enemy before him, and had reached the outskirts of Sharpsburg, when he was attacked in left and rear by A. P. Hill's fresh division coming up from Harper's Ferry, clad in new Federal uniforms and well supplied with Federal guns and ammunition.

The Ninth Corps changed front and held its ground, but the advance on Sharpsburg was checked. General Couch, who had been instructed to "observe" A. P. Hill, neither prevented Hill's coming nor came himself; McClellan would not send any of the 26,000 troops held in reserve to

¹ The losses of the Kanawha Division in this action were 442 killed and wounded. Colonel (afterwards President) Hayes was among the wounded.

² See *ante*, page 454, note.

the support of General Cox, and the opportunity for then and there destroying Lee's army was lost. On the recommendations of Generals Burnside and McClellan, General Cox was appointed Major-General of United States Volunteers "for gallant and meritorious services in the battles of South Mountain and Antietam," October 6, 1862.

The promotion had been fully earned. He had successfully stood every test that could be applied. As an independent commander in the field he had advanced and held his own against heavy odds. He had brought the army in West Virginia to a high state of discipline and efficiency. He had commanded a corps at South Mountain and Antietam with conspicuous ability. His fitness to command was emphasized by what had happened in West Virginia during his absence and by what he accomplished on his return, for he was sent back to West Virginia immediately after his promotion. Colonel Lightburn, a loyal West Virginia officer, was left in command of the district with 5,000 troops, when General Cox was summoned to Washington. The Confederate General Loring moved against him with an equal force, and Colonel Lightburn, instead of holding his ground—as General Cox had done the year before, with barely a third of his forces—beat a hasty retreat, burning bridges, and destroying large quantities of stores at Gauley Bridge and Charleston.

When General Cox was sent back to West Virginia, his Kanawha Division was detached to go with him, but was stopped at Hancock, ordered on other service, and never reached him. General Cox retook Charleston and Gauley Bridge, and reoccupied all his former positions, with the very troops that had retreated, and against the very troops that had driven them out. He remained in command of the district during the winter. Considering the means at his disposal, no army officer, east or west, had made a better record. He rested easy in the assurance that his ap-

pointment as Major-General thus earned, would be promptly confirmed, and that he would again be placed in command of a corps. But the Senate claimed that Lincoln had exceeded his authority in appointing nine new major-generals. Lincoln claimed that the law authorizing an increase of the army was authority enough for appointing additional officers to command the new troops. The controversy was carried on all the winter, and just before adjournment Congress authorized the appointment of thirty major-generals, twenty-one more than the President had already appointed. Surely General Cox would be confirmed! But no! some understanding was reached by which the President withdrew his appointments, and sent in a new list, satisfactory to members of Congress, and General Cox's name was not on the list!

The reasons—such as they were—may be briefly stated. (1) General McClellan had been relieved of his command under such circumstances as made *his* recommendation a detriment, instead of a help. (2) General Cox had disappeared from the Army of the Potomac, and was doing his duty in the comparative obscurity of West Virginia. (3) He was not a West-Pointer, and the natural jealousy of this class, who had practical control of the War Department, was against him. (4) As a politician, he was not known beyond the borders of Ohio, and there was no one to urge his appointment on political grounds. Vacancies occurred frequently thereafter, but there was always some one on hand to fill them, who had friends in the War Department or in Congress.¹

¹General Cox was twenty-fourth on the list of brigadiers when first appointed. All but seven of his ranking officers had been promoted, and four of the remaining seven resigned. Eighty-three of his juniors were promoted over his head, many of whom held rank below that of colonel, while he was commanding a corps. It was General Cox's fortune to serve during the war under no less than ten officers who were his own juniors in 1861. There were no sound military reasons why, at the time

It was a great disappointment, and all the more discouraging from the fact, which now became evident, that no volunteer officer could attain high rank, no matter what his services, unless he had a "political pull." The question has sometimes been tauntingly asked, "What volunteer officer ever won great distinction as commander of an army in the field? Grant, Sherman, Thomas, Sheridan, and Schofield were all West-Pointers." So also were some of the greatest failures of the war. The question may be answered by another, "What volunteer, who was not a prominent politician like Banks, or Butler, was ever given a chance to command a great army in the field?" But General Cox did not enter the army for rank or glory, and, discouraging as his treatment was, he continued to render distinguished service in his old rank of brigadier-general for nearly two years more before he was finally promoted, on the urgent and oft-repeated recommendations of Generals Schofield, Sherman, and Thomas. From April to December, 1863, he was in command of the military district of Ohio. During that time he directed the movements that resulted in the capture of John Morgan and his raiders, and defeated a plot to release the Confederate prisoners on Johnson's Island, Sandusky Bay. In December, 1863, he went to East Tennessee, at the request of Burnside, to take command of the Twenty-third Army Corps. In the spring, the Twenty-third Corps joined Sherman for the Atlanta Campaign, and the part assigned it was a most important one. While Thomas, with the Army of the Cumberland, held the center strongly, it executed flanking movements first on one side, and then on the other. General Cox, as ranking brigadier, was in actual command of the corps much of the time, and his work in this campaign alone of their appointment, any of these, except Thomas and Burnside, should have had the preference over General Cox, and if I were to name most of the others, few would be able to recall what they had done to deserve such promotion.

would stamp him as the peer of any officer in that army, except possibly Sherman himself. Troops engaged in flanking operations must be able to make long and rapid marches, to intrench quickly, and hold on tenaciously when they reach their goal. There must be mutual trust and confidence between them and their commander. He must feel that they will do all that he asks them to do, and they must feel that he will call upon them to endure no unnecessary hardships and encounter no needless perils. He must be alert, quick to see and occupy a position which not only enfilades the enemy's line or threatens his communications, but is capable of being defended against heavy odds until supports can be brought up. The work requires independent judgment, courage, intelligence, self-reliance, and reliance upon the commander-in-chief. "Hold the fort, for I am coming," is always understood. During the Atlanta Campaign his command became so expert in the matter of field entrenchments that it could cover its whole front with earthworks in fifteen minutes.

Before Dalton he held a position on the extreme left flank, cut off from the rest of the army by a high and rocky ridge. His opponent in the trenches was that fierce fighter, John B. Hood. When the movement on Resaca commenced, he was directed to withdraw from his perilous position, and did so, in the face of the enemy and in broad daylight, marching his second line to the rear, making it lie down and, when it was in position, retiring his first line to its rear, and so on until the movement was completed. It was so well ordered that the enemy did not dare to attack. Both Schofield and Sherman were enthusiastic. In his official report, Schofield said, the movement was "a delicate and difficult one, owing to the character of the ground, the position and strength of the enemy, and our comparative isolation from the main army," and added, "I regarded it as a complete test of the quality of my

troops, which I had not before had opportunity of seeing manoeuvre in the presence of the enemy." Sherman sent his congratulations, saying, "It was described to me by Captain Poe, as seen from the mountain, as very handsome."

At Resaca, General Cox with his division carried and held a very important salient on the right of the rebel lines. In that action his division lost 562 men. At Cassville, General Johnston had drawn up the rebel army in line of battle, and issued orders for a general engagement. General Cox appeared in a threatening position on the right flank of his army, Hood and Polk sent word that their position was untenable, and Johnston retreated, instead of fighting. While the battle of Kennesaw was raging, General Cox on the extreme right of the army made a "demonstration," as it was called, to attract the enemy's attention, and draw off troops from the center. As a matter of fact, he seized and held a commanding eminence, three miles from the Union lines, threatening Johnston's communications, and forced him to retreat across the Chattahoochee after having won the battle of Kennesaw. At the close of the Atlanta Campaign, General Schofield earnestly recommended General Cox's promotion, saying, among other things,—

"I have no hesitation in saying I have never seen a more able and efficient division commander. General Cox is possessed of a very high order of talent and superior education. As a commander he is discreet, energetic, and brave. As a just reward for long, faithful, and efficient service, and as an act of justice to the army and the country, I earnestly recommend that Brigadier-General J. D. Cox be appointed Major-General of Volunteers."

General Sherman forwarded this recommendation to General Hallock, indorsing General Cox as an "actual divi-

sion commander," "of marked courage, capacity, and merit," "qualified to separate command."

General Cox commanded the Twenty-third Corps throughout the Franklin and Nashville campaign. After Hood had crossed the Duck River above Columbia, and was pushing for the rear of the Union army, General Cox held the crossing at Columbia until after nightfall, when he withdrew and marched to Spring Hill, eleven miles north of Columbia. Near that place they found the advance of Hood's army encamped so near the road along which they had to march, that our men could see their camp-fires and hear their voices. When asked what he would have done, if the rebels had attacked him in flank as he was passing by, General Cox said, quietly, "We were all prepared; our men would have faced to the right; our flank would have become our front; and the rebels would have had a fight." Reaching Spring Hill at midnight, General Cox was directed to go on to Franklin, twelve miles farther, and entrench a position so as to protect the crossing of the Harpeth River at that point. So, after fighting all day on November 29th and marching all night, the Twenty-third Corps took up a position at daybreak, just south of the town of Franklin, fortified a line about a mile long, and then lay down in the trenches to sleep. The trains and their own artillery came in and passed north through the town. The artillery of the Fourth Corps was placed in the line of defense, and Opdycke's Brigade was held in reserve, just back of the center.¹ Two brigades of the Fourth Corps remained in an exposed position in front, until overrun and driven in by the charge of the Confederates. Our men reserved their fire at the center, so as not to kill their own comrades, and the Confederates charged up to and carried the breastworks and one battery of artillery, before any effect-

¹Opdycke was a graduate of the "Home Literary Union" at Warren.

ive resistance could be offered. The little army in the trenches was threatened with destruction. General Cox rode to the center, shouting, waving his hat, and encouraging his men. The rebel yelling and the crash of musketry at short range was appalling.¹ He never expected to come out of the *melée* alive. Then Opdycke charged. The men who had been driven from the breastworks rallied; a new line was entrenched, slightly in rear of the other, and that line was held steadily against all assaults of the enemy. There was not a sign of wavering in any other part of the line, and the firing was so well sustained that the rebels who lived to think, thought all our men were armed with repeating rifles. The attack began about four o'clock, and in less than two hours the fighting was practically over. Twenty-four thousand Confederates had attacked ten thousand Union men, and been repulsed with a loss of six thousand three hundred, twenty-six per cent of their whole number. Their losses included six generals killed, six wounded, and one captured; six colonels killed, fifteen wounded, and two missing. In fact, in many brigades every officer above the grade of captain was disabled. Thirty-three battle-flags were captured. The percentage of the killed was unusually large, the actual number being greater than Grant's at Shiloh, McClellan's in the Seven Days' Battles, Burnside's at Fredericksburg, Hooker's at Chancellorsville, Rosecrans's at Stone's River or Chickamauga, or Wellington's at Waterloo. This was the supreme test of General Cox and his command. To borrow the language of Cromwell, it was his "crowning mercy." The spirit of Hood's army was broken and, at the battle of Nashville, when *they* held the trenches and *our men* did the assaulting, they were driven from the field in disorder.

¹See *ante*, page 454, note.

Again, on December 19, 1864, Schofield pressed for the promotion of General Cox in a letter addressed to Halleck, in which he said:—

“It is unnecessary to recite, in detail, the service of so distinguished an officer. He has merited promotion scores of times by skillful and heroic conduct in as many battles. He is one of the very best division commanders I have ever seen, and has often shown himself qualified for a higher command. . . . An officer cannot exercise for three years a command which he is universally admitted to be eminently qualified for and yet be denied the corresponding rank while his juniors, notoriously less deserving, are promoted, without feeling such mortification and chagrin as must drive him from the army. Excuse, General, the earnestness with which I refer to this matter. I do not exaggerate the merits of the case; on the contrary I do not half state it.”

On December 20th, General Thomas forwarded this with his own recommendation, stating that,

“his services in the Atlanta campaign entitle him to the promotion asked for, and at the battle of Franklin he was eminently distinguished for personal courage as well as for the skillful management of his command.”

At last the War Department was moved to act, and General Cox was commissioned Major-General as of December 7, 1864.

Not long after the battle of Nashville, the Twenty-third Corps was transferred to North Carolina. General Cox commanded an expedition up the right bank of the Cape Fear River, captured Fort Anderson, with many cannon, and a fortified post at Town Creek, with two cannon and four hundred prisoners, and flanked the rebels out of Wilmington. He was then sent to Beaufort and put in charge of troops he had never met before, with instructions to move on Kinston and Goldsborough, rebuilding the railroad as he went. At Kinston he fought and won two bat-

ties against General Bragg, with superior forces, among whom were found a large part of Hood's old army, and after that, so far as General Cox was concerned, the fighting was over. While he was engaged in the performance of his duties as district commander at Greensborough, and winning the confidence and regard of his late enemies by his uniform fairness and courtesy, he was nominated for Governor of Ohio, by acclamation, at the "Union" Convention held in Columbus, June 21, 1865. At a ratification meeting held that evening Senator Sherman said, speaking of the ticket,—

"It is headed by a gentleman who is not only a soldier, but a statesman and scholar—a man of the highest and purest character—a man who, in all the walks of life, will be a model for us all. I thank you for that nomination—although I believe the people made it before the convention met."

Time will not permit a review of his subsequent career. I will mention but one circumstance. Just before leaving Oberlin, on the trip from which he never returned, he handed the College librarian a list of books he had read and reviewed for the *Nation* and some historical magazines since January 1, 1898, which he wished to add to the library he had already given to the college. They numbered eighty-three volumes. And this was the recreation of a man who had retired from active work! The great lesson of his life is the importance of doing one's whole duty, in whatever circumstances one is placed, and leaving rewards and other consequences to Him who is Lord over all. This involves honesty, energy, self-denial, and unflinching courage. Another lesson is the importance of reserving some time for "thought, study, and feeling" apart from the routine of daily business. The man who suffers himself to "get into a rut" will never be fit for anything outside of that rut. The last to which I will call

attention is the importance of unremitting industry. If one cannot accustom himself to do more work than other men, he cannot rise above other men. If one is able and willing to work more hours than his neighbor, or to work faster or to better advantage while he does work, he will outstrip him in the race of life. Nothing came to General Cox as a matter of mere fortune. He was *fit* for everything he undertook to do, and he was called *because he was fit*.