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**George Franklin Edmunds**



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*Edmunds*

*Mr. Charles Moore*



# George Franklin Edmunds

By

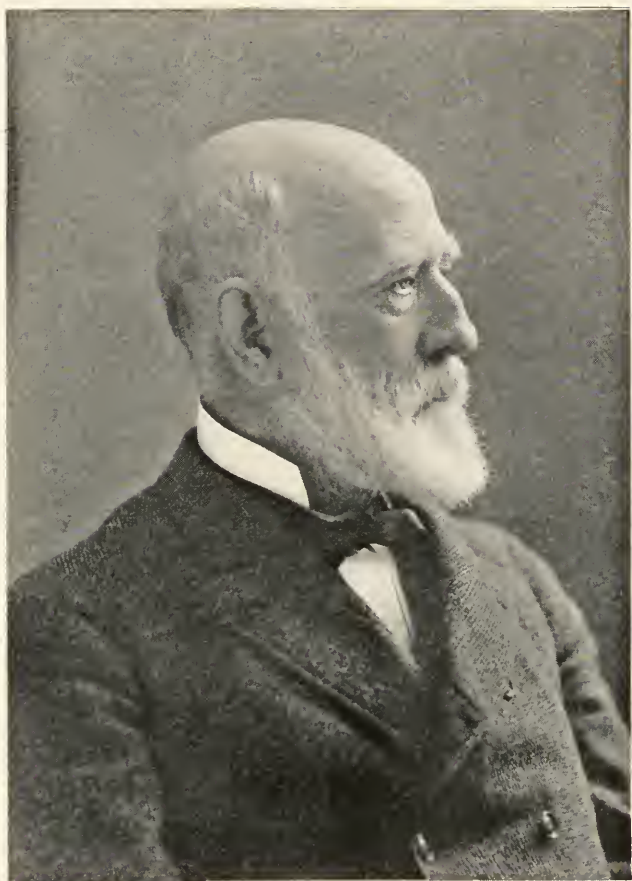
Walter Hill Crockett

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Genl. Edmund







THE BURLINGTON HOME OF SENATOR EDMUNDS



THE death of George F. Edmunds at Pasadena, California, February 27, 1919 ended the career of the man who may be ranked, when all circumstances are considered, as the most distinguished of the sons whom Vermont has sent directly into the public service of the Nation. During his long and useful life, covering more than ninety-one years, he saw a wonderful transformation in his own country and in the world. When he was born the area of the United States included the region north of Texas and east of the Rocky Mountains, the title to Oregon Territory not having been established. There were only two States west of the Mississippi River, Louisiana and Missouri. During the life of Senator Edmunds, as Vermonters had been accustomed to call him for more than fifty years, the number of States had increased from twenty-three to forty-eight, and the population of our country from 4,000,000 to more than 100,000,000. Great cities like Chicago, St. Louis and San Francisco had grown from nothing during his lifetime. When he was born John Quincy Adams was President of the United States and Ezra Butler was Governor of Vermont. The span of his life, therefore, included the administrations of twenty-two of the twenty-seven Presidents of the United States



and forty-eight of the fifty-seven Governors of Vermont. Nearly all of the great inventions that are now a part of our daily life, the steamboat excepted, have been discovered since his birth, and many volumes would be required to record the social, industrial and political transformations of the world during that period.

George Franklin Edmunds was born in Richmond, Vermont, February 1, 1828. Both his maternal and paternal grandparents were Rhode Island Quakers, or Friends, the former belonging to the Orthodox faith and the latter to the Hick-site denomination. In 1826 his parents removed from the Berkshires, Massachusetts, to Richmond, and purchased a large farm on the Winooski River, about two miles above the village, where their son George was born. The only children in the family were this son and an older sister, who afterward became Mrs. A. B. Maynard. The local district school was on this farm, and there Mr. Edmunds began his education at a very early age. He grew up a slender boy, lacking the health and strength of the average country lad. He was taught the various things that a boy on a farm should know, his parents carefully guarding his precarious health. His sports were hunting, trout fishing, riding farm horses and breaking colts, and altogether his boyhood was a happy one. About the year 1840 the farm was sold and the family moved to the



village, where, with his sister, George attended a select school taught by a capable man. A year of two later he was sent to Burlington to attend an academy in preparation for college. In a few weeks his health became impaired and a long illness followed, necessitating the abandonment of a college career. He had lessons in Latin and French from his brother-in-law, A. B. Maynard, a college man, and studied for one winter in a private school for boys at Troy, N. Y. Early in the summer of 1845 he returned home, glad, as he said, "to be with the family, the mountains and neighborhood friends." In a letter written a few years ago, Mr. Edmunds said of this period: "That summer I drove with one horse and a Concord wagon to the White Mountains, having previously, with other boys, climbed Camel's Hump and Mansfield, and thus taken a chronic mountain fever which has lasted me to this day, carrying my family and myself from our own Green Mountains to the white peaks of Switzerland and northern Italy, and the Rocky and Coast Mountains of the Pacific."

Mr. Edmunds began the study of law in the office of his brother-in-law, but being threatened with tuberculosis, he spent the winter of 1845-46 in Washington, for the benefit of his health. He continued his studies there and had access to the Law Library of the United States Supreme Court. It was his privilege to hear cases argued by some





of the great leaders of the American Bar (a distinction which he was himself to win in later years), among them being arguments by Daniel Webster, Rufus Choate and John Van Buren, in the famous "Passenger Case." In a letter to the writer of this article Mr. Edmunds related the following incident of this winter in Washington: "On one occasion, while reading in the Law Library, I had what was, to my youthful imagination, the greatest honor of my life, in showing to Mr. Webster and Mr. Van Buren, who came into the Library where I was sitting reading "Stephens' Pleadings," a passage in the book settling a point of law they were disputing in their conversation. With some trepidation, and an apology, I handed the book to Mr. Webster, who, having read the paragraph, smiled, rose and said to me in his deep, soft tones, 'Young man, I thank you'."

In the spring of 1846 he returned home and continued his law studies with Mr. Maynard until 1848, when he went to Burlington to be a student clerk in the law office of David A. Smalley and Edward J. Phelps, both eminent lawyers. Early in the year 1849 Mr. Edmunds was admitted to the Bar and returned to Richmond to become a partner of his brother-in-law. The following year he removed to Burlington and became the partner of Charles D. Kasson, who died within a year. He speedily built up a lucrative practice at a time when the Burling-



ton Bar included such eminent men as David A. Smalley, Edward J. Phelps, Levi Underwood and L. E. Chittenden.

In 1852 he married Susan Marsh Lyman, daughter of Wyllys Lyman, and a niece of George P. Marsh, then United States Minister to Turkey. Mrs. Edmunds was a woman of great refinement and intelligence, and during their married life of more than sixty years, Mr. Edmunds consulted her in all matters of importance, relying upon her rare judgment and depending largely upon her advice. Two daughters were born to Mr. and Mrs. Edmunds, one of whom, Miss Mary, is now living at Pasadena, California. Miss Julia died in 1882. Mrs. Edmunds died August 24, 1916.

#### Beginning of His Public Career

Mr. Edmunds' first public service was the performance of the duties of Moderator of the Burlington town meeting in March, 1854. Later that year he was elected as Representative from Burlington to the State Legislature, being the candidate of the younger element in local politics. This office, and all that he subsequently held, came without any seeking on his part, either directly or indirectly. State elections were then held annually, and Mr. Edmunds was re-elected to the House each year from 1855 to 1859. In 1855 he was made



chairman of the Judiciary Committee, and in 1857, 1858 and 1859 he was elected Speaker.

In 1861-62 he served in the State Senate, being chairman of the Judiciary Committee and President pro tempore of the Senate. As a member of the Legislature he won distinction as a painstaking and careful legislator, who gave diligent attention to every detail of business.

During the Civil War an old shoemaker in Jericho, whose name was similar to that of a man who had expressed his sympathy for the Southern cause, was arrested by the United States Marshal and confined in the Chittenden County jail. Mr. Edmunds acted as counsel for the prisoner and applied to Judge Smalley of the United States District Court for a writ of habeas corpus, which he obtained, directing the Marshal to produce the prisoner in court. The Marshal was instructed from Washington to refuse to execute the writ, to hold the prisoner, and to send the name of the attorney to Washington. When the Legislature convened Mr. Edmunds, then a member of the State Senate, introduced a resolution asking an investigation of the imprisonment of this harmless and innocent old man. This action of Mr. Edmunds was furiously denounced and the resolution received only the vote of the man who introduced it. A little later the Marshal was directed to release the prisoner.



For the next few years Mr. Edmunds devoted himself to his large law practice. Following the St. Albans Raid of 1864, when armed Confederates from Canada invaded Vermont and looted the banks of St. Albans, Mr. Edmunds was sent to Montreal by Secretary of State William H. Seward to obtain the extradition of the raiders on charges of murder and robbery. The Canadian courts, however, held that these crimes were acts of war. Mr. Edmunds at once notified the State Department of the condition of affairs and recommended a strict blockade of the Canadian border. This policy was adopted and was strictly enforced. As a result the Canadian government adopted a more reasonable attitude, and reimbursed the banks for the money stolen by the raiders.

#### Appointed Senator

The death of Senator Solomon Foot, March 28, 1866, necessitated the filling of the vacancy by the Governor, the Honorable Paul Dillingham. At this time the Senate and President Johnson were at odds and the Republican majority needed every vote it could command in the Senate. Governor Dillingham had decided to fill the vacancy without delay, and on his return from attending Senator Foot's funeral at Rutland, he stopped at Burlington, April 3, and sent a note to Mr. Edmunds asking him to come to the American House. The two men had





served together in the Legislature and had been fellow members of the Judiciary Committee. When the message came Mr. Edmunds was at his home in consultation with a Boston client, going over the papers and evidence in an important railroad case. He responded to the summons, however, and was offered the appointment as United States Senator. Although Mr. Edmunds knew that some of his friends might suggest his name, he had no expectation that he would be appointed. He was reluctant to abandon his law practice, which was his only means of support, and his family was in New York for the winter, where one of his daughters was receiving medical treatment. The Governor, however, was urgent not only that he should accept the appointment, but also that he should leave the next day for Washington. President Johnson had vetoed an important bill and the votes of both Vermont Senators were needed.

With much solicitude as to how he should succeed, he accepted, and left the following day for the national capital. His credentials were presented by Senator Poland, and he took his seat on April 5, 1866, at the age of thirty-eight years, being, with one exception, the youngest member of the body. On April 6, the Civil Rights bill, vetoed by President Johnson, came up in the Senate and was passed over the veto with not a vote to spare. Without the vote of Senator Edmunds it would have failed. He was



assigned, according to custom, to minor committee places, Pensions and Commerce being the committees on which he began his work.

One week after he entered the Senate he paid a brief but beautiful tribute to his predecessor at a memorial service held in honor of Senator Foot. On April 18, less than two weeks after he had taken his seat, a bill came up relating to the habeas corpus act, to which Senator Edmunds offered several amendments. His argument showed profound legal knowledge, a thorough mastery of the subject and great skill in the running fire of debate which followed. The late Benjamin F. Fifield of Montpelier informed the writer that this first speech of the new Vermont Senator created a deep and lasting impression in the Senate and at once gave him a high standing among his colleagues. In preparing for the case involving the Jericho shoemaker, to which previous reference has been made, Mr. Edmunds had familiarized himself thoroughly with the history of the habeas corpus privilege both in England and in America, and was well equipped for such a discussion.

On April 25, only twenty days after he entered the Senate, Mr. Edmunds made a powerful and eloquent speech on a bill providing for the admission of Colorado as a State. It was with difficulty that two-thirds of the voting strength of the Senate was obtained on measures which must be passed over



President Johnson's veto, and the addition of two Senators to the Republican column would have been most welcome. The State Constitution, however, contained a clause granting the right of suffrage only to white persons. Senator Edmunds opposed the passage of the bill on account of what he believed to be this unjust provision, asserting that Vermont from its foundation tolerated no distinctions of race or color in the granting of this right. As he concluded this speech Charles Sumner arose and said: "I cannot forbear returning my thanks to the Senator from Vermont for the noble utterance that we have heard from him. He has reminded you of the true principles upon which you are to pass. He has held up before you the dignity of the occasion, and has rallied the Senate to its duty. I thank him, sir. His speech ought to produce an effect on his associates in this Chamber. It ought to remind them that there is a truth which cannot be put aside for any temporary expediency. I am grateful to the Senator for the speech he has made. I think the Senate will do well to sleep upon it tonight, to reflect upon it, and when they come here tomorrow to do their duty in maintaining those principles which he has so clearly advocated." Coming from such an eminent leader as Mr. Sumner, this was, indeed, a remarkable tribute to be paid to a young man, unknown outside his own State,



who had served less than three weeks in that distinguished body.

### Rapid Rise in the Senate

Probably in the entire history of the American Senate there have been few men, coming into that Chamber unknown to the country at large, who gained a position of influence as speedily as did George F. Edmunds. James G. Blaine in his "Twenty Years of Congress" alludes to this fact, and Mr. Blaine was by no means an ardent admirer or close friend of the Vermont Senator. Before he had served a year in the Senate he was taking such a prominent part in the debates that James Ford Rhodes, the eminent historian, quotes from his speeches in describing the period following the Civil War. In December, 1866, Senator Edmunds had charge of and explained the features of the Tenure of Office Bill.

When arrangements were made for the trial of President Andrew Johnson before the Senate to answer to impeachment charges preferred by the House, Mr. Edmunds was made chairman of a committee to arrange rules of procedure in the Senate and, in conjunction with Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase of the United States Supreme Court, who was to preside at the trial, established the rules as they appear in the official records. It may be unnecessary again to call attention to the rapid





rise of Senator Edmunds to a position of leadership, but it is indeed remarkable that a man who had been in the Senate less than two years should be chosen for such a difficult and responsible task. Senator Edmunds and his colleague from Vermont voted to impeach President Johnson. In a letter written in 1913, and printed in the "Century," Mr. Edmunds expressed the opinion that the failure to impeach President Johnson was due in part, at least, to a belief that Senator Wade of Ohio, President pro tempore of the Senate, who would have succeeded to the Presidency, was not in all respects a proper man for the office, and that had Senator Frelinghuysen or Senator Harlan been President of the Senate, Mr. Johnson would have been removed.

Before the electoral votes cast in 1868 were officially counted, Senator Edmunds, on February 8, 1869, introduced a resolution relating to the vote of the State of Georgia. In this connection Rhodes says: "Edmunds was one of the best lawyers in the Senate, and to settle the difficult question had proposed the plan which followed the precedents of 1821 and 1837 in the cases of Missouri and Michigan." Rhodes frequently refers to the part taken by Senator Edmunds in the great debates of the Reconstruction period, mentioning his clear legal mind and his power of sarcasm. Writing of the Ku-Klux Bill, which was pending in 1871, this eminent historian



says: "The Senate Committee on the Judiciary was a strong body. Of the seven who composed it five were excellent lawyers, Trumbull (the chairman), Edmunds, Conkling, Carpenter and Thurman. As one surveys in retrospect the able men of the legal profession who have adorned the Senate, one would hesitate to affirm that, excepting Webster, Calhoun and Fessenden, greater adepts in constitutional law have argued in that arena of debate than Trumbull, Edmunds and Thurman." Trumbull and Thurman opposed the Ku-Klux Bill. Edmunds reported it from the Judiciary Committee and in closing the debate "made a powerful legal argument in its support." And this remarkable tribute is paid to a man who was still a new Senator as terms of service ordinarily are considered in that body.

Later, Senator Edmunds proposed amendments to the Colorado Bill and to one admitting the Territory of Nebraska as a State, which provided that a condition of admission should be suffrage rights which did not discriminate on account of race or color. In a private letter Senator Edmunds alluded to the fact that Senator Wade of Ohio lectured him rather roughly for the objection he had raised, saying that this course was like shaking a red rag at a bull, and that there was no danger that slavery would be established by the people of Colorado. Mr. Edmunds insisted,



however, and aided by Senator Sumner and others secured the amendment he desired.

#### Chairman of Judiciary Committee

Senator Edmunds' committee assignments in a few years were made more desirable. As a result of his demonstrated legal ability he was soon assigned to the Committee on the Judiciary and a little later to the Committee on Appropriations. In 1871 he was chairman of the Committee on Pensions and in 1872 was made chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary, a position which he held with great distinction during the remainder of his service in the Senate, with the exception of the period from 1879 to 1881, when the Democrats were in control and his intimate friend, Senator Thurman of Ohio, held the position. During the later years of his senatorial career he was a member of the Committee on Foreign Relations. It is not often that a small State exerts such an influence in national affairs as did Vermont during the long period when the chairmanships of the powerful Committees on the Judiciary and on Finance were held, respectively, by Senator Edmunds and Senator Morrill.

After the first two or three years of Senator Edmunds' term he was generally regarded as one of the leading members of the Senate and the "Congressional Record" shows that he participated actively and helpfully in the consideration of most



of the important measures that came before that body. It is said that President Grant depended much upon him for advice. Rhodes says, however, that Edmunds and Sherman could not be classed as "thick and thin supporters" of the Administration; that they were "statesmen of a high order," and not mere politicians. Senators Edmunds and Morrill voted against one of Grant's pet measures, the annexation of San Domingo.

In his "Men and Memories" John Russell Young, a famous journalist, said of President Grant; "The friends, however, whose advice had most weight with him in doing his country splendid service, were Hamilton Fish, Senator Edmunds of Vermont, and Mr. (George W.) Childs. I say this upon the authority of General Grant himself."

Early in Grant's first term he offered Senator Edmunds the position of Judge of the Circuit Court for the second United States circuit, comprising Vermont, Connecticut and New York. He was strongly tempted to accept, as he liked the law, but knowing that he must live in New York City, he made some inquiries in regard to the rental of a small and modest house in a healthful part of the city and found that it would be \$6,000, the exact amount of the salary he would receive. He decided, therefore, that he could not afford to accept the office. Later during President Grant's first term Senator Edmunds was asked to accept the post of





United States Minister to Great Britain preceding the negotiations concerning the Alabama Claims, which he felt compelled to decline on account of the expense which acceptance of the position would compel him to assume.

### Resumption of Specie Payments

Senator Edmunds was never a man who sought publicity for his achievements, and the credit which belonged to him for not a few important legislative acts has gone to others. As an illustration of this statement the Act providing for the resumption of specie payments, passed in 1875, may be cited. The story may be told best in Mr. Edmunds' own words, which he was kind enough to furnish the writer of this article for historical purposes, some years ago, and is as follows: "On the occasion of proceedings for the resumption of specie payments, resulting in the passage of the resumption bill of 1875, the Eastern and Western views in the Senate were greatly divided, the Western Senators feeling that resumption ought not to be established, thinking it could not be maintained. The Eastern Senators thought the experiment should be tried. The West also was badly tainted with the double standard delusion of sixteen to one, and with a desire for free coinage of silver. Most of the Eastern Senators thought quite otherwise. At the request of three or four of the Eastern Senators, of whom I was one, a Republican



confidential caucus was called, and met and appointed a committee of eleven, I think, to confer and, if possible, to propose a bill for some action on the subject that would satisfy all interested. I was a member of that committee, which for three weeks had almost daily, or, rather, nightly confidential consultations, and agreed upon a bill to provide for resumption. Drafting this bill was committed to a committee of two, Senator Logan of Illinois and myself, and we agreed upon a draft containing, I believe, precisely the words which appear in the Statutes of 1875 providing for resumption. We reported our draft to the committee, which agreed to it precisely as we had drawn it. The committee reported it to the caucus, which agreed to it, I believe, unanimously with the exception of Senator Morton of Indiana, who reserved leave to vote against it in the Senate. In fact, every Senator, stating that he wished to do so with frankness, had a perfect right to vote against the bill if he thought fit, without any complaint from the others. It was agreed in the caucus that if the bill was to be passed at all it was to be passed in the precise form, punctuation and all, in which the committee framed it. It was then directed by the caucus that this draft should be put into the hands of Senator Sherman, then chairman of the Finance Committee of the Senate, and that it should be reported from the Finance Committee in precisely that form, and that any amendment pro-



dential election. At that time the Democrats controlled the House, and the Republicans the Senate. About the middle of December the House passed a resolution asking the Senate to unite in the appointment of a joint committee to prepare and report some measure, either legislative or constitutional, which should determine the result of the election by some tribunal of unquestioned authority, the decision of which would be generally accepted as final. The Senate by resolution referred the House proposal to a committee of seven, Mr. Edmunds being the chairman. On January 18, 1877, the Electoral Commission Bill was reported by Senator Edmunds, who explained the bill thoroughly and supported it in an able speech. Although the bill was opposed by Republican leaders like Blaine, Sherman and Morton, it was passed in the Senate by a vote of forty-seven to seventeen, and in the House by a vote of one hundred and ninety-one to eighty. This commission was composed of five Justices of the United States Supreme Court, five Senators and five Representatives, Mr. Edmunds being the first Senator named as a member of the Senate commission. His death removed the last member of that distinguished body. To quote again from Rhodes, the historian; "There are few sublimer legislative achievements in our history than the Electoral Count bill, framed in the midst of intense political excitement and agreed to by thirteen out



of the fourteen members of a bi-partisan committee. The almost unanimous concurrence rendered certain the approval of Congress and the country. To the two chairmen, Edmunds and Payne, must be given the greatest credit." There has been much dispute concerning the legality of the election of Hayes, and many persons still insist that Tilden was lawfully chosen. Mr. Edmunds, however, had no doubt on this score, and writing in the "Century Magazine," thirty-six years after the commission rendered its decision, he said: "I believe that the time has come when, among fair-minded and intelligent Americans who will investigate the public and printed documents and papers in existence on the subject, there will be few divergent opinions touching the justice and lawfulness of the election of Mr. Hayes. They will find that he was lawfully elected and instituted to the office by fair and lawful means." In 1887 he secured the passage of an Electoral Count Act, which was designed to obviate the necessity of another Electoral Commission like that of 1877.

During the latter part of the Hayes administration the Democrats controlled the Senate, and inserted in the army appropriation bill a provision which, in effect, would have deprived the President of his constitutional power in the execution of the laws. It was feared by some Republicans that the President would sign the bill. Believing that such provisions were entirely out of place, and that they



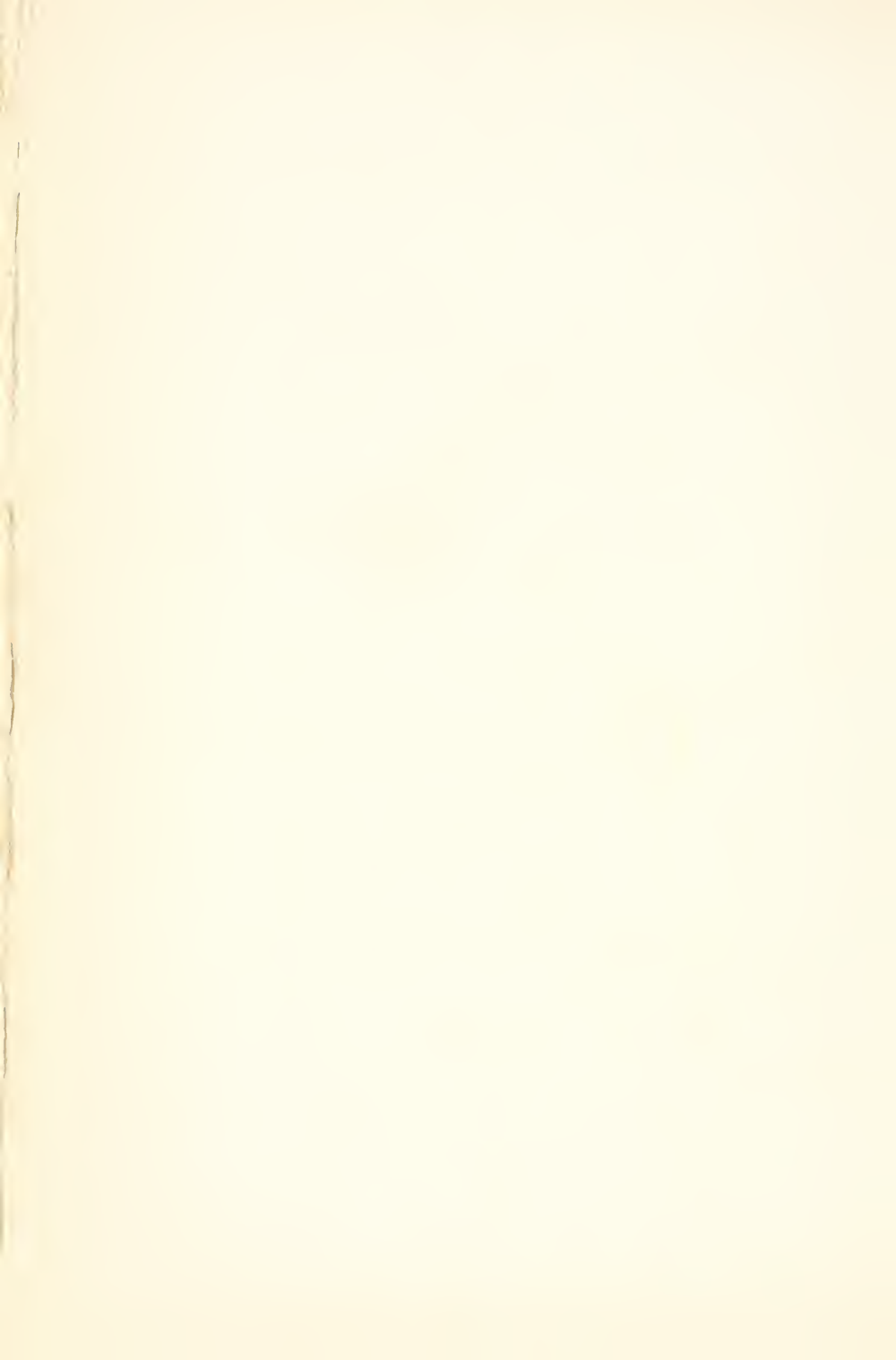


would deprive the President of the means of carrying on the Government unless he would consent to the changing of important laws, Senator Edmunds made a speech in which he opposed the bill. It was passed by both Senate and House, but was vetoed by the President, who sent a note to the Vermont Senator, saying that his argument had convinced him (the President) that it was his duty to veto the bill. Later Senator Eaton of Connecticut, in a criticism of the veto message, said: "The hand was the hand of Esau Hayes, but the voice was the voice of Jacob Edmunds."

During the Hayes administration Justice Hunt of the United States Supreme Court tendered his resignation, and the President asked Senator Edmunds to accept the appointment to fill the vacancy. At this time the Democrats controlled the Senate. They had complained of the preponderance of Republican members and had threatened to refuse the confirmation of any Republican, but it was intimated that they would waive the point in Mr. Edmunds' favor. Senator Roscoe Conkling was displeased, because he had not been consulted in advance, and induced Justice Hunt to withdraw his resignation.

#### The National Convention of 1880

It will be remembered that in 1880 a determined effort was made in the Republican National Convention to nominate General Grant for a third



Presidential term. His principal opponent was James G. Blaine, although there were several other candidates. Vermont decided to present the name of Senator Edmunds, and this movement met with much favor in Massachusetts. The nominating speech was made by Frederick Billings of Vermont, and the nomination was seconded by John E. Sanford of Massachusetts. On the first ballot Edmunds had thirty-four votes; on the final, the thirty-sixth ballot, his name disappeared, and Vermont voted for Garfield, who became the party nominee. It was reported at the time that the Grant leaders were ready to go to Edmunds on the thirty-seventh ballot, but waited until it was too late.

In 1883 President Arthur negotiated a canal treaty with Nicaragua, and the President and Secretary of State Frelinghuysen consulted Senator Edmunds in the drafting of the treaty. It was reported from the Foreign Relations Committee by Senator Edmunds, who had learned that more than three-fourths of the Senate were in favor of its ratification. It was not acted upon until after President Cleveland's election, and when it came up at the December session several Democratic Senators had changed their attitude, and the treaty lacked two or three votes of the number required to ratify it. A reconsideration was moved by Senator Edmunds, and it went back to the calendar, where



it remained until after President Cleveland's inauguration, when it was withdrawn.

Senator Edmunds was the author of the Edmunds Act of 1882 for the suppression of polygamy in Utah, and of an Act passed in 1887 dealing with the same subject. He was also interested in the proposal to establish a National University at Washington.

#### Offered Supreme Court Judgeship

During the Arthur Administration another vacancy occurred on the Supreme Court bench, and the President sent the nomination by Secretary of State Frelinghuysen to Senator Edmunds, urging him to accept it; but the serious illness of a member of his family, which he felt might necessitate his leaving Washington for a long time, made it seem best to decline the honor. The Judges of the court, knowing the situation, kindly offered to perform his duties during his enforced absence, but the Senator did not feel that he ought to accept under the circumstances.

Early in 1884 Senator Edmunds proposed that General Grant be placed upon the retired list of the army with the rank and full pay of the position which he resigned when he became President, a proposal which met with great favor throughout the country.



During the latter part of the Arthur Administration Senator Edmunds was President pro tempore of the Senate and acting Vice President of the United States.

#### The National Convention of 1884

As the time for the Republican National Convention of 1884 approached, it appeared that the principal candidates would be President Arthur and James G. Blaine. There were many persons, however, including some of the Independents, who were not favorable to either of these men. It became evident that the movement to nominate Senator Edmunds would be more formidable than it was in 1880. This feeling was voiced by "Harper's Weekly" on March 1, 1884, when it declared that Edmunds would be more acceptable than Arthur to a "large and resolute body of independent Republican voters," and, therefore, a stronger candidate. This paper said; "We have no doubt that Mr. Edmunds is at this time the sober preference of the party as an inflexible Republican of spotless personal character, of unquestionable political record, of conceded ability, and of prolonged public experience, who, without trimming or demagoguery, is identified with no faction, and while sure to command the full party vote, would be entirely acceptable to independent voters."

The civil service reform element was strongly





in favor of Mr. Edmunds' nomination, and voicing this desire "Harper's Weekly" said that in 1871 "when the first so-called Civil Service Commission met at Washington, Mr. Edmunds was the only Senator who seemed to take a hearty and intelligent interest in the question, or who regarded it as other than a rather foolish party dodge in view of the Liberal disaffection of that year. On the 14th of December, 1871, he introduced a bill embodying the reform views, and which was substantially the first bill introduced by Mr. Pendleton four years ago (in 1880). This bill Mr. Edmunds advocated in an admirable speech . . . . He is also the author of the law prohibiting political assessments, which is substantially that of Senator Hawley, which was incorporated in the reform bill as it passed. There is, in fact, no member of Congress and no conspicuous public man in the country who has been longer or more steadfastly the friend of the reform system than Senator Edmunds."

The Vermont Republican State Convention met at Montpelier, April 30, 1884, and made the following declaration: "Resolved, That we present to the Republicans of the Union George F. Edmunds as the embodiment of these principles (enumerated in the platform), as the vigilant defender and representative of what is best in the Republican faith, as one whose high and unselfish public service has made him the possession of the country rather than



of any State or section, and one whose aggressive integrity, large ability, sagacious statesmanship and unblemished record fit him for the chief magistracy, and one whose nomination will be a sure promise and sign of success." The Vermont delegation was composed of some of the State's most eminent men, headed by Ex-Governor John Gregory Smith as chairman and including Redfield Proctor, Frederick Billings and B. F. Fifield. They were instructed to vote for Mr. Edmunds "as long as his name shall be before the National Convention, and to use all honorable means to secure his nomination."

Most of the Massachusetts delegates were for Edmunds, and owing to a deadlock in the New York Convention between the followers of Blaine and Arthur, the friends of the President threw their strength to the Vermont Senator, and Edmunds delegates-at-large were elected to represent the Empire State. They included Theodore Roosevelt, then only twenty-five years old and just entering upon his long and brilliant public career, George William Curtis, the well-known reformer and editor, and President Andrew D. White of Cornell University. About two weeks before the assembling of the National Convention, Mr. Roosevelt and one of his fellow delegates invited all the Edmunds delegates from New England and New York to meet in New York City. About twenty men attended this conference, and plans were outlined after a general



discussion of the political situation. Several Vermonters attended, including Redfield Proctor, B. F. Fifield, B. D. Harris of Brattleboro, Henry Ballard of Burlington and T. C. Fletcher of St. Johnsbury. A canvass made by the New York "Herald" about this time showed that the Republican members of the New York Legislature expressed their Presidential preferences as follows: Senator Edmunds, six; Arthur, three; Blaine, two; one each for John Sherman, General Sherman and Senator Hawley; non-committal, four. In the Assembly, Edmunds, twenty-six; Blaine, ten; Arthur, seven; Harrison, one. The Boston "Advertiser's" canvass of the prominent Massachusetts Republicans showed the following vote: Edmunds, three hundred and fifty-nine; Arthur, seventy-three; Blaine, twenty-five. "Harper's Weekly" declared: "Mr. Edmunds' strength is undeniable. He unites eminent public ability and service with the greatest availability—a very unusual combination in a Presidential candidate."

Senator Edmunds himself was not ambitious to receive this honor. In a letter to Congressman William Walter Phelps of New Jersey, an ardent Blaine supporter, the Senator denied certain charges made against him and took occasion to say that "I am neither willing nor desirous to be either candidate or President, which everybody who has spoken to me or written to me knows." To personal friends he declared that he knew too much of the cares



and trials of a President to desire the office, and that if he were elected he believed it would kill him.

The Convention met at Chicago, June 3, 1884. President Andrew D. White has left the following bit of description: "Arrived at Chicago, June 2, 1884. I found the political caldron seething and bubbling. Various candidates were earnestly supported, and foremost of all, President Arthur and Mr. Blaine. The Independent delegates, led by Theodore Roosevelt and George Wiliam Curtis, and the Massachusetts delegation, headed by Governor Long, Senator Hoar and Henry Cabot Lodge, decided to support Senator Edmunds of Vermont. No man stood higher than he for integrity as well as for statesmanlike qualities and legal abilities; no one had more thoroughly the respect of thinking men from one end of the country to the other." According to the Convention report printed by the "New York Times," nearly everybody soon learned to know Theodore Roosevelt, "for there is not a State headquarters which he has not visited in his canvass for Edmunds, and scarce an influential delegate with whom he has not conversed in a straightforward, manly way."

The names of candidates were presented on the evening of the third day of the Convention. The name of Edmunds was not reached until late at night, when the delegates were weary, but the presentation by Governor John D. Long of Massa-





chusetts and the seconding speech by George William Curtis were so eloquent and forceful that they commanded the close attention of the great assemblage and won the highest praise. In his address Governor Long appealed "from the excitement of this vast concourse to the afterthought of the firesides of the people." In presenting his candidate he declared that his name "will carry over all the land a grateful feeling of serenity and security, like the benignant promise of a perfect day in June. It will be as wholesome and refreshing as the Green Mountains of the native State of him who bears it. Their summits tower not higher than his worth; their foundations are not firmer than his convictions and truth; the green and prolific slopes that grow great harvests at their feet are not richer than the fruitage of his long and lofty labors in the service of his country. Honest and capable, unexceptionable and fit, the best and the most available, the very staunchest of the old Republican guard, the most unflinching of American patriots, with the kindly heart of a courteous gentleman, as well as the robust and rugged mind of a great statesman, yet is he not more sternly just in the halls of Congress than tender in that sanctuary of the American heart—the American home \* \* \* \* Gentlemen, I nominate as the Republican candidate for the next President of the United States, the Honorable—aye! the Honorable George F. Edmunds of Vermont."



In closing his brilliant seconding speech, George William Curtis said: "Mr. President, in the beginning of the Revolution a Green Mountain Boy crossed Lake Champlain and, followed by his brave comrades, climbed the sheer precipice, and in the name of the Great Jehovah and of the Continental Congress, demanded and received the surrender of British Ticonderoga. There is another Green Mountain Boy; let us make him our captain in the great contest upon which we enter; make him our captain of the host, the vast host of loyal followers, as indeed, followers we shall be, doubtless, of any man who bears the banner of the Republican party, and in the name of the Great Jehovah and of the Republican party, he will demand and receive the surrender of the Democratic party. His name is in your hearts before it leaves my lips. Incorruptible, unassailable, a Republican whom every Republican trusts to the utmost; whom every Democrat respects with all his heart; a candidate who will make every Republican State surer, every Democratic State uneasy, and every doubtful State Republican, and who will awake all the old conquering Republican enthusiasm of principle and character. This is the candidate whose name has been presented to us by the old Bay State; and the candidate whose nomination on behalf of every American who believes that political honesty is the best political policy, I proudly second in repeating the name of George F. Edmunds of Vermont."



President Andrew D. White's estimate of these nominating speeches is quoted from his reminiscences as follows: "The various candidates were presented by prominent speakers, and most of the speeches were thoroughly good; but unquestionably the best, from an oratorical point of view, was made in the nomination of Mr. Edmunds by Governor Long of Massachusetts. Both as to matter and manner it was perfection; was felt to be so by the Convention; and was sincerely applauded even by the majority of those who intended to vote for Mr. Blaine."

The balloting began on the morning of the fourth day, Edmunds receiving ninety-three votes on the first ballot, distributed among the following fourteen States; Arkansas, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Wisconsin, Montana. On the fourth and last ballot, on which Blaine was nominated, Edmunds received forty-one votes, distributed among seven States; Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Vermont.

The defeat of Mr. Blaine by a very narrow margin is part of the history of the United States. That Senator Edmunds would have held the strong Independent vote which refused to support Mr. Blaine is beyond question, and it is probable that



had Edmunds been nominated he would have been elected. He was handicapped by coming from a small State that was more surely Republican than any other in the Union. Nature had not endowed him with those qualities of personal magnetism and cordial good fellowship which made Mr. Blaine the most popular of American political leaders with the exception of Henry Clay and Theodore Roosevelt. But so far as intellectual and legal ability, experience, statesmanship and high character are concerned, he was ideally equipped for the Presidency and excelled in those qualities most of the men who have held that high office. Senator Edmunds did not expect to receive the Republican nomination, and his defeat in the Convention probably came as a relief rather than a disappointment.

When Mr. Cleveland was President his Administration became engaged in a controversy with the Senate over the matter of removals from office, in which Senator Edmunds, as the leader of the Republican majority, was prominent.

In 1885, Mr. Edmunds was called to England to testify before the Committee of Privileges of the House of Lords concerning the law of the Province of New York in the year 1770 on the subject of marriage, the case being a dispute over a peerage title. The remainder of the summer was spent in studying the cathedrals of Great Britain.

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article one can not tell all the important legislation with which Senator Edmunds was identified during this period, because it would include practically a history of the proceedings of the Senate for a quarter of a century. When Vice-President Hendricks died, Senator Edmunds advised President Cleveland not to leave Washington to attend the funeral at Indianapolis owing to some uncertainty concerning the matter of the Presidential succession.

It is now known that the fundamental sections of the Anti-Trust law, which bears Senator Sherman's name, were written by Senator Edmunds. That portion of the Senate report upon the Clayton-Bulwer treaty relating to the Isthmian Canal, so far as it concerned negotiations with Great Britain, was prepared by Senator Edmunds.

Wearied with twenty-five years of hard work, Senator Edmunds resigned his seat in the Senate in the spring of 1891, the resignation to take effect in the fall of that year. He had been returned term after term, practically without opposition, and there is no reason to suppose that he could not have retained his seat as long as he desired. Had he remained in the Senate until his age was as great as that of his colleague, Senator Morrill, he might have completed fifty years of service in that body. Commenting on his retirement from public life, "Harper's Weekly" said: "The retirement of a Senator of such integrity, grasp, experience, and



simplicity of taste and character impoverishes public life . . . . . Were all his colleagues whom he salutes in farewell of the same quality with himself, the Senate would still deserve Chatham's eulogy of the Continental Congress."

After his retirement from the Senate, Mr. Edmunds was appointed a member of the Monetary Commission authorized by the Bankers' Convention held at Indianapolis, and was elected its chairman. This committee made a prolonged and careful investigation of the currency of the country, its findings being embodied in a report. Later President Cleveland, during his second term, offered Mr. Edmunds an appointment on the Interstate Waterways Commission, which was declined, not for lack of interest in the subject, but for the same reason that impelled his resignation from the Senate.

The career of Mr. Edmunds as a lawyer might properly be considered as the subject of an extended article, but this must be left for the consideration of a member of the Bar. His professional labors did not cease when he went to the Senate. At that time public opinion did not condemn the practice of law by Senators and Congressmen, and no person could fairly accuse Mr. Edmunds of allowing his course in the Senate to be influenced by his activity as a lawyer. His first case in the United States Supreme Court was a confiscation case, argued in 1867 or 1868, in which a former member of that



Court, Benjamin R. Curtis, appeared as the opposing counsel, contending against the validity of the confiscation of railroad stocks as Confederate property. Senator Edmunds upheld the act and the proceedings under it, and won the case. Thereafter, until 1896 or 1897, he argued important cases in the Supreme Court and in the United States Courts at New Orleans, St. Louis, Cincinnati, New York, Philadelphia, Macon, Georgia, and elsewhere. In 1895, with Joseph H. Choate, he argued against the constitutionality of the Income Tax Act before the United States Supreme Court, and won the case.

Senator Edmunds was a loyal and earnest member of the Episcopal Church, serving it faithfully in many ways, and several times acting as a Vermont delegate to the Triennial Convention. His firm belief in the great fundamental principles of Christianity was a powerful influence in his life, which was characterized by the strictest integrity in political as well as in business affairs.

The degree of A. M. was conferred upon him by the University of Vermont in 1855, and the degree of LL.D. was conferred by the following institutions: Middlebury College, 1869; University of Vermont, 1879; Trinity College, 1887; Dartmouth College, 1890. In 1896, Princeton University intended to confer upon him the degree of LL.D. at the Sesqui-Centennial exercises, but he was unable to be present.



Soon after his retirement, Mr. Edmunds made his home in Philadelphia, and later in Pasadena, California, not because of any lack of loyalty to Vermont, but rather on account of his own health and that of his family. From boyhood Mr. Edmunds had been obliged to fight a tendency to bronchial and lung trouble, and the New England winters were a menace to his health. To intimate any lack of loyalty to or affection for Vermont on his part, is to do his memory a cruel injustice. No man was prouder of the State than he, and no man has brought it greater honor.

During all the years of his retirement, he maintained a keen interest in public affairs, and from time to time he contributed interviews on great public questions which were extremely valuable. Although he lived to a great age, his splendid intellect was not dimmed, and his comments on the sinking of the Lusitania and the proper attitude of this country towards Germany during the World War were characterized by a robust Americanism that was refreshing to his countrymen. Unquestionably he was one of the greatest of American Senators, and for many years probably was considered the ablest man in the upper branch of Congress. His services constitute no small part of the honorable record of Vermont in Congress, and as long as the Green Mountain commonwealth exists it will do



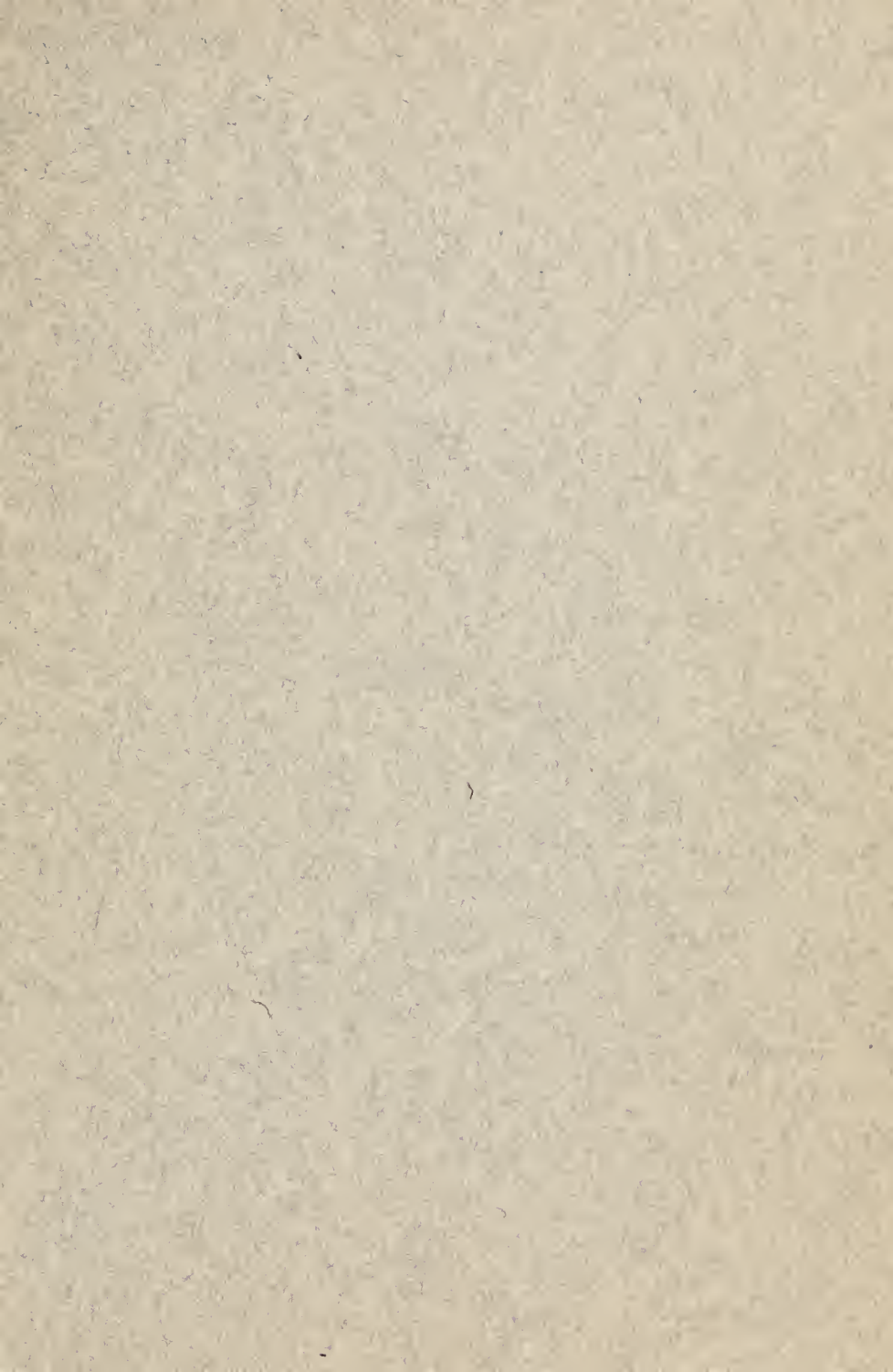


well to cherish the memory of this great American statesman.

The funeral of Senator Edmunds was held at St. Paul's Church, Burlington, on March 11, 1919, and the burial was in the family lot in Green Mount Cemetery at a point overlooking the beautiful Winooski valley beyond which lie the Vermont mountains he loved so well.







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