



William Franklin Draper

Draper, William Franklin, of Hopedale, Ambassador to Italy, general of Volunteers, ex-member of Congress and head of the manufacturing concern of George Draper & Sons, was born in Lowell, Mass., April 9, 1842.

Commencing in the early part of the seventeenth century, in England, Mr. Draper comes from a long line of successful textile manufacturers. Thomas Draper was a well-known manufacturer and fuller of cloth in England in 1630. The business was transferred to America in the person of his son James, who carried on the same trade as his father as early as 1650. The parents of W.F. Draper were George and Hannah Thwing Draper. George Draper was a remarkable man for strength of character, energy and intellect, and left a record of usefulness excelled by few of his contemporaries. One of his ancestors, Major Abijah Draper, of Dedham, fought in the Revolutionary War.

The early education of young Draper was intended to fit him for a college course, but his father, being a practical man and desiring that his son should become intimately acquainted with all the processes of manufacturing, this was interspersed with various periods of labor in machine shops and cotton mills, and three years before the war were entirely given to practical study of the manufacture and operation of cotton machinery.

The call to arms for the defense of the Union in the spring of 1861 put an end to all thought of further schooling. On the 9th of August he enlisted in a local volunteer company, that his father was instrumental in raising. This latter became Company B of the Twenty-fifth Massachusetts Regiment, and William F. Draper was chosen second lieutenant, although then but a little over nineteen years old.

His war experience extended over nearly four years of active campaigning. In the Burnside Expedition he became signal officer on the general's staff. While in this position he went through the battles of Roanoke Island, Newbern and Fort Macon, after which he was promoted to first lieutenant and returned to his regiment. In August 1862, he was commissioned captain in the Thirty-sixth Massachusetts, and joined his regiment just after the battle of South Mountain, Maryland. With the Thirty-sixth he went through the rest of the

Antietam Campaign and battle of Fredericksburg, and was then, with the corps, sent to Newport News. In June 1863, he went to join Grant's army at Vicksburg, taking part in the capture, and subsequently in the march to Jackson and the fighting in that locality. His regiment was reduced by battles and sickness from 650 in June to 198 in September. During this campaign he was promoted major of the regiment. In August 1863, he returned to Kentucky, and marched through Cumberland Gap into East Tennessee. Here his regiment stayed through the winter, engaging in the siege of Knoxville and battles of Blue Spring, Campbell's Station and Strawberry Plains, Major Draper commanding after the 10th of October, Colonel Goodell having been wounded. In the spring of 1864, his corps was moved to Annapolis, partially recruited, and then joined the Army of the Potomac. In the Battle of the Wilderness, on the 6th of May, while leading his regiment he was shot through the body, and fell on a rifle pit just being captured by his men. After having been left on the field as hopelessly wounded, and being captured by the rebels, he was recaptured by his men. He was commissioned lieutenant-colonel from this date, as his regiment was too small, from loss in the severe fighting, to muster a full colonel.

After partially recovering from his wound, he joined his regiment during the siege of Petersburg, and took command of a brigade at the Weldon Railroad engagement. A month later, at Poplar Grove Church and Pegram Farm, his division was severely engaged and cut off from its corps. His regiment was the only one of the brigade that came out as an organization, and they brought back the colors of several others. He was again wounded in the shoulder by a nearly spent ball. On the 12th of October his service expired, and he accepted a discharge, as his wounds were troublesome. He was brevetted colonel and brigadier general for "gallant service during the war." Both his regiments were "fighting regiments." The Twenty-fifth Massachusetts losing seventy percent of their number, killed or wounded, in one engagement (Cold Harbor), a record broken by but three others in the whole army, while the Thirty-sixth Massachusetts, in the campaign beginning with the Wilderness, had every field and line officer, except one, killed or wounded, and three-fourths of the enlisted men.

After more than three years' service in the defense of his country, General Draper accepted employment from the firm of E.D. & G. Draper, manufacturers of cotton machinery, at Hopedale, Mass. Both members of the concern were lineal descendants of the original James Draper, who founded a textile business in 1650. In such a sketch, the historical story of the connecting links

between the past and the present are always of interest. The actual dates and the varied changes in the firm have been as follows: 1816, Ira Draper, inventor and maker of revolving temples and looms; 1825, James, son of Ira, continued in the same business as his father; 1838, E.D. Draper, brother of James, manufacturer of temples; 1852, E.D. and George Draper, the latter also a brother of James, manufacturer of temples, let-off motions, and other improvements; 1868, William F. Draper, the son of George, bought out the interest of his uncle, E.D. Draper, and the firm of George Draper & Son came into existence. They continued the business, at this time greatly enlarged, of improved cotton machinery. In 1877, G.A. Draper, the second son of George Draper, was admitted and the name was changed to George Draper & Sons, and three years later E. S. Draper, the third son, became a member of the firm. In 1887, George Draper died, and W.F. Draper, Jr., the eldest son of W.F. Draper, was admitted to the firm, the name remaining unchanged. In 1889, George Otis Draper, the second son of W.F. Draper, was admitted a member.

By successive steps, General Draper grew in business reputation, and since his father's death, in 1887, he has been the head and controlling spirit of the firm of George Draper & sons. The story of the many improvements this concern has introduced to the manufacturers of America would make an interesting volume in itself. It is too long to be inserted here.

Besides the head of the firm which bears his father's name, General Draper has been directly connected with many other large manufacturing concerns, to which he has contributed no small share of the success attained. At this time he is president of the Milford & Woonsocket Railroad, Hopkinton Railroad, Hopedale Machine Screw Company, and the Dutcher Temple Company. His is a director of the Milford National Bank, Barnaby Manufacturing Company (Fall River), Grinnell Manufacturing Company (New Bedford), Henderson Cotton Mills (Kentucky), Glasgo Yarn Mills (Norwich, Conn.), Glasgo Thread Company (Worcester), Milford Water Company, Milford Electric Light Company, Milford Shoe Factory, Sawyer Spindle Company (Boston), American Mutual Liability Insurance Company (Boston), Merchants & Farmers' Mutual Fire Insurance Company (Worcester), Boston Manufacturers' Mutual Fire Insurance Company, and the Berkshire Manufacturing Company (Adams, Mass.).

The mechanical and inventive talent, shown in the last two and a half centuries of his family, finds full expression in General Draper. He has personally patented more than fifty different inventions, most of them of great value to manufacturers, These inventions have covered substantially the entire field of cotton machinery, but have had special reference to spinning and

weaving. Under General Draper's auspices and by his own inventions and those of others controlled by him, the speed of spindles has been doubled, and the cost of spinning cotton yarns been divided by two. These inventions have not only been thoroughly introduced in America, but largely in other parts of the world. The savings to the people of America in the cost of machinery alone, has not been less than fifty millions of dollars, while savings in labor, power, and incidentals resulting, are probably as much more.

During the last few years General Draper has been giving attention to the improvement of weaving, employing as skilled inventors, Mr. James H. Northrop and Mr. Charles F. Roper and others, and adding the results of his own thought and study. His intention is to halve the cost of weaving, as he and his associates have already halved the cost of spinning; and great progress has been made in that direction. The machine may be said to be perfected for many lines of goods to-day, but its perfection for all lines is the final mechanical task that General Draper has assigned himself.

In conducting a business having such extensive ramifications as that of which he is head, patent suits, both defensive and offensive, are the natural consequence, in this portion of the management of the business. General Draper has shown a marked legal instinct which has been of invaluable assistance in securing the success of his causes. Mechanically considered, he is admitted to be the first expert in this country on spinning machinery. His early training under his father and his long experience easily secure for him this position. On this subject and on other mechanical appliances with which the firm has been identified, he has written numerous articles, standard in their character.

His life has been so thoroughly bound up in the successful management of interests committed to his case that up to 1892 General Draper had never held an elective office, except that of member on the town School Committee. He served as a member of Governor John D. Long's staff during the three years that gentleman filled the gubernatorial chair. General Draper was a prominent delegate to the National Republican Convention which nominated President Hayes, and was one of the electors-at-large who voted for President Harrison. In 1888 he received a handsome vote in the Republican State Convention as a candidate for governor, and in 1889 he declined a nomination for that office which was practically assured.

As there seemed to be a demand in the Massachusetts delegation for practical businessmen in 1892, on account of the tariff question, he allowed himself to be nominated for Congress from the Eleventh Massachusetts District. His Congressional service fully justified the kindly words of Senator Lodge, who said: "Coming down a step further on the ticket, we come to the Republican candidate for Congress in this district. I have the pleasure to be the friend of General Draper.

(Applause.) And I know that he would do the honor to any district that he is called upon to represent. His military record is one of the best Massachusetts can show, and to that he joins an honorable career in civil life. *** A man of unblemished honor, and great force of character, he has shown himself in this campaign to be not only a successful business man, capable of conducting large enterprises, but a writer and a speaker of great ability and force. He is in all ways worthy of the votes of Massachusetts citizens. *** Such a career as General Draper's is a fair example of what is best in American life, - ready for all sacrifices when the need of the country is most bitter, and ready for the performance of all duties of peace when the people demand them. And so I say that he, too, is an honor to the ticket, and richly deserves the cordial support of this district."

(Applause). His work in this new field was so satisfactory to his constituents that in 1894 he was re-elected by one of the largest majorities ever given a congressional candidate in this state. All who are in any way connected with textile and machinery interests are thoroughly familiar with the value of his work in the halls of Congress. He was ever looked upon as a bulwark of defense against the attack of enemies of these interests, and the manner in which he fought their battles is gratefully remembered by the trades.

Service in Congress is very largely affected by the committee positions a member holds. While General Draper, from his practical knowledge, deserved a membership on the Ways and Means Committee, which deals with tariffs and other great business questions, and while as a matter of fact he has had marked influence in regard to such questions, his special assignments were, for both terms, on the committees on Foreign Affairs and Patents. The second term he has been chairman of the Committee on Patents, and second in rank on the committee on Foreign Affairs, and acting chairman part of the time, owing to the illness and necessary absence of the distinguished chairman, Mr. Hitt, of Illinois.

The Chinese exclusion bill, on which General Draper made a speech urging moderate action, and the Hawaiian question, were the principal ones in the 53rd Congress. General Draper's Hawaiian speech has been many times reprinted, and was adopted as a part of the Senate report, and no consideration of the Hawaiian question will be complete without it. During his second term the Venezuelan question, the censure of Bayard, and various questions regarding Cuba, have been before the committee.

General Draper's position has been conservative throughout. He was the only Republican member of the committee, and one of a half-dozen in the House, to oppose the resolutions which censured Ambassador Bayard, and his speech explaining his position was widely copied and favorably commented on by conservatives of both political parties. On Cuban questions he has taken the position that, whatever our sympathies, we must be guided and governed by the rules of international law: and his views, which have appeared in many speeches and interviews, while at first those of a small minority, have been recognized by a constantly increasing number, both of members of the House and of the American people as sound.

The Patent Committee under his auspices has done more important work than has been accomplished in this direction in the United States for a quarter of a century. A revision of the patent laws, important in character, was prepared by the National Bar Association, and with some amendments was carried through under General Draper's direction, in the House, and Senator O.H. Platt's in the Senate, and became law on the last day of the session. The bill was signed by President Cleveland on the morning of the 4th of March, 1897. Besides this he was successful in passing a bill affecting dramatic copyright, which is considered of the greatest value by our dramatic authors and the profession generally; and further bills regarding injunctions and the price of copies of patents. While not given to addressing the House on subjects outside of those where his life experience or his committee work give him special knowledge, he has been counted one of the most influential members.

In economic circles, General Draper is recognized as a hard student and a practical thinker. The protective tariff has been his especial field for research, and he has personally investigated at great length economic conditions, both in Europe and this country. His pamphlet and magazine articles on the tariff have been widely read and discussed, He has served as president of the Home Market Club, founded by his father, which is the strongest and most influential protective organization in New England, and second nationally only to the

American Protective Tariff League. He is also a member and officer of the Arkwright Club.

Socially, the General is well known from a large acquaintance, both at home and abroad. He is a member of the Loyal Legion and the Grand Army, is a Knight Templar, member of the Sons of the Revolution, Society of Colonial Wars, Union and Algonquin Clubs of Boston, the Hope Club of Providence, and many others.

General Draper was the permanent chairman of the Republican State Convention held in Music Hall, October 1896. His address on that occasion was most favorably received at the time, was highly complimented by the press and State, and was used as a campaign document by the Republican National Committee. But there were still higher honors in store for his acceptance. On April 1st, 1897, General Draper was nominated by President McKinley as ambassador to Italy, and a few days later this nomination was unanimously confirmed by the Senate. He is now filling this responsible position with great acceptability, being in every way fitted to meet the requirements of his office.

General Draper was married in September 1862 to Miss Lydia Joy, adopted daughter of Hon. David Joy, of Nantucket, Mass. The marriage took place during a four days' visit to Massachusetts, by reason of promotion from one regiment to another; and the wedding trip was a journey alone to the front to join his new regiment. Five children were the result of this marriage, all of whom are now living. William F., Jr., and George Otis are associated with their father in business.

Mrs. Draper died in 1884; and six years later General Draper married again, this time Miss Susan Preston, daughter of General William Preston of Kentucky, an officer in the Mexican War, a minister to Spain under President Buchanan, and a Major-General in the Confederate army. This is perhaps the only case on record where a general in the Union army married the daughter of a general in the Confederate army. Representative Men of Massachusetts, 1890 - 1900.

Published by Massachusetts Publishing Co., Everett, Mass.