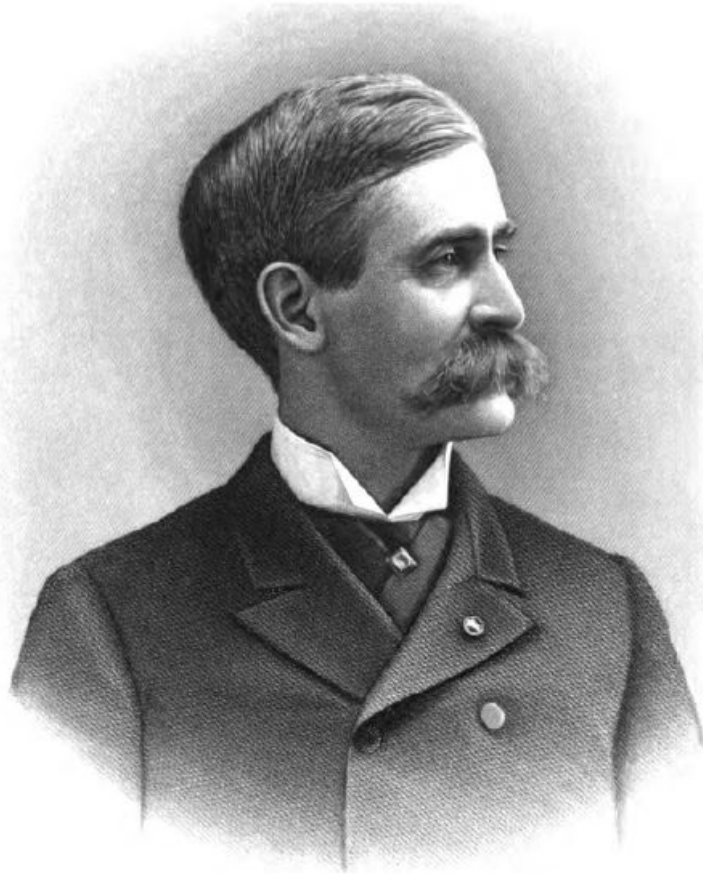


EUGENE M. WILSON

(December 25, 1833 - April 10, 1890)



Eugene M. Wilson

Eugene M. Wilson

8 Magazine of Western History (August 1888)

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1.

*The United States Biographical Dictionary and
Portrait Gallery of Eminent and Self-Made Men.
Minnesota Volume. Pages 283-4 (1879).*

HON. EUGENE M. WILSON, MINNEAPOLIS.

EUGENE McLANAHAN WILSON is the son of Edgar C. Wilson and Mary A. *née* Olliphant, and was born on the 25th of December, 1833, at Morgantown, Monongalia county, Virginia, of Scotch-Irish ancestors, who were among the very earliest families that settled in the Virginia valley, in Augusta and Rockbridge counties. His grandfather Wilson was an active participant in the war for independence, as also was his maternal great-grandfather, who was a Griffin.

Eugene M. received a rudimentary education, and prepared for college at the Morgantown (Monongalia) Academy. He afterward attended Jefferson College, at Cannonsburg, Pennsylvania, where he pursued a thorough course of study, graduating with honor in the class of 1852. Being possessed of inclinations favorable toward the legal profession, as offering the best opportunities, he entered the office of his father, at Morgantown, where he prepared himself for the practice of law, and was admitted to the bar in 1855. His father was a lawyer of considerable ability.

After being admitted to the bar Mr. Wilson decided to come west. Acting on this determination, he, like thousands of others, joined the "tide of emigration" then pouring toward these fields of promise, and his experiences abundantly testify to the wisdom of Horace Greeley's advice to young men. The attractions that lured him hither were not "Like Dead Sea fruit, that tempts the eye but turns to ashes on the lips," but true realities, — "the reward of labor." He worked and studied no less faithfully, and with no less fatigue, than he who shows a calloused hand, and his reward is an assured

and honorable position among the leading lights of the Minnesota bar. Arriving in Minnesota, Mr. Wilson settled first at Winona; practiced there about a year, and then removed to Minneapolis (1857), where he has since lived and pursued his profession. He was appointed United States attorney by President Buchanan, and held the office during the four years of that administration.

Mr. Wilson entered the Union army as captain of company A, 1st Minnesota Cavalry, rendering effective and continuous service, fighting Indians on the frontier, until the expiration of his term of enlistment in 1863, when he returned to Minneapolis.

He is, and always has been, a consistent adherent to the doctrines of the democratic party, and was, as such, elected to the forty-first congress from a republican district. As a member of the house, in which his father, grandfather and great-grandfather had sat, he worthily represented the people who had placed him there, and was uniformly successful in managing his bills. He was a member of the committees on public lands and Pacific railroads. After the expiration of his congressional term Mr. Wilson returned to Minneapolis, and resumed the practice of his profession. While in Washington, in 1872, without solicitation or knowledge on his part, he was nominated and elected to the office of mayor of Minneapolis. He was again elected to the same office in 1874. The bare mention of the fact that he held these offices in a strongly republican city is sufficient evidence of the estimation in which he is held by his fellow-citizens, and comments would be superfluous. He is always a delegate to the state democratic conventions, and was chairman of the Minnesota delegation to the national democratic convention at Saint Louis that nominated the Hon. Samuel J. Tilden for President in 1876. In 1878 he was elected to the state senate of Minnesota, of which he is now a member.

Mr. Wilson has been connected with the Masonic fraternity for the past twenty years. In 1875 was master of Khurum Lodge,

of this city. He is a Knight Templar, and has attained to the degree of Royal Arch Mason in the Scottish Rite.

On the 6th of September, 1865, he was married in Minneapolis to Miss Mary Elizabeth, daughter of Major Wm. M. and Lucy Kimball. Major Kimball is one of the pioneers of this place, and was an officer in the Union army during the late rebellion. The fruits of Mr. Wilson's union are: Mary Oliphant, born on the 16th of May, 1867; Helen Kimball, born on the 6th of March, 1869, and Eugenia, born on the 23d of May, 1878.

He is not united with any religious society, but attends worship at the Presbyterian church, of which Mrs. Wilson is a member. Has been connected with the Hennepin County Bar Association since its organization, and holds an enviable position as a representative of the legal profession.

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2.

Isaac Atwater, "Honorable Eugene Wilson,"
in volume 8 *Magazine of Western History*.
Pages 369-372 (August, 1888).

EUGENE M. WILSON was born in Morgantown, Monongalia county, Virginia, December 25, 1833. Both his father's and mother's ancestry were Scotch-Irish, the former being among the first settlers of Augusta and Rockbridge counties in Virginia, and the latter the first settlers of Fayette county, Pennsylvania.

For several generations the family has been prominent in public affairs in Virginia. His father, Edgar C. Wilson, was a representative in congress from Virginia from 1833 to 1835. His grandfather, Thomas Wilson, was a representative from

Virginia from 1811 to 1813. Soon after the organization of the government his great grandfather, on his mother's side, William Griffin, represented in congress a district comprising the western part of Pennsylvania.

Mr. Wilson was educated at Jefferson college and took high rank in his class, not less as a student than speaker and writer. He graduated at the early age of eighteen. He immediately commenced the study of law in his father's office, and was admitted to practice at the age of twenty-one.

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[business cards inserted by MLHP: *Winona Argus*, April 30, 1857, at 4 (top);
Wilson & Mitchell in *Winona Argus*, September 3, 1857, at 1]

At that time Minnesota offered strong attractions to a young and ambitious professional man who relied on his own efforts to achieve fame and fortune. The territory received many of this class from Maryland and some from Virginia, among whom was Mr. Wilson. He came to the territory in the spring of 1856, and located and opened an office in Winona. He formed a partnership for the practice of law with William Mitchell, now associate justice of the supreme court of Minnesota. The firm name was Wilson & Mitchell. Among his associates and friends, who settled in Winona about the same time, were Honorable William Windom and Daniel Norton, both afterwards United States senators; Honorable Thomas Wilson, afterwards chief-justice of the state and now member of congress; Honorable Charles Berry, first attorney-general of the state, and many other young men who have since obtained prominence in the history of the state.

The ability of Mr. Wilson soon became widely known and he rapidly succeeded in building up a large practice. In 1857 he was appointed United States district attorney for Minnesota by President Buchanan, the duties of which office he most acceptably discharged for four years. After his appointment he found that the business connected with the office required a residence at the capital, or some place nearer than Winona. Having strong faith in the future of Minneapolis, then but a small village, he determined to make that his future home, and removed there in the fall of 1857.

In 1861 he formed a legal partnership with the Honorable W. W. McNair, who [370] afterwards married Mr. Wilson's sister. The name of the firm was Wilson & McNair. This firm continued in business until 1869, when Mr. Wilson was elected to congress, and his place was taken by the Honorable William Lochren, now, and for several years past, judge of the district court of Hennepin county. The firm was always recognized as a strong and leading one, and enjoyed a large and profitable practice.

In 1862 Mr. Wilson enlisted and served as captain of the First Minnesota cavalry. His line of operations was principally in the Indian country, fighting the Sioux, which afforded little field for distinction. He performed his duties faithfully, and when the Indians were subdued and at the close of his term, returned with credit to the practice of his profession.

In 1868 Mr. Wilson was elected a representative on the Democratic ticket to the Forty-first congress from the Third congressional district. The district was strongly Republican, but there were two Republican candidates running—Ignatius Donnelly and C. C. Andrews. Mr. Wilson received 13,506 votes, Donnelly 11,229, and Andrews 8,595.

Mr. Wilson took a more active and prominent part, on many questions pertaining to the interests of the state, than is usual for a member during his first term. Uniting to a high order of natural ability, untiring industry, with genial and popular manners and a long acquaintance among southern members, he was more successful in carrying his measures than usually falls to the lot of new members.

Mr. Wilson served on two of the most important committees in congress (so far as the state of Minnesota was concerned), viz., on that of the Pacific railroad and public lands. He was largely instrumental in the passage of the Northern Pacific Railroad bill. The passage of this bill was vital to the interests of the state, and Mr. Wilson labored strenuously in its aid and had the satisfaction to see his efforts crowned with success. He was also largely instrumental in securing the passage of a bill granting lands to the state in aid of the State university, and other measures, while of not so much National interest, were of great importance to his constituents and the state at large.

But Mr. Wilson is a man of too broad views to confine his mind to the interests of his own state solely, while acting as a representative not only for his district but the Nation at large.

Accordingly, in his first speech in the house, April 2, 1869, he was successful in securing the passage of a joint resolution granting the right of way for the construction of a railroad from a point at or near Portland, Oregon, to a point west of the Cascade mountains in Washington territory. Moreover, even at that early day, he perceived the evils of the system of government policy towards the Indians, and in substance outlined a policy in regard to our treatment of the Indian tribes which subsequent experience has demonstrated to be the only wise and humane one—of allotting to [371] the Indians their individual lands. On several other important measures of national concern, as the Tariff bill, Georgia Reconstruction bill, the M'Garrahan case and other measures of general interest, he made able speeches which demonstrated that only time and experience were needed to make him one of the leaders of the house.

Mr. Wilson also took a deep interest all measures tending to foster and develop the agricultural interests of the state and Nation. He urged liberal appropriations for the promotion of this industry, and his efforts in this behalf were successful and highly appreciated by his constituents.

Every passing year serves to emphasize wisdom of these views, and of his action in congress in urging more liberal appropriations in behalf of the greatest and most important industry of the Nation. Representing, as he did, the largest manufacturing and least agricultural district of the state, his views were broad enough to embrace not only the interests of the whole state but of the country at large, and his best efforts given to promote them, and with gratifying success.

At the close of his term Mr. Wilson returned to Minneapolis to engage in his profession, poorer than when he entered congress. He was not one of who accepted office for the sake of its emoluments or of any chances of pecuniary gain which it might afford. His services were never for sale in the promotion of any measure on which it might become his duty

to vote; nor did he ever refuse to meet any issue on account of any real or supposed odium his vote might entail. And so poorer in purse, but richer in the esteem of his fellow-citizens, he resumed the arduous duties of his profession, which had been largely intermitted during his service of the state.

He formed a partnership with James W. Lawrence, a rising young attorney, and grandson of General Lawrence of Syracuse, New York, in his day one of the most distinguished lawyers in the Empire state. The father of young Lawrence was also a lawyer of marked ability, who practiced a few years in St. Anthony, but entered the army at the beginning of the late war, and lost his life in the service of his country. The firm still continues under the name of Wilson & Lawrence. It has always been regarded as one of the leading firms of the city, and has enjoyed a large and lucrative practice. Mainly through his success at the bar, coupled to some extent with fortunate real estate investments, Mr. Wilson has secured a fortune which renders him independent of his profession, though perhaps there are few, if any, lawyers in the state who perform harder professional work than he.

Still he has found time to devote no small amount of labor to public interests. In 1872, when what was the city of St. Anthony was consolidated with Minneapolis, Mr. Wilson was elected first mayor. He was again elected mayor in 1874. He was elected to the state senate for the years 1878 and 1879, and served on some of the most important committees in that body. [372]

Since the establishment of the park commission, he has been a member of the board, and has devoted much time and attention to the establishment of the park system of Minneapolis, which is doing so much to beautify the city. His fine taste in landscape, progressive ideas and broad views of the future of the city render his advice and services on the board most valuable, and almost indispensable to the work of

the commission. Mr. Wilson owns and occupies one of the most charming and beautiful residences in the city, opposite Hawthorne park, and by his own example shows what taste and a wise expenditure of comparatively moderate means can do to make a desirable and lovely home.

In still other directions Mr. Wilson has interested himself in the welfare of his adopted city. He is a member of the Masonic organization, a Knight Templar, also a member of the Grand Army and the "Loyal Legion."

On the sixth of October, 1865, Mr. Wilson was married to Miss Elizabeth Kimball, daughter of Colonel William M. Kimball of Minneapolis. The issue of this marriage was four children, of whom three daughters are now living.

The many genial, social qualities of Mr. Wilson, and his characteristic southern hospitality, have him to a large circle of friends, to whom his charming home is ever open. He is a fluent and happy extemporaneous speaker, and his services are always in demand at public dinners and other occasions where an audience instructed or entertained. As before remarked, Mr. Wilson is a Democrat, not only from education but principle, and never has lacked the courage of his convictions in advocating Democratic principles.

Mr. Wilson is still in the prime of life, with physical and mental powers unimpaired, and may reasonably look forward to many years of hard work which, it is to be hoped, may be largely devoted to the service of the state.

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3.

Obituary, funeral orations, bar memorials and eulogies of
Wilson published in the *St. Paul Daily Globe*,
April 17--23, 1890.

....

A. *St. Paul Daily Globe*, April 17, 1890, at 4

EUGENE WILSON IS DEAD.

The *Globe* has sad news for its readers this morning, in making announcement of the death of Hon. Eugene M. Wilson, whose useful and brilliant life was terminated at Nassau a week ago to-day. When Mr. Wilson left home a few weeks since, to seek rest and recreation in a warmer clime and under sunnier skies, his friends had no other anticipation but to see him come back in the spring in usual health, and in the full possession of his vigorous mental faculties. Hence, the shock created by his death is intensified by its unexpectedness.

Mr. Wilson was justly classed among the foremost men of the Northwest, and there was none who more universally enjoyed the respect and confidence of the whole people of this section. He came from his Virginia home to Minnesota when quite a young man, and has thus been actively identified with the marvelous development of this region. He was well equipped for leadership in affairs by the possession of the sturdy qualities of his Scotch-Irish ancestry, and by the additional advantages of culture and talent of a very high order.

He soon made his mark in a growing community where men of worth and genius and enterprise are always appreciated. And, once having gained a conspicuous station in social,

political and professional life, it followed as naturally as the stars move in their courses that Mr. Wilson should retain his prominence. And be it said in honor of his memory that his integrity, consistency and devotion to what he considered correct principles won for Eugene Wilson the respect of those whose opinions were most at variance with his own.

Mr. Wilson was a conspicuous figure in the politics of Minnesota. His services in the state legislature and in congress, and having recently been the candidate of his party for gubernatorial honors, made his name a familiar one in political circles. But his great reputation rests mainly on his success and abilities as a lawyer, and upon his spotless record as a Christian gentleman.

He had those qualities which are most to be prized, strong practical sense and an unbending devotion to principle. During the stormiest and bitterest agitation of politics nobody ever knew Eugene Wilson to be other than temperate, wise and just, both in his speeches and votes. The younger and more impetuous members of his own party were often restrained and improved by his advice and persuasion.

Nor did any one ever question his love of country in the darkest and most censorious times. His veins were filled with the blood of Revolutionary ancestors, and all the examples and traditions of his family were in behalf of union, liberty, the constitution, and the laws.

It was in his profession Mr. Wilson won his crowning distinction. He easily stood at the head of the Minnesota bar, and none were more willing to pay tribute to his fame as a lawyer than those associated with him in the practice of his profession. He was brilliantly endowed with all the essential elements of judicial character, and was himself a most perfect example of its complete and beautiful development.

Nothing obscured his moral perceptions, and his devotion to the demands of justice was unmeasured. He adorned his profession because he combined the two qualities of professional life which make the perfect lawyer—the ability to determine what the law is in the light of reason and justice, and then to have the courageous honesty to stand by one's convictions of what is right and just.

There is much in the character and life of a man like Eugene Wilson to give useful reflection. His example will not be lost. It is a part of the history of the state, and will be cherished by all who believe that a well-spent life is a portion of the public honor. His death, in the prime of his manhood, is full, too, of solemn and profitable thought. In addition to admonishing us of the evanescent nature of life, it teaches us how poor and painful the strife, the bitterness and the passions of the day seem when we bring them close to the tomb. Death has all seasons for its own, and we are walking by the open mouth of the grave every step of our existence.

Eugene Wilson is gone. Learned attorney, enlightened patriot, devoted Christian, kind friend, courteous gentleman—farewell! Sacred be thy memory, and peaceful and sweet be thy slumbers.

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B. *St. Paul Daily Globe*, April 20, 1890, at 11

A UNIVERSAL SORROW

Deep Regret Over the Death
of Hon. E. M. Wilson.

The Park Commission Passes
Feeling Resolutions of Respect.

The Last Letter Mr. Wilson
Ever Wrote to His Mother.

The Arrangements for the
Funeral on Tuesday Afternoon.

The funeral services over the body of Hon. Eugene M. Wilson will be held in Minneapolis at 2 o'clock on Tuesday afternoon. The place at which the services will be held has not yet been fully decided upon, but it is probable that they will be held in Westminster church. Seldom has the death of a citizen caused such widespread sorrow as that of E. M. Wilson's. Mr. Wilson had the happy faculty of adapting himself to all classes of people and he had friends everywhere. He was widely known and had more personal acquaintances and friends throughout the county than any other man in it, and it was due to this personal acquaintance, combined with his known sterling integrities that made him so successful as a trial lawyer. Hardly ever was there a jury impaneled in Hennepin county but what there was at least one man upon it who had known Eugene Wilson as a man and a lawyer far above the petty practices so often resorted to by attorneys. As a man he was respected by everybody; as a lawyer he was honest and just, and as a friend he was loved by rich and poor, the learned and the ignorant alike, for Mr. Wilson was no respecter of persons. There was nothing in his nature that divided men into classes. He was a friend to all, and all who knew him were his friends.

x x x x

Yesterday a meeting of the board of park commissioners, of which Mr. Wilson was a valuable member, was held. It was a regular session, and considerable business had accumulated, but the commissioners, who were to receive official notice of the death of the man whom every one of them had known for so many years, and whom they had learned to regard as a true and trusted friend, they were in no mood to discuss plans and finances for the enjoyment of the people. Their

hearts were too sad, and there was a huskiness in his voice and a quivering of his lips as President C. M. Loring arising from his seat, said:

"Never since I have been a member of this board have I been called upon to perform so sad a duty as I am to-day in announcing the death of Hon. Eugene M. Wilson. Twenty-five years ago I met Mr. Wilson at a meeting of citizens, which was trying to get for a park about twenty acres of ground near what is now Grant street. His life was too well known to need any comment. By his death the city has lost one of its most patriotic citizens, this board a most efficient worker, and a personal friend."

Commissioner Folwell introduced the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted, after which the board adjourned without transacting any business:

"Resolved, That the following minute be entered upon the records of this board's proceedings:

"Died at Nassau, Bahama Islands, April 10, 1890, the Honorable Eugene M. Wilson, of Minneapolis, Minnesota.

"The board of park commissioners hereby express and record, so far as any language permits, their deep sense of the loss they individually and collectively suffer in the removal by an unexpected and untimely death of their friend and colleague. Mr. Wilson was made a commissioner at the first organization of the board in 1833, and except during a short interval remained in continuous service. His cultivated tastes, his high legal attainments and his liberal public spirit enabled him to discharge most valuable and varied duties. The personal gifts of Mr. Wilson, his inbred courtesy of manner, his frankness and sincerity of speech, and his absolute and inflexible integrity were such as to render intercourse with him a delight and compel admiration and respect.

"Resolved, That the president of this board be requested to present an engrossed copy of these proceedings to Mrs. Wilson, and that they be given to the press for publication.

“Resolved, That the board through their president ask leave to attend the funeral services in a body.

“Resolved, That as a further mark of respect this board do now adjourn.”

x x X x x

To-morrow a meeting of the bar association will be held, at which resolutions of respect will be adopted by the men whose every-day life brought them into close business relations with Mr. Wilson.

A telegram from New York, which was received in Minneapolis last evening, stated that Mrs. Wilson and the friends who met her in New York had left for Minneapolis at 5 o'clock in Thomas Lowry's private car. They come over the Lake Shore road, and will arrive in Minneapolis to-morrow morning.

As Mr. Wilson was so widely known, the last letter which he ever wrote will be of interest to the people of Minneapolis. It was to his mother, and the following is an exact copy:

“Nassau, March 16, 1890. “Dear Mother:—

“A steamer goes to New York to-morrow, and as this only occurs twice a month everybody is engaged writing letters. It seems curious to only hear from the rest of the world once in two weeks. But so it is on this beautiful island. The inhabitants get used to it and seem as well satisfied as if a telegraph gave them daily news. The climate is charming and the vegetation entirely tropical. The graceful palm trees are waving their branches everywhere and are loaded with cocoanuts. The water around the island is more beautifully colored than I have ever seen it elsewhere. The harbor is full of sailing craft that ply between the many islands that form the Bahama group. The majority of them are engaged in the "sponge trade." There is a sponge market here where they are sold by wholesale. We one morning wanted to buy some that

we fancied. The man in charge said they could not sell by retail, but we were welcome to take what we wanted. There is a Presbyterian church here which we attended. It is one of the largest in the town, and has some very nice people in the congregation whose acquaintance we have made. The minister is a Mr. Dunlop, who preaches with a very strong Scotch accent.

“The greater portion of the population of the island are blacks, who are well-behaved and about as industrious as their race usually are. The children, how-ever, are the most persistent beggars I ever saw. Their hands are held out everywhere with ‘give us a small copper boss.’ This island, having been under English control ever since the negroes were imported; they are not Catholics as in most of the other islands that were under Spanish and French governments. A Catholic priest here told me he only had twenty-five or thirty Catholics in his church, which is the only one here. With much love, your son, EUGENE.”

All of the funeral arrangements will be made after the arrival of the party from New York. The interment will be in Lakewood.

---w---

C. *St. Paul Daily Globe*, Sunday, April 20, 1890, at 12

TRIBUTE TO THE DEAD.

A Pleasing Pen Picture of the
Late Hon. Eugene M. Wilson.

The Attributes of Mind and
Heart That Ranked Him as Great.

How He Honored Partisan
Politics by His Upright Attitude.

His Political and Official Career---
His Sweet Domestic Life.

Among all the thousands of good citizens and honorable men who have left the markings of their handiwork upon the history of Minnesota, there is probably not one, who, dying, would leave a wider space vacant than that left by Eugene M. Wilson, the announcement of whose passage across the silent river was made the past week. The bar and individual members of the legal profession have spoken of him professionally—have recalled to us his high talent as a lawyer, his professional courtesy, his capacity as a trial lawyer, his considerate kindness to the younger and inexperienced members of his profession, his honorable dealing towards those who met him before the judicial tribunals. Judges upon the bench have spoken of his honesty and the confidence universally reposed in him by the judiciary. Reporters for the daily press have dwelt upon the incidents of his political career, and business men have discussed the profits of his business and the amount of his fortune.

But under the high-sounding music of all this public applause, the clashing of cymbals and the roll of the muffled drum, there sounds the sweeter harmony played upon the heart strings of those who have known him through all his many-sided fortune since the day he came — an ambitious boy, fresh from school — and cast his lot, with the young commonwealth he was thenceforward to call his home. Mr. Wilson was only twenty-three years of age when he came to the new territory of Minnesota and took up his residence. One year afterward, when he was but twenty-four, President James Buchanan commissioned him to the high and responsible

position of United States district attorney, an office which he filled with perfect credit and rectitude for four years.

Old settlers of the state, letting their memory run backward to the latter years of the fifties, will recall the brilliant galaxy of young Democrats who were preparing to succeed the political war horses of those baleyon (sic) territorial days— George Bradley, William Sprigg Hall, John McMahon Holland, Charles E. Flandrau, J. Travis Rosser, Robert Smith, John B. Brisbin, Isaac Atwater, W. W. McNair, William Lochren, Eugene M. Wilson and a host of others. Of all this company of bright intellectual lights Mr. Wilson easily took rank among the first. But he possessed something better than even high intellectual capacity— a warm heart, perfect truthfulness, a high sense of honor and a nature so genial and kindly that it insensibly drew all hearts to him like a magnet. In some of the encomiums passed upon Mr. Wilson's character since the sad news of his death came to us, I observe that he has been called "a Virginia gentleman." I do not like the descriptive adjective. All gentlemen are near of kin, wherever they may have been born or educated. It is given to no particular locality to monopolize the die that strikes the stamp of "Gentleman" upon the human coin.

The rank is but the guinea stomp—
The man's the gowd for a' that!

And with all of the rough, uncouth, unfinished features of our early Minnesota society, it never lacked for gentlemen—and they came, too, from every state in the Union and from nearly every country in Europe. I first saw the subject of this sketch in a state convention — in either '58 or '59. He took the floor on some minor topic, and delivered one of his brief and pithy speeches, striking the center of the subject without circumlocution, and carrying his point — as he nearly always did— with the least possible effort. I shall never forget the impression he made upon me, and although I had no personal acquaintance with him, my friendship for him, and confidence

in his integrity, dated from that incident. Later years, and a more perfect knowledge of his character only served to deepen and confirm that first impression, during the war, and while he commanded a company in the First Minnesota cavalry (our Mounted Rangers, as the organization was locally known) I became more intimately acquainted with him. He was the ideal soldier, respected by his superiors and worshiped by his inferiors in rank. Had he chosen the broader military field in the South, there would have been no limit to the probabilities of his promotion. Indeed, I have heard that (I cannot vouch for the truth of the rumor) Governor Ramsey went so far as to tender him the colonelcy of a regiment. His courage was tried many times during the year's campaign of his regiment against the Indians, and it would be superfluous to say that it was never found wanting.

His chief characteristic in his intercourse with men, however, was unflinching courtesy. And in the practice of this virtue, prince and peasant, millionaire and hod carrier, statesman and roustabout, saint and sinner, stood on a perfect equality before him. Indeed, his political enemies (I never heard that he had other than political ones) often turned this virtue to his advantage. "Wilson is a demagogue," they would say; "look at him crossing the street to shake hands with that poor devil." But the poor devil knew differently, and as he looked at the clean gentleman standing before him with smiling face and outstretched hand he realized that there was at least one man that claimed to be a gentleman that recognized their kinship. "Noblesse oblige," and with him the obligation was never laid aside.

How much better and sweeter this crude old world of ours would grow if all men of great wealth and high station would practice the same courtesy to the poor and weak. The same tribute is to-day being paid to his memory by the younger members of the bar, and many are the incidents related. Let me give one that was told me only a day or two ago:

"I had my first case against Eugene Wilson," said the speaker— now a prominent attorney, "and I was as awkward as a big Newfoundland pup. I felt all the time that I was beaten, and was inclined to quarrel with fate for having put him against me in my very first case. I struggled along during the forenoon, fancying that the judge and all the spectators were guying me in their hearts, and particularly vexed with Wilson because of his perfect facility in overwhelming me at every turn. When the court took the noon recess Mr. Wilson turned to me and said, smiling kindly: 'Charley, step into the judge's room with me a moment—I want to stipulate with you in regard to this case.' I followed him somewhat reluctantly, wondering what he wanted to stipulate for when he had everything his own way as it was. When we were alone he took me by the hand and said:

"Now, Charley, I want to stipulate that you shall not lose your temper in this case. I am your friend and have predicted a bright future for you. But the law is a cold, mathematical mistress. She never gives victory to the man who woos her in a passion. We all lose cases sometimes, and it is your misfortune that you are on the wrong side of this one. Give me your word that you will not get vexed again until this case is finished." I did as he wished, for it was good sense he was talking to me. And then, do you know, he made me sit down, and gave me a lesson in practice I have never since forgotten. He showed me all my mistakes of the morning and put me on my guard against those which might follow in the afternoon. He concluded by saying: "I shall win the suit, but I want you to make a good record, and hope to live to be beaten by you in return someday."

"Is it necessary to say that this gentleman is a mourner at the grave of his friend? He did live to see the day that I beat him," said the gentlemen, "but I never yet have lived to see the day that I forgot for one moment his courtesy and kindness."

IN POLITICS

“Mr. Wilson was a Democrat. But the principles he believed in took no color of partisan meanness from him. He had the most unbounded faith in the inherent power of the people for self government. Had he sat at the feet of Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson and taken from the lips of those great leaders of men the precepts they taught, he could not have been more firmly imbued with their principles. He was a deeply religious man, and had perfect faith in the Bible and the tenets of his chosen church; and I have sometimes thought, when conversing with him on political topics, that he believed the teachings of the Democratic fathers only a later enunciation of the gospel—the gospel of a higher and broader freedom for the people.

“On one occasion, some fifteen years ago, during a hot political campaign, I accompanied him to the town of Corcoran for the purpose of holding a political meeting. The old blacksmith shop, well known to Hennepin county politicians, was filled to running over with the customary motley assemblage.

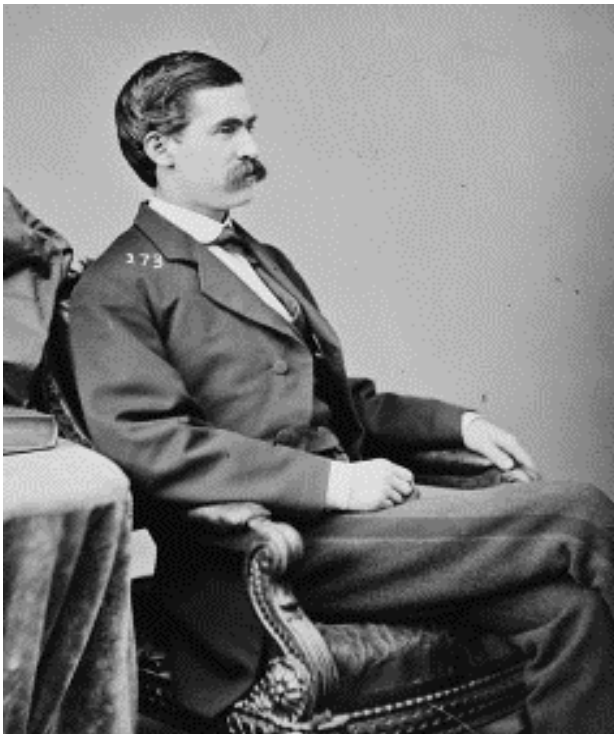
“He spoke pleasantly for half an hour, and then, in his usual urbane and courteous manner, introduced me to the audience. I determined to please Mr. Wilson, and so proceeded to give the gang an outline of Jefferson's doctrines, and well upon the sublime virtues of the immortal founder of the Democratic party. Somehow the gang did not cheer me with the same gusto that they had Mr. Wilson. After the meeting had adjourned to the "store" for refreshments, a leading Democrat of the town approached me and said: "Who the divil is that Jefferson ye wor talkin' about? Is he only kin to Dick Jefferson beyant in Hassan town?" On our midnight drive back to the city we were laughing over the incident, and I took occasion to express the conviction that my speech had not had a useful influence on the gathering.

"Oh, don't be discouraged," he responded, "you will sleep all the sweeter if you will try to remember that there is one more man in Hennepin county tonight than there was last night who has heard the name of Thomas Jefferson."

"Mr. Wilson was a politician. If he had been thrown steadily into the larger affairs of the nation he would have been statesman. In these days it has become fashionable to speak contemptuously of politicians as a class. Men of other professions — law, finance, trade, medicine, agriculture, journalism — all have their special sneer at the politician. And yet the politician is a necessary adjunct— an essential part of the machinery— of a republic. And the potent fact seems to be overlooked that the politician has been taken from one or another of these various classes, and that he simply carries with him into the new field the moral code inculcated by his associates in other lines of life. Corruption in national, state and municipal government is merely the shadow and symptom of the corruption that underlies every branch of business throughout the length and breadth of every nation, that seems to have no other end or aim save the getting of money. Mr. Wilson belonged to that primitive class in American politics— the old school— which could no more stoop to corrupt practices to get money out of politics than it could sell the interests of a client in a lawsuit for pelf. If the young men of to-day who aspire to high political preferment would resurrect the text books studied by Eugene Wilson and commit some of their precepts to memory the republic would more surely survive to confer blessings upon future generations. Indeed, in every walk of life—as lawyer, citizen, patriot, neighbor, husband, father— the rising generation could do well by striving to imitate his virtues— for most of those virtues seem somehow to be growing unpopular with a majority of the young men of to-day.

CONGRESSIONAL CAREER.

“I clearly remember the convention that nominated Mr. Wilson for congress in 1868. The Republican party was hopelessly divided because of a personal controversy between Mr. Donnelly and the Washburn family. Mr. Donnelly had served two terms in congress, and William D. Washburn, now United States senator, was desirous of succeeding him. Both of these gentlemen had large factional followings in the Republican party, and it was generally conceded that if the Democrats made a judicious nomination, his chances for election would be exceedingly good.



From Minneapolis Park History website [inserted by MLHP]:

This photo, from the Brady-Handy Collection at the Library of Congress, is almost certainly Eugene Wilson when he was a Congressman from Minnesota 1869-1871. The photo by Matthew Brady is identified only as Hon. [E or M] Wilson, but resembles very closely other images of Wilson.

“Judge L. A. Evans, of St. Cloud; Hon. W. A. Gorman, of St. Paul, and Mr. Wilson, of Minneapolis, were the candidates before the convention. The fight was hotly contested. Hon. C. E. Flandrau was chairman of the convention, and without his knowledge or consent, his friends upon the floor were work-

ing up a scheme to break the deadlock between the three contestants by taking Mr. Flandrau as a compromise candidate. This scheme was almost consummated, when the Evans following from the northern part of the state cast their fortunes with Mr. Wilson, giving him the nomination.

“Notwithstanding the split in the Republican party, Mr. Donnelly proved a dangerous adversary, and came close to receiving a plurality. Mr. Wilson's personal popularity stood him in hand, however, and drew over to the Democratic candidate enough Republican votes to secure his election. Politics aside, Mr. Wilson proved himself one of the most useful and brilliant members of the lower house ever sent to Washington from Minnesota. It was largely through his influence and popularity among the members that the charter of the Northern Pacific railway was passed; and, although he voted with his party associates on all political questions, no constituent ever had cause to complain that the representative from the Second Minnesota district neglected the interest of his state or people.

“Ten years afterward— or in 1878— Mr. Wilson was elected state senator from the northern district of Hennepin county, and while serving in that capacity he secured the passage of the existing law reducing the rate of interest from 10 to 7 per cent. Only his intimate friends and associates know how great was the pressure brought to bear to have him forego this just and beneficent measure. All of the great financial concerns of the state combined to defeat the measure, and Mr. Wilson withstood the entreaties of his warmest personal and political friends, while he laughed at the threats of the consolidated capital of the entire state. The measure he regarded just, and being just, for the best interests of the state; and with sleepless energy, and against objects almost insurmountable, he pressed the merits of the bill until it was embodied in the laws of the state. It is hardly necessary to add that his wisdom, honesty and foresight have been abundantly justified by the resultant consequences of this most beneficent law.

“Mr. Wilson was twice elected mayor of the city of Minneapolis— both times on his personal merits and popularity, and not through the strength of his party. Indeed, for several years during which he was in active political life he was the one Democrat who was sure of being chosen to any office he might desire in the community that knew him best, and among his neighbors, who knew and appreciated his merits as a man and a citizen.

“His industry was un-bounded, his un-selfishness proverbial, his hospitality spontaneous, his home life Arcadian. While he had all the elements necessary to shine socially, in his



profession, on the stump or platform, he was always seen at his best within the sacred precincts of his beautiful home. Here, surrounded by a most charming family, the sunlight of family love—reciprocal affection of the deepest and most abiding type—gave warmth and color to his countless inherent domestic graces. Here, as elsewhere, no harsh or thoughtless

word escaped him. Here his natural courtesy, that only flowered in his public life, fruited and gave life, health and spiritual strength to all upon whom it fell.

“Let me close as I commenced. The absence of no man of my acquaintance would be so widely and universally felt as will the absence of Eugene M. Wilson. Other good men who cross over the border line that divides the life temporal from the life eternal, are missed—sadly missed, sometimes—by a class

or a circle. Mr. Wilson was one of those rare men, the touch of whose super-abundant love gilded everything it shown upon. At the bar and in his office, at the bank and in the park board, at the church and in the home, will his absence be felt. The absence of his bright smile and cordial "good morning" will leave a cloud upon the sunlit street. In every spot where his public spirit and wide sympathies were accustomed to call him men will glance over their shoulders and wonder why they hear his voice no more— why the strength, always powerful, but ever gentle, is absent." FRANK J. MEAD.

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D. *St. Paul Daily Globe*, April 23, 1890, at page 3.

TO BE LAID AT REST.

The Funeral of the Late E. M. Wilson
Will Occur To-Day.

The Feeling Tribute of the
Hennepin Bar to His Memory.

. . .

The wife and daughters Eugene M. Wilson arrived in Minneapolis yesterday afternoon at 3:35 on the Milwaukee road, accompanied by sorrowing friends who had gone to St. Paul to meet them.

The committee from the bar association met them at the depot, and ushered them to the carriages in waiting. The funeral services will be held at the McNair residence, 1301 Lincoln avenue, at 2 o'clock this afternoon. The services will be unostentatious and private, only the intimate friends of the deceased, members of orders to which Mr. Wilson belonged,

and his law associates taking part. Rev. D. J. Burrell will officiate, assisted by Dr. McCurdy, of Macalester, who had been a close personal friend of Mr. Wilson.

The following are the pallbearers that have been selected: George A. Brackett, Clinton Morrison. C. M. Loring, Judge J. M. Shaw, William Lochren, Judge M. B. Koon, Judge Mitchell, Judge Thomas Wilson, of Winona: Judge Charles E. Flandrau, of St. Paul; and Judge J. B. Gilfillan.

The Tribute of the Bar.

Nearly 300 lawyers, comprising about every member of the Hennepin county bar met in the large court room at the district court yesterday afternoon to memorialize the memory of both Hon. E. M. Wilson and Hon. F. von Schlegel, late probate judge. The meeting was under the auspices of the Hennepin County bar association, and was called to order by Judge Shaw, the president.

There were present as representatives of the Ramsey county bar: Charles E. Flandrau, J. B. Brisbin, O. E. Holman, H. J. Horn, Frank B. Kellogg, C. A. Severance, H. H. Stone, H. F. Stevens, N. C. Hickman, H. R. Bigelow, Gordon E. Cole, J. B. Gilfillan, John W. Willis. E. C. Squires, G. B. Young, John L. Townley, J. W. Lusk, C. D. O'Brien, G. Clark and W. D. Cornish.

At the suggestion of Judge Shaw, these gentlemen were invited to take part in the memorial services. Judge Shaw then mounted to the bench and spoke as follows, of the object of the meeting.

Judge Shaw's Address.

"My friends, I feel to-day as if I had a special right to greet you as friends. If there should be any man within the sound of my voice whom I might not have the right to call friend, or, if there should be any man who would not, under ordinary

circumstances, care to extend to me the hand of friendship, I should still believe that the common bond of friendship which unites each and every one of us to the illustrious dead, whose memory we are assembled here to commemorate, would justify me at this hour in calling you all friends.

“Probably never— rarely, if ever— in the course of the history of this city and community, and our sister city as well, has such a shock been inflicted upon the great heart of our people as was felt when, a few days ago, there was flashed over the wires the intelligence of the death of Eugene Wilson. That shock was well-nigh universal. Men were seen to meet together upon the street and pass by in silence with sorrowful looks, words not being adequate to express the feeling in their hearts. Many men were heard to say, “Is it possible, can it be possible; that Eugene Wilson is dead? Is it not possible that there may be some mistake about this intelligence?”

“Although Mr. Wilson was what we may appropriately call a many-sided man, a man who seemed to have a warm and cordial side for every class in the community, it is to-day especially as a lawyer that we would wish to contemplate him. We have seen him in that capacity going in and out among us for a quarter of a century or more. Everybody knew him, everybody loved him. It is not necessary that I should attempt here and now to speak of his special qualifications as a lawyer. They have been an open book before you all for a long number of years. It is only a little while ago that, within a few feet from where I stand, we heard his voice pleading earnestly, and only as a learned and able counsellor can plead when his heart and soul is enlisted in his cause, for one whom he was called upon, in the line of his professional duty, to act for. We little thought then that in so short a time we should be called upon to mourn his departure. But we who are assembled here have special cause for mourning, above those who, perhaps, though equally near to him, were no brought into such intimate association with him from day to day as we have been.

“We have all witnessed his qualities, and particularly his qualities from a professional standpoint, and I want to say here something which, I think, you will all agree with me in: That nothing in human history, nothing in the contact of men with men so effectually serves to endear men to each other as contests, honorable contests, which we of our profession have with each other in the causes in which we are employed. Nothing serves to bind men more closely together, or to insure respect for each other more than such contests as these of honorable opponent with honorable opponent. We have all read the history of the days of chivalry, when muscular power was thought to be the supreme qualification of men for glory and honor, and we know that then those knights who fought in the arena together loved each other, and loved each other the more intensely in proportion to the hard blows and the close contests waged with each other. And so in these better days, in the chivalry of this age, which is of an intellectual character, we all know that the contact of mind with mind in noble contest is such as inspires affection, respect and lasting friendship. That Eugene Wilson was such a foe and such a friend all those who have known him, and particularly those who have for many years met him at this bar and wrestled with him in honorable contest, and have been overcome by him, and rarely perhaps achieved a professional victory over him— can all testify that Eugene Wilson was such a friend and such a foe.

“But, my friends, we are called upon to bear a double sorrow to-day. Within twenty four hours from the time Wilson yielded his spirit to the great enemy, another prominent and worthy citizen, and member of our bar also, was called upon to pass over the river. My own acquaintance with Judge von Schlegel was limited in comparison with that which I had with Mr. Wilson, and there are those here who can doubtless speak to his memory more intelligently and more fully than I shall be able to do, But I know enough of him to know that in the comparatively short time which he had been here, he had achieved an honorable reputation, both professionally, and as

a citizen. He was a man of great qualities and attainments, a citizen whose integrity and honesty in all the walks of life no one ever presumed to question; and he was a man who, although I have learned he had a right to boast the inheritance of noble blood in his veins, yet never did so boast—preferred to ground his patent of nobility upon those God-given instincts and struggles which characterize nature's noblemen. It is eminently fitting, my friends, that we should at this time pay that meed of respect and honor to the memory of these men which they have deserved!”

On motion to that effect, Judge M. B. Koon, J. B. Gilfillan and A. T. Ankeny were appointed as a committee to prepare a suitable memorial of Hon. E. M. Wilson for presentation to the district court of the Fourth district. Anton Grethen Sr., A. Ueland and C. B. Holmes were appointed to draft a suitable memorial of the late Judge Yon Schlegel, and both committees retired for consultation. In a few minutes the first committee reported this memorial, which was adopted and ordered presented to the court.

The Memorial.

“May It please the court: The members of the bar of Hennepin county, having learned of the death of Hon. Eugene M. Wilson, one of their fellow members, desire to present to the court a brief memorial of their profound sorrow for the sad event, and of the exalted worth of their deceased brother and friend.

“Mr. Wilson died on the 10th inst, at Nassau, New Providence, to which place he had lately gone in company with his wife and two daughters for the purpose of rest from the arduous labors of his profession. Haying died at the age of fifty-six years, far away from his home on an island of the sea, hut in the full strength and glory of his manhood, the sad intelligence of his death came to our association, as it doubtless comes to the court, as well as to the entire community, with a suddenness and severity rarely, if ever, felt before.

“As a lawyer those who have been intimately associated with Mr. Wilson, and as such have known him best, proudly enroll his name high in the rank of the able lawyers of our state and country. It is not too much to say of him that, as advocate or judge, he would have adorned any position. He seemed to have been born a lawyer. In his very early years he mastered the principles of jurisprudence. His range of mental vision was wide, and in his practice he intuitively grasped the salient points of his case.

“His manner of speech was clear and convincing. As was said of another: "No man ever spoke more neatly, more pressly, more weightily," He struck for the citadel at once, and never attempted to win by stratagem. His mind was enriched with the flowers of literature, but he used them only for illustration; never for ornament. To his marvelous gifts and attainments there was added the perfect grace of self control.

“Superadded was his capacity for hard work. This was his genius. If his unrelenting labors recalled the powers of the steam engine, they reflected none the less its imperceptible friction. Thus it was that, fully armed and equipped no man of his day, in the chosen field of his labors garnered more splendid results.

“As a citizen, he was alike conspicuous in service to the state. As United States district attorney, as soldier, member of congress, mayor of our city, city attorney, state senator, member of the park board, or in the councils and services of his party, he was alike the capable exponent and the faithful steward of the interest entrusted to his care.

“As a man, above all, he was at once an example and a splendid type. Courteous in intercourse, upright in conduct, considerate of others, no man was his enemy, and all were his friends. Men of every creed and of every party hasten to unite in manifestations of respect for his character, and in doing honor to his memory.

“That such a life, its course but scarcely half run, should thus suddenly go out, is cause for mourning universal and sincere. The simple tribute we here bring to his memory is only what he himself has so often and so eloquently done for others. Now that “the golden bowl is broken,” we can only say in painful resignation: “Rest thee, dear spirit, in sweet and undisturbed repose.”

M. B. Koon,
J. B. Gilfillan,
A. T. Ankeny.

After he had finished reading the memorial, Judge Koon, his voice oft times trembling with emotion, voiced his admiration for the deceased and his sadness at the death of so universally admired and loved a man, thus.

"In moving the adoption of the report, Mr. President, I desire to add one word expressive of my own personal appreciation of Mr. Wilson's character as a lawyer, as a citizen, as a friend and my sincere and profound sorrow upon the occasion of his untimely taking off. To know that we shall see him and enjoy it no more is to me an occasion of profound and almost inexpressible sadness. It would, indeed, be inexpressible, Mr. President, if I felt that the life of such a man as Eugene Wilson died when that phase occurs which we call death. I do not believe that he so died. You may sever the spirit from the body; you may paralyze the intellect which once moved and animated his mind and his actions; you may silence his tongue: his body, cold and lifeless, may be buried in the ground; his ashes may repose in mother earth; seasons may come and go; years pass away, green grass and beautiful flowers grow and blossom, and wither and fade over his grave, but the memory of his life, the recollection of his kindness, his gentleness, his unvarying courtesy, his loyalty to truth, his uprightness in the practice of his profession, his faithful performance of every duty which was cast upon him as a lawyer, as a social man, as a citizen, will still remain, I

firmly believe, to bless many and many a life that comes after him.”

Mr. Gilfillan's Tribute.

John B. Gilfillan, too, was an old friend and admirer of the deceased. He knew him as a man, as a lawyer, as a fellow citizen, he could not let the opportunity pass without adding a word in eulogy of the illustrious dead. He said:

"My friends, and members of the bar: We meet to-day in the midst of a sorrow that has been aptly styled by our president as universal, for it is widespread and all-pervading. Our whole city— aye, our whole state— feels the shock of this bereavement. But it is to our bar that it comes home the most severely, from which has been snatched away one of its most active members; one of its brightest intellects; one of its noblest characters; one of its chiefest ornaments.

"It was my good fortune to become acquainted with Mr. Wilson many years ago. I think it was in 1857 we first met, and since then our acquaintance and friendship, I am very happy to say, has been continued and intimate. Mr. Wilson as a man was sui generis. He had an exceptional variety of talents that fitted him to meet with all classes and conditions of men, and no one, I believe, who ever met him, whether high or low, failed to recognize this fact.

"We may draw, perhaps, some lessons from his life. Those of us who may be included among the older members of the bar, as the younger members, will remember how uniformly courteous he was! The majority may draw, perhaps, a useful lesson from that. To the younger members of the bar I may, perhaps, allude to the noble example of professional manhood which he always exhibited and which may be a fitting pattern for them to follow.”

From the Supreme Bench.

Judge Vanderburgh, too, whose venerable head had been bowed throughout the exercises, bore tribute to the man whose memory all were anxious to honor, thus:

"Mr. President: I have known Mr. Wilson so long that it is perhaps not improper that I should add a few words here, and I can very well say that it was always a pleasure to see Mr. Wilson come into the courtroom. It was exceedingly acceptable also to know that he was to take part as counsel in the trial of a case; it was a guarantee that the trial would be conducted in a lawyer-like way, and with that courtesy between counsel and between court and counsel, and in all the departments of the trial, that was exceedingly agreeable to contemplate. In addition to those fine traits of character that made everybody his friend, he had those sterling and solid elements of character also that abundantly tilted him for success and usefulness. For I think he sought to be useful. While I do not think he would reject a difficult cause or an uncomfortable cause I do not think he would take a dishonorable cause. Added to his fine natural capacity and kindly disposition was a very careful training. Mr. Wilson was a man, too distinguished for his devotion to truth. His was a mind conscious of rectitude. He was always sincere. I do not think that mental soundness, sound legal judgment, for any great length of time ever accompanies iniquity. Mental crookedness and moral depravity are very apt to be associated together, think we may say truly of him in his professional life that he would take part against no man's misfortune in the selection or conduct of cases, and side with no man's iniquities."

Tribute of a Friend.

Probably no member of the bar within the State of Minnesota had a more intimate acquaintance with Mr. Wilson than had Judge C. E. Flandrau, of St. Paul. He knew Mr. Wilson when he first came to Minnesota, and, as a result of a life-long acquaintance, had this to say:

“Mr. President: If the members of the Hennepin County Bar association have said what they desire to say in regard to the resolutions, I rise on behalf of the Ramsey county bar to offer a resolution that the president appoint a committee to draw a suitable resolution, or memorial, or whatever may be appropriate, to be presented to the supreme court of our state, and also to the circuit and district courts of the United States.

“Mr. President: In making that motion, I desire to say that I suppose there is no one present, or very few, who have had as long, as intimate and as delightful an association with Eugene Wilson as myself. I remember him when he first came to the state of Minnesota from Virginia and located in Winona. He was then a boy, thirty-five years ago— a stripling— but he was a beautiful boy. He had about him those elements which— to use the language of his own state, he looked like a race horse. He had the elements of courage and ambition of a fighting cock, and with all he had the elements of the true gentleman. I remember that year, I think it was in 1857, that he was appointed United States district attorney of the territory of Minnesota, and about the same time I was appointed by the same administration United States district court judge. We served together, I upon the bench and he at the bar, and during all those long years that have followed, it has been my pleasure to have enjoyed the most delightful social and professional intercourse with Eugene Wilson.

“I know of no man in the whole range of my acquaintance that I can rise with more pleasure and with a conscientious sense

of truth to say was a better man than Eugene Wilson. I do not propose to eulogize him. You cannot eulogize a man of that character.

“Resolutions, speeches, words, records can only carry it down to posterity. It is the life of the man that makes his history. It is the life of the man that is his enemy.

“Now, sir, as I said, eulogy is out of the case. The man has lived among us, he has been the United States district attorney, he has represented this constituency in the legislature, he has represented this state in congress, he has been the city attorney— an important position — representing the municipality of Minneapolis, and he has been a prominent man throughout his career. It is eulogy enough to say that he never failed, and always enjoyed the respect of every man, high or low, great or small, In every position he occupied and, better than that, he was beloved—only esteemed, but beloved — by everybody who knew him. I can say. No more, Mr. President.”

There were a few more eulogistic remarks, and then Judge C. E. Flandrau, Greenleaf Clark, H. R. Bigelow, R. C. Benton and J. B. Gilfillan were named as a committee to prepare a memorial for presentation to the supreme court of the state and to the United States courts.

Judge Ueland here read the memorial prepared in honor of the dead judge of probate, and made a speech eulogistic of the deceased. He was followed by Judge Daniel Fish on the same subject, and C. D. O'Brien was called for and responded as follows:

By ex-Mayor O'Brien.

"Mr. President:

“All that I can say on this occasion is that the Ramsey county bar feel it to be a privilege, though a sad one, to be with you

on this occasion and listen to the deserved eulogium on your departed brother, Mr. Wilson. There is nothing that can be said of the life of a worthy man— no words that can express the beauties of a perfect life such as his has been. There is one circumstance connected with the life of Mr. Wilson that struck me during his lifetime as both, beautiful and commendable, particularly to our profession, and since his death I have often dwelt upon it, which is that he gave his services to the community and restricted himself to no specially. In the zenith of his fame, in the well-earned success which attended his professional career, his door was ever open to any client who sought his aid, and his great and magnificent powers were at the disposal of the worthy, regardless of how indifferent his case might be, or how humble the individual himself.

The committee on resolutions were requested to present their memorials to the court at the opening hour this morning, the courts were requested to adjourn for to-day and the meeting adjourned.

Carriages will form in line on Linden avenue, coming from Twelfth street and entering at the Linden avenue entrance.

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E. *St. Paul Daily Globe* April 23, 1890, at 3.

BORNE TO THE GRAVE.

Friends and Relatives Take
Final Leave of Hon. E. M. Wilson.

One of the Most Impressive
Funerals Ever Seen in Minneapolis.

More Honor Rendered the Deceased
by the Hennepin County Bar.

. . .

That the sorrow over the sad demise of Hon. Eugene M. Wilson is universal was fittingly portrayed by the impressive services held yesterday afternoon in honor of the dead at the residence of Mrs. W. W. McNair, corner of Linden avenue and Thirteenth street, Minneapolis. Long before the hour set for the funeral hundreds of carriages were seen in waiting for blocks around, while solemnly by twos and threes came sorrowing friends and associates of the honored gentleman to pay a last tribute to the kindly and brilliant man who had passed from among them at the call of the great Creator.

As if in sympathy with the occasion, the spring sun, which had been shining steadily for a week, hid itself in sorrow behind the dull clouds, and the noiseless, dripping rain that fell from every branch of the trees that surround the stately mansion, seemed to voice the sentiment that all nature wept in unison with a sorrowing city.

At the end of the large hallway lay the casket containing all that was of this earth of the lawyer, statesman, friend and gentleman, Hon. Eugene M. Wilson. Huge palms were grouped about the head, their spreading leaves bending gracefully over the bier, and on all sides of the hall were ranged the floral tributes from relatives, friends and the numerous orders and associations to which he had belonged, those of the Knights Templar, Loyal Legion and Minneapolis club being especially elaborate.

The large hallway and parlors were filled with representative men of both Minneapolis and St. Paul, among them the judges of the supreme bench, the sad silence, even with such a vast gathering, being expressive of the utmost respect and sorrow that was felt for the family of their darkest hour. The Westminster quartette opened the services with a lament that found an echo in every heart, and President McCord, of Macalester college, delivered a short, touching prayer, after which the quartette sang "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," which had been one of Mr. Wilson's favorite airs. Then Dr. McCurdy, in a voice that was husky with emotion, but which gradually grew stronger as he spoke in praise of his departed friend, delivered his tribute.

"An unusually bright light has been put out too soon," said he, "and has left us to wander and grope in the darkness; but I trust we will all be led in our sorrow to Him who is the light of this world as He is of the next, and in whom only can we find relief; that we shall all have the patience to wait until that darkness has disappeared and the future, which is heaven, is revealed. I was with him before he left for a brief visit, never thinking that this outer casket would be alone returned to us, all that we shall see of him until the resurrection hour. I fully believed I would meet him, and again have the pleasure of his conversation, and again feel the clasp of his friendly hand. I was surprised beyond expression when the telegram was handed to me announcing his death, and the silent tear sprang to my eyes as I realized what I had lost. Friends, it is a great loss, and I feel that in saying this I have said as much as can be said. It is a great loss to the community, to his profession, to every order of which he was a member, to Macalester college, of which he was a director, and to which he lent his aid, and to the church of which he was a member. We will miss the loving husband, the kind and indulgent

father, the warm and true friend, the brilliant and polished gentleman, the able advocate, the untiring student, the grand and able scholar. He stood great, without ostentation; he was noble, without being demonstrative, a character sturdy and decisive, without weakness, without infirmity, and without spot. With study he rose to eminence in his profession, in which he commanded respect for his frank and open loyalty. Above all else, he could be trusted, as he was by all who knew him. He was kind and genial, hence he was loved; he could be faithful, hence he was trusted. He is dead now, but his voice speaks in eloquence still, and will speak in eloquence to a listening posterity. He left us but a short time ago, that he might seek rest and recuperation from weariness of much labor and care. He was weary, and he needed rest, almost worn out by his professional and business cares, which had overtaxed his great and sympathetic brain. He was weary and needed rest, and he sought it, not alone, but in company with the sunshine and love of all the family circle which he took with him.

“Dear friends, he found rest. 'Come ye, all who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Ah, yes; the sweet eternal rest that he promises. Try and realize that fact, all ye sorrowing ones, in this troubled hour. We can find rest only in one spot, and that is in the bosom of the Lord, our Savior. And so, when we would come to this sorrowing family with sympathies, which we all would be glad to give, still there is nothing that will meet the necessities of the hour, for we must come to Him whose heart palpitates in living sympathy and compassion for the bereaved and the disconsolate in Christ, and of Him only.

'Let not your heart be troubled, Ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not

so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, that whosoever believeth in me, even though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Dr. Burrill's Tribute.

After the quartette had sung "Rock of Ages," a song that was Mr. Wilson's especial favorite, and one he often sang himself, Rev. D. J. Burrill, of Westminster church, the family pastor, spoke as follows:

"The sublimest thing in this world is character. It is the gold of all the metals, which alchemists have sought in vain to imitate. A reputation may be forged, but character is inimitable, and this is the word that writes itself before our eyes to-day and links itself with the name of our friend, Eugene Wilson. He was a man of character; that tells the story, sums up the eulogium, and voices our farewell. Two things go to make up character, namely, creed and behavior. The former is not a vain thing. He is a foolish fellow who undertakes to say:

"For forms of faith let canting bigots fight.
His faith cannot be wrong whose life is right."

"Foolish, because he fails to see that faith is the substratum of life. "Belief" is from the Saxon bylifian, the thing we live by. As a man thinketh in his heart so is he. Eugene Wilson was a man of sound convictions as to spiritual and clerical truths, those convictions centered in the Bible. He was a son of the covenant, taught in the Scriptures from his earliest childhood, and always loyal to them. He believed in the Bible as God's word, the only infallible rule of faith and practice from the beginning to the end, and concerning the verities of the unseen world he had, so far as his most intimate friends are

aware, never a doubt or questioning. He believed in God, a personal God whom he could address as "Abba, Father." He believed in Jesus Christ, the manifestation of the God head bodily, who was born of a woman, lived among men, suffered and died, having our sins in his own body on the tree; and he accepted the averment that there is no other name given under heaven or among men whereby we must be saved. He believed in the church, the Holy Catholic church made up of all everywhere who believe in Jesus as the Christ. If it be questioned why he never entered the fellowship of the church outwardly the answer is at hand. Let none of that multitudinous body of secular scribes and Parisees who esteem themselves too good to associate with church members who confess themselves to be sinners saved by grace, let no one of that censorious band who are ever pointing the finger of adverse criticism at weak professors, presume for a moment to borrow heart or countenance from the example of this man. He was not one of those who stand without crying, "Aha! Aha!"

"Never was man more deferential toward holy things; never did worshiper tread the aisles of Westminster with reverent feet than he. It was his high conception of the church, yoked with distrust of himself, that kept him out of it. A fault I do believe, a fault which he himself, no doubt, regretfully confessed could he stand before us. But the fault of a man who errs from over sensitiveness is only a fault that leans to virtue's side. In our Christian fellowship, in our aggressive work against the stronghold of sin, in all our ecclesiastical benevolence, in church reunions, we counted him as one among us. He never knew the time when he would willingly have allowed his name to be reckoned as against the Bible, the church, or the old-fashioned doctrines of the gospel of Christ. At twelve years of age he was summoned to his

mother's death-bed. She asked him to sing and he sang, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," while she passed through the gates into the heavenly city. He loved to sing the psalms, our "spiritual songs which have come down through history, winging their way like singing birds. He loved "Rock of Ages Cleft for Me," and "Just as I Am, Without One Plea, But That Thy Blood Was Shed for Me, O Lamb of God, I Come!" There was no man in my congregation who seemed to enter more devoutly with heart and soul into the service of prayer and praise. The other side of character is behavior. If one's belief be right he will live well. Can a man gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles.

"The life of Eugene Wilson was the natural expression of a sincere and wholehearted apprehension of spiritual truth. He lived, not as one expecting to live for a hand-breadth of time and then die and be no more, but as one expecting to live forever. He grasped the tremendous fact that life and immortality are bought to fact in the Gospel, and he lived that way. In his domestic life he was always the kind husband, the considerate and helpful father, studying to make his home like the king's garden, "Where grow such sweet and pleasant flowers as nowhere else are seen." In his profession he won the respect of all who were associated with him; at court no petti-fogger in politics no demagogue; a wise co-worker, a fair opponent; up right, honorable, a gentleman always. A lesson falls from his cold lips to-day addressed to all ambitious youth.

"Who misses, or who wins the prize?
You fail or conquer as you can,
But if you fall or if you rise.
Be each, pray God, a gentleman."

"I have never known a man who seemed to approach so near the ideal of the true knight. Sir Phillip Sidney defined knight-hood to be "high thoughts seated in a heart of courtesy." His was the very soul of honor. But for that, honored as he was, he might have attained to yet higher and more conspicuous places of authority. He would not stoop to conquer. He carried out to the letter the injunction of Robbie Burns:

"But when ye feel your honor grip,
Let that aye be your border."

"This is not the time nor place for labored eulogy, otherwise it would be impossible not to dwell upon his personal kindness, his fidelity, his conscientiousness in trifles, his patience in physical suffering. These and other manly qualities are pleasant to remember. But we are not saying farewell today. An influence like his is an abiding presence.

"Dead he is not, but departed.
For a good man never dies."

How meet and proper it was that such a man should look off with clear eyes and a calm heart toward the eternal world. "Are you afraid to die?" he was asked on the last day of his weary pilgrimage. "Afraid?" he answered, "not a bit." Why should a good man be afraid to die? Why should a man loyal to truth and devoted to righteousness be afraid to die? O Lord, enable us to live holy that we may die well, to live holily that we may die happily. As this man lay a-dying, his mind clear and rational as ever, he spoke once and again of hearing voices, voices that said: "Come up higher!" It may have been a fancy, it may to have been the call of the Master, such as John heard at Patmos, such as Paul heard in the Mammerisne jail, moving him to cry: "There is laid up for me a crown which the righteous Judge shall give me at that day."

“In behalf of all assembled here, and of the multitude of friends not here, I extend an assurance of most cordial sympathy to the wife, the aged mother, the children and other sorrowing ones. "Ye do not sorrow as those that are without hope." We commend you to the grace of Him who giveth beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. We commend to you the expression of faith which was often upon our friend's lips: "He that careth for a sparrow's fall will surely care for you." The blessing of the God of Consolation be with you.”

After another lament by the quartette choir and benediction the pall-bearers, Judge Thomas Wilson, of Winona; Judge Mitchell, of the state supreme court; Judge Flaudrau, of St. Paul; Judge William Lochren, of the district court; J. M. Shaw and M. B. Koon, of the Hennepin county bar, both ex-judges of the district court; J. B. Gilfillan, of the Hennepin county bar, and Messrs. C. M. Loring, G. A. Brackett and Clinton Morrison, sadly gathered about the casket, and lifted the remains of their honored friend sadly into the waiting hearse. The long line of carriages followed to Lakewood cemetery, where the ceremony was a short one, consisting of a song by the choir, a short but eloquent prayer, and the hidden form of the loved gentleman was lowered to the last resting place.

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FROM THE BENCH.

The District Court Adds Its Testimonial of Love and Respect.

The court house was again yesterday morning the scene of memorable exercises in memory of Hon. E. M. Wilson. The full bench was assembled to receive the memorial adopted the

day before by the bar association, and many attorneys were again present to pay final homage to the memory of him whom all his acquaintances delighted to honor. Outside the clouds lowered and a gloom spread over the face of nature, as if even the elements were sorrowing for the departure of the illustrious dead. Inside the court room the exercises were, if possible, more impressive than those of the day before. All present felt that it was their last opportunity to show their esteem, affection and reverence for him whom all delighted to honor in the flesh.

Amidst a silence as of the grave, A. T. Ankeny arose and most feelingly read the memorial adopted by the bar association, his sympathetic voice bringing out distinctly the wealth of meaning in those few simple words. In presenting the resolutions Mr. Ankeny said:

"If the court please: At a very largely attended meeting of the members of the bar of Hennepin county yesterday, a memorial expressive of the sense of the members of the bar of their sorrow at the death of one of their fellow members, Hon. Eugene M. Wilson; and also expressive of his eminent virtue was adopted by that association. A request was also made that the committee having the matter in charge present the resolution to the court. In obedience, therefore, to this wish, I am now ready to make that presentation and will read the paper."

Judge Young responded first. He spoke feelingly of Mr. Wilson's relation to the court thus:

"I can hardly allow this occasion to pass without saying just a few words in respect to our departed brother and the relations he sustained to the court.

"Mr. Wilson was always a great help to the court by reason of the peculiarly happy relation he sustained. As was said yesterday by Judge Vanderburgh, when Mr. Wilson came before the court representing a cause we always knew that his side, at least, would be fairly represented, and that the interests of his client would be fully protected, so far as an attorney can protect those interests. And then again, Mr. Wilson was always very courteous and gentlemanly to the court. The relation which he sustained to the court in this respect was very happy indeed. He was a perfect gentleman. While he maintained always the interests of his clients with firmness, as well as the legal position which he felt he ought to take, yet at the same time he never forgot to be a perfect gentleman and a lawyer, and Mr. Wilson never deceived the court. He was thoroughly honest and a man of the highest integrity."

Judge Lochren spoke more of the life of his friend, he having made the acquaintance of the deceased shortly after he came to Minnesota. He said:

"After listening to what has been said by our brethren at the bar yesterday, and now by my associates, I feel that there is nothing that I can add appropriate to this sad occasion.

"I became acquainted with him in 1857, when, soon after his appointment as United States district attorney for the territory, he returned from Winona to this place, and became largely interested in real estate transactions, but carrying on a considerable law practice and discharging the duties of his office successfully through the entire term of four years.

"Soon after this war came on and the Indian war, in which he participated with credit, and one of his last labors before he went South was to write the narrative of his regiment, which

will appear in the forthcoming history of Minnesota troops in those wars. His military service, followed by his election to congress soon after, broke in upon his professional career; but after his return, although he always participated actively and with credit to himself in public affairs, holding several offices, he attended closely and successfully to his professional business, attending to most cases of importance tried in our court. In every relation he bore the character of an upright, public spirited man of generous impulses and unflinching courtesy. In his death we have all lost a friend and the community a citizen, honored, trusted and regretted by everyone."

Judge Rea had this to say of him:

"I feel constrained on this occasion to utter just a few words. It is a repetition of what has already been said, both yesterday and to-day, but it will bear repetition, I want to say that during the four years I have been upon this bench I never have seen Mr. Wilson take his seat at that table to participate in the trial of a case without feeling a sensation of pleasure, because I knew as my brother, Judge Young, has said, that the case would be fairly presented; that every person connected with it would be treated in a courteous manner. And I would add this, with respect to Eugene Wilson's qualities as a lawyer, it always seemed to me that in the conduct of a cause he was not thinking about his fees, nor so much about personal success as the demonstration of the justice of his client's case."

Judge Hicks said simply: "I concur most heartily in what my brethren of the bench have said' in paying their high tribute of respect to Mr. Wilson as a man and as a lawyer."

Court then adjourned for the day out of respect for Mr. Wilson.

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F. *Minneapolis Tribune*, April 17, 1890, at 4 (editorial).

EUGENE M. WILSON.

The Tribune is not often obliged to chronicle sadder news and that which announces the death of Eugene M. Wilson. He had gone to the Bahamas, accompanied by Mrs. Wilson, for needed rest and recuperation. But his illness, which was not deemed serious when he left home, developed into a persistent case of malarial fever. Yesterday morning the Tribune stated that Mr. Wilson's continual illness was occasioning his friends here much anxiety, and that his departure from Nassau had been postponed on account of the slowness of his recovery. The noon edition of the Tribune gave the news of his death. He died April 10, but the absence of telegraph facilities from Nassau retarded the message sent by the bereaved wife.

Mr. Wilson was so generally known and so highly appreciated in Minneapolis and throughout the entire state that it is well-nigh superfluous to say a lot in his praise. He was one of a number of far-sighted, great-minded men who came to Minneapolis in the early days with faith in the destiny of the place and with the energy and ability to achieve great things. He had the advantages of good birth, and good education and the self-respect and laudable ambition of a young man of such antecedents. In the struggling village he very soon became an important man. He was always been one of a group of model citizens who have been honored, esteemed and trusted by the whole community without regard to party, race or other lines of division. It has always been certain that

Eugene Wilson would be found ready to cooperate in everything for the promotion of the best local interests.

Professionally, Mr. Wilson was a leader. He stood in the very highest rank of the Minnesota bar. And he was an ornament to his calling. His logical knowledge was ample, his mind was clear, his logic was strong, his speech was lucid and fluent, and his manner was courteous and persuasive to a rare degree. There has hardly been a case of commanding importance here in two decades it has not engaged Mr. Wilson's professional services on one side or the other.

As a life-long Democrat, Mr. Wilson could not have avoided a place of great influence in the party councils. He was not an office-seeker, but his name was continually mentioned in connection with prominent positions. He served a term in Congress from this district some years ago, and if he had lived where his party could have kept them in the place, he would unquestionably have attained the highest grade of influence at Washington. A seat in the United States Senate would have been this long ago if the Minnesotan Minnesota Democrats had been in the minority; for he was their first choice. He was their candidate for the governorship at the last election, and made a strong campaign based purely upon public issues and free almost absolutely from disparaging personalities on either side. Mr. Wilson possessed so completely the respect and personal good-will of political opponents that in all his contests, whether for Congress, for the state Senate, for governorship or for municipal positions, he was exceptionally exempt from the unpleasant personal incidents that so often pertain to act a political life.

Twice Mr. Wilson was mayor of Minneapolis. At the time of his death he was a member of the board of park commissioners. He had given years of valuable service on this board, and he felt great satisfaction in the progress of the city in such matters as those of parks and boulevards, education, the exposition, and the public library. He was a good citizen and

a man of the highest worth in all the areas all the relations of life; and when such words are pronounced with a deliberate sense of their full meaning, they constitute a high eulogy.

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Frank J. Mead, "Eugene M. Wilson" in the first volume of *History of the City of Minneapolis, Minnesota*, edited by Isaac Atwater (1893).

EUGENE M. WILSON. At the age of twenty-four years, or in the fall of 1857, Eugene M. Wilson cast his fortunes with those of the people of the comparatively new village of Minneapolis. From that time until the day of his death he ranked as one of the most notably influential citizens of this community.

Mr. Wilson sprang from Scotch-Irish stock, the same blood that gave Andrew Jackson and John C. Calhoun to American statecraft. His father was Edgar C. Wilson, prominent in Virginia politics, and his grandfather, Thomas Wilson. Both father and grandfather were members of Congress from Virginia, the father serving in the National house from 1833 to 1835, and his grandfather from 1811 to 1813. His ancestry on both the maternal and paternal side were patriots and soldiers during the Revolutionary struggle, and also during the war of 1812.

Mr. Wilson was born in Morgantown, Va., Dec. 25, 1833, and began his education at home and in the schools of his native village. Before he was fifteen years of age he entered Jefferson College, graduating from that institution at the early age of eighteen. After completing his academic studies he entered

his father's law office as a student, and at the [457] age of twenty-one was admitted to the practice. In the year 1856 he left Virginia and came to Minnesota, first settling in the practice of law at Winona, where he formed a partnership with William Mitchell, afterwards Judge of the State Supreme Court, the firm name being Wilson & Mitchell. Here he soon demonstrated his ability as a lawyer in legal contests with such shining lights of the bar as William Windom, afterwards member of Congress, United States Senator, and twice Secretary of the Treasury; D. S. Norton, afterward United States Senator; Thomas Wilson, afterward Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and Charles Berry, afterward Attorney General.

In 1857 President Buchanan appointed Mr. Wilson to the office of United States District Attorney, a position he filled with marked credit and ability until the admission of the State into the Union in 1858. On receiving his commission as District Attorney he removed from Winona to Minneapolis, thereafter finding his home in this city for the remainder of his life.

After the admission of the State into the Union, Mr. Wilson continued the practice of his profession in this city. In 1861 he formed a law partnership with W. W. McNair, a gentleman who later became his brother-in-law. In 1862 he entered the military service of the nation, being commissioned captain of Company "A" of the First Minnesota Regiment of Cavalry, or the "Mounted Rangers," as it was locally known. In this position he served for one year, being mustered out at the close of his term of service. His military experience did not extend to the battlefields of the South, as the organization to which he belonged was retained in the State for service on the frontier against the Indians. On entering again into civil life he resumed the practice of his profession, taking position in the ranks there of among the foremost lawyers of the Northwest.

On the 6th day of September, 1865, Mr. Wilson was married to Elizabeth Kimball, only daughter of Col. William M. Kimball, of St. Anthony (East Minneapolis). There were born of this union five children, three daughters still surviving.

In 1868, after one of the most heated campaigns ever known in the political history of the State, Mr. Wilson was elected on the Democratic ticket to a seat in the Forty-first Congress from the Third Congressional District. The district was overwhelmingly Republican, and had been represented by Hon. Ignatius Donnelly. During the campaign of that year occurred the historical split in the Republican party; Mr. Donnelly receiving a nomination from one faction and Hon. C. C. Andrews that of the other. Mr. Wilson was the unanimous choice of the Democratic convention, and was elected, receiving 13,506 votes to 11,229 for Mr. Donnelly and 8,595 for Mr. Andrews. His service in Congress was of the most useful and brilliant character, notwithstanding the fact that his party was everywhere in the minority. Mr. Wilson was especially fitted, both by inherent qualities and education, for success in public life. He was of the most genial temperament, and without effort could draw men to him. Possessed of a handsome and magnetic personality and fine social qualities, he was wherever known a universal favorite. Only to the fact that his party was hopelessly in the minority in the district represented by him is to be attributed his retirement in 1870. To his honor be it said that he returned to his profession, after a two years term in Congress, poorer than he left it.

It was during his term in Congress that the Northern Pacific railway land [458] grant was secured. Mr. Wilson was member of both the Pacific Railroad and Public Lands committees of the House, and was thus in a position to wield a most potent influence on the fortunes of the struggling corporation. At the time of Mr. Wilson's advent on the floor of Congress it was regarded as a matter of most vital importance to the State that the Northern Pacific railroad should be chartered and

endowed. Both on the floor and in committee, by public speech and tireless industry he strove to compass this great work, and was successful. To his eternal honor be it said, that in the midst of the most unblushing corruption Mr. Wilson kept his hands and his conscience clear, and that his most malignant political enemy (he never had a personal one) never dared to hint that he had supported any public measure from unworthy motives. During his congressional career he also secured the passage of a bill granting lands to the University of Minnesota; advocated the policy (since then adopted as the settled policy of the government) of allotment of lands in severalty to Indians; championed liberal appropriations for the advancement of agricultural interests, and gave cheerfully of his time and energies for the passage of every just bill before Congress.

Returning to Minneapolis after the close of his congressional term, he formed a partnership with James W. Lawrence, a business connection which remained unbroken down to the day of his death. The firm of which he was the senior member at once took a leading position at the bar of the county and state, and there were few important cases tried in Minneapolis during the ensuing twenty years with which the firm of Wilson & Lawrence was not in some way connected. Mr. Wilson was the leading counsel of Col. W. S. King in the famous King-Remington suit, which involved real estate in Minneapolis valued at over \$2,000,000. He prepared the case for trial, personally drew all the papers during its trial and the briefs in appeal, and finally fought it to a successful issue for his client—the most noted case and involving larger interests than any ever before brought before the courts of the Northwest.

In 1872 the two cities of St. Anthony and Minneapolis were united under one municipal government, and notwithstanding the fact that the city was at that time Republican by an overwhelming majority, Mr. Wilson was elected the first mayor of the new city. Of his career as the chief executive officer of

this large and growing city, it is scarcely necessary to give more than a passing word. Here, as everywhere, his course was guided and marked by the strictest integrity and the most tireless energy in the upbuilding of the public interest. Again in 1874 he was chosen mayor and served with honor and credit for another term, refusing a re-nomination by his party equivalent to an election. In 1878 and again in 1890 he was elected State Senator and served the people of Hennepin County faithfully in the State Legislature. On the establishment of the park system for the city Mr. Wilson was appointed a member of the Park Board—his last public position, and one he held until his death. The last ten years of his life were devoted to the active discharge of the duties of his profession and to social and domestic enjoyment. Possessed of a beautiful home and abundant wealth, surrounded by a most charming family, he was the centre of a most select circle of friends who were always welcome to the hospitalities of his fireside. He continued in the discharge of the duties of his profession until the early winter of 1889, when his health began to fail. His condition was not [459] considered at all dangerous, but his physician advised a cessation of work and the enjoyment of a period of perfect rest. Accompanied by his wife and daughters and by Hon. Thomas Wilson and wife, of Winona, he sailed for Nassau, New Providence, in the Bahamas, hoping that the genial climate of that locality would restore him to health and vigor. But such was not to be. Afflicted by no particular disease, it seemed that the vital forces were simply worn out. He died at Nassau on the 10th day of April, 1890. Almost, if not quite, his last labor was one of love, in preparing a history of the Mounted Rangers, for publication in the military history of the State.

Mr. Wilson was a man of unimpeachable integrity, perfectly honest in every motive, the last person to suspect a wrong in others, and this unswerving confidence in mankind was returned to him by all classes in a marked degree. Springing from old and distinguished colonial stock, he was the most democratic of men. His best friends, and those whose loyalty

never failed him, were the working classes—the men and women of the city who toiled with their hands. To these he was guide, philosopher, counsellor and friend, and to their interests and for their advancement he gave without money and without price the best days of his manly and useful life. His friends of every station in life did not fully appreciate the value of this man until death had removed him. In the midst of the daily struggle for wealth and social position his perfect self-poise, entire unselfishness and inherent sense of all that was gentle, quietly courageous and manly, were overlooked. To speak of the public services rendered and high positions held by a man like Eugene M. Wilson, seems only a mockery to those who were acquainted with the man, and could measure the strength of the quiet, unseen forces which made every hour of his sincere and ingenuous life a benediction to his fellows. Of no one in all the range of the writer's acquaintance could the words applied to Bayard—"Sans peur et sans reproche"—"without fear and without reproach," be more honestly and truthfully applied. In the midst of corruption he was incorruptible; surrounded by selfishness and greed he was forever generous, liberal, magnanimous.

In 1888 he was duly nominated by the Democratic party as their Gubernatorial leader. There were three candidates, receiving the following vote: Merriam, 134,355; Wilson, 110,251; Harrison, 17,026.

Mr. Wilson would probably under no accident of environment have been recorded a great statesman. His undoubted ability was supplemented by industry and energy, while his fine social qualities gave assurance always of personal popularity. If his fortunes had been cast in a community controlled by the Democratic party, he would doubtless have spent the major portion of his life in public employment, and he would doubtless have been more widely known. But, after all, the chief strength and charm of Mr. Wilson was found rather in his heart than his head. His intellectual qualities, though strong and pronounced, were not of that overshadowing

character which constitute a Cromwell or force to the front a Webster or Lincoln.

His influence on Minneapolis and its development was great and lasting—and always beneficent. The force of his good works will persist when his monument is dust and his name forgotten. His chief element of strength was found in that mightiest bulwark against wrong everywhere—a high and beneficent character. Other men might stoop [460] to do unclean or un-worthy things, but what Eugene Wilson did was always in accord with his conception of the strictest principles of entire justice and the most perfect rectitude. He never for one moment laid aside the safeguard of right thought; and so when temptations came to him he was armed against vice. His life bore constant testimony to his birth and breeding. Behind him was an ancestry—not overwhelmingly great or exalted, perhaps, but one that had always consisted of men of high sense of honor. The shades of his ancestors were never stained by any act of his.

Probably no man that ever was called away from his place by death was more universally missed and mourned than Mr. Wilson. The numerous testimonials offered by his fellow citizens at the shrine of his grave all bear witness to the exalted esteem of his fellow citizens. All classes and conditions of men and women joined to do honor to the perfect citizen, the constant friend, the tireless advocate, the honest man.

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Profile of Wilson from the second volume of the
*Proceedings and Report of the Annual Meetings of the
Minnesota Territorial Pioneers (1901)*

EUGENE M. WILSON was born in Morgantown, Va., Dec. 25, 1833. His father, Edgar C. Wilson, and his grandfather, Thomas Wilson, were members of congress from Virginia, and his ancestry on both maternal and paternal sides were patriots and soldiers of the Revolutionary War. Mr. Wilson graduated from Jefferson College at the age of eighteen, and was admitted to the bar when twenty-one years of age. In 1856 he came to Minnesota, first settling at Winona, where he formed a law partnership with William Mitchell, afterwards justice of state supreme court. In 1857 he was appointed United States district attorney for Minnesota by President Buchanan, and moved to Minneapolis.

In 1861 he formed a law partnership with W. W. McNair, who afterwards became his brother-in-law. In 1862 he was commissioned captain of Company A, of the First Minnesota Cavalry, serving for one year on the northern frontier. While in this service he made the acquaintance of Elizabeth Kimball, only daughter of Col. William Kimball of St. Anthony, then quartermaster for northwestern military posts, to whom he was married Sept. 6, 1865.

In 1868 Captain Wilson, who was always a staunch Democrat, was elected to congress in a strong Republican district, owing to the split in the Republican party, and his own popularity, Ignatius Donnelly and C. C. Andrews being the two Republican candidates. At the end of his term in congress he returned to the law practice, and was for many years one of the foremost lawyers of the state. In 1872, when the cities of St. Anthony and Minneapolis were united, he was elected the first mayor of the new municipality, being re-elected in 1874

for another term of two years. In 1878 and again in 1880 he was elected state senator from Hennepin County. In 1888 he was the candidate of his party for governor, being defeated by W. R. Merriam. When the park system of Minneapolis was established he became a member of the park commission, a position he held until his death. For many years Captain Wilson was interested as a partner in the ownership of pine lands and in the lumber business in Northern Minnesota. In 1889, owing to failing health, accompanied by his wife and daughters, he started for Nassau, in the Bahamas, hoping the change of climate would restore him to health. It was at this place he died, on April 10, 1890, leaving a widow and three daughters. The family have since occupied the elegant home he built for them on Hawthorne avenue a few years before his death.

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Biographical Directory of the United States Congress Website

WILSON, Eugene McLanahan, (1833-1890)

WILSON, Eugene McLanahan, (son of Edgar Campbell Wilson, grandson of Thomas Wilson of Virginia, and great-grandson of Isaac Griffin), a Representative from Minnesota; born in Morgantown, Monongalia County, Va. (now West Virginia), December 25, 1833; attended the common schools and Morgantown Academy; was graduated from Jefferson College, Canonsburg, Pa., in 1852; studied law; was admitted to the bar in 1855 and commenced practice in Winona, Minn.; United States attorney for the district of Minnesota with residence in Minneapolis 1857-1861; continued the practice of law in Minneapolis; served in the Union Army during the Civil War as captain of Company A, First Minnesota Mounted

Rangers; elected as a Democrat to the Forty-first Congress (March 4, 1869-March 3, 1871); was not a candidate for renomination in 1870; resumed the practice of law; elected mayor of Minneapolis in 1872 and 1874; unsuccessful candidate for election in 1874 to the Forty-fourth Congress; delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1876; member of the State senate in 1878 and 1879; unsuccessful candidate for Governor in 1888; died while on a visit to regain his health in Nassau, New Providence Island, British West Indies, April 10, 1890; interment in Lakewood Cemetery, Minneapolis, Minn. ■

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Posted MLHP: October 2008;
Expanded October 2012, and
May 5, 2016.