

Gay and Piper's Tribute to Wilson

JOHN LOCKWOOD WILSON

by

Judge Wilson R. Gay

On Sunday morning, September 8th last, I with another friend, stood in the depot of this city saying "Goodbye, Senator—pleasant journey" to John Lockwood Wilson. He was leaving his home to visit his distinguished brother, the United States Minister to Mexico, Henry Lane Wilson, and his family. At that time Senator Wilson was in good spirits and apparent good health, though not robust, yet possessed, as we now see it, of an indefinable intuition of the closeness of that Grim Reaper which in time spare none. At that time he spoke, apparently as a casual remark, of the satisfaction he felt at the condition of his business affairs "should anything happen to me" and made some simple request of us in the event that anything should happen to him through which he might not come back. I however, expected his return; in no way did I think I was for the last time upon this earth saying to my beloved friend, "Goodbye, Senator—pleasant journey."

We were friends. For nearly a quarter of a century our friendship was constant, enduring, faithful and true. He would not have me today attempt to paint him as moral man without blemish or fault, but I do stand here and declare that I never heard a critic attempt to point a fault or an enemy seek to uncover a blemish in him that I did not instantly find an excuse or a defense. Friendship and pity toward a fellow man are as incompatible passions as love and hate and the two have no abiding place in any breast toward any object, and on this occasion I proclaim that my friendship of and for John L. Wilson was such that I never saw in him serious fault or material defect.

I knew him well and to know him was to love him. He knew how to hold a friend because he knew how to be a friend, and his friendship once given was of that strain which possesses loyalty and fidelity, that grappled as bands of iron, and was as enduring as the Rock of Ages because it was founded on Truth and in Love. I never heard him try to apologize for a friend,—never knew him to bear ugly tales, either to or from a friend. If his friend met adversity and he could help him, his words and efforts were gentle

and affectionate, his manner uplifting and reassuring; he knew how to help without debasement.

I well knew my friend as congressman, as senator, as publisher of a great newspaper, as citizen and as husband and father, and in no relation of life was there aught for shame—aye, there was in every relation a clean life and a splendid discharge of duties and obligations,—a close approach to that high standard of perfect ideals. I, in common with all his friends, was indeed very proud of

of life, those who knew him best seemed to delight in helping him to secure measures which he was endeavoring to promote.

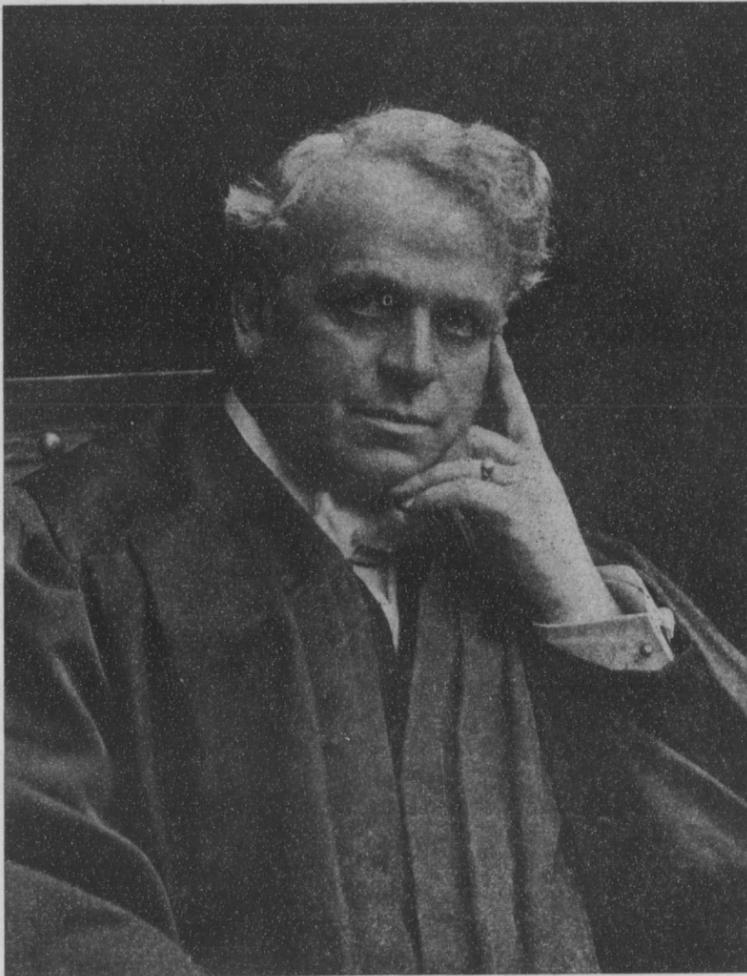
In one thing he was greatly misunderstood, for there seems to have been a popular estimate of him that he made "demands," when, as a matter of fact, he never made demands. He would advocate a cause or gently make a request—ofentimes no more than an intimation, which was usually crowned with success, but if, perchance, he met with failure, he

as an individual, was cleanliness and an honest publication of legitimate news; he believed his paper should unceasingly labor for the upbuilding of this city and this great northwest and that all personal bickerings and spites toward competitors should forever cease. He did his full part to bring about this end with happy results. No pledged words of such a course were ever spoken. No alliance of offense or defense with any competitor exists or ever was entered into. They at all times were and now are honest competitors, each pursuing its own individual course, and it is to be hoped this wise policy will forever continue.

Just for a brief moment I gently open the door and enter the sacred precincts of his home life, only enough, though, to speak of an ideal devoted husband, who faithfully kept his pledge to cherish his beloved wife, who has as girl given him her all in a sublime faith in his personal worth, which faith remained unshaken unto the end, and of his affection and inspiring love for his daughter and granddaughter. He loved them deeply, devotedly and strongly, and toward them was magnanimous, gallant, chivalrous. By them he was beloved unto devotion. He was their shield,—indeed, to them, he was the embodiment of affectionate noble manhood. In his behalf, as in every other walk in life, we may safely use the old homely descriptive saying, "He was a well bred gentleman," for all his great qualities were of nature's implanting and he seemingly could not bend or stoop to aught that was base or ignoble.

Senator Wilson was an orator and a public speaker possessed force, charm and effectiveness to a wonderful degree. If we were to search for the secret of this power so strongly possessed by him, it would probably be best found in his great love for his fellow men and his exceptional knowledge of human nature.

The mortal life of John Lockwood Wilson upon this earth is ended. In that Indiana town of his birth sods have been upturned—there is a newly opened grave. It is winter. The birds do not sing; the grasses nestle not; neither doth the vine creep, but here and there is an evergreen, a sprig of myrtle, the amaranth, and the forget-me-not, emblematic of an immortality, firmly believed



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him, and rejoiced in his friendship. He had a way of doing things which was most effective and peculiar to himself. Challenged to combat, he was as brave as a lion and defiant as a giant, but withal, he was a modest man.

I have seen him in his committee room of the House of Representatives and of the United States Senate when other members of international reputation would come in and in the most friendly way call out, "Hello, Jack—how is that great empire of yours out in the far northwest?" And before the ending of this friendly visit, the caller would be pledged to support some legislation which our representative was seeking to secure for this commonwealth. For in all walks never bore resentment, much less a grouch. Briefly (as all addresses must be upon this occasion) mention has been made of Senator Wilson as the owner and publisher of the Post-Intelligencer. He assumed this great work when past fifty years of age and without previous training in that work, but he had an intuitive sense of a "good story," of "newz," and an appreciation of the public demand that a newspaper should have honorable character and stability, and he earnestly sought to meet those demands. But it is not of that I would speak,—it is of another matter. Senator Wilson loved peace and he became firmly convinced that the first great obligation of a newspaper,