

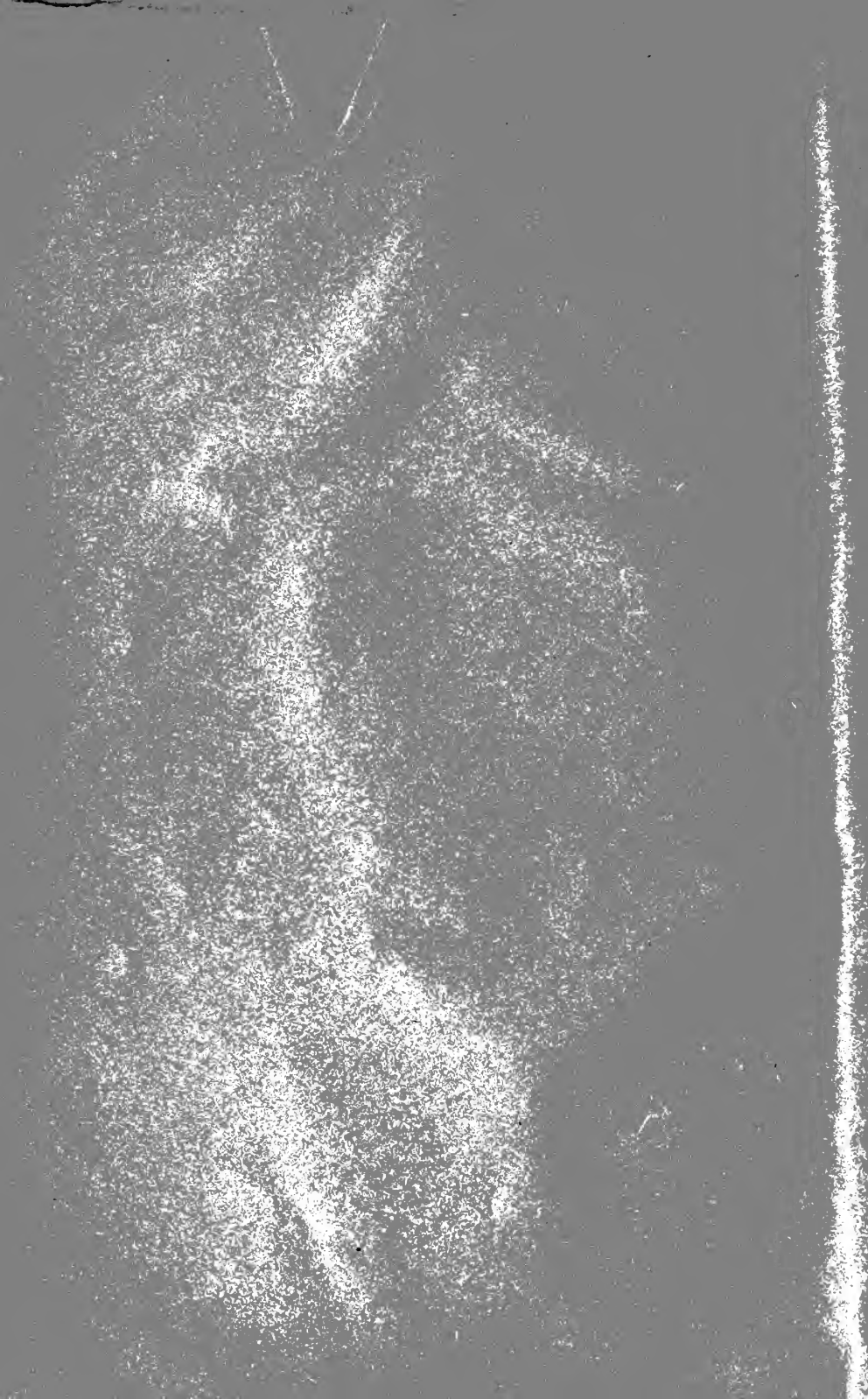
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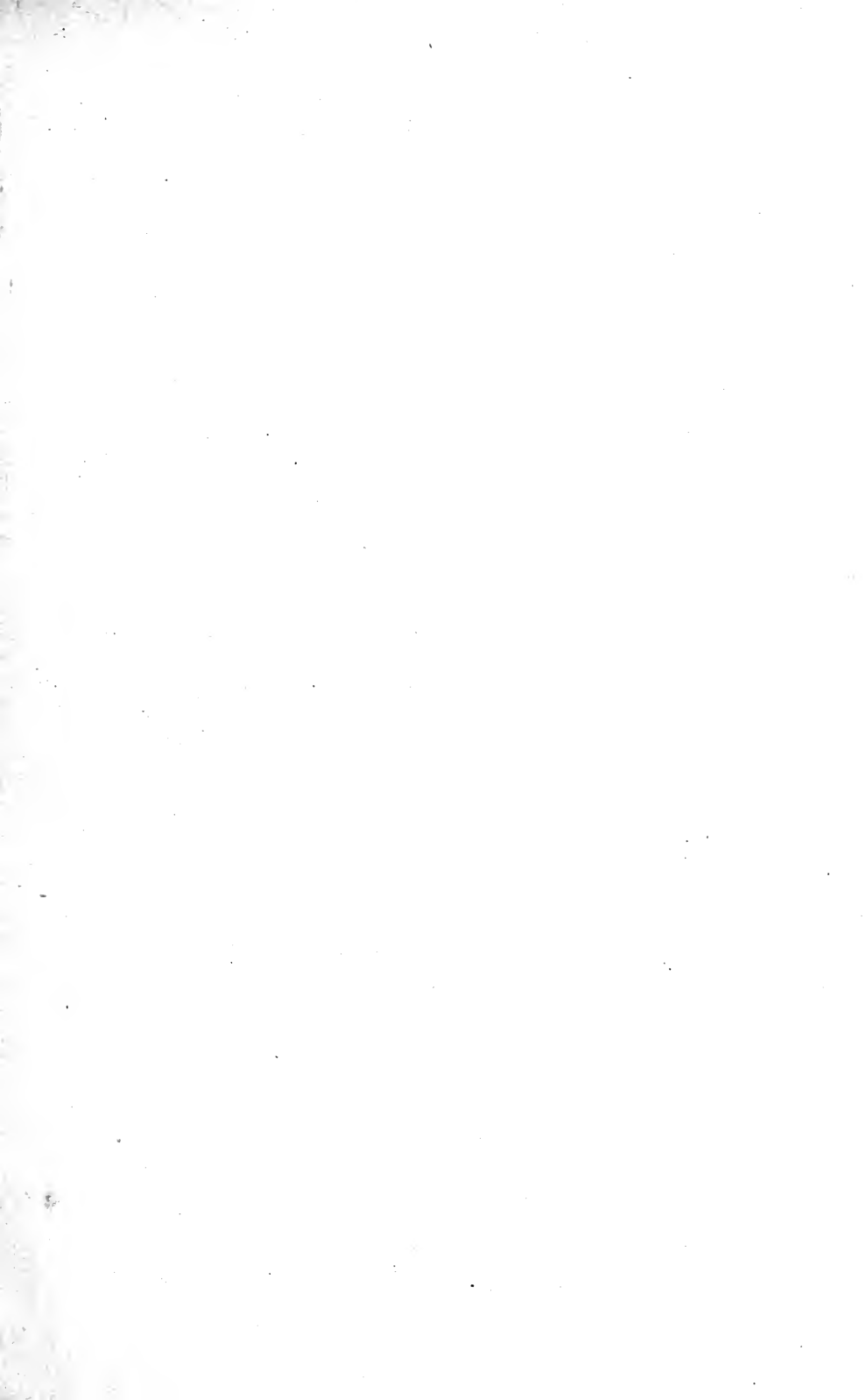
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# HENRY HASTINGS SIBLEY.

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## A MEMOIR.

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BY J. FLETCHER WILLIAMS, SECRETARY OF THE MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

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Henry Hastings Sibley, the oldest living pioneer of our state at the time of his death, died at his residence, 417 Woodward avenue, St. Paul, on February 18th, at 4:30 o'clock a. m., in the eightieth year of his age.

Many just and eloquent eulogies to the memory of the deceased have been pronounced since his death, in the various bodies and societies of which he was a member. The object of this paper is not to add to these, but simply to give a plain, unvarnished narrative of his public and private life.\*

### ANCESTRY.

The Sibley family came from England with the early settlers of New England. The name is undoubtedly Saxon, signifying, according to Arthur, in his "Derivation of Names," Sib, peaceful or quiet; ley, lea, legh or leigh, signifying a pasture, field or commons. Lle, in Welsh, signifies "a place." This, says Burke, in his "Landed

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\*The greater part of this paper was published in the *St. Paul Daily Pioneer Press* Feb. 17, 1891.

Gentry." is one of that large class of Saxon names derived from localities or places. Lower, in his "Patronymica Britannica," traces the name back to the twelfth century, and quoted one Sibaldus (the Latinized name) as a tenant-in-chief in Northamptonshire, given in the "Domesday Book," which was written eight centuries ago. Savage, in his "Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England," states that John Sibley (spelled also Sebley and Sybley in early records) came over in 1629, and settled at Salem. From this ancestor all the Sibley family in America have sprung. The name, however, is not a common one, either in this country or in England. A genealogy of the family in America is in preparation. Solomon Sibley (father of H. H.) was born at Sutton, Mass. Oct. 7, 1769. He studied law and removed to Ohio in 1795, establishing himself first at Marietta and subsequently at Cincinnati in the practice of his profession. He removed to Detroit in 1797, and in 1799 was elected to the first Territorial Legislature of the Northwestern Territory at Cincinnati. Judge Burnet, in his work, "Notes on the Northwestern Territory," says:

"Mr. Sibley was a man of high standing, and was considered one of the most talented men of the House. He possessed a sound mind, improved by liberal education, and a stability and firmness of character which commanded general respect, and secured to him the confidence and the esteem of his fellow-members."

He was elected to Congress in 1820, and in 1824 was appointed Judge of the Supreme Court, which post he held until 1836, when he resigned on account of increas-



ing deafness. He was also United States Commissioner, and in company with Lewis Cass, made a treaty with the Indians for most of the territory which was included in the peninsular portion of Michigan. He was also, for a time, United States District Attorney. He died at Detroit, April 4, 1840, universally respected for his talents and virtues.

The mother of General Sibley was a Miss Sarah W. Sproat, daughter of Colonel Ebenezer Sproat, a revolutionary soldier, and of his wife, formerly Miss Catherine Whipple, daughter of Commodore Abraham Whipple, of the revolutionary navy. She was born at Providence, R. I., Jan. 28, 1782. In 1788 her parents removed to Marietta, Ohio, so that her whole life, almost, was spent on the frontier. Colonel Sproat, her father, was a man of great bravery and commanding stature. Hildreth, in his "Lives of the Pioneers of Ohio," states that he "was six feet four inches in height, with limbs formed in nature's most perfect model. His social habits, pleasant, agreeable manners and cheerful disposition rendered him a general favorite with the officers as well as with the private soldiers." After he settled at Marietta he held the office of sheriff fourteen years, and opened, as such, the first court ever held in Ohio. His experience in military matters was of great advantage during the border warfare with the Indians in those days, and he bore a full share of danger and hardship. He died of apoplexy in 1805, aged fifty-two years, being still in the prime of life. Mrs. Sibley (mother of H. H.) is described by Miss Ellet, in her "Pioneer Women of the West," as a lady of unusual personal

beauty and commanding figure. She had "a vigorous and cultivated intellect, undaunted courage, and an intuitive and clear perception of right and wrong. Affectionate in disposition, frank in manner, and truly just as well as benevolent, she was during her whole married life the center of an admiring circle of devoted friends. She died, as she had always lived, without one to cast a reproach upon her elevated and beautiful character." Her death took place at Detroit, Jan. 22, 1851. Nine children were born to Judge and Mrs. Sibley—four sons and five daughters.

#### BIRTH AND EARLY YEARS.

Henry Hastings Sibley was born at Detroit, Mich., Feb. 20, 1811. The history of the Northwest at that time, the perilous condition of the frontier, the savage warfare which desolated the region, the siege and surrender of Detroit, etc., are too well known to need recounting. When the subject of this memoir was only eighteen months old, the capture of Detroit by the British and Indians took place. Judge Sibley, his father, with his mother, were compelled to abandon their home, taking with them only a few necessaries, and escaped to Ohio, where they remained a year. Thus the Sibley family bore their full share in the trials of frontier life. Three times Mrs. Sibley rode on horseback, by a dim trail through the forests from Detroit to Marietta, camping out most of the way. It would thus seem that the subject of this sketch was launched into a career destined from the start to be one of adventure and stirring incidents, repeating the eventful pioneer life of his ancestors. Thus hereditarily predis-

posed, as it might be said, to a life of close contact with the strange and romantic elements that have always given such a charm to frontier life in the eyes of the courageous and active, his innate disposition received a still further bent from the very condition of society in his boyhood. It was passed in a region favorable for field sports, and the hardy exploits of the hunter and pioneer, where every one of the old inhabitants was a fireside bard, reciting those wonderful epics of hair-breadth escapes and "accidents by flood and field," perils and feats of the half mythical heroes of the frontier, legends full of poetry and romance, well calculated to stir the blood and excite the ambition of the youthful listener. This largely accounts for the life he subsequently led. During his boyhood he received such academical education as could be obtained in Detroit at that time, and subsequently enjoyed two years' private tuition in the classics from Rev. R. F. Cadle, a fine scholar. Judge Sibley had destined him for his own profession, and about the age of sixteen, in obedience to that wish, he commenced its study in his father's office. After about a year's delving into the dry details of the law, young Sibley became convinced that his natural inclinations and tastes would lead him to a more active and stirring life, and so informed his father. Judge Sibley very wisely told him if such was the case, to pursue his own wishes as regarded his occupation.

#### GOES TO MACKINAC.

In 1828 he consequently went to Sault. Ste. Marie and engaged in mercantile operations for about a year. In 1829 he went to Mackinac, an important point at

that date, as regarded the Northwest trade, and entered the service of the American Fur Company as clerk. He remained at that post five years, having a variety of adventures and becoming acquainted with most of the leading traders and prominent frontiersmen and pioneers—names now historical—and with the principal Indian chiefs and head men. He listened to their stories of life in the great wilderness of the Northwest (so he once stated to the writer) like some tale of romance, filling him with a keen desire to see and traverse this wonderful land of lake, prairie and forest. During this period he made his entrance into official life, being commissioned by Gov. Geo. B. Porter of Michigan Territory, a justice of peace of Michimackinac county in 1831. His commission was, in fact, received before he was quite of age, and he was subsequently qualified before Michael Dousman, father of the late Hercules L. Dousman, Prairie du Chien.

#### COMES TO MINNESOTA.

It was mainly owing to the latter person that Gen. Sibley was induced to come to Minnesota. In a memoir of Col. Dousman, read before the Historical Society several years ago, Gen. Sibley said:

“My personal acquaintance with the subject of this memoir dates back to the year 1829, more than forty years ago. I was then a mere boy, employed as a clerk by the American Fur Company at their central agency at Mackinac. Col. Dousman and others in charge of important districts were to report in person during the summer of each year at that point, whither they went in charge of the Mackinac boats that contained the furs

and skins collected during the previous year. I became quite intimate with him, although he was many years my senior, and at each of his annual visits he depicted the beauties of this wild Western land in such glowing colors, and the abundance and variety of game, animals and birds it contained, that my youthful imagination was captivated, and my love of adventure aroused, so that in 1834, at his earnest solicitation I formed with him and the late Joseph Rolette, Sr., a copartnership with the American Fur Company, of New York, which passed in that year under the direction of Ramsey Crooks as president. By the terms of the agreement I was to be placed in control of all the country above Lake Pepin, to the head waters of the streams emptying into the Missouri and north of the British line, with my headquarters at St. Peter's, now the village of Mendota. Col. Dousman was, therefore, under providence, chiefly instrumental in linking my destinies with those of Minnesota."

Gen. Sibley stated to the writer that it was his love of field sports, more perhaps than any other motive, which induced him to come to Minnesota.

"At that time," he states in his article above quoted, "the bear, the deer, the fisher, the martin, the raccoon were the tenants of the woods; the beaver, the otter and other amphibia, such as the mink and the muskrat, were to be found in the streams and lakes, while the prairies were dotted with countless herds of bison and the elk, accompanied by their usual attendants, wolves and foxes, which scarcely deigned to seek concealment from the eye of the traveler. The numerous lakes and marshes were the breeding places of myriads of wild fowl, including

swan, geese and ducks. Many of the younger men who sought employment with the fur companies were, like myself, more attached to this wild region by a love of adventure and of the chase than by any prospect of pecuniary gain. There was always enough of danger also, to give zest to extreme frontier life, and to counteract any tendency to *ennui*. There were the perils of prairie fires and of flood, from evil-disposed savages, and those inseparable from the hunt of ferocious wild beasts, such as the bear, the panther and the buffalo. War was the normal condition of the powerful bands of Dakotas and Chippewas, and white men falling in with a party of these belligerent tribes might deem himself fortunate if he could save his life by a sacrifice of whatever property he possessed. The traveler and hunter, in their peregrinations, were compelled to trust to their skill in constructing rafts or swimming for crossing the numerous streams, and to the compass or to the sun and stars to direct their course. Nature, in her primitive luxuriance, unmarred by the labor of man, unveiled her beauties on every side as a reward to those of her infrequent visitors who could appreciate and enjoy them."

Such was Minnesota forty-six years ago, when General Sibley first became a resident of it. In all its vast domain, now the home of 1,200,000 white people, there was then but a mere handful of whites, traders, clerks and voyageurs in the employ of the fur company, and a few soldiers at Fort Snelling.

"When I performed the journey," further wrote Gen. Sibley, "in the autumn of 1834, from Prairie du Chien to St. Peters, now Mendota, a distance of nearly 300

miles, there was but one house between those points, and that was a log house occupied by a trader named Rocque, situated below Lake Pepin, near the site of the present town of Wabasha." \* \* \* "I arrived at the mouth of the Minnesota river on the 7th of November, 1834. The trip from Prairie du Chien was performed on horseback in company with Alexis Bailly, since deceased, and two hired Canadians." \* \* \* \* "When I first caught a glimpse of Fort Snelling, and descended the hills to Mendota, then called St. Peter's, I little anticipated that the hamlet was to be my abiding place for twenty-eight years. [In 1862 he removed to St. Paul.] There were a few log houses at St. Peter's, occupied by persons employed in the fur trade."

On Nov. 7, 1884, some of Gen. Sibley's friends in St. Paul gave him an honorary banquet in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of his settlement in Minnesota. What had not that half century witnessed, in the mighty changes which had taken place in the Northwest?

Of the few traders who occupied the various posts in this region at that time, not a single one of this band of heroes now survives. The names of Kittson, Faribault, Bailly, Aitkin, Brown, Prescott, Morrison, Borup, Oakes, Renville, etc., have become historical in this state.

#### GEN. SIBLEY AS A TRADER.

The position now occupied by Gen. Sibley was, for a man of twenty-three, one of great importance and responsibility. He had control of the interests of the American Fur Company over a vast extent of territory, inspecting its posts, supervising the operations of the traders, clerks

and voyageurs, and dictating its policy as regarded the traffic with the Indians. Maj. Lawrence Taliaferro, a splenetic, conceited, opinionated, but honest and incorruptible man, was Indian agent at Fort Snelling from 1820 to 1841. He had generally managed to keep up a standing quarrel with every trader, accusing them of malpractices, and probably with good grounds in many cases. No such occurrence took place after Gen. Sibley assumed control of this district. Maj. Taliaferro always spoke of him and wrote of him in terms indicating the highest respect and confidence. It will not be necessary in a sketch of this kind to detail at length the daily life of an Indian trader. To a majority of readers this must be somewhat familiar. It is, and always was, a peculiar life. It required more than average personal courage, great tact and diplomacy, firmness and patience, and carefulness in petty details, which almost no other occupation made necessary to such a degree. The Indians were a simple-minded race in some respects, but difficult to manage in general, being whimsical and notional. Their "trade" was but a simple exchange of peltries for arms and ammunition, blankets, and ornaments, provisions and other articles of that nature. There were sometimes great profits in the fur trade, but also great hazards and risks and losses. Oftentimes the lives of the traders were in great danger from revengeful and malicious Indians. Mr. Sibley used to travel about from post to post, exposed to all these hazards, and not knowing what moment some fateful danger might overtake him. He soon became acquainted with Indian character and habits, however, and spoke



their language. By his tact, prudence, courage and firmness in dealing with them he acquired, in a brief time, great influence among them, and no one was ever more respected and feared. They trusted him and his word implicitly, and he was careful never to deceive them, or allow any one in his employ to do so. The name they knew him by was Wah-ze-o-man-zee,—Walker-in-the-Pines—a name that had a potent influence among them far and near, as long as the Dakota race dwelt in the state. His post at Mendota was generally thronged, also, with a crowd of Canadian and half-breed retainers in the employ of the fur company as voyageurs and laborers. This was a peculiar class of people, as our old settlers well remember; a class mercurial, undisciplined and of unrestrained passions. To keep them in proper subjection and to prevent crimes among them was a difficult task. Mr. Sibley succeeded in it, nevertheless, with good results, and though for years this region had practically no law, or courts, or officers, or justice, he exercised a wholesome restraint over all the white and mixed bloods. About 1840, after this region was included in the bounds of Iowa Territory, being a part of Clayton county, Mr. Sibley received a commission as justice of the peace.

“As I was the only magistrate in this region (he says in a paper written for the Historical Society), and the county seat was some 300 miles distant, I had matters pretty much under my own control, there being little chance of an appeal from my decisions. In fact, some of the simple-minded people around me firmly believed that I had the power of life and death.”

Perhaps something of his influence may have been caused by his own physical prowess and courage. The late John H. Fairbanks of White Earth once narrated an occurrence he witnessed at the Mackinac trading post. A ruffianly fellow, a great bully, and a man of powerful physique, had disputed Sibley's word. Quick as a flash young Sibley sprang over the counter, threw himself on the bully, and seizing him as one would a light bundle of goods, threw him out of the door. The fellow picked himself up and made off in haste. Some of the early settlers used to say that Sibley preserved order and discipline among his rough voyageurs by the actual use of the lash and bludgeon. Doubtless, if so, it was unavoidable. Gen. Sibley once related a case, showing the trouble he had in managing his men. One of them, a powerful and desperate fellow, while intoxicated, insisted on picking a quarrel with Sibley, and defied him. Mr. Sibley said he saw no half-way measure would answer, or his authority would have been gone forever. He knocked the rascal down by a blow of his fist, and then pummeled him until he begged for mercy. Some of the man's pals took him away, unable to move, and it was reported that he was seriously hurt. Some days afterward Sibley sent him word to come back and behave himself, which he did, and he never had any more trouble with the man; nor indeed, with any of the others. Once at Mendota, Mr. Fairbanks further related, a half-breed named George Cornoyer was raising a row with some others. Sibley took him under his arm and dragged him out of the ring. Cornoyer twisted his head around and looked up. Recognizing who had him, he exclaimed; "Oh, is that you, Mis'r

Sib-lee? I'll give up." These incidents will serve to show the nature of his life at Mendota for several years; indeed up to the time of the organization of the territory in 1849. Two very important criminal cases connected with early Minnesota history came before while a justice of the peace. One of these was Phelan, for the murder of Hays at St. Paul in 1838, and the other was the alleged murderers of young Simpson, the explorer, in 1840. The former was held to trial and the latter discharged by Justice Sibley.

#### BUILDS A RESIDENCE.

In 1835-6 he had constructed for his use the comfortable and commodious residence at Mendota known for so many years as the "Sibley Mansion," and which, in the earlier years of our territory, but especially in the pre-territorial days, was the seat of such generous hospitality to the traveler and the public man. This building was the first permanent residence, strictly speaking, built in Minnesota, not connected with the military post, and is now, undoubtedly, the oldest building in Minnesota, except Fort Snelling. It has recently passed into the possession of the Sisters of the Catholic Church for a female academy. Here Mr. Sibley enjoyed, for many years, the establishment of a "country gentleman," with all the appointments of a manorial mansion or estate. He had his horses and dogs, and retainers to do his bidding. A French cook of the finest skill served his table, and never was one supplied more profusely with the choicest game. A good library, current periodicals, pictures, etc., completed the requirements of a cultivated

life, and the opportunities of the best society were afforded by the officers of the fort and their families.

#### HIS MARRIAGE.

On May 2, 1843, Gen. Sibley was married at Fort Snelling to Miss Sarah J. Steele (sister of the late Franklin Steele and Dr. John Steele, of St. Paul), a lady of rare virtues and accomplishments and exalted worth, and admirably fitted to adorn the prominent station in society which she occupied for so many years in Washington and St. Paul. After twenty-six years of happy married life, Mrs. Sibley died, May 21, 1869, lamented by a wide circle of friends in various parts of the Union. His domestic establishment at Mendota was now, and for twenty years thereafter, the abode of happiness and enjoyment. An interesting family of children grew up there, five of whom preceded their parents, in infancy, to the other world. Four of their children grew to mature years. One of his daughters, Augusta Sibley, married, in 1867, Capt. Douglas Pope, of Illinois, who died in that state, February, 1880, leaving three children. Mrs. Pope and her daughters reside in St. Paul. Another daughter, Sarah Jane, married, several years since, Mr. E. A. Young, a well-known business man of this city. His sons, Charles Frederick Sibley and Alfred Brush Sibley, both of whom have reached manhood's estate, are in business in this city. For some years, until, indeed, St. Paul became a place large enough to boast a hotel, distinguished travelers and explorers visiting this region were accustomed to sojourn at Gen. Sibley's residence, where they were hospitably entertained. Among the eminent travelers and

scientists who visited him were Jean J. Nicollet, John C. Fremont, George Catlin, G. W. Featherstonhaugh, Frederick Maryatt, Monsieur Picot, the naturalist, Stephen A. Douglas, etc., all of whom, in their works, speak gratefully of the hospitality and aid received from Gen. Sibley, while the early missionaries to our native tribes were also aided as far as possible. Scarcely a steamboat landed at Fort Snelling, without bringing among its tourists, government officials, or military men, one or more guests for Gen. Sibley.

#### FONDNESS FOR FIELD SPORTS.

Some reference was made previously to Gen. Sibley's fondness for field sports, and that the superiority of this region as a land of game had largely determined him in his choice of residence here. He became, like Nimrod, "a mighty hunter." This taste for field sports probably had much to do in determining his future character. He once stated:

"I believe that my fondness for hunting kept me from becoming demoralized by the temptations which surrounded every man in the Indian trade at that time, and were the ruin of many. With plenty of leisure on their hands during portions of the year, unrestrained by the ties of family or refined society, they were too apt to give up their time to gambling, to the bowl, or to vicious indulgences which the proximity of the wigwam will suggest. But my fondness for shooting kept me out of such temptations. When not actually engaged in business I was out with my gun and dogs in pursuit of game, and this being a sort of passion with me, kept any other inclination from taking hold of me."

He procured from various sources, some of the finest blooded dogs, of various kinds, ever brought to Minnesota. Part of these were setters and pointers, for duck and grouse shooting, but one notable part of his kennel was a pack of fox and wolf hounds. Persons visiting his house within a few years past may remember a large oil painting of one of his most famous wolf hounds, Lion, painted about 1843, by a young artist named Deas, at Fort Snelling. For some years during the period referred to there was stationed at the fort, Capt. Martin Scott, an army officer, whose fame as a hunter is so national (almost every one has heard of "Capt. Scott and the coon") that it need not be mentioned at length. Capt. Scott and Gen. Sibley were continually in the field, each had splendid horses and a full pack of dogs, and the latter, when in full cry after a fox or wolf, must have wakened the echoes of the bluffs and valleys as they never have been, before or since. These two hunters, in their many expeditions, destroyed whole hecatombs of animals and birds. The stories Gen. Sibley used to relate about the abundance of game in those days—for instance, droves of elk, numbering hundreds, etc.,—make our latter day sportsmen envious. Some accounts of his hunting exploits are given in his reminiscences published by the Historical Society. His fondness for hunting lasted until near the close of his life, and his pursuit of it was only prevented by his ill health the last few years. His keen eye and unerring aim were unaffected by age.

GEN. SIBLEY AS A STUDENT AND WRITER.

When not permitted to engage in field sports, Gen. Sibley spent his leisure hours in study and writing. It

might be supposed that one isolated as he was, on the frontier, with scanty mail service, far separated from the cities of the country where books, and newspapers, and libraries, and other sources of information are found, would lose step with the progress of the age, and lapse into an indifferent knowledge of the world's events. But these impediments had no such effect. He supplied himself with the best journals of the country, and the best works of the day, of which he was a close and faithful student. Thus no gentleman in any of the cities of the country had a more intelligent view of the progress of political events and the literature of the times. Political economy, history, social science, natural history, geography and statistics, and a few other branches were especially studied by him, and he accumulated a large and valuable library on these subjects. Those acquainted with Gen. Sibley knew what a great fund of information on current topics of the day he possessed. He was a close thinker and a diligent student, and the books in his library were for use, not show. He was always fond of writing. During the pre-territorial days he kept up a large correspondence with persons in various parts of the country, and wrote articles for literary and political journals. He was a regular contributor of *The Spirit of the Times*, New York, and for many years (from 1846 to 1852) wrote valuable papers descriptive of life on the frontier, Indian character and warfare, and sporting incidents and adventures. His *nom de plume* in this journal was "Hal, a Dakota." Through these papers he became known to writers all over the country, and in England. Henry William Herbert (Frank Forester), the eminent writer on

field sports, said that Gen. Sibley's sketches were among the finest articles of the kind he had ever read, and valuable contributions to sporting literature. By reading them he conceived a warm admiration for the writer, and when the latter became a member of congress in 1848, Herbert called on him, and made his acquaintance, commencing then a friendship which was broken only by the sad death of the gifted but unfortunate author several years afterwards.

Several years ago, when the sportsmen of America raised a fund for a monument to Herbert, Gen. Sibley made a generous donation towards it, and wrote a beautiful and touching sketch of his acquaintance with the brilliant "Frank Forester." In the American edition of Col. Hawker's famous work on "Games and Shooting" (1853), the editor, William T. Porter, Esq., of the New York *Spirit of the Times*, includes some forty or fifty pages of Gen. Sibley's sketches of hunting adventures in what is now Minnesota. In 1866 or '67, at a period when his time was amply engrossed with business cares, and public and social duties, he contributed to the St. Paul *Pioneer* a series of sketches of the life and adventures of Joseph Jack Frazer, one of the most singular characters connected with the early history of our state. These papers have been pronounced by competent judges to be among the most candid, faithful and minute pictures of Indian life and character ever written, and are penned (like all Gen. Sibley's writings) in an easy, graceful and unaffected style. Indeed, it may be said that as a writer he deserves a high rank. He had been in his younger days a close student of classical English com-



position, studying analytically some of the finest models in our language, and based his style on them. He always used terse, plain Saxon, as carrying more undorned force with it. All his letters, articles, messages and papers are models of smooth, concise and graceful expression. During the last few years his pen seemed never to rest, but was engaged several hours each day on every species of composition. His penmanship was remarkably neat, clear and regular, and he had a very methodical and neat way of keeping his papers, accounts, etc. In the Executive Department of the state are a multitude of evidences of this, in the documents neatly folded, arranged and labeled in his handwriting, while all who have ever had any business with him, know how careful and precise he was in all details.

It is a matter of great regret, to those interested in early Minnesota history, that Gen. Sibley did not write more of his entertaining reminiscences. His memory was stored with a multitude of the most interesting facts regarding pioneer days, and the pioneers themselves. It was a treat for any one who felt any interest in such subjects, to listen to his narration of the incidents and adventures of early times, which were recounted in a graphic and impressive style. But he had no time in latter years to write much of that kind. I have, on many occasions, got from him partial accounts of occurrences of the long ago, which I reduced to writing, but all these, together, were but a fraction of what might have been written down from his dictation, had there been any one interested in pioneer history with the leisure to have done it.

## WITH THE EARLY HISTORY OF ST. PAUL

Gen. Sibley bore as prominent a part as if actually a resident. All its first settlers, as well as those at "Pig's Eye," were, or had recently been, his employes. The first actual claim made and white man's tenement erected on its site, as every body knows, was by one Pierre Parrant, in the summer of 1838. Parrant that fall borrowed \$90 of William Beaumette of Mendota, and gave as security a "mortgage" on the aforesaid historical claim. The note and mortgage (now in the possession of our Historical Society) are in Gen. Sibley's handwriting—the first document connected with St. Paul real estate, or with its history in any shape. Reference was made above to the examination before Justice Sibley of Edward Phelan, for the murder of John Hayes in 1839. In the fall of 1847 the owners of the townsite of St. Paul caused it to be surveyed and recorded. Gen. Sibley was owner of some real estate at that time, and was thus one of the proprietors of the original town of St. Paul. The following year (Aug. 14, 1848) the first government sale of lands in Minnesota occurred at St. Croix Falls. Gen. Sibley had been selected by the settlers to bid in for them the sections of land covered by the townsite. Fears had been entertained that speculators might overbid the bona fide settlers.

"When the hour for business had arrived," says General Sibley in one of his published articles, "my seat was surrounded by a number of men with huge bludgeons. What was meant by the proceedings, I could, of course, only surmise, but I would not have envied the fate of the individual who would have ventured to bid against me."

The land being thus entered by Gen. Sibley in trust, himself, with two other owners, were selected as trustees to re-deed the various lots, blocks and fractions to the rightful owners. This was a very difficult task, as the claim lines and the surveyors' lot and block lines "straddled" each other in every conceivable way. It required much time and endless patience to adjust every title and satisfy all, but it was finally accomplished. Some of the simple Canadians suffered their title to remain in Gen. Sibley for years, and it required much persuasion on his part to get them to receive and record their deeds. So great confidence did they have in him, they preferred their titles to rest in him. This accounts for the name of Gen. Sibley being found in so many abstracts of title to lots in "St. Paul Proper."

#### MOVEMENT FOR A TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENT.

Meantime Wisconsin Territory had been admitted as a state, leaving that portion west of the St. Croix and Mississippi rivers "out in the cold" without any government, and a strong effort was being put forth by the residents of this locality—a mere handful—to secure a territorial organization. The famous "Stillwater convention" of August 5th was held pursuant to notice circulated. Sixty-one persons were present. Gen. Sibley took a prominent part in the proceedings. A memorial to congress was prepared and signed by all present, praying for a territorial organization, under the name "Minnesota," and Gen. Sibley was elected a delegate, to proceed to Washington (at his own expense), at the approaching session of congress, and urge the same. He accepted the trust, and pledged himself to go. Soon after, John H. Tweedy, of Wisconsin, who had been delegate

from Wisconsin Territory, resigned, and Hon. John Catlin, claiming to be acting governor of Wisconsin Territory, issued a proclamation for a special election of delegate on October 30th. Gen. Sibley and H. M. Rice were both named for the position by their friends. Neither made any effort to secure it, although some little show of a contest was made by their adherents, but there was no regularly defined election precincts, and but a sparse population, scattered in hamlets here and there. When the election occurred, Gen. Sibley was chosen.

#### ENTRANCE ON PUBLIC LIFE.

This was an important step for General Sibley, as it brought him into public life, where for the remaining thirty years or more of his career, he was kept, in some station or other, prominently before the people of his state. The call to official life found him prepared for its duties and responsibilities. He had been a diligent student of social and political science and economy, and of our government history, theory and polity. With a mind well stored with geographical and statistical information, a close thinker on all the political problems of the day and with a well balanced judgment in weighing men and measures, he was prepared to take his place, not as a novice, but one well equipped for his duties in the national congress. The only doubt in his mind as he journeyed to Washington was, whether he would be admitted to a seat, claiming to represent a territory which had no legal existence. Of his struggle to secure a seat he afterward wrote:

“I arrived in Washington two days before congress convened, and I soon became convinced that my admission as

a delegate was extremely uncertain, in fact I may say, absolutely improbable. My credentials were presented on the first day of the session, by Hon. James Wilson of New Hampshire, yet though the case was by him set forth in a clear and strong light and no objection was made to my admission, my claim was referred to the committee on elections, with instructions to examine and report thereon. I will not enter into a detail of the mortifications and vexatious delays to which I was subjected from that time until the question was decided, six weeks later. Meanwhile, my claim was resisted with bitter pertinacity by certain individuals of the committee, particularly by the Hon. Mr. Boyden of North Carolina, who made a long and labored argument against my right to a seat, and ridiculed the pretension that a territorial organization still existed in the country north and west of the state of Wisconsin. I made a reply before the committee, etc."

[The reply mentioned by him was printed in the house documents of that session, and is an able and convincing argument on his right to a seat.]

"Finally the majority of the committee reported in my favor and the minority presented a strong counter protest. On Jan. 15, 1849, the subject was brought before the house, and the resolution introduced by the majority of the committee was adopted by a strong vote, which admitted me to the full enjoyment of the privileges of a delegate."

Some of the members who advocated and voted for the admission of Gen. Sibley to a seat, admitted that they did so largely out of courtesy to him, and because, having become acquainted with him during the pendency of the question, they entertained such a warm personal regard for him on

account of his bearing, high character and attainments; so that it is probable that the prompt organization of our territory was largely due to the selection by the people here of one who was calculated to make such a good impression abroad. When his claim to a seat was first presented, it is probable that some of the Eastern members thought that our delegate was some "border ruffian," in buckskin hunting shirt and moccasins. Gen. Sibley, in one of his reminiscential papers, says:

"I was told by a New England member, with whom I became subsequently quite intimate, that there was some disappointment felt when I made my appearance, for it was expected that the delegate from this remote region would make his debut, if not in full Indian costume, at least with some peculiarities of dress and manners characteristic of the rude and semi-civilized people who had sent him to the capital."

Gen. Sibley at once set about securing the passage of a bill to organize Minnesota Territory. The bill was reported by Senator Douglas, chairman of the committee on territories. He preferred Mendota as the capital, and had that name placed in the bill, thinking the confluence of our two principal rivers a proper place, geographically, for the seat of government. At the earnest request of Gen. Sibley he changed it to St. Paul, the point fixed on by the Stillwater Convention, and on the last day of the session, after a hard struggle by our delegate and a few friends, whose sympathy and aid he had enlisted by his personal influence and high character, the bill became a law.

Gen. Sibley was re-elected delegate in the fall of 1849, for a full term of two years, without opposition, and again in

1851, serving four years in all, and they were four years of faithful service to his constituents, too. At the beginning of his term he had many difficulties to contend with to secure the requisite appropriations for our territory, and matters connected with it. Some of the members characterized it as a hyperborean region, inhabited only by Indians and a few lumbermen, and of no account for agriculture, and there was much prejudice against the territory. Gen. Sibley prepared and published a paper, giving an account of this region and its resources, which was one of the first articles ever published in the East properly representing our capabilities. Still, during his term, the liberal appropriations made by congress, and other acts for our advantage, were largely owing to the personal influence wielded by our delegate, and the warm friendship and respect felt for him by his fellow members, on account of his uprightness of character, ability and refined manners. During his term, he made the acquaintance of hundreds of the prominent men of the country, in civil and military life, and thus became known personally and intimately to persons all over the Union. As a representative man of Minnesota, our people felt proud of their delegate. His courtly bearing, purity of character, fine physical appearance and his mental ability, would have given him influence and standing at any court, and our state gained many firm friends through his presence at our national capital.

#### RETIREMENT FROM CONGRESS, ETC.

In 1853 Gen. Sibley declined to run for delegate again. Hitherto he had served on a non-party basis, and had either been elected without opposition or by the people

irrespective of party, as he contended that a delegate so elected would be better able to do good service to the territory. Meantime parties had become well organized here, and political lines strongly drawn. Such a contest being unpleasant, although always a firm Democrat, he declined to have his name come before the convention of 1853, and retired to private life. About this time, also, the fur trading house of P. Chouteau & Co. of St. Louis, which had in 1842 succeeded the old American Fur Company, of which Gen. Sibley was a partner, wound up its business, and he retired from the fur trade, the seat of which had become changed by the rapid settlement of the territory. From this time on, when not in official life, he devoted himself to the management of his property interests. As a business man he was always successful, and the investments made by him in the early days of our city and elsewhere proved his foresight by their growth in value. He was elected a member from Dakota county of the House of Representatives, session of 1855, but after this was not again brought into public life until the Constitutional Convention of 1857, of which he was elected a member from the same county. The assembling of the convention, the inexcusable disagreement between the members of different politics regarding the hour of assembly, the resultant organizing of each into a convention, each claiming to be the legal convention, etc., are too well known to need repeating. General Sibley was elected president of the "Democratic wing," and took a prominent and useful part in the proceedings.



## ELECTION AS GOVERNOR.

When the state Democratic convention assembled in the fall of the same year, Gen. Sibley was nominated for governor, and, at the solicitation of friends, made quite an active canvass for the office. The election took place on October 13. The result was not announced for some weeks thereafter, however, as the returns from some of the frontier counties caused considerable delay and contest in the canvassing board. The absence of any clearly defined election law providing how returns should be made, by whom, etc., and how canvassed, and whether Indians could vote, and similar questions, probably added to the disagreement. The labors of the canvassing board resulted in declaring the entire Democratic state ticket elected by a very small majority. Those who examine the files of Republican papers of this period will notice that the decision of the board was not acquiesced in with much resignation by them. Notably this was the case with the *Minnesotian*, the principal organ of the party, whose editor at that time wielded a pen fairly dipped in gall and vitriol. During the entire term of Gov. Sibley, he assaulted that gentleman with the vilest abuse, the coarsest epithets and the most vindictive and bitter calumny. While no notice whatever was ever taken by Gov. Sibley of these attacks, and if referred to at all was without any feeling of resentment, it is possible they may have injured him in the estimation of those who did not personally know him. This is inferred from an incident which occurred some years afterward. A leading Republican living in the southern part of the state, then holding a high position, said:

“In 1858-59, I was a reader of the *Minnesotian*, and never having seen Gov. Sibley, imagined him, from those articles, to be a coarse, mean, ruffianly person. When I came here and met him personally, I was agreeably surprised to find him a courtly and polished gentleman, of irreproachable character and conduct.”

Through the delay in congress to admit the state, which admission did not take place till May 11, 1858, Gov. Sibley was not inaugurated until May 24. He entered on his office at a time when the people of the state were suffering from the disastrous financial revulsion of 1857. There was but limited agriculture, little reserve wealth, no established industries, a want of any system of finances in either state or county government, and not a cent of funds in the state treasury. To build up a prosperous commonwealth out of such a condition as this, seemed hopeless. The state government could only be carried on by a loan, which was effected, and the machinery of the administration was soon organized and running smoothly. Nearly everything connected with the state government—its laws, courts, institutions and departments—had to be created and built up during his term. During Gov. Sibley’s administration, several very important measures were enacted, and events occurred which have affected the interests of the state more or less ever since. One of these was the loan of state credit to land grant railroad companies already organized. The act was passed and voted on by the people prior to the commencement of Gov. Sibley’s term. He had been opposed to it, and voted against it. When some months later the railroad companies applied to him as governor to issue

bonds to them, he insisted upon receiving first mortgage bonds from them in return for those of the state. The companies procured from the supreme court a writ of peremptory mandamus, ordering him to issue the bonds without this condition of priority of lien, and it was accordingly done. Some time after the bonds were issued, Gov. Sibley was requested to proceed to New York and aid in negotiating the bonds. If this could not be done, the whole plan of the state loan would fail, and both the people and the companies suffer loss. Governor Sibley thereupon went to New York and labored hard to market the bonds. He would probably have succeeded, but unfortunately, even at that early period, the failure of the whole scheme began to be apparent to the people, and threats that the bonds so issued would be repudiated, were so broadly and plainly made in some of the state journals, that capitalists were afraid to touch them. Thus the whole loan measure proved to be partially a failure. Gov. Sibley could in no way be censured for this, as he did everything he could to protect the state and insure the success of the scheme, so that no loss to any one could occur. Gov. Sibley was always firmly of the opinion that the bonds had been legally issued, and that they should be paid by the people of the state. While serving as a member of the house in 1871 he advocated the adjustment of the outstanding bonds with all his power and earnestness. The plan then proposed did not meet the approval of the people of the state. He also warmly advocated the mode of adjustment proposed by the legislature of 1877, but which was also equally unsuccessful.

Up to the time of the final adjustment, whenever occasion offered, he did not cease to urge that the honor of the state demanded that these obligations should be met, at least on terms which the holders would accept as equitable. It was not until October, 1881, that the legislature, at a special session convened for that purpose by a proclamation of Gov. Pillsbury, passed a measure for the settlement of the outstanding bonds, by the issue of new state bonds to the amount of \$4,253,000. No citizen of our state was more delighted at this tardy but honorable measure of justice than Gen. Sibley, who had so long and ardently advocated it.

#### THE WRIGHT COUNTY WAR

was another of the events of Gov. Sibley's administration, which excited at the time acrimonious strictures on his action, and has been frequently mentioned since as an error of judgment on his part. It resulted from a firm determination on the part of Gov. Sibley that the laws of the state should be obeyed and order enforced. In 1858 a man named Rinehart, who had been arrested in Le Sueur county for murder, was taken out of the jail by a mob of disguised men and hung. One or two other cases of lynch law had also occurred, and the law-abiding people became alarmed at these demonstrations and insisted that an effort should be made to suppress or punish them. In the spring of 1859, a man named Oscar F. Jackson, of Wright county, who had been regularly tried for the murder of a neighbor and acquitted, was seized by a mob at Rockford and hung—a most daring and flagrant outrage. Immediately on learning these facts, Gov. Sibley issued a proclamation, offering a

reward of \$500 for the arrest or conviction of any of the perpetrators. He said:

“These deeds of violence must cease, or there will be no safety for life or property in our midst. If necessary, the whole power of the state will be called into action to punish the perpetrators of such crimes against the laws.”

Not long after this Mrs. Jackson recognized, in a party at Minnehaha Falls, one Emory Moore, who had been prominent in the lynching of her husband. He was arrested and taken to Wright county for trial. On August 2d an armed mob broke into the building where he was confined and released him. The regular civil authorities of Wright county declared that they were powerless. Gov. Sibley at once saw that he must punish this defiant lawlessness or merit censure for an abject surrender of the rights and protection of the people to a few rebellious ruffians. He was not a man to be daunted or intimidated by such a demonstration. He at once ordered the uniformed and equipped militia of the state (of which there were then several finely organized companies) under arms, and on August 5th dispatched three companies under Col. John S. Prince, to Monticello to arrest the rioters and enforce the law. A few special detectives and civil officers accompanied the troops, and Gov. Sibley in person directed the whole movement. The force proceeded to Monticello, reinforced the civil authorities, arrested eleven lynchers and rescuers, and handed them over to the authorities. The lawless spirit having been effectually overawed, the forces returned, and the “Wright county war” ended, fortunately without bloodshed. The cost of the expedition was necessarily considerable, and was severely commented on by party papers, but



there was no law-abiding citizen at that time who did not heartily sustain Gov. Sibley in his prompt and determined effort to uphold the majesty of the law—as was his sworn duty to do.

#### HIS FURTHER OFFICIAL CAREER.

It would expand this sketch to too great length to give much of a minute review to the principal events of Gov. Sibley's official career. During the whole term he labored most faithfully and earnestly to protect the interests of the state and its people, and in the aid of good government, good laws and good policy. Whatever may have been said by those politically opposed to him of his administration (and of course he did not escape criticism from such), no one did, nor could, say that he was not honest, scrupulous and incorruptible, and that he strove to secure such men for all positions, where he had the appointing power. His administration, more than any which have succeeded it, was beset with difficulties, owing to the unorganized condition of everything, incident to the initial year of the state government, and it required patient effort and careful tact on his part to adjust all the delicate questions springing up. When his term was nearing a close, he was warmly urged by his political friends to accept the nomination for a second term, but he refused to do so, preferring the peace of quiet private life to the thorny path of public office. When the rebellion of 1861 broke out, Gov. Sibley earnestly advocated the Union cause. He had been, in common with a large class of patriots, strongly in favor of any honorable compromise which would avert the threatened disruption and



the calamity of war, and spoke and wrote in favor of peaceful conciliatory measures. But when the attack was made on Sumter, and President Lincoln called for military forces to suppress rebellion, Gov. Sibley warmly advocated upholding the honor of the nation by arms, as being the only course left us. To those who thought that the struggle would be a brief one, and that the secessionists could be easily subjugated, he said, decidedly, he knew better, that he had mingled with Southern men largely in the army and at Washington, and knew their pride and spirit better. He was satisfied that the contest would be long and bitter. During the war he was always ready to contribute means for aid of the various sanitary and soldiers' relief measures set on foot, and wherever he wrote or spoke on the subject, it was with patriotic and loyal warmth.

## THE INDIAN WAR OF 1862.

The Sioux outbreak occurred Aug. 18, 1862, and on Aug. 19, Gov. Sibley was appointed by Gov. Ramsey to the command of the military expedition then moving up the Minnesota River, with the rank of colonel, but really with the powers and duties of a general. At that time the appointment could have been bestowed upon no one better qualified to execute the difficult trust. His intimate acquaintance with the Indian character and their leading men, his knowledge of the country and his acquaintance with military art, as well as the Indian mode of warfare, admirably fitted him for success as a commander-in-chief. Arriving at the frontier, everything was found in a terrible state. New Ulm and other towns

had been partly burned, hundreds of persons massacred, the country laid waste, and numbers of women and children captives in the hands of the brutal savages. Panic and confusion reigned everywhere. The troops who had been hurried to the front were raw recruits, poorly armed, without rations or equipage, and many had never seen an Indian. The enemy were the most numerous and well armed, and thus far victorious at every point. Such were the difficulties which faced him. Gen. Sibley's first object was to protect the most exposed points, until he could be furnished with reinforcements and supplies. He was severely criticised at the time by newspaper fault-finders and military tyros for not throwing his raw troops on the enemy at once, and even some intimated that he was manoeuvring to let the Indians get more plunder and escape unharmed. But such a policy as was urged on him would have been disastrous. His troops would have suffered inevitable defeat and massacre. It would have been the repulse of Braddock or Custer re-enacted. All his plans worked out successfully. The savages were repulsed at New Ulm by the force under Col. Flandrau, at Fort Ridgely and Birch Coolie successively, and finally completely beaten in the decisive battle of Wood Lake, by Gen. Sibley. Soon after Gen. Sibley was enabled, by strategy and diplomatic management, to not only effect the release of the white captives, nearly 250 in number, but to take prisoners about 2,000 men, women and children of the enemy. He then instituted a military commission, with Col. William Crooks as president, and Hon. I. V. D. Heard as judge advocate, by which the Indian warriors, to the number of more than 400, were tried.



Three hundred and three were condemned to death for murder and massacre, and others to various terms of imprisonment, from one to ten years, for pillage and robbery. The execution of the condemned was prevented by the order of President Lincoln, at the earnest solicitation of some pseudo humanitarians at the East, much to the dissatisfaction of the people generally of this state. Finally, Gen. Sibley was ordered to execute thirty-eight of the criminals convicted of massacre and rape, which was done on Dec. 26, 1862, at Mankato. The remainder were taken to Davenport, Iowa, and from thence to Fort Thompson, on the Missouri. On Sept. 29, 1862, President Lincoln commissioned Col. Sibley as a brigadier general for gallant conduct in the field. He established his headquarters in St. Paul, and a new military department was created, embracing Minnesota, Dakota, Iowa and Wisconsin. At this time Gen. Sibley removed his family to St. Paul, and, after a few months, purchased the fine mansion owned by J. W. Bass, which was ever after his residence, and is associated in the minds of people of the state with innumerable acts of hospitality and social occasions. Gen. John Pope was in command of the district above noted, but he was here only a few weeks in person, his headquarters being in Milwaukee, and the management and oversight of the military affairs in this state were left entirely to Gen. Sibley.

The winter of 1862-3 was spent in forming a cordon of posts and garrisons, with a line of scouts and patrols across the frontier, which resulted in securing perfect protection to the people in the western part of the state.

Congress meantime having reduced the number of brigadier generals, it seemed certain that Gen. Sibley's appointment would not be confirmed. In anticipation of this event the legislature on March 3rd passed a joint resolution referring to his successful management of the campaign of 1862 and his fitness for the command, and that the failure to confirm his nomination would be regarded as a misfortune, and asking the president to appoint him a brigadier general of volunteers and assign him to the command of the district of Minnesota, etc. The senate having failed to confirm his nomination, Gen. Sibley was again appointed by the president, as above requested, and, having some scruples about accepting under the circumstances, was urged to do so by a petition, or request, signed by all the prominent business men and firms in the city. To this wish he yielded, and immediately set about preparing for the campaign of 1863. An expedition was at once organized to proceed to Devil's Lake and vicinity, and attack and defeat the hostile Sioux known to be in that region. The expedition was finely equipped and well officered, and was led by Gen. Sibley in person. It left Camp Pope on June 16th, marched into Dakota, had three battles and sundry skirmishes with the hostile Sioux, defeating them at every encounter, and driving them beyond the Missouri river, which was the farthest point reached by the troops. Having accomplished its object, and freed the Minnesota frontier from all apprehensions of Indian raids, it returned to Fort Snelling in September. During the time of the expedition the leading hostile chief, Little Crow, was killed and his son captured. During the absence of Gen. Sibley, also, the sad

news reached him of the death of one of his children at St. Paul. The years 1864 and 1865 were employed in conducting measures for the defense of the frontier, which resulted in completely restoring safety to our Western counties, and depriving the savages of an opportunity to molest them. On Nov. 29th, 1865, Gen. Sibley was appointed brevet major general "for efficient and meritorious services." He was relieved from the command of the district of Minnesota in August, 1866, by order of the president, and detailed with a mixed civil and military commission to negotiate treaties with the hostile Sioux and other disaffected bands on the upper Missouri, which duty was successfully discharged, treaties having been made at Fort Sully with the Sioux and subsequently ratified by the Senate. It might, in this connection, be remarked that Gen. Sibley always had great influence with the Indians at treaties and had attended all the prominent treaties with the various tribes of the Northwest ever since his advent into this region. His advice was always sought, and relied on by the officers of the Indian bureau at Washington, and was of great value to them on numerous critical occasions. Almost to the period of his death, he took a great interest in the Indian question, and frequently gave his views in writing, to the Department, in answer to questions submitted by its officials.

#### IN CIVIL LIFE AGAIN.

On retiring from military life and cares, Gen. Sibley again assumed the duties of a public-spirited and useful citizen. The business to which he mainly devoted himself during the remainder of his life was the presi-

dency of the St. Paul Gas Company, to which he was elected, he having secured a majority of the capital stock of that company. He retained the presidency of this corporation until his death, a period of just twenty three years. It was at once considerably extended, the works enlarged and the company put on a footing commensurate with the rapid growth of the city about that time, February, 1868. He had, in addition to this, numerous investments in other directions, which required constant care and watchfulness on his part. He was president of two banks at one time, the City bank and the Minnesota Savings Institution, the former of which was subsequently merged into the First National Bank, of which he became a director. At the same period, and for a long time subsequently he was a director in the Sioux City railroad, and possibly of other business corporations in which he was a stockholder. In all these organizations he was continually on the most responsible and laborious committees, and his advice and counsel were continually in request. In 1867 he was largely instrumental in organizing the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce, and in giving it its efficiency and character. He was its president at different periods, for several years, served on its most important committees, and attended its meetings with a punctuality and regularity which shamed younger men and those of more leisure. In 1868 he was by it elected a delegate to the national board of trade, which met that year in Detroit, and in which body he took a leading part. He also served as chairman of the committee on relief of grasshopper sufferers in 1873-4, devoting a large amount of time and labor to the duties

of that trust, collecting and disbursing money, food and clothing, writing letters, relieving special cases of distress, etc. The people of the frontier counties will remember these labors with gratitude.

On Nov. 15, 1867, a very afflicting tragedy occurred at Gen. Sibley's residence. At the close of a social entertainment, a young servant girl was extinguishing an oil lamp, when it exploded, covering her with blazing oil. At her screams, General Sibley ran with a blanket and wrapped it around her, succeeding, at length, in extinguishing the flames, but not until the unlucky young woman had received injuries from which she died in a short time. Gen. S. had his hands very severely burned, as also his daughter, Augusta, and his wife, in their efforts to aid the girl, while his residence narrowly escaped destruction.

In 1871 and '72, Gen. S. was president of the Chamber of Commerce, of which he was also for several years a director, and a perpetual member. He was also (1873-1891) a director in the First National Bank, and (1878-1891) president of Oakland cemetery. From 1885 to his death he was president of the Minnesota Club, and in 1888, commander of the Loyal Legion of Minnesota. In 1883, he was appointed by President Arthur, as president of the commission to settle claims for damages due to the Ojibway Indians from the construction of the national reservoirs. He was also a member of Acker Post No. 21, G. A. R., from May, 1885, until his death.

Other honors were also bestowed on him, by institutions elsewhere. In 1875, he was elected a member of the American Geographical Society, of New York. Al-

most the last year of his life (in 1888), General Sibley, very unexpectedly to himself, received the compliment of his creation as a Doctor of Laws, by the College of New Jersey, at Princeton, and received the diploma in due form. It was a just and well-merited recognition of our foremost citizen, and he always appreciated it highly.

#### OFFICIAL TRUSTS AND APPOINTMENTS.

He was also appointed delegate to the Cleveland soldiers' convention in 1866, and visitor to the West Point Military Academy in 1867. It is gratifying to remark that wherever he went on such missions as this, he was always recognized as a representative man of our state, and found that he was no stranger to leading men of other sections, having in some degree a national reputation, which was gratifying to his fellow citizens of Minnesota, who always regarded him with a just pride. These years were also crowded with official duties of various responsible kinds. He was elected school inspector from the Fifth ward in 1867, and gave the position faithful and conscientious attention, not escaping criticism, however, for the independent stand he took in regard to sharing the school funds with Catholic schools. In 1870 he was elected a member of the house of representatives, and, in addition to other faithful and conscientious labors for his constituency and the state at large, he labored hard to secure a recognition and adjustment of the outstanding "State railroad bonds." His speech on that question, which was widely circulated, was a masterly argument in favor of good faith to the bondholders.

In 1868 Gen. Sibley was appointed a regent of the State University, and from that date until his death rendered faithful services in aid of that institution, although it sometimes taxed his time, engrossed as he was by numerous other cares, to a great degree. Frequently he urged his resignation, on the plea of age and failing strength, but his associates on the board prized his services and ability too highly, to consent to his withdrawal. In 1874 he was also appointed a member of the state normal board, and for several years did good service in aid of normal education for Minnesota, being president of the board also. In 1875 Gen. Sibley was appointed by the president as a member of the Board of Indian commissioners, an important and difficult post, but one for which his valuable knowledge of the Indian character made him especially valuable. He served on this commission for some months, and rendered services highly esteemed by the department, but finding that it would require his absence from home too much, interfering with other duties, and his health being also precarious, he resigned in 1876, to the regret of his associates on the board. In 1872 Gen. Sibley was created by act of legislature a member of a commission to purchase a park for the city of St. Paul, and aided in securing the valuable tract now known as Como Park, a measure, which, though it was met with much adverse criticism at the time, has since demonstrated the value of the move.

In the fall of 1880 Gen. Sibley was prevailed on to yield to the earnest solicitations of his party friends in the Third congressional district, and became their candidate for congressman. It was wholly unexpected and unde-

sired by him, and his acceptance of the nomination was simply a favor to his friends. He saw at the time that success was impossible, as the opposite party had a large majority in the district, which his friends could not hope to overcome, even by the great popularity of their candidate. He made as little personal canvass as was possible under the circumstances, though his friends did active work for him, and large numbers of the opposite party, even, advocated his election and voted for him. His defeat, therefore, did not disappoint him, and it is probable that he even rejoiced at it, as it is certain that he preferred the quiet of home to the exciting and laborious life of a congressman.

#### THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

Gen. Sibley was a charter member, and one of the founders, of both the Minnesota Historical Society and the Old Settlers' Association of Minnesota—the former in 1849, the latter in 1858. He was greatly interested in the objects of both, and was president of each, at different times, for several years. He wrote several valuable papers for the historical society, which have been published in their collections. These papers are memoirs of prominent pioneers, accounts of historical occurrences, reminiscences of early days, etc. He made the society valuable gifts at various times, and rendered it signal services in many ways. He was twice its president, the last time, for thirteen years continually, and until his death. As the infirmities of age began to affect him, he several times, at the election of officers, begged his associates in the society to relieve him from his duties as president,



but they valued and appreciated his devotion to its success, and the influence of having his name at the head of their roll, too much to yield to his request. It is well known, that some years ago Gen. Sibley had provided in his will for a handsome bequest to the Historical Society, for the purpose of aiding it in the erection of its proposed fire proof building, but towards the period of his death, finding that the society did not appear to have any intention of pushing its project of a building within a reasonable period, he cancelled the bequest, and instead, provided for a gift of books from his private library, which has, since his death, been received. Among them were many books which the society highly prizes.

It may be proper to state here that the society has had the assurance from the heirs of General Sibley that they will donate to it, all the papers and manuscript left by the general at his death. There are many thousands of these, of great historical value. They constitute his business and personal correspondence, reaching back to the time of his engaging in the service of the American Fur Company, at Mackinac, in 1829; all his manuscript records, journals, files of documents, memorandum books, account books, etc., for over sixty years. So careful and methodical was General Sibley in his habits, that it is certain that every scrap of writing which came into his hands during that period, was filed by him. There are many thousand letters from old fur traders, pioneers and explorers, government officials, Indian agents and treaty makers; army officers, early residents and travelers, officials and missionaries, reaching back over half a century. Most of all this long list of the heroes of our

pre-historic period, have been gathered to their fathers, a generation ago, and undoubtedly these precious memorials of their life and times on the northwest frontier, are the only autographs in existence of most of them. They relate to events in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Hudson's Bay, Lake Superior, Red River, and many important events are perhaps recorded in no other form. The value, for historical material, of this mass of manuscript is beyond computation, and constitutes a more valuable legacy from our deceased president, than anything which he could have left to us. When received and properly bound and indexed, they will form one of the most valuable departments of our collections.

#### A BUSY LIFE

The appointments and official trusts above referred to were really but a small portion of those in which Gen. Sibley served his state or his community. There are a number of other committees, delegations, commissions, etc., in which he served, giving to each careful and conscientious service. Indeed, for some years, scarcely any movement would be inaugurated without getting Gen. Sibley to countenance or head it, and if he could be induced to serve on it, or even give it the sanction of his name, it would secure influence and weight at once. This engrossed his time to a degree which must have been, and certainly was, a severe tax on his health and strength. Sometimes his intimate friends, who feared that he was permitting too many burdens to be laid upon him, remonstrated with him. He felt the justice of their advice, and endeavored to decline some of the appointments urged

on him. But it was difficult, in his proverbial willingness to aid his friends and to help enterprises and objects they were interested in, and which he, as a public-spirited citizen, wished to succeed, to say no to their importunities. He was for some years, perhaps, one of the hardest worked men in St. Paul, and that, too, at times when he was suffering physical pain and debility. He used to jocosely remark to his friends, when these duties were thrust upon him, "I am almost a public pack-horse," but always cheerfully and energetically assumed the duties. During these years, also, his pen was never idle. In addition to his large correspondence, he was continually engaged in writing addresses, lectures, reports of various kinds, papers for the Historical Society, etc. Being so familiar with the history of the state and its people, he was continually resorted to for information, and people would write to him for facts of various kinds, about the state or portions of it, and always received patient and courteous answers. So much was his judgment relied on and valued, that he was continually being selected as arbitrator in various matters. Persons would even resort to him to ask advice about business matters, property investments, and even regarding domestic troubles. One class of persons were his old half-breed and Canadian retainers, or their descendants. They would come to him for advice and aid about property and other business matters. Sometimes he spent considerable time in aiding them, or gave them valuable advice which saved them much expense, and wrote letters, or prepared conveyances and other papers for them. Many of them

came to beg pecuniary aid, and, if worthy, never went away empty handed. The amounts he expended in this way must have been large in the aggregate. Indeed, for several years he almost entirely supported two or three families of former valued serviteurs of his trading period. Gen. Sibley's patience in listening to all these demands—engrossed, as he always was, by business cares—has often surprised his friends. The humblest person that ever called on him to ask a favor was courteously and kindly received, and his request granted, if proper.

His kindness of heart and his feelings of broad charity for all men was one of his most admirable traits. He was never known to speak harshly or disparagingly of any one, no matter what the provocation might be, and when others have done so in his presence, he would seek some way to excuse and palliate the offense of the person so criticised.

#### DOMESTIC LIFE.

The demands of social life on Gen. Sibley's time were also very large. His prominence in official life, and in the community, necessarily made his list of visitors a very large one, and his hospitable mansion was the point to which a wide circle of friends, as well as casual acquaintances, made frequent visits. Strangers, even, visiting the city were accustomed to visit him—authors, tourists, journalists, artists and others, who wished to see him for either mere curiosity or some other purpose. When distinguished guests visited our city, Gen. Sibley usually served on the committee of reception. Thus his time, even the hours which he would have devoted to

the family circle, were largely engrossed by cares incident to his position. In his family relations he was greatly blessed. A fond wife and dearly beloved children made his home precious to him, and he was a loving husband and tender parent, as those who knew his home life were aware. Several children blessed this union (as mentioned above), some of whom were early called away, and in 1869 the great sorrow of his life, the death of his wife, interrupted the years of quiet domestic enjoyment of his home.\* He bore this great loss patiently and resignedly, bearing with him through his remaining years the memory of the quarter-century of married life that had been so happy and blest. Ere long there came grand-children into his home, and it seemed to be a source of intense enjoyment to him to listen to their interesting prattle and receive their affectionate caresses. Visitors to his house have frequently witnessed his intense affection for them and also theirs for their "grandpa." He was by nature one of the most tender and sympathetic of men, as his friends were well aware, and perhaps his own bereavements had made even that kindly nature more softened. Those who had troubles and sorrows or had suffered the loss of dear relatives know how sympathizingly and soothingly he could address them with consoling words.

#### HIS RELIGIOUS VIEWS.

In this connection perhaps some reference to Gen. Sibley's religious views will not be misplaced. † These are

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\* During the remainder of Gen. Sibley's life his wife's sister, Mrs. Abbie A. Potts (widow of Dr. Thos. R. Potts, a pioneer physician), an estimable and accomplished lady, superintended his household, and dispensed his hospitality in a noteworthy manner.

best expressed in a letter from himself, answering an inquiry on the subject addressed to him by the writer of this sketch, while he was sojourning at the springs in Canada for his health:

ST. CATHERINE'S, April 16, 1877.—My Dear Sir: Your favor of the 4th inst. was duly received. I have no objection to state my views on the subject of religion. I am a believer in the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith, having been educated in that belief, and never having swerved from it. I am an attendant regularly upon the Episcopal service and a vestryman in St. Paul parish in our city. I am not a communicant, for the reason that I am not a sectarian, and none of the denominations come up to my idea of what the church militant of Jesus Christ should be. Theology has loaded what I regard as a very clear and simple creed, with so much unnecessary mystification and ceremonial, that I shrink from the labor of penetrating the labyrinth and prefer to turn to the pages of sacred writ for guidance. I find there certain well-defined and clearly expressed precepts for the guidance of the seeker after truth. First, love of God is inculcated, and love of our fellow men. "Do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God," keeping the commandments in their spirit and letter, with entire reliance upon the savior as the mediator between God and man, and upon the Holy Spirit for grace to lead in the straight and narrow path. I regard the ordinance of baptism as mandatory, but no other, and I trust the time will come, sooner or later, when all Christians will cease controversies upon non-essential points, and unite in an unbroken front against infidelity in all its forms. I believe the doctrines of the Bible to be the only safe guide for nations, as well as individuals, and that they are all-sufficient for this life, and for that eternity to which we are hastening. Such, in brief, are my convictions upon this important subject. Truly yours,

H. H. SIBLEY.

That such deep, clear, catholic views of religion as Gen. Sibley expresses in his letter were exemplified in his daily life, no one who knew him could doubt. His high moral purity, his conscientious honesty, his delicate sense of honor, his detestation of anything gross and coarse, his lofty abhorrence of deceit or duplicity, his benevolence and sympathy, and his readiness for every good work, were an outgrowth of this religious sentiment. He was in every respect and particular the highest mold of a perfect Christian gentleman. His friends, who visited at his house, must have seen on the table of his sitting room, a well-worn copy of the Scriptures, bearing marks of daily use for years, and daily prayer, also, was undoubtedly his custom. Of this, perhaps his most intimate friend, maybe not even his own family, were ever made acquainted. Nothing could have been further from his nature than anything which savored of affectation, cant or display in religion, and the self-distrust which prevented him from making any public profession of religion, and from parading it before men, arose from a real and admirable Christian humility.

It is proper to remark, in this connection, that though his own self-distrust had long prevented him from formally uniting with the church, he was confirmed in St. Paul's Episcopal church, in which he had been so long an attendant and official, but a few months before his death.

#### HIS PERSONAL APPEARANCE, HEALTH, ETC.

Some reference to his physical appearance may not be out of place for those readers of this sketch who never had the pleasure of meeting him in person. Gen. Sibley was a man of striking appearance. He was fully, if not

over, six feet in height, and always very erect in his carriage. In his youth he was quite slender, though very active and muscular; but as he advanced in years became somewhat stouter. At this period he was a man who would have attracted attention and commanded respect anywhere among strangers, from his fine appearance and dignified manners. His complexion was dark; his eyes, with the iris rather small, of a dark, lustrous brown, and of a kind, pleasing expression—which, when animated, as they always were during conversation, became what is usually termed piercing. His hair, until he had attained quite an advanced age, was black, and in his earlier portraits he is represented as wearing a plain, black, closely trimmed moustache. Toward the close of his life, he wore a full beard, afterward quite silvered with gray. Several excellent portraits of him, in various styles, and taken at different periods after his entrance into public life, will perpetuate his features throughout coming years. He was what would be termed by any one a handsome man, while the noble soul which gave a dignified and kindly expression to his features was apparent to even a casual observer, and inspired even strangers with respect and confidence toward him. In his early years, and until perhaps the age of sixty-five, he had enjoyed excellent and uninterrupted health. About 1876, he was attacked by a painful and debilitating disease (thought to be ulceration of the stomach), and suffered severely from it for some weeks. He was often confined to his bed, and his feeble appearance and apparently failing condition excited the apprehensions of his friends that the race might soon terminate. Still, in the intervals of his severer attacks, though still



suffering pain, he resolutely and cheerfully attended to business and to his public duties. In 1877 he spent some time at the medicinal springs in St. Catharine's, Canada, and at a health resort in North Carolina, and experienced much relief. Remedies which his physicians employed about the same time, were fortunately successful in restoring him to a fair state of health, considering his age, and, though looking somewhat more feeble and broken, he actively engaged in his ordinary business and social duties again with something of his old-time vigor and determination, and his useful life, to the great joy of his friends, was prolonged for fully a dozen years more. Indeed, so much was his health improved, that it was this fact which encouraged his friends to prevail on him to accept the nomination for Congress in 1880, spoken of before. But this was the last occasion on which General Sibley came before the public. The remaining term of his life was quietly devoted to his duties as president of the Gas Company, president of the Board of Regents of the State University, and president of the State Historical Society.

#### THE CLOSING YEARS OF HIS LIFE

were passed in the most complete enjoyment of the esteem and love of the people of his state—a fruition of his long and usefully spent life. By his upright character, his worth as a public spirited man, his prominence as a pioneer of the state, and one of its very oldest inhabitants, his creditable record in both civil and military life, his culture and attainments in mental and social development, his generosity towards every good work and project, he had won a foremost place in the esteem

of the public. It is safe to say that he had no peer in all those elements of moral excellence and personal worth combined, which successfully win and retain the love and warm esteem of the people and endear one to them. His intimate friend, Col. E. S. Goodrich, tersely summed up the popular estimate of his primacy in everything admirable when he said, in one of his articles on our early history, that it was a title universally accorded Gen. Sibley as "the first gentleman of Minnesota." Indeed, his name may be truthfully said to have become almost a "household word" in our state, so closely interwoven it had been with the history of Minnesota for over half a century, and with the social and business life of this city for a generation past. It is also perpetuated on our maps, Sibley county, in Minnesota, the town of Sibley, Iowa, the city of Hastings, Minnesota, and the important commercial street, Sibley, in the capital of our state, bearing the name to future generations.

Inheriting from his ancestors a vigorous constitution, which was strengthened by the free, out door life which he led for some years, and preserved by his pure and temperate habits, his days had been prolonged beyond the ordinary span usually allotted to man. He rounded out four-score years, save two days. But the strong and erect form was beginning to bow under the weight of years. For several months before his death, he declined visibly. His chair in his office was vacant more frequently. The last meeting of the Historical Society at which he was present, was April 14, 1890. Still, when at his post in the gas office, notwithstanding his feebleness, he continued to carry on his duties, conversing cheerfully

with callers, and evincing unabated interest in all public questions and events. But his voice seemed feebler, and his hand moved slower with his pen. Even his familiar signature was growing more tremulous. The last warrants which I took to him to sign as president at his office, was on Sept. 14, 1890. Closely following this date, he was compelled to keep his room, and just five months afterwards, was borne out of it. Even through this period of walking through the "valley of the shadow of death," he was not confined to his bed all the time, but retained his consciousness to the very end, and his interest in current matters. At four o'clock, on the morning of February 18, 1891, surrounded by all his family, rest came to him, calmly and almost imperceptibly.

The intelligence of the death of Gen. Sibley was received by the people of the state with profound and sincere sorrow. A number of bodies, boards, and societies in the state passed resolutions appropriate to the event, and many warm and just eulogies on his character were pronounced. The press of the state, and to a considerable extent, that of the entire country, printed obituary notices of the deceased, and all united in fitting praise of the subject, and in warm encomiums of him as a man, a public official and a citizen. Everywhere, on the streets, in the public marts, were heard heartfelt expressions showing how much the late general was beloved and esteemed.

#### THE FUNERAL OBSEQUIES

of Gen. Sibley's remains, were held at Saint Paul's church, on Feb. 20. The intention of the family had been to have all the ceremonies as simple and void of

pageantry as possible. There was no military display, or escort. The body was quietly borne from his home to the church, the following gentlemen acting as pall-bearers:

*Active:* Harvey Officer, J. I. Beaumont, John D. Ludden, J. W. Bishop, Geo. L. Becker, W. W. Folwell, Lewis Baker, Sr., and Charles Nichols.

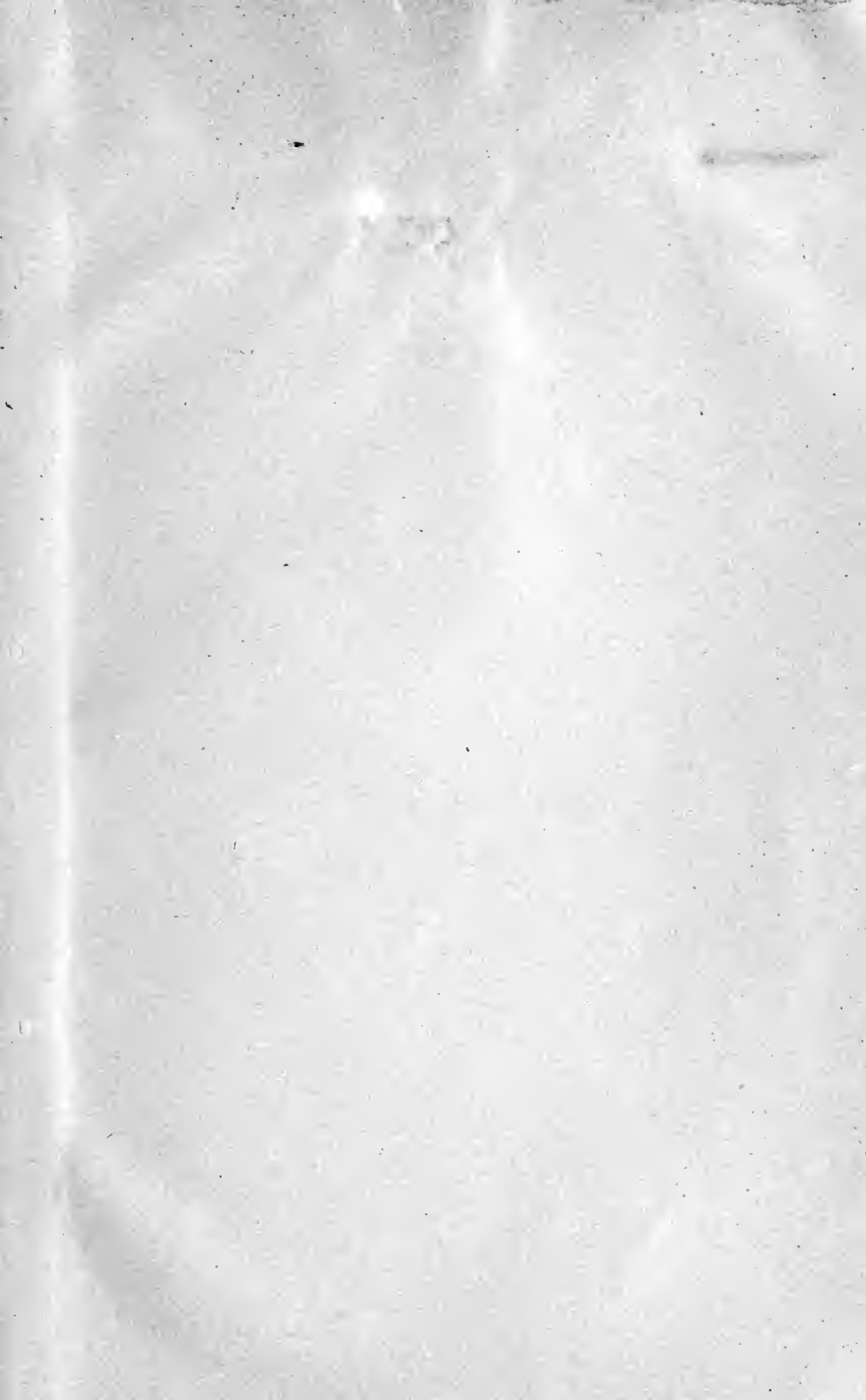
*Honorary:* Alex. Ramsey, John S. Pillsbury, Charles H. Berry, Chas. E. Flandrau, Cyrus Northrop, Alex. Wilkin, Russell Blakeley, A. H. Wilder, R. R. Nelson.

In the church were seated the Loyal Legion, Commandery of Minnesota; Acker Post of the Grand Army; the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce; the Regents of the State University; the members of the Minnesota Historical Society, and of the Old Settlers' Association, state officers, and officers and members of the Legislature, and officers of the U. S. Army. Large numbers were unable to obtain admittance.

The services in the church were simply those of the Episcopal church, conducted by Bishop M. N. Gilbert, Rev. John Wright, rector of St. Paul's church, and Revs. Wm. C. Pope and Wm. Wilkinson. Profuse and rich floral offerings covered the casket.

At the conclusion of the services, the body was taken to Oakland Cemetery, followed by a long cortege of carriages, and the remains were deposited in their last resting place.

The flags on all public buildings, and most of the business blocks, were suspended at half mast during the day. The Capitol was draped in black.



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