

# **Memorial addresses in honor of Governor Alexander Ramsey, at meetings of the Minnesota Historical Society, in the State Capitol, St. Paul, Minn., September 3 and 14, 1903.**

Alx. Ramsey

**MEMORIAL ADDRESSES IN HONOR OF GOVERNOR ALEXANDER RAMSEY, AT MEETINGS OF THE MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, IN THE STATE CAPITOL, ST. PAUL, MINN., SEPTEMBER 3 AND 14, 1903. 46**

**ALEXANDER RAMSEY.**

A Memorial Eulogy, delivered before the Minnesota Historical Society in the Senate Chamber of the Capitol, Thursday Evening, September 3, 1903.

BY GEN. JAMES H. BAKER.

It is not the purpose of this address to deliver to you a biography, nor to indict an epitaph. Made, by your favor, for this memorial occasion, the organ of our Society, it is my desire to paint, as best I may, the portrait of our late distinguished President; to set his picture in the environment of his times, clothed in the characteristics of his marked individuality, and with notice of the more salient features of his achievement. Forty-four years of unbroken intimacy and friendship salute me from his grave; and this I trust will not warp my judgment, but rather the better equip me for presenting a true analysis of his character. He has already received the affectionate praises of devoted friends, and the generous voices of political opponents have celebrated his lofty character. Eulogy has exhausted her votive offerings, and I come late to glean in a field so abundantly garnered.

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This busy world will not concern itself with men who are dead, unless they have largely contributed to the sum of human knowledge, or performed such signal services to humanity as give them a claim to be long remembered. There are limitations to every form of human greatness; but, within the confines of our state, I assert that Alexander Ramsey has more claims to enduring remembrance than any of her other sons.

The work he did, the influences he set in motion, are interwoven parts of the state itself. Out of chaos he organized the 724 territory into official forms, and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life. You cannot recite the formative periods of our history without blending his life with the threads of our story. Like the confluence of two great streams, whose waters are lost in the commingling currents, so the state and the man were borne on together.

Alexander Ramsey appeared at the right time, and under the right conditions, for his usefulness and his fame. His education, his experience, his discipline, prior to his advent on this soil as an empire builder, were such that it would seem fate herself had prepared him for his destiny.

If characters are modified by physical scenery around them, then Ramsey was fortunate in the home of his youth. He came from the grand old state of Pennsylvania, settled by the English, the Scotch, and the German. He was from the Chestnut Ridges and Laurel Hills of the lovely Susquehanna. The blue tops of the great Appalachian range filled his youthful eye. The story of William Penn had stamped its impress on the state, and Indian legends and Indian treaties were a part of the traditions of every Pennsylvania boy.

He had read, too, of the massacre of Wyoming, and his youthful imagination had been fired by Campbell's poetic description of that ruthless slaughter. He had thus inherited no love for the Indian character, and his pressing proffer to President Lincoln, to take all the responsibility of promptly hanging the convicted savages of 1862, must be interpreted in the light of the lurid flames of Wyoming.

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To understand fully one who has played so great a part in our dramatic history, we must, for the hour, live in those times, see what he saw, look into the faces of his remarkable copartners, sympathize with his trials, and rejoice in his successes.

Alexander Ramsey was born near Harrisburg, Pa., September 8, 1815. His paternal ancestry were Scotch, and his mother of German origin, a racial combination difficult to excel. An orphan at ten, by the aid of a friendly relative he obtained a fair education, which was greatly enhanced by his strong love for reading and study. He subsequently became a carpenter by trade; he taught school and studied law.

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That he did not receive a complete collegiate education, I think, is happy for us all, for then he might have contented himself in filling a professor's chair, and measured out his days in expounding the metres of Homer and Virgil. The self-taught American, like Franklin and Lincoln, most often develops the vigorous and broad life so useful to the nation. Nor was there ever a better illustration of the wholesome training of a young man in the great common school of experience and self-study, which is the nursery and stronghold of American democracy, than we have in the example of young Ramsey. He was one of those practical men who quickly avail themselves of the grand opportunities whose golden gates stand open, in this country, night and day.

He came upon the stage of active life when party strife was raging with unabated fury. The Whig and Democratic parties bitterly divided the American people. The questions about a bank, a tariff, and the distribution of the proceeds of the public lands, seem to us, at this distant day, to be trivial. But politics were intense, the excitement great, and all were politicians, even the women and children. As a matter of fact, it was not so much *measures, as men*, that agitated and divided the people.

Jackson and Clay were the illustrious leaders, and under their respective banners the contestants were marshalled in irreconcilable antagonism. Both leaders were men of

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consummate tact and management. Each held his followers as with hooks of steel. Clay was the captain of the Whigs, and his graceful manners and splendid eloquence held in thrall the aspiring young men of the day. Ramsey caught the contagion which the fervid genius of Clay evoked. The Whig party was resplendent with talent, and in that atmosphere young Ramsey was matured.

The famous Harrisburg convention of 1840 met in his city. Harrison was nominated, and Clay was defeated. But the people rose as if *en masse*. Banners floated; the air was hot with acclamations; songs were sung, and even business was neglected. As upon an ocean wave, "Tippecanoe and Tyler, too," were floated into office.

A month later Harrison died. Tyler, like another Arnold, betrayed his party. Clay's heart was broken, and the Whig party was paralyzed. But the great commoner of Kentucky bore 726 himself like a plumed knight. In the midst of these stormy times, Ramsey was rocked in the cradle of politics.

In 1840, he was secretary of the electoral college; in 1841, he was chief clerk of the House of Representatives; in 1842, he was elected to Congress, and served in the 28th and 29th Congresses. He was a substantial Whig member, social, cool, cautious, and given to practical business. He retired, voluntarily, from further service, after the close of the 29th Congress, while, singularly enough, Henry Hasting Sibley was just entering the 30th Congress as a delegate from that *terra incognita*, the territory of Minnesota.

Ramsey's career in Congress was signaled by his ardent support of the Wilmot Proviso, in its application to certain territories acquired as the result of the war with Mexico. His seat was next to Wilmot's in the House, and, as a matter of fact, he wrote the proviso on his desk for Wilmot, which the latter offered. No less strange is the fact that Mr. Sibley opposed the application of the Wilmot Proviso to the territory of Minnesota in the very next Congress, as "wholly superfluous."

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In 1848, Ramsey was made chairman of the Whig State Central Committee of Pennsylvania, and contributed largely to the election of Zachary Taylor, the last of the Whig presidents. When that gallant soldier was inaugurated, he at once tendered the governorship of Minnesota to Alexander Ramsey. His commission bears date, April 2nd, 1849.

The Whig party was now moribund, dying of slavery. Clay, too, was dying, and Webster had condoned with the Slave Power. The Fugitive Slave Law was the final bolt that slew the great army which Clay and Webster had organized. Thus it happened that the brilliant party which had won Alexander Ramsey's youthful love and devotion was waning and expiring, when he made his advent into the Northwest.

On the 10th of September, 1845, while a member of Congress, he was married to Miss Anna Earl Jenks, a beautiful and queenly woman, of eighteen summers, possessed of the sweetest disposition and the most estimable qualities. With a dash of Quaker blood, her "thee's" and "thou's" were exceedingly agreeable. She was highly domestic in her tastes. Coming from a home of comfort and the best society, with marked affability and practical good sense, she at once adapted herself to her new surroundings, and by her tact and grace contributed largely to the fortunes of her distinguished husband. After a noble and useful life, she died on November 29th, 1884, and with sad hearts, her troops of friends laid her tenderly away, covered with garlands of flowers, in Oakland Cemetery.

On the 27th day of May, 1849, the new governor arrived at the scene of his official duties. With something of poetic fitness, he came, with his young wife, from Sibley's baronial home at Mendota, where they had been guests, in an Indian birch-bark canoe. On the first day of June, 1849, he issued his official proclamation, declaring the territory duly organized.

Minnesota thus entered her kindergarten preparation for statehood. Then followed the detail necessary to the establishment of the machinery of the new government. This was

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the historic starting point of the new commonwealth. These important proceedings brought him face to face with the most remarkable body of men who ever graced a frontier, Sibley, Brown, the Rices, Olmsted, Morrison, Steele, McLeod, Stevens, Renville, Borup, Kittson, Bailly.

How, at the mention of their names, the dead arise, and life starts in the stalwart forms of these primeval kings of the wilderness! If New England parades, with pride, her Puritan ancestors, with equal veneration we point to the vigorous, intrepid and superb men, who stood sponsors to the birth of our commonwealth. They were no ignoble rivals in the race which was to be run. No stronger men ever colonized a new country. They possessed that restlessness that comes of ambition, and the audacity that comes of enterprise.

Far behind these empire-builders of the Northwest, there yet appeared in the twilight of our history, other majestic forms. We behold the saintly Allouez and Marquette, glorified by their sufferings. We see Le Seuer in the valley of the St. Peter, in his journey in pursuit of gold, shrouded in mystery and romance, as imaginary as that of Jason in pursuit of the Golden Fleece.

We contemplate the reign and wars of the great fur companies, those mighty lords of the lakes of the North. These all are the paladins of our history. Following them came the era of the scientists, Nicollet, Pike, Schoolcraft. This brings the 728 panorama to true historic ground. We now touch the time when some of you were co-partners in our early dramatic scenes.

Inspired by these grand traditions, and surrounded by these stalwart figures, the young Pennsylvanian saw that this wilderness had an epic of thrilling interest. As he stood in this environment, what were his dreams of the future? Did he behold in the aisles of the pathless woods, and in the vernal bloom of the unploughed prairies, the miraged image of that wonderful state which is now so proud an ornament in the clustering stars of the

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Union? But as yet, the scene before him was far from inviting. There was but little to inspire him with hope.

He saw but a small hamlet, with bark-roofed cabins. Savages yet walked in the straggling streets, with the scalps of their enemies dangling from their belts. Cranberries and pelts were the commercial currency of the settlement. Oxen were the horses of the country, and Red River carts the chariots of her commerce.

But what gave him greater anxiety than all else, was the fact that, though he was the nominal executive of a domain more extensive than France, yet but a fragment was open to settlement. Casting his eyes upon the map, all in reality over which he had authority was the narrow strip of land lying between the St. Croix and the Mississippi, bounded on the north by a line passing near where Princeton now stands, a "pent-up Utica," and the land not of the best.

All the territory west of the Mississippi was unceded by the Indians. Into this rich Sioux empire, the young governor gazed with longing eyes. He immediately began to press, with zeal, his Whig friends in Congress, for authority to make a treaty with these savages. At last the authorization came in 1850. As a logical result of this warrant, there followed by far the most important event in the history of Minnesota, and destined to have the most salutary influence upon our destinies.

The treaty was finally consummated July 23rd, 1851, and was ratified by the United States Senate June 26th, 1852. That day Minnesota was born again. This treaty sealed the doom of the Dakota race in Minnesota; they signed away their heritage, and were henceforth strangers in the land of their fathers.

Study all the history of that negotiation as you may, you will find that Alexander Ramsey was the essential and controlling factor in the transaction. He was not only governor of the territory, but *ex officio*, Superintendent of Indian Affairs. It is true that the entire body of traders used their great influence with the Indians to accept the treaty,

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and that influence was powerful. But the traders worked from mercenary motives. Their combined claims amounted to \$209,200. Most of these accounts were of long standing, and were, perhaps, justly, provided for in the terms of the treaty. But the one man, in that entire body of whites, who worked from no sordid motives, was Alexander Ramsey.

The treaty itself was the most imposing spectacle yet presented in the Northwest. All the dignitaries of the territory, an army of traders, speculators, editors, and all the great Dakota chiefs, in barbaric pomp, with thousands of their painted followers, were present. Why it has not received the historic, literary, and artistic notice it so well deserves, it is difficult to understand. In the events of that day, it excluded and overshadowed all other concerns. It gave 23,000,000 acres of land to the state, and this the most picturesque and fertile on earth. The Almighty could have made a better country, but he never did.

The ink was not yet dry on the pages of that treaty, when a stream of immigration poured in, through "the inward swinging gates," and barbarism gave way to civilization. Ramsey beheld the realization of his dream; a magnificent destiny to the state was assured.

One of the noblest features of this treaty was, that it was contracted by peaceful persuasion. Nearly all the treaties of our government with the aborigines have been the result of bloody wars, and made at the point of the bayonet. This pacific treaty stands in all honor and credit with that of William Penn. Not a soldier was present, nor were they at any time required.

All that is wanting is an artist like Benjamin West, who gave Penn's treaty to the world, and the scene will be immortal. Yonder stands your new capitol, with

"Granite and marble and granite, Corridor, column, and dome, A capitol huge as a planet, And massive as marble-built Rome."

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This edifice will ever be regarded with enthusiasm, for its grace, its elegance and dignity. Therefore let us hang its inviolate walls with glorious state histories, first and foremost of which should be the scene representing the great treaty of 1851.

It may be proper here to note that some disappointed traders, whose claims were not allowed, brought charges against Ramsey, affecting the integrity of his conduct in the negotiations. It is sufficient to state that these charges were fully investigated by a hostile senate, and he was triumphantly vindicated. Lethe, long since, sent her waves of forgetfulness over the whole story.

Correlative to this negotiation, by authority of Congress, in 1863, when he was United States senator, he made a most important treaty with the Red Lake and Pembina Ojibways. This treaty covered thirty miles on each side of the Red river, and now includes the fertile counties of Kittson, Marshall, Polk, and Norman, in Minnesota. Previous to this, by his influence chiefly, the Winnebagoes were permanently removed from the heart of the fairest portion of the state. By his early and persistent efforts, the colonist, the conqueror, the civilizer, the Anglo-Saxon, possesses the state, and the pagan is gone. What sentimentality regrets the change?

In the period between the close of his office as territorial governor and his election as the second executive of the state, he loyally performed every duty of a good citizen, serving one term as mayor of the city of St. Paul.

The slavery question, with a potency which subordinated all other political ideas, was now "sovereign of the ascendant." Hitherto, in territorial politics, the Democrats held undisputed sway. On the 25th of July, 1855, the opponents of the Nebraska bill held a meeting at St. Anthony, and assumed the name "Republican." They issued a call for convention, and Alexander Ramsey was the first name signed to that proclamation.

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From that day onward, his allegiance to Republican principles was unflinching. More and more these principles informed and infused his convictions. He believed that his party creed was the best for the country and humanity. All the ills of the republic could be medicated in that political pharmacy. He made no unnatural political alliances, but stood his ground upon the well defined principles of his party. He constantly gave his patronage to the support of his party, except during the period of the civil war, when he bestowed his favors equally on both parties, and with a discriminating hand.

In 1857, a state constitution was to be made. A governor, state officers, two members of Congress, and two U. S. senators, were the prizes. The contest was sharp, and both sides claimed a majority. The result was a double convention, but, by a flash of common sense, each faction produced the same constitution, alike even in orthography and punctuation. Promptly it was approved, and the arch of the state was locked in the cohesion of granitic permanence. Henry H. Sibley was the Democratic candidate for governor, and Alexander Ramsey led the Republican column. He was counted out under circumstances of great doubt.

In 1859, Alexander Ramsey was again the logical Republican nominee, and was elected governor by a decisive majority. Under his leadership, the Republicans attained power, to be dislodged but once in forty-five years.

No other governor ever so impressed his individuality upon the state. Well did Henry A. Swift declare that his administration "was a distinct era in the history of the state." The study of his messages reveals his practical purposes, and consummate skill as a public administrator. Extravagance was curbed, salaries reduced, county government simplified, the school and University lands were safely housed from the despoiler, under the guarantees of the constitution. The growing and enormous school fund will ever remain as a proud monument to his memory.

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His pronounced action in reference to our school lands, as contained in his celebrated message of January 9, 1861, is undoubtedly the most complete and forceful presentation of the value to the state, and to posterity, of the magnificent grant of public lands we received from the nation, more especially in the mode and method he devised for safeguarding the gift, which has ever been presented to a legislative body. He had fully resolved that this magnificent endowment should not be squandered. With matchless courage he constrained the adoption of his measures. He left nothing, in this regard, for his successors to do, but to follow in his footsteps. By this good work, so successfully accomplished, he may be justly regarded as the author and builder of that wonderful school fund, which is today the admiration of every state in the Union.

Kindred to this, and illustrating his practical and economical state house-keeping, and characteristic of his German thrift, was his complete reformation of the extravagant and expensive government of the preceding state administration. Our first legislature was prodigal far beyond the state's resources. State, county, and township governments, had plunged headlong into excessive expenditures, creating debts and embarrassing the people. He met the situation promptly and vigorously. He insisted that every state expenditure should be reduced, that taxation might not eat up the substance of the people, nor prove a bar to immigration. His economical reforms were sweeping, even to reducing his gubernatorial salary one-half. The legislative body was largely reduced; county and township expenditures were curtailed; the public printing was no longer "a job;" salaries and taxes were alike reduced; and a banking law, which authorized a currency on inadequate securities, was swept away. Out of these radical reforms soon sprung that prosperity which has since marked the unparalleled advancement of the state.

In the progress of our history there had occurred one of those sore tribulations by which so many young states and territories have been afflicted, leaving wounds and scars during years of regret. Our misfortune was the celebrated "Five Million Loan Bill." Had the governor of the state stood firm, and permitted no encroachment upon the executive

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prerogative, there would have been a door of escape. Governor Ramsey, who inherited from his predecessor this ill-fortune, devised measures to extricate the state from its entanglements. An amended constitution expunged the unfortunate measure from the statutes, and the franchises and enormous land grants were restored to the state, and by his devices the state renewed the same to other corporations, so safeguarded as to secure us those great lines of railroad which have so rapidly developed the state. Governor Ramsey is entitled to the highest credit for the masterly skill with which he extricated the endangered state from its greatest peril.

January 1, 1860, Alexander Ramsey became governor of Minnesota. Extraordinary events were pulsating the civilized 733 world. Russia was emancipating her serfs; Garibaldi was liberating Italy; Germany was moving to unity. But above all, in the United States of America, the revolt against the slave power had arisen to fever heat. The Fugitive Slave Law, the Dred Scott decision, Buchanan's career of weakness and imbecility, the overthrow of the Missouri Compromise, were inciting causes for a revolution which was fated to end in blood. John Brown's soul, at Harper's Ferry, had begun its ominous march. A mighty duel between slavery and freedom was organizing in every home of the republic.

In November, 1860, that man of God, Abraham Lincoln, was elected president. The storm which had gathered, now burst in fury, and on a fatal Friday afternoon, April 12, 1861, treason fired its first shots at Fort Sumter, the portents of the bloody carnage to follow. For the first time the flag of the Union went down, but to rise again, for "the eternal years of God are hers!"

Ramsey was well prepared by experience and conviction, for the new and extraordinary responsibilities thrust upon him by the dread note of war. Not one moment did he hesitate, but offered the first troops to the President, and thus set the pace for loyal governors. The young state became a military camp, and the roll of the drum and the thrill of the bugle fired the hearts of the sons of Minnesota. He issued his call, and his call was not in vain:

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“And there was mounting in hot haste; the steed, The mustering squadron and the clattering car, Went pouring forward with impetuous speed, And swiftly forming in the ranks of war.”

The unexpected exigencies required statesmanlike abilities. With an empty treasury, he yet equipped regiments, supplied batteries, and placed squadrons of cavalry in the field. He established hospitals, appointed surgeons, and sent comforts to the sick. He personally visited his troops in the bivouac and in the hospital, and no men in the field were better fed, better clothed, or cared for. At each subsequent call, like the clan of Roderick Dhu, at the sound of his bugle, warriors came from every bush and brake. The history of Minnesota in the mighty struggle became heroic. It was necessary to choose an army of officers, and 734 well did he select. His privates became captains; his chaplains, archbishops; his captains, colonels; and his colonels, generals.

But in the midst of this terrible war, when our flag was almost fainting in the breeze, there came the foray of a savage enemy in the rear, with deeds too dark for description, threatening the desolation of the state. The dwellings of settlers were blazing at midnight, their paths ambushed by day. It was an orgy of blood, in which neither age nor sex were spared.

Never was a governor so tried and tested. Never was a young state in such deadly peril. But his energies and resources expanded with the dangers. His Scotch blood was fired with the courage of a Bruce. He summoned every man to the front. The plow was stopped in the furrow; the church door was closed, or the church itself converted into a hospital. The inhabitants were fleeing toward the great cities. The conditions of the state were trying to the fortitude of the bravest hearts. But it is the highest of all human praise to say, that their constancy and courage were equal to the trial.

I doubt if the records of ancient or modern times give a better example of heroic deeds and actions, than were exhibited in that dark day, when the rebels were in our front, and the

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savages in our rear. Our soldier sons were falling on the bloody slopes of southern battle fields, and our citizens, on the frontier, were tomahawked amid the ghastly flames of New Ulm. This was the famous and heroic era of our history, when we showed the world “the might that slumbers in a peasant's arm.”

Let our children of all time revive their drooping faith in periods of despondency, by contemplating this supreme exhibition of patriotic devotion to the public weal. By promptness and unwearied exertions, the governor restored public confidence, defended the frontier, and kept two armies in the field, till triumph closed, in honor, around our faithful and chivalrous sons. These war achievements opened the door for his admission to the Loyal Legion, the noblest association following any military contest in history.

It is idle to compare any other state administration with that of Alexander Ramsey. All others, however competent the executives, are commonplace and devoid of stirring events. Amid all these scenes of financial distress, of prostrated credit, of dire 735 rebellion and savage onslaught, Ramsey was ever the central figure. His coolness, his judgment, his practical good sense, carried us safely and triumphantly through the most trying conditions in all the history of our state.

The roster of our seventeen governors, territorial and state, comprises a roll of admirable men, of vigor and marked ability. But Alexander Ramsey is easily the Nestor of them all. His figure stands out in bold relief, and his primacy is universally conceded.

On the fourteenth day of January, 1863, he was elected to the United States Senate. For twelve years he was a distinguished and working member of that illustrious body. He served on its most important committees, and no senator has left a record of greater practical usefulness during the stirring period of the war and the reconstructive era following.

It was his fortune to participate in those great questions of reconstruction, of resumption, of constitutional amendments, which in their sweep involved all the issues of the great

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civil conflict. Party matters were trivial; but these demanded wisdom and statesmanship absolute. In all of these, he obtained the high-water mark of excellence. His state was proud of him, and felt a confidence in his wisdom and pilotage, felt in no other.

As illustrative of his practical state-craft, while he was chairman of the committee on post-offices and post roads, some of our most valuable postal reforms were successfully achieved, cheap international postage was secured, and the celebrated "Ramsey bill" corrected the old franking abuse. Great improvements in the navigation of the Mississippi river, essential aid to the Northern Pacific railroad, and the most satisfactory assistance in behalf of the territories of Dakota and Montana,—these, and all matters pertaining to the interests of the great Northwest, were the objects of his constant and sedulous care.

It is proper for me here to remark, that, in the matter of negro suffrage, he believed in a ballot based on intelligence. But in view of the extraordinary course of Andrew Johnson, in pardoning and restoring to civil rights those who had served in the rebel army, while all the South were determined to refuse the negro any rights whatever, under any conditions, he felt that it was necessary to arm these wards of the nation with the ballot, 736 that they might not be utterly helpless, but in some measure become their own guardians.

Senator Ramsey's senatorial career closed March 4, 1875, having completed twelve years of faithful service.

In 1879 he was appointed by President Hayes to a seat in the cabinet, as secretary of war. As constitutional advisor to the President, he filled the office with wisdom and discretion. He thus widened his personal fame, and reflected additional lustre upon the state he had been so instrumental in creating.

He was called from retirement in 1882, when the "Edmunds bill" was enacted, the object of which was to extinguish polygamy in Utah. To execute that important statute required men of consummate skill and experience. A commission was formed by the

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Garfield administration, of which Ramsey was made chairman. He resigned in 1886, and permanently retired to private life. This was his last public work.

We have now touched the more salient points of his remarkable history. He had rounded out a splendid career, more abundant in honors than was ever yet accorded to any son of Minnesota. With grace, dignity, and philosophic satisfaction, he retired to private life. He was out of the dust of the political arena, but in the full enjoyment of the profound respect of all his fellow citizens. Not Jefferson at Monticello, nor Jackson at the Hermitage, was the object of greater veneration and love from their own fellow citizens. He had retired full of honors, as full of years.

Now that the tomb has claimed him, what do men think of him? Was Alexander Ramsey a great man? Well was it remarked that, since the advent of Washington, all estimates of human greatness have essentially changed. Men are now measured by the actual benefits they achieve for their fellow citizens, and for humanity. Measured by this standard, he was a great man, and his name should be canonized within the limits of our state.

He was one, and the chief one, of an assemblage of distinguished men, who were eminently conspicuous in our early annals. His rivals and co-workers were of the Titanic type.

There was Henry Hastings Sibley, his most illustrious compeer; a man of culture amid barbaric surroundings; brave and chivalric; the "plumed knight" of pre-territorial times.

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There was Henry M. Rice, able, graceful, whether in the wigwam or the senate, always polished, suave and diplomatic.

There was Joseph Renshaw Brown, the brainiest of them all, a sort of an intellectual lion, who sported with the savage Sioux, or ruled a political caucus, with equal power.

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There was Ignatius Donnelly, that Celtic genius, whose dazzling intellect shone like a meteor; but, unhappily, like the elephants of Pyrrhus, he was sometimes as dangerous to his friends as his foes.

There was Edmund Rice, elegant and courtly, the Chesterfield of his day. There was John S. Pillsbury, honest, solid and true; the champion of the University, and the friend of the settler.

There was Morton S. Wilkinson, stately, gifted and elegant; the friend of Lincoln. It is to be regretted that his speeches were always better than his practices.

There was Cushman K. Davis, that great jurist, whose bugle-notes of eloquence in Ciceronian periods still live in the echoes of the American Senate, as his memory yet lives, deathless, in our hearts.

And there is the familiar face of Charles Eugene Flandrau, the cavalier of the border, lawyer, jurist, soldier, the Prince Rupert of the Northwest.

There is George Loomis Becker, lawyer, railroad president, state senator, railroad commissioner, twice Democratic candidate for governor, a true type of an elegant and accomplished gentleman of the old school.

There is James J. Hill, a strong, unique, virile, monumental character, for whom a sharp claim will be justly pressed with all the power of steam, for a high niche in the Pantheon of Minnesota's great men.

There is the patriotic face of the Right Reverend John Ireland, priest, army chaplain, assistant bishop, bishop, archbishop, and soon, we pray (be it prophetically said), to wear the red hat of a cardinal, the most eminent Catholic prelate America has yet produced, and a splendid type of a loyal American, after the stamp of Patrick Henry.

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And we must mention also the name of Joseph A. Wheelock, whose polished Athenian pen has been the brightest jewel 47 738 in the crown of our literature, and will remain for him a peerless monument, which proclaims the pen mightier than the sword.

Men such as these, and other rare spirits, of literary, civil, and social mark, were Ramsey's august compeers and emulators. Yet, in some aggregate way, he measured more than any one of them; and moreover, down deep in the red core of their hearts, the people loved him better than any other public man. That position he held by the grace of God, and without the leave of the politicians.

Beside him but one scarcely inferior figure is to be seen, and that is the stately form of Henry Hastings Sibley. He was a splendid cavalier, "from spur to plume." He, too, is one of the august fathers of the state. The panorama of his life, from barbarism to civilization, is an unwritten Iliad. He, like Ramsey, was the type of a man to found an American commonwealth. These two men are the twin pillars on which the pristine arches of the state rest,— *par nobile fratrum* !

There is nothing finer in the history of our state, than when Ramsey, as governor, summoned his old antagonist from retirement, and gave him a commission to command all the troops in the field against the hostile Sioux, and with unlimited authority. The trust and confidence these ancient enemies, in an hour of common danger, reposed in each other, bespeak for them the enduring regard of all who admire nobility of character.

What then constitutes the qualities which made Ramsey great? His greatest gift was his strong, practical common sense. Guizot, in his History of Civilization, says, that saving common sense is the best genius for mankind, and has ever been its savior in all times of danger. While not a genius, he possessed talents of the highest order. His mental fabric was symmetrical, and he was ever in command of all his faculties, judgment, memory, perception, discretion. He could apply his whole intellectual endowment to a solution of the questions before him. He was never among the stars, searching for ideal conditions,

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but always on earth, taking clear, practical views of affairs. The proverb from Ovid, "Medio tutissimus ibis," was applicable to his way and method.

He was a man with a purpose. He was one who did things. He was a projector, as well as an executor. He possessed a 739 strong individuality of character, and that character impressed itself indelibly upon the councils of the state. He was gifted with a quality of temper that could never be ruffled. Always frank and good humored, he might be described by Goldsmith's well known line,

"An abridgment of all that is pleasant in man."

And yet, he had firmness and decision of character, and was not easily turned from his purpose.

Though bitter invective, often descending to absolute scurrility, marked the stormy annals of territorial times, yet he never, for one moment, descended to its use. Though frequently galled by the poisoned lance of partisan abuse, he never retorted in kind. His speeches and public utterances were elevated, clean, and devoid of grossness or defamation.

Ramsey was not an orator. He in no wise met the requirements of Cicero, that master of elocution. So often on the rostrum with him, I always admired his plain, direct methods, utterly rejecting all ornamentation, and by the simplest and most direct route reaching the purposes of his address. Like Franklin, he seldom exceeded a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes in any public address. While not a fluent, he was an easy speaker. He spoke as well in German as in English, and this fact greatly enhanced his popularity. His evident sincerity always carried conviction, and he won the judgment of his audience. He had as few idiosyncracies as any man I ever met in public life,—no crotchets, no fads, and this left his faculties unclouded and unbiased.

He was a typical American, and loved his country with a devotion as fervid as Patrick Henry. He could say, as Webster once said, "I was born an American, I live an American,

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I shall die an American." The East, from whence he came, was narrow ; but the West broadened and liberalized his ideas.

The effect of the West upon the political thought and action of the republic, is simply enormous. It is not so much what the East has done for the West, but what has not the West done for the East? We take the sons of the East, and recast them, in stature and breadth, free from the trammels of tradition, till they widen like our own ocean prairies. The grand effect of the West upon the national character, life and government, is a 740 story yet to be written. The West reconstructed Alexander Ramsey.

Like all truly great men, he was a firm believer in the truths of Christianity. He was a Presbyterian of the most liberal school, and believed more in a practical Christian life than in creeds or dogmas. He often quoted the couplet of the poet:

"For modes of faith, let graceless zealots fight, He can't be wrong, whose life is in the right."

There was something remarkable in the general estimate placed upon his character. Public esteem is a lofty criterion to decide a man's reputation. He who holds an elevated character, before such a tribunal, is indeed fortunate. Innumerable were the tongues in the state which proclaimed his virtues and his safe qualities. In the convention, in the town meeting, in the city full, or on the remote frontier, in the church or on the car, everywhere, the people said, without distinction of party, Ramsey was always safe and to be trusted. Such was the power of reputation and good character. To be thus confided in was better than a great inheritance or bank stock. No other public man among us ever so held the universal confidence. With an intimate knowledge of our sharp political contests, I fear not to state that, when beaten for a high office by legislative coalitions and strange alliances, if left to the suffrages of his entire party, he would have been triumphantly elected.

We love sometimes to look at distinguished men *en dishabille* , not always in their robes of state. Let us view him personally. His social and colloquial qualities were of the best. In

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private life, he was a genial and generous neighbor, a loving husband and a fond father. He was neither avaricious nor prodigal of money. He bowed in knightly homage to women, as all true gentlemen have ever done.

That elegant contrivance of social life, a good dinner, had its charms for his leisure hours and Epicurean tastes. The gorgeous table, the embossed plate, the exotic bottles, the brilliant flowers, the distinguished guests, the Attic salt, in his leisure hours, to him were fascinating. The salads of Lucullus, and the wines of Maecenas, were none too rich for his Pennsylvania blood. I believe he had the best stomach in America, and a good stomach is the foundation of a strong man.

741

He was a man of marked personal appearance. He had broad shoulders, a deep chest, and great muscular power, denoting immense vitality. He had a noble head, round, well balanced, and symmetrical. His face was broad and expressive. When the "dew of youth" rested upon him, he was accounted especially handsome; and age but added grace and dignity to his noble appearance.

Finally, his connection with and devotion to this Society must not be omitted on this memorial occasion. He was our patron saint from our natal hour to the end of his days. He signed the legislative act incorporating this body October 20, 1849, four weeks before it was organized. His address on assuming the chair as first president, January 13, 1851, is a remarkable paper, as it defined the splendid field of our research, and pointed out, as never since, the great objects of this Society. To read it even now creates an enthusiasm in our work, and an inspiration not to be received from any other source. He showed how Minnesota had a history, rich in tales of daring enterprise, glowing with myths and traditions, which were to be exhumed and gathered into permanent form. We were to preserve the fleeting memorials of our territory; in fact, were to become the embalmers royal to all that is worth preserving in our history. Hence this Society has a passion for old things, old traditions, old mounds, old stories, old pictures, old heroes; we love to grope

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in the twilight of the past, to unearth our eldest myths, as well as to verify events that otherwise would fade;—an employment so suitably symbolized by the motto on the seal of our Society. “Lux e tenebris.”

Like “Old Mortality” in Scott's immortal story, with mallet and chisel, bending over their tombs in pious reverence, we remove the moss which time has gathered, ere yet oblivion dedicates them to forgetfulness. We protect and preserve the name and the fame of all the good sons of the state, as each in his turn requires these good offices, such as we now and here render to him whose memory we tonight celebrate. That Minnesota has an Historical Society, methodically to gather and record chronicles of men and events, of which any state might be justly proud, is largely due to his wise foresight and his constant and effective support.

Thus have I endeavored to present the portrait of our companion, Councilor, and President. We have turned the dial backwards, 742 and recalled some of the scenes in the gray dawn of the past. We have summoned figures of noted cotemporaries, and have touched a few of the more important events of his history. True, we stumble over the images of many other distinguished men, and the fragments of many weighty events; but the canvass will not carry all things in a single picture. The artist has aimed at the general effect, without arithmetical weariness of detail.

Alexander Ramsey is dead, and has passed forever to the “starry court of eternity.” The grave closes the scene, and we scatter, profusely it may be, the lilies of remembrance upon his sepulcher. But the praise of the dead harms no rival, though it be generously given. I doubt if the state shall look upon his like again, because there are no surroundings to produce such a character. He surely earned a name and a fame. Minnesota cannot afford to let it die. A generous people will yet decorate his tomb with a monument that would please the eye of Pericles.

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Ever advancing shadows leave uncovered the forms of but few who have been active in the arena of the state. Many we fondly thought imperishable are already quite forgotten. But Alexander Ramsey has filled so broad and so useful a page in the annals of Minnesota that he has bequeathed his name as a household word in the homes of the state, for centuries to come.

The intelligence of his death fell with an equal shock upon all classes of society. It invaded alike the homes of the rich and the cottages of the poor,—“pauperum tabernas, regumque tures.”

Alexander Ramsey is dead, so far as such men can die, and he is henceforth an historical character. I venture thus early to anticipate the verdict of posterity, and call him a great man; one test of which surely lies in this, that no other has yet risen among us, who, all in all, can successfully contest with him the palm of primacy.

To few men is it given to witness what, in the limitations of a single life time, it was his to behold. The wilderness of 1849 has been converted into a modern empire, better equipped than Greece or Rome, for the people who are its happy citizens. Gladstone, in his long life, never beheld such a transformation scene. Moses was denied the promised land, except its distant vision from a mountain top; but Ramsey not only saw the wonderful 743 vision, but he was permitted to enter into its full enjoyment. He saw the great Mississippi valley swiftly filled with the stars of empire. He saw the mighty gates of the Rocky Mountains open to close no more. He saw twelve hundred thousand happy and prosperous people on the very land his genius had given by Indian treaties to the expanded state. He witnessed what had been done, and foresaw the unwritten triumphs of the future.

He must be measured in the completeness of his character, physical, moral, and intellectual, in all its harmony, by what it was capable of accomplishing, and by what it did actually accomplish. The propulsive force of his work still operates, and, like

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Tennyson's brook, will flow on forever. In all that pertained to the well-being of the state, his actions have stood the test of time; and no other man, on questions of public policy, ever committed so few errors of judgment. His name should be recorded among the heralds of empire, as the grandest among the founders and statesmen of Minnesota.

He died in the maturity of his years. The very ends of his being seem to have been fulfilled. It was no sudden death in the midst of life's great activities and usefulness, like the lamented Windom; but was like the close of some pleasing summer's day, whose long lingering and benignant light charms as it departs, and melts away into the rosy west, leaving upon its forehead the evening star of memory.

Nothing could be more appropriate for his monumental inscription than that placed upon the tomb of Sir Christopher Wren, the architect of the Cathedral of St. Paul, who lies buried in the very building his genius constructed, and on whose tablet is this immortal legend:

“Si monumentum quaeris, circumspice.”

But Alexander Ramsey lies inurned in a cathedral whose mighty arches and swelling dome reach to the very confines of this empire state, which his genius may be said to have almost created.

J. H. Baker Minnesota Historical Society , Vol. X, Plate XVIII .

### **MEMORIAL ADDRESSES, PRESENTED AT THE MONTHLY COUNCIL MEETING, SEPTEMBER 14, 1903.**

Hon. Greenleaf Clark presented the following address:

The admirable and adequate eulogy by Councilor James H. Baker before this society at a recent meeting, largely attended by the general public, so fully covers the life, character, and services of Alexander Ramsey, and places so just an estimate upon them, that but

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little remains to be said; and that little more in the nature of personal impression of some special characteristic than by way of important addition to the picture so happily drawn.

One of the qualities of Governor Ramsey which greatly impressed me was his mental equipoise, the perfect command he had over himself at all times, a mastery over his faculties which events of the most critical import could not overthrow, and which made him the man for the crisis. No vital energy was lost by despair or nervous fear. His faculties were always ready. It was his habit to meet his friends and neighbors with a hearty greeting and smiling face. He was fond of humor, and often indulged in it, even in serious conversations. No sudden weight of responsibility changed his manners in these respects. He acted as though a troubled mien and depressed manners had no part in the serious affairs of life, and appeared to live in the consciousness that there was to be a tomorrow, and that if we were true to ourselves, our duty, and our country, and did the best we could, the good providence of God, in due time, would evolve the better day.

“He looked not on weal as one who knows not woe comes too: He looked not on evil days as though they would never mend.”

And is it not true that the true man in the darkest hours will live in hope and expectation of the morn?

746

As illustration of his ability for prompt and decisive action, and of his executive force, I may refer to the incident of the arrest of Chief Red Iron at Traverse des Sioux, on the occasion of the first payment, in November, 1852, under the treaty of Traverse des Sioux. The Indians were dissatisfied because of the large amounts which were to be paid out of their treaty money to their creditors, the traders, according to the agreement made at the time of the treaty, but to which they now claimed that their signatures had been obtained by fraud. Instigated, in part, by traders whose claims were not recognized in the agreement, they were in an ugly mood, and matters assumed a threatening aspect. Governor Ramsey

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sent to Fort Snelling for troops, and received a beggarly force of forty-five men, all told, to confront thousands of turbulent Indians. The leader of the trouble was Chief Red Iron, who organized his tribe into a "soldiers' lodge." To show the spirit that animated them, Red Iron's band would ride fiercely up to the thin line of soldiers, and on reaching them would wheel and ride back again, and repeat the manoeuvre. Governor Ramsey promptly ordered the arrest of Red Iron by a file of soldiers, and kept him in custody until the payment was allowed to proceed. This was courageous and forceful action in a crisis so threatening, but it was successful.

The breaking out of the Sioux massacre in 1862, when Ramsey, then governor, was already loaded down with the cares incident to the raising and equipping of troops for the war of the Rebellion, suddenly devolved a most critical and arduous additional burden upon him. The State was denuded of regular troops, and the only military force available was of raw volunteers. Governor Ramsey promptly went to ex-Governor Sibley and persuaded him to take command of the force he hoped to get together and equip for an immediate campaign against the savages. This was quick decision and decisive action out of the ordinary course. There were able military men to be found. Governor Sibley had never commanded soldiers, and had never been a soldier. But he knew more of Indian character and their modes of warfare than any other white man then living, acquired by long and close association with them. Two things were of vital importance, to put a stop to the slaughter, and to rescue two or three hundred wretched female captives. Sibley knew, better than any other man, what course to pursue to keep them alive, and finally 747 to get possession of them. The results, which it is unnecessary to detail, as they are matters of history, justified the wisdom of this new and unprecedented action on the part of Governor Ramsey.

At the time of the breaking out of the war of the Rebellion, Governor Ramsey, being in Washington when the first call for troops was made by the President, immediately and personally tendered to Mr. Lincoln a regiment of volunteers, the first one offered to the

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Government in the civil war. He at once came home, and soon had the regiment recruited, mustered in, equipped, officered, and ready for duty.

No further illustrations are necessary to show his masterful power for quick, decisive, judicious action. There is but one further honor that the State can bestow upon Governor Ramsey, and that is, to perpetuate his name and fame as the foremost man in its upbuilding, by placing his statue in Statuary Hall in the Capitol at Washington; and I offer the following resolutions, and suggest that they be laid on the table until the memorial addresses are concluded, and then be taken up and acted upon.

### **RESOLUTIONS.**

Presented by Hon. Greenleaf Clark in the Meeting of the Executive Council of the Minnesota Historical Society, September 14, 1903, which were unanimously adopted .

*Be it Resolved* by the Historical Society that under the Act of Congress of 1864, authorizing the States, upon the invitation of the President, to provide and furnish statues in marble or bronze, not exceeding two in number, for each State, of deceased persons who have been citizens thereof, and illustrious for their historic renown, or for distinguished civic or military services, such as each State may deem to be worthy of national commemoration, to be placed in the old hall of the House of Representatives in the capitol of the United States, set apart for the purpose, this Society do memorialize the Legislature of Minnesota at its next session, to provide and furnish, for one niche in such statuary hall, the statue of Alexander Ramsey, now dead, full of years and of honors, illustrious for his public services, as Territorial and State Governor, in extinguishing the Indian right to the occupancy of the soil over the fairest part of Minnesota, and so preparing it for the advancing tide of civilization, 748 in laying broad and deep and strong the foundations of the civil government of Minnesota, and for his ever memorable steadfastness, devotion and labors as "War Governor," in throwing the whole power of the State to the aid of the Federal Government in the suppression of the unhappy

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rebellion of 1861, and for the defense of the State against savage foes at the Sioux Indian massacre of 1862, distinguished for statesmanship in the halls of Congress, in the House of Representatives in his early manhood, and in maturer years in the Senate, and in the national councils as Secretary of War, and who in the intelligent judgment of his countrymen, and especially of the people of Minnesota, is deemed worthy of national commemoration.

*Resolved*, further, that it is made the duty of the President and Secretary of this Society to prepare and present to the next Legislature in behalf of this Society, such memorial, and to ask that the proper steps be taken to put in execution the objects thereof, and for an appropriation adequate for the purpose.

Ex-governor Lucius F. Hubbard spoke as follows:

It was surely a very great privilege to be associated with Governor Ramsey, as some of you gentlemen were, in his work of laying the foundations of our State. While I can hardly claim to have sustained such a relation to him in any degree, it was my good fortune to live in Minnesota at the time when his service in upbuilding the commonwealth was most forcibly and most effectively felt. We all now recognize our obligation to his able and conservative guidance during the formative period of our existence as a political community, in overcoming the unusual difficulties and in solving the serious problems that confronted us in our early career.

It was a great privilege vouchsafed to him to be spared to witness the imperial proportions attained by the young commonwealth whose destiny had been so largely shaped by his hands.

The characteristic of Governor Ramsey that specially impressed me, and generally those, I think, that came to know him well, was his unique and charming personality. However one might differ with him upon any question of public interest, personal contact with him was sure to harmonize, in some degree, 749 one's own view with his. He had a most

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persuasive way in that respect, and if one finally was compelled to differ with him upon a question of interest or policy, it was with a feeling of real sorrow that it must be so. In his nature there was little of that element of antagonism that we encounter in the average man of our times. If he did not always succeed in conciliating such opposition as one must encounter in a long public career like his, it caused keen regret upon the part of those who felt that they must decline to accept his view of men or measures.

Perhaps the pleasantest reminiscence I have of my relation to Governor Ramsey, is connected with the visit he made to our Minnesota regiments in the summer of 1862, along our lines at the front, near Corinth, Mississippi. It was during the first few months of our service in the South, before we had become acclimated and hardened by experience into the veterans we regarded ourselves a year or two later. We had had our first fight and had concluded our first campaign, and at the time were encamped in one of the worst of the many malarious localities that distinguish that section of the country. The health of the troops had become seriously affected by the adverse conditions that generally prevailed. Our Minnesota men, in common with their comrades from other states, were being in such large numbers reported sick, or unfit for duty, that a feeling of despondency and gloom was beginning to pervade the command. The sick were earnestly pleading to be taken away from the environment of death that was daily claiming many of their comrades, and those yet in reasonable health were cast down by what seemed to be the inevitable prospect before them. Governor Ramsey's visit occurred at about this crisis, and he at once interested himself in an effort to reassure and revive the drooping spirits of our men. Here was an instance where the remarkable personality of Governor Ramsey, to which I have referred, was illustrated in a notable manner. His efforts had a marked effect. There seemed to be a change for the better in the conditions of which I have spoken after this visit of Governor Ramsey.

Personally, I well remember the feeling of relief and reassurance I experienced, respecting the responsibilities resting upon me as commander of the Fifth Regiment, after Governor Ramsey's visit to our camp. It was simply a case of "bracing 750 up" on our part, but the

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incentive and stimulus to such an effort were the cheerful sympathy and assurance with which the Governor convinced us that things were not as bad as they seemed to be.

Surely the name and fame of Governor Ramsey are so woven into the fabric of our history that they must endure and be honored as long as the Commonwealth shall survive.

Ex-Governor Andrew R. McGill presented the following tribute, which, in his absence, was read by the Secretary.

It would not be possible in the few minutes allotted me to do more than glance at, much less amplify, the traits which differentiated Governor Ramsey from other men and served as indices to a character marked with strong but withal pleasing individuality.

Following the excellent sketch of his life by General Baker, recently read before this Society, any further utterances on the subject must be in the nature of redundancy, or but confirmatory echoes of what has already been comprehensively considered and thoroughly well said.

Governor Ramsey was first of all a good American citizen, loyal alike to his City, State, and Country. His respect for law and the orderly conduct of affairs was a marked trait of his character. He was at all times a model citizen. His patriotism had no bounds. He believed in his Country and its institutions with all his soul, and even in the gloomiest days of the rebellion his faith remained constant and unshaken. He foresaw the country's triumph and splendid destiny, when strong men quailed and trembled in fear lest it should be overcome by those who sought its life; and with cheerful face he looked to the future, buoyed up by the firm conviction that this government would not perish from the earth, that it would emerge, as it did, with a new birth and a new life, strengthened even by its sacrifices and capable of withstanding whatever foes it might encounter in the future, domestic or foreign. Those who knew Governor Ramsey during this period cannot fail to recall the sublimity of his faith and confidence. In this faith there was no pessimism.

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He was a sagacious, big-brained man, and in saving common sense was not excelled by any of his contemporaries. His views on public questions were broad and comprehensive, and his judgment wonderfully accurate.

It was but natural for Governor Ramsey to be kindly, sociable, and hospitable. He had no doubt more warm personal friends and admirers than any other man in the State. The quotation,

“None knew thee but to love thee, Nor named thee but to praise,”

is often used in extolling the dead, and is seldom applicable; yet in the case of the subject of this sketch it applies literally. And while his friends were a great multitude, he never failed, however busy, to greet each one, as he met them from time to time, and with such undisguised and kindly courtesy as to still further endear him to them. Thus as the years rolled by, the ties which united him to his friends continually strengthened.

And who were his friends? Were they the high officers of the State and Church? Were they the scholars and artists, the men of great learning and accomplishment? Were they the wealthy and the powerful? Yes, all of these, and equally also the humble and poor. He was no respecter of persons. No property qualification was necessary to gain his friendship. He was absolutely without affectation. There was no fawning on his part, neither was there repulsion. To him all of his acquaintances, whatever their condition in life, stood on the same level. His greetings to the humble were as hale and hearty as to the wealthy. His purposes were noble and sincere, and his life one of unaffected simplicity.

It is unnecessary for me to refer to Governor Ramsey's official career. That phase of his life has been so interwoven into the history of the State as to embellish nearly all of its pages. The history of *his* life and of the State's are contemporaneous and inseparable.

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They cannot be considered apart. To relate one is to relate the other. No man was ever more clearly identified with his State than he.

He desired the prosperity and happiness of his fellow men and to the last was deeply interested in whatever tended to the development and betterment of the State. He had been present at its birth, had been prominent in moulding its policies and laws, had seen it grow in wealth and population, in education and refinement, until it had become confessedly one of the prominent States of the Union. He had been an important factor in making possible this splendid fruition, and with the satisfaction of a parent he dwelt continually in admiration of the splendid achievement.

In the State Historical Society his interest never abated. Comprehending its great value, he gave to it his services up to the close of his eventful life. I recall his attendance upon the Finance Committees of the legislature from time to time, and his earnest pleas for the support necessary to carry on its important work. At the session of 1901, weighted then with four score and six years, he climbed to the third story of the Capitol building to meet the Committees in this behalf, and it is pleasant now to remember that his demand or request was unanimously conceded.

Governor Ramsey was admirably adapted to public life. By reason of his temperament, his knowledge of men, his frank and manly nature, and his large comprehension of things essential, he was enabled to accomplish more than most men of even conceded ability and influence. And, possessing these great advantages, he was untiring in serving as best he could his State and his Country.

Death has reaped a glorious harvest in Minnesota the last few years. We, who survive, stand appalled as the names are called of those who have passed over into that "undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns." Ramsey's name, alas! has been added to the list. He has joined the immortals. The State has lost its first citizen; and we, each of us, have lost a noble friend. Yet we know that

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“It is not all of life to live, Nor all of death to die;”

and that, while he has been called from among us and from the activities of life, his works will live after him and his name will continue to be influential in Minnesota—his State and ours—so long as time shall last. In consideration of these 753 things, and in the memory which we treasure of his noble life, let us find our consolation.

Governor Van Sant spoke as follows:

The long and valuable services of Hon. Alexander Ramsey, to both the Territory and State of Minnesota, easily mark him as our most worthy and distinguished fellow-citizen. His treaties with the Indians, his labors in season and out of season to advance our interests in the pioneer days, will long be remembered by a grateful people.

His fidelity to the cause of education, and his deep solicitude for the safety of the school fund, were most commendable. When by legislative enactment land sharks and speculators would have laid violent hands upon it, Alexander Ramsey vetoed the measure. And this magnificent fund, now amounting to \$15,000,000,—and later, if like wisdom and integrity prevail, it will amount to fully \$50,000,000,—will stand as a lasting monument to Ramsey's faithful and efficient services and devotion to duty.

He it was who tendered to Abraham Lincoln at the outbreak of the Civil War the first regiment, and it was not only Minnesota's first, but, on account of its memorable charge at Gettysburg, it became the first regiment of the nation,—suffering a greater loss in that sanguinary engagement than any other similar organization on either side in any one engagement during the entire war.

At that time there was not a dollar in the treasury of the state. Ramsey made a long and tedious journey to Pennsylvania and borrowed the money, on his own promise to pay, to equip that same body of men and send them to the front. The fact that he could at such a

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time on his personal note secure so large a sum of money is a most convincing tribute to the esteem in which he was held by the people of his native state.

During that great struggle no war governor did more with the men and means at his command to aid President Lincoln in his mighty task than he. His patriotism was ever 48754 of the highest type. As United States Senator and Secretary of War, the same fidelity to duty characterized his every act. Not only in public but in private life he was a most exemplary citizen, a devoted husband, a kind father; in a word, loved and esteemed by all who knew him.

At Washington, in the rotunda of the Capitol, each state is privileged to place statues of two of her most distinguished sons. So universal is the sentiment that Alexander Ramsey is of all men entitled to this honor, that I purpose asking the next legislature to appropriate the money and take the necessary steps to place his statue in the nation's first niche of fame allotted to Minnesota. There may be some question as to who shall occupy the other place,—let future generations decide that; but there can be no difference of opinion, it seems to me, as to the wisdom of thus honoring the memory of Alexander Ramsey.

Archbishop Ireland spoke as follows:

The presence of Governor Ramsey in our streets, before his death, was forceful and meaningful. He expressed in himself the whole half century of toil and achievement—the practical labors and the romance and poetry of our half century of growth. He was fortunate in living fourscore years and ten, that the quiet peacefulness of his declining years might crown the more rugged activity of his early life,—that he might see the harvest he had helped to sow, and reap the satisfaction from a life full of labor and usefulness.

Alexander Ramsey and the State of Minnesota are inseparable. You cannot mention the one without recalling the other. I can remember no other state in which the history of the commonwealth is so closely bound up in the life of one man. Arriving in 1849 as the first governor of the new territory, he found Minnesota new and unimportant. A few white men

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were scattered along her rivers. No axmen were in her forests, and no plow had furrowed her broad plains. Only the trails of the savages marked where man had passed.

On his arrival he hunted in vain for a roof to spend the night, but was taken in by General Sibley at Mendota, until 755 St. Paul awoke to her dignity as the capital and provided quarters for him.

The story from that time until this present year is more epic than ever Homer or Virgil wrote, for wonders have indeed been done, and Alexander Ramsey could say, "Among great things, I have been great." He may well be called the builder, savior, and father of his State.

Private virtue is ever the embellishment of public capacities, and in the private virtues Ramsey stood pre-eminent. Honest, kindly, affectionate in his home and among his friends, Alexander Ramsey was, indeed, a man whose memory will fade only when Minnesota has become but a memory.

Hon. F. C. Stevens said:

I esteem myself fortunate, as one of the younger generation, in having enjoyed sufficient acquaintance with Governor Ramsey so that it was possible to appreciate the noble qualities which so endeared him to the people of the Northwest. During the last few years of his life he discussed with me matters of public importance with such shrewdness, vigor, and breadth of view, as to cause one to marvel:

"How far the Gulf stream of our youth may flow  
Into the Arctic regions of our lives,  
Where little else than life survives."

I have had the opportunity to contrast his strength and soundness of intellect with some of the distinguished contemporaries, who with him met and solved the momentous problems which confronted men of public affairs more than a generation ago. Few of them did retain

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as he the memory of persons and events, and a just appreciation of the accomplishments and errors, of those fateful years. But more than all it seems to me wonderful that he grasped so strongly and accurately the trend of recent events which also form an epoch in the world's history. There is one occurrence which impressed me with those faculties. I met Governor Ramsey in St. Paul, and he had recounted some of his work in Washington and told some stories of interest relating to close friends of his then in active public life and in most important stations. 756 One of them was a member of the President's Cabinet. Governor Ramsey sent a personal letter by a friend to this former colleague in the Senate and Cabinet, relative to some business then pending, and I was charged to introduce the gentleman and deliver the letter; and to our astonishment this prominent official did not remember either the Governor or the important matters of former years, until after we had vigorously refreshed his memory. And when we discussed current events applying to our mission, his feeble old intellect could not seem to comprehend them. Yet at that time our old friend seized these with the greatest eagerness; and his opinions and conclusions were so broad and just and shrewd as to always compel admiration.

In my public work I was greatly interested in two particular questions on which I found Governor Ramsey also informed and interested, namely, the improvement of our postal service, and our national merchant marine. I ascertained that when in the Senate he had devoted special attention to these topics, and, as chairman of the Senate Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads in 1870, had drafted, introduced, reported and conducted in the Senate most important measures on these subjects. He informed me that the foundation of our postal system of today is the postal code which he had piloted through the Senate in the short session of 1871. Though there has been much subsequent legislation and many amendments, there has since never been any thoroughly competent revision. I recall that, in that conversation, he stated the present postal system to be in some respects inadequate and cumbersome; and that the machine for the expenditure of less than \$20,000,000 for 30,000,000 people could not be expected to do the work

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satisfactorily for the expenditure of \$120,000,000 for 75,000,000 people. Recent events have sustained the same conclusion of this wise old statesman.

I recall, too, that during the time when the ship subsidy bills were under discussion by the country and in Congress, Governor Ramsey informed me that he had been through similar contests when he drafted and reported four bills for the benefit of the waning merchant marine of the country and to establish steamship lines on the Pacific, Gulf, and Atlantic, and 757 with Asiatic, South American, Mexican, and European ports. He discussed the subject as it appeared in his active days and the changes that had since occurred, as well as the necessities of the present, with such force and clearness that I found that the so-called modern statesmen may better sit at the feet of the grand old man for instruction even in their chosen lines.

Most of us think we are doing well when we deal with a few subjects of importance. But he seemed to have mastered many. In those days he had the burden of public affairs which men in our times hardly realize. The vast and various questions of war and reconstruction, of finance and resumption of specie payments, of commerce and shipping, of the proper reduction of our army, of Indian and land matters then of vast importance, and of encouragement for the building of railroads and improving our water ways without robbing and impoverishing our people, and multitudes of smaller and yet most important questions, were connected with the close of the great and destructive war and with the development of a new country, populated by the most vigorous and restless and progressive pioneers the world has ever seen. These latter topics alone would create a vast amount of difficult business at all times.

It is given to few men in public life to stand in the front rank and perform notable public acts so that the world will acclaim them as great. In our country, Washington and Jefferson, Webster and Clay, Lincoln and Seward, had the opportunity. Even these men could have accomplished nothing unless they had been loyally supported by that second rank of patriotic, wise and strong men who stood between these leaders and the people

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and carried on the vast and varied business of a rapidly growing country. These men may not have achieved so much fame with the populace, but after all their services were of the utmost value and necessity. Ramsey was one of them and will always be remembered as of those who supported the great chieftains wisely and strongly in the dark days of the nation's extremity.

A new country is largely what its pioneers make it. They fix the character and the trend of its development. Their lives, plans, and guidance, mostly determine its possibilities and usefulness. 758 We younger men have been so fortunate as to have our ways directed to this fair land after the stress and struggles of pioneering had passed, and when all of the accompaniments of the highest and most delightful civilization were present; and we can never honor too highly the men who brought these wonderful things to pass.

We shall always find an inspiration for well doing in public and private capacity in the life and works of Alexander Ramsey.

Mr. Henry S. Fairchild said:

We have met here to do honor to the memory of a very distinguished man, who to many of us was a warm personal friend.

At our last meeting we listened to an able, a very eloquent, and well deserved tribute to Governor Ramsey, by General James H. Baker; and he and those who have preceded me tonight have covered fully his remarkable public life and his personal characteristics. It is only left to me to allude to a few traits of the character of Governor Ramsey that strongly impressed me in the last few years when business relations threw us into close association.

In these years I have heard him relate much of the public men of the nation with whom he had come in contact, and much of his fellow pioneers of this State, of whom some had been lifelong political friends, some political opponents, and a few personal enemies

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(for all men of positive character must have enemies), and a broad spirit of charity characterized all his utterances. I cannot recall a single instance in which he indulged in detraction or disparagement of his opponents, even when some of them had participated in defrauding him of the governorship to which all now know he was fairly elected in the first contest.

His kindheartedness was illustrated by his retaining servants and tenants for twenty or thirty years, not always for their worthiness, but because he had come to know them well, and his sympathies would not permit their discharge.

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Men exalted to high stations often lose touch with the mass of humanity. Not so with Alexander Ramsey. It was his fortune to have known well most of the distinguished men of our country of the last two generations, yet he never lost touch with the humblest of his fellow citizens, especially of the old settlers. He met them always with a pleasant smile and cordial shake of the hand, and was by them universally loved.

When he lay in state at the Capitol, I stood and watched with interest the thronging thousands pass his bier, once more to look on the face of the "Grand Old Man," whom they revered and loved.

When Abou Ben Adhem saw the angel writing in the "Book of Gold" in the soft moonlight of his room, he made bold to ask the Celestial Presence, "What writest thou?" The angel answered, "The names of those who love the Lord." Abou asked, "And is mine one?" The angel, with a sweet, sad face, answered, "Nay, not so." Then Ben Adhem humbly said, "Write me as one that loves his fellow men." The next night the angel came with a great wakening light,

"And showed the names whom love of God had bless'd, And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest."

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More and more, as the earth circles the sun men will be judged by men (and is man more merciful than God?) in accordance with the quality of their hearts and their love of their fellow men, rather than by the quality of their judgment, their creeds, or beliefs.

In the last few years Governor Ramsey thought much and talked often, when none others were by, of the great, and, through all time, perplexing mysteries of life and destiny.

“Where rest the secrets? where the keys Of the old death-bolted mysteries? Alas! the dead retain their trust, Dust has no answer from the dust.”

I remember well his speaking of having often listened to a distinguished senator from Ohio, who had made a study of all religions and philosophies, which in a degree unsettled his faith, and he said he often regretted having heard him;—that 760 he wished that he could have remained in the simple comforting faith of his sainted mother.

Pardon me, Mr. President, if, impelled by the knowledge of the growing current of the thought of the day, I say it is not accordant with reason or intuition that instinct should lead aright the squirrel and the bee to lay up stores for the winter of whose needs they have had no experience,—that instinct should teach the wild waterfowl to wing their way to the far North, to nest and rear their brood in safety on the reedy margins of the lakes in the unpeopled wilderness,—that instinct should lead aright all the lower ranks of creation; and that the universal instinct of man, the highest order in creation,—the instinct of man, civilized or savage, in all nations and in all climes,—should lead him amiss as to life after death, the immortality of the soul.

And so, independent of authority and despite the oracles of modern science, we may rest assured that our friend still lives. The bars that caged his soul have been drawn away, and the perplexing mysteries so insolvable to our feeble finite faculties, with a naturally narrow limitation increased by the mists and clouds of passion and prejudice, have doubtless all

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been made clear to the unfettered spirit of our friend. But where and how the after and higher life is led, we know not. Our sweetest singer says:

“I know not where His islands lift Their fronded palms in air; I only know I cannot drift Beyond His love and care.”

Mr. A. L. Larpenteur said:

Alexander Ramsey is dead. Goodbye, old friend; you have preceded us but a few days. Children, accept our sincere condolence, which we offer you on this day of your sad bereavement, and the sentiments of a bleeding heart, and bow with humble supplication to the will of Him who created him. His work was done and God called him home to rest.

We shall miss him from our festive board where it has been my privilege to sit with him for fifty odd years. Eighty-eight years of usefulness! What a lesson for others to emulate! 761 He has paid the debt due to our humanity, and his Creator has said to him, “Come home, good and faithful servant and reap your reward.”

Minnesota owes you much. You took her while in her swaddling clothes; by your wisdom and sagacity you nursed her into maturity. And then again you were called upon to care for her in the Nation's greatest need. By your wise and prudent judgment of men and measures, you failed not to call into your counsels our best men for your lieutenants, as demonstrated in the selection of that Christian gentleman, the poor man's friend, General Henry H. Sibley, capable and honorable. Hence your administrations have been ever successful. Minnesota has honored you, 'tis true, but no more than you have honored her.

The name of Alexander Ramsey should be inscribed upon the indestructible Rock of Time, there to remain as a contribution from the State of Minnesota to History, in veneration of one of the most illustrious pioneers and founders of this great State, “Minnesota, the Gem of the Constellation.”

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Mrs. Vinnie Ream Hoxie said:

It would be superfluous for me to speak of the estimation in which Alexander Ramsey was held in this State, where he was loved so well, but of my personal experience I may briefly speak.

When, as scarcely more than a child, I competed for the honor of making the statue of Abraham Lincoln, he and other senators befriended the little western girl. President Lincoln had given me sittings at the White House for a bust, which was one of my earliest works, and I had been engaged on it five months when he was assassinated. He had become my warm friend, and was much pleased with the likeness I had made. Immediately after his death, Congress appropriated ten thousand dollars for a statue of the martyred President, which was to be in marble and placed in the rotunda of the Capitol. It required a great deal of courage in these men to be the friend of an unknown artist, who was daring to compete with experienced and famous sculptors, and I determined not to disappoint them.

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Again, when I competed for the statue of Farragut, they stood by me with renewed zeal.

You can imagine, therefore, my mingled feelings of sorrow and gladness in having this public opportunity of expressing my gratitude, which has filled my heart to overflowing for many years.

All hail to Ramsey, great, good, tender-hearted leader! The memory of his life will help other men to live. All the youth of Minnesota have inherited from him the example of a great life and character.

General James H. Baker spoke as follows:

Referring to the recent Memorial Eulogy which I had the honor to deliver on the life and character of Alexander Ramsey, a question has arisen as to the correctness of the

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statement therein contained, that one of the noblest features of the treaty of 1851 was the fact of its absolutely pacific character, “not a soldier being present, nor were they at any time required.”

Several eminent gentlemen are of the opinion that I was in error as to this statement, that there were no soldiers present at the time of the treaty. Among them are men such as Joseph A. Wheelock and General William G. Le Duc, each so well qualified to determine a historic question of that sort. I have also received several letters of like import. I respectfully insist, however, that I am absolutely correct. For this reason, among others, I placed the Ramsey treaty on the high moral plane of William Penn's celebrated treaty.

Now as to my authority for its absolutely pacific character: the only regular correspondent on the ground at Traverse des Sioux during the time of the treaty was James M. Goodhue, of the Pioneer, to whose elaborate letters we are chiefly indebted for a history of the treaty. They are on file in our vaults, and I have read them with care.

Under date of June 29, 1851, Goodhue says: “Arriving at Mendota, we took on board cattle, supplies, and wood. Then crossing over to Fort Snelling, Governor Ramsey came on board. It was expected that a company of dragoons from the fort would have gone up on the boat to be in attendance at the 763 treaty, but the notice for their departure had been so brief that they were not in readiness, and so the boat departed without them.”

Nowhere in his series of daily letters does he subsequently refer to the arrival of any soldiers, but, on the contrary, in a very brilliant description of the scene, written July 15, 1851, he says: “Behold yonder on the sleeping hillside, the glorious flag of our country, every wave of which sends a pulsation of pride through American hearts, under its protection; a few tents and marquees, of a handful of men, constitute the Commission, unguarded by a single sentinel or musket, amid hundreds of savages....”

In a subsequent letter he gives the names of all the white men present at the treaty, as follows: “I will here give a list, as nearly as I can, of all the white men who compose

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our camp. Commissioners Lea and Ramsey, Secretary Foster, Hugh Tyler, Colonel Henderson, A. S. White, Wallace B. White, Alexis Bailly, F. Brown, R. Chute and lady, Messrs. Lord, Mayer, M. McLeod, Riggs, Williamson, H. Jackson, Hartshorn, J. R. Brown, H. L. Dousman, K. McKenzie, H. H. Sibley, J. La Framboise, W. H. Forbes, A. Faribault, and myself, and probably several others whose names do not occur to me.”

Turn now to the U. S. Executive Documents, War Department, 1851, on file in our Library, and you will find, in the report of the colonel commanding at Fort Snelling that year, that he recites the causes why he was unable to respond to Governor Ramsey's request to send troops to the Sioux treaty at Traverse des Sioux, 1851. But now turn to these Executive Documents, 1852, of the War Department, and you will find the report of one Captain James Monroe, who was sent by the colonel commanding at Fort Snelling, at the request of Governor Ramsey, because of trouble with the Indians at the time of the payment, which report bears date November 19, 1852.

My good friends, Wheelock and Le Duc, have simply confounded events which occurred at the time of the payment with those of the treaty. The payment of money required by the terms of the treaty made in 1851, was not made till more than a year later, on November 19, 1852, when a part of the Indians, principally chiefs and head men, were re-assembled at Traverse des Sioux to receive their money. And it was on account of 764 serious difficulties with the Indians, by reason of the traders claiming most of the money, that Governor Ramsey was compelled to dispatch a courier to Fort Snelling for soldiers, which was responded to promptly by the coming of Captain Monroe with some forty dragoons.

That was the time, as the record shows, of the difficulties with the chief, Red Iron, and also with Captain Dodds. This was the time (November, 1852) when Red Iron became furious and organized the “soldiers' lodge” to resist the results of the treaty, and Governor Ramsey showed his courage and intrepidity by boldly confronting Red Iron, and actually casting him into prison, before the coming of the soldiers.

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My friends have simply confounded the events of 1852 with the events of 1851, which, after a lapse of more than half a century, is not surprising.

Finally and conclusively, when Mr. Thomas Hughes, of Mankato, was preparing his excellent and exhaustive paper, "The Treaty of Traverse des Sioux," read before this society on September 9, 1901, with that care which always marks his historic researches, he visited Governor Ramsey in this city, and they went over the whole matter of the treaty in detail. Among the specific questions that Mr. Hughes asked Governor Ramsey, was, whether there were any soldiers present at the treaty, and he promptly replied, "No, there was not a single soldier present during the entire time of the treaty; but the next year, at the time of the payment, 1852, I had serious trouble with Red Iron and his followers, and I sent a hasty messenger to Fort Snelling, and Captain Monroe came promptly to my assistance. There was not a soldier present during the time of the treaty. We had perfect peace and good order, though there were thousands of Indians."

Mr. Hughes' history of the treaty will always stand as authority on that matter, as it richly deserves, by reason of the thorough care bestowed in its preparation. It assigns him a high position as a careful and valuable historian. It will be published in Volume X of this Society's Historical Collections.

I have been thus particular in setting at rest the rumor that there were soldiers present at this great treaty of 1851, because I have taken pride in bringing to the public eye the potent influence of that treaty upon the fortunes of Minnesota. And, moreover, the purely pacific character of the treaty was one of its crowning glories. I do not wish to see that laurel plucked away. To have soldiers there, would indicate some menace, or threat, or pressure upon the Indians. As the treaty now stands, historically, in all its essential features, it far outranks the celebrated treaty of William Penn, in 1683, and was the most peaceful, just, and orderly treaty, in all its appointments, magnitude, conduct, and results,

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ever negotiated with the aborigines of this country. And through it all Alexander Ramsey was the dominant and controlling spirit.

The Secretary, Mr. Warren Upham , spoke last in this series of Memorial Addresses, as follows:

After a little more than seven years of association with Governor Ramsey in the work of this Society, I wish here to speak briefly, as my personal tribute of honor and love for him, of two admirable qualities of mind and character which he possessed in a most remarkable and unusual degree.

Having heard him converse times without number concerning the old settlers and the great leaders of our Territory and State, some of whom were politically his co-workers and others his opponents, I have never heard him express a word or thought of unkindness or depreciation of any person among all this very wide range of acquaintance through his fifty-four years of life in Minnesota. In general courtesy, sincere forgiveness of early wrongs and defamation, and a hearty kindness to all, from former political antagonists to the servants at his home, or to the worthy poor of this city, Governor Ramsey displayed invariably a very rare and grand magnanimity, a true greatness of spirit and nobility, which distinguished him as much as his long public services and honors. This quality gave him a serene and happy old age.

Another and equally observable characteristic was his entire freedom from self complaisance or even consciousness of his own achievements or greatness. Egotism had no place in his conversation or conduct. During all the sixty years of his public life, in Pennsylvania and Minnesota, he kept a series of diaries or memorandum books, noting events, names, and dates, 766 with occasional comments, which might be desired for future reference. These very concise contemporary records are of inestimable value for a biography of Governor Ramsey, and indeed for the broader history of Minnesota, to which he was often urged by the Council of this Society, that an assistant should work with him

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and have his life written and published under his supervision and approval. But this very earnest and repeated request was unavailing, because he had no desire for publication of any records concerning himself. Let us hope that this work will yet be done worthily, with filial care, to be a volume of this Society's Collections.

Among the grand statesmen who have nurtured and led our Territory and State through its first half century, Alexander Ramsey is preëminent, clearly recognized as the foremost, to whom the people of Minnesota owe the highest gratitude and honor. He had noble associates, as Sibley, Rice, Windom, Davis, Pillsbury, and others. We are so near to all these men, as in a range or group of mountains, that we cannot yet see fully their relative altitudes, but it is distinctly seen that Ramsey is the highest and first.

By many of our citizens he is best remembered as the vigorous "War Governor," who was the first to offer a regiment to President Lincoln in the dark days at the beginning of the Civil War, and who organized efficient defense of our frontier and suppression of the Sioux outbreak in 1862.

By others, of the younger generation, he will be known chiefly as a historic personage, by whom the treaties of 1851 at Traverse des Sioux and Mendota, and that of 1863 with the Ojibways of the Red river region, were enacted, giving to white immigrants nearly the whole of the fertile prairie country in this state. He will also be forever gratefully remembered by all teachers and pupils in our schools, as the founder of the state's magnificent public school fund.

In view of all his splendid services, and of the general popular regard and affection for the old governor, which General Baker so well emphasized in his recent address, it may very fittingly be said of Alexander Ramsey in his relations to the people of Minnesota, as was said of Washington in his relation to the beginning of our republic, that he was "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."