



J. A. Van Dyke

Detroit. He is identified with various professional, civic, fraternal and social organizations and enjoys distinctive popularity in the city which represents his home. He is an aggressive factor in the work of the Republican party and an able and effective exemplar of its principles and policies. He was elected as his own successor in congress in the election of November, 1908. Mr. Denby is a bachelor.

JAMES A. VAN DYKE.

Pure, constant and noble was the spiritual flame which burned in and illumined the mortal tenement of James Adams Van Dyke, who became one of the distinguished members of the Detroit bar even before the admission of Michigan to statehood, who attained to high honors as a loyal and public-spirited citizen, and whose deep appreciation of his stewardship was on a parity with the distinctive success which it was his to gain. Our later generation may well pause to contemplate his exalted and useful life and pay anew a tribute to his memory, for he wrote his name large on the earlier history of Detroit. True biography has a more noble purpose than mere fulsome eulogy. The historic spirit, faithful to the record; the discerning judgment, unmoved by prejudice and uncolored by enthusiasm, are as essential in giving the life of the individual person as in writing the history of a people. The world to-day is what the leading men of the last generation have made it. From the past has come the legacy of the present. Art, science, statesmanship and government are accumulations. They constitute an inheritance upon which the present generation have entered, and the advantages secured from so vast a bequeathment depend entirely upon the fidelity with which is conducted the study of the lives of those who have transmitted the legacy. To such a careful study are the life, character and services of James A. Van Dyke eminently entitled, and in a publication such as the one at hand it is gratifying to be able to present even a memoir of the abridged type which the province of the work necessarily prescribes.

James Adams Van Dyke was born in Mercersburg, Franklin county, Pennsylvania, in

December, 1813, and his death occurred at his home in Detroit on the 7th of May, 1855. He was a son of William and Nancy (Dunbar) Van Dyke, the former of whom was of Holland Dutch lineage. His parents continued to reside in Pennsylvania until their death, and it should be noted that the respective families were founded in America in the colonial epoch. William Van Dyke was born in the old Keystone state, as was also his wife, and of their six children, five sons and one daughter, the subject of this memoir was the eldest.

The education of James A. Van Dyke had its inception under the direction of able private tutors, and there is ample evidence to show that he was specially favored in the surroundings and influences of the parental home, which was one of unmistakable culture and refinement. At the age of fifteen years he was matriculated in Madison College, at Uniontown, Pennsylvania, and from this institution he was graduated as a member of the class of 1832. Within the same year he began the study of law, under the preceptorship of George Chambers, at Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. There he continued his professional reading with marked avidity and earnestness for one year, at the expiration of which he removed to Hagerstown, Maryland, where he found an able preceptor in the person of William Price, a prominent member of the bar of that commonwealth. Later he pursued his technical studies for several months in the city of Baltimore, where he also availed himself of the privilege of attending upon the courts.

In the month of December, 1834, Mr. Van Dyke left his home, with the purpose of locating in the city of Pittsburg, which was then a small city and one that did not prove attractive to him. Under these conditions he determined to come to the west, and he arrived in Detroit, bearing letters of introduction to the Hon. Alexander D. Frazer, then one of the representative members of the local bar. He entered the office of Mr. Frazer and within six months thereafter was admitted to the bar of the territory of Michigan. In a memorial published at the time of his death appear the

following pertinent words: "From the very onset of his career Mr. Van Dyke devoted himself with the utmost assiduity to his profession. It was the calling of his choice, and his peculiar and rich gifts rendered him entirely fit to pursue its higher, more honorable and more distinguished walks."

In 1835 Mr. Van Dyke formed a law partnership with Hon. Charles W. Whipple, and this alliance continued until the election of the latter to the bench of the supreme court of the new state, in 1838. Mr. Van Dyke then associated himself in practice with E. B. Harrington, who continued as his professional confrere until the relationship was severed by the death of Mr. Harrington, in 1844. Thereafter Mr. Van Dyke was associated in general practice with H. H. Emmons until 1852, when both virtually retired from the active general practice of their profession. In the year mentioned, Mr. Van Dyke became the attorney for the Michigan Central Railroad, in which connection he rendered effective service, both in behalf of the company and the people of the state. In 1835, and again in 1839, he was appointed city attorney of Detroit, and in 1840 he was appointed prosecuting attorney of Wayne county. Concerning his administration of this latter office the following contemporaneous estimate was given: "He established a new era in the efficiency, energy and exactness with which he conducted the criminal prosecutions, and cleared the city and county of numerous and flagrant criminals. During the continuance of Mr. Van Dyke in this office he kept up the same vigilance and exercised the same indefatigable determination in the prosecution of crime." In 1843 he was chosen to represent the third ward on the board of aldermen, and in the following year was chosen as his own successor. His effective services as chairman of the committee of ways and means during this period, when the city's finances were in deplorable condition, proved specially potent in upholding the financial reputation of Detroit. In 1847 he was elected mayor of the city, and in his careful and conservative administration he was able to carry to a logical conclusion the policy which he

had brought forward in the committee previously mentioned. He was not a figurehead in the office of mayor, but put forth his best efforts and powers in behalf of the city of his home and the one in which all of his interests centered. In 1853 he was chosen a member of the first board of commissioners of the Detroit water works, and of this position he continued incumbent until his death. From the history of Detroit and Michigan published by Silas Farmer, of Detroit, in 1889, are secured the following extracts touching the peculiarly prominent association of Mr. Van Dyke with the Detroit fire department:

"He was best known, however, from his connection with the early history of the Detroit fire department. His name was enrolled on the list of members composing Protection Fire Company No. 1, the first duly organized company in Detroit, and until his death no man in the city took a more active interest in building up and extending the usefulness of the fire department. He served as president of the department from 1847 to 1851, and to his financial tact, energy and determination, no less than to an honest pride in the fire department, all citizens are greatly indebted. In 1840 he framed and procured the passage of the law incorporating the fire department, and it was largely his efforts that secured the erection of the first firemen's hall. His death, which occurred May 7, 1855, was an especially severe loss to the fire department, the feeling being fittingly expressed in the following resolutions adopted by its officers:

"Resolved, That in the death of Mr. Van Dyke the fire department of Detroit has lost one of its benefactors; that his name is so closely interwoven with its fortune, from its origin as a benevolent and chartered organization, through the vicissitudes of its early and precarious existence until its successful and triumphant development as one of the prominent institutions of the city, that it may with truth be said that its history is almost comprised within the limits of his active participation in its affairs.

"Resolved, That as a fireman, beginning and serving his full term in one of the companies of this city, his aim seemed to be rather

to discharge well the duties of a private than to accept the proffered honors of this company, save as trustee in the Board. But of those duties he had a high appreciation, deeming it a worthy ambition, as inculcated by him in an address to the department, 'to dedicate one's self to the work with heart brave and steadfast, tenacious of obedience to law and order, with an elevated and stern determination to tread only the paths of rectitude.'

"In order to further honor his memory the fire department issued a memorial volume, containing the proceedings of the department, of the Detroit bar and of the common council, relative to his death, as well as several tributes to his memory from those who knew him best."

In the domain of his chosen profession Mr. Van Dyke gained pre-eminence. Profound and exact in his erudition, strong in dialectic powers, forceful in the clarity and precision of his diction, and with a most pleasing personal presence, he naturally commanded a place of leadership as a trial lawyer, while as a counsel he was equally secure and fortified. He appeared in many important litigations and made a reputation that was not hedged in by the confines of his home city or state. This article would stultify its consistency were there failure to revert to the masterly argument made by Mr. Van Dyke in one of the most important cases ever presented in the courts of the state of Michigan. He was one of the counsel for the people in the great railroad conspiracy case, relative to the Michigan Central Railroad, which was tried in the circuit court of Wayne count at the May term of the year 1851. It may be said without fear of legitimate contradiction that his was the leading argument advanced in the *cause célèbre*, and the record concerning the same has become an integral part of the legal history of the state. The argument of Mr. Van Dyke occupies one hundred and thirty-two closely printed pages, and is notable alike for its cogency, its broadness and fairness and for its beauty of diction and absolute eloquence. Of course it is impossible within the compass of a sketch of this description to offer more than the briefest of extracts from the article in question, but the

following excerpts, both eloquent and prophetic, may well be given place here:

What has been the history of the road (Michigan Central) while in the hands of the state? For years it dragged its slow length along,—an encumbrance and a burthen. The state needed engines, cars, depots,—every material to prosecute or sustain with energy or profit, this important work; but its credit was gone and it was immersed in debt. Our population was thinly scattered across the entire breadth of the peninsula. Engines dragged slowly and heavily through the dense forests. Our city numbered but twelve thousand people; our state was destitute of wealth; our farmers destitute of markets; our laborers destitute of employment; and so far as the interests of the state and her people were identified with the railroad, it presented a joyless present, a dark and frowning future. In a fortunate hour the state sold the road, and the millions of this denounced company were flung broadcast through our community; they took up the old track, relaid a better one, extended the road to the extreme line of the state, laid down, at enormous cost, over four hundred miles of fences to guard the property of all, save those who wanted a beef market at each crossing; multiplied the accommodation seven-fold, quadrupled the speed, increased traffic and commerce, so that, while in 1845 the state passed twenty-six thousand tons over the road, in 1850 the company passed one hundred and thirty-four thousand tons; created markets for our products, snatched the tide of passing emigration from the hands of a steamboat monopoly, hostile to Michigan, and threw it into the heart of our state, until now, where heaven's light was once shut out by dense forests it shines over fertile fields and rich, luxuriant harvests, and the rivers of our state, which once ran with wasteful speed to the bosom of the lakes, turn the machinery which renders our rich products available. With them, capital made its home among us; our credit was restored; hope and energy sprang from their lethargic sleep; labor clapped her glad hands and shouted for joy; and Michigan, bent for the moment, like a sapling by the fierceness of a passing tempest, relieved from the debts and burthens, rose erect and in her youthful strength stood proudly up among her sister states.

Who shall stop this inglorious work which

is spreading blessings and prosperity around us? Who shall dare to say, "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther?" Who shall dictate to it after doing so much? Must it now pause and rest in inglorious ease? No, gentlemen, it shall not be stayed; it shall speed onward in triumph; it shall add link after link to the great chain that binds mankind together; it shall speed onward, still onward, through the gorges of the mountains, over the depths of the valley, till the iron horse, whose bowels are fire, "out of whose nostrils goeth forth smoke," and "whose breath kindleth coals," shall be heard thundering through the echoing solitudes of the Rocky mountains, startling the lone Indian from his wild retreat, and ere long reaching the golden shores of the far off Pacific, there to be welcomed by the glad shouts of American freemen at the glorious event which has conquered time and distance and bound the freemen themselves by nearer cords to offer homes and sister states.

A detestable monopoly! These railroads, built by united energies and capital, are the great instruments in the hand of God to hasten onward the glorious mission of religion and civilization. Already is our Central Road stretching forth its hands and giving assurance that soon shall its iron track reach across the neighboring provinces from Detroit to Niagara, and that ere long the scream of the locomotive shall be heard over the sound of the cataract, which shall thunder forth in deafening peals that glorious event. Our brethren on the shores of the Atlantic, with whom we are bound by every interest, association and affection, will hail the shortened tie with ardent welcome.

Passing on with his argument, Mr. Van Dyke spoke as follows concerning law and its powers and applications:

Gentlemen, all you possess on earth is the reward of labor protected by law. It is law alone which keeps all things in order, guards the sleep of infancy, the energy of manhood, and the weakness of age. It hovers over us by day; it keeps watch and ward over the slumbers of the night; it goes with us over the land, and guides and guards us through the trackless paths of the mighty waters. The high and the low, each is within its view and beneath its ample folds. It protects beauty and virtue, punishes crime and wickedness, and vindicates right. Honor and life, and liberty

and property, the wide world over, are its high objects. Stern, yet kind; pure, yet pitying; steadfast, immutable and just,—it is the attribute of God on earth. It proceeds from his bosom and encircles the world with its care and power and blessings. All honor and praise to those who administer it in purity and who reverence its high behests.

The foregoing quotations are made simply to show the impassioned eloquence of the speaker and his love for the cause of right and justice. No idea is conveyed as to the profundity of the argument he advanced on the occasion, but in even these few words the man, the orator, the patriot, seems to stand before us in his virile strength.

The generous and noble qualities of Mr. Van Dyke's mind and heart glorified a singularly winning personality, and he won and retained friends in all classes. He touched and appreciated the depths of human thought and motive and his charity to his fellow men was spread on that liberal plane which shows forth the grace of toleration and true human sympathy. He had fine perceptions of principle, and if one of his nobler characteristics stood out in distinct prominence above all others it was his loyalty to principle. It would be difficult to say anything better than that of any man. He was one of the kindest and most polished and courteous of gentlemen, and the story of his life bears both lesson and incentive. He was prominent in the political affairs of the new state, and was a conservative Whig in his attitude. His religious faith was that of the Catholic church, of which he was a devout communicant, and it may well be said that his was the faith that makes faithful in all things. He was generous in his aiding of religious, charitable and benevolent objects, and his home life was one whose ideality renders it impossible for the veil to be lifted to public inspection, even in a cursory way and long after he has passed to his reward. Of him it has well been said: "He left a name dear to his friends and a rich inheritance to his children, consecrated by the remembrance of the genial qualities and virtues with which he was so richly endowed." Further, it can not prove other than consistent to incorporate in this brief

sketch a reproduction of the resolutions adopted by the members of the Detroit bar at the time of his death,—a bar which bore at the time names which remain those of greatest distinction in the history of Michigan:

Resolved, That we, who have been witnesses and sharers of his professional labors, can best give full testimony to the genius, skill, learning and industry which he brought to that profession, to which he devoted alike the chivalrous fire of his youth and the riper powers of his manhood, in which he cherished a manly pride, and whose best honors and success he so rapidly and so honorably achieved.

Resolved, That while we bear this just tribute to the fine intellect of our deceased brother, we turn with greater pleasure to those generous qualities of his heart, which endeared him to us all as a companion and friend; which have left tender memorials with so many of his younger brothers, of grateful sympathy and assistance rendered when most needed; and which made his life a bright example of just and honorable conduct in all its relations.

Resolved, That though devoted to the profession of his choice, yet he was never indifferent to the wider duties which were devolved upon him by society at large, and he filled the many public stations to which he was called by the confidence and esteem of his fellow citizens, with an earnestness, purity and ability alike honorable to himself and serviceable to the public.

In the year 1835 was solemnized the marriage of Mr. Van Dyke to Miss Elizabeth Desnoyers, daughter of Hon. Peter J. Desnoyers, another of the honored pioneers of the state of Michigan. Of this union were born eleven children, of whom seven attained to maturity. Philip J. D. Van Dyke, the third son, died in 1883, having become a successful lawyer and having served two terms as prosecuting attorney of Wayne county; Rev. Henry Van Dyke is pastor of St. Mary's church, Bad Axe, Michigan; William Van Dyke is a prominent lawyer of Detroit, associated with E. Y. Swift, Esq.; George W. Van Dyke is now deceased; Marie is the widow of William Casgrain, of Chicago; Rev. Ernest Van Dyke has been for forty years a priest of the Catholic church and for thirty-five years has been pastor of the parish of St. Aloysius, one of the most important in

Detroit; Josephine is the wife of Mr. Henry F. Brownson, of Detroit; and Madame Van Dyke, the youngest of the daughters now living, is superior of the Sacred Heart convent, Chicago.

The portrait of Mr. Van Dyke adorns the walls of the court room of the presiding judge, in the Wayne county building, and another is in the office of the mayor of Detroit with the collection of Detroit's mayors.

D. BETHUNE DUFFIELD.

A valiant, noble soul was that which had indwelling in the mortal tenement of the honored subject of this memoir, than whom none has ever held a more secure and inviolable place in the esteem of the people of the city of Detroit, where he so long lived and labored and where he attained to eminence as one of the distinguished members of the bar of the Wolverine state. "His life was gentle," and also was a faithful under all the changes and chances of this mortal existence,—faithful to itself and to all the objective duties and responsibilities which canopy every human being, no matter what his status. "Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,—these three lead on to sovereign power," and all these were distinguishing attributes in the character of D. Bethune Duffield. He knew mankind, including himself, and there can be no impropriety in utilizing in connection with him the term self-reverence, for this meant in his case but the bringing out of the best that was in him, and his life was guided and governed by a conscience of peculiar sensitiveness,—a conscience that dominated his every thought and action. Those to whom was given the privilege of his acquaintanceship bear appreciative and reverent testimony to the truth of this statement. Then, as a man, as a citizen and as a leader in his profession, does he merit a tribute in every publication which touches the life histories of those who have honored and been honored by the city of Detroit. His ancestral history is outlined in an article concerning the Duffield family, on other pages of this work, and the subject-matter need not be here repeated. In-