

STATE BUILDERS OF THE WEST.

III.

WILLIS ARNOLD GORMAN.

Statesman and soldier, patriot and student, are the terms which encompass the labors of a well spent life in the person of Willis Arnold Gorman, second Governor of the Territory of Minnesota. It is given to few men to run the gauntlet of an active public life and depart amidst the universal regrets of the populace, leaving behind an absolutely unblemished record.

It was the fortune of Governor Gorman to live in the most stirring period of his century. He was born January 12, 1816, near Flemingsburgh, Kentucky, the only son of David L. and Elizabeth Gorman. He received a thorough collegiate education, applied himself early to the study of law, and was admitted to practice at the age of twenty. He removed to Bloomington, Indiana, and quickly gained popularity as a lawyer.

His talents were soon recognized by the people, who urged him into a public career. At the age of 23 he was elected a member of the state legislature, where he served with distinction for six consecutive terms. Then the Mexican war broke out and the student and lawyer laid aside his well ordered habits of life and became a soldier.

Mr. Gorman volunteered as a private in a Bloomington company which was added to the Third Indiana regiment, being mustered into service in 1846. At the election of officers held before the regiment embarked, Mr. Gorman was elected major. He served with distinction during the year in the field, exhibiting bravery, coolness and courage. In 1847 he returned home and at once organized a new regiment, whose colonel he became and which distinguished itself in the capture of Humantala, being the first to plant the American flag on its ramparts.

In 1849, after his return from Mexico he again entered public life, as a member of Congress, serving two terms. He served contemporaneously with such men as Daniel Webster, Thomas Benton, John C. Calhoun and others, and in the agitation and debates over the slavery ques-

tion he readily obtained a prominent place as a debater.

Mr. Gorman became identified with Minnesota in 1853 in which year President Pierce appointed him governor of the territory, to succeed Governor Ramsey. He arrived in Saint Paul on May 12, took possession of his office two days later and remained chief executive of the territory until April 23, 1857.

Firmness and unswerving honesty of purpose marked his administration and to him is in a large measure due the existence of the law which gives the state three per cent of the gross earnings of the railroads in Minnesota. The land grant question was an important one, and Governor Gorman met with bitter opposition. The first land grant bill, in favor of the Northwestern Railway company, was promptly vetoed by him because it failed to secure to the people sufficient compensation, in lieu of taxation, as he believed equitable. Attempts at bribery were futile. The governor remained firm in his resolve not to throw away the rights of the people, and a compromise was finally effected, which is today embodied in the so-called "gross earnings tax."

Gov. Gorman's administration was an active one. The capitol was completed during his term of office, greatly facilitating the transaction of public business. By direction of the general government, he made a number of treaties with the Indians in 1854 and 1855, accomplishing his work with satisfactory results, without the slightest friction and disbursing about a million dollars of public funds without the loss of a penny to either Government or Indians. It required a man of prompt decision and firm character to deal in those early days with the problems of how to handle the Indians, who had possession of the greater portion of Minnesota, but Gov. Gorman was equal to the task.

In 1853 he was directed to remove the Sioux bands, inhabiting the west bank of the Mississippi river, opposite Saint Paul,

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GEN. WILLIS A. GORMAN.
A Civil War Time Picture
From An Old Print.

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to a new reservation at Redwood and Yellow Medicine. There were more than 6000 of these Indians at the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, among them such noted Chiefs as Little Crow and Wabasha. It was no easy undertaking, but, after counseling with a few noted pioneers, the governor carried out the transfer, accompanying the Indians on the journey, attended only by a few interpreters. He carried with him \$250,000 in gold to be distributed among the Indians, but went without guards or escort, allowing the Indians to watch their own treasure, a confidence which was not misplaced, and which won him the esteem of the red men. The party had proceeded to the "Big Woods"—in the vicinity of Belleplaine—when some of the younger warriors demanded a "big talk" or council with the governor, whom they named the "man with the eagle's eye."

The council ring was formed, when the younger element of the Indians demanded the privilege of holding their fall hunt, before proceeding to their new reservation, in order to lay in a supply of meat for the winter, which was approaching. Older chiefs counseled them to live up to their treaty and go on, while the gov-

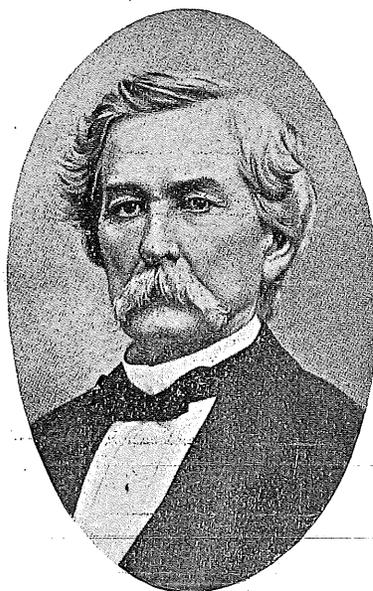
ernor was willing to give them three days, but no longer. The council broke up nothing having been accomplished. But Gov. Gorman was determined that the Indians should go on, and secretly dispatched a messenger to Fort Snelling asking for a force. By 9 o'clock on the next morning, Capt. McGruder with 100 dragoons and a battery of artillery suddenly drew up before the astonished Indians, who had been holding a private council. The Indians gathered about the governor, shook his hand, and quietly proceeded to their reservation, where they remained in peace until 1862. This incident is related merely to show the resourcefulness of the subject of this article under trying conditions.

His character is best illuminated by a brief extract from the first message to the legislature, in which he says:

"Give the people the largest political rights consistent with the constitution of the United States and the organic act of the territory. Enforce the strictest obedience to the laws. Be guided by the safest economy in all public expenditures. Let your actions be controlled by the rule that the right is always expedient. Encourage high morality among the people. Guard the weak against the strong. Give equal rights to all, exclusive privileges to none * * * and lay the foundation, broad and deep, for a state in whose destiny we shall all be proud."

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GEN. WILLIS A. GORMAN.
As He Appeared in Later Life.

Better precepts were never laid before a body of law makers in the history of the nation. Governor Gorman received from office in 1857 and was in June of the same year elected a member of the constitutional convention as a member from Saint Paul, taking an active part in the framing of the various measures for the government of the infant state.

But slowly during these busy times in our section of the country destinies were shaping themselves elsewhere, which soon convulsed the nation. The mutterings of secession were becoming louder and stronger. Civil war was knocking at the door. Gov. Gorman at once took a firm position as an unqualified Unionist. Sumter fell, and the statesman again laid down his work to take up arms in defense of his country. He made stirring speeches at the war meetings, eloquent, full of fire, and appealing to the patriotism of the citizens. At the same time he set a worthy example by immediately tendering his services for the war, which were accepted by Governor Ramsey. Excitement ran high and a regiment was quickly organized, having already been tendered to President Lincoln by Gov. Ramsey. This regiment became known as the First Minnesota Infantry, than

which no braver ever marched to the front, and which left its name inscribed on the nation's honor roll in indelible letters of glory.

Of this regiment Gov. Gorman was commissioned colonel and it stood the senior three years regiment in the service. The ranks were quickly filled up, and on May 24 the regiment paraded to the state capitol, where Mrs. Ramsey presented it with a beautiful state flag on behalf of the ladies of Saint Paul, which was carried through the war with honor and distinction. In accepting the flag Col. Gorman said:

"We accept this flag as the emblem of the cause in which we have unsheathed our swords, and with the help of the God of Battles, we will never allow them to return to their scabbards, until treason shall be punished, and this flag the Union and the Constitution be vindicated and made perpetual. I accept it in the name of the gallant men of the First Minnesota and most solemnly make the pledge never to surrender it to a foe until its folds have been baptized in our blood."

Inspired by officers of such lofty ideals the regiment went forth to the front and made history for itself and the State of Minnesota. From Bull Run to Gettysburg was a steady series of gallant heroic service, never surpassed, scarcely equalled in the world's military history. Upon recommendation of Gen. Scott, the commander-in-chief, Col. Gorman was com-

W. A. GORMAN.
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missioned brigadier general of volunteers (Sept. 17, 1861) it being one of the first promotions made from the volunteer service.

He remained actively in the field often taking command by the vicissitudes of battle; the Penninsular campaign, South Mountain and Antietam were among the noteworthy engagements in which he participated. In the latter battle he took command of his division, the second of the second army corps, which he retained until the army was reorganized after the removal of McClellan. Gen. Gorman was then ordered to the Southwest where he remained until late in 1864. Having now served four years actively and laboriously in the fields of battle, he laid aside his military honors and sought in private life the rest to which he was entitled and in need.

Gen. Gorman returned to Saint Paul and formed a law partnership with Hon. C. K. Davis. But in 1869 he was elected city attorney of St. Paul, and again took up public life, serving in that capacity until his death, May 20, 1876. He had practically given his entire life to the service of his fellow men. The news of his demise cast a gloom over the entire state.

The forces of his character had made

itself felt strongly among those with whom he had to deal. He fought with unflinching valor every attempt to rob the people of the state, and regardless of personal interests, sought only to further and advance those of Minnesota, which even in those days, gave many promises of a bright and glorious future. He abhorred the weaklings who cried for peace, when peace had fled and civil war was rampant. Yet with all his powers, he never, while in military command, allowed the civil law or authority to be usurped by those of the military. While often opposed, from political reasons, to measures inaugurated by the government, yet did he never fail to carry out what was required. While in favor of abolishing slavery, he did not agree with the advisability of arming the freed men. But when that step was taken he laid aside his own convictions and personally organized and drilled a regiment of colored troops, the First Arkansas.

As a statesman he was never the tool or property of any clique or ring, nor was it ever said that he was guilty of betraying the smallest trust. His efforts to secure for the state a competent public school fund were among his most cheerful remembrances and all his actions, for the welfare of Minnesota, have stood the test of time.

ROADS AND HIGHWAYS.

NATIONAL PARKS HIGHWAY NEWS.

General Secretary Guilbert, of the National Parks Highway Association has sent to the members of the Executive Board a most interesting communication concerning the travel over this Highway, in which he says:

"Do you know that 2,000 cars are using the National Parks Highway this 20 day period. That means that 6,000 persons are touring the highway and each one of these persons, according to Government statistics, spends an average of \$4.00 a day while vacationing in this manner. Unless I have made some mistake, this means that \$480,000 is being spent by automobile tourists along the National Parks Highway during the current 20 day period. There will be a like amount expended during the next 20 days and there has been a like amount

spent during the preceding 20 days, aggregating \$1,440,000 minimum that has come to our hotels, merchants, garages and those who will benefit directly or indirectly. This takes into consideration only 60 days of a 120 day minimum touring season over the National Parks Highway. Thus it is reasonable to suppose that we will have spent on the National Parks Highway this summer not less than \$1,500,000, probably \$2,000,000.

Fifty per cent of the tourists camp. While the hotels do not profit from this fifty per cent, the grocery houses and other supply houses directly do, and indirectly they also profit from those who do stop at the hotels.

The popularity of this scenic route is increasing with every season, and the management will see to it that it is kept in the best of condition. Travelers over

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