

# The Conservative.

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FOUNDED BY J. STERLING MORTON.

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## VALEDICTORY.

This is the last Conservative.—The paper has furnished occupation for four years to a great man, who had the welfare of his countrymen very much at heart. It was his last work. What good he has done with it, and what he would have accomplished in another ten years, it is for others to estimate.—To those friends who have encouraged and supported him in this undertaking, his assistants who have worked near him return thanks for their friendship.

## J. STERLING MORTON.

[By Dr. George L. Miller. Written in 1901.]

Nebraska was distinguished in its early life, by which is meant the first settlement, by the high character of the young men who came to the new land in search of home and fortune, and to assist in laying the foundations of social order and civilized government. The Indian still occupied the soil; he had parted with his title under treaty with the United States, but was still here in the wild plenitude of his aboriginal character and habits. These young men, in striking majority, brought with them intellectual cultivation and social refinement. In the midst of the chaos which existed here in 1854, they did not forget to cherish the moral and religious elements as the main foundations for the superstructure which they were about to erect. They were representatives of families who fostered the best in their sons. Typical among these young men, J. Sterling Morton, the peer of all in manly strength and ambitions, and the one who, perhaps, was foremost in the rolling years in impressing his personality and influence upon the new community, was on the threshold of manhood. He was a strong and original character. It may be said that he differed in a wide degree from others who were on the firing lines of leadership in the conquests that were to be made here, in many of his characteristics. His reputation for mental power, incorruptible integrity of conviction, clear-cut mentality, and moral courage in the maintenance of his views, long since passed beyond the boundaries of the

state, and even before he entered the cabinet of President Cleveland, his name was known the wide world over by his most important achievement, the invention and establishment of "Arbor Day," which has won for him enduring fame.

On his arrival in Nebraska, and under the lead of Acting-Governor Thomas B. Cuming, who became governor of the new territory in 1854, on the death of Governor Burt, Mr. Morton instantly took his position as a powerful personality and political factor and force in the development of this new country. Associated with Wilbur F. Story in his boyhood, and while still at school at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, as a contributor to Mr. Story's paper, the Detroit Free Press, his pen marked the bent of the ambitions that were born in him. He had thus early developed the qualities which made him a natural leader of men, which by no means excluded the desire for political distinction, as the record will show. His ideals concentrated his sympathies and efforts upon the home, and upon an ardent desire to make his mark upon the social and material development of the young and growing country. He now ranks among the distinguished men of the United States as a publicist, and as a profound student of the economics of government and of the great principles of political and commercial liberty which underlie, and which can alone conserve, the welfare of the Republic. In politics Mr. Morton was always a democrat, deserting the political alliances of his father at an early age and adopting, from principle, the Jeffersonian doctrines. As a political economist of the first rank, Mr. Morton early saw that this was an agricultural country or that it was nothing. He knew even then that the basis of all wealth is land, and that the true groundwork of modern life and progress is found in intelligent labor devoted to its cultivation. As a writer his style, like his character, is of marked originality and strength. His contributions to the Detroit Free Press, which were among his first editorial writings, attracted the attention of Lewis Cass, the great statesman of Michigan. These articles so pleased General Cass that he took pains to make inquiry about the author, whose first

essays in political life were against the organization of "Know-Nothings," which had become a dangerous political force in the country at that time. Mr. Morton was highly complimented by General Cass for his bold attack upon secret societies as being antagonistic to a republican form of government. His whole life has been in consistent line with his early espousal of that political faith which is known to the country as democratic, and nothing could swerve him from the support of the principles that underlie it. In this new country he has, from the beginning, largely devoted himself to the press and to literary work, in the form of essays, upon the great practical subjects which concern the people. He began with contributions to the "Palladium," the first paper published in Nebraska, at Bellevue, and upon settling at Nebraska City he became the editor of the "News" at that place, which was founded by the Nebraska City Town Site Company.

Mr. Morton's devotion to all homes, as well as his own, is one of the most beautiful traits of his character. He has written more poems, not in versification, but in paragraphs, in editorial columns, and in public addresses, on the subject of home, poems of beautiful sentiment and far-reaching power, than any other man in my acquaintance. Arbor Day is the crowning expression of his devotion to the beautiful in nature, and there is ample warrant for saying that no other man has done so much to cover this barren land with trees, which in young forests are now spreading out over the whole state, as J. Sterling Morton.

In the discussion of public questions which relate to finance and the tariff, Mr. Morton's arguments are always strong, logical and clear. From the beginning of civilized life in Nebraska he has maintained the doctrines of sound money, honest administration, low taxation and economy in every branch of the federal, state and local governments as being essential to the safety and welfare of the people. Upon all these questions through the stormy periods of nearly half a century he has been aggressive, courageous and true in the face of the most violent opposition. He has maintained his position through good and evil report, never flinching,