

majority who had adjourned to Florence, and the attempt to reorganize at that session was abandoned. His action was very warmly commended by Governor Richardson afterwards, who subsequently recommended him to his first political patron and friend, General Lewis Cass, then Secretary of State in the cabinet of President James Buchanan. The President appointed Mr. Morton as secretary of the territory in May, 1858, and he served in that office until May, 1861, when he was relieved by his old republican friend, Algernon Sidney Paddock, who had been appointed by President Lincoln to fill the place.

Mr. Morton, as has been previously stated, became a leader of public opinion from the time of his first arrival in the territory. His field of usefulness was now to broaden, and he was first nominated for a delegate to congress, at a democratic convention that met at Omaha in September, 1860. His opponent was Samuel G. Daily of Peru. The official returns gave Mr. Morton fourteen majority. Mr. Daily contested and won the seat by virtue of a republican majority which controlled the lower house of congress at the time. It was in this first real campaign which Mr. Morton ever made in Nebraska that his reputation became fixed before the people for ability and power in debate, and for that kind of leadership which makes him the peer of all public men in this part of the west. On the admission of Nebraska as a state in 1867 he was nominated for governor by the Democratic State Convention. The republican candidate was David Butler of Pawnee county. After an able and brilliant canvass in which, for the second time, Morton proved his powers in public discussion, he was fairly elected by a majority of 148 votes, but a board of canvassers at Plattsmouth threw out the Rock Bluff vote in Cass county because the judges of election had not signed the tally list. There was no charge of fraud. The vote of the precinct was full and fair, but upon the technical ground votes enough were thrown out to give the republicans the legislature on joint ballot by a majority of eight, and to elect David Butler governor by a hundred and some odd votes. At that election there were two hundred United States soldiers stationed at Fort Kearney who voted for Butler, and who had just previously voted for Stone for governor of Iowa. At the same election the half-breeds and Indians were influenced to vote on the Omaha reservation for Butler. In the legislature chosen by this election, Mr. Morton and the late A. J. Poppleton, his friend at college, were nominated and voted for by the democrats for the United States senate, John M. Thayer and Thomas W. Tipton, republicans, defeating them by seven votes on joint ballot. It was at this

time that Mr. Morton yielded to the persuasion of Mrs. Morton to abjure politics and devote himself to business pursuits, which he did for the ensuing fourteen years with success, when in 1882 he was again nominated for the governorship in the state convention of that year. The state was largely republican, and while he received about 26,000 votes in the contest, Mr. Dawes, the republican candidate, was elected by a large plurality. He was again nominated for governor and made the race against Mr. Dawes in 1884. At this election he received more than twice as many votes,—that is to say, 57,000 against 26,000,—as he had received two years previously. From this time on he was not a candidate for office, but in 1888 a convention at Nebraska City nominated him for congress. It was a convention that he did not attend, and in which he had very little interest, because he knew a nomination was only an opportunity to expend money in organizing a party and in laying a foundation for the success of some one else. Leading friends and democrats were sent as a committee to persuade him to accept the nomination, which he at first declined. But he was induced at last to accept, and entered upon the campaign with his usual vigor, bearing his own expenses in organizing the district for the contest. His opponent was W. J. Connell, of Omaha, by whom he was defeated by a decisive majority.

Mr. Morton was nominated by his party for governor again in 1892, Lorenzo Crouse being the republican nominee, and Charles H. VanWyck the populist nominee. It was a stirring campaign, marked by great ability on the part of the candidates in discussing questions then before the people. Judge Crouse was elected governor by a plurality of from eight thousand to ten thousand votes. Mr. Morton accepted this nomination and made the canvass for the sole and exclusive purpose of putting down populism in the state to the extent of his ability; it was in this campaign that he boldly advocated the gold standard for the first time before the people.

In February, 1893, Mr. Morton was nominated by his friends as a candidate for the United States senate before the legislature of that year. He seemed to hold the balance of power in that body through the votes of the gold-standard democrats. As long as they could be held together, neither the republicans nor the populists could elect. The crisis came and the republicans concluded to drop the republican candidate, Mr. Thurston, and vote for Mr. Morton. Forty-five of them signed a paper to that effect, but the whole scheme was broken up because a colored representative from Omaha was induced to believe that Mr. Morton had been a dealer in slaves.

Mr. Morton had now become a public

man of national proportions. He found among his intimate associates in the leadership of the democratic party, Carlisle, Bayard, and others of the strongest men in democratic councils, and the same month in which he suffered defeat for the senate, Grover Cleveland, elected for a second term to the presidency, tendered him the position of Secretary of Agriculture. In this great office he distinguished himself for administrative ability of the first order. He immediately antagonized the political practices of congress in the distribution of seeds to the people, which he regarded as useless and pernicious.

He came in direct collision with the House of Representatives on that issue, and maintained his ground with his usual ability and firmness. The problem with him was to make his Department illustrate efficiency in conserving and promoting all interests over which it had jurisdiction, and at the lowest possible expenditure of public money. The result was highly gratifying to the president and to the people when it became known that he had actually been able to cover back into the treasury of the United States from the amounts of money appropriated for his Department, over \$2,000,000, or to state it more accurately, 19½ per cent of all the appropriations made for the Department of Agriculture.

In the reduction of its clerical force, and through the merit system, the president, at Mr. Morton's request, put all of the employees of the Bureau of Animal Industry into the classified civil service. It was then made a condition precedent to an examination before the civil service examinations for an inspector of the bureau to present a diploma as a veterinary surgeon issued by some reputable veterinary college. Under this wise reform it is now the fact that all inspectors are graduates of veterinary schools, and inspection of animals for human consumption, both before and after slaughter, is thoroughly scientific, and in the hands of skilled and capable men. Previous to President Cleveland's order, this great work was in the hands of political mendicants and beneficiaries, who received appointments as rewards for partisan service. Secretary Morton's able administration of the Department of Agriculture was by no means the measure of his valuable public service during the four years of his incumbency. An able, prudent and wise adviser of the president, he was scarcely second in influence to any member of a cabinet which in intellectual ability was strong in every part, and all will agree that his public service reflected honor upon his state and country.

At the end of the Cleveland administration Mr. Morton retired to his home and resumed his life work in the up-building of the state, and especially of