

## THE HIGHEST TRIBUTE.

The air was heavy with the breath  
Of flowers at his bier,  
And hosts of men bent o'er his face  
And saw, with starting tear,  
The peaceful look of one whom death  
Had called from noble life;  
And sad farewells were murmured there.  
The great world sent from out its strife,  
Above its din of toil,  
Its loud laments, and Honor's voice  
Rang out for him who lived  
With honor as his choice.

But deepest tribute came from souls  
Whose sorrow like a pall  
Fell o'er their hearts and left them lone  
In desolation's thrall.  
Their sunlight gone, they mourned the loss  
Of one, who knowing grief,  
Brought tender sympathy, with gifts  
Of pity and relief;  
From sighs of youthful lips who missed  
The guiding voice that led  
Their untried feet to seek the paths  
That honor bids us tread;  
From childish sobs for one whose words  
And smile with mirth would blend;  
There came this tribute to his bier,  
"This man, here sleeping, was my friend."

—Mary French Morton.

## From William Eleroy Curtis, Washington.

To say that a man has not an enemy in the world is commonly considered the highest form of eulogy. But that cannot be said of Sterling Morton. I never knew a man in public life who had so many positive enemies, and contrary to the usual disposition of mankind, it was a source of profound gratification to him. I never knew any other public man who deliberately provoked hostility as he did, and who declined the friendship and support of persons in whom he had no confidence. He hated humbugs; he abhorred hypocrits; and his rigid code of morals prohibited compromise with wrong. He was not always right. His instincts were generally accurate, when truth or justice were in question, but he had certain deep-rooted prejudices which could not be overcome. Otherwise he was just.

He loved a controversy. Nothing could restrain him from attacking every wrong he discovered, from exposing fraud, and denouncing fallacies. For that reason demagogues avoided him, hypocrits and Pharisees were careful not to excite his attention, and impostors turned the corner when they saw him coming down the street.

Mr. Morton used to enjoy the attacks that were made upon him. When he found a political speech or newspaper article that was particularly abusive he used to cut it out, carry it around in his pocketbook and read it to his friends. Some of the editorials which have appeared in Nebraska newspapers that were opposed to his political views and methods gave him great satisfaction.

He would chuckle to himself as he read them, and often quoted a favorite expression of a Methodist preacher he had known in his early days: "When the Devil abuses me I know I am growing in grace."

His opinions upon all subjects of current interest were positive and pronounced. He could not have concealed them had he cared to do so. His nature was absolutely transparent, and he was so candid and so truthful that he considered evasion to be more contemptible than falsehood because it was cowardly. He was always willing to be measured by the same scale that he applied to other men.

Judged from the conventional point of view he was a poor politician, for he would rather be right than be popular. His friends often said to him "You cannot afford to do such and such a thing. You will get those people down on you." He would reply: "I can't afford not to do it. I want to get them down on me. If I thought that sort of people would approve my conduct I would quit and go home."

But his enemies respected him. If his own life had not been so clean, so honest, so free from selfish motives and personal interests, he could not have survived their assaults. He wore an armor that could not be pierced, and the more frequently he was attacked the higher he stood in the estimation of honorable men.

I once asked him his definition of success in life. He was fond of making epigrams, and answered:

"To be a hero to one's valet."

"I should feel that my life was a failure," he continued, "if I did not have the confidence of my sons, my servants and my neighbors. If you once get that and keep it, the rest of the world will find you out after a while. A man's success in life cannot be measured by the diameter of the orbit in which he moves. The humblest men are often the most useful. We sometimes mistake influence for success, and with bad men the wider the influence the greater the failure in life."

## From E. P. Ripley, Chicago.

My first meeting with J. Sterling Morton was in 1877 when I was living in Boston. Coming with a letter of introduction I invited him to spend Sunday at my home. In the afternoon he retired to his room and in the evening he told us that he had been "writing to his boys." Conversation following about his boys, he at last read to us the letter. It was written in the style which has since become so familiar and both the manner and the matter made an impression on me that I have felt ever since. I remember thinking that

the sons of such a father would start in life with great advantages, and close association with them for many years confirms the opinion then formed. In the 25 years elapsed since that meeting I saw Mr. Morton often, both socially and otherwise. One particular evening I remember, when we were both guests of the late Wirt Dexter, and I was a delighted listener to their post-prandial wit and anecdote. To bear witness to his uprightness, his forceful mentality, his independence, his unique literary style, is only to repeat what will be better said by others, but to me his predominant quality seemed to be that of "level-headedness"—of complete mental sanity. Slow in physical movement, even to a suggestion of indolence, his mind was ever alert and his perceptions acute. His powers were never prostituted to unworthy ends and he served his fellow citizens, both in large matters and small, conscientiously and not for personal profit. He leaves a precious legacy to his sons in his history and his reputation; to his countrymen he leaves an example of the public-spirited citizen and statesman, and to all who realize the importance of his efforts to arouse interest in the reforestation of our country, his name stands out as one who started a great work in a wise way. His memory is worthy of all honor.

## From Erskine M. Phelps Chicago.

It has been my good fortune to know J. Sterling Morton intimately for more than a quarter of a century. We were politically associated with such men as Secretary Bayard, Mr. Pendleton, Senator McDonald, Vice-President Hendricks, Arthur Sewall, besides many others. Above this bright galaxy of statesmen he towered like a giant. Strong in his convictions, he knew the right and dared maintain it.

Grover Cleveland, with his keen foresight, perceived that no man was better fitted to take the office of Secretary of Agriculture than Mr. Morton, the man who had established Arbor Day; who, with his far-searching thought for our country's good and protection, saw that the only way to prevent the devastating floods was to plant trees and restore the forests, whereby his name has become immortal, richly deserving a niche in the Hall of Fame.

To all of you who knew him in his home life, it is needless for me to speak of his family relations. Three of his sons, whom I am proud to number among my cherished friends, are living in Chicago. Their loving relation to their father was most touching, and his comradeship with his sons was a beautiful example to all men. Friend after friend departs. Who has not lost a friend? Alas, such a friend as our beloved J. Sterling Morton we shall miss and mourn as long as memory lasts.