

David Eugene Thompson--His Life and Ambition

David E. Thompson, whose picture appears on this page, came within four votes of being United States senator from Nebraska. He received the short term caucus nomination and for several days received the solid vote of those who participated in the caucus held under the Wilkinson call. It was his withdrawal from the race in favor of Governor Charles H. Dietrich that broke the senatorial deadlock.

David Eugene Thompson is a typical self-made man. He won his way from poverty and obscurity to wealth and prominence by sheer force of character and dogged determination. He came to Nebraska thirty years ago friendless and without means other than his muscle. It is told of him that he went out on his first trip as a brakeman without eating because he had no money to buy food. It is got at all improbable that from this personal experience with the chill of penury much of his liberality arises. His charity, at any rate, has never been stinted, and has only been questioned by his enemies. These have alleged that he never thought of being charitable until he became imbued with the idea of being senator. His friends recount many tales to show how he has aided poor men and women with no hope of reward, and long before he was even remotely connected with party leadership.

His political career, up till two years ago, when he entered the senatorial contest, was confined almost solely to the local Lincoln arena. There he made himself felt, and accumulated as choice a collection of hard-working opponents as any ambitious politician might wish. It is not known if he ever studied Whistler's "Gentle Art of Making Enemies," but he certainly succeeded. He also succeeded in establishing himself as the animating power of Lancaster county political affairs. During the campaign of last fall he took a keen and active interest for the first time in state politics, realizing that on the election of a republican legislature depended his chances for going to the United States senate.

His Birth and Business Life

D. E. Thompson was born in Branch county, Michigan, February, 1854. Both parents died before he was 9 years of age. From that time until 13 years old he lived with an uncle in the village of Coldwater, Mich. At 13 years of age he went to learn the watchmaker's trade in Hillsdale and worked at this trade in Hillsdale and Jackson till 17 years of age. At 17 he came to Nebraska and entered the service of the Burlington railroad as freight house truckman in Lincoln. After a few months of this work he entered train service on the same road as brakeman. After one year's service as brakeman he was made freight conductor, and after two years of this work on the Burlington he was taken to the Santa Fe road by C. F. Morse, who had been general superintendent of the Burlington and had gone to the Santa Fe in the same capacity. Thompson's first service on the Santa Fe was that of passenger conductor. At this time he was 21 years of age. Three years later he returned to the Burlington road as trainmaster. One year from that time he was made assistant division superintendent, and in another year superintendent of about 1,100 miles of line of the Burlington road, with headquarters in Lincoln. He remained in this capacity till 1890, when he left the railroad service to look after personal interests, and this he is still doing. The personal interests requiring his attention have been as follows: Two farms in Nebraska; the Farmers' and Merchants' Insurance company, in Lincoln, of which he was president from near the time of its organization in 1885 until sold to an eastern syndicate in 1889; president of the Lincoln Gas and Electric Light company since their consolidation and re-organization in 1890 until sold in the early part of the present year; a large sugar plantation and cattle ranch in Old Mexico; president of the Aurora State bank of Aurora, Neb.; and since the forepart of this year, when the Columbia Fire Insurance company of Omaha was organized, he has been its president. In addition to such affairs as above named there have been and are numerous smaller ones.

His Aid to the Soldiers.

Many stories are told of Mr. Thompson's charities. One act of his which called public attention to his methods more than any other, probably, was when he gave \$20,000 to assist in providing special trains to bring the First Nebraska volunteers home from San Francisco. It is an old story in

Nebraska, how the fund had languished until it had all but failed, and the word was sent on to the regiment, just mustered out of the service of the United States, that it was a case of pay fare or walk. Nearly \$30,000 was needed, and only some \$16,000 of this sum had been raised when D. E. Thompson walked into Governor Poynter's office one Saturday afternoon in August, 1899, and asked him how much was needed to pay for the trains. "Twenty thousand dollars," replied the governor, in a despondent tone, having despaired of securing the fund. Mr. Thompson quietly filled out a check for that amount and handed it to the governor, and the fight for the trains was over.

In the meantime the Nebraska boys had gone to bed at the Presidio in anything but a pleasant frame of mind. They were

for Dave Thompson. None of them knew the man, unless maybe it was the Lincoln man, and few of them had heard of him, but all knew what to say about the man who put up \$20,000 to help pay for trains to haul a regiment over 1,800 miles of mountains and desert. All Nebraska knows the rest.

Lift for a Brakeman.

Of Mr. Thompson's methods when a brakeman and conductor many stories are told but all to illustrate the persistence with which he attended to business. When in a subordinate position he obeyed orders, but showed great aptitude. As an officer of the company he was a strict disciplinarian, and exacted the closest attention to rules and orders from his men. He was looked upon as a hard taskmaster, but on at least one occasion he showed he had not forgot-

good for twenty days, and a \$20 bill. He had no trouble arranging with the trainmaster for a leave of absence. That brakeman is still in the service of the company, not as a brakeman, however, but as E. Thompson denies any knowledge of the transaction.

Excursion for the Children.

During the time of the Transmississippi Exposition in the summer of 1898, an excursion for school children was run from Lincoln to Omaha. It was noticed that a great many were not able to join the merry throng that pulled out from the Capital City depot that morning. Their wistful faces made a strong contrast to the bright eyes and lips that laughed in anticipation of a day amid the glorious splendors and marvelous wonders of the exposition. Here is another place where Dave Thompson astonished the public. He

known. His friends say that he has helped everybody in his quiet way, but Mr. Thompson doesn't talk about these things. He is a big, bluff man, with much of the way of a railroad man still sticking to him. His business methods are the direct ones learned in the strenuous school of active railroad work. His political campaigns are carried on as are his business affairs, quietly and energetically. On one point his friends and foes agree. He is a remarkable man.

Homelike Episodes

Boston Courier: Mrs. Fourthhusband 1-- It really true, as the papers intimate, that our United States senators frequently talk for the mere purpose of killing time? Mr. Fourthhusband: No question of it, my dear. Mrs. F: What a reprehensible practice to be sure.

Mr. F: (mindful of the fate of his predecessor). Very true, but there are greater offenders, our local cemetery bears testimony to the existence of more fatal talkers than those whom you accuse.

Detroit Journal: The aged farmer and his wife wept for their recreant daughter.

"Oh, how cruel of her!" moaned the mother, and wrung her hands.

"Yes, it will cost all of \$10 to get her picture enlarged in crayon suitably for being turned toward the wall!" sobbed the father, rocking to and fro.

The sight of such terrible grief had the effect of composing the woman, somewhat. She felt that it was her part to be brave, and she went over and kissed her husband's throbbing brow, and bade him be of good cheer.

At a small country church in England a newly married couple were just receiving some advice from the elderly vicar as to how they were to conduct themselves, and so always live happily.

"You must never both get cross at once; it is the husband's duty to protect his wife whenever an occasion arises, and a wife must love, honor and obey her husband and follow him wherever he goes."

"But, sir"--pleaded the young bride.

"I haven't yet finished," remarked the clergyman, annoyed at the interruption.

"She must!"

"But, please, sir (in desperation), can't you alter the last part? My husband is going to be a postman."

A young man took his gold watch to a fashionable Chestnut street jewelry establishment recently to have the photograph of a young woman placed in the case, reports the Philadelphia Record. He just wanted it pasted on.

"Why don't you have it photographed directly on the inside of the case?" asked the salesman. "We can have it done for you for \$5, and it is so much more artistic."

No, the young man didn't want that. He thought it would be well enough to have it pasted in. "You see, you can't always tell about these things," he finally said in a burst of confidence. "You can't always tell how they are going to turn out, or how long they are going to last. A friend of mine had his girl's picture photographed on his watch and then, after a while, the whole thing was declared off. It put him to a lot of trouble, embarrassment and expense. When it's just pasted in, if anything happens, all you have to do is just to scrape it off. I guess I'll have this pasted in."

The bride of a brief month crouched in a corner of a divan--crouched among her gorgeous pillows, while the bitter tears streamed down and stained the delicate fabrics, relates Leslie's Weekly. This was the end of her young ambitions, her brave efforts to make life one grand, sweet song.

As she uttered one last sigh of despair her mother entered the room and flew to the divan, casting her arms about her prostrated child.

"My darling girl, what is it?" she cried. "Confide in your mother. What is it that thus wrings your heart?"

"N-nothing, ma; n-nothing. B-but it is all over."

"What is all over?" questioned the mother in affright. "Has your husband abused you?"

"No, ma," said the bride, raising herself upon her elbow and speaking with tragic emphasis. "You remember what my ambition has been for months? W-well--" "I cut both bloomers for one leg, and it was a remnant and I can't match it anywhere."

"My child," said her mother solemnly, "your trouble is indeed too great to bear."



DAVID E. THOMPSON--CAUCUS NOMINEE FOR SHORT TERM UNITED STATES SENATOR

only waiting the final order that should turn them out of their comfortable tents and set them homeless on the streets of San Francisco. All efforts to secure rates below the established figures had failed, and the men were not in a mood to be held up by the Southern Pacific. Serious talk of marching across California and Nevada to Ogden was heard. "We have hiked across Luzon," said the boys, "and Nevada can't be much worse. We were getting even with Aggie then, and now is a chance to get even with a railroad company." It was in this mood they had put out the lights when "taps" was sounded. Just about an hour afterwards the sentry at the main north entrance to the Presidio allowed a couple of men to pass because of a telegram from Omaha one of them carried. In a very few moments Nebraska, Pennsylvania and Colorado were joining in cheers

his early struggles. A brakeman, whose parents lived in Illinois, came in from his run one day and was handed a telegram telling him his father was dying. The poor fellow had just gone to work, and had no money. He could not afford to give up his position, and was in a quandary as to what to do, when a call boy came to him with "the old man" doesn't often send for brakemen, and not many brakemen relish being called into his presence. With a sense of added sorrow the brakeman made his way to the office of the superintendent. Here, on giving his name, he was handed an envelope--the most dreaded thing in the service. He had not the courage to open the fatal missive in the office, and went outside. Over on the platform, in desperation he tore open the envelope, and out dropped a pass to his home in Illinois,

quietly made his arrangements and announced that he would run a special train to Omaha to carry all the children of Lincoln who were too poor or otherwise unable to join the school excursion. Eight hundred youngsters look back with fond remembrance to the day when they were guests of the millionaire, who provided the train and paid all their expenses at the gate and in the grounds, besides giving each a dollar to spend as fancy might dictate.

His outing for the working women of Lincoln at Beatrice last summer is too recent history to need recounting here. He provided accommodations and paid all expenses for 400 mothers and children for a week of romp and picnic on the banks of the Blue.

Such have been some of his public acts. Of his unrecorded charities very little is