

CAPTAIN HENRY A. CASTLE¹

The good die not—this heritage they leave,
The record of a life well spent.
We know, at parting though we grieve,
A noble life is man's best monument.

Monuments to the dead, although of the most imposing character and designed by the most celebrated artists, serve only to identify the person; they do not commemorate his virtues or exemplify his character. Eulogies pronounced by the most finished orators are but the passing breath of the moment and are soon forgotten. But a monument reared in the hearts of the people by unselfish and noble devotion to God, to country, and to fellow men will endure as long as memory shall last.

In the life of Captain Henry A. Castle these qualities were united in a remarkable degree. He was preëminently a Christian gentleman in every sense of the word—a faithful member of the church from his youth, and one whose profession was exemplified in his daily intercourse with his fellow men. His devotion and loyalty to his country were shown by the sacrifices made in its behalf and by the offering of his life in its defence. Born August 22, 1841, he entered the Civil War in the year 1862, serving as sergeant major of his regiment until the terrible battle of Stone River, in which he was severely wounded. On account of this wound he was discharged as disabled for further service in April, 1863, but notwithstanding this experience and the condition of his health resulting therefrom, he again enlisted in May, 1864, and continued in the army as captain of his company until nearly the close of the war.

Captain Castle came to Minnesota in June, 1866, and sometime in 1868 settled at St. Paul, where he resided until the

¹ A memorial read at the stated meeting of the executive council of the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, December 11, 1916.

time of his death, which occurred at his summer home at Silver Lake, August 16, 1916. His activities since his arrival in Minnesota are coincident to, and form part of, the history of the state for that period, as he always took an influential and prominent part not only in the affairs of the state, but in the development and advancement of the great Northwest.

In the service of his comrades of the war he was peculiarly active and useful. Soon after reaching Minnesota he inaugurated a campaign for securing aid and an education for the orphans of those soldiers who had given their lives in the defence of their country, and he was largely instrumental in securing the necessary legislation for this purpose and finally in providing a home for these unfortunates at Winona, where the work was continued until it was no longer needed. He was a member of the board of trustees of this organization during the entire period of its existence and took a leading part in its operations. As a direct result of this great work a large number of the orphans of these patriot soldiers, who otherwise might have been left in poverty and ignorance, received care at a time when it was most needed and an education which not only has been of the greatest benefit to themselves, but has resulted in great good to the state; and to-day some of the most influential and useful citizens of Minnesota may be found among those who received aid from this noble charity.

The legislation necessary for the organization of the Minnesota Soldiers' Home was due likewise in a large measure to his efforts, as was also the location of this home upon its beautiful grounds at Minnehaha Falls, although this site was strongly opposed by some. He also took a leading part in securing the passage of an act by the legislature of Minnesota which provides a fund for the aid of soldiers and soldiers' widows at their own homes in all parts of the state, and which has proved beneficial to many unfortunate and deserving people.

Captain Castle aided materially in the organization of the Grand Army of the Republic in Minnesota, and served as commander of the department of Minnesota from 1872 to 1875, the

only member of this department who has been honored with three successive terms. In the year 1870 he organized Acker Post at St. Paul and was its first commander.

Among other activities of like character he helped to obtain the necessary fund for the soldiers' monument erected in Summit Park, St. Paul, and delivered an oration at the time of its dedication that will not soon be forgotten by those who were present on that occasion. An appropriation for the statue of Hon. Henry M. Rice, United States senator from Minnesota during the early part of the war, for the Hall of Fame at Washington was secured through his instrumentality; and it was almost exclusively through his exertions that a statue to the memory of his boyhood hero, General James Shields of Mexican War fame and sometime United States senator for Illinois, Missouri, and Minnesota, was erected in Missouri, a replica of which, also obtained by him, was placed in the Minnesota Capitol.

In his public life Captain Castle was highly honored both by the state and the nation, and in every instance showed himself honest and capable, and well worthy of the honor thus conferred. He served as postmaster at St. Paul for several years, in which capacity he gave general satisfaction. After his term had expired, he was appointed sixth auditor of the United States treasury in the post office department. He filled this position for a considerable period with conspicuous ability, and at the end of his service received the highest commendations from his superior officer.

Captain Castle was elected an annual member of the Minnesota Historical Society in the year 1870, and in November, 1897, while absent at Washington in the discharge of his official duties there, was elected a corresponding member, and was carried on the rolls as such up to the time of his death. He gave a number of memorial and other addresses before the society, and in its library will be found copies of a large number of addresses delivered by him upon notable occasions and before various organizations in the state and elsewhere. He per-

formed a great and valuable service for the state in securing and arranging the historical data which may be found detailed in the three volumes of his admirable work entitled *Minnesota, Its Story and Biography*, and in his *History of St. Paul and Vicinity*, also contained in three volumes.

Among other duties and objects of the historical society is the important one of securing the data and preserving a record of the life and activities of distinguished citizens of the state, not only in relation to those duties performed in a public capacity, but also in recognition of the work done by them in promoting the advancement and upbuilding of our great commonwealth. In keeping this partial and very incomplete record of the life and services of Captain Henry A. Castle the society has performed a service that it owes to the state and to the man, and it deems itself honored in having numbered among its associates a citizen so widely known and highly esteemed.

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