

subject of this sketch, who has not only for years urged a higher standard for admission to the bar, but has also worked earnestly in endeavoring to secure for our city the advantages of the most thorough instruction in all departments of university work.

He has given special attention to the work of the Chicago Home Missionary and Church Extension Society, with which he has been connected as a trustee and as an officer for many years. He has long been identified with the Methodist Episcopal church, and has been active in various departments of church work. He holds a membership in the Chicago Bar Association, in connection with which association he has served as president. He holds a membership in the Illinois State Bar Association and the American Bar Association, and is a valued member of the Union League Club, as well as the Hamilton and several other clubs and social organizations.

Mr. Towle was married in 1868 to a daughter of Robert F. Queal, of Evanston, Illinois. Her death occurred in 1881, and in 1884 he married Miss Sarah A. Meacham, of Oak Park, Illinois, at which place Mr. and Mrs. Towle now reside. He is most highly esteemed in all relations of life as a man of probity, trustworthiness and capability.

William P. Black.—Progress ever indicates effort; only retrogression follows inertia. Purpose, determination, strength and energy ever lie back of accomplishment, and that which is gained without effort is regarded as worthless. "Honor and fame from no condition rise," sang the poet; they come as the crown of unceasing, noble labor, and the truly famous men of the land are those whose character is above question, and whose mental attainments are of a very brilliant order. Both qualities are indispensable to real fame, and when we say that Captain W. P. Black is to-day numbered among the famous men of the nation it is at once understood that his eminent position results from such causes. One act alone in his life entitled him to rank among the famous men of America, and that was his defense of the anarchists in 1886. In the face of the strongest opposition of old-time friends, the profession and public opinion, he undertook to plead for the lives of men whose sentiments differed radically from his own, but who, as human beings, deserved all the protection that law could give. Life and property would be valueless if this right of defense were denied to the individual through popular feeling; for it is a matter of history that the populace has been often found on the wrong side; and thus as a matter of principle, and with a nobleness that led him to put aside all personal feeling, Captain Black stood for the defense of those few men when the bitterness of public feeling not only threatened to engulf them but to bring disaster upon all who might in any way be associated with them. Viewed in the calmer light of the present, his action seems heroic, yet it was without a thought of self-aggrandizement that Captain Black undertook the management of a case that brought him renown not only on this side the Atlantic but also in foreign lands.

The early life of Captain Black passed quietly and uneventfully. A native of Kentucky, he was born in Woodford county, in 1842, and is of Scotch-Irish lineage, claiming among his ancestors those who fought for the independence of

the nation in the memorable period between 1776 and 1783. From South Carolina, where the first settlement was made, the family removed to Westmoreland county, Pennsylvania. Rev. John Black, one of the earliest representatives in the Keystone state, was a minister of the Presbyterian church, and his son and great-grandson also followed the same calling. The latter, Rev. John Black, D. D., was the father of Captain William P. Black. At the time of his father's death our subject was but five years of age, and with his mother he soon afterward removed to Danville, Illinois, where his boyhood days were passed. Of a studious nature he laid a substantial educational foundation in the English branches, acquired a good knowledge of literature and later entered Wabash College, at Crawfordsville, Indiana, where his collegiate career was marked by close application and high standing. His social qualities made him a favorite with the pupils, while his excellent scholarship won him the respect and admiration of his preceptors.

While engaged in pursuing his education, the south attempted secession and with all the ardor and patriotism of his nature he espoused the Union cause. Hardly had the smoke from Fort Sumter's guns cleared away, when with forty of his fellow students, including his only brother, John Charles, who rose to the rank of general, he joined Company I of the Eleventh Indiana Zouaves, commanded by Colonel, afterward General, Lew Wallace. He joined the "boys in blue" April 15, 1861, as a private, and on the expiration of the three-months term was mustered out as a corporal. In the meantime it was seen that the war was to be no holiday affair, that both sides were determined to win the victory, and President Lincoln had issued his call for three-years men. Corporal Black then at once assisted in recruiting a company in Vermilion county, Illinois, and was elected its captain. These troops were mustered in at Chicago as Company K, Thirty-seventh Illinois Infantry, known as the Fremont Rifles, and thus before he had reached his nineteenth birthday Captain Black went to the front at the head of one hundred men to valiantly battle for the preservation of the Union. He retained the command of his company until he was duly mustered out of service, on the 30th of September, 1864, participating in all the engagements of his regiment. At the siege of Vicksburg he held the responsible and dangerous position of brigade picket officer, having charge of the rifle pits of his brigade, and demonstrated that he possessed that high courage which would be implicitly relied upon and put to any test.

The year following his return from the war Captain Black spent in the office of the provost marshal of the seventh Illinois congressional district, in Danville. He has been identified with the interests of Chicago since the autumn of 1865, when he became a law student in the office of Arrington & Dent, a well known law firm of the city. After his admission to the bar he practiced for a year in Danville, and then, returning to Chicago, formed a partnership with Thomas Dent, his former preceptor. This connection was continued until Captain Black withdrew in order to undertake the defense of the anarchists.

His reputation as a lawyer is second to none. During the greater part of his professional career he has devoted his energies to civil law and has demonstrated



his power to handle its intricate problems with masterly skill. He is remarkable among lawyers for the wide research and provident care with which he prepares his cases. In no case has his reading ever been confined to the limitations of the question at issue; it has gone beyond and compassed every contingency and planned for the defense against every possible attack. His logical grasp of facts and principles and of the law applicable to them has been another potent element in his success, and a remarkable clearness of expression, an adequate and precise diction, which enable him to make others understand not only the salient points of his argument but also his every fine gradation of meaning, may be accounted among his most conspicuous gifts and accomplishments.

In civil law he had a very extensive clientage, and was doing a very profitable business when the friends of the anarchists besought him to undertake their case. After listening with characteristic courtesy to their request, he informed them that he was not a criminal lawyer and advised them to apply to some of his colleagues at the bar who made a specialty of that branch of practice. The reply to this was that these lawyers had already been conferred with and had refused to engage in a service which they feared would jeopardize their standing as citizens and members of a community intensely hostile to the men who were to be placed on trial. The friends of the anarchists appealed to Captain Black's love of justice, his sense of fairness, and his regard for the right of fair and impartial trial by jury, and at last wrung from him the promise that he would aid them to secure such counsel as would insure an able defense of the accused men. He then tried hard, but was unable to succeed in persuading any of the successful criminal lawyers of the city to take hold of the case. It had in the meantime become clear to him that the men charged with the "Haymarket murder" were in danger of being sacrificed for want of adequate defense. This was something which his sense of duty would not permit him to look upon with indifference. Whether or not the accused persons were guilty as charged, was a question not to be decided in advance of trial and the hearing of the evidence. He felt it to be the duty of some member of the bar to defend them with all the zeal and ability at his command, and his chivalric nature would not allow him to shrink from a discharge of that duty, because of consequences which might be unpleasant or even disastrous to himself.

The history of the trial is too well known to need recounting here. As Captain Black studied the case he became more and more convinced that the men were innocent of the specific crime with which they were charged,—murder. He had no sympathy with their anarchistic sentiments,—for there is no more loyal American citizen in Chicago,—but he defended the men against punishment for the crime with which they were charged with all the strength of his nature. However, from the beginning it seemed a foregone conclusion that the men would hang,—the public wanted and demanded their punishment for what they had spoken or written rather than for the killing of the policemen; it was anarchy rather than murder for which they were tried. From the judgment of the criminal court Captain Black appealed to the supreme court of Illinois, then to the supreme court of the United States, and failing in both instances to gain a

reversal, sought executive clemency, thus doing all in his power, as every honorable lawyer who undertakes a case should do, to save his clients.

A fair estimate of the noble character of the service which Captain Black rendered in this connection is summed up in the following extract from an address delivered by Judge Tuley before the Young Lawyers' Bar Association. He said:

"No true lawyer follows his profession solely for the money that is to be made out of it; and the brightest and most cherished recollections of a lawyer are those where without fee or hope of reward he has protected the weak against the strong, the ignorant and lowly against the aggressions of the rich and powerful, or when he has reached out his helping hand to stand by the friendless and forsaken. In the history of our profession, there is no brighter chapter or one that casts more glory upon our profession than that which recounts how the four sergeants of the English bar, at the peril of their lives, stood by and defended King Charles the First, when on trial for his life on the charge of treason.

"Sometimes occasions arise when it is the duty of the true lawyer to sacrifice himself upon the altar of his profession. I cannot refrain from mentioning an incident within my own knowledge, and which I have never before related, where a member of the bar rose equal to a great occasion and made this sacrifice upon the altar of duty. This lawyer, whom I had known for many years, called on me in my chambers one day before the trial of the anarchists and at a time when the excitement was at its highest pitch, and stated that he wished to consult with me as a friend and as a judge. He said that he had been applied to by the friends of the anarchists to undertake their defense; that he told the parties that he had not followed to any great extent the practice of the criminal law and advised them to employ some one who made the criminal law a specialty; that they came back a second time and stated that they had been unable to get any such person to undertake their defense as they had but very little money, and again pleaded with him to undertake it. 'The amount of money they have offered me,' he said, 'is not worthy of consideration; but it is their all,—all that they can raise. I told them I would consider the matter and give them my decision. You know,' he continued, 'what undertaking their defense means to me or any other lawyer of position at the bar.' I said, 'You have then counted the cost?' 'Yes,' he replied, 'I think I can foresee the result to me if I undertake their defense. I have now, as you know, a large and profitable business that my partner and myself have been many years in building up. Our clients are principally of the class—capitalists and board-of-trade men—who are much exercised over this matter and about the growth of anarchy and lawlessness generally. I shall have to give months to the case and must neglect other business to some extent. I think I can foresee that he who undertakes the defense of these anarchists will be looked upon with at least great disfavor. It means to some extent social ostracism and I believe an almost total sacrifice of my business and possibly of my future prospects. Now, Judge, what shall I do? What would you do?'

"I replied, 'Captain Black,'—for it was Captain William P. Black,—'your question is a very serious one, and probably one that you should solve your-



self; but as you ask my opinion I will give it to you. As these men have offered a retainer and that to the extent of their ability, I have no hesitation in saying that your duty to your profession, your duty to yourself, demands that you accept it and undertake their defense. I must say that you have rather underestimated than overestimated the cost to yourself; but yet, Captain, it is always expedient to do one's duty.' He replied that he felt that it was his duty to take the case and that my advice encouraged him to do so.

"You all know how well, how ably through many wearisome months he performed that duty. He extorted the admiration of those who denounced him by the heroic defense he made. The result, as to himself, was even worse than he anticipated. Many of his so-called friends gave him the 'cold shoulder,' his partnership was dissolved, nearly all of his clients forsook him, and I believe that in six months he who was earning his ten to fifteen thousand dollars a year could not count upon one thousand a year income. The feeling that had been engendered gradually died out and people began to reason among themselves. He manfully stood up and fought his way back into a lucrative business. The Chicago bar should delight to honor him, this brother lawyer who made so great a sacrifice to maintain the honor of the profession."

When the case was over Captain Black resumed the practice of law, but it was as he supposed, and as Judge Tuley stated,—his defense of the anarchists had cost him a great share of his civil practice. As the years passed, however, and calmer judgment returned, there has arisen a feeling of appreciation for the sacrificing and heroic spirit that led the lawyer, in obedience to the ethics of his profession and the spirit of the law, to stand for a fair trial for those who were accused of offense; old clients returned and new clients came to him, and he is now in the enjoyment of a larger law business than ever before. He has been connected with much of the most important litigation in the civil courts for many years and has achieved distinction, not only for his ability but also for the integrity and honesty of purpose which characterizes all his professional acts. He is now in the active practice of his profession in Chicago, his zeal unabated, his efficiency unimpaired.

Captain Black has given deep thought and careful investigation to social and economic questions of the day, and on these topics has written many able articles. He is an unusually clear, earnest and vigorous writer. In 1881 he prepared and delivered before the Chicago Philosophical Society a lecture on Socialism as a Factor in American Society and Politics, which was published in the Chicago Times, republished in pamphlet form and extensively quoted and noted in various parts of the country. It was a remarkably clear, interesting and philosophical consideration of the great question of the social relations of the wage classes in our growing republic. A year later he delivered before the same body a lecture on Russia and Nihilism, which has since been delivered, by request, before the Liberal League of Chicago and the Industrial Reform Club of the same place, and which has been printed in the Weekly Magazine and reprinted in tract form. In regard to this lecture Wendell Phillips wrote to Captain Black as follows:

Boston, July, 1882.

My Dear Sir:—Hearty thanks for your instructive and eloquent address on Russia and Nihilism. Such a masterly and logical summing up of the case against the Romanoffs must give our people pause and make them think. Then we shall see a public opinion more worthy of our past and our national position among civilized states.

I have read and reread your statement, each time with fresh admiration and added thanks that any American has been found ready to make it an honor to us and a service to the world.

Yours with great respect,

Colonel W. P. Black.

WENDELL PHILLIPS.

Captain Black is in no sense of the word a politician though taking a keen interest in the affairs of the country to whose service in the tented field he gave three and a half years of his life. In his views he is thoroughly independent, casting his vote and his influence always with what he believes the better side of every cause. Prior to 1872 he had been a staunch Republican, but in that year he advocated the cause of Horace Greeley, and has since been independent, though usually voting with the Democracy. In the fall of 1882 he became a candidate for congress upon the unsolicited nominations first of the anti-monopolists in their conventions, then of the Democracy and afterward of the independent Republicans. Although Captain Black was defeated, through treachery in the Democratic camp,—and then by only twenty-four hundred votes, when at the preceding election the opposing party had a majority of six thousand votes,—the campaign awakened great interest and brought to him many written and spoken tributes concerning his character and attainments. Henry L. Turner, a prominent real-estate dealer and lifelong Republican, wrote of him in the following manner: "Speaking from a personal acquaintance of years' standing, the writer, if asked, would say of Captain William P. Black that he would bring to the legislative office a heart throbbing with a benevolent love for his fellow men, sympathetic with their misfortunes, and ambitious to be of service to them; a quick and enlightened conscience, with a profound sense of personal responsibility; an independence of thought and action almost phenomenal; an honesty deep seated as the earth's foundation; an incorruptibility absolutely unassailable; an intellect of great breadth and keenness; a mind well stored with a comprehensive knowledge of law and history; a ripe and widely varied experience; an eloquence at once dignified and impassioned, impressive and graceful; a patriotism strengthened and purified on the battle-fields of the rebellion, and a courage which cannot be daunted; a life so pure and spotless that the fierce breath of a bitter canvass has cast no mist upon it; a religious principle which manifests a reverent regard for all the ways of righteousness; a widely gathered familiarity with the management of affairs, and a broad general culture; a splendid presence, and manners courteous, affable and polished."

His home life is ideal in its pleasant relations. In 1869 Captain Black married Miss Hortensia M. MacGreal, of Galveston, Texas, who has shared with him in all his benevolent and philanthropic work. He is known as a Christian gentleman of liberal views and scholarly tastes, and all moral and social reforms receive his support. Faultless in honor, fearless, in conduct, and stainless in reputation, he stands to-day as one of the most brilliant and respected members of the Chicago bar.