

There is another part of Judge Vilas' character upon which I have not yet touched. I allude now to the brightest jewels in the diadem which crowns the genuine man. Without honor, truth and integrity, no man can claim the rewards due to real nobility. The subject of this sketch was, of course, not faultless, but in regard to those traits which form the character of true generosity of heart, and good will toward others, Judge Vilas was often the victim of a misjudging world. He had all these qualities in a large degree. He had the reputation of being close and exacting in financial matters, but he did not deserve it. It is true, that he would exact what he believed to be his right to the last cent; but he was liberal and generous to profusion, where the occasion called for the exercise of those qualities of the heart. One instance, within the actual knowledge of the writer, will fully illustrate this part of his character. He had been annoyed by trespasses long continued upon some of his property. He at last brought suit, to put a stop to these encroachments, and the result was a judgment for damages amounting to a considerable sum. Before he left the court-room, it was reliably whispered in his ear that the defendant was poor, and burdened with a sick wife. Without a word, the judge stepped up to the clerk's desk, and satisfied on the record the judgment, which he had just obtained, and paid the costs himself. This undisputed fact ought to be a sufficient vindication against all charges of the nature indicated.

Judge Vilas used to say of himself, that no man could charge him with loving his enemies better than he did his friends. It was pre-eminently true of him, that he never forgot an obligation, nor deserted a friend. He hated fraud, was an enemy to duplicity, and despised shams. Strictly honest in his private business transactions, his code of ethics in the management of public affairs may be summed up in his own well chosen words: "Infidelity to public trust is moral treason to the government."

He was true to his own political creed, for, in all the official stations which he was called upon to fill, no trace of wrong, of corruption, or malfeasance has ever been found. His private record is equally clear of reproach or stain. Honestly, and by