

# HENRY WILSON

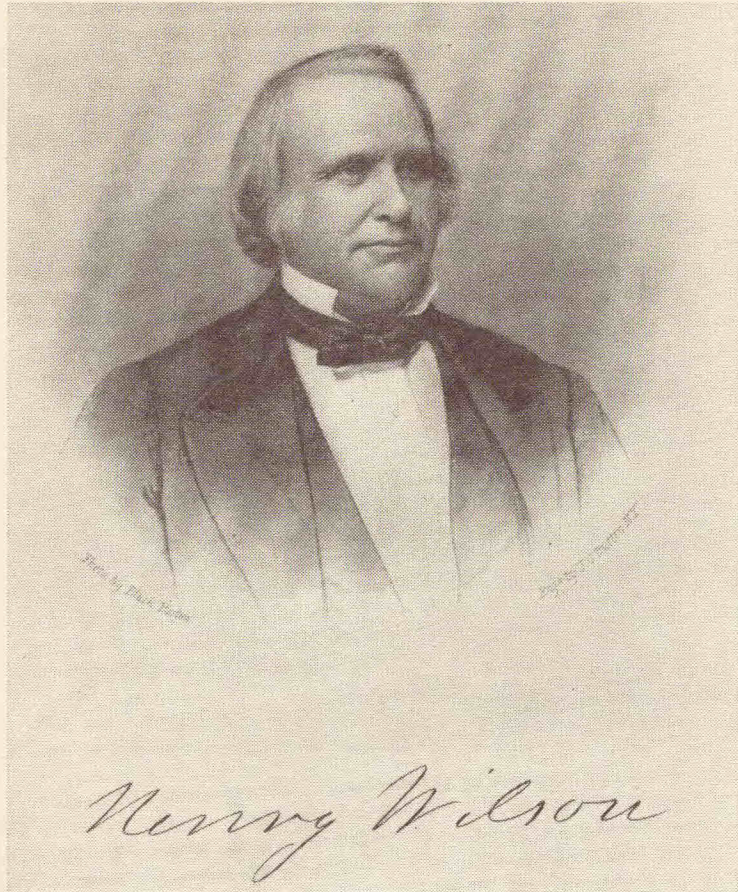
18th VICE PRESIDENT  
OF THE UNITED STATES

SERVING UNDER PRESIDENT U. S. GRANT

BORN IN  
FARMINGTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
FEBRUARY 16, 1812



SITE OF HENRY WILSON'S BIRTHPLACE



# THE NATICK COBBLER'S RISE TO FAME

A STORY OF THE STRUGGLES  
AND ACHIEVEMENT OF A MAN  
OF THE PEOPLE WHO ROSE TO A  
SEAT IN THE SENATE OF THE  
UNITED STATES AND TO THE CHAIR  
OF THE VICE PRESIDENCY

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## FOREWORD

Since its inception, November 11, 1949, The Farmington-New Durham Historical Society, Inc., has steadfastly endeavored to bring about a greater appreciation of and pride in our community and in the accomplishments of its sons and daughters whose contributions have greatly enriched the past, our present and are a part of the warp and woof of our heritage to future generations.

Foremost among Farmington's most distinguished sons is the Hon. Henry Wilson, New Hampshire's only Vice President of the United States, 18th in line, serving under President Ulysses S. Grant. Born Jeremiah Jones Colbath, in Farmington, February 16, 1812, his seriousness of purpose and driving determination to obtain an education brought him to the attention of outstanding townspeople, among them Mrs. Nehemiah Eastman, sister of Governor Levi Woodbury, whose kindly help and encouragement he received at an early age. On reaching his majority, on the advice of friends and with the consent of his family, his name was changed by act of Legislature of the State of New Hampshire, July 6, 1833, to Henry Wilson, after which he journeyed to Natick, Massachusetts, to learn shoemaking, there coming to be known as The Natick Cobbler.

Although most of his public life was lived in Massachusetts and in the nation's Capitol, Washington, D. C., Farmington takes just pride in the sterling qualities, strength of character and unswerving devotion to that which he considered right developed in the town of his birth, as well as in his national prominence during the turbulent times surrounding the War of the Rebellion. The boulder which marks his birthplace is typical of the man—rugged New Hampshire granite with its simple but dignified inscription. It was placed there by his life long friend, Martin Luther Hayes.

At the conclusion of the Preface to his comprehensive three-volume work, "The History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America", Henry Wilson says, "To my countrymen I commit this work, on which I have bestowed years of unstinted labor, in the confident hope that it will contribute something to a clearer comprehension of the career of that Power, which after aggressive warfare of more than two generations upon the vital and animat-

ing spirit of republican institutions, upon the cherished and hallowed sentiments of a Christian people, upon the enduring interests and lasting renown of the Republic, organized treasonable conspiracies, raised the standard of revolution, and plunged the nation into a bloody contest for the preservation of its threatened life. I trust that this record will reveal to those who raised voice and hand against their country the true nature and real character of that system they sought to perpetuate at such fearful cost; and to those who were loyal to country and liberty, the magnitude and grandeur of the cause in which they exhibited such faith and devotion, endurance and heroism. I trust, too, that the young men who remember the days of their boyhood, when homes were saddened by the absence of fathers, brothers, and kindred, summoned to encounter the hazards and hardships of the camp and field, will gather something from these pages which will enable them to realize in larger measure the toils and sacrifices offered for the redemption of their country and its free institutions, of which they, under Providence, are so soon to become the guardians".

The following article, one of a series of historical sketches of famous Americans, appeared in the Boston Globe in five parts, February 22-26, 1913. The original series of clippings were presented to the Society by Mr. John Gilman, and a typewritten copy with additional notes was received from the late Herbert Browne. The Farmington-New Durham Historical Society, Inc., has had many requests for copies of this material which has been heard at several meetings of the Society as well as serving as the main theme of the afternoon's program of The Association of Historical Societies of New Hampshire, Inc., at the April 24, 1954, meeting held at the historic Colbath-Knight homestead.

As a tribute to Vice President Henry Wilson and to the town of his birth on this 50th Anniversary Old Home Celebration which the Society instigated, this publication is dedicated.

MARY MOCK CLOUTMAN,

July 31, 1954

Secretary.



HENRY WILSON  
BORN JEREMIAH JONES COLBATH  
ON A NEW HAMPSHIRE FARM;  
WHO ROSE FROM SHOEMAKER TO STATESMAN TO  
18th VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Henry Wilson, christened Jeremiah Jones Colbath, was born in Farmington, New Hampshire, February 16, 1812, the son of Winthrop and Abigail Colbath, descendants of early settlers of that state who left the north of Ireland sometime early in the 18th century in quest of home and fortune in a new strange land. His birthplace was a small cottage on the right bank of the Cochecho river, about one mile south of the present village of Farmington. It is about 35 miles northeast of Concord, and at the time of the birth of the future vice president about 1200 men, women and children were enumerated in its population. Most of the men were farmers. The father of Jeremiah was a poor day laborer, who worked at sawing lumber in summer and felling trees for saw logs in winter.

The value of education, the public school and an early beginning at the tasks of spelling, arithmetic, geography, etc., always were held high by the New England fathers and mothers, and when the boy arrived at the school age he was introduced to the tuition of a Mistress Guy, who soon noticed the remarkably good qualities of her pupil. As in all country schools, there were mischief makers who now and then vexed Mistress Guy with their whispering, giggling, the flinging of spitballs and the placing of bent pins for unfortunates to sit on, but to the Colbath boy the school was a place of business.

He dug into his Perry's "spelling book" and "The Primer" with all the intensity of purpose that marked his shoemaking and speechmaking later in life. The more elusive the problems in arithmetic the greater would be his effort to make the figures tell him exactly what he wished to know. What he got from the books remained his, for he was blessed with a memory that kept captive all that came in, and the boy was never satisfied in study until he

fully understood what the lessons were designed to teach. Coupled to these qualities was a studious, obedient, manly disposition that endeared the boy to his teacher and attracted the kindly attention of Mrs. Anstress Eastman, sister of the Hon. Levi Woodbury.

The good fortune of getting into the interest of Mrs. Eastman was an incident which must have had considerable influence on Jeremiah's future life. He was eight years old when it occurred and his clothes must have been in a deplorable state of patch and tatter, for one day while on his way to school she called him in and gave him some clothes. Mrs. Eastman was so well pleased with the lad's good manners that she questioned him about his lessons, asked if he liked his studies and could he read. Just a bit surprised and perhaps somewhat amused by the boy's easy, confident assurance that he could read pretty well, she handed him a Testament with a request for him to let her hear how well he could read. Without the least hesitation he read a verse and continued to the finish of a chapter. Telling him that he could have the Testament if he would read it through, Mrs. Eastman directed him to take it home and call again when he had finished the reading. At the end of seven days the boy returned to report that he had read the good book from cover to cover, and the lady, after examining him chapter by chapter, was quite satisfied that he had done so.

War with England had made times bad, work for laboring men was slack, money was scarce, wages low and to add to the misery of dire want in the Colbath home, sickness came when Jeremiah was about 10 years old and took away three of the children, whose gaunt, wasted bodies were buried in the field opposite the stricken home.

The bitter memory of that period of famine and grief was never erased from the memory of Jeremiah Colbath. Once in his mature years, when in the senate of the United States, these gaunt, miserable days were resketched in his memory when Senator Hammond of South Carolina, in a speech proclaiming cotton as king, characterized workingmen as "the mud-sills of society". In replying to that speech the early days of poverty in Farmington were alluded to in these words:

"Poverty cast her dark and chilling shadow over the home of my childhood, and Want was there sometimes, an unbidden guest. At the age of 10 years, to aid him who gave me being in keeping the gaunt specter from the hearth of the mother who bore me, I left the home of my boyhood and went to earn my bread by daily labor".

When 10 years old, sickness and death in the family aroused in the son of Winthrop Colbath a determination to lessen by the ab-



sence of one from the household the expense of providing food and other musts in the home life. In mind and manner the boy was beyond his years. Nature had given him a vigorous constitution and good health. He was possessed of a lively aspiration to do something, so it was with a feeling of having made a start on the road to success that he consented to be bound by indenture to a hard-working farmer named Knight, who lived in the same neighborhood. This new event in Jeremiah's life took place in August, 1822, when he was some few months more than 10 years old. It was stipulated in the covenant that he was to remain in the services of Mr. Knight until he was of age; that he was to have one month's schooling each winter, food and raiment and six sheep and a yoke of oxen when he was 21.

Just at the age when fortunate boys harbor fond thoughts of the trout waters, the haunts of birds and squirrels, the games of "hide and seek", "barn tick" and "three-times-around-and-in-again", which somewhat resembled the present day baseball, this lad, with a mind for study and a determination to do great things, began the rough, monotonous routine of work as a bound boy on a New England farm. Dawn till star time was the working day. He was at his chores before the earliest of the birds began to pipe greetings to the morning and fireflies were flashing and bats criss-crossing ere the last of the stock was cared for and the old wooden button turned to hold shut the door to the tie-up. There were cows to milk, pigs to feed, wood to cut, water to carry, butter to churn, fields to plow, seed to sow and scythes to swing. As he increased in age, his toil became more steady and severe. He chopped cordwood in winter, drove the oxen that hauled it and worked the bucksaw that shortened the sticks for the kitchen stove. He husked corn, shelled peas and beans, picked herbs in the pastures to provide for colds and other ills.

At the beginning of this new life on the Knight farm there were no books except the Testament the lady gave him and the text books of the district school; but Mrs. Eastman had not forgotten him. Pleased by his regard for books and his keen desire to learn, she selected volumes from her husband's library and loaned them to the young student. How he mentally devoured their contents! Every moment he could steal from toil was spent in reading. It was his sole pleasure. Volume after volume, loaned by the kind lady who gave him the Testament, was gone through, some of them two and three times. The lot included the leading works of the British and American statesmen and historians; the fascinating descriptions of Irving, Cooper and Scott and books selected for him

by Judge Whitehouse of Farmington, who became interested. So industriously had the boy applied himself to self-culture by means of borrowed books that at the expiration of his time of service he had read nearly a thousand volumes of history, biography, philosophy and general literature.

In February, 1833, Jeremiah Jones Colbath was 21 years old. He had fulfilled the purport of the indenture bond, had given satisfaction and received the promised six sheep and a pair of oxen. These he sold for \$84, more money than he had ever seen. So poor had he been that up to the time of selling the wage of his 11 years toil, he had never possessed \$2. One dollar would cover every cent he had spent in his entire 21 years of life.

For some unexplained reason, the young man, immediately on becoming of age, applied to the legislature for authority to change his name. From birth to his 21st year he was Jeremiah Jones Colbath. Henceforth he was to be Henry Wilson, a name he had seen in a book. The change, it is said, was on the advice of the Knight family, and with the consent and approval of the young man's parents. His apprenticeship at an end, and his farm animals turned into cash, this youth of toilsome years, and a desire to do something, got a notion in mind to make shoes. He had heard that good prices were paid to men who made them in Natick, Mass., and went there.

#### THE NATICK COBBLER

There were thousands of acres of untamed land between Farmington, N. H., and Natick, Mass., in 1833 when Henry Wilson set out one frigid day in December, to foot the distance in a hunt for work. He had walked on a like quest to Dover and Salmon Falls and Newmarket before starting on the more than 100 miles tramp through the wintry woods and the frosty open.

There was nothing to be had in New Hampshire, so one day he made his adieus and with a small pack of clothing and a few dollars in money started on his long lonesome journey. He finished his first day's walk at Durham, where he passed the night at a farmhouse, moving the next day to Salisbury-on-the-Merrimack, remaining in that town over night and proceeding to Newburyport the next day. Having blistered his feet by the rough going, he bought for 25 cents a pair of slippers which helped to make the trek from Newburyport on to Saugus a bit more comfortable.

Paying 25 cents for his lodging and breakfast furnished by a farmer on the main road through Saugus, the traveler, on his way to Boston, stopped at Bunker Hill. He had read of the battle, of the great losses sustained by Gens. Howe and Pigot and Clinton,



who came with reinforcements and of the American Prescott's command for the musketeers to hold their fire until the whites of the enemy's eyes could be seen. It was his first sight of Bunker Hill, and Breeds Hill, where the real fighting was, and he gave the place more than an hour's careful study.

#### REACHES NATICK

From there the wayfarer continued on to Boston, where he stopped to see the office of the North American Review. He had enjoyed the copies subscribed for by Judge Whitehouse of Farmington, and had a great curiosity to see the people who had helped to make his young manhood days on the old Knight farm both pleasant and profitable.

Somebody gave him the wrong direction when he inquired for the Natick road. This misinformation took him many miles out of his way. He passed through Dedham and reached his destination about midnight. He put up at an old tavern in the western part of the village, for village it was in 1833, and found on examining his expense account that he had spent \$1.05 on the cross-country trip. Natick then had a population of about 1000. There was a Congregational church in the central village, and its pastor, Rev. Erasmus D. Moore, afterward became an earnest friend and counselor of the young man from out of the state.

In that 76-year-ago period Natick was making notable progress in the manufacture of shoes. Everything in the line of footwear was hand made and each worker fashioned an entire shoe. There was a demand in the south for a scheme in leather called a "brogan", which, at wholesale, was supplied to retailers at about \$1 a pair. Henry Wilson got a job with William P. Legro, who agreed, for the consideration of five months' labor, to make a shoemaker of him. Discovering after a few weeks of effort with other builders of "brogans" that he had made a bad bargain, he obtained a release from his obligation by the payment of \$15 and immediately opened a shoemaking industry of his own.

#### SUCCEEDED IN SHOEMAKING

The first day as an independent manufacturer he made eight pairs of "brogans". He became an expert, worked long into the night, and once on a try to see how many shoes he could make without taking sleep actually finished 47½ pairs. On the last half pair he was seized by Morpheus between the up-lift and the down-swing of the shoe hammer and was compelled to go to bed. He made a success of the shoe business, but incessant labor, coupled with a great deal of reading and study, threatened to shatter his health and he was compelled in 1836 to take a rest.

About a year before this threat of bodily breakdown Wilson had decided to get an education. He had walked to Boston to hear Edward Everett's oration on the battle of Lexington, and Webster when he made one of his famous speeches. He joined the Natick debating society when it was organized in 1835, and took an active part of the meetings held in the old village schoolhouse. In 1840 this society was merged in the Natick lyceum. It was at these meetings that Henry Wilson acquired skill in parliamentary practice, and perhaps for the first time came in contact with the political bee that was to do such busy buzzing in the years to come.

It was in the month of May, 1836, that failing health demanded a change of air and environment, and on the advice of his physician Wilson went to Washington. He saw for the first time slaves at work in the fields of Maryland, and was at once convinced that slavery was an evil. At the capitol he listened to the debates in congress, sensed the subserviency of northern politicians to southern domination and grasped at once the dominant question of the country. He saw slaves sold at Williams' notorious pen at the corner of 7th and B streets, and then and there determined to devote his life to opposing traffic in human beings.

#### SETBACK IN FINANCES

About \$700 was the amount possessed by Wilson when he returned from Washington. He went to Strafford, N. H., and on the first day of July began a course of study in the academy at that place. Later he went to Wolfeboro, where a daughter of his hometown benefactress was teaching, and pursued his studies for one term. Next he taught in one of the winter district schools about half a mile from Wolfeboro, and in the spring of 1837 entered the academy at Concord.

While pursuing his studies at this institution the man in Natick to whom he had loaned a considerable sum of money made in the shoe business failed, leaving him penniless. This sudden throwback to boyhood conditions of scarce money darkened his horizon, but a good friend, Samuel Avery, of Wolfeboro, stepped in and offered to board him on credit as long as he cared to attend the school. The offer was accepted.

Completing his course at the academy, he returned to Natick, taught one winter in the Center district school and in the spring of 1838 began again the manufacture of shoes. He married Miss Harriet Malvina Howe in October, 1840, and built a home in Central street, which he occupied when not in Washington, until his death. His only child, Henry Hamilton Wilson, was born in 1846. Henry Wilson's last venture in the shoe business continued 10



years when he closed it out to devote his entire time and attention to politics.

#### HENRY WILSON'S RISE FROM THE BENCH

Both in principle and practice Henry Wilson was an abstainer from intoxicants, and all Natick knew that could he have his wishes materialize there would take place an immediate destruction of all drinks in the land. Conscious of his regard in this respect he was approached soon after his return from the Concord academy by a goodly number of Natick's citizens who were advocating a political dogma styled the "Fifteen-gallon law" to stand as a candidate for the legislature in 1839. He made a close run for the place, being only a few votes to the bad when the count was made. This close approach to success seemed to act as a stimulant to his ambition. The speeches he had made in the district attracted unexpected attention, and in the following year when the very noisy, hard-fought "Tippecanoe and Tyler too" campaign opened Mr. Wilson gave a great deal of his time to speechmaking.

He was in the midst of the loudest of the shoutings. He made speeches in Natick and in all of the nearby places. Workingmen believed in him, and were especially impressed with his sturdy arraignment of President Van Buren's financial policy, for the reason that hitherto his sympathies had been with the democrats. He spoke in Cambridge, Lynn, Lowell, Roxbury, Charlestown, Taunton and other places, making more than 60 speeches before the close of the campaign.

For what he did in that famous political battle, which resulted in a whig victory, he was, in 1841, sent to the state legislature as a member of the lower branch. One of the first things he did was to purchase for three dollars the seat on the floor drawn by a good-natured rural member who was not particular in regard to location. This was viewed as a revelation of the new member's foresight, as the exchange gave him a much better position in which to listen to arguments, and to present his own. His first speech, delivered January 25, 1841, was in opposition to a bill to exempt the wages of laborers from attachment. He thought such a law would be an act of unwisdom, in that it would encourage dishonesty, and he believed the honest poor of the state would view the matter as he did.

Mr. Wilson was returned to the legislature the following year. He was sent to the state senate in 1844, and during that session and the one of the year following did much for the improvement of the state's military system. He also took the lead in a movement for the betterment of the condition of negroes, who were neither

welcome to railway cars, nor their children to the schools, and succeeded in securing the enactment of a corrective measure. About this time in his career Mr. Wilson began to appear conspicuously in opposition to slavery, especially in regard to the admission of Texas to the union. He also, in a public speech, advocated improvement in the military system of the state and favored an increase in the pay of soldiers.

His stand in the interest of the militia was so well received that, without consulting him in the matter, he was, in 1843, elected major of the 1st regiment of artillery, by Col. William Schouler. The press gave him first tidings of the election, and he accepted. Military life had always appealed to him. It appealed to his imagination when he was a boy on the Knight farm in Farmington, N. H., where he held a noncom's position in an unpretentious organization of young men with red blood in their veins. His duties as major of artillery he performed faithfully. He won promotion. In June, 1846, he was made a colonel of the same regiment, and at the end of six weeks saw him a brigadier in command of the 3d brigade, MVM. That command was held for five years, and in the meantime Gen. Wilson perfected himself in tactics and made his brigade a model of excellence in deportment, drill and discipline. Nine years' experience as an officer of militia peculiarly prepared him for the performance of important duties which in later years he was to be called upon to perform as chairman of the military committee of the U. S. senate during the period of the civil war.

The first attempt to get to congress was made by Mr. Wilson in the February of 1848. The death of John Quincy Adams left a vacancy in the house of representatives, and a convention of whigs was called to select a man to fill his place. William Jackson, Horace Mann and Henry Wilson were the preference men, but after three ballots had been cast Mr. Wilson withdrew in favor of Mann, who was nominated. The convention then appointed Mr. Wilson to the whig national convention in Philadelphia. It was held in June of the same year. Gen. Taylor was nominated, and Mr. Wilson and his colleague, Charles Allen, expressed protest and withdrew. Mr. Wilson and several other dissatisfied men brought about the Buffalo free soil convention that nominated Van Buren. Then followed a storm of accusation against the whig party. It was subservient to the interest of the south; it was inadequate and unwilling to meet the demands of freedom; everything was wrong with it. Thus began the organization of the free-soil party, a coalition of forces to oppose the further extension of slavery.

This movement appealed so strongly to Mr. Wilson that he



purchased "the Boston Republican" in the autumn of 1848, and conducted it energetically for two years. It was the premier free-soil organ of the country. Its creed was that there should be "no extension of slavery over the territories; no more slave territory to be added to the union; no more slave states to be admitted into the union; no compromise with slavery must be made". On retiring from this newspaper venture in 1851, Mr. Wilson discovered that he had lost about \$7000.

Once more, in 1850, Mr. Wilson became a member of the house in the state legislature. He got all the free-soil votes in the contest for speaker, but there were not enough. It was during this session of the general court that he succeeded in bringing about the coalition of the free-soil and the democratic parties which resulted in the election of George S. Boutwell as governor, and in the sending in 1851 of Charles Sumner to the U. S. senate for the long term and Robert Rantoul, a democrat, for the short.

As a further result of this coalition Mr. Wilson was sent to the state senate in 1851, and its members made him president. He was a member and president of the senate in 1852, and was chairman of the committee to welcome President Fillmore and receive the Hungarian exile, Louis Kossuth. In 1853 he was defeated as the free-soil candidate for governor. Again in 1854, in an endeavor to effect a combine of anti-slavery elements, he ran for governor on the republican ticket and was beaten. He was severely criticized for going over to that party, but many others, who had become distrustful of the Whig leadership, soon joined him.

#### HENRY WILSON, THE SHOEMAKER SENATOR

History was being made with startling rapidity about the time of Henry Wilson's second defeat for the governorship in 1854. He had been severely criticized for going over to the republican party, but he possessed a political sagacity which enabled him, with marvelous accuracy, correctly to foresee the drift of things.

While the Kansas and Nebraska bills were pending Mr. Wilson was in Washington trying to organize a force to combat the power behind them. His grand idea was free labor for the entire country, and everlasting death to human servitude. Thinking men now began to consider him more seriously. He was accepted as a leader, and was largely influential in bringing about a general anti-slavery disposition in the Massachusetts legislature. The reclaiming of escaped slaves, the reign of terror in Kansas in which Massachusetts men lost their property, or their lives, not only aroused indignation in this state, but directed more intense public attention to Henry Wilson.

While the commonwealth was still in the throes of excitement caused by the riots in Kansas and the hunting for fugitive slaves in the New England states, U. S. Senator Edward Everett, who had been elected in 1853, was compelled by failing health to resign. At that time Charles Sumner, in the senate, was striking right and left in the defense of freedom, and employing the full limit of his wonderful intellectual powers in opposition to slave-holding interests. The answer of Massachusetts to the question, "who has the historic knowledge, the legislative skill, the statesmanship, the honesty, the force, the will to take the place of Edward Everett?" was "Henry Wilson".

Before the day of election Mr. Wilson was asked by several gentlemen to publish a letter softening somewhat his avowed opinions on the question of slavery, but they were met with blunt refusal. The opinions he had held on that question had grown with him and developed from the time of his farm work in his native town, and he broadly hinted that he had no desire for the political support of people who were inclined to condone the evil of slavery. In a letter to a friend, dated Natick, March 10, 1855, he said: "You also know that I never traveled a single mile to secure a vote, or asked a single member of the house or senate to vote for me".

Mr. Wilson was elected by 234 to 130 in the house, and 21 to 19 in the senate. He took his seat in the senate in February, 1855. He was 43, and, according to a description written at the time, was about 5 feet 10 inches high, and weighed about 165 pounds. He had a florid complexion, brown hair, ample brow, strong, clear voice, seemed to be fearless and good natured and was decidedly good looking. In his first speech in the senate he made known his determination to fight the extension of slavery to the death. The occasion of the speech was the bringing up of a bill by Mr. Toucey of Connecticut "to protect persons executing the fugitive slave act from prosecution by state courts". He assured the senators from the south that the free states meant to change their policy and withdraw the class of men who had been false to the people who sent them there and to fill their places with men who could be depended upon to maintain the principles of the people of the free states. His uncompromising attitude drew forth many expressions of admiration, even from men who could not agree with him.

At the national council of the American party held in Philadelphia in June, 1855, a delegate from Virginia, whose temper had been fired by Mr. Wilson's denunciation of slavery, and the repre-



representative of the free states, who played into the hands of members from the south, rushed at him with drawn pistol and doom in his eye. He denounced the Massachusetts delegate as a leader of the anti-slavery party and threatened to make an end of him on the spot. Neither threat nor gun had the effect of frightening the shoemaker statesman. Wilson said he was there to meet "argument with argument, scorn with scorn, and, if need be, blow with blow". Later, after the assault by Preston S. Brooks, of South Carolina, on Charles Sumner, Mr. Wilson gave a similar exhibition of cool nerve and steadfast courage. On May 22, 1856, Brooks, who was a member of the house, rushed into the senate chamber and felled Sumner with a heavy cane. The Massachusetts senator went to the floor limp, and while he was lying there Brooks continued to belabor him.

The next day Mr. Wilson, who was not present at the time of the assault, directed the attention of the senate to the outrage, which he characterized as "brutal, murderous and cowardly". He was rudely interrupted by Senator Butler of South Carolina. Threats of personal violence were shouted during the ensuing uproar, but the colleague of the assaulted senator was not to be frightened. What he had to say was said with an emphasis that left no doubt regarding his sincerity, and his intention to fight if necessary. On the morning of the 29th, seven or eight days after the assault, Mr. Wilson received a challenge from Brooks. In his reply declining to fight a duel, because duelling was a crime, Mr. Wilson said: "I characterized on the floor of the senate the assault upon my colleague as brutal, murderous and cowardly. I thought so then; I think so now. I have no qualifications whatever to make in regard to those words". He further assured Brooks that he did believe absolutely in the right of self-defense.

The action taken by Mr. Wilson met with general approval throughout the north, and he was afterward congratulated by many public men representing different states for the brave and manly reply he made to the speech of Senator Butler of South Carolina assailing Senator Sumner and the state of Massachusetts.

In January, 1859, Mr. Wilson was returned to the senate for a term of six years. One of the most important of internal improvements, a railway to the Pacific, was about the time of his return up for consideration. Members of congress from the south advocated a line through Arizona, called the "Disunion route", because some senators said it would be theirs when the union was dissolved. This route was favorable to the administration. Mr. Wilson, in a speech displaying a great amount of research and knowledge of the

country, advocated a central route through Nebraska and Nevada, which was finally adopted.

When Lincoln was nominated for the presidency by the republicans, Mr. Wilson threw himself, body and soul, into the fight for Lincoln's election.

#### HENRY WILSON, THE SHOEMAKER VICE PRESIDENT

With energy and diligence that marked his efforts to glean knowledge from borrowed books when he was a boy, Mr. Wilson entered upon his duties as chairman of the military committee of the senate at the beginning of the frightful drama of the civil war. He had been a member of that committee when Jefferson Davis was its chairman, and his abundant knowledge of legislation and military affairs were now to have full play. About a fortnight after the firing on Sumter he and Mr. Walbridge of New York advised President Lincoln to call for 300,000 in addition to the 75,000 men, and he persuaded the secretary of war to double the number of men apportioned to Massachusetts. On July 6 he introduced into the senate a bill authorizing the President to call for 500,000 volunteers, and on the last day of that month presented a bill for the appointment of additional aides-de-camp, which carried a provision that abolished the cruel custom of flogging in the army. His interest in the enlisted men was further illustrated early in the following month by a bill increasing the pay of privates from \$11 to \$13 per month. In view of the immense amount of good work he accomplished when quick action, good judgment and superior knowledge meant so much for the government, Gen. Scott said: "Senator Wilson had done more work in that short session (an extra one assembled July 4) than all the chairmen of the military committees had done for the last 20 years.

At the first Bull run fight, July 21, Mr. Wilson was in the midst of the fighting, encouraging officers and men alike. The confederates made an effort to capture him, but he succeeded in getting away and returned to Washington in safety. This first defeat, Mr. Wilson remarked to a friend, was a chastisement for fighting on Sunday. He did not believe though that God would desert the side upholding the right principle, and made it known that what the north needed was more men, and he told the President that he purposed raising a regiment in Massachusetts. President Lincoln would have had him made a brigadier general, but as this would have compelled him to resign his seat he preferred to stick to the senate and at the adjournment of the short session proceed to Natick and call for volunteers.



Obtaining authority to carry out this proposition, Mr. Wilson arranged for a mass meeting in Faneuil Hall, Boston, and began recruiting. In less than 40 days more than 2000 men had rallied to the colors. The majority of them were farmers, mechanics and tradesmen, and from these volunteers was formed the 22d regiment, part of the 23d, one company of sharpshooters and two batteries of artillery. Mr. Wilson was commissioned colonel of the 22d, with the understanding that at the call of his senatorial duties he was to be relieved. On October 8 the 22d and a company of sharpshooters started for Washington. Friends had presented the newly made colonel a splendid Morgan charger, and the color-bearer carried a flag presented by Robert C. Winthrop.

On the way to Washington this outfit was enthusiastically greeted. Officers and men were banqueted in New York, and two days after arriving in Washington, on October 11, camp was made with Gen. Martindale's brigade in Fitz-John Porter's division at Halls Hill, Virginia. Senatorial duties demanded his attention. Mr. Wilson gave his commission on October 28, turning over his command to Jesse D. Gove, who was killed in June, 1862, at Gaines Mills, Va. Soon after giving up the 22d and returning to his tasks as chairman of the military committee Mr. Wilson was induced by the secretary of war to accept for a brief period a position as aide-de-camp on Gen. McClellan's staff to make observations that might be beneficial in the legislative hall. It was a pleasant diversion, but it did not last long, as there was too much to do in the senate. The entire expense of raising the 22d Massachusetts regiment was borne by Mr. Wilson and he did not receive a cent for his services as colonel or while acting as aide on the staff of Gen. McClellan.

Many bills and resolutions which had an immediate bearing on the efficiency of the federal fighting forces and on the government itself were introduced and carried to enactment by Mr. Wilson during the second session of the 37th congress.

Among these was the bill "to amend the act calling forth the militia to execute the laws, suppress insurrections and repel invasions". There was authority in this act for the President to receive persons of African descent for military service. Thus for the first time it was possible to receive negroes into the regular military service of the United States.

When Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania, who was Lincoln's secretary of war from March, 1861, to January, 1862, resigned his office to take the post of U. S. minister to Russia he addressed a letter to Mr. Wilson, in which he stated that, in his opinion, no man in the whole country had done more to aid the war department in

"preparing the mighty army now under arms than yourself, and before leaving the city I think it my duty to offer to you my sincere thanks as its late head". In December, 1861, Mr. Wilson introduced a bill "for the release of certain persons held in service or labor (that is for the abolition of slavery) in the district of Columbia". This measure met with vigorous, bitter opposition, but it became a law, and the freedmen met in the churches and thanked God for their deliverance. All through the years 1862 and 1863 he was so actively and constantly at work, that had he not possessed a marvelously strong constitution he must have suffered from breakdown.

One of the most important of the war measures was the bill introduced in February, 1863, by Mr. Wilson, for enrolling and calling out the national forces. It declared in part that all able-bodied citizens between the ages of 18 and 45 should be liable to military duty at the call of the President. An attempt was made to exempt members of congress, but Mr. Wilson contended that such a provision would weaken the moral force of the law, and he won his point. This measure was adopted and the army was strengthened to the force necessary to evade defeat when the clash at Gettysburg came.

Lee's surrender in April, 1865, relieved the faithful, hard-working statesman of an immense load of responsibility. He left Washington to be present at the raising of the flag over Fort Sumter, and while aboard the boat off Hilton Head he heard of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

The day Mr. and Mrs. Wilson were 25 years married, October 27, 1865, friends and neighbors gathered at their home in Natick to congratulate them. Among those present were Hannibal Hamlin, Anson Burlingame, Oakes Ames, Charles Sumner, William Claflin, Ginery Twitchell, Charles W. Slack and Mrs. Julia Ward Howe. A purse of \$4,000 was presented to the couple by William Claflin.

In the reconstruction of affairs upset by the war Mr. Wilson's counsel was for a decisive course of action. He believed that only loyal men should assume control, and insisted that freedmen should be protected. Equal rights for every citizen and loyalty to the union was his creed. In the midst of his reconstruction duties in December, 1866, tidings came to Washington of the death of Mr. Wilson's only son, Lieut.-Col. Henry Hamilton Wilson, who was on duty at Austin, Tex. The body was sent north and was buried in Dell Park cemetery, Natick.



In the spring of 1870 the death of Mrs. Wilson brought the husband into profound gloom. He had regarded his wife and always spoke of her with most affectionate tenderness. To him her word and her wishes were sacred. To relieve his mind from the sad memories which all objects at home tended to awaken Mr. Wilson went abroad in the summer of 1871 and traveled in Europe. Returning to this country he was nominated for vice president at the republican convention held in Philadelphia in 1872, and when the votes of the election were all in and counted Grant and Wilson were credited with a majority on the popular vote of 762,991 over Horace Greeley and B. Gratz Brown. The electoral vote was 300 to 66.

When Mr. Wilson was about to take his seat as vice president, he borrowed from Charles Sumner. "I have not enough money to be inaugurated," he said. A check for \$100 was handed to Mr. Wilson and as he walked away Sumner remarked to B. F. Carpenter: "There is an incident worth remembering—such a one as could never have occurred in any country but our own".

Mr. Wilson continued his literary labors. Every spare moment was devoted to his last work, "The Rise and Fall of the Slave-Power in America". He often worked until two o'clock in the morning. Finally his health began to yield, the first warning coming in 1873, when he suffered a slight stroke of apoplexy which slightly altered his countenance.

In September of that year Mr. Wilson visited the White Mountains for his health; but he had another shock early in 1875, and in November of that year he died\* in the 64th year of his age.

\*November 22, 1875, while in office. Buried in Dell Park cemetery, Natick, Massachusetts.