

BIOGRAPHY OF WOODROW WILSON

IN WOODROW WILSON the Democratic party has a nominee for the Presidency whom it presents to the country in full assurance that he is, in a peculiar manner, the choice not only of the voters of the party, but also of thousands who have heretofore voted another ticket. Mr. Wilson's nomination was the result of a popular demand such as never before swept a national convention—a demand spontaneous and country-wide, which it was impossible to resist.

Woodrow Wilson was born in 1856, in Christmas week, in the town of Staunton, Virginia. When he takes his seat, he will be the eighth President born in the Old Dominion. And in temperament, ripeness of statesman-like views, capacity for political leadership, he is particularly fitted to be the successor of Washington, Jefferson, Madison and Monroe. As they were prepared, above all other men of their time, to do the particular work of founding the Government of the new Republic and giving the first cast and direction to our political institutions, so, it is no idle rhetoric to affirm, is Wilson uniquely fitted to preside over the critical hour when the nation is perplexed by the necessity of meeting new industrial, social and commercial conditions undreamed of by the fathers of the Republic.

Woodrow Wilson's grandfather, James Wilson, was born in Ireland, whence he emigrated, landing in Philadelphia a little more than a century ago. James Wilson was a printer; he obtained employment in the office of the "Aurora," which was the leading Democratic paper of the day, recognized as the organ of Thomas Jefferson. (Philadelphia was then the capital of the United States.) James Wilson worked hard and prospered. In the year 1812 he appears by the Philadelphia Directory of

that date as publisher of the paper. As such James Wilson must have known Jefferson, who continued his interest in the "Aurora" after his retirement from the Presidency.

About the year 1820, James Wilson moved to Steubenville, Ohio, where he founded or bought the "Western Herald," and made himself a power in the Democratic party in Ohio, becoming "Judge" Wilson.

OF PIONEER STOCK

In this background of vigorous Western life, among the pioneers of the State of Ohio, Woodrow Wilson's father, Joseph R. Wilson, was born and grew to manhood. Joseph R. Wilson began life as a teacher, first in an academy, then in Jefferson College, then in Hampden-Sidney College. Soon, however, he entered the Presbyterian ministry. He married Janet Woodrow, daughter of the Presbyterian minister of Chillicothe, Ohio. Janet Woodrow had been born in Carlisle, England, but her father had crossed the ocean when she was a little girl—one rough day during the long voyage of ten weeks she had barely escaped being washed overboard.

Two years after Woodrow Wilson was born, his father was called to the pastorate of the Presbyterian Church of Augusta, Georgia, one of the most influential congregations of the South. He remained in this pulpit throughout the war.

The education of the Wilson boy was not freed. His father, who had now become one of the leading divines of the South, had his son as a constant companion and talked

to him by the hour; sometimes he took the lad on excursions to the factories of the city—for Augusta was a manufacturing town—and taught him the processes by which crude materials of all kinds are worked up into finished products. Among his mates at school in Augusta was "Joe" Lamar and his brother "Phil." "Joe" is now a Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

In the autumn of 1870, the Wilsons moved to Columbia, S. C. In the autumn of 1873, being then seventeen years old, Woodrow went off to college. His father had chosen a school which was accounted particularly strong just then in the character of its faculty, though it was a rather small institution: Davidson College.

The next year young Wilson stayed at home with his father, who had now been called to Wilmington, preparing himself to enter a Northern university, where it was thought (the colleges, along with everything else in the South, suffering under the depression following the war) he would find better opportunities for education. The future Governor

of New Jersey, first saw the State where his earliest political honors were to be won, one September morning in 1875. He found himself entering the Freshman class with 133 other young men.

From the start, the young fellow declined to lie down in the regular groove and be ground through the mill. Very early he made up his mind what he wanted to make of himself, and then he set himself steadfastly to the task.

One day early in his first term, prowling about the college library, he happened to pick up a magazine that contained one of a series of articles on the British

Parliament. They were written in a peculiarly vivid and intimate style, and gave an unforgettable picture of the dramatic scenes enacted in the British legislature. Wilson was charmed. Scarcely waiting to finish reading the article he had chanced upon he hunted up the others and devoured them. From the hour in which those magazine articles fell into his hand he never wavered in his determination that he, too, should have his part in the splendid scenes in which national destinies are shaped.

PREPARING FOR LIFE'S BATTLE

Straightway he began his preparation. He made his regular course at Princeton subordinate to the great work of fitting himself for public life. Always he was reading, thinking, and writing about government. He was in no sense a "dig," and seemed to have no particular ambition in the college studies, but he devoted every energy to the furnishing and the training of his mind as an authority on government, the history of government, and leadership in public life. To this he added assiduous practice in writing and extemporaneous speaking; the seeking for skill in expression and readiness in debate. He had already made himself proficient in stenography, finding it of great value in making digests of what he read and quotations which would otherwise have occupied him long. Wilson never, either then or in later life, wrote out his speeches; except on the very rare occasions when it was necessary to be verbally exact. This



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