



JOHN FRANCIS WHEATON.

The story of the life of the subject of this sketch is an interesting one. Born, with the dark blood of the negro race flowing in his veins, and confronted with all the obstacles of race prejudice, John Francis Wheaton has climbed a rugged path such as few men have successfully surmounted, and won for himself a record and a name that would be envied by any man. He was born at Hagerstown, Washington County, Maryland, May 8, 1866, the son of Jacob F. and Emily B. Wheaton. He is able to trace back his ancestry, as far, on the paternal side, to his two great-grandfathers, and his great-grandfather on the maternal side. The father of his paternal grandmother was an Englishman who settled in Virginia as a planter. His name was Thomas Buckingham. The father of his paternal grandfather was also a Virginia planter whose Afro-American son was his slave. Upon the death of this planter, he liberated his dark-hued son, at the age of twenty-four years. It was from this planter that Wheaton's family took its name. His maternal great-grandparents were both slaves of the Wingert family in Maryland. He attended

the public schools of his native town until his thirteenth year, and then for two years a school in Ohio. Later he took a course of study in Storer College, at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, graduating from the State Normal Department in 1882, as valedictorian of his class. The funds which enabled him to receive an education were earned by him shining shoes, milking cows, etc. The laws forbidding any one to teach school under nineteen years of age were finally set aside by young Wheaton being able to pass a rigid test examination. He taught school for a few terms, but entered into politics before he was nineteen years of age, exhibiting considerable ability as a stump speaker. When but twenty-one years of age his name was presented to the Republican county convention of Washington county, Maryland, for nomination as candidate for the state legislature, but he withdrew his name after receiving a flattering complimentary vote of one hundred and twenty out of a necessary one hundred and fifty votes. In 1887, 1889 and 1891 he served as a delegate to the state convention, and in 1888 attended the Republican national convention at Chicago as an alternate delegate. During a large share of this time he was teaching school at Williamsport and studying law in the office of Hon. Albert A. Small, a prominent lawyer of Maryland. In 1888 he took a course in the Dixon Business College, at Dixon, Illinois, and during the campaign of that year was engaged as a stump speaker by the Republican national committee to stump Illinois, Indiana and Ohio. In February, 1889, he was elected temporary chairman of the state Republican convention at Baltimore, and successfully quieted the warring factions. He was a candidate for the superintendency of the house document room in Washington, but was turned down after the place had been promised him. He was, however, given a clerkship in the same department, which he held during the Fifty-first congress. While in Washington he attended the law department of Howard University, graduating in May, 1892. On his return home he made a bitter fight for admission to the bar, and was finally allowed to take an examination, which he

passed successfully. It was only after ten months of persistent effort, however, that Judge R. H. Alvey, now chief justice of the supreme court of the District of Columbia, and a member of the Venezuelan commission admitted him to practice. He was the first colored man admitted to practice outside the city of Baltimore, and the fourth in the state. In 1892 the colored Republicans of his state elected him as a delegate-at-large to represent them in the Republican national convention in Minneapolis, but his credentials were not accepted. Tiring of his continual struggle against the disadvantages imposed upon men of his color, Mr. Wheaton moved to Minneapolis, May 1, 1893. That he might be admitted to practice before the Minnesota courts he took a two years' law course at the Minnesota State University in one year, and was elected orator of his class. He took an active part in the campaign of 1894 and entered the lists as a candidate for the office of reading clerk in the lower house of the legislature. After a hard contest he was beaten by one ballot, but subsequently was elected as assistant file and reading clerk. In 1895 he was appointed deputy clerk in the municipal court of Minneapolis, which position he now holds. He was elected by acclamation as alternate delegate from the Fifth Minnesota congressional district to the Republican national convention at St. Louis in 1896, having the distinction of being the first colored man to represent Minnesota in a national convention. Mr. Wheaton is a member of the Masonic fraternity. He was married June 6, 1889, to Miss Ella Chambers, a graduate of Wilberforce University, Ohio. They have two children, Layton J. and Frank P.

WILLIAM EDWIN HEWITT.

Mr. Hewitt, who is an attorney-at-law practicing in Minneapolis, is of pioneer American stock. On his father's side the family line includes John Howland and Elizabeth Tilley, of the Mayflower. His progenitors on the maternal side were early Virginia settlers. He was born at Le



Claire, Iowa, September 23, 1861, the son of W. H. Hewitt, one of the pioneers of the Hawkeye state, and Anna Davenport (Hewitt). William received his early education in the common schools and academy of his native town. The first money he ever earned by his own efforts was made by carrying newspapers when a boy. Having decided to make the practice of law his vocation in life, he entered the law office of Jenkins, Elliott & Winkler, of Milwaukee to take up its study. Later he entered the Iowa State University, taking a course in its law department, from which he graduated in 1882. He removed to Chicago and became connected with the law firm of Mason Brothers, of that city, acting as managing clerk. This position he held until his removal to Minneapolis in 1886 to engage in the practice of his profession. Mr. Hewitt has been quite successful from the start and has built up a profitable practice. His early political affiliations were with the Democratic party, but after maturer consideration he attached himself to the Republican party. He was married in 1888, at Minneapolis, to Miss Mabelle Van Sickler. They have two daughters, Harriet and Marjorie.