

## HON. CHARLES E. BENTLEY:

Nominee of the National Party for the Presidency.

THE National Party nominee for President, Charles Eugene Bentley, was born at Warner's, Onondaga County, New York, April 30, 1841. Mr. Bentley is the eldest of a family of six children, and is the only surviving one. The paternal grandparents were from Rhode Island, sturdy New England stock. Early in the century they removed to the then unexplored West of Central New York, coming in 1809 to the pioneer settlement at Warner's, and carving out of the primeval forest the farm of one hundred acres which for eighty-seven years has been occupied and owned by the Bentley family.

In the War of 1812, with Great Britain, the grandfather was enlisted for service as an American soldier, and was assigned for duty at Sackett's Harbor.

As a contrast to the nomadic habits that pertain to the West, it is an interesting fact that Mr. Bentley's father, himself and his oldest child were all born on the old farm. Mr. Bentley's father

died in 1877, but the mother, now nearly seventy-eight years old, still survives, living at the old home. Mr. Bentley's parents were mentally and physically well endowed. While they had but few opportunities for schooling in those early times, when the old English Reader was sole text book, they nevertheless obtained a sound and practical education, becoming well informed upon all the questions of the day. They had decided literary taste, and read with discriminating care history, biography and poetry. Both loved politics as the science of government, and were ardent advocates of the principles of the Whig and Republican parties. Mr. Bentley has often said that he could not escape the marked conditions of a political heredity, that must environ one born at the close of the never-to-be-forgotten Harrison and Tyler campaign of 1840.

He has, however, cause for thankfulness, that while this law of heredity brings him into vital sympathy of the ballot-box sort with social and political reforms, heredity may be so modified by intelligent citizenship that its subjects never climb into a party band wagon that is run for monopoly, Wall Street, partial suffrage and the saloon. Mr. Bentley's education was obtained in the schools of the Empire State, and in Seminary courses at Elbridge and Cazenovia, N. Y. He lived on the home farm until he reached manhood's estate and

established a home of his own. He was married in 1863, to Persis Freeman, of Baldwinsville, N. Y., and in 1866 removed permanently to the West, locating in Clinton, Iowa, where he engaged in active business life. During the twelve years' residence in that city Mr. Bentley was almost constantly in public service, holding for a period of years positions as City Clerk and Treasurer, and Secretary of the Board of Education, until his removal to Nebraska in 1878. Although politically allied during these years to the Republican Party, he cherished an inborn hatred to the drink traffic and the rule of monopolistic wealth. This led him at times to open rebellion against the party policy which was annually bidding for both the church and saloon vote.

On removing to Nebraska Mr. Bentley returned to the farm, settling on a quarter of raw prairie at Surprise, in Butler County, and located about fifty miles from the State Capital. Here the family remained for nearly thirteen years. The school life of the children was so arranged that study and farm work were judiciously blended. Every member of the family contributed directly to the sum of the labor and toil required for developing the farm into one of the finest and most productive in the State. More than this, they contributed to the moral and social uplift of the community in the organization of churches, temperance and literary

societies, Chautauqua Circles and one of the most influential W. C. T. U. organizations in the State.

Mr. Bentley and his wife are, and have been for ten years, active white ribboners. Probably no other man in the State has been so often called upon to speak in public addresses for the Union. Mrs. Bentley is the leader of the local union known as the East Lincoln, and she has also the superintendency in district and State of the Evangelistic and Unfermented Wine Departments.

In 1890 Mr. Bentley removed to Lincoln that the family might avail themselves of the superior educational advantages of the capital city. The two eldest sons are graduates of the State University, the older having taken his degree of M. A., and the second one securing in competitive work a scholarship in Philosophy at Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y. The younger daughters and son are taking preparatory courses in the graded and High Schools. The eldest daughter, Lucy, is her father's helper in his large and increasing correspondence. She is an enthusiastic student and worker in National party politics, a ready writer, and for some time edited a column of news for the party State paper.

In 1884, Mr. Bentley failed to "cordially sympathize" any longer with the Republican Party and came out for St. John and the Prohibition Party. As was natural for a man of his ability,

he was chosen chairman of the first Prohibition Party Convention ever held in Nebraska, that of 1884, a place which he has often filled since with conspicuous ability and fairness.

His active work as a reformer began at this time, and he has been unceasing in his efforts for the upbuilding of the Prohibition Party. He says, "Since becoming a party adherent in 1884 I have never voted for any person for any office who was not a recognized party Prohibitionist."

Mr. Bentley has often been a candidate upon the Prohibition ticket, and has the unbroken record of having always led his ticket in the number of votes received. He has been nominated twice for the State legislature, once for Congress and once for the United States Senate.

In 1892, when a candidate for governor, he polled 1,333 votes more than General Bidwell received for President at the same election; and in 1894, when nominated as popular choice for United States Senator to head the Prohibition ticket and make the race against Hon. W. J. Bryan, the free silver Democrat, Mr. Bentley received 25,591 votes at the general election. This indicates the measure of his popularity among his fellow-citizens.

In 1890 he was chosen chairman of the State Prohibition Committee, to manage the famous constitutional amendment campaign of that year. In

this campaign \$23,000.00 were disbursed directly by the state committee, and over three thousand speeches made for constitutional prohibition under Mr. Bentley's direction.

The executive ability displayed was so marked that he has been retained as chairman ever since, except in 1892, when, in response to an overwhelming popular demand, he made the race for governor.

In 1892 Mr. Bentley was elected a member of the National Prohibition Committee. At the State Convention of 1895 a stirring resolution was unanimously adopted indorsing Mr. Bentley for presidential honors, and at the February Convention of 1896 this indorsement was even more emphatically repeated, and the delegation instructed accordingly. In the face of this call from his friends, Mr. Bentley reluctantly consented to have his name go before the new party Convention.

He has been actively instrumental in his own State in having the party take advanced position on all economic questions. The Nebraska platform has always been notably broad, and has in other States served as a model in setting forth in clear and direct statement the distinctive principles of the party. It is in fact, in method and phraseology, the National party platform, and could be re-affirmed without change as the principles of that party in State and nation.

Some months ago, as a member of the National Committee of the Prohibition Party, Mr. Bentley sent out to each member of that committee a strong protest against the efforts of Mr. Dickie and others in minimizing or ignoring the position of the party on all its platform declarations except that of saloon suppression, and urged the committee to unite in this protest against a policy so suicidal and unwarranted. That he correctly interpreted the narrow policy if carried out as bringing sure dismemberment to the party, the Pittsburg Convention furnishes abundant proof.

Mr. Bentley is and has been a sturdy and determined advocate of woman suffrage. No party can hold him in political leading that in open opposition or silent, cowardly evasion denies to woman the right of the ballot. Mr. Bentley retains at Surprise the pastoral charge of the Baptist Church, over which he has presided since he personally led in its organization in 1880. He also preaches as supply for the church at Friend, Neb. The doors of his church have always been opened for every righteous reform. His plain, uncompromising declarations of truth, as he preaches political righteousness and denounces parties that have made a "Covenant with Death," are in refreshing contrast to the timid, time-serving utterances of the average license party preacher.

In personal appearance Mr. Bentley is a man of

more than average attractions, gifted with splendid physique, a genial manner, forcefulness of expression and those rare gifts of oratory which come from a direct statement of the truth. He is a leader by virtue of his natural endowments, coupled with the experience which he has had all these years.