

**JAMES ROBERT
DUNBAR: A
MEMORIAL**

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James Robert Dunbar: A Memorial by Various

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JAMES ROBERT DUNBAR

A MEETING of the Boston Bar Association was held on Saturday, December 18, 1915, at twelve o'clock, noon, in the full bench room of the Supreme Judicial Court in the Suffolk County Court House, in memory of the late James Robert Dunbar. A large and distinguished assembly of judges and lawyers, with members of the family of Judge Dunbar and other friends, filled the room. The president of the association, Samuel J. Elder, in stating the object of the meeting, said:

“We are assembled again, Brethren of the Bar, to pay the last tribute that we can pay to one of our friends, one of our associates, a distinguished judge, and an eminent practitioner. Following the customary form, a committee was appointed by the Bar Association of the

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City of Boston to prepare a resolution, accompanied by a memorial, upon the services and life of our friend, with a request that it be presented first to the Bar of Suffolk County, and afterward, if adopted, to the Supreme Judicial Court."

This committee, which consisted of William V. Kellen, chairman, Nathan Matthews, Henry F. Hurlburt, Sherman L. Whipple, and Felix Rackemann, then offered the following memorial:

JAMES ROBERT DUNBAR, a leader of the Bar, sometime Justice of the Superior Court, died on August 20, 1915.

He was descended from a Dunbar of Dunbar who was driven by religious persecution from Scotland to Ireland in the seventeenth century. With this sturdy Scotch stock was later as-

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simulated a strain of German blood, when his grandfather, John Dunbar, married Ann Delmage, whose people, suffering like persecution and fleeing the Palatinate for America, were wrecked on the shores of Ireland, and there settled. These grandparents, to better their condition, migrated to Canada. There his father, Henry William Dunbar, was born; he married Elizabeth Richards, whose family came from Cornwall, and the young people, in their turn, left Canada, and, after a brief stay in the State of New York, came to Massachusetts and settled in Pittsfield, Berkshire County, where James Robert was born on December 23, 1847.

Young Dunbar went to the public schools of Pittsfield and there fitted for college, gaining practical experience, in an interval of school attendance, as a clerk in the village post-office. He

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entered Williams College in 1867, was in due course elected to the Phi Beta Kappa Society, and was graduated with distinction in the class of 1871. Subsequently he studied law in the office of Milton B. Whitney of Westfield, a much respected member of the Hampden County Bar, and later, during the year 1873, pursued his legal studies at the Harvard Law School. He was admitted to the Bar of Hampden County in April, 1874, and was at once taken into partnership by Mr. Whitney, and with him practised law to their mutual satisfaction for several years in Westfield.

From the first he affiliated with the Republican party, and was active and influential in town and county affairs. He became one of the leading men in the town, served as moderator at town meetings, and grew in the estimation

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of his neighbors and of his brethren of the Bar. For Westfield (though compelled by circumstances to leave that town) he always retained a lively affection, and there his ashes lie buried.

He was elected to the General Court of 1885 as a member of the Senate from the Hampden District, a position to which he was returned for 1886. He early impressed his fellow senators as a man of sound sense and conservative instincts, of sane judgment, and of absolute sincerity. He became a leader to whom men of both parties listened with respect, and whom in non-partisan matters especially they followed with increasing confidence. He was chairman of the Committee on Election Laws and a member of the Committee on the Judiciary during both terms, and during his second term he also served on the Committees on

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Bills in the Third Reading and on the Revision of the Judicial System of the Commonwealth. During his first term he also acted as chairman of a Joint Special Committee on certain State House Expenditures.

In January, 1887, the partnership with Mr. Whitney was dissolved, and he continued the practice of the law alone. Later in that year he was appointed and served for a few months as District Attorney of Hampden County, upon the election of the Hon. Andrew J. Waterman, who held that office, as Attorney-General.

In March, 1888, with the training and reputation gained at the Bar and in public service, he reached the position for which habit of mind and temperament preëminently fitted him, when he was appointed by Governor Ames an associate justice of the Superior Court.