

TO THE CIRCUIT COURT IN AND FOR RACINE COUNTY, WISCONSIN.

Your committee appointed by the County Bar Association to prepare a memorial sketch of the life and services of Samuel Ritchie, deceased, for many years a member of the bar of this county, beg leave to submit the following:

Respectfully

D. A. Hunt
C. C. Gittings
E. R. Burgess
&

Committee

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Samuel Ritchie was born at Lenzburg in the Canton of Aargau in Switzerland June 3rd 1829, ^u *and died at Racine Wisconsin July 2, 1908*. The place of his birth is a well known city in Switzerland and is situated on a small stream one of the original sources of the Rhine. Within the range of his boyhoods vision towered the majestic Rigi and Pilate^us. The visitor to Switzerland sees them as they stand reflected in the waters of Lake Lucerne. Samuel Ritchie saw them daily from the north and east as the morning sun touched their snow clad peaks with his pencil of tenderest amethyst. As here the historic Rhine gathers the waters which make it a mighty stream so he amid these scenes inhaled the spirit of justice and liberty which were the main springs of his character. The mighty roar of that gigantic social earthquake, the French revolution, had scarcely subsided when his eyes first beheld the light of day. The delight of his boyish years was to hear the story of the immortal Washington. The atmosphere of the whole earth was surcharged with this new spirit of liberty, a radical change was coming and had been already wrought in the organization of society. Mr. Ritchie had read those prophetic words, "All men are created equal" long before his feet trod the shores of America.

His father having met with financial reverses and having failed in business on account of signing for others in the year 1846 started for the United States. Ten weeks on a sailing vessel brought the family of nine among whom was the late Mrs. John Kranz, a sister, to New Orleans. They at once started for the North. Mr. Ritchie and his brother remained for a short time in New Orleans. During the winter following called thither by the sickness of their father they journeyed to East Troy, Wisconsin, where the family had taken up their new home. With his brother John he traveled from New Orleans to Peoria, Illinois on a dollar between them. From Peoria they walked in the middle of winter to East Troy, Wisconsin.

The father died shortly after their arrival and the family removed to Racine. Here Mr. Ritchie learned the trade of wagon-maker and worked in the local shops as a day laborer. He at one time had a small shop of his own. Latter he took up merchandising. Just after the war he applied himself more directly to the study of law and was admitted to the bar of Racine County on the *22* day of *January* *1873*, since which time until shortly before his death he was actively engaged in the practise of his profession.

In 1850 he was married to Emma Madorey, daughter of Henry Madorey, himself a Swiss imigrant, and at one time a drill master under the First Napoleon. Issue of this marriage was one daughter, Clara Ritchie Dewey, of Rockford, Illinois, and a son Albert, who was a member of this bar, and is now located at Omaha, Nebraska. In the ~~opening of~~ *early* the 70s he was a partner of S. B. Van Buskirk, and the partnership handled the cases of Gottbeheit vs. Hubacheck, 36 Wis. 515, and Ruth vs. Oberbrunner, 40 Wis. 238. The former resulting in a clear out statement of the law of slander by Chief Justice Ryan of the Supreme Court. The latter case involved the property known as the Convent Block in this city and is a leading case on the law of uses and trusts. Mr. Ritchie was the chief spirit on the plaintiff's side in both of these cases. He was for twelve years City Attorney and has been called the Father of our city charter. He with Justices Winslow and Dodge of the Supreme Court, who were both former practitioners here, made a complete revision of our city charter which was adopted in 1891. While City Attorney he advised the city to compromise the suit threatened against it by the bond holders of the bonds issued in aid of the Racine & Southwestern Railway. The towns of Racine, Mount Pleasant and Caledonia issued these bonds. The city of Racine settled under the advise of Mr. Ritchie. The towns of Mount Pleasant and Caledonia ^{do not} Suit was brought against them,

which was carried through the Supreme Court of the United States, where judgment went against the two towns. It cost nearly Three dollars an acre in taxes on every acre in the towns, to pay the judgment. The case turned on the point whether the City of Racine was liable for bonds issued by the Town of Racine out of which it was carved, or in other words, whether a man could escape payment of an obligation issued by him by merely changing his name. Mr. Ritchie advised that the City was liable, made a settlement for the City and so saved in Thousands of Dollars.

His good judgment was again displayed when he refused to take a retainer in a suit to break the Taylor will. Mr. Van Buskirk his partner after the dissolution of their partnership undertook for a large contingent fee to break that will. Mr. Ritchie said again that if the courts could find a way they would sustain the will on account of the splendid charity, The Racine Orphan Asylum, which was created by it. The courts found a way and the will was sustained. Philanthropic^{motives} also deterred Mr. Ritchie for he said that he would not be a party directly or indirectly to the destruction of this charity, for all there was in the case.

As a lawyer his word was absolutely good. On account of his kindly nature and modest manner he had a larger acquaintance and friendship among the ordinary plain working people of the city than any other lawyer at the bar. Even as a lawyer he remained one of them. They knew that he was scrupulously honest and they trusted him. The breath of suspicion never touched his reputation for integrity. He knew no back stairs but always went up the front stairs, on the merits in all his legal battles. He "never crooked the pregnant hinges of the knee that thrift might follow fawning." He always took a keen interest in public affairs. Both as to European and American politics he was practically a cotemporary and copartisan of Carl Schurz. He said editorially in the "Racine Volksfreund", a german paper published by him

in the edition of Saturday, December 3rd 1859, which was the day of John Brown's execution, the following,

" A demonstration which for brutality and total depravity has never had its equal in ^{Racine} ~~the scene~~, was made yesterday, the day of the death of John Brown, by the local Democratic Club. One must doubt whether the participants are brutes or men for in their mad partisanship they seem to have lost all sense of decency. Yesterday these blood thirsty scoundrels hung from the windows of their club a United States flag inscribed with the words, "Death to Traitors." This was done in celebration of the death of John Brown and as a threat against all the friends of freedom and the enemies of slavery. It is the same gang which exulted over the death of Jesus and Socrates and the recent martyrs to the cause of liberty and civilization. Every decent man in this community is nauseated at the conduct of these scoundrels."

This seems to indicate where he stood then. When asked on a latter day, why he was asocialist, he said, Unless society is fundamentally rebuilt the rich will devour the poor as the big fish devour the little ones. When asked, how he was going to distribute the wealth created by a socialistic scheme of industry, he answered, "It may present some difficulties, but the distribution cannot be much worse than it is now." He was for the ownership of public utilities by the people.

He was not a confessor of any faith. He permitted no man to write his religious creed for him. He hated frauds and shams in religion as he hated them elsewhere. He had a broad and well founded faith in the God of the Universe. He believed that to do right because it is eternally right to do right is a sufficient code of morals. In this simple faith he lived and in it he died. A lover of his kind he was also loved by them.

His remains repose in a conspicuous place in our beautiful Mound Cemetery. A slab of Wisconsin granite with

the simple inscription, "Samuel Ritchie", marks his last resting place. The future citizen of the Belle City as he passes there may well stop and reflect upon the career of this man. A poor Swiss boy with no guide but the magnificent brain which God had given him, ignorant of our language, "No chart but his own untutored mind; no compass save his own undisciplined will; early bereaved in this wilderness of his father, struggling on applying himself by night and the moments he could catch from the fierce struggle for bread to literature and law; tireless in his industry, creeping steadily on and up until he was repeatedly chosen the counsellor of the whole city; perserving throughout all these vissitudes a spotless character. Here indeed was a character worthy of respect and admiration. He was not great as the world goes but great in the love and esteem of his neighbors and friends who knew him best. Truly it may be said, our city has lost a good citizen.

WHEREAS, We, the members of the Racine county bar as a slight tribute to the memory of Samuel Ritchie, desire to take public notice of his death and place on record the expression of our esteem for him; therefore,

Resolved, That we are duly ^{penetrated} ~~penetrated~~ with a deep sense of the loss which we in common with the rest of his fellow citizens have sustained by the death of Samuel Ritchie and that we will ever cherish his memory which is endeared to us by his many splendid qualities of ^{mind} ~~mind~~ and heart.

Resolved, That these resolutions be ^{published} ~~published~~ in the journals of the city and a copy forwarded to the family of the deceased.

Resolved, That they be presented to the Circuit Court for Racine county with request to be entered on its minutes.

