

In Memoriam

THOMAS RIDGWAY, ESQ.



Thomas Ridgway, Esq., member of the Council of The Historical Society and one of its most active Committeemen, whom to know was to love, passed with unfaltering courage from earth to the Undiscovered Land like a noble ship to a new mission.

Positive in opinion, courtesy marked every expression thereof. At meetings of Council, were a motion by him in process of becoming controversial, it was promptly withdrawn, with no possible shadow to mark its passing. O, rare Thomas Ridgway, that you possessed the blessed art of friendship, was well recognized by your fellow councillors!

As stated by Judge Edwin O. Lewis, retiring President, Pennsylvania Society, Sons of the Revolution, in another *In Memoriam*:

Mr. Ridgway was for several decades a distinguished Philadelphian, an able, thorough lawyer, a student and historian of the local stage, and a gallant and discriminating leader in the social life of Philadelphia and Newport. Wherever he dwelt, he assumed a full share of responsibility for the community's welfare and upbuilding.

As a Philadelphian, he was active in practice of the legal profession until his final illness. Typical of the orderliness and directness of his personality, his hand-writing was beautiful to the eye and his legal briefs were models of concise composition. He numbered as his clients innumerable old friends, their widows, sisters, children and grandchildren, and to all he gave courtly and conscientious, yet courageous, service. By appointment of the Courts, he frequently acted as Referee, Master, Trustee, Guardian and Receiver, and his reports were meticulously correct and sound, with seldom reversal.

A summer resident of Newport, Rhode Island, he was one of its most esteemed personalities, serving for many years as Chairman of the Tennis Committee of the Casino, and, as such, managing the annual tennis tournaments, a feature of life at that resort. He was also a Director of the Spouting Rock Beach Club, controlling Bailey's Beach, a member of the Reading Room, and active in the support of the Art Association and similar organizations. His life spanned eras of Newport that linked its days of magnificence to the more subdued ones following World War I.

From his Princeton days Mr. Ridgway was interested in the drama and in the leading personalities of the stage, which interest later became an avocation. He found much intellectual delight in the history of the early

theatre in Philadelphia, and in Edwin Forrest as a tragedian. At the time of his last illness he was engaged in writing a life of Forrest, which it is hoped may find its way into print, as a tangible memorial of the Society's distinguished councillor and author.

Quite recently he addressed the Society of the Colonial Dames of America on the drama in Philadelphia. This address constituted a preview of his chapter, "Eighteenth Century Ballad Opera in Philadelphia Theatres," written for that Society's three-volume work, *Church Music and Musical Life in Pennsylvania in the Eighteenth Century*, now in process of printing. On March 1, 1943, he was a guest speaker at the Annual Meeting of The Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, his topic being "William Henry Fry of Philadelphia, First American Composer of Grand Opera." Most heartily received, it is in course of print in the current number of that Society's *Publications*.

A graduate of Princeton, 1896, Mr. Ridgway was in membership with many organizations, social clubs and patriotic hereditary societies. Among them: the First Troop, Philadelphia City Cavalry, with which he served in Cuba during the Spanish American War; the Philadelphia Club; Philadelphia Country Club; The Colonial Society of Pennsylvania; The Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania; Pennsylvania Society, Sons of The Revolution, of which he was for some years a most courteous Secretary and recently elected Vice President; a Founder and Director of the Independence Hall Association; and active in the Delta Psi Fraternity.

A staunch Republican, with a keen desire for intelligent judgment in all matters pertaining to the franchise, and a procedure of education preceding elections, with final fair practice at the polls, Mr. Ridgway added to his many other labors, prompted by pure chivalry, the administrative direction of the Women's Seventh Ward Republican Club, to which his death will be a most grievous loss.

But the loss is widespread. In the Council Room of The Historical Society there will be, at least in spirit, always a vacant chair and it is a matter of more than passing interest that, while the now forever absent Councillor was "brother under the skin" to all associates, he was of physical kinship to several by a common descent from Richard Ridgway, twenty years from 1700 Justice of the Peace and Judge of the Courts of Burlington County, New Jersey. With wife Elizabeth Chamberlyne, he arrived in the Delaware on the *Jacob and Mary* of London in the 7th month, 1678, leaving behind at Wallingford, Berks, old England, an honorable ancestry, to become the progenitor of many eminent descendants who would adorn the annals of New Jersey and Philadelphia.

The son of John Jacob Ridgway, Jr., by his wife, Elizabeth Fry, Thomas Ridgway, born July 20, 1874, died December 6, 1943, followed his father's footsteps in the law and acquired a wide clientele. He married Edith Wayne, who survives him, with two sons. Thomas Ridgway, Jr., Captain, United

States Air Forces, has been four times cited and decorated for meritorious service in China, India and Burma, with the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, and two Oak Leaf Clusters. The second son, Anthony Wayne Ridgway, Army of the United States, has twice been overseas, once in Africa, now in England, winning promotion from Private to Lieutenant.

The final chapter of Mr. Ridgway's high-standing earthly career closed with funeral services at Old St. Peter's Church, Third and Pine Streets, Philadelphia, and interment at Laurel Hill, where, among friends, he sleeps well.

May light perpetual shine upon him.