



CHARLES A. FICKE
Public Citizen (1850-1931)

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BY MARIE MEYER

Few cities in the United States have had as liberal a contributor to their cultural life as Davenport had in the late Charles A. Ficke, who, during the long years of his life, remembered most generously the city in which he lived. Three institutions in that city benefited especially from his civic consciousness: The Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences,¹ the Davenport Public Library and the Davenport Municipal Art Gallery. These institutions owed either their very existence to his vision and foresight, as in the case of the Art Gallery, or have received from this adopted son of America many of their finest collection of antiquities, books, and manuscripts. Yet not only did Charles Ficke serve his city culturally, but politically as well; twice as mayor, and again as county attorney. In his private life as banker, lawyer, and dealer in real estate, his influence extended beyond the city of Davenport, for throughout the state he reached and served many people. Davenport was good to Charles Ficke, but he paid his debt to the city many, many times. The manner in which he made his payment is well known by the citizens of Davenport and will be long remembered.

The keynote to Ficke's public life is found in the words of his reply to Lorado Taft, the sculptor who fashioned his bust which now reposes in a niche in the municipal art gallery. When the sculptor asked Ficke why he had made so many generous gifts to the city, the latter replied, "I am trying to pay to the next generation the debt that I owe to the last. What we have and what we are in a position to do is almost entirely the result of work accomplished by those who went

¹Organized in 1867; name changed to Davenport Public Museum in 1927.

before us. And to pay that debt to them it is our duty to do something that will aid the generations that follow us." Such was the spirit of this German born American to whom the word philanthropist can truly be applied.

Two years before Charles Fieke was born, Germany and other countries of Europe had been swept by a wave of unsuccessful revolutions aiming at democratic reforms. Though many of the revolutionists fled to America, the dashed hopes and frustrated dreams of the defeated reformers who remained left the air tense with unrest in the years following 1848. It was in this period of defeat and reaction that Charles August Fieke, one of eight children in the cultured and educated family of a successful merchant, was born in Boitzenburg, in the province of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Germany, April 21, 1850. The glowing letters received by the father from friends who had earlier fled to seek their future in America continued to come, were eagerly read, and then passed on to other friends in the community. Soon the elder Fieke decided to risk the family's future in America also. At last, in 1852, after a forty-five day ocean trip and a slow journey overland, the one-time merchant of Boitzenburg and his family reached the borderland of Iowa, there to commence life anew on an Iowa farm.

Charles Fieke has given a most interesting story of the early life of his family in his biography, *Memories of Four-score Years*. The twelve years spent on the farm near Long Grove, in Scott County, Iowa, were certainly valuable years of training for the younger Fiekcs. In his book he says, "Life . . . on the farm had its redeeming features. While driving the reaper, cultivating corn, searching for cattle and in a score of other activities, I had to do my own thinking, reasoning and planning." These powers were decidedly marked in Charles Fieke as a man, and undoubtedly contributed to the great success of his many efforts and enterprises.

The education of the Fieke children on this Iowa farm was not neglected either, although the backbreaking farm work and chores were part of the routine of that life. Private tutors

engaged by the father brought more than the usual district school could offer. With the classics, history, and modern languages, young Charles August was ready for school in the nearby city of Davenport. Grade school completed, the boy desired to continue his education in high school, but circumstances decreed that he should strike out for himself in earning a living. First as clerk in a dry-goods store, then as a bookkeeper in an insurance office, and later as bank clerk, he advanced in position and in the esteem of his employers and the community in the course of the years.

In the meantime the young man was continuing his own studies. For some time he had been reading law in his room during the evenings, and each Sunday morning he visited the home of a friend who questioned and instructed him on legal matters. As the career of a lawyer appealed more and more strongly to him, and, since careful living and frugal saving had built up a comfortable bank account, he decided to continue his law studies in the Albany, New York, law school. After his graduation a year later, in 1877, he went on a six month's tour of Europe. This trip greatly stimulated the growing taste for art in this observing man. He spent, so he himself writes, many delightful hours in the Uffizi and Pitti Art Galleries in Italy. He also said, "Had I on this first visit but known that important Old Masters were obtainable, and had my finances but permitted their purchase, what treasures the Davenport Municipal Art Gallery would now possess!"

On his return to Davenport he entered upon the practice of his chosen profession. Unlike many struggling young lawyers he did not wait long for clients. The community had already noted the excellent qualities of the man, and his work in store and bank had attracted the attention of the leading citizens.

After a few years in the practice of law he became convinced that the city of Davenport would some day have a large population, that it would become a center of industry. With this thought of the future development in mind, he started buying rural and city property. The years passed and the vision of Ficke was fulfilled. The farm boy who had started his career as a clerk in a dry goods store at four and one-half

dollars a week, later came to be ranked as one of the community's wealthiest men. But wealth did not mean ostentatious display and show to him; rather it meant the use of wealth in a dignified and moderate manner. From early life Fieke had a great desire to travel. Financial success that came as the result of careful investments made it possible for him to gratify this wish. Twice he traveled completely around the world, and other trips took him to practically every country on the globe. Upon these travels he collected many of the fine paintings by old masters, antiquities, old manuscripts and books that now enrich the city of Davenport.

The first of the three institutions to share in the splendid gifts of Charles Fieke was the Davenport Public Museum, then known as the Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences located at Sixth and Brady Streets. This museum, founded in 1867, would indeed do credit to a city many times the size of Davenport. It has been visited by renowned scientists who have pronounced many of its collections and single exhibits as outstanding.²

Fieke derived much pleasure throughout his life from the activities of the museum. A frequent visitor to its halls, a lecturer under its auspices while upon his travels, a member of its governing board and elected its president in 1906, he was identified with its growth for many years. Fieke says of his election to the office of the presidency, "In January, 1906, I was elected president of the Davenport Academy of Sciences. I had repeatedly declined this office, because, not being in

²One cannot think of this museum without mentioning the Putnam family which has been the guiding spirit in the affairs of this institution since the day of its establishment. The *Davenport Democrat*, in paying tribute to the family and to the man who has been the institution's greatest single benefactor, says: "Until his death on January 13, 1906, William Clement Putnam put the climax on the long record of the Putnam family in the support of the Davenport Academy of Natural Science, by leaving to the Academy his entire estate valued at \$500,000 to \$600,000 with provisions which will keep it intact and make it worth several times that amount when fully developed. The estate includes one entire city block in the very heart of the business district in Davenport, and a number of other business properties. Mr. Putnam made his brothers and sisters trustees of the estate and executors of his will, providing that the principal block was not to be sold but should be maintained and improved until its present four-story buildings were replaced with modern store and office fixtures. This is to be gradually done from the revenue of the estate and by realizing on other properties; and the residue of the income during the rebuilding process, and finally all of it is to go to the Academy. Ultimately it will have a property value well up toward the million dollar mark." This property includes the entire north side of Second Street, between Main and Brady. At present, the "modern store and office fixtures" of Mr. Putnam's wish are Parkers Department Store and the Putnam Building, both fine eight-story structures.

science, I considered it incongruous to allow myself to be elected president of a scientific society. I would have declined this office but for the fact that shortly before the annual election W. C. Putnam, then on his deathbed, sent for me, and exacted my promise that I would accept the office mentioned." Such was the modesty of the man who gave so much to the museum.

Many of Ficke's gifts to the museum are in archaeological fields, and may be divided into four groups, southwestern United States, Mexico, South America, and the Orient.

O. E. Klingaman, who for several years was assistant director of the Davenport Museum, now the curator of the State Historical Department in Des Moines, says that "Mr. Ficke was one of the museum-minded men who helped finance Warren King Moorhead, the American archaeologist, when he went into the southwestern part of the United States some fifty or more years ago to begin the explorations of the extinct civilizations of that section. Those financing the expedition were permitted to share in such material as he discovered, and were given the opportunity to select certain items uncovered in the course of excavations. This expedition gave Mr. Ficke valuable material of the Southwest which he in turn donated to the Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences. These things are outstanding examples of their kind, some of which have not yet been identified so far as age or use is concerned. It is possible that when these finds are completely interpreted, quite a gap will be filled showing the connection between the southwestern United States and the higher civilizations that were developed in the Valley of Mexico."

His interest in archaeology then turned to Mexico from which many of the figurines, urns, pots and jade objects of the Aztec, Toltec and Zapotec civilizations were obtained by Mr. Ficke for the collection which he made in old Mexico on his visit there soon after the Oaxaca and the Mitla districts had been made accessible in 1893. At San Juan Teotihuacan he was able to have Indian boys search newly plowed fields for many of the thousands of terra cotta heads included in this group. These utterly fascinating heads with their varied ex-

pressions form one of the most interesting exhibits in the museum.

The third group of collections—the South American—were obtained by Fieke after his interest had been aroused in the Peruvian phase of his archaeological work by the excavations in the early 1900's of Prof. Max Uhle, the German archaeologist, who was then employed by Mrs. Phoebe Hearst through Leland Stanford University. Dr. Uhle was sent to South America to pursue his archaeological researches, and, while so engaged, discovered the pre-Inca civilization as shown by buried remains at Nazca in southern Peru. The pottery found there in 1911 was exquisite. The University of California was ultimately called upon for financial assistance in the research expeditions Uhle made to South America. As a result that University has the largest and finest Nazca pottery collection in the United States. The second largest and finest collection is in the Davenport Museum.

After Fieke's attention was called to Prof. Uhle's work he himself visited Peru in 1911 and returned with extremely valuable material, consisting chiefly of pottery, although some textile materials were secured. He experienced great difficulty, however, in securing Nazca pottery, supposed to antedate the beginning of the Christian era by twelve centuries; only three museums at that time possessed specimens of this splendid pottery. Even after an advertisement in the Lima newspapers, Fieke almost despaired of securing what he sought, for in response to his announced intention of purchasing Peruvian antiquities, which brought him some three hundred Inca pots and other artifacts, no Nazca pot had been brought to him. Finally, Fieke writes, "A wholesale grocer called who offered me a collection of ninety-nine Nazca pots. I accompanied him to his store, and there found that number of these highly prized pots. I bought the entire collection. Its owner told me this story of its genesis: While Dr. Uhle was excavating the Nazca necropolis in the daytime, his workers continued work on their own account during the night. They disposed of the pots they found to a local merchant, who, in turn sold them to the Lima wholesaler."

Before this collection was shipped from Lima, it was critically examined by Dr. Uhle, who was at that time director of the National Museum at Lima. Edward K. Putnam in "The Davenport Collection of Nazca and Other Peruvian pottery" (Vol. XIII, *The Proceedings of Davenport Academy of Sciences*), says: "For comparison with the Ficke collection at Davenport, the collection of Nazca pottery in the Paris, London and Berlin museums have been examined. The collection appears to be typical as to shape, color, design, and quality of workmanship."

Aside from the much prized Nazca ware, which is representative of the southern coast, Mr. Putnam writes:

From other parts of Peru there is a large collection of the black and of the dull red modeled or molded pottery from the north coast, chiefly from Ferenape, Chielayo and Trajillo. There are also representative specimens of various types of pottery from the coastal region between Huacho and Pachacamac, and of pottery showing the Nazca influence. For the Davenport Museum, the Ficke gift of Peruvian pottery is a valuable addition in that it supplements the extensive collection of ancient Mississippi Valley pottery now in the museum. A study of this Mississippi Valley pottery is made more interesting and instructive by a comparison with the Peruvian.

Mr. Putnam concludes:

In addition to the pottery, the Ficke collection in Davenport contains a number of textiles showing the skill of the Peruvians, both in workmanship and design. These pieces of brilliantly colored cloth are of unusual interest, not only on account of their own artistic merit, but for comparison with similar designs on the pottery. There are also various articles of wood, stone, shell and gourds, as well as of copper and silver.

The ancient civilizations of Asia Minor, Egypt, Carthage, Greece and Rome were not neglected by Ficke either, as the many fine examples of the culture and art of these lands found in the museum testify.

From Egypt came the mummy which was purchased in 1896. Its acquisition is described by Ficke in his autobiography: "At the Cairo Museum I acquired a mummy and mummy-case. Mummies and mummy-cases, when found, are stored in separate rooms at the museum. In the one in which

are kept the cases, I selected the only one for sale, which was covered with hieroglyphics. Attendants brought in mummy after mummy until one was found which exactly filled the case. The deal was then closed and mummy and case started on their long journey to the country which was not discovered until twenty centuries after the case and the mummy were consigned to the tomb."

From Egypt also came scarabs, bronze arrow points, rings, bracelets, pins, amulets or magic charms dating from 3000 B. C. to the beginning of the Christian era, fragments of papyri from Thebes, necklaces made from beads of faience, glass and carnelians. Textiles with the design and colors still clear and distinct, the effigy of a boat with the figures of the oarsmen, which were buried with the dead, seeds of wheat and grain and woven reed bags filled with wheat for use in the future life, canopic jars filled with foods, which were placed in tombs, and liquids and oils are other things that show the high state of the civilization of ancient Egypt. One cannot help but wonder after looking at the basket of woven reeds, which was found in a tomb with a mummy, if the basket in which the baby Moses was placed might not have been very similar to the one in the Ficke collection. Probably the really outstanding subjects of this group are the several long cylindrical vases and the other pieces of pottery of archaic Egypt—that long and dim distant past which antedates the dynasties of Egypt—because few of these are in the United States.

Here also are a number of pieces of Phoenician iridescent glass dating back 2000 years before the Christian period. Among these are the tear bottles so prized by the ancients. In the babylonian group are some tablets of clay recording contracts, and temple records of about the time of Abraham, or about 2000 B. C. One of these is the record of the payments of drink, oil and cereals to the messengers of southern Babylonia and another a record of sheep given various temples.

The Japanese section of Ficke gifts represents the culture of Japan of long ago; treasures which are no longer permitted by the Japanese government to leave that country. It is quite possible that the Ficke collection was one of the last to be

shipped to foreign lands. This collection contains so many fine things that it is almost impossible to select any one outstanding item.

The collection of ancient Nipponese armor consisting of twenty suits and forty helmets attracts much attention. Included in this is a suit of armor belonging to the Daimio, one of the great feudal houses of Japan from 1600 to 1867. As the Japanese fought principally on foot, the main use of armor was for protection against the arrow. Some of the armor is beautifully inlaid, and most of it is lacquered. These suits range in age from three hundred years to six hundred years.

There is also a collection of beautiful swords of that same period as well as bows and arrows. The arrows are tipped with metal points.

In view of Japan's modern methods of warfare and equipment, this display of ancient weapons serves as a great reminder of the change that has been made in Japan since Commodore Perry negotiated the treaty of 1854, which opened certain Japanese ports to western trade.

Among the Japanese items the collection of Japanese "No" masks is outstanding, it is considered the most nearly complete and finest in the United States. These masks were among those used originally in certain dances at semi-religious performances as early as the ninth century. In later years these masks were and are used by actors in a sort of historical drama. They represent spirits both good and evil. It is difficult for foreigners to understand the interpretation of the "No" drama that is placed upon it by the Japanese. The dances and acting are characterized by gorgeous costumes and by the slow and deliberate movements of the participants. That the "No" drama may bewilder the Occidental is suggested by the following directions for the appreciation:

Forget the theater and look at the No;

Forget the No and look at the actor;

Forget the actor and look at the idea;

Forget the idea and you will understand the No.

In the collection of Japanese carvings, are many excellent pieces of ancient art, by which term is meant articles more

than three hundred years old and covered by old lacquer, old lacquer meaning that each has approximately three hundred coats or applications. These carvings are from Buddhist temples which have long been destroyed. Also from these temples have come some of the finest Buddhas in America. The Japanese Buddhas of this collection are all of wood. Two large ones are in the attitude of perfection, in which attitude the idol is placed on a base made of the lotus blossom. There is also a beautiful and practically complete Buddhist shrine from a rich home of Japan; its interior is lacquered with gold. The equipment is nearly complete; missing from the top shelf of this shrine, however, is the small figure of the Buddha, without which no Buddhist shrine is complete.

A large portable shrine which in the past was carried on the shoulders of one hundred men in a religious procession on certain days attracts much attention also. Carved and lacquered wood, inlaid mother-of-pearl work, carving of great variety of design and elaborate embroidery are some of the details in the construction of this old shrine.

In the Chinese group, some of the materials are at least thirteen hundred years old. These are pale terra cotta images of men, women, horses and camels, and are among the best examples of ancient Chinese art. The small statuette of a prancing horse is as fine a piece of this type of work as there is in the world. It is possible that the ancestors of this type of horse were the ancestors of the horses of Greek and Roman times. These ancient relics were dug out of the old tombs of China.

Included in the Chinese group are some splendid examples of ancient porcelains. One very rare group, known as "Guardians of the Well," represents water gods and were placed in temples near wells, apparently to guard them from pollution. These guardians consist of figures of three men, one of whom has a black face and a black beard. This piece, especially, is a wonderful example of Chinese porcelain and is rare.

The purchase of the Chinese wedding sedan chair afforded Ficke much pleasure. He related with great glee that at the time of making this purchase he was looked upon as a mil-

lionaire by the astonished and admiring Chinese throng. He made the purchase of the chair immediately after a Chinese bride had stepped from the chair into the arms of her husband. The chair is used in the wedding procession and in it the bride is conveyed to the home of the groom. Before entering the home, however, the groom pushes aside the curtains of the wedding chair and sees the bride for the first time. This is a large chair, completely covered with much embroidery, and was carried on the shoulders of twelve men.

As an example of Ficke's range of interest represented in the Davenport Museum gifts, there is a splendid collection of materials from Tibet in which there are two prayer wheels. It is said that the Metropolitan Art Museum in New York is the only other museum in the United States which has two Tibetan prayer wheels. Viewed from the Tibetan standpoint, all of the materials in that small collection represent the most cherished things of Tibet. They were collected in 1926 at Darjeeling, India. Ficke, in his *Memories of Fourscore Years*, speaks of making this collection, as follows:

On Sunday we visited its [Darjeeling's] market. From the mountain districts come the quaintly clad natives with their products. What added to the interest of this market was the circumstance that the expedition, which Colonel Young-husband had led into Tibet to the Forbidden City of Lhasa, had but just returned to Darjeeling. Its members had brought many interesting objects, supposedly loot, which were being offered for sale. Here I acquired the Tibetan collection now in the Davenport Museum.

The second public institution in Davenport to receive a generous gift from Charles Ficke is the Public Library, to which he gave a priceless collection of rare books. This collection consists of 113 volumes, many of them having been out of print for many years, and was presented to the library in 1919. The *Davenport Democrat*, commenting on the gift at the time said:

Although Mr. Ficke is too modest to even discuss the value of the collection, his friends say he has spent a small fortune in its compilation. It is known that many of the books are

very rare and costly. Some of them, it is said, could not be replaced for any amount of money, for none of them are on the market. A duplicate of one book in the collection is understood to be priced at \$5,000 when a Davenportier endeavored to secure it. Another one is said to have been sold for \$1,000. But the discussion of the value of the collection is distasteful to Mr. Ficke and no reference would be made to it at this time but for the reason that The Democrat feels that the public should be given at least a faint idea of Mr. Ficke's generosity and magnitude of the gift it has received from him.

That this collection attracted state-wide attention is best shown by the following review and description that appeared in the Des Moines Register, June 5, 1919:

"Forgotten worlds, told in dead languages, which only a few scholars can read; worlds of science, religion, history, and law, together with the world of early Christian civilization and the new world of the American, disclosed in the original manuscripts of many ancient tongues, are laid before the student of the past in a priceless collection of 113 books which C. A. Ficke has just donated to the Davenport Public Library. In his travels around the world, repeated many times, Mr. Ficke has continually collected, to preserve for civilization, the priceless books and art treasures of the past. The present collection is his second large donation to the city. The collection of books now given to the public is catholic in its selection. It was gathered in every corner of the world. Part was secured from collectors in London, Paris, and Naples. From old Spanish families in Mexico, from temples in Ceylon and India, from ancient collections in Japan, from the shadows of the pyramids and ancient monasteries in China other treasures were secured."

Ficke, while a discriminating collector, was always a good business man in securing his treasures. He bought Chaldean clay tablets as he would buy real estate, appraising them with cool judgment like the shrewd American business man that he was. If, in far-away Constantinople, he could not buy an ancient book of Mohammed for what he thought it was worth, he found it in Cario at a better figure. Only once in his quarter century of touring did he pay more for an antiquity than he believed it was worth. Some years ago he found a rare illustrated Latin manuscript in Paris. The owner asked a price which the American connoisseur thought unreasonable. Four days Ficke bargained for that book. The owner

was obdurate. He would not sell below a certain figure. Finally, just half an hour before his train was to leave, the Iowa collector, believing he might never see a copy of that particular style again, bought it at the owner's price.

Some of the other difficulties of book collecting is indicated in Ficke's experience in obtaining two handwritten volumes of *Commentaries on the Koran* which quote profusely from the writing of the earliest commentaries. These volumes were located in the hands of a Mohammedan in Cario, but were deemed of such a sacred character that their sale to a non-Mohammedan, even at a fancy price, could not be thought of—at least in the presence of other Mohammedans. When finally a too tempting price had been offered, the deal had to be closed in a dark shed in a sequestered alley, out of sight and hearing of the seller's co-religionists.

One of the rarest books in the collection is a parchment missal of the fourteenth century. Ficke secured it in Rome twenty-five years ago when museums had not yet gathered in such treasures. It would be difficult to evaluate the art or to estimate the years expended by a monk in some Italian monastery five hundred years ago in painting the miniatures and the 280 pages in this precious volume illuminated in gold and colors. Another missal of the same century and style of workmanship has 295 pages, twelve by seventeen inches, each decorated in figures of gold and varied colors. A Gregorian chant, a Latin parchment manuscript, was secured in Paris many years ago, and is very rare. The notes, showing some of the earliest Christian music, are done in squares. There are 110 parchment leaves, sixteen by twenty-four inches, bound in board and leather. Probably it was written in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries. When half a century ago Mexico closed her churches and monasteries such treasures found their way into the curio shops, and it was in one of these, in the city of Mexico, that Ficke secured this volume. The collection contains eight other most interesting parchment books of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Books printed before fifteen hundred, such as most of these, are called "incunabula."

The earliest of all movable block prints in the collection is one printed in Venice in 1479. Another early example of movable block printing is an Aristotle, printed in 1510, which he also found in Mexico City, in a most interesting manner:

a dealer from whom I had bought numerous antiquities invited us to a luncheon at his suburban home. In a shed adjoining our host's home I was shown a pyramid of books six feet high, covered with the dust of years. It consisted of hundreds of Latin and Spanish volumes, printed in Europe, which were once a part of libraries our host had purchased in the course of years. I picked up a volume at random. It was a rare Latin Aristotle, printed in 1510, with heavy movable block types. It bore the seal of Zumarrago, first bishop of Mexico. Other volumes which I examined bore equally early dates. Only a few of these had been printed later than the sixteenth century. The whole lot was offered to me at an absurdly low price. I selected a few volumes, including the Aristotle, and let the rest go . . . I still bewail my neglect to acquire the entire collection.

Other examples of movable block prints are an Ovid, with numerous woodcuts, printed in 1527, the *Writings of Thomas Aquinas*, printed in Venice in 1483, and the *Life and Writings of St. Augustine* printed in 1532. Numerous copies of Old and New Testaments are also in the collection of 113 volumes. One of these, in Latin, with one hundred woodcuts, bears the date of 1561; another was printed by Christopher Barker in England in 1480; still another, a very large one, was printed by Robert Barker in London in 1612. Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, richly illustrated, another rare book was printed in 1617.

Among these rare books are two printed by the famous Aldus in 1554 and fifteen volumes printed by Elzevirs between 1629 and 1664, some exquisitely illustrated. There is also Livy's *History of the Roman Empire*, with 138 hand colored woodcuts, printed in 1574, and an Aesop's Fables printed in 1647. One of the volume, the *Nuremberg Chronicles*, was fourteen years in printing, and of course the dates of many of the other books are unknown.

In addition to these specimens from the western world, there are a number of richly illustrated oriental books. The rarest of these is a "Sha-Namah," the epic of the Kings of

Persia, written in the purest Persian, obtained in Calcutta. In 60,000 couplets about Kاستین Mansur (called Firdusi), the great epic poet of Persia sings of the deeds of Persian sovereigns and heroes from earliest times to the Mohammedan invasion. This fifteenth century handwritten book, a 12,226 page work, very curiously contains the entry that the copyist received 5,000 rupees for making the copy. A number of Arabic books, centuries old, were also collected. Among the eastern books is a manuscript Koran of the middle sixteenth century which Ficke secured at Agra, this in addition to the commentaries on the Koran secured at Cario, of which mention has earlier been made.

An interesting feature of nine very old Buddhist sacred books in the collection, secured in Rangoon and Colombo, is that they are in Pali, a dead language except as used in Buddhist sacred writings. The writing is done with a stylus on leaves fashioned out of talipot palms and then going over them with ink. These letters are so beautifully made that they remind one of steel engraving. The Pali script is very intricate and beautifully exact. The books, which look like a closed fan, are made by passing two strings through each end of the several strips of leaves; thus the books are bound together. Leaves of a book made from leaves of a tree! The cover is a strip of wood from the palm tree and illuminated with an ornamental border. Ten other Buddhist sacred books in the collection are in roll form, some of which date back to the tenth century. The rolls measure from twenty to thirty feet in length, and remind us of the pictures in our school histories showing Grecian youths reading. Another striking book besides these Buddhist volumes is an Arabic book secured in Japan, done by hand in red, white, and gold, and black ink.

The late Judge Waterman, president of the library board at the time Ficke made his gift, voiced the deep gratitude of the people of Davenport with these words: "It is a magnificent collection and a most generous gift on the part of Mr. Ficke. The library trustees are extremely grateful for the gift, and their gratitude is shared by every book lover

in Davenport. It is a collection which the library could never have secured of its own accord. It will attract book connoisseurs from far and wide."

The third public institution in Davenport to be benefited by the generous benefactions of Charles Ficke was the Davenport Municipal Art Gallery, which owes its creation, in fact, to his original gifts of paintings.

At an early age Ficke displayed an interest in art and the collection of pieces he personally admired. The fruit of this as developed in the course of years brought rich stores of the world's art to Davenport. The first purchase made by Ficke occurred soon after he became a bank clerk in the old Davenport National Bank in 1870. He noted this event in his biography when he wrote, "Davenport art lovers at that time aspired no higher than owning 'Chromos.' A carload of these arrived in the city to be sold at auction. I bought a very moderately priced one." Ficke's great interest in art was aided and enriched through the study of books in the library of William Penn Clark, a prominent figure in the early years of Iowa. Mr. Clark also possessed a large collection of copies of old masters of the various European schools of painting, and in these the eager student found the greatest of pleasure. Ficke has written that "much of the pleasure I received from travel in Italy in later years was due to my reading Gibbon's 'Rome,' lent to me by Mr. Clark. Among the paintings in Mr. Clark's collection was a copy of a portrait of a woman, by Van Dyck, whose superbly painted hand was called to my attention. Whenever, in later years, I saw portraits in art galleries, I made mental comparison between the hands in those portraits and the one in the portrait of the Clark collection."

Ficke offered his magnificent collection of paintings he had collected on his travels to the city early in 1923, upon the condition that within a reasonable time suitable quarters to house the exhibit should be provided. On February 13, 1925, the state legislature of Iowa passed an act authorizing the establishment of municipal art galleries in cities having a population of 50,000 or more, including special charter cities,

of which Davenport is one. The Davenport City Council, on March 13, of the same year, adopted an ordinance converting the old armory into a temporary building to house this collection. Thus Davenport became the possessor of a fine art collection and has the distinction of being the first city in the United States to possess a municipally owned art gallery.

The *Davenport Democrat* of April 3, 1925, published the following story of this collection:

Mr. Robert Horshe, the late director of the Chicago Art Institute, appraised the Ficke collection at \$250,000. He stated that the Chicago Art Institute did not possess, during the first en years of its existence, so excellent a collection as that of Mr. Ficke. There are 135 pictures in the collection, which would be gladly accepted by the Chicago institution. Among the canvases about which the critic was most enthusiastic were the following:

Brueghel, Pieter (the elder).....	THE GOOD SHEPHERD
Bol, Ferdinand	PORTRAIT
Constable, John	LANDSCAPE, HARVEST
Daugibiny, Charles Francois	LANDSCAPE
Daugherty, Paul	THE CLEFF
Dupont, Gainsborough	
.....	PORTRAIT OF LORD MONTSTUART
Dupre, Jules	LANDSCAPE AND MARINE
Landseer, Sir Edwin Henry	THE PETS
Lawrence, Sir Thomas ..	PORTRAIT OF LORD SEAFORTH
Netseher, Casper	PORTRAIT
Sarto, Andrea del	THE HOLY FAMILY
Spagna, Giovanni	LO! MARY MAGDALENE
Veratshagin	HEAD OF AN OLD MAN
Withoos, Mathias	FISHING DOCKS

One of the pleasures of all collectors is the memories of unexpected "finds," (and again in Mexico City) Ficke experienced such a pleasure in a discovery of a rare fine painting. He writes of this discovery in that city, a treasure house of old Spanish-Mexican art, in *Memories of Fourscore Years*:

In Mexico City—in the so-called 'Thieves Market'—I stumbled onto a painting signed 'Juan Roderiquez Xuarez', dated 1698 and representing a beautiful madonna. I bought it for the ridiculously small sum of twenty dollars, or ten dollars in American money. The director of the National Art Gallery, to whom I showed it, pronounced it original and of rare merit, by one of Mexico's foremost seventeenth century painters. I learned from him that when the Mexican government in the nineteenth century under President Juarez nationalized many convents and churches, their art treasures had passed to private ownership; and if I were to search the city, I would be able to find and acquire many good paintings. I visited pawn shops and antique shops. I also instructed two native Mexicans, who were assisting me, to search the city for Old Masters. As a result I acquired nearly a half hundred of these.

This painting and others of that period are now in the Davenport collection.

Yet another interesting story in connection with Charles Ficke's activities as an art collector is told in the *Davenport Democrat*, sometime in 1921, about a fragment of a painting in the Ficke collection:

In the middle of the seventeenth century Govaert Flinck and Gergeranat van den Eckhout, both pupils of Rembrandt, were two of the foremost painters of Holland. Their paintings were, and are, mistaken for those of their master. One of these artists, it is not certain which one of them, painted one of those heroic sized pictures, measuring eight feet square, which in that century were in favor. It represented "Christ Being Shown to the People." During some war or revolution, perhaps several centuries ago, it disappeared. In order to conceal it more securely, the purloiner cut it up perhaps into four pieces, one of which is now in the Ficke collection. This fragment was purchased in London by a New York dealer and sold to Mr. Ficke fifteen years ago. It depicts people pointing to some object not appearing in the fragment. The figure of the youth near the edge was deprived of an arm and a hand when the original was cut to pieces. The search by the owner for the other fragment was rewarded when in a catalog of the paintings in the Hockley Gallery of Fine Arts of Muskegon, Michigan, Mr. Ficke found a reproduction of a second fragment of the original painting, in which appears not only these missing members but also Christ and His attendants upon whom the people shown in the Davenport fragment were gazing before the original was dismembered. The other fragments being of minor

importance, doubtless are permanently lost. Correspondence between the owners of the respective fragments established the indubitable fact that both are parts of one large original, painted by either Flinck or Eckhout. Could these fragments but speak, what a story they could relate of the circumstances which led to their separation and wanderings until they found permanent homes in two American collections.

Dr. Walter G. Jessup, then President of the State University of Iowa, upon the dedication of the Municipal Art Gallery, October 11, 1925, said: "How fortunate we all are that in the city of Davenport, through the munificence of Mr. Ficke and the intelligent co-operation of her citizens, forces are being set in motion that will surely increase the sum total of our happiness and joy in these finer spiritual things." No greater or finer tribute can be paid to the memory of Charles August Ficke, who, through his tireless energy, wisdom, and generosity felt it his duty for fourscore years "to do something that will aid the generations that follow us." All who knew him were agreed that he had performed his duty well.

Such were the footprints left behind in the public and cultural life of Davenport by this largehearted man who, on December 10, 1931, completed a life of fourscore years of fruitful, generous living.

LABOR DAY

Of the time when he was Mayor of Davenport, Charles Ficke wrote:

In 1890, the first day of September was created a legal holiday to be known as "Labor Day." It became my privilege officially to participate at Davenport's first Labor Day celebration. The event opened with a procession in which five thousand members of military, labor, and civic organizations, and four hundred floats and vehicles, participated. This was followed by a gathering at Schuetzen Park, at which the attendance was limited only by transportation facilities. At the park Governor Boise and I were among the speakers.—*Memories of Fourscore Years*, pages 244-45.

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