



*Samuel Murdock.*

HON. SAMUEL MURDOCK.  
Jurist and Pioneer Law-Maker.

## SAMUEL MURDOCK.

BY REV. MARION MURDOCK.

I cannot do better, in response to the request to furnish a sketch of my father for *THE ANNALS OF IOWA*, than to send the very fitting address given by Hon. J. O. Crosby of Garnaville at the services held in that town. Mr. Crosby's reputation as one of the ablest of Iowa lawyers is well known, but his generosity and nobility as a friend only those best know who have made test of that friendship, as my father had, for more than forty years.

It might also be fitting to subjoin the following resolutions adopted by the Iowa House of Representatives, inasmuch as they refer especially to my father's close connection with the history and development of the State of Iowa. For Iowa he always had the most enthusiastic admiration and affection. Her geologic formations, her pioneer history, her growth and prospects for the future, were subjects that never wearied him, and he loved to live over again the pioneer days when he was more closely associated with her law-makers:

MR. SPEAKER:—Your committee to draft resolutions on the death of Hon. Samuel Murdock respectfully report as follows:

WHEREAS, An all wise Father has taken to Himself Judge Samuel Murdock, after permitting him to survive beyond the allotted time of man; and,

WHEREAS, Judge Murdock for over one-half of a century was intimately connected with the material development of Iowa; and as he was one of the pioneer law-makers of this State, and was always, during his long life, intimately associated with the enactment and enforcement of our laws; therefore be it

*Resolved*, As follows: That we are fully sensible of the loss to the State, and to the early pioneers of Iowa, of whom Judge Murdock was a striking example. That we appreciate that men possessing the energy, capacity and character of Judge Murdock were largely responsible for the intelligence, progressive spirit and high state of civilization found in Iowa today. That as Judge Murdock was a member of that band of Pioneer Law-Makers of Iowa, which as the years go by becomes smaller, we extend to that association our sympathy and condolence in the loss they have sustained in his death. That to his family, to whom he was so much, we extend our sympathy and affection, with the thought expressed that they

have a goodly heritage in the memory of the noble, loving and self-sacrificing life of Judge Murdock.

That the clerk of this House shall send to Mrs. Samuel Murdock at Elkader, Iowa, a copy of these resolutions.

T. J. SULLIVAN,  
THOMAS F. NOLAN,  
SAMUEL MAYNE.

These resolutions refer to his energy, and it is perhaps not too much to say that he possessed this characteristic in a remarkable degree. He was an indefatigable and always eager worker. In addition to his law-practice, he was constantly at work upon some scientific, historical or biographical article. Of his many articles upon various topics, those, I think, relating to archaeology and geology were of most interest, and may be considered the best of his work in this direction. But every part of the natural world interested him. He was passionately fond of science, and I have often felt that he ought, in justice to himself, to have devoted his entire time to scientific pursuits. What was a recreation ought to have been a profession. The boys and girls of the present generation have much more encouragement than those of the passing generation, in taking up science as an avocation, and the now notable schools of Applied Science show what opportunities are given to those who, like Mr. Murdock, manifest from very boyhood an intensely loving interest in the revelations of nature. This interest for him was more than an intellectual one. The beauty and poetry of it all awakened a reverence in him which he would have hesitated to call religious, but which may well be considered one of the essential elements in the spiritual life. Everything in nature, from a stone to a star, was for him an object of wonder and mystery. Nothing pleased him more than to explore the depths of earth, to open mounds, or to examine the various strata of rocks. The geology of his State was a subject he was never weary of discussing, and the discussion always related itself to man and his origin and destiny.

But of his life and characteristics it is more fitting that others should speak. The press throughout the State, in speaking of his political work bore testimony also to his love of humanity, his kindness of heart, his integrity. One of

these articles said: "He was tender-hearted in the extreme, a friend of the poor, a friend of the children, whom he delighted to gather around him." Another wrote: "When Judge Murdock died there passed from earth one of the most generous and loving souls we ever knew." Another, after speaking of his work in his profession and in other lines, said: "But over and above all this, the crowning virtue of his life—known and read of all who knew him—was his kindness of heart that always responded to the call of distress from the poor and needy. As a lawyer, citizen, neighbor, or friend, no one applying to Judge Murdock for help was ever turned away."

Rev. Mr. Wing, in conducting the services at Elkader, spoke from the text, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course," and spoke very touchingly of his uniform kindness of spirit, and his endeavor to deal justly with all his fellow men. In the closing words of Mr. Crosby at Garnavillo, nothing moved his family or the friends so much as the words: "All children knew that in him they had a friend," and, "As a lawyer he espoused the cause of the poor and friendless, and the practice that gave him the greatest satisfaction was when he secured their rights, even though he received no compensation for his services."

#### MR. CROSBY'S REMARKS.

Born near Pittsburg in the State of Pennsylvania on the 13th day of March, 1817, Judge Murdock lacked about six weeks of reaching four score years.\*

When twelve years of age his parents removed to the State of Ohio, near the city of Cleveland, and in the year 1841, a little more than fifty-five years ago, he came to Iowa, and in 1843 to Garnavillo and opened the beautiful farm that was his home for all the years, till he removed to Elkader in 1876, which has since been his home. He combined the operations of the farm with the practice of law.

In 1845 he was elected a member of the last Territorial legislature, and in 1869 was elected to the general assembly

\*Judge Samuel Murdock died at his home in Elkader, Clayton county, January 26, 1897. See page 77 of this volume of THE ANNALS.

of the State. In the spring of 1855 he was elected judge of the new Tenth Judicial district, which included ten counties of Northeastern Iowa.

Before coming to this county, he was admitted to the bar at Iowa City. As a pioneer he was the leader in surrounding his homestead with beautiful evergreens and other shade trees, and he planted a large orchard and cultivated many varieties of grapes.

As a home-builder, lawyer, legislator and judge, his success was enough to satisfy a reasonable ambition, and was an example of the great opportunities for mankind under our form of government.

I knew him first in 1854. Then Dr. Andros, Dr. Linton, Judge Murdock, Reuben Noble, Elias H. Williams, Orlando Stevens, Elijah Odell and H. S. Granger were here, in the full vigor of life; and all the others but Mr. Granger, have passed from time to eternity.

Samuel Murdock was my friend from the day I came to Garnavillo, seeking a place to make a home for myself and family. To the stranger in those days seeking a home in Iowa, his hospitality knew no bounds. His kindly assistance to me was as much as I could expect to receive from a father.

He was a student, a thinker, a ready writer, a great lover of children. All children knew that in him they had a friend, and their meeting was always followed by an exchange of smiles and cheerful greetings. He had a keen sense of humor, and his heart overflowed with kindness and generosity.

As a lawyer he espoused the cause of the poor and friendless, and the practice that gave him the greatest satisfaction was when he secured their rights, even though he received no compensation for his services.

The crowning happiness of his later life, was his attendance at the Semi-Centennial celebration of the State of Iowa at Burlington, from the first to the eighth of October last, to which he had been invited as one of the speakers on Friday, "Pioneer Day." He was entertained at the home of Dr.

Charles Beardsley, who was chairman of the committee in charge of that day, and for eight days no pains were spared to see that everything was provided that could minister to the happiness of the judge. The doctor was with him in 1870, a member of the general assembly, and they were old friends. From first to last the judge missed no part in the exercises, and surrounded by old-time friends, his cup of happiness was filled to overflowing. The following is an extract from his speech on that occasion :

To hear and listen to the words of your honorable and eloquent president, in his able and instructive address, as well as to your eminent men who have followed him in their discourses before you, was enough to have called me away from my northern home to be with you here today; but when I add to this pleasure the friendly meetings and the greetings of old, tried and true friends, some of whom I have not met before for over half a century, and who, like myself, had found their way hither, to pursue a common occupation with me, and to establish for ourselves a common heritage on lands where, until then, the wheels of the emigrant wagon had never rolled, it all overwhelms me with feelings of gladness, and calls forth from my head and heart emotions and thoughts that make my old eyes water at their utterance, and my head drop in melancholy recollections of days that are gone never to return.

But while we are commingling together today in these friendly greetings, bestowing these grand ovations upon our worthy and eminent living statesmen, as well as rejoicing over the exalted rank our noble State has achieved during the half century of her age in everything that contributes to the happiness of her people, let us not forget in these moments of praise and devotion, the memory of our noble and eminent dead who sleep beneath her soil, and who, in her councils and forums, laid her foundation of greatness, and sent her on the road of progress to a grateful, a thankful and an enlightened posterity, to build upon it newer and brighter institutions, as civilization develops, until this soil we call our own shall become the fortress and the citadel to which human liberty will ever resort in times of danger, for a covert and a shelter.

Arriving on the soil of Iowa fifty-five years ago, the thirtieth of last month, where I have ever since resided, at times pursuing the double occupations of farmer and lawyer, I was early thrown into her councils, her courts, her legislatures, as well as called to administer justice in her judicial forums, and therefore I could but personally know and commingle from the first to the present with those of your eminent and honorable dead while they were still in life and activity; and I am here before you today as one of the links in the chain of life that connects the past with the present, and with language clear and hands uplifted before you and

high heaven, to testify to their goodness, their intelligence, their worth and their virtuous lives both in public and private action.

No one now living in our broad State owes to the memory of these fallen men a greater tribute nor a more sincere praise than I do, for to me they were ever kind, and until this heart ceases to beat, or these lips and tongue cease to utter words, to me that memory shall be ever green.

Judge Murdock was a lover of the beauties of nature, and delighted in their contemplation and study. He wrote a poem to Garnavillo, calling it "Bright Gem of the Prairie," and this is its closing verse :

Though the world may conspire and invite me to leave thee,  
 And hold out temptations that bid me to roam;  
 Though palace and treasure await to receive me,  
 In rank or misfortune, I'll call thee my home.  
 Neither wealth nor rich treasure shall cause me to sever  
 The ties that once bound me so sacred to thee,  
 But in life or in death I will cherish forever  
 Our by-gones and pleasures once lovely to me.

How fitting that his weary limbs should be laid to rest in Garnavillo with those of his family that have gone before him, and that together their earthly remains shall repose beneath the evergreen trees planted by his own hand in remembrance of them.

As the long train

Of ages glide away, the sons of men—  
 The youth in life's green spring, and he who goes  
 In the full strength of years, matron and maid  
 And the sweet babe, and the gray-headed man—  
 Shall one by one be gathered to thy side  
 By those who in their turn shall follow them.

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Why weep ye then for him, who, having won  
 The bound of man's appointed years, at last,  
 Life's blessings all enjoyed, life's labors done,  
 Serenely to his final rest has passed;  
 While the soft memory of his virtues, yet  
 Lingers like twilight hues, when the bright sun is set?

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