

AUGUST P. RICHTER

Editor of *Der Demokrat*, Davenport, Iowa, 1884-1913

An Appreciation

BY F. I. HERRIOTT
Professor in Drake University

(Concluded from April Number)

My acquaintance with Dr. Richter began in the latter part of 1906. I was prosecuting a study of the preliminaries of the National Republican Convention of 1860 in an effort to explain the first nomination of Abraham Lincoln for the presidency of the United States; and I had become possessed with the notion that the Germans, especially the German refugees of the Revolution of 1848, had exerted a potent influence in the final determination of that celebrated convention. A letter asking Dr. Richter some questions and indicating my growing belief brought an instant reply that gave me specific data confirming my tentative belief and giving some definite leads which proved of superlative worth in the outcome. The most significant fact in his reply, as the event proved, was his cordial good will and his offer of his good offices in my investigations.

During the following ten years in the pursuit of my researches I appealed to Dr. Richter for aid in many and various ways. Throughout the correspondence several facts stand forth luminously in my memories—his gracious and generous efforts in furtherance of all my requests, the keenness of his appreciation of the important primary facts, his accuracy and care in statements of fact, the absence of bias, narrowness or prejudice in his consideration of matters in issue, his anxiety to be scrupulously fair in criticism or in drawing any adverse inference. Further, Dr. Richter's continued kindness was manifested steadily through the years under conditions of constant business exactions of his own that with nine out of ten men would have barred even inclination, let alone active, effective effort in compliance with requests.

Dr. Richter was a busy editor of a daily paper. His task

could not be slighted nor delegated. Its accomplishment normally would leave the average editor weary at the day's close and intolerant of anything save diversion. Letters seeking either much or minute information on matters of historic interest chiefly are likely to be regarded as mere presumption, amounting to aggression on one's peace. An oppressive sense of sorry lack of consideration has distressed me as I have examined his many letters giving me extracts and memoranda, and anon extended transcripts, sometimes in German and sometimes in translation, frequently with careful comments as to their significance or correct interpretation, taken chiefly from the columns of *Der Demokrat* for the years 1854, 1856, 1858, 1859, 1860, and now and then from the contemporary English papers of Davenport. Two facts only will possibly secure me pardon on the last day of judgment, namely: Dr. Richter's cordial encouragement to me to ask his aid whenever he could assist in my searches for facts; and my zealous effort to achieve a purpose that he, Dr. Richter, very much desired to see accomplished, to wit, the demonstration of the conspicuous and dominant part taken by the Germans in the first nomination and election of Abraham Lincoln, president of the United States.

After taxing his generosity until my own conscience balked, and after considerable hesitation I ventured to ask if he could secure me the loan of the files of *Der Demokrat* for the years 1851-60 inclusive so that I could personally search for the data I needed or might discover. This accommodation he promptly arranged to my great convenience, but apparently not without some opposition and protest. He told me some time later when in Des Moines that some of the older residents of Davenport when they heard of what he had done protested against the file leaving the basement stack room of the City Library where they were deposited for safe-keeping because of the serious risk of gross injury or utter loss in transit. Were it not violating the proprieties I should like to reproduce his vivid account of the encounter with some notables anent his consideration for me. Fortunately, no misfortune attended; I secured substantial collections of transcripts and memoranda and returned the files unharmed to their proper place. It was an act of grace on Dr.

Richter's part which made me very grateful and later his many personal and public expressions when my various studies appeared in the ANNALS OF IOWA, in Downer's *History of Scott County and Davenport*, in *Deutsch-Amerikanische Geschichtsblätter*, *Jahrbuch der Deutsch-Amerikanischen Historischen Gesellschaft von Illinois* and in the *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society*, between the years 1907 and 1919, made me feel that my returns had partially paid my heavy debt to him.

His generousness in good offices and good will needs no further exposition but excerpts from three hastily written letters in his busy year just before he laid down his editorial pen and departed for California may be given in the way of illustration:

Sept. 1, 1912.

This time much newspaper work, nasty politics and the heat and aggressiveness of the atmosphere, in combination, have to serve as an excuse for my not having complied sooner to your request of August 16.

I hope the translation although made in great haste will be clear enough to be understood by you. * * *

May 13, 1913.

Last night I found in a file of the *Davenport Democrat*, of 1896, a reproduction of a Lincoln letter, which I have copied for you. Probably this letter may not be new to you; I had read of it long ago, but it had gotten out of my mind.

Aug. 23, 1913.

I shall leave my position here on the *Demokrat* about September 1 and hope to start for California about a week later. Whenever you think I can furnish some information in regard to Iowa I hope you will write to me. Wishing you success in your laudable but laborious undertaking, * * *

Accompanying the first letter quoted were fifteen pages containing translations of editorial or news items pertinent to my inquiry or summarizing certain drifts of the comments or policy of *Der Demokrat* in pre-Civil War discussion.

Another phase of the courtesy and marked consideration accorded me by Dr. Richter in those years I did not appreciate at the outset, nor for some years. My first inquiries in my studies in 1906-07 were made with no knowledge whatever that he was planning a history of Davenport, and not once did he disclose his purpose until near the time he concluded his work on *Der Demokrat* in 1913. My innumerable quests and requests intruded

bluntly into the very heart of what he knew full well were some of the most interesting, and momentous chapters or sections of such a history as he had in contemplation, for the part of the Germans in the crucial formative days in Iowa and in the formation of the Republican party in this state was at once definitive and major in character. I was seeking data that he appreciated to the full.

The true significance of the action of the Germans in the preliminaries of the National Republican Convention of 1860 had not been sensed by any of the post-war historians and he was aware of the preponderant consideration given the German voters in the gubernatorial campaign in Iowa in 1859 in the nomination of Nicholas J. Rusch of Scott County for lieutenant governor, and the significance of the resolutions of the German Republicans of Davenport of March 7, 1860, and I was asking him to give me some of the finest fruits of his own laborious researches. Normal human nature would be loath to respond to a bothersome, confounded *Ausländer*.² He might have easily avoided answering, as many under such circumstances would have done—and justly. Or he might have declined for lack of time, or sent me meager answers with no important or illuminating data. But far from so doing was his course. His answers were instant, generous, and complete, throughout the ensuing years. And not one scintilla of a sign did he give out that I was poaching on his preserves, “jumping his claim” or “rustling his stock” as our pioneers would phrase it. I was not guilty of conscious aggression but as I have canvassed his letters in the light of what I now know I have a sorry feeling that I am chargeable with presumption.

²My use of *Ausländer* in the narrative above expressed my feelings but it is metaphorical and not a statement of fact. A query by a reader of the manuscript impels an explanation. Dr. Richter in a kind reference in his *True History of Scott County*, Chap. XX, *The Democrat and Leader*, Nov. 7, 1920, says: “Professor Herriott is an American descendant of a Huguenot family which has for generations resided in the United States.” In this instance he is slightly in error. I was born near New Liberty in Liberty township in the northwest corner of Scott County, Iowa. My parents were natives of Pennsylvania; my father was a descendant of a Scotch line which came to this country in 1685 and my mother of an English stock which came in the thirties of the last century. My father left Scott County in 1872 because he was surrounded by Germans with whom he could not easily carry on an ordinary conversation. My studies of the Germans in pre-Civil War politics were not induced by either Germanic affiliations or associations or prejudices but were wholly the incidental result of a wide-ranging investigation of the major factors and forces controlling in the preliminaries and proceedings of the national Republican Convention at Chicago, May 16-18, 1860. So, while a native son of Scott County, I had the feelings of an intrusive and presumptuous *Ausländer* when I took advantage, so greedily, of Dr. Richter's exceeding good nature and drew so many heavy drafts on his stores of information.

Lest some may feel that I am allowing personal preferences and prejudices to impel and control judgment, I venture to give the following excerpts from letters to me from associates and familiars of Dr. Richter. Each one had personal relations or business contacts with him of a sort which give intimate knowledge of the man's character and disposition. They are from Fred A. Lischer, one of the Lischer Brothers who succeeded their father, Henry Lischer, in the ownership and management of *Der Demokrat*; Mr. J. E. Calkins, city editor of *The Democrat* from 1889 to 1903, now residing in Pomona, California; Dr. Walter L. Bierring, whose boyhood was passed in Davenport, now a distinguished physician resident in Des Moines; Hon. Charles A. Ficke, sometime county attorney of Scott County and later mayor of Davenport, generous patron of the Academy of Science and donor of the extensive Collections of the Municipal Art Gallery of that city; Hon. J. W. Bollinger, judge of the District Court, 1897-1911; Miss Grace D. Rose, librarian of the Public Library of Davenport, 1906-1920, now of Morristown, New Jersey; B. F. Tillinghast, editor of *The Davenport Democrat* from 1888-1907, now of Crescent City, Florida; and Max Baum, secretary of the German-American Historical Society of Illinois since 1912, of Chicago. The excerpts follow:

Dr. Richter was always very quiet and unassuming at his work * * *. Every day would find him at his desk at the same hour. * * *

His relations with his coworkers were always friendly and helpful, willing to assist others in their work at all times, and willing to give whatever valuable information he was able, whenever he was asked.

When he took a stand on any vital question, he was very outspoken. Nothing would swerve him from the position he had taken and he would fight out the matter to the very end.—Mr. Lischer.

I went to Davenport as city editor of the (English) *Democrat* in May, 1889, and soon after that date I became acquainted with Dr. Richter. I left the position of city editor in November, 1903. During those fourteen years I had the pleasure of many agreeable encounters with Dr. Richter. * * *

Dr. Richter was ten or fifteen years older than I, and because of my comparative youth might have been expected to assume a somewhat patronizing attitude toward me, but this he never did. He was thoroughly German, in feature and speech and other characteristics, and he was also thoroughly a gentleman. He habitually wore an expression

of grave dignity, but had not a trace of pomposity, as far as I ever saw. Sometimes this aspect of gravity seemed to indicate that he was quite heavily burdened, but it was always relaxed most agreeably whenever we met, and our meetings were always on the even level, and with great mutual respect, and as far as I know, sincere mutual regard.

Ours was the leading evening paper in the English language, and his was a morning paper in the German. Naturally I often found it a convenient shortcut to call upon him for something with which he had better contact than I, and, on the other end, he rather often came to us for information that was not easily accessible to him. It was always a pleasure to me to give to Dr. Richter anything in our shop that he could use, and I never failed to have complete and apparently pleased reciprocation on his part. On the many occasions of my calls upon him I always found him busy, but never hurried or flustered or excited, and I am not able to remember any such call that was not marked by invitation or even urging to linger a while. He liked to talk with friendly persons, I judged. The interchange of a quiet hour, I always felt, was a real relaxation to him. I never met him socially, but I have no doubt that he was the same quiet, agreeable, dignified gentleman on all occasions. I have no idea of the kind of books he preferred, but I cannot imagine that wild western stories, or accounts of the frivolings of modern high society, or tales of lurid adventure, or amazing detective stories, made any appeal to him. He always seemed to be trying to do something that appeared to him to be worth while. He had the most nearly perfect knack of letting you know that he held you in friendly regard, yet at the same time relaxing none of his fine poise and dignity, that I ever saw, I think. I missed much by not being able to read the German to any great extent, but I was aware that his page carried many a bit of quiet sarcasm that it would have done a mere American real good to read. Occasionally a quaint bit of humor, or a light shaft of this same sarcasm, without much barb, if any, would break into our chats; but I can not recall an instance in which he shot any pointed word at me that could inflict even the slightest wound upon my most sensitive point. Our ideas about things did not always line up exactly, but Dr. Richter was always a gentleman of culture and consideration. One of the plainest memory pictures of those old newspaper days is Dr. Richter strolling leisurely around the corner to our door to ask for some morsel for *Der Demokrat* that he had reason to believe I might have concealed about me. If it were a hot summer evening he was probably white-shirted and bareheaded; and almost invariably a rather long-shafted underslung pipe, of potent flavor, depended from his lip. I cannot remember that I ever saw him smile, but I seem to remember that he always looked mighty pleasant. As far as I knew him he was a man of the sort to be an intimate of greatest charm and benefit. And when he was bent upon something that was to be done he was, after the manner of his painstaking people, never to be daunted by the size of

the task, or the heat and burden of the day. Toward the latter end of our acquaintance I learned that he was at work upon a history, and since then I have seen something of that history. He made it a vast thing in its minuteness and detail—as I should have expected him to do. In his latter days, also, he was sorely beset by physical ills. These, also, I am compelled to imagine, he met with fortitude and the sort of enduring courage that cannot be conquered. I must admit that I had only some glimpses of the sort of man he was inside, but these bits of circumstantial evidence all went to paint him to me as one of the men I have known who were always earnest, sincere, industrious, dependable, kindly and courteous, and well worth cultivating. I fear that he did not get from me as much of pleasant good as he gave me, while unconscious that he was giving anything at all. I remember that I always carried away from our meetings the impression that he was of that unselfish type that found it better to give than to receive.—Mr. Calkins.

During the middle eighties I was a carrier boy for *Der Demokrat*. As this was a morning paper I saw the editor, Dr. Richter, only occasionally.

I recall his stopping one day to say, "My boy, you are living in a wonderful age (*wunderbare Zeit*) and you will live to see things that we know nothing of now."

While my contacts were rather limited, nevertheless, a vivid memory remains of his soldierly figure, kindly interest in boys, and a strong, unusual personality.—Dr. Bierring.

Dr. Richter was very tolerant towards those who differed with him in matters of religion. I do not recall an unkind verbal or written statement by him regarding men who differed with him on that question, except when they sought to encroach upon the rights and liberties of others who held contrary views. * * * He was deeply interested in everything that stood for cultural advancement—education, art, theatres and music. His reports for his paper on concerts and plays were classics.—Mr. Ficke.

My first acquaintance with Dr. Richter arose while I was a high school boy in the early eighties. I was then an intimate friend of Julius Lischer, whose father was Henry Lischer, the proprietor of the *Der Demokrat*. One of our activities in those days was a debating society in our high school. Julius Lischer, Henry Vollmer and myself one time debated the merits of prohibition with three students of Griswold College, which then flourished in our city. Of course we had the wet side and the college boys the dry, and Dr. Richter took an interest in the debate as much as if we were his own children. He gave us data and facts and figures about the prohibition movement, that we never would have found otherwise. And when we won the debate he was just as pleased as if he were actually our own age.

As you know, in the eighties the German element of our town was probably fifty per cent by actual count, but its influence in public opinion was really greater than that. * * * and our Germans were nearly all Republicans and the jollification over Garfield's election at the old Turner Hall in Davenport was a scene I shall never forget. * * *

But soon the prohibition amendment in our State Constitution came. The Republicans were blamed locally for it. You recall our Supreme Court declared the Amendment unconstitutional in the famous case of *Koehler v. Hill*. This was tried before our Supreme Court sitting in Davenport. Dr. Richter from then on was always very prominent in all political matters in this city and his paper and his pen made the German force felt to the fullest extent. In it he always seemed to me to be far less concerned about politics and political parties than he was about what he thought to be the basic wrong of prohibition as a moral, economic, and social experiment. He was a most upright man in all respects, and yet resented the enforcement by law, of all the old prohibition laws.

From the latter part of 1897 to the beginning of 1911 I found it my official duty to sign many decrees closing saloons in this city. Each one of these was a thorn to him as the later columns of his paper will show. But I always liked him, always admired him, and regretted much when his late afternoon came and he left our city for the coast.

He was one of a type, and it was an old type, that came to Iowa and did so much to make the rugged virtues of citizenship predominate. And, as I love to think and agree with you, did so much to help make Lincoln president.—Judge Bollinger.

Dr. Richter was one of the friends that I made while librarian in Davenport whom it was a privilege to know * * * we saw him frequently in the library and he was ever ready to help me in the selection of German books for our collection.—Miss Rose.³

I knew Dr. Richter intimately. * * * I was editor of the *Davenport Daily Democrat*. The offices of both papers were in the same block, and the Doctor's "den" and mine were but a few feet apart. * * * We discussed many subjects.

He was an honest and ardent opponent of the free silver cause as represented by William J. Bryan in 1896. So was I. Both papers were normally Democratic but both fought the silver craze nationally and locally, going so far as to refuse to support Democratic nominees for Congress if they sympathized with Mr. Bryan.

* * * * *

In all movements for municipal advance he could be depended upon. For several years I was president of the Davenport Chapter of the American Red Cross. There were occasional appeals for help. I shall

³See later section for balance of Miss Rose's letter.

never forget the solid help Dr. Richter gave me and the cause. He could always be counted on in that way and others.

He was a student of local history, and probably the best informed man in Scott County in that respect. He was patient and persistent in looking up facts and trusted his imagination for nothing.

I doubt if any Iowa editor was more independent in word and in thought and deed than Dr. Richter. He did not follow public sentiment, which so often changes, but upheld the views he believed in at any cost. He was serious in all that he did and wrote; well grounded in the subjects he discussed. He was on friendly terms with his fellow newspaper workers, all of whom esteemed him highly.—Mr. Tillinghast.

Dr. Richter, as I knew him from correspondence and the opinions of other people with whom he came in daily contact, was one of the finest German-Americans one could meet; he was a nobleman in every sense and in the truest sense of the word. He had an excellent education and was of the same type as Dr. Ernst Schmidt, the father of Dr. Otto L. Schmidt, a real scientist and thorough and reliable in every word that he uttered or wrote.—Mr. Max Baum.

Such golden memories are not produced by the common man in the street—that mediocre mortal ever found in the crowds and the processions. They are not produced by the man of marked ability, simply. They are the refined reflections of years of close observations of a man in his daily walk and talk in his relations with his workfellows, whose character shines forth clear and staunch amidst life's wear and tear and the buffetings of fate, and through sunshine and storm stands foursquare to all the winds that blow.

On the morning of April 19, 1909, Dr. Richter achieved the twenty-fifth anniversary of his editorial service for *Der Demokrat*. He came to his office as usual, but in some astonishment; for without consulting him the publishers, the Messrs. Lischer Brothers, and his associates of the working staffs had gotten out a "special edition" of the paper in which his quarter centennial was celebrated by a "special edition" in very truth. His features in photogravure and articles laudatory of his character and work greeted his readers. When he entered his sanctum he was further astonished. I will let a few extracts from the pen of his English contemporary, Ralph W. Cram, editor of *The Davenport Democrat and Leader*, the following morning, describe the occasion:

DR. AUGUST P. RICHTER'S LONG AND ABLE SERVICE

* * * * *

Der Demokrat has a record not surpassed by any other paper in Iowa printed in German. * * *

The paper has been fortunate and exceptional in the character of its editors. * * *

Twenty-five years ago yesterday Dr. August P. Richter joined *Der Demokrat's staff*, first as city editor, and in a short time as editor. In recognition of his faithful service the owners of the paper placed on his desk yesterday morning twenty-five of the best American beauty roses. Attached to one of the roses was an envelope and enclosed in this was a letter expressing appreciation and congratulations. Within the letter was a most substantial financial token, one that made Dr. Richter speechless, not only for recognition, but the practical value. He had no knowledge of what was going on in the office. * * *

No paper has a more devoted editor; he is at all times faithful to the demands of his work. No one has known Dr. Richter to take a vacation. Aside from the discussion of local and public questions Dr. Richter has found time to gather more historical material than any other historical collector in this part of the state.

In the Academy of Science, the Public Library, the Turner Society, the public schools and other worthy organizations, Dr. Richter has shown a lively interest, and they are all in debt to him. He is a man of strong convictions and fearless in defending what he believes to be right. A more modest man, or one who more carefully shuns notice, it would be impossible to find. That he may live long to continue his work is the wish of all who know him.

In these excessively laborious days of "early closing," half holidays, junkets and vacationings, "time off" for luncheon hours and golf, six-hour days and "five-days-a-week" in order to "create work" and insure a high level of rigor, rest and recovery for the poor mortals tied to the wheels of modern industry, the daily routine of Dr. Richter, while prosaic and unromantic, is very interesting and, indeed, instructive if one is seeking the causes and conditions for the "high cost of living," the alleged grief of the farmers, and the increasing anarchy within the domestic circles of the land.

Dr. Richter continued his quiet but strenuous work on *Der Demokrat* with no variation until September 1, 1913, when he laid down his pencil, having entered upon his thirtieth year as editor and the seventieth year of his life. His retirement brought forth an interesting editorial appreciation in *The Daily Times*

from the pen of James E. Hardman under the caption, "Dr. Richter Retires."

After suggesting that a great community does not consist simply or mainly of miles of paving, or massive buildings, or mere numbers of people, but rather of men and women who are animated by "compelling ideals, certain ambitions, habits of thought and plans of action," Mr. Hardman says:

Dr. Richter has been a conspicuous figure in the newspaper life of Davenport for many years. He has been thorough, conscientious, plain-spoken, and sometimes vitriolic. But whether one has been able to agree with him either on account of politics or because of opinions which he held and defended so ably, one must concede that he was not afraid to speak plainly and forcibly in defense of his convictions. And after all it is sincerity and straightforwardness that count in any walk of life.

The people of Davenport will regret that Dr. Richter has decided to put aside his pen and to leave Davenport. No one can tell how many years his influence here will be felt and his work live in Davenport. But who will undertake to measure what one man with his pen has done?

Within a week Dr. Richter was on his way to his daughter's home in Los Angeles, California. His plans for the ensuing years were very clear-cut and specific and had been in his mind's eye for many a year and most fondly did he look forward to their realization in a happy, hard earned leisure, uninterrupted by the ruthless exactions of daily editorial duties.

Dr. Richter took with him his accumulations of memoranda and notes which for thirty years and more he had been systematically garnering from the columns of *Der Demokrat* (1851-1913) and its English antecedents and contemporaries in Davenport—all neatly filed in consecutive folios—which he had collected for the purpose of writing a history of Davenport and Scott County.

All conditions and all prospects for the achievement of his task were favorable. He thought he was in excellent health. He knew exactly what he wanted to do. He had achieved the infinite drudgery which your true scholar must get through in his preliminary surveys before he can begin the exacting task of composition of his narrative with its intermittent analysis, description and critical judgments upon events, men and measures.

Willing hands were ready to protect him against annoyance and to do his slightest wish in forwarding his program for effective work.

He got under way with his work at once. The skies were blue and fortune smiling. But alas! and alack! The telling lines of the sweet singer of Scotland tells us that the Sable Sisters often have contrary notions and now and then cut the threads of Fate in utterly unpredictable fashion:

The best laid plans of mice and men
Gang aft a-gley,
And lea'e us naught but grief and pain
For promised joy.

Suddenly from the centre of the cerulean vault came in rapid succession crashing bolts, striking without warning and without mercy, ruthless and devastating—bolts which appalled him and his friends and almost annihilated his Spartan courage and stern stoicism.

After the manner of many a literary and scholarly man Dr. Richter was far from a close-fisted, hard-headed, cool, calculating business man. He was not possessed with a consuming zeal to acquire dollars and with them in possession he was not prone to hold on to them with a deathlike grip. When practicing medicine at Lowden and Mt. Joy he did not charge substantial fees. More serious, if patients were not prompt in paying or delayed unduly or refused, he seldom proceeded to summary measures to collect. He seemed to assume that if they could pay they would, and if they did not they could not, so what was the use in harsh measures. In Davenport his generous disposition was generally known, for immigrant and itinerant or transient Germans in distress or sore straits ever and anon appealed to him for aid, and usually his purse strings would tie less in consequence. Earnest representatives of legitimate and righteous enterprises could secure his interest and involve his bank account or capital reserves, albeit perfectly naturally, but sometimes to his loss. Thus for years he paid premiums on insurance policies in "mutual fraternal" orders or companies, and then in the course of time increased rates would be inflicted upon the policyholders, the enhanced rates becoming an intolerable burden. Again, following

the lead of those he deemed wise in worldly matters he invested what were to him considerable sums in the securities of mercantile and mining companies, Florida lands, and elsewhere. Between 1910 and 1914 financial depression came upon the country. About the time Dr. Richter was getting under way with his work in California the contraction affecting the financial marts hit his investments and he suddenly found that which he had confidently assumed would be sources of income for him would be deficits. In short his losses were serious, and his resources almost eliminated. It was a peace-disturbing situation at his time of life. But there was no outcry, no harsh recrimination and no bemoaning his lot. His letters and his conversation were now and then tinged with cynical irony in consequence of the vanities of human hopes. He concluded with Isaiah that the Lord of Hosts tests men, as nations, "with the sieve of vanity"; and with Spartan firmness he proceeded to carry on.

But the frowns of the Fates did not cease. Alas! they increased. When making ready to remove to California one daughter warned him as to the possible unwisdom of such a radical change in his daily routine of life. But he foresaw no difficulty. He reckoned, however, without his host, his physical Self. He undertook the care of a garden. With characteristic definiteness he went about it and set to work vigorously and rather strenuously. This taxed him more seriously than he anticipated. He found that he suffered from fatigue. The outdoor work was not the sort of exercise to which he was used. His feet and legs began to suffer. At the outset he presumed that it was simply the necessary difficulty endured in getting used to a new routine calling for new sets of muscles. But the distress persisted, increased, and interfered with his work so seriously that he decided to return to Davenport in April, 1914—partly to consult with his old family friends, the Doctors Carl and Henry Matthey; partly to recoup his finances; and partly to be again with old friends in Davenport.

His physicians made him realize that he was suffering from a serious malady. Developments soon became threatening. A gangrenous necrosis appeared in his right foot. His own physical

distress, however, was a minor matter to him for his heart was torn by the fatal illness of his friend, Dr. Carl Matthey. Despite his own discomfort Dr. Richter almost daily walked to the home of his friend until his death in the forepart of July. Dr. Henry Matthey persuaded Dr. Richter to go to Mercy Hospital, July 29, to insure rest; and on September 17 Drs. Walter Matthey (son of Carl) and Lawrence W. Littig removed the right foot. This drastic proceeding did not remove the menace. In December they had to remove the left foot.

Within a few days he was able to sit up and receive his friends. On Christmas eve he was back in his apartments. His physical vitality and spiritual vigor were remarkable. Within a short time he began to consider the feasibility of artificial substitutes for the excised feet; and as soon as assured of their practicability secured them and began at once to regain his ability to walk. Dr. Littig gave him for many weeks more than professional care in assisting him in the difficult task. It was not long before he could negotiate three flights of stairs if need or inclination prompted.

During those trying months there must have been many moments of utter depression. But there was no bemoaning of his lot, no carping at the hard blows the Fates were dealing him. His one controlling thought was the achievement of his History. This hope drove and focussed his efforts. The day started with the morning issue of *Der Demokrat*. When weary of composition or pouring over his notes or searching in the files of old papers pinochle with his daughter or friends gave him diversion.

Meanwhile with no intimation that he was in trouble of any sort Dr. Richter was cheerfully answering my various intrusive letters to him asking for information that assumed not only stores of information and cheerful willingness to answer but more or less effort and correspondence on his part. Between April 27 and August 9 I received two post cards and four letters, some with enclosures of extended data about the careers of two German editors of pre-Civil War days—John Bittman of the *Staats Zeitung* of Dubuque, and Henry Ramming of *Der Demokrat* of Davenport. In two of them he tendered apologies for not an-

swering more promptly. When later I became aware of his condition I suffered feelings which are not pleasant to recall. It was a chance statement in a letter from Mr. Henry B. Gniffke of *Der National Demokrat* of Dubuque early in January, 1915, that made me aware of the catastrophe Dr. Richter had endured.

A few sentences from two letters of Mr. Downer from whom I have already quoted will suggest the cheerful sturdy courage and the congenial humor and humanness of the man in the midst of his distress:

This afternoon [Jan. 21, 1915] I went to see my old journalistic running mate Dr. Richter and I told him that your letter brought me. I found him in his flat on the third floor of the Walsh apartments, seated in a wheel chair watching sundry small villains in the school yard opposite trying to pound the heads off each other. The doctor showed me your last letter and appreciated your thought for him and explained that he only wrote a few letters but did not mean to forget you.

Seated in his wheel chair he looked out on the world and found it good. He was still captain of his soul. His friends climbed the stairs to enjoy his friendship. They will always remember him.

Such complete reticence, such self-repression in these hectic days of "self-expression" and "self-exploitation"—when so many "enjoy poor health" and nurse all of their aches and pains and communicate with all and sundry outside the family circle in the most "intimate confidences," when hypochondria has become a fashionable high art and "affected by public interest"—such ability to consume his own smoke and to suffer in silence discloses a character at once rare, attractive, and strong, and one may discern therein why a golden glow makes radiant the memories of Dr. Richter's friends.

The contents of a letter of Dr. Richter to me of November 28, 1916, are given in considerable part to indicate first his variable health, second, his persistence in his work, and third, his stoical acceptance of the result of the presidential election of that year.

* * * * *

I beg your particular pardon for not having written sooner.

Your contribution to the German American Jahrbuch has, of course, been read by me with the usual interest.⁴ * * * Old Nick had me by the

⁴Refers to my Monograph on *The Premises and Significance of Abraham Lincoln's Letter to Theodor Canisius*.

neck. That long and terribly hot spell in July was too much even for me, and I was prostrated by the heat. My condition was such that (without my knowing it) my daughter in New York was telegraphed for. She, however, came too soon for a funeral. Among the many victims of the summer's heat was a good friend of mine, the former telegraph editor of the *Der Demokrat* [Manfred Mainhardt]. * * *

My little work is going on—slowly. I am somewhat handicapped by my physical defects. As you are well aware, this kind of work is growing in scope while in hand. It will eventually be doubly as big as I originally expected, notwithstanding my efforts to cut it short.

The election has disappointed me, but I do not take its result very tragically. It cannot be changed. I have voted for Hughes, Harding and Hull (our congressman) and also for Theophilus for Supr. Court. I think Iowa has done well in recording her protest against the methods of warfare indulged in by some of the papers and some of the orthodox churchmen. There seems to be some hope for the future!

Wishing you a good Thanksgiving appetite, I am sincerely yours,
A. P. Richter.

Meantime—worse than the loss of his invested funds, and worse than the loss of feet, he had to watch and endure the hellish progress of the horrors of the infernal war in Europe. For four years he had to keep his head level, his eyes clear of cinders and dust, and his tongue between his teeth amidst the cyclonic reactions of "war-hate" which raged all about him within his home city and in the nation at large.

If there was one fact more than another which stirred Dr. Richter's pride it was the conspicuous role played by emigrants from Germany in our national history, as the illuminating pages of Professor Faust's *The German Element in the United States* (1909) demonstrate beyond all cavil. Davenport, and Scott County, received thousands of Germans and Hungarians, for the most part refugees from the oppressive conditions they endured in Schleswig, Holstein, Hanover, Prussia, Hungary and Austria. They had prospered notably and constituted a major division of the population of the city and county. Their history, their trials, and successes and distinctive contributions to their new fatherland, Dr. Richter had looked forward to recounting with the fondest of anticipations, and well he might for he had a splendid story of fine successes to relate.

Despite sundry instances of irritation and inflammation of the

relations between our government and the German Empire—with Bismarck over Samoa, with Kaiser Wilhelm II anent his adverse Health and Meat inspection laws in retaliation for the McKinley Tariff law of 1890, his effort to organize a coalition against us in our War with Spain in 1898, the von Diederichs interference with Commodore Dewey in Manila Bay, and the clash with President Roosevelt over Venezuela—Germans and German culture were held in high esteem by Americans generally.

But the Sable Sisters, who were gracious and encouraging when he got under way, suddenly flamed and blazed forth in black and hideous fury. The sullen, ill-suppressed, long-smoldering racial and religious hatreds and political prejudices of the peoples of Central Europe, by the assassination of the Austrian Crown Prince at Serajevo in June, 1914, were brought to focus and flashed forth in cyclonic rage.

When the first war clouds burst in July, 1914, American feelings were mixed. Austria's insensate harshness in her ultimatum to Serbia astounded us and created much sympathy for that small state. Between Russia and Austria we were indifferent and inert. We were more or less unmoved in the grand clash between Russia and France on one hand and Germany and Austria on the other. But Germany's violation of Belgium, which precipitated England's entry into the maelstrom, produced a violent revulsion that swept the great majority of our citizens into pronounced opposition and, as the horrible struggle proceeded, into increasingly hostile criticism of the course of Kaiser Wilhelm II and his high command. Despite our President's and our people's wish we inevitably became involved and finally plunged into the titanic struggle and the horrible mania of "war hate" took possession of us. All things German were proscribed and Germans, native sons, no less than immigrant sires, were looked upon with alert and crass suspicion. It was a hideous debacle of all that makes for civilization. But such is war when it comes!

During 1914-15-16 the air was split with rancorous discussion among us as to the sins and virtues of the contestants. The charges and countercharges wrecked the habits of courtesy and consideration of citizens, one for the other, if they differed in

feelings and opinions. Germans naturally—as blood is thicker than water—sympathized with their families and countrymen hemmed in by the awful wall of fire. They had no use for Frenchmen or Russians. Nor could they see superlative virtues in the British. And have we been predisposed to sing the praises of Britain, especially with the embittered Irish in a constant chorus of hate for all things English? For one hundred and forty years “anti-English” propaganda has been the stock in trade of American politicians. But the sufferings of Belgium, the gas attacks, the submarine violations of international law, and the *Lusitania* were too much and the hideous cacophony concluded in our entry into the war.

Dr. Richter watched the progress of the awful struggle in Europe with utter distress of soul and the developments on this side the water were to him a veritable medley of misery.

Many of his dearest friends found themselves under surveillance and anon charged with obstructive or treasonable conduct because they did not realize that governments, even though they stand stoutly for liberty of speech during peaceful times, are ruthless in the suppression of serious criticism of their course in waging hostilities. Cicero discovered this fact: *Silent enim leges inter arma.*

The reaction against German culture was so violent that Iowa's chief executive was seized with the popular panic and issued May 23, 1918, with dubious authority, a proclamation proscribing the use of the German language in our public schools. While primarily aimed at the public or tax-supported schools, colleges and the State University, all private colleges and universities were also hit hard in the matter of instruction in German language and literature. The Governor's pronouncement produces some curious reflections when we know that those in control of the high commands of European military establishments exact mastery of the languages of their immediate or probable national enemies by their officers, high and low alike.

Dr. Richter had to stand by and witness another sorry result of the harsh reaction against all things German. He was engaged in more or less intermittent substitute work on *Der Demokrat* over which he had wielded editorial control for so many years. Public hostility and suspicion became so serious that its

local clientele became frightened, fell away and in 1918 the Lischer Brothers felt forced to discontinue the further publication of the paper that had been a proud possession in their family for virtually sixty-two years, and the first German paper to be published in the state, having been started in 1851.

It does not require the poet's discerning eye to imagine the sorry feelings of Dr. Richter as he witnessed the crash of things round about him. For the most part, although neither indifferent nor supine, he followed the scriptural injunction and suffered in silence, as is the wont of the elect of earth. Nevertheless, the influence of his personality was felt and it was pervasive; and on occasion he let his voice be heard when he could aid in the amelioration of the bitterness and devastation of the war. One appearance of Dr. Richter lives vividly in the memory of one who saw much of him in the Public Library, Miss Grace D. Rose, who was librarian from 1906 to 1920. In a letter to me, written at Morristown, New Jersey, where she is now librarian of the Morristown Library, she says:

My last recollection of Dr. Richter was at a Red Cross meeting during the war, after the entry of this country into the struggle. He spoke in deep sorrow over the situation, but urged the German-born Americans to aid the Red Cross in its work of mercy and to be loyal to their adopted country. He expressed doubt of some of the atrocities that were being circulated against Germany but regretted that the world was plunged into the war by that country. It was a fine, sane, and highly patriotic speech that he made.

But the skies were not all a dense black. A genial glow lightened some portions here and there, and now and then a flash brightened things. His friends were near and many and they wished him and his work well. A letter from Davenport's most notable son, the nationally known jurist, Judge John F. Dillon, urging him to compass the achievement of his history must have "lifted" him, to use a Scotch phrase. Anxiety on another score was removed when the same fine friend, who had lightened the load in the dread hospital experience, quietly assured him of funds to insure him against personal financial loss in its publication. Meantime he had striven to forget and lose himself in the work in which genuine delight was his sufficient reward.

It is not always easy to determine what precisely impels one

to undertake a scholastic task, especially in the realm of historical exposition. Sometimes it is a mere accident, or incident; sometimes it is merely another project in the business of earning one's livelihood; and, anon, it is a resultant of a complex of influences, antecedent and collateral, in which idealistic sentiments, rather than mundane advantage, energize, control and color effort.

The recollections of liberty-loving Germans during the past century and a half have been a maze of conflicting memories. Their history has been a story of intermittent sorrow and success, of distress and domination, of subjection to foreign oppressors and of lusty ambitions for world power; of Jena and Sedan; of the pitiable helplessness of Frederick William and the serene assurance of Kaiser Wilhelm I; of the promises of constitutional government and popular rights and the crash of all their hopes in 1848; of the crass indignities inflicted upon Queen Louise by Napoleon between Jena and Friedland and Tilsit and the harsh treaty signed thereat and of the utter ruthlessness of German officers in dealing with the Alsatians in Zabern in 1913, a Crown Prince congratulating them and inciting them, *Immer feste darauf* (Go it strong); of vom Stein and Hardenberg and Bismarck and von Moltke; of Gottfried Kinkel and Carl Schurz, of Karl Marx and Ferdinand LaSalle; of Koerner and Schiller and Bernhardt and Nietschke; of the War of Liberation and Waterloo and of the late World Horror and the Treaty of Versailles.

The harsh and stupid governments of the Hohenzollerns, the Hapsburgs, Romanoffs and the Danish dynasty during the middle decades of the last century drove thousands of German and Hungarian liberals from their native lands in Germany, Austria, Russia and Schleswig-Holstein to our friendly shores—for the most part, scions of the highest university culture and social rank. With them came hundreds of thousands of artisans and laborers, merchants and peasant farmers, all of whom eagerly sought either land in fee simple or the right to enter any industrial occupation and to rise to the limit of their abilities and effort. Here they entered mightily and successfully into all forms of industry and commerce, into the arts and sciences. They came to us, especially their notable leaders, with their hearts on fire with hopes for human liberty and constitutional government

which would protect individuals against the arbitrary conduct of rulers and their bureaucratic chiefs and henchmen. During the stormy fifties they entered with furious zeal into the anti-slavery agitation and became a major fighting corps of the newly formed Republican party, and can justly claim a conspicuous, if not dominant part in the selection of Abraham Lincoln for the presidency, and in saving the Union in the Civil War ensuing. It was knowledge of these things that stirred Dr. Richter and impelled him to gather facts about his fellow countrymen in Davenport and Scott County.

Another cluster of facts, we may suspect, animated him besides pride in the achievements of his fellow Germans in this Western Mesopotamia. For most mortals their history is uneventful—a round of normal, prosaic duties and events which do not excite public interest nor induce headlines in the press. “Happy is the people” says Montesquieu “whose annals are uninteresting.” But the lives of the commoners, and their leaders, are at once the basis of the strength of the state and the warp and woof whence is woven the nation’s substantial history. But, and here is the rub,

* * * * * life so fast doth fly
We learn so little and forget so much.

Further we are wont to see the major things—the high mountains—and overlook the minutia near at hand or under our feet in which inheres the potency of life at large, be it society, or the state. Moreover, Dr. Richter knew that the microscope, no less than the majestic 200-inch telescope, discloses the great controlling determinants of life and health and happiness. This fact may explain in part his early formed purpose to gather the materials for a history of the part taken by his fellow Germans in the history of his home city and county.

But another fact may have been an impelling motive. In the mass and rush of things most of the best that enters into and forms the solid substance of a state or nation’s history is either not seen, or if discerned, not appreciated or soon forgotten. Most of the efficient servants of mankind are quiet and unostentatious. In consequence they are unheralded. Those in the seats of au-

thority—those who strut across the stage, or about the streets in high-heeled cothurnus—get the applause, and the hewers of wood, the men in the ranks, are unthought of and unsung. Dr. Richter may have had the stirring last lines of Theodor Koerner's *Aufruf*, or "The Summons to Arms," 1813, in mind:

*Doch stehst du dann, mein Volk, bekränzt vom Glücke,
In deiner Vorzeit heil' gem Siegerglanz:
Vergiss die treuen Toten nicht und schmücke
Auch unsre Urne mit dem Eichenkranz!*
(* * * when thou, my folk, by fortune favored,
Stand'st crowned in victory's halo
Do not forget thy faithful martyrs,
Adorn our urn with live oak bough.)

Or, as he pondered the sorry complexes of adverse fates amidst which most mortals pursue their progress, and in which he was himself involved he may have thought in the refrain of a later German poet, Carl von Holtei, in his "*Lorbeerbaum und Bettelstab*":

*So schwindet Alles hin, Blut, Herz und Schmerz,
Und nur der Sänger kommt nach langer Frist
Und sammelt, was auf Gräbern grünt und blüht
Als Nachwuchs alter, ewig junger Sage.*
(Then all will vanish, heart and hope and pain,
Until some poet comes, in later days,
And picks what sprouts and blooms on sunken graves
Like verdant aftergrowth of ancient lore.)

Dr. Richter seems to have been constrained by such sentiments. In the daily lives of his neighbors, yokemates and fellow burghers, he saw both poetry and pathos; and he deemed their *Odyssey* and *Iliad* no less interesting and no less instructive than the recitals of their High Mightinesses and Sir Oracles who thunder through the pages of our ordinary histories.

With such memories and amidst the hard blows the Fates were dealing him Dr. Richter began the preparation of the manuscript for two stout volumes. The first was published in 1917 after our nation had plunged into the European Horror. It was entitled: *Geschichte der Stadt Davenport und des County Scott nebst Seitenblicken auf das Territorium und den Staat Iowa* and contained 713 pages inclusive of index.

Although written in German and designed for his German compatriots, and with a natural emphasis upon the prominence of the emigrants from the Teutonic countries of Europe, it was not a "pro-German" narrative in any sense of "Pan-Germanism." Dr. Richter was thoroughly in love with his new homeland and he dealt frankly, generously and scientifically with all other racial elements which entered into the making of the fair city of his adoption.

He gives us in rapid sketches the beginnings of political and social life in Davenport and its environs, the French and British rule, the controversies between British and Americans, and the territorial jurisdictions. The narrative is not overloaded with gossipy *personalia*. It deals primarily with the basic, the institutional or the organic structures in the life of the people, and with persons as their characters and influence determine the institutional or express the common life or social drifts.

Thus we read of "*Squatter-Regierung*" and "*Primitive Rechtspflege*" which played such a prominent part in the actual life of the settlers in their first settlements and in the politics of the day as they took form in the "Claim Associations." We have a chapter on "Jefferson Davis' *Liebesroman*" and "Dred Scott, *Der Sklave*, in Davenport." In Chapter 14, "*Wirken, Leiden und Freuden unserer Pioniere*," we are given interesting touches of the daily work, the daily trials and the domestic amusements of the pioneers; and in Chapter 16, "*Die Prairie*," he describes with the poet's sense for the fineness of things the first views of the gorgeous landscapes our forefathers enjoyed with the masses of brilliant flowers and "the mists of green" the eyes reveled in before railroads and artificial civilization cut through and altered the face of nature. He summons Bryant and Whittier and other bards to his aid in expressing his feelings and opinions.

The first half of the volume is devoted exclusively to the general beginnings of Davenport in the pre-territorial and territorial and the early state periods with little or no reference to Germans. The second half is devoted largely, although not exclusively, to the prominent part played by the German immigrants, beginning with Chapter 35, "*Die Eroberung von Scott County durch die Deutschen*." In rapid succession we are told of "*Die Achtundvierziger*" [the Forty-eighters] (37); "*Die Ungan-*

rische [Hungarian] *Immigration*" (39); "*Der Davenport Männerchor*" (41); two chapters on the German press; two on the *Turn-Gemeinde* and its leaders (44-45); "*Die Schleswig-Holstein'schen Kampfgenossen von 1848-1850*" (50), dealing with the memories of the many emigrants from those war-torn provinces of Denmark and the strong sense of comradeship they ever after felt in their new homeland, far from their ancestral penates. The German schools and the German theater are dealt with in two chapters (46, 51) with feelings of pride.

In two chapters only does Dr. Richter show his German resentment of "nativistic" or so-called "Americanistic" notions and public policy, namely, in his Chapter 53, "Davenport's *Wachstum und Modernisierung*" (Development and Modernization) in which he touches upon "*Temperenz und Knownothingismus—Das "Maine Liquor Law"—Eine "Whiskey Rebellion,"*" etc. wherein he dwells upon various phases of politics in the stormy decade just before the Civil War. Few historians dissent from the assertion that malevolence of the rankest sort rolled over the nation in ugly tides between 1852 and 1858, and the foreign born were subjected to outrageous mistreatment under the guise of "Americanism," and in consequence they regarded much of the sumptuary legislation of the period not only as fanatical Puritanism but as pharisaical aggression against them and their old-time customs. In his next and last chapter Dr. Richter lets his feelings go in a short, pithy poem entitled "*Die Neuesten Marseillaise*" which he reprinted from *Iowa Reform*. It was a sarcastic skit anent anti-German prejudice.

Alas! his high hopes of the laborious years were utterly dashed. The whole world was out of joint. Ugly tides of rancorous "anti-German" feeling were rolling over the land and completely shattered all chances of a favorable reception for his *Geschichte*.

The adverse conditions were such that the preparation of the second volume of the *Geschichte* became a matter of grave doubt. One interesting story has come to me that illustrates the confusion of the day and somewhat of its perplexity: The manuscript, I have been informed, was prepared and forwarded to the printer—the latter, it is alleged, because of the hostile attitude of the people and the government then towards everything German, became alarmed and in a panic of fear destroyed the manu-

script. The recollections of others in Davenport, and those within the family circle, while not able flatly to contradict, cannot confirm. One thing, however, is true: the manuscript of the second volume is not extant.

All Dr. Richter's friends recognized the mistake in judgment he had made in publishing in German; but they were no less certain that his "Collections" and his *Geschichte* contained much which they and the public should have. Many influential friends urged and encouraged him to reproduce and extend his narrative in English. Arrangements to this end were made.

In the forepart of 1920 Dr. Richter returned to his daughter's home in California where he passed the remainder of his days. His folios of memoranda and notes went back with him and he devoted his leisure time to the composition of the narrative that was outlined and started before he left Davenport.

Amidst all these sorry buffetings of Fate Dr. Richter steadily carried on, although at times he must have worked in a state of despair and utter depression of heart. With some hesitation I venture to quote generously from a letter of his to me of June 9, 1920, written from Long Beach, California. It states with painful frankness the ruthless wreckage of his fondest hopes; but the letter also displays his sure balance of judgment, a serene stoicism that made him master of his soul:

* * * * *

The time was not propitious for the book [*Geschichte von Davenport*]. Most of the Germans in Davenport, intimidated by Gov. Harding and the Council of Defense, were afraid to buy a German book, or to be found in possession of one. Many others were not interested, and the younger generation, while yet able to understand and speak the language, cannot read a German book or paper. From my personal experiences, old and recent, I can assure Gov. Harding and others that their presumption that by the use of the German language the foundations of the Republic could be undermined, is entirely wrong.

My cash loss in the undertaking amounts to fully \$1200. Of the 2000 printed copies I had only 1500 bound, leaving the others with the printer. About 275 have been sold as literary garbage to the junk dealer at one-third of a cent a pound, bound books bringing much less than old newspapers.

I am now writing a history in English, which appears in installments

in the Sunday issue of the *Davenport Democrat*, beginning April 11th. Not being able to do any physical work, I consider the arrangement with the paper a very good one. I occupy my time in an agreeable manner and remunerative one, earning an "honest dollar" at the rate of \$.....per installment, and publisher and writer think they are performing a little public service.

* * * * *

The series as it appeared in the *Democrat* was entitled:

A TRUE HISTORY OF SCOTT COUNTY
ITS PEOPLE, CITIES, TOWNS AND INSTITUTIONS
A Monument to Our Predecessors and an Example
For Their Successors
By Aug. P. Richter

The series appeared continuously in the Sunday issues from April 11, 1920, to November 13, 1922, 136 installments altogether, each amounting to four solid columns per Sunday in small eight-point or brevier type, to use the typesetter's jargon.

Public interest in his historical papers was such that, a year and a half later, Dr. Richter was asked to contribute additional chapters to *The Daily Times*. The series began May 3, 1924. It consisted of 36 installments concluding January 3, 1925. They dealt with the origins and notable events and men of various communities, townships and towns and smaller cities of Scott County either not considered, or inadequately portrayed in his first series, namely, Allen's Grove, Bettendorf, Blue Grass, Bowling Green, Buffalo, Donahue, LeClaire, Princeton, Pleasant Valley, Rockingham, Summit, Walnut Grove and others. Characterization or exposition is not feasible as I have not had access to the files of the *Times*.

It is regrettable that the type of the *True History* was not so set that the forms could have been lifted, rearranged and rerun in book form. The narrative which will be a valuable collection of local data in an easy running narrative, would thus have been preserved for both private and public use for years to come. As it is now it will not be many years before the files of the *Democrat* (and the *Times* also) will be unusable, because printed, as our daily papers now are, on flimsy wood pulp paper those files will at best have but a short life; and not very long either unless special care is exercised by the guardians of stack or store rooms

wherein such files are housed; religiously to keep the heat below normal.

The narrative of Dr. Richter's *Geschichte*, as published, came down substantially to 1856. The narrative of the *True History* reaches the middle of the nineties. The latter, like the former, is neither annals or chronicles in form, nor a collection of biographical memorabilia, nor a scrap heap of miscellaneous data dealt with hit-or-miss. Further, in the second, as in his first narrative, he exercised the severest restraint in keeping out such literary padding as "biographies" of the innumerable local notables, male and female, with which so many of our commercially promoted county histories are loaded down. The men and women given particular mention were those justly lauded for their energy and potency in the upbuilding of the county and its institutions or in determining the course of public policy or the turns and twists of local politics and governmental administration. In general his English *History of Scott County* proceeds chronologically, but within each decade or period covered we have the personal and the public intermingled in an interesting fashion; now general political movements are dealt with in vigorous strokes and then personal episodes and picturesque personalities are presented. He was writing primarily for his old-time fellow citizens and he includes many names which severe literary technicians might not mention, but they were all among the *dramatis personae*. His English is always lucid and limpid. His descriptions of persons or places or situations are pithy and vivid. His comments and characterizations of men and measures are pointed and vigorous.

Dr. Richter did not allow himself even in this popular series to pursue the practice, very common in local histories, of indulging in excessive laudation of his city and county, asserting that all within their confines were the first, the finest, the greatest, the most important in the state or the country or "the world" and so on *ad nauseam*. There is a notable absence of all invidious or odious comparisons which alienate or irritate the judicious and the stranger who may peruse his narrative.

Another fact stands out in the clear. The narrative is straight-

forward and impartial. It gives the lights and the shadows, the good and the bad, progress and perversion. There is no over-emphasis of this or that set of facts or interests or promotion of any propaganda or peculiar views. While Dr. Richter was a sturdy Teuton and proud of the great role of his fellow Germans in the history of Davenport and environs, you would not suspect it from the quiet presentation of the part which they took in the common progress of the city and county. I am certain that an "American" chronicler would have laid his brush on thicker in laudation of the virtues of the Germans and "played up" the notable roles by Germans at various junctures of the local, state and national history with ostentatious discrimination. I do not mean that he does not display his interest in the Germans, for he clearly does, but his natural prejudice is displayed mainly by quiet correction of prejudicial errors or the explosion of popular presumptions entertained as regards alleged perverse customs or conduct of the Germans. Dr. Richter was a Prussian by birth, and tradition credits Prussians with a rather lusty self-assertion, but he devotes more consideration and bestows more favorable comment upon Hungarians and Schleswig-Holsteiners than upon any other group of his fellow Germans.

The stormy decades of the fifties and the sixties receive more extended and detailed treatment at Dr. Richter's hands than the two decades following, and not unnaturally, for in the fifties Iowa was becoming aware of itself and receiving those flooding influences which determined her public policy for the next half century. The nation and the state were torn with the momentous discussions that shook the nation to its very center, and the ensuing Civil War was a convulsion which rived and scarred our common life most fatefully and from the sorry effects thereof we have not fully recovered.

Dr. Richter's accounts of developments in Scott County give us a cross section of the state and nation at large; and they are both interesting and instructive. The antislavery movement and the formation of the Republican party and its conquest of the seats of authority in Iowa in 1854 and 1856—the outbreaks of malevolent antiforeign prejudice which blazed forth in incendiarism and brutal outrages under the guise of Know-Nothing-

ism—the “Temperance” agitation and the passage by a popular referendum of a “Maine Liquor Law” prohibiting the manufacture and sale of alcoholic stimulants—the coming of the railroads and the wild craze for the issuance of bonds by counties to promote their construction—the crucial state political campaign of 1859—the execution of John Brown and the outburst of German sympathy for him in Davenport—all these dramatic developments are clearly and comprehensively considered.

The same favorable opinion will follow upon reading the stirring chapters on the events of the Civil War. Davenport was then no mean city. It was a commercial center on the Mississippi of considerable influence. Its proximity to Rock Island and its arsenal and collateral industries gave it primary military importance. Her citizens were very alert and energetic in doing their share in the prosecution of the war to save the Union. Camp McClellan hard by enhanced their local concern for it was a rendezvous for mustering and training troops. He has garnered much that should not be forgotten.

The chapters dealing with the events of the two following decades are packed with interesting clusters of facts showing the general developments of Davenport, the commercial and political *entrepot* of the county. One might profitably linger over their contents with mounting interest and instruction.

The narrative is not a continuous solemn procession of erudite, ponderous, and solid prose. It is a moving panorama of the life of the people; and precisely as in life there is a constant variation in the nature of the contents. Business and manufacture one moment engages us; then art and music, the theater and the Academy of Science or the work of the schools. Churches and their problems are under our eye with sympathetic consideration, and then the infinite perplexities of government may be the next matters to engage the reader's attention. The ordinary minutia of life comes into the narrative. Programs of meetings, such as the celebration of notable anniversaries, with the names of all the speakers and their toasts or themes, and anon the menus of banquets revive the memories of Davenporters. Dr. Richter's poetical inclinations are clearly indicated in the frequent quotation of lines from famous poems ancient and modern and often from local bards. The nature of the chapters afford the residents

of Scott County a history somewhat after the manner of Mr. Sullivan's *Our Times*.

There are many valuable—indeed it is not too strong to say invaluable—chapters in Dr. Richter's *True History* for the future historians of Iowa, but there are none more interesting and instructive than those dealing with the history of the various state wide movements for statutory prohibition of the manufacture and sale of alcoholic stimulants, which had its first culmination in 1855 and then again in the latter part of the seventies and the forepart of the eighties. The fury and fanaticism of the latter campaign are far from reproduced, although one may perceive in the quiet recital of the major facts and developments much of the material that produced the bitterness and rancor. He does not "let himself go" in describing the exciting experiences of the citizens of Davenport in the referendum on the Constitutional Amendment of 1882, and the dramatic events leading to the decision of the Supreme Court in the noted case of *Koehler v. Hill* (60 Iowa, 543) which was handed down by that court in session in Davenport in which the amendment adopted by a majority of 30,000 votes cast at a most hotly contested election was declared invalid because of serious defects in the procedure of the General Assembly in passing the proposed amendment preliminary to its submission to the people. Four simple, short words, "or to be used," were in the Amendment on its passage through the state Senate in the Eighteenth General Assembly. They were not found in the enrolled bill signed by the president of the Senate in the nineteenth session. The Amendment submitted to the voters was not reprinted verbatim in the journals of each house, as passed, in the consecutive sessions of the General Assembly, as specifically required by the provisions of the Constitution of Iowa. The explanation of the excision or omission—whether due to clerical inadvertance or sinister design—may not be feasible. But it was a technicality of the sheerest sort; but its observance was clearly mandatory. The intense bitterness following the publication of Judge Day's ruling, in which five out of the six justices sitting in the hearing concurred, probably has never before nor since been equaled in the history of the state.

Had Dr. Richter wanted to indulge in biting contempt and

point a moral of enormous significance he might have called attention to the difference between the hurricane of abuse which assailed the justices of our high court in 1883 for standing squarely upon the technical terms of the supreme law and the hallelujah chorus of superlative praise for the justices of the same high court thirty years later when in the case of *Pilkington v. Potwin* (163 Iowa, 86) they held invalid and ineffective the petitions of the owners or operators of ninety-nine saloons in Des Moines seeking renewals of their licenses under the Muley Law—so holding because a young lady employed by them had inadvertently neglected to secure the renewal of her notarial commission, the sheerest sort of a technicality—so holding despite the frantic efforts of attorneys in their behalf and the passage of a retroactive “legalizing” or “curative act” by the General Assembly pronouncing them without virtue, *pendente lite nihil innovetur*. But, although the crass inconsistency of the “friends of temperance” screamed to heaven, Dr. Richter held his pen, and we may easily imagine the glint in his eyes and the sardonic smile that spread over his stern countenance as he reflected upon the violent differences when it is your ox which is gored and when it is the other fellow’s ox.

Dr. Richter’s fine balance of judgment and his habits of courtesy and consideration for those with whom he had differed are shown unequivocally in dealing with churches and clergymen and with what he and others regarded as “the infernal temperance question.” He had suffered acutely many a time by reason of the contemptuous and harsh criticism of his course in stoutly resisting fanatical propaganda demanding restrictive legislation in matters which he earnestly believed to be properly with man’s personal discretion under the principles of our Constitution and traditions of freedom; and churchmen were more than ordinarily harsh in their references to him. But while he wielded a pen that was sharp, and if need be, he could dip it deep in acid inks and scorch his critics by scathing sarcasm, his *True History* contains no retorts in kind. He does not allow himself to “get even” with his maligners. He was controlled by the kindly injunction in Mathew Prior’s well-known lines (in which I substitute “their” for “her”):

Be to their virtues very kind;
Be to their faults a little blind.

Although a nonchurchman with the views of an agnostic it matters not whether Dr. Richter is dealing with Catholics or Protestants or Evangelicals or the Salvation Army there is no contempt and no indulgence in flings or flouts—rather a fair and generous presentation of the matters affecting each. Thus in dealing with Father Pelamorgues or Bishop Cosgrove of the Catholic Church, or Bishops H. W. Lee and W. S. Perry of the Episcopal Church, or the Rev. Jonas Hartzell, the “Campbellite” minister of the Disciples of Christ, he is gracious in discriminating their public achievements and recalling the public’s applause of their lives. Hon. Hiram Price and Mr. A. C. Fulton were doughty champions of temperance and prohibition, but their characters and good works are portrayed in generous colors.

Davenport, within the coming three or six years, will celebrate its centenary. Her citizens will have very much in the history of their fair city to recall with pride. Her chroniclers and philosophical historians must needs search for the grounds of their appreciation; and Dr. Richter’s chapters in the *Democrat* and *Times* will be next door to original sources. Under the circumstances it does not seem inappropriate to offer two suggestions to his fellow townsmen.

Among Davenport’s numerous literary folk there must be those with editorial ability and discernment for historical connections and significance who could assemble the cognate matter of the two series published in the columns of the *Democrat* and the *Times*, eliminate duplication and redundancy and consolidate the two into a continuous and comprehensive narrative of the city and county’s growth. If some one does not undertake the task Dr. Richter’s work will probably be substantially lost within the coming twenty years because of the rapid disintegration of the pulp paper on which modern city papers are now printed. Men with the keenness of appreciation, historical sense and methodical habits of collecting, displayed by Dr. Richter, do not grow on every bush and tree roundabout. A stitch in time saves nine.

In Santa Monica, California, in the custody of his daughter, Miss Katharine, are the folios of Dr. Richter's memoranda and notes, now in storage, representing his garnerings of many years of painstaking searches in the old files of Davenport's newspapers, interviews with the pioneers of Davenport and Scott County, all or nearly all of whom have passed beyond recall now, the data assembled and more or less classified. They would be invaluable to all seeking facts about the history of the city and county. It would be both fitting and wise for some of Davenport's generous citizens to institute measures to secure by purchase Dr. Richter's collections and place them in their Public Library, classify and index them and make them available for the press, schools and citizens in days to come.

Our state and national governments in recent decades have spent large sums recovering the historical lore of their people. Generous sums have been contributed to send men to the north and south poles, to the heart of Asia, Africa and South and Central America to search for and bring back geological, zoological and archeological remains. Our state is spending huge sums to keep records of cattle, hogs, horses and sheep, and the culture of grains and fruits. The citizens of Davenport have been forward in supporting their Academy of Science and they are notably proud of their Municipal Art Gallery. The data and analysis and narrative of their industrial, financial, governmental, musical, political, religious and social history are not a whit less interesting and important.

The purchase of Dr. Richter's collections is suggested for what constitutes, it is submitted, an appropriate and sufficient reason. After the manner of many a true scholar Dr. Richter gave himself without stint and gladly to his studies, just as he gave generously to any one who appealed to him for aid. He did not always stop prudently to see whether it would "pay" or not in the worldly sense of the term. He served his city with the fidelity and fervor of a soldier at the front under the injunctions of a stern and watchful conscience—and he served effectively and steadily through the best years of his life. Dire catastrophe—such as no mortal could or would ordinarily foresee or fend against—struck him down in the evening of his life and he was

unable to secure the one to whom he had committed his collections safe against the accidents of time. The Emersonian law of compensation was not a mere sentimental observation of the seer of Concord. It is a part of the eternal fitness of things. In consequence it is a part of our great common law and is known in the familiar parlance of courts as the rule of *quantum meruit*.

Dr. Richter's remaining days were passed quietly amidst the sunshine and flowers of Southern California, in the home of his daughter, Mrs. T. C. Murdoch, in Santa Monica. Up to the last, despite his physical handicaps, he was active. He was alertly interested in the world's panorama roundabout him. The currents and eddies of public discussion, as of old, probably held first place in his moments of relaxation. The fuss and splutter of the throngs in Vanity Fair amused him and he vented a genial cynicism upon poor mortals feverishly seeking to compass great social reforms via the machinery and runways of government. Although far away he ever remained an Iowan. Not a little of his daily effort was given to letters to and from his old friends and confreres in Davenport. For those old time friends his generous nature always welled up in good wishes and courteous tenders of good will if he could further their plans or pleasure. His books and chapters in his "History" continued to be the magnets that drew forth and held his energy. He was gathering and assembling data upon the merger of two banks of his old home city when the last call came. It came suddenly, and with no warning, and with no drawn-out distress. He suffered a paralytic stroke. Within a few hours, and with no noticeable suffering, his sturdy spirit ceased from labor and departed, Monday, February 8, 1926.

Four fine lines of Dryden fitly describe the life of the man whose spirit left that day:

Statesman, yet friend to truth! of a soul sincere,
In action faithful, and in honor clear;
Who broke no promise, served no private end;
Who gained no title, and lost no friend.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.