



DR. AUGUST P. RICHTER

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AUGUST P. RICHTER

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

*An Appreciation*

BY F. I. HERRIOTT

Professor in Drake University

From my tutor [I learned] to be a partizan, neither of the Greens nor of the Blues in the chariot-races, nor of the Parmularii or Scutarii in the gladiatorial contests. He taught me also to endure toil, to have few wants, to be industrious, to mind my own business, and to despise slander.—Marcus Aurelius—Meditations.

The few stout and sincere persons whom each one of us knows recommend the country and the planet to us.—Emerson's Journal.

Ships that pass in the night, and speak each other in passing;  
Only a signal shown, and a distant voice in the darkness.  
So on the ocean of life, we pass and speak one another;  
Only a look and a voice, then darkness and silence.

—Longfellow—Tales of the Wayside Inn.

Dr. August P. Richter, editor for thirty years of *Der Demokrat* of Davenport, Iowa, died at Santa Monica, California, on the morning of Monday, February 8, 1926, age eighty-two years. His transit from the precincts of his family, friends and acquaintances into that Bourne whence all travelers hail and thence return deserves more than the usual formal *Nunc Dimittis* accorded familiars when the ruthless Reaper passes near us.

It was not my privilege to enjoy daily contacts and frequent converse with Dr. Richter. In fact, throughout the twenty years of my acquaintance I met him but three times—twice in his home city, and each time the meeting was casual, no more than the

usual formal greetings and a few observations marked each occasion; and once in Des Moines when upon one of his rare visits to our state's capital he let me know of his coming and I had an hour's chat with him at his hotel.

My relations with Dr. Richter began informally in the latter part of 1906 in the course of the prosecution of a study of a notable national event; and they were maintained by correspondence, more or less intermittently, through the intervening years. Through that exchange I was the beneficiary of his gracious and generous disposition. Much more—I got intimate glimpses of various phases of a most interesting character, the facets and flashes of which steadily held me in increasing admiration with the ongoing years, and which enabled me to understand the golden memories of his intimate associates and fellow citizens.

After all, when life's bothers and parade cease and

The tumult and the shouting dies

what is man's chief desire but the hope that when one has departed from this mortal coil there may cluster in the hearts of those who linger fond memories which gladden and lift those who carry on?

Dr. Richter was a strong man with a soul at once sensitive and stern and staunch, with a mind alert to the basic realities of life and a heart attuned to the fine things which make for beauty and worth. Ben Jonson in his drama, "The Epicene," describes one of the characters as "a gentleman who does not love noise." Such an one was Dr. Richter; he was very quiet in his habits of life, reserved in speech, and without any sort of ostentation. He was seldom seen in public places wherein crowds foregather and indulge in feasting, routs and sports. But while a citizen without arrogance or assumption, preferring the cool recesses of his library and its dry white light, he was ever forthright and downright in public expression should public right or the popular welfare be on the anvil of debate and grave decisions be in the issue. He served his day and generation well. Of such are the foundations of strong states.

Because it was my good fortune to come within the circuit of Dr. Richter's generous nature and good will I venture to express

both my admiration of his character and my sense of obligation in the "Appreciation" which follows and to place it upon his cairn.

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Dr. August Paul Richter was born in Maerkisch-Friedland, West Prussia, on January 25, 1844. But little is available concerning his ancestry, or his childhood and youth because of his reticence about himself. There is, however, reason to assume that his family were within the reaches of the commercial or professional classes as they were strictly designated in those days, for his education presupposes such connections.<sup>1</sup>

When and where young August achieved the curriculum of the gymnasium cannot be stated with assurance but probably in Berlin; for an older brother, who attained marked success as royal interior decorator of castles and public buildings to Wilhelm I, King of Prussia, later Kaiser of the Empire, made it possible for him to enter upon the study of medicine in the University of Berlin. His graduation from the gymnasium gave him the important rank or status of an *Einjährigfreiwilliger* and thereby reduced his compulsory military training from two years to one year. While in the midst of his medical studies the war between Austria and Prussia broke out in 1866 and the young collegian was called to the colors. He served in the Royal Artillery. He did not see service on the firing lines but seems to have been held either in training camp or in the reserves.

But that short service under arms had a serious effect upon

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<sup>1</sup>The biographical data presented in the following pages has been obtained from the following sources:

1. Personal letters to the writer from Dr. Richter, 1906-1925, from Mrs. T. C. (Clara Richter) Murdoch of Santa Monica, California, and from Mrs. J. Gustaf V. (Anna Richter) Lang of New York City; and from Hon. Charles A. Ficke, Adolph Petersen, editor of *Iowa Reform*; Grace Shellenberger, Librarian of the Public Library—all of Davenport.

2. The files of *Der Demokrat*, *The Davenport Democrat and Leader*, *The Daily Times*, *Iowa Reform*, and *Downer History of Scott County and Davenport*. For transcripts from the *Times* I am indebted to Laura M. Ade and to Leo J. Lucier.

3. Various correspondents quoted specifically in the ensuing narrative. Dr. Richter's reticence regarding himself may be seen in the fact that though himself engaged for fifty, if not sixty, years in promoting "publicity" for others, we have no authorized "biography" in any of the histories of Davenport or Scott County, and the brief sketches published in the presses of Davenport at the time of his death indicate clearly that he did not like so many of latter-day literary folk "let his ego go" in any "advance" information for his conferees of the press.

To Dr. Carl F. Haussmann of the German Historical Society of Germantown, Pennsylvania, I am indebted for the title and the original German of Dr. Richter's translation of *Lorbeerbaum und Bettelstab* found in the introduction to his second series of historical papers in *The Daily Times* in 1924.

the feelings and opinions of the aspiring young student of medicine. His family and their social rank and his upbringing naturally induced the attitude and views of the conservative classes as to the proper relations of the classes to the masses. What he saw in the army seemed to produce a marked change in his state of mind. Thereafter he did not look on the life of his fellows through the eyes of his family and his class. Precisely what caused his revulsion of feeling or the revolution in his views may not be positively asserted. But the common conditions within the army explain his altered attitude toward life—the autocratic, harsh rule of the Prussian drill sergeant; the arrogance, dominance and dictation of those in command; the helplessness and insignificance of the private soldier beneath the frown or fury of his superiors—these conditions made young Richter think seriously about the proper relations of the ordinary individual to those in authority, and to ask what were the grand purposes of government so far as concerns the private citizen who carries the burden and receives the brunt of the decrees of his state.

When peace was declared and young Richter returned to his studies in the university his critical attitude towards the traditional relations between the holders of capital and the ordinary worker was noticed by his family and associates. The rights and immunities of those enjoying office, rank and the possession of vested interests, the hauteur and ruthlessness of those in control in old Prussia and the utter suppression of the individual who might resent arbitrary and intolerable treatment—these conditions, it appeared to him, held the common man in the same sort of thralldom to which the private soldier was subject within the army camps or cantonments.

Another complex of facts may have influenced him. In the middle years of the sixties Prussia and all Germany were seething with popular discontent incited largely by Ferdinand Lassalle. His brilliant abilities and stirring arguments compelled the favorable attention of Bismarck. August Richter may have been attracted, if not fascinated, by Lassalle's terrific attacks upon aristocratic monopolies in the government and industries. His "Open Letter" issued at the Workingmen's Congress at

Leipzig in May, 1863, had become at once the charter of the popular rule which the masses demanded and a tocsin call to arouse themselves in agitation.

Whatever the impelling reason it was not long before young Richter began to express "radical" opinions, neither common nor popular in the circles frequented by his family or neighbors. In consequence he began to encounter indignant criticism which irritated him and enhanced his discontent with the status quo.

In a letter to me dated at Long Beach, California, under date of June 9, 1920, dealing somewhat with his unhappy experiences during and following the World War is a paragraph that contains some biographical data about his days in Berlin which indicate conclusively that even in his "callow college days" August Richter was a young man of such force and attraction that men of light and influence were his confreres.

These last three years [1917-1920] make up a terrible period for many a good American not infected with a crazy hyper-patriotism. I have always considered myself a "good American" since I landed in New York in 1868, and even before that time. For it had been my good fortune to be intimately acquainted with several Americans living in Berlin, among whom I may only name Theodore S. Fay, a former secretary to the legations at London and Berlin, and minister resident in Switzerland, first appointed by President Pierce, but in later years a stout Republican, and during the Civil War very active in enlightening the European mind regarding the causes and developments that led to the war.

Among other acquaintances intimately associated with the United States whom he met in 1867 was a fellow German who had been in the German consular service at Chicago. He brought back favorable memories of his sojourn in that thriving city. His enthusiastic accounts of the opportunities for aspiring young men in this "land of liberty" soon aroused a very lively interest in young Richter. His growing discontent with the economic and political conditions controlling in Prussia had caused him to discontinue, or at least, to slacken his studies in medicine. His irritation made him prone to look elsewhere. Meantime, he had met, wooed and won the hand of an attractive young lady, Fräulein Anna May, of Stettin, Pomerania, daughter of one of the leading manufacturers of fine cutlery. She was a young

woman of refinement, highly educated in music and literature and with the traditions and esprit of her social rank.

The alluring pictures of the life o'er seas in this land of fair promise became at last too much for young Richter to withstand. He decided to emigrate. But his decision produced storms at home and within the circle of his fiancée. His brother offered him an advantageous partnership in a very prosperous business, but he rejected the offer and permanently alienated his brother from whom he was always estranged in consequence of the bitterness attending the severance of their relations. It was the soreness of heart produced by his departure which explains his later reticence about himself and his family in the old homeland.

August Richter and Miss May were married on May 12, 1868, and the next day they started for the United States.

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The young immigrant's initial experiences in New York City where he landed were varied. Among his first ventures was an interesting undertaking—the purchase and administration of a circulating library. Its success, however, was not sufficient to justify its continuance, but it indicates the strong literary inclinations of the immigrant which he ever after displayed. He was soon attached to the writing staff of *Arbeiter Union*, the organ of the Trades Unions of New York City, and he thereby came under the influence of the notable educator and editor, Dr. Adolph Douai. Another valued acquaintance with whom he became associated was the brilliant Frederick Kapp, an attorney at law and publicist of distinction—later to achieve more fame as a member of the Reichstag of the German Empire when the puissant Bismarck controlled counsels.

In 1871 Mr. Richter purchased the German paper, *Anzeiger für Paterson* (N. J.), the name of which he immediately changed to *New Jersey Staats-Zeitung*. Industrial conditions in that manufacturing city were then disturbed by bitter contention between the workers in the silk mills and their employers. The new editor of the *Staats-Zeitung* was soon enflamed by the eloquent appeals and protests of the leaders of the strikers and espoused their cause enthusiastically in his editorial columns. Like many another ardent young idealist he had not reckoned

with his advertisers and patrons. They suddenly deserted him, profits and friends fell away, and he could not go forward with shrinking bank balances and in 1872 he sold his interest in the paper and concluded that journalism was not the best field for his abilities, ideals and temperament. He removed to Buffalo and in 1873 returned to his studies in medicine, entering a medical college in that city whence he graduated in due course. He then began to look about for a favorable locus wherein to practice his profession.

The fair fame of Iowa *ad interim* had become known to the young "Doctor in Medicine." During the forties and the fifties his German countrymen who fled from the oppressive rule of the Hohenzollerns and their minor confreres in arbitrary government had come by the thousands to this Mesopotamia. Their prosperity and happiness on the fertile farms on the rolling prairies and in the beautiful valleys in the western watershed of the Father of Waters and in the thriving cities on its banks were most alluring. All accounts confirmed the judgment of Prince de Joinville, years before, that Iowa was "*une ravissante contrée.*"

In 1876 Dr. Richter decided to emigrate to Iowa. He first settled in Lowden in Cedar County where he continued for two years. He then moved to Mt. Joy, located just north of Davenport in Scott County where he remained for five years. While he pursued his medical practice with diligence his general interest in men and things soon brought his pen again into active use. He had a keen eye for the interesting and picturesque phases of life roundabout him. The intimate contacts he had with his fellows in his professional work afforded him infinite variety. He became acquainted with Henry Matthey, Sr., editor and publisher of *Sternen-Banner* of Davenport (now *Iowa Reform*) and soon began sending him articles dealing either with current problems or describing local happenings. The annual county fair held at Mt. Joy with its usual kaleidoscopic variety afforded him many colorful themes for his facile pen. His articles attracted attention by their point and vividness. He was asked to write for *Der Demokrat*, also of Davenport, the oldest and the most extensively read German paper in central eastern Iowa.



In the latter part of 1879 Dr. Richter saw an attractive newspaper opening in Burlington, Iowa, and closed negotiations for editorial work (if not partial ownership) on the *Iowa Tribune*, a German daily which Theodor Guelich, founder of *Der Demokrat* in 1851, edited for many years. He got under way and moved his family, but the serious illness of Mrs. Richter and other adverse considerations caused him to give up his venture and return to Mt. Joy. Dr. Richter's irrepressible predisposition toward journalism led him into another venture in 1883. He decided to publish a bi-weekly which he entitled *Der Nordwesten*. It was to be devoted to serious, substantial articles, critical and literary in character, but although it ran for a short time his public was not ready.

In 1884 Dr. Richter was offered a position on the editorial staff of *Der Demokrat* which he could not resist. He gave up his medical practice in Mt. Joy, moved to Davenport and for thirty years devoted himself exclusively to editorial work. Both the efficiency and the esteem in which his work was held were signalized in 1888 when he was made editor in chief. From 1892 forward, however, he devoted himself almost entirely to political editorials and public questions.

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Dr. Richter had many general qualifications for a successful editor. He wrote easily, expressing himself concisely, pointedly and forcefully, in English and German alike. His sentences were compact and they "tracked," proceeding swiftly to his conclusion or objectives. He wrote in a clear, neat script that must have been a delight to his typesetters or compositors. He indulged in picturesque and vivid metaphors on occasion. If stirred his sentences were often pungent, and if he discerned crass inconsistency, or if he suspected double-dealing, his sarcasm was scathing and his wit biting. He had an artistic sense which had he decided to use his pen or pencil in pictorial expression would have insured him success as a cartoonist. His daughters recall their frequent use in decorations of birthday cards and Christmas and New Year's greetings for the family. He had poetical ability of no mean order, easily turning his fancies or feelings into telling rhythm or rime for those within

his intimate circle. For many years he wrote a poetical New Year's greeting for the readers of *Der Demokrat*. His familiarity with the classic literature of Greece and Rome and of Germany and of England enhanced the vigor and variety of his editorial exposition. He was one of the founders in 1888 of the Arion Society and its first president—an organization devoted to choral singing, in which he was much interested for years. While not a practical musician, although in his youth he was an adept with the flute, he was familiar with the history and technique of both musical and dramatic art to such an extent that his criticisms of concerts, operas and dramatic performances in the German and English theatres of Davenport were always read with great interest by the readers of *Der Demokrat*.

Mr. Harry Downer, for many years a fellow craftsman on one of the English contemporaries of Davenport, and himself a deliver in the history of Davenport, makes some observations in a letter to me that give us other facets:

\* \* \* the Doctor was a good newspaperman. \* \* \* He had a fund of humor which brightened his columns and an ability in lampooning \* \* \* that made the bug under his microscope squirm. He was an able champion of "personal liberty." \* \* \* He was a prodigious worker. \* \* \* He was a charming companion with just enough of the typical pessimism of the newspaper man to give piquancy to his conversation.

In his relations with the readers of *Der Demokrat* and with the general public Dr. Richter was notably under the control of Kant's Categorical Imperative. While not an *Achtundvierziger* ("Forty-eighter") he had all of their noteworthy moral traits—a blunt, outright, downright outspokenness in the expression of his opinions. He had a conscience which was Puritanical in its exactness and tyrannical in its insistence. If a thing *ought* to be then it *must* be. When he thought an act or policy wrong, or a menace to the general welfare, or a violation of basic human rights, he said so plainly and pointedly. He never dodged between false pretenses or shifty maneuvers; nor used sugar-coated words with a *double entendre*; nor tried to steer his way adroitly between the lines of prudence or profit or "pelf" and principle. No more did he try to coddle or cuddle the public with flattery or honeyed words; and no matter whether the entire public or

the potent majority might be against him or his view of the matter in issue. He gave his fellow burghers the best of yeoman service—when all and sundry of the heedless, thoughtless crowds were saying, or singing, or shouting after their wont, “Yes! Yes!! Yes!!!” he would send forth a thundering “everlasting No!!!” with true Carlylean emphasis. It is refreshing in these days to contemplate the sturdiness of such a character as Dr. Richter when public discussion—if we so describe it—seems to be the co-ordinated parts of a “Punch and Judy Show.” What is asserted to be public opinion seems to be the issue largely of “syndicated” ideas, “canned speeches” formulated or expressed *via* jazz orchestras, megaphones, phonographs, animated by some centralizing, co-ordinating, consolidating “bureau” or “council.”

By this I do not mean to imply that Dr. Richter was a sort of belligerent Teutonic Irishman who thought every one out of step but himself, and who was ever “agin the government.” With respect to the ordinary, prosaic minutia that constitutes the premises for life and industry for the normal man, he was in no dissent and seldom engaged in contentious comment. He was one with his fellows and all lovers of the fine things of nature and art in his admiration of, and desire for, the beautiful in literature and music, in painting and sculpture, and in the furtherance of science and popular education. It was in the field of politics and government wherein ardent advocates of popular reforms invade the sphere of the individual, and under the guise of personal and social hygiene invoke the coercion of the sovereign power that aroused him and impelled his protests and denunciation of the course of things round about him.

In ability, achievement and stern devotion, Dr. Richter was a worthy compeer of his notable predecessors in the editorial control of *Der Demokrat*—Theodor Guelich, 1851-1856, Theodor Olshausen, 1856-1861, Jens Peter Stibolt, 1861-1881. He was much more than a mere annalist, editor or penman. In disposition he was at once a student of men and things, and a statesman seeking to forward human liberty and progress in better social conditions. He was constantly delving into man's history and scrutinizing the conditions and factors controlling the personal and public conduct of his fellows and deducing

life's lessons therefrom. In his editorial work he was a man of intense personal feeling and high public purpose. He cared little for the applause of the heedless populace round about him, be they the loiterers in clubs and literary *quid nuncs*, or the boisterous folk in theatres and the market place; and he cared less for their disapproval.

Dr. Richter was an editor of the old school of journalism before these rushing days of "mass" production, consolidation and concentration of control and syndicated uniformity. While he appreciated the importance of the accounting and sales departments, he was more interested in his editorial section and in his articles on music and drama than in the reports of miscellaneous gossip or mere local happenings. He made no effort to "play up" or placate cliques or interests, persons or sections. He assumed that his readers were concerned with serious things and with serious discussion of matters in public controversy. He took life with a stern seriousness. While he had a keen sense of humor, discerning the ridiculous easily, he seldom indulged in ordinary humor; but he would expose the nonsense of a situation or the absurdities of popular contention by a nipping ironical phrase that made dissentients shrink from his mordant wit.

Dr. Richter's scientific studies in medicine and his practical experiences with human nature in therapeutics had a controlling influence in his political and social philosophy and in his editorial treatment of public questions. They made him more cautious in reaching and in expressing conclusions for he was aware of the multiplicity of conditions and factors affecting events and producing developments. They made him appreciate that physical and biological factors constitute the premises and the driving forces of human life; that "virtue and vices are products like sugar and vitriol"; and that heredity and environment are controlled by general laws which constitute nature at large. Furthermore his studies in medicine had taught him that nature's great medicaments are not found in drugs and sundry nostrums. Health and strength, capacity and character cannot be produced or insured by narcotics or stimulants, or by social clagues or by legislative programs which undertake to impose corrective discipline, or deterrents and thus coerce human nature and effort,

In considerable part his attitude towards many of the latter-day problems in life and politics were predetermined by his youthful recollections of autocracy in the old Prussian regime. The old "Liberals" of Prussia always resented and resisted the dictation of the monarchical system. The basic requirements for law and order call for a minimum of central control but with respect to the vast and various minutiae of common life he saw no reason for governmental direction or coercion. The law of nature in the development of character or strength is the law of use and disuse. Exercise is the highway of progress—self-assertion and self-discipline, not dependence on others, not direction from without or from above. Personal effort, personal accountability and personal responsibility—these are the key words of successful living for man and society.

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The philosophy which guided his thinking and controlled his daily practice—for he was one of those rare ones whose ordinary routine squared with his rationale of life and things—was exhibited in an interesting fashion when I first met him some three years after our correspondence had begun. It was at the close of the first session of the Eleventh Conference of Charities and Corrections in Davenport on the night of November 7, 1909, over which I chanced to preside. The chief speaker of the program had read an extended paper on "Criminal Making." The speaker, a sometime schoolman and then warden of the State Penitentiary at Fort Madison, expressed himself in vigorous and at times dramatic terms. His language was couched in spectacular rhetoric; his assertions were wide ranging and often daring. He denounced the sorry welter of crime which was then astonishing the public—as it continues to do—and he placed the blame for such developments squarely and solely upon "society," and particularly upon "the state" and "the schools"; and demanded more legislation, more education and more "communal effort" in the way of efficient reform. There were no *if's* or *and's* or *but's* in his discourse, and no mental reservations or qualifications. At the close of the meeting Dr. Richter asked me bluntly:

"How does the gentleman expect, or intend, to create a strong, self-reliant, self-respecting citizen? Is the state—or society—

to feed every child with a spoon and to hold each in leading strings throughout childhood and youth? and, if so, will not the state have to continue to hold the adult in leading strings!! What does he mean by character? Can the state by its decrees or statutes produce it, manufacture it at will, order it as from a store? If the state's agents, be they the constable or police or the teachers in our schools, undertake the colossal task of doing everything for the individual, relieving parents of their normal task of rearing their children, will they—the parents—ever be able to guide or assist in the actual formation of their characters? And if the state protects both parents and children against the natural consequences of ignorance, indolence and folly can we ever hope to develop intelligence, disciplined minds and self-directing men and women who will know how to earn their own way in the world and respect others' rights and keep the public peace? Won't we be creating more pauperism and more perversion by our increasing paternalism? I cannot understand his reasoning at all."

As my feelings and opinions concurred with his I gave no controversial rejoinders to his questions or comments. I was entirely interested in my impressions of the man—his alert eyes, their intense expression, the earnestness of his feelings and the rapier-like thrust of his questions. It was clear that a question and an answer put by Goethe clearly expressed his convictions:

*Welche Regierung die beste sei? Diejenige, die uns lehrt, uns selbst zu regieren.*

(What Government is best? That which teaches us to govern ourselves.)

Society, in the intervening years since, has been pursuing a sort of Rake's Progress in paternalism, and the multitudinous evils which confront us in this land of the free at all points of the compass ring are beginning to appall the hitherto heedless and reckless (or witless). Dr. Richter's incisive questions suggest some of the major causes.

Dr. Richter's sturdy individualism and the consistency of his private practice and public professions were displayed most interestingly in his course respecting the education of his children and their religious affiliations.

In his home life—which was both refuge and playground for

him, for he seldom frequented clubs or appeared at social gatherings—he enforced his ideas with a preciseness and rigor which was an interesting blend of Spartan sternness and congenial humanness. One of his daughters writes me of her happy memories of his practice of reading fairy stories to her and her sisters in the evening, partly to engage their interest in wholesome literature and partly to encourage their efforts at mastery of the German language—a form of diversion which he enjoyed equally with his youthful listeners. But when it came to their daily schoolwork he insisted sternly upon the Pestalozzian formula, “the only real help is self help.” He not only would not aid them in their lessons but insisted with a stern exactness upon each doing the specific assigned tasks and taking her share of the direct consequences of their good or ill effort, in this way securing habits of self-effort and self-confidence and thereby strength of character so essential in life’s successes. *Des Menschen Wille, das is sein Glück* (Man’s will—that shapes his fortune), this thought of Schiller’s guided him.

As was common with probably the majority of German refugees from university circles in the four decades from 1830 to 1870, Dr. Richter was not a churchman; and he was not a devotee of any creed and he did not affiliate with any sectarian group. The relations between the Prussian state and the state church of his day alienated rather than attracted him. The audacious criticisms of men and measures of either church or state in *Kneipen* of the *Burschenschaften* in the universities were usually heedless and reckless. The demands of rigorous scientific studies, the ruthless inquiries into causes and conditions producing effects in nature at large as well as in the realm of human pathology, naturally made the *Hochschuler* a critic of the ruthless sort. Dr. Richter left the University of Berlin either antagonistic to the church because of its alliance with the established order, or indifferent and agnostic so far as positive beliefs in the efficacy of creeds were concerned. But he was not of that disagreeable species of latter-day liberal who is intolerant towards those of the older faiths. His creed was that of the gentleman who lives and lets live, according the same consideration to them that he exacts for himself. His own daughters

attended and joined the churches of their choice, as their affiliations or inclinations prompted.

But Dr. Richter was not what many pious critics call with horrific import a "mere moralist"—indifferent, negative and passive in his attitude towards life and its fateful complexes of human want and woe and their amelioration. Even though his philosophical reflections or scientific conclusions might make him dubious as to the efficacy of much of the aggressive philanthropy of his day and generation, he was not contemptuous or inert in matters of social betterment. He took an active interest in the German Free Sunday School in Davenport in aiding its work. Dr. Richter was also an alert and influential member of the Ethical Culture Society, whose members were animated by an earnest philanthropy and zealous in the furtherance of greater human concern for the improvement of the social relations of men in modern times.

We may see the direction of the current by the feather floating in the air or the stream. So little things may give us unequivocal signs of the true inwardness of a man's character. As an editor of a daily newspaper Dr. Richter was in the way of sundry sorts of benefits such as "comps", *douceurs*, favors, passes, perquisites, purchaser's inside preferences, etc., etc. Usually they are offered and received frankly as in the nature of *quid pro quo* in return for advertising, or favorable public mention in news or editorial columns, and usually there is no question, pro or con, as to their propriety. But Dr. Richter would not accept passes or special favors from any public utility operating in or entering Davenport because he did not want to feel hampered by any sort of feeling that he should not freely criticise whenever he saw that which in his judgment called for adverse comment and perhaps drastic action in correction of programs or policies. He denied himself and family many an easy outing by his severe notions about such matters.

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Dr. Richter's career as editor of *Der Demokrat* was notable for his sturdy independence. He was a believer in ordinary political parties and in normal partisan procedure in the practical determinations of politics and government; but he was not



a purblind zealot for so-called party regularity. For sundry reasons he was a Republican in state and national matters, because that party had its inception in the antislavery agitation between 1854 and 1865 and stood for liberties and programs which were the objectives of the contenders for constitutional government in the Fatherland whence he emigrated. But when the paternalistic propaganda under the slogans "Temperance" and "Prohibition" got under headway in the late seventies and culminated in drastic legislation in Iowa in the eighties, Dr. Richter not only promptly protested but he balked at concurrence with the party's program and broke with its leadership.

As in these halcyon days, so in those days, partisan insistence on what was so inconsistently called "temperance" became fanatical and intolerant, public discussion rancorous, and dissentients were denounced in malevolent and often venomous terms. Dr. Richter thus suffered from the slings and arrows of harsh and arbitrary critics and maligners. But he knew that if a man thinks much in this vale of tears he is sure to be lonesome and he was not deterred, though often discouraged. In a striking fashion he effectively illustrated in his own life his theory of the separation of personal conduct and public interference. In his personal habits of life he demonstrated perfectly the old-time tradition—indeed the Biblical conception—of temperance. But he stood staunchly for the contention that he had no right to step across the street or into his neighbor's yard and compel others to observe his routine.

Many facts in our history made Dr. Richter resent with hot indignation the treatment he received. It was the revolt of the German Protestants of his Fatherland who had given the majority of the people of this land of liberty their norms and standards of freedom from clerical and governmental dictation in matters of religion. It was the "Forty-eighters" who resisted the oppressive tyranny of the harsh Hohenzollerns and fled therefrom to this country who had joined the antislavery forces and were major factors in putting Abraham Lincoln into the White House in 1861. If there was anything that they stood for it was liberty for the individual and they had no more respect for the "tyranny of the majority," as de Tocqueville

phrased it, than they had for the arbitrary dictation of the Hapsburgs or the Hohenzollerns. Unless man's conduct interfered grossly with the common peace and obstructed freedom of action, he knew of no principle of liberty or free government which justified governmental restrictions, and any infringement would induce constant increase of arbitrary government that would steadily progress towards hideous governmental espionage of private citizens.

One fact in the current debate of the "irrepressible" question he bitterly resented, namely, the popular assumption and the endlessly repeated assertion that his fellow Germans were alone, or chiefly, the resisters to "temperance" legislation. He knew and the public knew that there is just as much love of home and sobriety and temperance and abstemiousness among the German folk as among the English, or Irish or Scotch or Welsh or the Scandinavians. He knew and the public knew that "Native American" opposition to the slightest suggestion of restriction in the use of alcoholic stimulants has been continuously maintained by English and Scotch in the fastnesses of the Appalachian Mountains since the days of the Whiskey Rebellion in 1792 and if there is any pure blood, "100 per cent" Native American stock among us they may justly claim to be the scions of the dominant ilk. Furthermore he knew and the public knew that representatives of orthodox and evangelical churches of the purest Protestant faith asked and secured legislation which permitted their clergymen to obtain legal permits or licenses to obtain wine for use in communion services in the effective realization of the divine ordinances governing their holy ministrations. Finally, Dr. Richter knew and he knew that the public knew that the resistance of Germans to such drastic sumptuary laws was no more unrighteous than the resistance of our American forefathers to King George's legal enactments, or of the abolitionists and antislavery folk (among whom German "Forty-eighters" were numbered by the thousands) to the Fugitive Slave Law enacted in the Clay Compromise in 1850. Germans are just as conscientious as "ither ilk."

If Dr. Richter's spirit should return to his old-time haunts and walk again 'neath the glimpses of the moon we may wonder

what his reflections and comments might be as he contemplates the variegated results of the last decade of national "prohibition"—the gross disregard of the law in our large cities, the open and insidious perversion of public officials, police and juries, the swamping of our national judiciary with a miserable mass of petty criminal litigation, the overcrowding of our national prisons in consequence, the blunt refusal of great sovereign states—New York, New Jersey, Maryland and Wisconsin—to give authority to their administrative officers to fulfill their "concurrent" duties in the enforcement of the great national statute, the serious disturbance of international relations, especially on the northern border and on our ocean fronts, the horrible increases in crime and licentiousness among old and young alike (if we may believe one tenth part of what the daily press puts before its readers) in both flagrant and insidious practices, and concurrent increases in contempt for all law and order together with a horrible din of debate as to whether the whole program is a great success or an impudent farce—conditions so serious that our nation's President felt constrained to make present day developments the primary concern of his inaugural address, and effective reforms a major objective of his administration.

The dour, stiff-necked Englishman, John Hobbes, told his countrymen three centuries since that "the world goes right after trying every possible way of going wrong." How long must poor mortals flounder and wallow in futilities before they will discern the basic truth in the discrimination of Spinoza between the difficulties in enforcing the penalties in the case of *mala in se* and those attendant upon *mala prohibita*.

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So far as I can discover Dr. Richter did not continue, or display, his antagonism to capitalistic control of industry and employers, which apparently possessed him more or less when he left Germany and during his connection with the *Arbeiter Union* in New York and the *New Jersey Staats-Zeitung* in Paterson. His sharp experiences in Paterson probably chilled his ardor. First he found general conditions here vastly more to his liking. He was not irritated by the arrogance of ranks and aristocratic preferences. Further continued experience probably in-

duced the conclusion that the average capitalist and the average employer of common and skilled labor are just as considerate of their employees as the workers are of their employer's welfare. He probably saw enough of life to convince him that the alleged tyranny of capital is no more oppressive than the tyranny of organized labor. One does see very much of life at large and in its major details without discovering that liberty of action, freedom from coercion by either employers or employees, is the *via sacra* if individual and general social progress and prosperity and peace are to prevail in the land.

Controversies between managers and workers usually cannot be justly judged *en bloc* as has been the general practice—the “conservative” classes lumping all labor disputes together and presuming that petty or perversive reasoning controls the striking workers, and the “friends of labor” incontinently assuming naught but evil intent on the part of the directors of large business enterprises.

Dr. Richter's own experience as a dissentient no doubt indicated to him that those who wish to maintain the status quo are just as honest, sane and publicly minded as those who insist on every one going with their crowd or program of reform. In other words, Dr. Richter throughout his editorial career on *Der Demokrat* dealt with each case in controversy, striving judicially to determine the issues upon the displays of the evidence, and neither condemning nor lauding a class or group in bulk. In short he followed Burke's great prudential injunction not to criticise or adjudge entire peoples adversely. He discussed men and measures on their merits; and this is the base rule of your true editor.

An effective illustration of Dr. Richter's altered attitude towards industrial and social problems is afforded in his editorial expression in *Der Demokrat* upon the Pullman strikers of 1894—perhaps it would be more accurate to say Eugene V. Debs's dramatic intervention therein via the “sympathetic strike” called by the American Railway Union in June. Considerable portions of a long editorial in the issue of June 29 are given:

## AMERICAN RAILWAY UNION BOYCOTTS PULLMAN CO.

Whatever the authorization to strike may be, it is nevertheless true that the public can have no sympathy with the boycott President Debs has ordered, and into which the public has been unreasonably and recklessly drawn. His managers are hotheads and puffed up fellows who in the height of momentary power have become unduly proud, while thousands of free citizens must obey their orders. Like children they are playing with fire unconscious of the devastating flame they might fan.

It is not unlikely that the notices given out from headquarters regarding the results of the strike are exaggerated. They come from people who have already lost their heads and are talking nonsense. Their reports are for the most part strongly exaggerated in order to spread false reports to the public regarding their following. The sensational press willingly aids them in this.

The Grand Mogul (Debs) could not let the opportunity pass of showing his great power. He proclaimed that all workers should support the boycott even if idleness in all trades should result. Previously he ordered 1500 workers in the Chicago Stockyards to strike.

Debs has declared that no violence should be practiced. It should be confined only to laying down the work: the railroads not to be hindered from hiring other workers, etc., etc. We know what those assurances mean. McBride issued those same orders at the beginning of the coal strike. He could not hold his excited mobs in check and murder, arson and other crimes resulted. Debs may experience the same. Scarcely forty-eight hours had passed after his boycott went into effect when violence occurred in the station at Hammond, Indiana.

Federal Judge Caldwell was right when he said to the strikers and strike sympathizers that when they laid down their work their places would be taken by others and those guilty of lawlessness would be punished severely.

The wantonly conceived boycott of Mr. Debs, moreover, shows signs of speedy collapse so plainly that his purpose of domination will fail.

Several significant facts stand out sharply in that editorial utterance:

First, there was no namby-pamby sentimentalism or shilly-shally about the "rights of organized labor" as against the "greed of capitalism" or the sinister rule of "big interests." It was a clear-cut, downright denunciation of a horrible attack upon the public peace, upon the rights of peaceful laborers to continue in their daily work in earning their livelihood. Second, Dr. Richter expressed no opinion upon the merits of the original strike at Pullman. Third, he saw clearly that a sympathetic

strike of the sort Debs was engineering was a colossal menace to the entire country. Fourth, he saw clearly that the pious declaration of Debs that no violence was to be sanctioned was but little else than a cynical incitement to lawlessness; and his prediction that greater violence would ensue was confirmed in the event. Fifth, his statement that Debs's "wantonly conceived boycott" was in the way of speedy collapse while not exactly verified, as assumed, it nevertheless almost immediately started forces of just reaction which brought the National Government into action and President Cleveland gave the country a magnificent demonstration of what law and order means under our National Constitution.

On July 8 in consequence of the rioting in Chicago and the inability of the federal judge, Peter Grosscup, to secure compliance with his injunction, President Cleveland issued his celebrated proclamation against the lawless bands and his command to General Miles to intervene with the national troops. Commenting editorially on the President's intervention Dr. Richter on July 10 pointedly observed:

The warning of the President seems already to have been obeyed for after yesterday's dispatch we see that the backbone of the strike is broken.

If the authorities from Chicago, Cook County and Illinois as well as Indiana, had done their duty at the beginning, then such frightful violences could not have happened. No people would have been killed, millions of dollars worth of valuable property would not have been seized and the industry and trade of the entire country would not have been crippled. Thousands of erring people would not have found themselves in the unpleasant situation of being punished as lawbreakers.

The same people, if they will admit their own blindness, may have the doubtful consolation of putting part of the responsibility of the negligence and cowardice on their chosen leaders.

Again it will be observed that Dr. Richter sees with no blurred vision, nor does he mince matters in comment. The so-called "friends of labor" had committed a colossal blunder and had become sheer lawbreakers of the worst sort. Again there was no flimsy discussion of the relative rights of the national or of the state governments, and no shadow of questioning of the imperative duty of the President to enforce the national laws

and protect the national dominion from crass anarchy. Finally, no one can discern any sly or subtle suggestion that because the governor of Illinois was a native of Germany that he thereby was either right or entitled to any special consideration—he and his entire proceedings were condemned as beyond tolerance if we are to have law and order and peace within the Republic.

When the "populistic" agitation began to disturb party lines in the North Central and Western States in the late eighties and the early nineties, and under the leadership of William Jennings Bryan, then of Nebraska, began to control counsels in the Democratic party, Dr. Richter regarded its leadership with critical eyes. The adoption of Bryan's entire program of "free silver" at the ratio of 16 to 1 by the national Democratic Convention at Chicago in 1896, together with his attack on the national Supreme Court and sundry other socialistic dogmas and nostrums, forced Dr. Richter at once to break with the "party of the people." In the ensuing exciting campaign he fought Bryan with hammer and tongs and the prosperous Germans of eastern central Iowa and western Illinois followed his lead in solid phalanxes.

Following 1896 *Der Demokrat* for sixteen years generally supported the Republican party and its policies. When, however, violent dissensions began to split the party's ranks in the middle and latter years of President Taft's administration Dr. Richter began again to watch the currents and waves of popular discussion with a dubious eye. The erratic and tumultuous course of ex-President Roosevelt in 1912 did not enlist his enthusiasm or approval. The notorious Columbus speech of the Rough Rider on February 21, 1912, *Der Demokrat* treated with cynical coolness. When the ex-President "threw his hat into the ring" (February 26) in his announcement of his candidacy for the Republican nomination at Chicago in June *Der Democrat* disclosed its attitude by the headline over the speech, "Roosevelt Throws Off the Mask"; and in an editorial expression the next day Dr. Richter bluntly discusses the situation:

A hot battle will now be fought between Roosevelt and Taft. Roosevelt must now fight in the open field; he may be a poacher no longer.

Roosevelt naturally runs as a Republican although he holds many populist-progressive doctrines. He will be the candidate of the so-called Progressive Republicans although on important questions, such as the tariff, he is a real Standpatter, and Mr. Taft is a stormy Progressive. In his seven years of the presidency, Mr. Roosevelt has not uttered one word in favor of tariff revision which our people are interested in. And what he says about trusts need bring no sorrow to the trust magnates for every trust may be maintained; they are good and useful. Roosevelt's new hobby horse is the "recall," the recall of officers, including judges. All judicial decisions which do not meet with the approval of a portion of the people he will have corrected and revised. \* \* \*

But it is not to be guaranteed that the condition will be bettered through the referendum or a vote of the people (*Urabstimmung*). When nine justices, five judges so, and four otherwise, then it is truly deplorable, but when such a decision is referred to the people, then as we have heretofore experienced, only a proportionate few voters will vote their own political judgment, or their prejudices, and nothing will be accomplished.

Roosevelt is a man of high-toned words and he woos the people with this gift of his. Of real deeds, he has in his long term as president not much to show. In this respect Taft has the preference. \* \* \*

That editorial impells many comments. There is an undertone of cynicism in it which illustrates Mr. Downer's observation effectively. Mr. Roosevelt was a veritable *Fernando Furioso* when proclaiming the rights of the people, but he spoke softly and held his "big stick" behind him when dealing with tariffs and trusts. He was far from being a Grover Cleveland. Our distinguished Chief Justice will have a medley of feelings should he learn that he was "a stormy Progressive." Dr. Richter was the old fashioned "liberal" in his insistence upon substantial tariff reforms—a subject that both Democrats and Republicans have shied from systematically more and more in the intervening years.

As he reflected upon the shifts and turns of popular opinion, or rather of the vagrant and variable popular prejudices which anon suddenly take form in gusts and flurries, now and then in hurricanes of violent fanatical feeling and partisan propaganda, driving the voters in a sort of bovine stampede, and which he had witnessed from time to time from the seventies to the twenties, Dr. Richter must have thought in the lines of Schiller



*Die wankelmüth 'ge Menge,  
Die jeder Wind hëruntreibt! Wehe dem,  
Der auf dies Rohr sich lehnet!—Mary Stuart.*

(The fickle multitude, which veers with every wind! Woe to him who leans on such a reed!)

*Die Mehrheit?  
Was ist die Mehrheit? Mehrheit ist der Unsinn;  
Verstand ist stets bei wen'gen nur gewesen.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Man soll die Stimmen wägen, und nicht zählen;  
Der Staat muss untergehn, früh oder spät,  
Wo Mehrheit siegt und Unverstand entscheidet.—Demetrius.*

(Majority? What does that mean? Sense has ever been centered in the few. \* \* \* Votes should be weighed not counted. That state must sooner or later go to wreck where numbers sway and ignorance decides.)

He viewed the uproar of the preliminaries of the Chicago convention of 1912 with grave concern and at the conclusion of that stormy conclave he declared, June 23: "A new party has long been a need of the country. The foremost citizens of the country have longed for it and would have gladly worked for it. But—in a Roosevelt party in view of Roosevelt's development we can have no confidence and cannot enthuse for same." As the campaign progressed and he saw that the Progressives and the Stand-patters were simply effectively committing political suicide, *Der Demokrat* frankly declared that in view of the situation it preferred the election of Mr. Wilson and so advised its readers.

The ensuing months did not insure him peace of mind. The course of President Wilson did not meet with his favor. In time a medley of reasons doubtless controlled his feelings. Chief among them was the erratic and unpredictable course of his secretary of state, William Jennings Bryan. His Mexican policy perplexed him—it seemed to be a series of stops and starts, neither flesh, fish nor fowl. When the war in Europe broke out, like many of his fellow Germans, he saw, or thought that he saw, a pro-British inclination in his general drifts of policy rather than a clear-cut program of neutrality. He voted for Mr. Hughes in 1916 and was not happy at the outcome. When we declared war in 1917 the skies became dismal with dark clouds, as we shall see.

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*Ein Gelehrter hat keine langeweile.*

The keen observation of the poet, Jean Paul Richter, just quoted—a scholar does not suffer from ennui, or, if you please, has no sense of weariness—is a very apt characterization of the editor of *Der Demokrat* throughout his entire stewardship. To the ordinary poor mortal anxiously seeking diversion, or surcease of boredom, Dr. Richter led a very prosaic life. He was not an habitue of club rooms. He was not an expert at billiards; and he was not addicted to cards, dancing, or golf. In fact he had no dissipations and none of the popular diversions.

His circuit of activity was to the hurrying man on the street a dull round of daily duties done without variation and no fillip to stimulate zest in life. It began with his home and comprehended his office, and, anon, included the City Library in the basement of which were to be found in stacks the files of *Der Demokrat* and most of the other papers previously published in Davenport. But the quiet gentleman, garbed usually in solemn black, who pursued that daily circuit had no dull hours.

His immediate editorial task might absorb his mind, but if such was not the case he was not aimlessly twirling his thumbs or whiling away the time following floating fancies here and there. His day's program was always full—as soon as the regular day's task was achieved, and no extraordinary communal affairs attracted or commandeered his abilities and time, he, more likely than not, was delving in his library at home or in the stack room at the City Library gathering data upon subjects engaging his scholarly interest. Many of his daughters' recollections of their father cluster about his bringing home the big unwieldy volumes of *Der Demokrat* and his going over them carefully searching for items about the history of the city. He was a light sleeper and he generally worked into the small hours of the next morning.

His efforts in such researches were not of the "off-and-on" sort, spasmodic, sporadic and erratic. They were definite, systematic and pursued with a religious persistence and with specific objectives. His findings were carefully incorporated in notes and extracts and consecutively filed in folios for use in his daily editorial work, for articles he prepared for historical occasions

or magazines, and for the *Magnum Opus* he fondly hoped sometime to find time to write. It was his collections of notes that enabled him to answer so promptly and so completely my many letters to him asking for specific data about a subject not familiar to scholars even—concerning which more later.

Dr. Richter's literary work outside of his daily contributions to the editorial and literary columns of *Der Demokrat* was not extensive, although his capacity for such work was marked had he so determined. In 1901 he published a scholarly article in the pages of *Deutsche-Amerikanische Geschichtsblaetter der Deutsch-Amerikanischen Historischen Gesellschaft von Illinois* (pp. 35-47) under the caption, "*Primitive Rechtspflege im Westen*" in which he discusses and displays the *Volksjustiz*, *Recht des Individuums* and *Naturjustiz* as they took form in "Squatter Rights," "Claim-Jumpers" and "Claim Clubs" in the formative days of Iowa in the forties and fifties. He clearly sensed the social significance of those interesting "extra-legal" institutions of our arrogant and lawless pioneers. In the same publication in January, 1911, (pp. 56-57) he published a brief biographical sketch of his fellow-townsmen, entitled "Emil Geisler—Davenport."

In 1920 he contributed to the December issue of the *Palimpsest* at Iowa City an interesting biographical sketch or Appreciation of Clint Parkhurst, a man of brilliant parts who achieved local and some state fame as a poet, a sometime resident of LeClaire (as was also Col. W. F. Cody, "Buffalo Bill"). It is a sympathetic and vivacious narrative. One sentence, "In 1896 in his temporary Tusculum, the Soldier's Home of Virginia, he [Parkhurst] wrote a historical romance concerning the Black Hawk War entitled 'A Military Belle,'" indicates familiarity with the history and literature of Latium.

Aside from his *Geschichte von Davenport* and his *True History of Scott County*, concerning which more later, the only other considerable scholarly effort of Dr. Richter was his *Die Davenport Turner Gemeinde: Gedenkschrift in Ihrem Goldenen Jubiläum, 3 August, 1902*—a substantial brochure of 111 pages. The subject was one that engaged his interest intimately for many reasons other than the fact that he was for many years a mem-

ber. Many, perhaps most, of the finest memories of the liberty-loving Germans cluster about and in the history of the *Turngemeinde* or *Vereine* of the Fatherland and of this country. This assertion is certainly true if we include the *Burschenschaften* of the students of the universities as part and parcel of the Turner movement. Their historic origin during the *Sturm und Drang* days of the Napoleonic oppression in the Gymnastic School of Frederick Ludwig Jahn, who suffered such martyrdom in the cause of human freedom in his Fatherland, made their history, their organization and work, an inspiring tradition. They consolidated grand objectives in a striking fashion. They realized the noted injunction of the shrewd satirist of Rome, Juvenal, *mens sana in corpore sano*, and they achieved the maximum of patriotism and the maximum of prudence at the same time. They may be justly accredited with organizing the victory of Leipsic. In this country they stood steadfastly for "*Freiheit, Bildung, und Wohlstand für Alle*" (Freedom, Culture, and Prosperity for all), to quote Mrs. Christian Mueller, daughter of one of Davenport's notable Holsteiners, Hans Reimer Claussen, in one of the speeches delivered in their Jubilee at Davenport. Dr. Richter recounts with just pride the great influence which the *Turngemeinde* had in resisting the onslaughts of Know-Nothingism and in promoting the antislavery movements and in the preservation of the Union on the outbreak of the Civil War. The work of the Turners of Davenport was typical of the Turners throughout the North—a work which our historians have but partially appreciated.

(Concluded in July Annals)

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