

In Memoriam.

Ralph Chandler Harrison.

**ASSOCIATE JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF
CALIFORNIA, 1899-1903.**

**PRESIDING JUSTICE OF THE DISTRICT COURT OF APPEAL OF THE
STATE OF CALIFORNIA, IN AND FOR THE FIRST
APPELLATE DISTRICT, 1905, 1906.**

At the meeting of the Supreme Court of the state of California, held in San Francisco, on Tuesday, September 3, 1918, Dr. Edward Robeson Taylor, on behalf of the memorial committee of the San Francisco Bar Association, presented and read the following memorial of the life and services of Ralph Chandler Harrison, former Associate Justice of that court, and moved that the same be spread upon the minutes of the court. The memorial had been prepared by a committee of members of the Bar of the state of California, consisting of Edward Robeson Taylor, Dean of Hastings College of Law, F. M. Angellotti, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of California, and Frank P. Deering, a member of the San Francisco Bar.

Memorial

OF THE

LIFE AND SERVICES

OF THE

Honorable Ralph Chandler Harrison,

**FORMER ASSOCIATE JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE
OF CALIFORNIA, ALSO FORMER PRESIDING JUSTICE OF THE
DISTRICT COURT OF APPEAL OF THE STATE OF
CALIFORNIA, IN AND FOR THE FIRST
APPELLATE DISTRICT.**

Ralph Chandler Harrison. "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?" So said King David to his servants, and so might one in authority have said on the eighteenth day of July of the current year of Judge Harrison; for he was a commanding man in every position to which he was called. In intellectuality his eyes fell not before the level of any whom he confronted, while in all the essentials that go to make up a man in rounded completeness, there was nothing to abate. Of such a man a brief account at least deserves to be spread upon the record of the court he honored. The bare facts of his life are authentically recited in a very admirable article on him published in the issue of "The Recorder" of July 20th last, and from that article we extract as follows: "Ralph Chandler Harrison was born at Cornwall Bridge, Connecticut, on the twenty-second day of October, 1833. He was educated at Wesleyan University, taking his bachelor's degree from that institution in 1853. In the same year he became a teacher of mathematics in Armenia Seminary, New York, and in 1854-56 he taught ancient languages and rhetorics in the same institution. He took his master's degree at Wesleyan in 1856. In 1857 he was a member of the Connecticut legislature and then entered Albany Law School, graduating from that institution in 1859

with the degree of LL.B., and the same year was admitted to practice in the Supreme Court of New York. It was during his attendance at Albany Law School that Judge Harrison met General David D. Colton, who had been sheriff of Siskiyou County, California, and who was a classmate at the law school. Colton suggested to his friend that they return to California and establish themselves in the practice of the law at Yreka, so they journeyed westward, arriving in San Francisco in 1859. Here they remained, establishing law offices under the name of Colton and Harrison, and there began the career at the bar that has made Judge Harrison one of the best known lawyers in the state. After General Colton retired from the practice of the law, Judge Harrison practiced alone for several years, but in 1867 he associated himself with John R. Jarboe, an association that continued until his election to the Supreme Court in 1890. During the last five years of his partnership with Mr. Jarboe, the late William S. Goodfellow was a member of the firm, which was thereafter known as Jarboe, Harrison, and Goodfellow. Their practice was large and important and they appeared as counsel in much of the important litigation of the time. In 1880 Judge Harrison was a member of the Board of Freeholders to frame a charter for the city and county of San Francisco, and in 1886 he served as president of another similar board. In 1890 he was elected as a Republican to the Supreme Court for the twelve-year term which expired in 1903. In 1904 Judge Harrison was appointed a member of the Supreme Court Commission and in 1905, upon the creation of the District Courts of Appeal, he was appointed Presiding Justice of the Court of Appeal for the First District, organizing that court. Since the expiration of his term in 1906, Judge Harrison had been associated in the practice of his profession with his son, Richard C. Harrison. In 1884, he became a trustee of the San Francisco Law Library. In 1886 he was appointed a life director of Hastings College of the Law, and in 1887 was appointed a trustee of the San Francisco Public Library, a position that he held at the time of his death. He had been since 1874 an honorary member of the California Academy of Sciences, and had been a vice-president of the Geographical Society of the Pacific since 1892."

Judge Harrison was one of the trustees of the San Francisco Public Library for thirty-one years, during the whole

of which time he was a member of its book committee and for many years its chairman. No place could have been better fitted to his knowledge and talents, and those he gave unstintedly to the duties of his office. He had himself a library of the choicest kind to which he was greatly attached; and when the great fire destroyed it and his house as well, he looked upon their destruction like a Roman of old, with no lamentation that betrayed the slightest weakness.

At the time of his death he was the senior member of the noted Bohemian Club of this city, and of this relation Mr. Frank P. Deering, an ex-president of the club and a member of this Memorial Committee, writes as follows: "Judge Harrison at the time of his death was the senior member of the Bohemian Club. He was elected May 7, 1872, and always took a very great interest in all club activities. Such was the interest which he displayed that he was made an honorary life member and was such at the time of his death. He enjoyed to an unusual degree universal respect and affection of the members of the club and four years ago, at the Christmas high jinks, during the presidency of Charles K. Field, Judge Harrison, who had been a member of the club for a greater number of years than any other man then living, welcomed the most newly elected member in a graceful ceremonial, which illustrated the pleasant relations existing in Bohemia between the old and young members, and furnished an opportunity to show toward Judge Harrison the esteem in which he was held. Dignity, courtesy, and geniality characterized Judge Harrison in all walks of life, and these qualities were especially noticeable in his intercourse with those whom he met in Bohemia and were the basis of regard entertained for him."

As a judge, Harrison was thoroughly well qualified, innately and learnedly. His sense of justice was acute, and his education wide and deep. In addition, his reading was various, histories and the like having the preference. His mind once decisively made up, he was firm as a rock. His written opinions have a quality which is invaluable, that of crystalline clearness. There was no thinness, no sloppiness, no ambiguity or obscurities. He never shirked an issue, but fronted it squarely. As a general thing he stated the facts of the case himself, not leaving that to the reporter. Some of his opinions are landmarks and all

are masterly. His dignity of deportment as a judge was unbending, and never under any circumstances trivial. He looked upon the law with a scientific eye, and had no sympathy with the popular demand, sometimes exhibiting itself offensively, to go outside of the law for means and instrumentalities, but held it a sacred duty to use only the means which the law had provided as the instrumentalities whereby justice was to be achieved. He hewed close to the line, and deemed the legislature and not the courts the one to change the rule. He was courageous, and we do not believe he would have deviated from what he had determined as judicially right under any kind of menace. Still, he was not a lawyer and nothing else; to be such is really to be a dry-as-dust of a man. He kept himself abreast of his times and was, hence, a most valuable citizen, as is demonstrated by his many activities.

Judge Harrison had the singular distinction of being a charter member of the Bar Association of San Francisco. From the time of its birth up to the time of his own death he took a lively interest in all of its affairs, having filled many of its offices. He was a lawyer from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, and every instrumentality which tended to the betterment of his profession (and the Bar Association he deemed to be such a one) he warmly favored and always advocated. As a lawyer he was thorough and exact. He never left his case until he had exhausted it, nor until he could make to the court the clearest explication of it. In fact, his exceeding painstakingness was one of the most distinguishing marks of his character. With such endowments and such a character it is no wonder that he acquired the confidence of men, and became the possessor of a large practice. In fact, the firm with which he was associated, that of Jarboe and Harrison, was one of the best known in the state.

Judge Harrison was twice married, in 1865 to Miss Juliet L. Waite, who died in 1890, by whom he had three sons, two of whom survive, Richard C. Harrison, his partner at the time of his death, and Robert W. Harrison, at present a deputy attorney-general. His second marriage was to Miss Ella Spencer Reid, who survives him. Judge Harrison grew up with a bar which was exceptionally high, and to which he contributed much of its excellence. He was a man that anyone on seeing would take as distinguished, as indeed he was. His

character was of the highest and his honesty unquestionable. This was demonstrated by the fact that he was treasurer for many years, both of the Bar Association and of the San Francisco Law Library. The latter office he resigned but a short time before his death, having filled it for thirty years. He was exceedingly companionable and with such a fine sense of humor that no really good thing was ever lost on him. Besides, his knowledge was so great that he was a welcome guest at any table. Yet he never aired his knowledge and never made a show of it. He was as free of conceitedness as a man could well be, and in every situation was modest. Your committee would steer clear, as all of us should, of the rocks of the superlative, and yet it is difficult to do so in dealing with such a character as that of Judge Harrison; he seemed to be in every sphere of life what every man should be. He looked at things with a clear eye, and was always courageous, steadfast, and calm. Like Horatio, as Hamlet characterized him, he was

*"A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
Hast ta'en with equal thanks."*

He went on to his next duty, no matter what had happened, without complaining or lament. As he was a brilliant one among the brilliants of the past, so he remained until death laid its fatal finger upon him. In him he had a noble victim; and we who were honored by his friendship should not be bowed down by his death, but rather rejoice in having possessed his inestimable life.

At the conclusion of the presentation of the foregoing memorial, Chief Justice Angellotti expressed the gratitude of the court to Dr. Taylor and Mr. Deering for their action in preparing the memorial, and the concurrence of the individual members of the court in the expressions therein contained, and ordered that the memorial be received and spread upon the minutes of the court and published in the next volume of the California Reports.