

DEATH OF WILLIAM SCHLEY, ESQ.

Meeting of Members of the Bar--Resolutions, Speeches, &c.

[Reported for the Baltimore Sun.]

The community will learn with regret that William Schley, Esq., one of the shining lights of the Baltimore bar, died about 6 1/2 o'clock yesterday morning at the Marine Hospital, of confluent small-pox, which he contracted on the cars while traveling to the city some two weeks ago. Mr. Schley, it is understood, had never been vaccinated, and as soon as the disease made its appearance he was, with his own acquiescence, removed to the hospital. His friends and relatives, however, notwithstanding the disease with which he suffered, were assiduous in their attention, while the best medical talent of the city was invoked in his aid. One of his daughters, Mrs. Wm. Woodville, accompanied him to the hospital, but as the disease began to develop she was prevented by the physicians from entering the sick chamber, though she remained in the hospital until her father died.

William Schley was born in Frederick city, Maryland, October 31, 1799, and was, therefore, at the time of his death, in his 73d year. The Schleys were among the earliest settlers of the county of Frederick, having arrived there in 1735, with a colony of Calvinists and Huguenots, from France, Switzerland and Germany. The first house in Frederick was built by Thomas Schley, grandfather of William, in 1746. William Schley graduated at Nassau Hall, (College of New Jersey,) in 1821, with first honor in every department of study. He was admitted to the bar in 1824, and practiced with success in Frederick till 1837, when he removed to Baltimore and rapidly rose to distinction. In 1834 Mr. Schley married a daughter of Gen. Sam. Ringgold, of Conococheague Manor, Washington co., and sister of Major Samuel Ringgold, who was killed in the Mexican war, at Palo Alto. This lady died in 1870. In 1836 Mr. Schley was elected to the Senate of Maryland, where, as chairman of the committee on the constitution, he took a leading part in the debates of the interesting reform agitation of that time, which involved him in a personal dispute with William Cost Johnson, to whom Mr. Schley sent a challenge. The parties met at Alexandria, Va., February 13, 1837, and exchanged one shot, in which each was wounded. Mr. Schley was accompanied to the field by Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer, of Maryland, and Gov. Pickens, of South Carolina. Mr. Johnson's seconds were Gen. Henry A. Wise, of Virginia, and Gen. Campbell, of South Carolina. The parties were reconciled on the ground and remained firm friends after. The affair received the name at the time of the "patter duel," from the extreme punctilio which was observed.

Mr. Schley was in politics a whig. He was defeated by one vote in the caucus nomination for the United States Senate in 1838. He took an active part in the political campaigns of 1836, when Mr. Fillmore was a candidate, and in 1864, when Gen. McClellan was a candidate. Mr. Schley was on terms of friendly and confidential intercourse with Mr. Clay, Mr. Webster, Mr. Crittenden, Gen. Scott, Chief Justice Taney, and many others of the more distinguished men of the last half century. His life and energies were given with earnestness to the profession of the law, in which he continued actively engaged up to his last sickness. His professional reputation, which was of the very highest character within his State, extended beyond those limits, and no man was more frequently consulted by clients from abroad or from other States. In personal and social intercourse he was distinguished by that peculiar courtesy and gracefulness of manner which is recognized by the appellation "of the old school."

Yesterday morning Mr. Weaver, undertaker, on Fayette street, went to the hospital and had the body prepared for burial, and the interment took place at Greenmount Cemetery yesterday afternoon, the body being consigned to its last resting place in the presence of members of the family of the deceased.

All of the courts in the city adjourned yesterday out of respect to the memory of Mr. Schley, and a large meeting of the members of the bar was held at 1 o'clock, P. M. The meeting was called by order by S. Teackle Wallis, Esq., upon whose motion Hon. Judge Giles took the chair, and Bernard Carter, Esq., was selected as secretary.

Upon motion a committee, consisting of Wm. H. Collins, George M. Gill, James M. Buchanan, St. Geo. W. Teackle, P. W. Brune, J. N. Steole, W. H. Norris, S. T. Wallis, Hon. R. Gilmore and Wm. A. Fisher, were appointed to draft appropriate resolutions in respect to the memory of the deceased. The committee, through their chairman, Mr. Collins, reported a preamble and resolutions setting forth that the news of Mr. Schley's death had been received under circumstances so distressing as to excite the deepest sensibility; declaring that during his professional career of half a century he had justly entitled himself by his eminent ability, learning and attainments to rank among the leaders of the profession in the law; and expressing deep regret at his death, and sympathy with his family, and concluding with the request that the proceedings of the meeting be recorded in the minutes of the several courts of the city.

Mr. Wallis read the resolutions, after which W. H. Collins, Esq., who had known Mr. Schley for more than fifty years, had known him when he was a boy at college, spoke of the many noble virtues of the deceased, of his eminent legal qualifications and high personal character. The key to Mr. Schley's troubles and embarrassments in later life, he said, was to be found in the first step, taken under a generous but mistaken impulse, which led him, when a young man in the beginning of his professional career, to assume heavy pecuniary obligations for the purpose of saving the princely estate of his father-in-law, Mr. Ringgold.

In conclusion, Mr. Collins eulogized in glowing terms the devotion of the daughter of Mr. Schley, who, true to the instincts of her sex, had watched over him until the end. This community, he said, had witnessed two expressions of filial devotion not exceeded by any the world had recorded, that of the daughter of Mr. Schley and that of a daughter for a mother, whose name he was not there to breathe. While the deceased had faults which his friends regretted, he had also many noble qualities. He was brave, kind and courteous, and in his career, he said, the student could see what labor can do, for he was one of the most laborious men he had ever known.

James M. Buchanan, Esq., warmly eulogized the character of the deceased, and said that if Mr. Schley had given more time to public and political questions it would have been more to his advantage. A warmer heart, he said, never animated human breast. Mr. Schley was especially attached to the daughter who had ministered to him so faithfully in his last sickness; she had been to him a ministering angel indeed.

S. T. Wallis, Esq., said that the resolutions which had been offered expressed his own sentiments in reference to their departed brother, whose career and life had just closed under circumstances so distressing, better than he could express them orally. He had not himself been personally intimate with the deceased; he had only come to the bar about the time that Mr. Schley removed to the city from Frederick, in the zenith of his professional fame and the height of his great popularity. He had known him at first only as a young man might know one so much older, but he had shared his genial and lavish hospitality, and it ill became any one who had broken bread at that hospitable board, not to have some crumbs of kindly remembrance for his sad death-feast. It would be difficult, Mr. Wallis said, to exaggerate the brilliancy and promise of Mr. Schley's professional position at one time, and it was indescribably mournful to think of the clouds which had cast their shadow over his career and life until both had closed in the loathsome ward of a pest-house. Mr. Wallis spoke of Mr. Schley as he knew him--as the genial and courteous gentleman, and in every walk of the profession a lawyer of singular ability and accomplishments. If the deceased had his frailties--and who has not? it is pleasant to know from the lips of those who knew him best that he was full of those high qualities which make his friends forget them. Who shall dare refuse the charity of man to a brother who is now standing, we trust, in the smile of the mercy of God?

Wm. P. Preston, Esq., touchingly referred to the sad death of Mr. Schley, of whom he felt it an honor to himself to say "he was my dear friend." In looking around this meeting he saw many aged brethren, like himself contemporaneous with the deceased, to whom this chilling fact naturally awakened the question, who shall depart next? Mr. Preston said that if there was anything in Mr. Schley's character deserving the name of weakness, it was entirely unknown to him; but that if the qualities of wisdom, generosity, courage and charity constitute true manhood, then the deceased was in every sense of the word a man. Mr. Preston did not think he had left behind him any one capable of filling his place, and that his departure will be regarded as a disappearance from the firmament of jurisprudence of a bright and leading star. In conclusion, Mr. Preston also referred to the self-sacrificing and tender devotion of Mr. Schley's affectionate daughter, who, he said, in the midst of the danger and distress and gloom attendant upon a fearful pestilence, had attended with more than Roman fidelity her dying father.

Judge Giles said: Before taking a vote upon the resolutions submitted, I would express the deep sorrow I felt on learning this morning of Mr. Schley's death. Thirty-seven years since, at Annapolis, I made his acquaintance. He was then a Senator of Maryland from the county of Frederick. During the winter of 1837 he resigned and moved to this city. During the many years since that time he has been in full practice as a leading member of our bar; and no more patient, hardworking and willing member could be found in the profession. He was an accomplished scholar, an able advocate and a learned jurist. In very long service on the bench of the District and Circuit Courts of the United States he has tried very many cases before me, and I always felt I was a learner at his feet. He was courteous and kind to all, and I shall long miss him as a friend whom I shall see here no more. The last few years of his life had been of much sorrow--death had broken up his family circle and taken from him those who once adorned it. But he bore a blow, after blow, with an uncomplaining spirit and toiled on.

His passage from the strife and active scene of this life to the solitude and quiet of the grave has been under circumstances the most painful; but even over the dark cloud there breaks a ray of glory from a daughter's love. But a few days since I stood with him at this bar to pay our last tribute to the patriarch of our profession. Little did I dream that his name would be next called from the muster of death. But he has bowed to that decree from which there is no appeal, and has gone on that journey from which there is no return. Let his surviving brethren

take the lesson to heart; and while discharging faithfully every duty of this life, let them live prepared to meet the summons to quit it whenever it shall come.

The resolutions were then adopted and the meeting adjourned.