

James M. Ambler.
Memorial Services.

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JUDGE JAMES MURRAY AMBLER died at his home in Baltimore, on April 8th, 1934. For fifty-three years he had been a member of this bar and for twelve of those years he was one of the judges of the Supreme Bench of Baltimore. His professional career was as honorable as it was long, and it is meet and proper that both bench and bar should accord to his passing their formal recognition and pay to his memory their tribute of appreciation and respect. Your Honors have extended to us and we have gratefully accepted, the privilege of presenting at this meeting called in his honor, this brief memorial minute of Judge Ambler's life, his qualities and his services.

Like not a few Maryland lawyers, Judge Ambler was of Virginia birth. His father, the Reverend John Ambler, belonged to an old and well-known Virginia family, and through his mother, -Ann Maria Mason, - Judge Ambler was descended from George Mason, of Gunston, who loomed large in the political and social life of Virginia in Colonial and Revolutionary times.

Judge Ambler was born in Winchester, Virginia, on August 21st, 1854, but his father then and for many years after was Rector of the Episcopal Church at Markham in Fauquier County, and there at "Morven" the Ambler home place, young Ambler spent his boyhood days. He attended William and Mary College, followed by two years at the University of Virginia. After several years engaged in teaching, and in the study of law, he came to Baltimore and was admitted to the Maryland bar in 1881, entering the office of Barton and Wilmer. He rapidly gained the complete confidence of his associates, although not until some years later did he become a member of the firm, when it was

enlarged under the name of Barton, Wilmer, Ambler and Stewart. In 1910 Governor Crothers appointed him Chairman of the Public Service Commission. While always a Democrat, Judge Ambler had never previously held office and he had taken no part in politics, so his appointment was due solely to his merits and his manifest fitness. He served most acceptably in that office until 1912, when he was appointed to a vacancy then occurring on the Supreme Bench, and at the election of 1913 he was chosen for the full term. He declined to accept a legislative extension of the age limit, and on his reaching seventy in 1924 he retired from the bench and resumed practice, as head of the firm of Barton, Wilmer, Ambler and Barton. For some years after his return to the bar, he was in active practice, and he continued a member of the firm until his death.

Judge Ambler was a thoroughly sound lawyer and a close and constant student of the law. Few were better qualified to solve a knotty legal problem, and when Judge Ambler gave his consideration to such a question, it could be safely assumed that no point of view would be overlooked. These qualities which made him while at the bar an especially safe and able counselor, stood him in even better stead on the bench, and there he uniformly gave most acceptable service. He was so anxious to do at all times the fullest justice, whether it be to client or to litigant, that he would not infrequently be characterized as "leaning over backwards",- always to his own discomfort, he insisting that any deviation from the vertical was equally a fault regardless of the direction of that deviation.

Judge Ambler was conservative by both instinct and training, but he did not hesitate to adopt the pioneer role in his decisions

where it seemed necessary, and not a few of the opinions of the Court of Appeals affirming his rulings, relate to legal questions for the first time coming before that Court for review.

By nature he was reserved and retiring, but with his intimates this shyness disappeared and he was full of fun and humor.

Judge Ambler married in early life the daughter of Bishop Alfred M. Randolph of Virginia, who to his lasting sorrow predeceased him by many years. He was not only by heredity, but by conviction a devout churchman, and he served many years as a vestryman of Emanuel Church. His life was centred on his home. Outside of his profession his chief interest was in his family, consisting of two daughters and two grandsons, all of whom survive him. One of his brothers, still living, has long held a most distinguished position at the bar of West Virginia.

Judge Ambler was in character, training, learning and temperament all that a wise counselor and a good judge ought to be. He leaves an enviable and unblemished reputation at the bar, and on the bench he upheld in every respect and at all times the high standard which the people of Maryland have uniformly been privileged to count upon as a matter of course in their judiciary. His career carries on a tradition of which the Baltimore bar has long been justly proud and his name well deserves to be added to the honored roll preserved among the records of this Bench, of those of our profession in this City who have made that tradition what it is.

Wm. H. ...
Eugene ...
Randolph ...
A. Morris Byson *Redwood ...*

