

**MEMORIAL ADDRESSES ON THE LIFE AND
CHARACTER OF JOHN B. RICE (A
REPRESENTATIVE FROM ILLINOIS), MEMORIAL
ADDRESSES ON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF
ALVAH CROCKER (A REPRESENTATIVE FROM
MASSACHUSETTS), PP. 61-74**

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Memorial addresses on the life and character of John B. Rice (a representative from Illinois).
Memorial addresses on the life and character of Alvah Crocker (a representative from
Massachusetts), pp. 61-74 by United States Congress

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UNITED STATES CONGRESS

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MEMORIAL ADDRESSES

ON THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

JOHN B. RICE,

(A REPRESENTATIVE FROM ILLINOIS.)

DELIVERED IN THE

SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

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ADDRESSES
ON THE
DEATH OF JOHN B. RICE,

PROCEEDINGS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

ADDRESS OF MR. WARD, OF ILLINOIS.

MR. SPEAKER: I arise to pay a last tribute of respect to the memory of my late colleague, Hon. JOHN B. RICE. He died at the house of his daughter, in Norfolk, Va., on the 17th day of December, 1874. He left at the close of the last session with his health somewhat impaired. During the recess of Congress he sought rest at resorts, and at times he improved so that he and his friends hoped and believed he would soon be fully restored. But this was not to be so, and he did not take his seat at the commencement of the present session, and gradually failing, died as I have stated.

But recently he whom we now mourn was among us in robust health, giving promise of many years of usefulness. His great heart has ceased to beat, and he sleeps the sleep that knows no waking.

We stand above his honored grave and recall the graces and grand qualities of his life.

A good man has gone to rest and the world is poorer for his loss, though richer and better because he once lived.

To those who knew him as he was known here, no word of mine

can add anything to the incense which envelops his memory or increase the respect which in life his high character challenged from all who came in contact with him.

Without pretension, he was industrious, earnest, and able; without obstinacy, he was firm; without self-righteousness, he was scrupulously honest and conscientious in all things; faithful to his friends, yet just to his opponents; true to his convictions, yet ever ready to receive suggestions and advice. Scorning deceit, he diligently sought for truth; fearless in action and in the expression of his own opinions, yet attentive and respectful to those with whom he differed; public-spirited as a citizen, charitable to the needy, sympathetic with the suffering. A gentle, loving, and indulgent father, genial as an associate, he was a man to be honored and loved as he was in life, and sincerely mourned as he is in death.

His early life was not spent under the most auspicious circumstances, and his eminence in his profession, in the social world, and in politics was achieved by his own strong will and sturdy efforts.

JOHN BLAKE RICE was born in the village of Easton, Talbot County, Md., in 1809. His father was a shoemaker, and he learned that trade. It is not known how long he worked at this humble calling, nor is it certain that he might not have continued at it many years longer and the whole current of his life have run in a different channel but for an accidental circumstance something in this wise: The manager of a Baltimore theater, while strolling along one of the streets of the Maryland metropolis one day, overheard a rich musical voice trolling out a song inside a shop. He stopped and listened for a moment and then passed on, but the voice impressed him as unusually fine, and he made it convenient soon after to drop in at that shop and find out the possessor of the fine baritone. After a brief negotiation, the young mechanic was engaged as a chorister in Clemens's Theater, and it was there the stage life of JOHN B. RICE began. This was in 1836. The following year found

him a member of the company of the Walnut Street Theater, Philadelphia, where he was engaged for "singing parts," and occasionally was on for a song between acts. While in Philadelphia he married Miss Mary Ann Warren, daughter of the old manager and actor, William Warren, long since deceased. Miss Warren was then playing *soubrette* parts at the Walnut Street Theater. Mr. RICE subsequently went to Albany, N. Y., where he opened the National Amphitheater. That undertaking, however, proved a failure, and he became associated with the proprietor of the Albany Museum. He remained there four or five years as manager, and thence went to Buffalo, where he joined the company of the Eagle Street Theater. He became manager. It was at the Eagle Street Theater in Buffalo, and under Mr. RICE's management, that Dan Marble made his first great hit as a comedian; and it was also here that Charlotte Cushman, then a young lady of twenty-one or twenty-two, played one of her very first star engagements. The Eagle-street enterprise succeeded but moderately in a financial way, and the manager concluded to give it up and go west.

Early in 1847 he went to Milwaukee and there managed a theater for a time. He ascertained that a canal convention—that was an age of canals—was to be held at Chicago in July of that year, 1847. It occurred to Manager RICE to seize the occasion and turn it to account, and with such capital and credit as he could command he went to Chicago and put up a wooden theater on Randolph street between Dearborn and State streets. He had calculated rightly; the canal convention brought a large number of strangers to the city, and the theater made money rapidly until it burned down.

The first "star" introduced to the Chicago public under his management was Edwin Forrest, who appeared as Jack Cade, June 15, 1847.

Two months after the destruction of the wooden theater on Randolph street, Mr. RICE purchased a lot on Dearborn street, the

present site of Rice's Block, and in the month following (September 16) the foundation for a new theater was laid. It was opened February 3, 1851. This theater was prosperous, and in the subsequent years "stars" of the first magnitude played within its walls. Charlotte Cushman was the most prominent.

In February, 1857, Mr. RICE, having accumulated considerable wealth, decided to retire from the business. His management practically ended November 27, 1857, when the season closed. He determined to utilize his property by turning it into business places. This was done, and was occupied as stores and offices until 1871, when it was destroyed in the great fire. A substantial structure was erected on the site the following year, and is known as "Rice's Block," a monument of his enterprise and faith in the future of his loved city.

After abandoning the theater Mr. RICE devoted himself to the improvement of his real estate, of which he had acquired considerable. During all the time he managed a stage there was never allowed anything which would tinge the cheek of the most refined with a blush.

Although a prominent and active citizen almost from the day of his arrival in Chicago, and a warm republican from the day of the organization of that party, Mr. RICE took no great part in political life until 1865, when he was nominated as the candidate of the "Union party" for mayor, and elected by a large majority. In 1867 he was renominated by acclamation, and again elected by a large majority. When his term of office expired in the fall of 1869, he refused to be a candidate for re-election. His two administrations were singularly fortunate. There were no jobs in the council and no complaints of indifference on the part of the mayor. As presiding officer of the council he was in all respects the best that body has ever had. He took an active part in every detail of the city affairs, and was thoroughly conversant with all its necessities.

From 1869 to 1872 he took no active part in politics; but in the fall of the latter year, when the republicans of the new first congressional district wanted a candidate, he was unanimously selected as the representative of his party. He was chosen by an immense majority, swollen by his own personal strength, and went to Washington to discharge his new duties, bearing with him the same conscientious determination to fulfill the high functions of his office that he had displayed in other and less important positions. His record in Congress is well known. A new member, busied in learning details, he had few opportunities of displaying the real ability which was in him; but when he spoke and acted it was always wisely and well. By his associates he was loved and respected.

By his death, which occurred in almost the prime of his life, the first congressional district has lost its first Representative, the city and county one of its best citizens, and his family a kind and affectionate father.

Mr. RICE's family consisted of one son and five daughters. His son enlisted early in the war, and was killed at Chickamauga, Tenn., September 19, 1863, while in command of Company A of the Eighty-ninth Illinois Volunteers. His daughters all are living; and they, and his wife, who also survives him, mourn him as only such can mourn for such a husband and father.

In the city where he lived, and over which he had so long, so acceptably, and so justly ruled, and where he was so well and widely known, he was most appreciated and loved. The announcement of his death carried sorrow to every household there; few men ever had or ever will win as he had won the hearts of all—the high and low, the rich and poor alike of that city. And we shall be fortunate indeed if, when our work is done, it has been as good and our lives as pure as that of him of whom we take the last good-by to-day.

I submit the following resolutions:

Resolved, That this House has heard with deep regret of the death