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George Reinhard (1902-1906)

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Reinhard, George Louis

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G. L. Reichard

[BY JOHN GILBERT SHANKLIN.]

REINHARD, GEORGE LOUIS. In a small village in Bavaria, George Louis Reinhard, now a Judge of the Appellate Court of Indiana, was born July 5th, 1843. After receiving such information as the schools of his native village afforded, at the age of fourteen he came with his mother and step-father to the United States. The family proceeded at once to Cincinnati, where an uncle of the lad had previously settled and was successfully

engaged in the manufacture of a variety of articles made from wood. Young Reinhard accepted employment in his uncle's business where he remained for more than a year, acquiring some practical knowledge along with a livelihood, although the character of the employment was far from congenial. Young as he was, he soon realized that the opportunities for fortune and distinction were not monopolized by those who were born to wealth and that the prerogative of birth which almost wholly controlled the destinies of individuals in his native Germany were utterly valueless, indeed had no existence in this free land. He saw the popular regard in which some of his own countrymen were held and accepted their advancement to eminent positions at the bar, on the bench, and in politics as proofs that foreign birth was no obstacle in the way of the attainment of the highest honors of the state. At that time the names of Groesbeck, Stallo and Hassaurek were among the most distinguished in the community where he lived, while Carl Schurz's star had just arisen in the West, giving promise of the brilliant career that was to follow and which is now a part of the nation's history. Young Reinhard's aspirations were aroused. While he did not neglect his work at the lathe, he felt that handicraft was not the field of action to which he was best suited. All vocations were equally respectable in his eyes and he would gladly have continued in the business where a reasonable measure of material prosperity seemed certain if he could have ignored the question of personal adaptation. But if the trite aphorism be true that a good shoemaker is spoiled to make a poor preacher, why should not the converse of the proposition be sound philosophy? Why might not a good lawyer be spoiled in making an indifferent worker in wood? In 1849 the family of which he was a member moved to Union county, Indiana. A crisis had arisen in national affairs over the slavery question and it was plain that the sectional feeling which had grown in intensity during the last few years had now reached a point where civil war was imminent. The election of Abraham Lincoln was construed by the South as a direct challenge and preparation was at once inaugurated in the Southern States to carry out the threatened secession from the Union which Southern Senators and Representatives in Congress had frequently indulged. There was but one sentiment in Indiana at that time; it was that the Union must be preserved at whatever cost. In response to President Lincoln's first call for troops the youth of the State came forward in large numbers, prompted by the patriotic impulse that Americans have ever shown whenever the safety or the honor of the country was in danger. Among them was young Reinhard, who had not yet reached the age of eighteen. Early in April, 1861, he enlisted in the Union County Guards, a company which, under the command of Thomas W. Bennett, was first assigned to the Sixteenth Regiment of Infantry, organized for one year's service in accordance with the President's first call for troops. Subsequently, at the earnest request of Captain Bennett and most of his men, the Union County Guards was transferred to the three years' service, and as Company I, became a part of the Fifteenth Regiment, which was then



G. L. Richard

organizing at Lafayette under command of Colonel George D. Wagner. During the succeeding three years and four months young Reinhard served faithfully as a private soldier, taking part in many battles, among which were Greenbriar, Perryville, Shiloh, Siege of Corinth and Stone River. Thus the first years of his manhood were spent in giving the highest proofs of his sincere loyalty to his adopted country. The learned professions afford avocations which are naturally preferred by those inclined to books and study. All of young Reinhard's tastes and inclinations were in this direction. During the years of his service in the army the most of his time when off duty was devoted to the study of American history and especially to the inception and development of our constitutional form of Government. He had determined to adopt the profession of the law and the serious question was how could he obtain the education which he felt to be the first essential in the direction of his ambition. He attended a private school in Cincinnati for a year, and in 1866 was matriculated as a student of Miami University at Oxford, Ohio. But his scanty purse was wholly inadequate to his wants, simple as he had learned to make them, and although he was able to add something to his financial resources by teaching German, he was compelled to abandon his college course at the end of the collegiate year of 1868. With many regrets he left Oxford and located at Owensboro, Ky., where he taught school for a livelihood and devoted all of his leisure hours to the study of law. Here he was admitted to the bar in accordance with the practice then prevailing in Kentucky, which required the applicant for legal honors to undergo an examination before two Judges of the Circuit Court. About this time he was married to Miss Mary Wilson, whose parents still reside on the old Wilson homestead near Philpot Station, in Daviess county, Kentucky. Judge and Mrs. Reinhard have two children living, both daughters. In the winter of 1870-71, he returned to Indiana, locating at Rockport. At that time the bar of Rockport was distinguished for its ability, numbering in its membership such lawyers as Gen. James C. Veach, Judge L. Q. DeBruier, Edwin R. Hatfield and others whose names were familiar throughout southern Indiana. Notwithstanding the many hardships with which the young lawyer had to contend he soon made an impression upon the community. His practice began to yield him a good support and to give certain promise of a prosperous future. The services of Mr. Reinhard were sought by litigants not only in Spencer but in many neighboring counties. He practiced in all the Courts held at Evansville and in the circuits contiguous to the one in which he resided, meeting as antagonists many of the leading members of the bar of the State. As early as 1872 the Democrats of Spencer county nominated him against his will as their candidate for Representative in the General Assembly, and he came within seventy-one votes of an election, although the county was at that time Republican by several hundred. In 1876 he was elected Prosecuting Attorney of the Second Judicial District. He discharged the duties of the office so faithfully during his first term that he was re-elected in 1878 without opposition. In addition to his official labors during these

four years he wrote a volume on the "Indiana Criminal Law," which was given to the public in 1879. The work was welcomed by the entire profession of the State as a useful and timely publication, eliciting words of commendation from the press and from many leading lawyers after they had fully tested its merits. Retiring from the office of Prosecuting Attorney he devoted himself to general practice for two years, but his ability as a jurist was now so widely recognized that he was not long permitted to continue in private station. In 1882 he was nominated by his party for Judge of the circuit composed of the counties of Warrick, Spencer and Perry. Owing to some local party divisions this contest was quite a memorable one. Mr. Reinhard was elected, carrying his own county by 753 majority, though his majority in the circuit was a very narrow one, and as a proof that no ill-feeling had resulted from the victory he was re-elected in 1888 by a largely increased majority. In 1891 the General Assembly passed a law establishing the Appellate Court and Judge Reinhard was appointed as a member of the new Court from the First Appellate District, his associates being Judges James F. Black, Jephtha D. New, Milton S. Robinson and Edgar D. Crum-packer. In the general election of the following year he was chosen Judge of this Court for a full term, having received the nomination of his party for this high honor without opposition. He was elected by a majority of nearly 7,000 and will remain a member of this exalted tribunal until January 1st, 1897, when his term will have expired. He is the only remaining one of the list of Judges originally appointed to this Court. In 1894 Judge Reinhard was nominated for Judge of the Supreme Court without opposition, but shared the defeat which overtook all of the Democratic candidates in the election of that year. There are men to whom public confidence and honors seem naturally to belong. They make no effort in their own behalf, yet the recognition of their capacity for dealing with large affairs is what might be termed a popular intuition. George Louis Reinhard is one of this class. From Prosecuting Attorney of his circuit through natural stages of advancement he has gone from the Circuit to the Appellate bench, and that he was not still further promoted to a place in the Supreme Court is wholly due to the caprices of politics and not to any decline of popular confidence in his ability and integrity. A man of his personal attributes never feels any bitterness in defeat, because, recognizing that he owes certain obligations to society, in any event he follows the line of duty without much solicitude as to whether it leads to public or private station. At the beginning of his early prime he has already achieved for himself a reputation which places him, it is not too much to say, in the foremost rank of Indiana's most distinguished lawyers and Judges. He might well afford to retire upon the laurels he has already earned. But in addition to his high character and qualifications he is fortunate in possessing that subtle quality of disposition to which the psychologists have given the name of magnetism. His manner is of the quiet, dignified kind, not lacking in cordiality, but never drifting into extremes. It is not probable that his public career will terminate with the

close of his term of office. The people of Indiana have learned to know his worth so well that they will witness his retirement from the bench with unaffected regret, always remembering that whether as soldier, citizen or public servant, George Louis Reinhard has never failed in the discharge of functions requiring a cool head and a true heart.