

ROBERT CLAIR BOYCE:

TO THE NASHVILLE BAR & LIBRARY ASSOCIATION:

Your committee appointed to draft memorial resolutions upon the life of R. C. Boyce, Sr., appreciating the honor of such designation from among so many friends and associations of this beloved lawyer, has prepared for your consideration the following resolution:

WHEREAS, in the recent death of R. C. Boyce, Sr., the Nashville Bar has lost one of the most conscientious and capable members, the Nashville Bar and Library Association now entered upon its permanent records this memorial statement.

ROBERT CLAIR BOYCE, SR. was born on June 9, 1890, in Perry County, Tennessee, the son of Samuel Miles Boyce and Harriett Cisco Boyce, and was one of a group of five brothers and a sister. His father was a farmer in the community known as Flatwoods and from all accounts a sort of patriarchal figure embodying traditional pioneer virtues and who even upon the eve of the twentieth century, lived in the self sufficient manner of our ancestors.

It is difficult in these days of roads and power lines to realize how separately and alone in its social and economic life the rural village of sixty years ago stood apart. Although Flatwoods was within twelve miles of Linden, the county seat, it still required a day to visit that point, for Perry County was wholly without turnpikes and railroads facilities. Telephones were known only by report and electric light by rumor.

In this environment the children of the Boyce family cast about to decide upon their future and make preparation for it. The two older boys struck out for the Territory of Oklahoma and there established themselves as ranchers. The three young ones decided to embark upon their respective careers in the so-called learned professions, one to become a minister, one a doctor and one a lawyer. Preparations for such permits, however, required what was a very scarce thing upon a Perry County farm, namely money.

In a family meeting the three boys and their sister decided that the answer to this need was a cash crop, and that the most promising crop of this kind was peanuts. Accordingly they set about to grow and gather peanuts until they could accumulate enough to support them while they sought an education. In time this was accomplished and the four young people came to Nashville in order that the boys might attend school. They enrolled in Winthrop Preparatory School, which was an adjunct of the George Peabody College for Teachers. Their sister came along as housekeeper and on the proceeds of their peanut crop and foodstuffs sent from home, they lived and paid for their schooling. It is sufficient here to note that each boy succeeded in his ambition for professional life, one becoming a minister, one a physician and one a lawyer.

Having completed his schooling at Winthrop, Robert returned to his home community and taught school for two years, after which he attended the University of Tennessee. His training in law was received at Cumberland University and it was while at Lebanon attending law school that he became acquainted with Miss Lena Rivers Graham who had come from Franklin County, Tennessee, and who later became his wife.

In 1914 he came to Nashville and opened a law office and practiced here until his death on the 14th day of April 1951. He was never a member of a partnership but at different times was associated in office with several Nashville lawyers, including Judge Litton Hickman, Noah W. Cooper, J. G. Lackey, General Carlton Loser, Moreau Estes, Lacy Reynolds, Albert Williams and Joe Brown Cummings. At the time of his death

he was associated with his son Robert, and Jack White.

Among the members of the Nashville Bar, R. C. Boyce was recognized for his painstaking care, his ability to understand the law and his conscientious conduct. Perhaps of no other attorney at the bar could it be said that he had been called upon to preside as special judge upon the bench of all seven of our state courts of record. Mr. Boyce, however, had served as special judge of our two Criminal Courts, our two Chancery Courts, and our three Circuit Courts. He was one of the draftsmen of the Act which created our Court of General Sessions and was continually interested in the improvement and progress of our judicial system. He had served as President of the Nashville Bar and Library Association and no member of the Association stood higher in the general esteem of his professional contemporaries. His lawsuits were tried with skill and foresight and when he lost one it was not because he had failed to appreciate and understand the legal questions involved.

He was available to every Nashville Lawyer who desired to discuss a case with him and many made use of such valuable opportunity. His time was freely given to his friends and associates and he became the adviser of many of us who learned to lean upon his judgment for the determination of difficult problems. At times he was employed by both City and State when it was plain that genuine legal talent was demanded in a particular piece of work,

But notwithstanding the attachment of Robert Boyce to his profession, it was his home and family life that occupied first place in his affections. The father of three sons, Robert, Graham and Walter Miles, and of a daughter, Margaret Ann, he found homelife the happy center of all his purposes and pursuits. His church likewise claimed an important place in his life.

The day following his death an editorial in the Nashville Tennessean thus epitomized his reputation.

"Gentle, Courteous, Considerate and sincere.

"Such was the character of R. C. Boyce.

"Those who assume that a lawyer is 'heard for his much speaking' may never properly have appraised the studious and careful attorney whose death occurred yesterday, but among judges and students of the law his capacity was well recognized and his ability very generally conceded.

"As a Christian gentleman who brought to the practice of his profession the highest type of ethical conduct, he will be long remembered."

This Association believes that this expression is a fair and conservative appraisal of our brother's character. Therefore the members of the Nashville Bar and Library Association thus resolve: That the Association hereby acknowledge and express its loss in the death of R. C. Boyce and by these resolutions communicate to the members of his family our deep sympathy in their bereavement and our sincere hope that the memory of a beloved husband and father and the recollection of his example may continue to be their inspiration through the oncoming years.

Albert Williams, Chairman.

(SIGNED)

Thomas A. Shriver,
J. Carlton Loser,
Harry H. Chitwood,
Thomas P. Gore.
