

OUR FIRST PRESIDENT,

THE HONORABLE JOHN WILLIAM RITCHIE, 1808-1890.

By the HON. LAWRENCE G. POWER, K. C., Halifax.

(Read, 3rd December, 1915).

Theophilus Parsons, who was many years ago Dane Professor of Law in Harvard University, delivered about once a year an address to the students, on the great lawyers whom he had known. I had the pleasure of hearing the address which has never altogether left my memory. I still recall some of the things he told us of men like Pinckney and Jerry Mason; but nothing so vividly impressed itself on my mind as a quotation which he used. "Gentlemen," the old Professor said, in a rather tremulous voice, "The names of our profession are written in water." The object of the yearly address was to preserve from oblivion the names and the deeds of the leaders of the profession with whom in his earlier days he had been more or less closely associated. He pointed out that, no matter how able or successful a lawyer might be, if he confined himself to the work of the profession and did not enter public life, he was sure to be forgotten, except of course, by the members of his immediate family, very shortly after quitting the scene of his labors.

I had long realized the soundness of the views set before the law students by Professor Parsons; and I had felt for some time that it was in a sense the duty of the society to pay a tribute to the memory of its first President, while it was also the duty of such of our members as belong to the legal profession to place before the public an appreciation of the character and works of one who, whether as a practising barrister, or as a judge, had no superior. The performance of this duty has been too long delayed; and, during the twenty-five years that have passed since Judge Ritchie's death, most of those who knew him best have followed him into another world. Then again, the sub-