

# COLONEL JAMES D. HILL'S TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF GOVERNOR NICHOLLS.

Colonel James D. Hill's address to the Supreme Court on Saturday in presenting the portrait of Governor Nicholls made a deep impression and was an eloquent tribute to Louisiana's beloved leader. He spoke as follows:

May it please the honorable, the chief justice and the associate justices of the Supreme Court of Louisiana: I am before you to-day to transmit to your keeping the pictured likeness of Francis Tillou Nicholls, who but recently sat with you as an associate, and only a few years earlier presided over this august tribunal as chief justice, as do you, sir, so happily this day.

Native to this soil, whereon he was born on the 20th of August, 1834, his career spanned seventy-seven years of devoted service to his state and people, until translated to higher duty on the 4th of January, 1912.

In the presence of his friends, who have loved him and have known him so well, it needs not to give great detail of a life known and admired of all men.

The history of this state can never be written without a bright record of the virtues of his life, commemorating its devotion, heroism and righteousness, and revealing it the exemplar, which, if followed by the manhood of this state, would make Louisiana the cynosure and inspiration of every other state of this nation.

Permit me, therefore, in a few words to revive some memories recalled by this silent inspiration before us, and bear with me though they be but imperfect sketches. Your hearts will fill out to the full measure of life what my lips may be able only faintly to suggest.

## A CURIOUS COINCIDENCE

is to be noted in regard to the three great roles enacted by him in the marvelous staging of his life.

In the future the determination as to which of these is most admirably discharged will be largely the predilection of the observer, whether inclined to arms, to statecraft or to jurisprudence. But whatever his bent, he will find in the achievements of Nicholls the theme to inspire courage in the soldier, to enforce freedom for the people, and to maintain righteousness and truth in the administration of law.

The coincidence to which I referred is that every role enacted by him was repeated in his own life; twice a soldier, twice a governor and twice commissioned to this Supreme Court. As though Providence, well pleased, had declared, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," because thou hast been faithful in this, be thou honored still more.

He bore arms first in the Army of the United States, into which he graduated from the Military Academy of West Point in the class of '56. At this same spot he was the recipient of distinguished courtesy and honor in 1858, as president of the board of visitors. He redoubled the pleasures of recalling the scenes of his youth by sharing them with the beloved daughter, who was his proud and happy companion on this honorary but most prized and acceptable service accorded to the older graduates of West Point by the president of the United States. He resigned his commission in '66, studied law, passed before this court, and com-

menced the practice of his profession. As though to complete his dedication to the ways of peace, to rest beneath his own vine and fig tree, he married Miss Caroline Gulon in 1880, who survives as his widow, and who is the gracious donor of this precious gift to you. In this and then marrying, establishing his "home," "he builded better than he knew." He obtained the helpmeet, who, for over fifty years, by devoted affection, has soothed his sufferings, comforted him in his trials, shared his joys, divided his sorrows, and through all presided over his household with dignity and honor, as wife and mother, until his end came.

The honeymoon was short; 'twas rudely broken by his second call to arms. And he soon became part of the great Army of Northern Virginia. That very name has magic power; to the mental vision there arise the thousands of heroes, whose deeds and daring, through the vicissitudes of years and the declination of death, raised a pyramid of fame against which the sands of time shall hurl unheeded, as the sands of the desert wash harmless, to and fro, at the feet of the everlasting monuments of Egypt.

Upon the mighty platforms of this historic pyramid stand forth, for the admiration of the world, the mighty figures of Lee and Jackson, and for Louisiana stand, one whom we love because he is our own, the kindred hero, Francis T. Nicholls.

Baptized in the same

## BAPTISM OF FIRE

which left Lee unscathed, but untimely quenched the star of hope, Stonewall Jackson, there came forth at the end of the war Nicholls, with his left arm buried at Winchester and his right leg at Chancellorsville. The same spirit of devotion to his country, the same fearlessness in the discharge of duty, the same modesty and self-effacement before the eyes of applauding multitudes, have marked and characterized them all.

Little wonder then that the name of Francis T. Nicholls became a household word in all Louisiana, and that I, like others, thrilled when I heard the nomination made by Fay Godde "of all that was left of Francis T. Nicholls." So was he first called to the executive chair in 1877. Happily for this state! For perhaps no other could have had the final support of President Grant, the man of power at that time, save one like the governor, who had gained the respect and confidence of this fellow-soldier, while in the Army of the United States, and who trusted his declaration, that "he would be the governor of his whole people." The same truth was brought home to Hayes, the successor of Grant, on the 4th of March, 1877, by the emphatic statements of Philip Hickey Morgan, who had been called to Washington by William M. Everts, and clinched the determination to recognize the Nicholls government. His first administration put an end to the strife between the United States and our own commonwealth, which had endured through the throes of Civil War and the agonies of reconstruction; it restored the state's autonomy and re-established her right relations with the Union.

A second time he was called to the executive chair, returning to it in 1888. This time his administration

faced as momentous an issue as was confronted by him in 1877. For while the problem of '77 involved the rescue of the state from the stranglehold of its worst element, which was engaged in despoiling the people through the forms of legislation and by unjust taxation, all of which was unblushingly aided and abetted by the National Government so the issue of '88 and '92 was as vital, to save the state from the crime of suicide, by defeating the renewal of the lottery charter. The contest was to the death. Nicholls' stand had been taken in '79, by signing act 44, repealing the charter. In the lower house I had then the honor, in supporting this measure, for the first time, in public, to raise my voice against the lottery.

In this second administration I had the greater one, on stopping over at Ridgefield, on my return from the Farmers Alliance conference, of receiving his approval and commendation for the Lafayette agreement, which his consolidated the successful vote of the farmers and the anti-lottery Democrats in the ensuing election. They responded to and indorsed

## THE NOBLE SENTIMENT

which actuated Governor Nicholls in vetoing the lottery extension when he wrote: "At no time and under no circumstances will I permit one of my hands to aid in degrading what the other has lost in seeking to uphold the honor of my native state. Were I to affix my signature to this bill I would be indeed ashamed to let my left hand know what my right hand had done." But what his right hand did was right in the eyes of God and of the people of his native state, for their right hands joined with his in fellowship and deposited the vote that crushed out the lottery curse and seated as executive another anti-lottery leader, Murphy J. Foster, who signalized his accession to the governorship by ushering the soldier, the statesman, into his third great role, by appointing Francis Tillou Nicholls chief justice of the State of Louisiana.

It is a peculiar pleasure to know that this appointment gratified the highest aspirations of the chief justice. To not say ambition, for of all men whom I ever knew, none have at heart had less of eager desire for power and distinction for its own sake than Francis T. Nicholls. Simple and direct in thought, pure and devoted in affection, guileless in disposition and tender in speech, these charms adorned a character firm, frank and strong.

He merited all he attained because of his integrity and moral force. These led him to accept all the high duties placed upon him with equanimity, and enabled him to discharge them with grace and moderation. That he rejoiced to attain this high judicial office was foreshadowed by his grim humor at Chancellorsville, when, borne bleeding from the field, he gave heroic play to his wit in regretting that he was no longer fit to entertain his alluring dream to be an impartial judge, as he must now, forever remain "a one-sided man." Thank God, if he cherished this dream that it was given to him to realize it; and for us to know that his heart, head and conscience made him what the world ever holds with praise, "the upright judge."

His second filling of the role of judge, his last great public service to his people, was an exemplification of the selflessness of the man. In the almost certainty of reappointment as chief justice at the end of his term, he advised, in 1898, with his nephew, P. S. Bugh, member of the Constitutional Convention, and suggested that the honor of chief justice should belong to that member of the supreme bench having the senior commission. It was so provided in the Constitution, and on his reappointment he bowed gracefully to the exactions of a rotation in office which

## HIS SENSE OF JUSTICE

had had embodied in the fundamental law.

His second term as judge was marked by a like magnanimous act on the part of the people, who, recognizing the inestimable value of his services, desired to acknowledge their deep sense of obligation to his faithful loyalty to every duty of his life. They implored the constitutional amendment, permitting judges of the Supreme Court to retire. And every vote ratifying this amendment was a personal tribute to this thrice-honored son of Louisiana.

Your hearts, I know, hold for him the same deep reverence and affection which spring in mine. We shall all, while life lasts, cherish his memory, but you will have the added privilege of honoring it by the tender care which you will bestow upon this silent memento of our blessed friend.