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# Watauga Democrat.

VOL. 6 BOONE, WATAUGA COUNTY, N. C., THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1894, NO. 18.

## Day After Day,

Week after week, year after year, you plod a beaten path, from your home to your work and back again. No hope for the future, nothing ahead but work, work, work, and a still darker prospect for your family should you die. A 20-year Tontine Policy in the

## Equitable Life

will give you something to live for; a bright star to look ahead to; an end to toil when you are no longer able to follow the beaten path of drudgery; an assurance that your wife and children will be provided for at your death. Isn't it worth considering? For facts and figures address

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—(a)—

Will practice in the courts of Watauga, Ashe, Mitchell, McDowell and all other counties in the Western District. Special attention given to the collection of claims.

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Will give special attention to abstracts of title, the sale of Real Estate in W. N. C. Those having farms, timber and mineral lands for sale, will do well to call on said Co. at Boone.

**L. L. GREEN & CO.**

March 16, 1893.

### NOTICE.

#### Hotel Property for Sale.

On account of failing health of myself and wife, I offer for sale my hotel property in the town of Boone, North Carolina, and will sell low for cash and make terms to suit the buyer, and will take real or personal property in exchange. Apply soon.

W. L. BRYAN.

### NOTICE.

Parties putting papers in my hand for execution will please advance the fees with the papers and they will receive prompt attention, otherwise they will be returned not executed for the want of fees.

D. F. BAIRD SHUFF.

### A Biographical Sketch of John Horton and David Colvard McCaslas.

Communicated.

John Horton and David C. McCaslas, familiarly known in this day and generation as Jack Horton and Cob McCaslas, were both very remarkable men in many respects, and in early life they were very popular. They were both aspirants for the same political honors. On the organization of Watauga county in 1849, one Michael Cook was elected by the County Court the first sheriff. He may not have been elected in 1849, but any way he was the first sheriff of the county. I write from memory as I have no dates before me as to the foregoing matters.

On the expiration of his term, Jack Horton was elected to the same office. He held the office for two years, and was a candidate for reelection. He was opposed by Cob McCaslas, then a very young man, who lived on the upper Watauga River, and near the foot of the Grandfather mountain. My recollection is, that he was about 23 years old at this time. He was almost an entire stranger to a large majority of the people of Watauga.

The campaign opened on upper Cove Creek. The contest was aggressive and bitter from its very inception. They were both strong physically and mentally. Horton was five feet 8 or 10 inches high with a strong, muscular frame, and his whole contour indicated strength of purpose and a wonderful degree of courage. He did not mix well with a crowd; he was seemingly very retired, but on approaching him one would find him exceedingly pleasant and very companionable. He did not seek to ingratiate himself into the affections of the people by palavering or bluster, but in his quiet and unpretentious style he made friends and drew them around him as with hooks of steel. As a neighbor, he was unsurpassed always abounding in hospitality.

McCaslas was at least six feet in his stockings, with a large, massive frame slightly stooped, with a large head and very bushy hair which grew nearly to his eyebrows. His face and eyes indicated strength and determination and also that there pulsated within his Herculean bosom a warm and generous heart full of love and sympathy. His manners were very affable and his bearing superb. I have no hesitancy in saying that he was by far the most astute electioneerer I ever saw. In this respect he was very dissimilar to Jack Horton. As soon as he approached a crowd of fellow citizens, he at once, without stopping on the outskirts, moved in to the midst of them, and began shaking the hands of the multitude with the greatest ease and familiarity imaginable.

Jack Horton, on the other hand, lingered on the outskirts in close consultation with his champions discussing the order of battle, and

this he did with consummate skill. Horton was very aggressive in all his political contests and always flaunted the black flag and never gave nor asked for quarters from his opponent. He engaged in the contest as though his opponent was trying to deprive him of vested rights.

The early educational advantages of these most remarkable men were only such as the common schools of forty or fifty years ago afforded. They had only acquired the rudiments of the English branches. Horton was not a student of history and consequently was not a man of extensive and varied information, though he was a reader of the newspapers and was fairly well up on the political struggles of his time. He was, however, a friend to education, and did much to foster institutions of learning, and gave his children liberal educations.

McCaslas on the other hand was a great student and around the base of the great mountain that towered far above his humble cottage, he seems to have caught an inspiration of the grand and beautiful, and early turned in to historic and poetic fields, such as Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Pope, Milton, and Byron. He was familiar with the great Captains of both ancient and modern times. He studied closely the revolutions in which Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar and Napoleon were the great central figures.

Horton was not an orator, but like Mark Anthony, spoke right on dealing in strong invectives and burning sarcasm. McCaslas was a superb orator, dealing blows right and left with telling effect on his auditory and occasionally adorning and beautifying his speeches with timely quotations from the poets and historians. Horton was a few years the senior of McCaslas. He had already seen much of life, and while he had made a very acceptable sheriff, he had become the devotee and was worshipping at the shrine of Bacchus and in other respects his reputation had become a little sullied. He had already acquired the character of a successful pugilist, and had occasionally engaged in more deadly conflicts, and upon the whole he was regarded as a very dangerous foe.

As I have already said these two men met on Cove Creek, and soon the dance was on. It was soon seen that Horton had, for the first time, met a foeman worthy of his steel. The conflict became warmer and warmer, Horton using his battle axe with telling effect and at each onset was parried off by the keen Damascus blade of McCaslas. I believe it was at this point, though I am not certain as I was not present, that while McCaslas was charging Horton with complicity in the counterfeit business that he retorted with an oath that he (McCaslas) had forgotten the time when he had applied to him (Horton) for a twenty-dollar counterfeit bill to which McCaslas replied that it was a d—d lie. As the campaign progressed, it was frequently with much difficulty that their friends prevented them from engaging in deadly strife. Bowie knives and pistols frequently gleamed in the sun-light. The late Joseph Dobson told me that while he was a candidate for the Senate he met them at Soda Hill, and they were both armed to the teeth. As each one began his speech he would lay his weapon on a neighboring stump and defiantly open the racket. He further said that he was constantly expecting during their discussion that one or the other would be killed. The contest continued until the people had deposited their ballots, when it was ascertained that the beardless youth had won his spurs.

Horton and McCaslas were now inveterate enemies. They later on became candidates for the same office again. The contest was again bitter but McCaslas was again the victor. As I have already stated, Horton was very generous and kind to his friends, but woe be to the man who crossed his pathway and in the crossing threw down the glove. He followed him with the ferocity with which the blood hound pursues the bleeding, stricken deer and never let up until in the twilight the stars appeared.

Horton continued in his devotion to Bacchus and frequently engaged in deadly brawls and was feared and shunned by the law-abiding citizens, especially when intoxicated. It is proper to state here that in his sober moments he was gentle as a lamb and pleasant and affable to all with whom he came in contact. Horton at the close of the war was chosen by the County Court, sheriff of the county. The war had left in its wake bands who were setting at defiance the regularly constituted authorities of the country. In this emergency it became necessary to select a bold and fearless spirit in order to successfully grapple with the bands of bandits then infesting the borders of Watauga. The members of the court knew of none that were bolder and more fearless than Jack Horton and they selected him and well did he meet their expectations. He soon restored law and order and brought the violators of law to the bar of the court when they were tried and punished. He held the office until 1874 when he found that his estate had been wrecked by the results of the war and he then retired to private life, where he spent the remainder of his days in trying to build up his wasted fortune.

McCaslas for a few years after his promotion was exceedingly popular. But he became the devotee of wine and women and plunged into the deepest vortex of dissipation and debauchery and finally on or about the ninth day of Feb., 1859 fled the state and carried with him

a beautiful mountain girl whom he had won and ruined; and headed for the wild and woolly north-west.

Both these men are dead. Horton died some 8 or 10 years ago at home and surrounded by relatives and friends and is now awaiting the bugle blast of the great trump which will awake him from his slumber and hasten him away to the judgment. On the other hand McCaslas ended his life in a deadly fray about the commencement of the late war in the State of Kansas and without a moment warning went into the unknown beyond, and was buried amid strangers and in a strange land and he too is awaiting to hear the awful trump which is to bid him arise and hurry him a way to the great assizes. Both these extraordinary men by nature possessed warm and generous hearts and had it not been for bad associates they no doubt would have been ornaments to society. As it was they possessed very many excellent traits of character some of which I have already presented. These men were very dissimilar in many respects in fact the only striking similarity that they had in common was their lofty and daring courage and this they possessed in a higher degree than any two men whom I ever knew. While Horton had a strong natural intellect yet I think that McCaslas possessed a much more brilliant mind. I am clearly of the opinion that McCaslas' intellectual parts towered far above the ordinary mind and if he had properly directed it he would have been a very brilliant man. Dr. J. I. Mott said to me a few days ago that he knew McCaslas, having frequently met him in Lenoir, and that he believed that he was naturally the brightest man that he had ever seen. He also spoke of his splendid presence and lofty bearing. But women and wine with their long train of concomitants dimmed his intellectual star, and away to the north-west on the virgin soil of Kansas it went down in blood and carnage long before he reached the meridian of life. But it is useless for me to speculate on the possibilities and probabilities that might have been in reserve for this wonderful man. Suffice it to say that he listened to bewitching voices of the siren and she allured him into devious paths and by her many blandishments led him upon the rock upon which he and thousands more have been wrecked and lost. There are many other things that I might write concerning these dead heroes some of which would be favorable and others not so favorable but I will here let the curtain fall.

### H. BINGHAM.

Bristol Courier: The groundhog tells the a true story. It wasn't long after he got skittish of his shadow that the heavens grew dark and began to weep as it were. You may not believe in signs, but you will have to admit that the groundhog sign is proverbial for its correctness. Let us hope, however, that the weather will at least partially deny its never-failing correctness before the six weeks scamper by.

### READING THE CLOUDS.

Chicago Tribune.

Out beyond Forest Park and Cabonne Place, in the pretty suburban town of Wells, eight miles west of St. Louis, lives the Rev. Israel R. Hicks, the world renowned weather prophet. Sky View, his cozy out unpretentious cottage, is situated on the crest of a high knoll, at the end of the electric road, and commands a view of the surrounding country within a radius of several miles in either direction. It is but one story high, with a gabled roof, in the center of which is a peculiar protuberance, elevated eight or ten feet above the cone, perfectly square, with two windows on each side and surmounted by a railing.

This is the storm prophet's observatory. It looks as if it had been built in the attic and afterwards forced up through the roof. Here it is that the storm prophet, astronomer, editor and minister studies and works and calculates, and it is from this picturesque little "house on the hill" that Hicks' predictions of cyclones, tornadoes, blizzards, tempests and all the dreaded natural phenomena emanate. His forecasts seldom fail of verification, and when he issues a special warning the accuracy of his predictions in the past causes the residents of the threatened locality to heed his danger signal. In 1892 92 per cent. of his predictions proved correct.

Col. I. R. Hicks was born at Bristol, Tenn., December, 1844, and is consequently forty-nine years of age. At the close of the war he attended Andrew College two years. He was ordained to the ministry by Bishop Doggett at Coldwater, Mississippi, in 1871 and removed to St. Louis, Mo., the same year. He remained with the Methodist Church until nine years ago, when he affiliated himself with the Congregationalists. He wedded Miss Lillian Hornsby a little over two years ago, his first wife having died several years before. Miss Hornsby was a teacher in one of his Sunday-school classes. Six years ago he resigned from the ministry and accepted the editorship of Word and Work, and from his salary, earning on his stock, and the income from briefs of his weather charts he earns a good annual income.

His home life has the charm of perfect contentment and happiness. His cottage is comfortable and even luxuriously furnished, his income ample, his wife young, beautiful and devoted, his business prosperous, and good health fills his cup of joy to overflowing.

### FOR SALE

In the town of Boone, a comfortable dwelling house with 6 rooms and five fire places, with nine acres of land, good spring, some apple, peach and chestnut trees, situated some 300 yards from Main street. It is a desirable private residence. The place will be sold cheap on terms to suit the purchaser. For further particulars apply to L. W. Thomas, Hibernia, N. C. or W. B. Councill, Boone, N. C.