

## A CHARACTER STUDY

*A Tribute to the Sturdy Character of the Late Governor A. W. McLean, Capped by the Application of a Quotation from Epictetus.*

(By ARNOLD A. McKAY.)

In the many fine tributes paid to the memory of Former Governor Angus Wilton McLean at his death, it is irksome to read so often that his contribution to his day and generation was his "fine business genius"; his "knowledge of finances"; his putting the state "on a livable budget and bringing it out of financial chaos"; and other such dull, workaday phrases. As though every man had his value, if not his price, in dollars and cents! Such earnest effort to appraise a man's life shows how impossible it is to do so, even with the best of motives.

I think Mr. McLean's influence came from the character of the man. Oh, I know perfectly well that when you use such a word as "character" you invite yawns. You have simply mouthed something that is repeated carelessly and glibly a thousand times every day. But there is such a thing. We may not be able to define it, but we always know and admire it when we see it. Persons who do not have character accomplish little; may make a hollow, garish display, but are also very soon forgotten. Those who are endowed with it distinguish themselves in some way and are long remembered, even by the stupid, the selfish, and the arrogant. It is a presence rather than a quality tangible and classifiable. As Disraeli's biographer said of him: "One felt him enter the room whether one saw him or not."

So when we say that Governor McLean made a "business man's governor" I think what we are groping to say is that a business man of exceptional character served the State when it needed desperately his services. Character, however, was already there else there would have been no business or gubernatorial achievements worth the telling. Naturally he did not acquire this high-mindedness any more than you or I acquire blue eyes or a blunt nose. He inherited it from a long line of hardy, earnest, religious folk who generation after generation worked and fought building distinctive racial traits. And there was nothing aristocratic about this heredity if you are thinking of aristocracy in the biological, rather English, sense of the word. It was definitely aristocratic, however, if you are thinking of the word in its philosophical, rather Hellenic, meaning of the term. Having somehow inherited this "character," Wilton McLean cherished it and developed it for his own good and for the glory of his kinsmen—his State, and the Nation.

Now it is tragic that a man's passion sooner or later becomes his pain and kills him. But it does. The half-mad Tom Paine shouting "We live to improve or we live in vain!"—a cry the scholarly Jefferson suavely appropriated for his silk-stockinged followers; Lincoln with his interest in the common man; Wilson with his League of Nations battling for a world too stupid and selfish to understand—great men everywhere finally succumbing to their master passion. Yes, we are all inevitably laid low by the enthusiasms and passions that control our destiny. Governor McLean's passion was for honest, hard work. Work for his section, state, family. When the crash came in 1929, he saw his financial structures toppling and without whining set about building them up again. His character reserves rushed to his aid. But he "stopped to build them up with worn-out tools." His powerful body driven so long was too worn out to stand the strain; and so hard work, the passion of his life, his mortal agony.

One could write about his personal qualities, that side of a man's nature seldom seen by a cold, critical world—the side reserved only for our friends who have "their adoption tried." I think I know Mr. McLean as well as any Scot may know another; and dating from the time I was a callow Chapel Hill student and he a successful middle-aged lawyer impatient to seek larger fields of human usefulness—a natural and wholesome development in the growth of every man and woman. I knew his faults, never considerable; and he knew mine. Nearly always we differed on social and political questions. We never got together without good-naturedly taking sides. Whenever in the warmth of discussion I said something that to any pop-gun lawyer would be clearly "treasonable" or "unconstitutional" he would smile tolerantly, never calling me a Red, Communist, Socialist or some other harsh name by which we seek to justify our own imperfect ideas. And I am sure I never thought of him as "just another conservative business man of which this tired world has too many"; and never referred to him as such. So I would write of him,

## Jernigan Family One Of Oldest

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### World-Beating Record

The last sentence is more pertinent in view of the world-beating record of Rev. Hannibal W. Jernigan, whose stalwart frame is no stranger on the streets of Dunn. "Believe it or not," but Mr. Hannibal Jernigan had a daughter, a granddaughter, and a great-granddaughter to graduate from the Dunn High School six weeks ago. It is doubtful if the school knew the remarkable fact, since all three bear different names. The daughter is Miss Eloise Jernigan, the granddaughter is Miss Frances Cromartie (by adoption, Driver by birth), and the great-granddaughter is Miss Gladys Tart, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. M. C. Tart, and granddaughter of Edgar H. Jernigan and Esther Draughon Jernigan.

The world is challenged to beat that record, and the world is given warning that the Jernigans are swarming. King Canute could have conquered more countries than England if he had had back of him the present progeny of his comrade Jernigan. The last mention I have seen of the name in the press was an account of Judge Aycock's lecturing a Jernigan lad in his court at Smithfield for misbehavior in church and for his derisive smiles while the case was in progress. The judge warned the lad that he needed saving and should help the church rather than hinder it, and the writer commends to that lad and to all other Jernigans, good, bad, and indifferent, the sentiment of the inscription quoted above:

"Jesus Christ, both God and man,  
Save thy servant Jernigan."

Two preachers in the family of Lewis Jernigan, and the Rev. Frank Jernigan, of Arkansas, mentioned above, is a fair indication that many of them bear the sentiment in mind.

not as a friend, but as a fellow Tar Heel who had what St. Paul calls his "proper gift from God," and used that gift the best he knew how.

Undoubtedly that proper gift was economic, high-minded business character. He used it most creditably and honorably. I really think we have enough character in the professions and in the trades to help make a better world. God knows we still need it in business. The Insulls, the Mellons, and the Morgans, heroes of the Coolidge Era, are chastened but not contrite. President Roosevelt undoubtedly is finding that out more and more every day. Governor McLean had he lived another decade, would still have been the type of business man with which an honest democratic government could have no quarrel.

Now that he has passed on, there is little more to say. If he were living this fine June morning and had a little leisure (he always had leisure for his friends), I should like to hobnob with him again for an hour or more. The last letter I had from him expressed the wish that we "get together the next time I come home." No business, mind you. Just sitting and talking. A business man whose time was worth real money wasting hours with a fellow who never put much store by such things! For the meeting I was saying a passage I had run across recently in Epictetus' writings. He would have enjoyed it. Schoolmaster Quackenbush at Laurinburg never gave the future governor much of a glimpse into the classics—a handicap Mr. McLean never failed to lament. This passage from Epictetus is in my opinion one of the finest pieces of literature in any language. Governor McLean would have appreciated the political flavor. Vespasian, the Roman emperor, was having trouble with his senators. Epictetus records this incident.

"This Priscus Holvidius, too, saw, and acted accordingly. For when Vespasian had sent to forbid his going into the senate, he answered: 'It is in your power to prevent my remaining a senator, but as long as I am one, I must go.' 'Well, then, at least be silent there,' said the emperor. 'Do not ask my opinion,' he replied, (and I will be silent.) 'But I must ask it.' 'And I must speak what appears to me to be right.' 'But if you do, I will surely put you to death.' 'Master, did I ever tell you that I was immortal? You will do your part, and I mine. It is yours to kill, and mine to die intrepid; yours to banish, mine to depart untroubled.'

"What good, then, did Priscus do, who was but a single person? Why, what good does the purple do in the garment? What else but to be beautiful in itself, and give an example of beauty to others?"

Aesthetically, there may not be much beauty in business. But Governor A. W. McLean added a little purple to the economic and political fabrics of his native land.

## An Extract From the "Listener's Column" on Editorial Page of the Boston Transcript, June 29, 1935

Two or three days before the closing of the forms of this issue of the State's Voice, we received a letter from Captain Ashe, promising us a copy of an article he had prepared at the instance of Miss Beatrice Gobb, secretary of the N. C. Press association, about the meeting of the Press Association in Boston in 1883. This article is written in view of the coming repetition of the association's visit to Boston next week. The article, which, I gather, glorifies the hospitality of Boston, did not arrive in time for publication in this issue, but on the eve of publication we have received from Capt. Ashe the following excerpt from the *Boston Transcript*, which condemns the uncomely assault upon General Lee by the Massachusetts organization of women of the Grand Army, which was so cleverly answered by Graham Barden when the slander was uttered before the Congressional committee of which the Third District congressman is a member. For that excerpt we are undertaking to find space as follows:

"Probably there never was a more unanimous expression of opinion in this country than the universal judgment of the American press, in editorials and in letters from the people, in opposition to the Massachusetts G. A. R. Women's Relief Corps' condemnation of the proposition to erect a monument to General Robert E. Lee in the Arlington National Cemetery. It was a beautiful proposition, and everybody seems to have been pleased with it except the members of this society in Massachusetts who voted their disapproval. The worst of the matter for us is that everybody outside seems to think that the disapproval was peculiarly a Massachusetts proposition, and that the objection to the monument could not have been voiced elsewhere—as if our State had a special grudge against the great soldier, scholar and gentleman who commanded the Confederate Army. Of course nothing of the kind is or ever was the case. In the days before the war the relations between the States of Massachusetts and Virginia were particularly candid, harking back to the long friendship and correspondence between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. During the war any Virginian who came into our State as a prisoner of war was sure of especially friendly and kind treatment.

"The Listener once attended a dinner—it was years after the war—which was given at one of Boston's hotels to ex-Senator John H. Reagan of Texas on the occasion of a business visit of General Reagan to Boston. General Reagan spoke of his imprisonment in Fort Warren at the time when he was postmaster general of the Confederacy, and said that he had been treated more as a guest of honor by Boston people than as a prisoner of war, and he emphasized in his remarks the time-honored cordiality between Massachusetts, and especially Boston, and Virginia. And now it is only Massachusetts that thinks of an objection to Lee's status at his old home as undesirable! IctratinylMn.W desirable! It certainly seems strange. It should be made the business of our delegation in Congress or our State government by some action to counteract the bad impression created in the country at large by this Relief Club objection."

### A Thousand Freight-Car Loads of Silver

Treasurer Morgenthau says that Uncle Sam has bought thirteen-thousand tons of silver during the last ten months. That looks like plumb foolishness; yet it is to become backing for silver certificates, just as good as anybody's dollars, but representing a dollar total considerably larger than the price paid for the six or seven hundred car loads of the white metal. The much greater part of the purchases represents silver drained from other countries and comparatively little newly mined silver. It is hard to conceive that there is in the world a thousand 26-thousand-pound car loads of silver. That treasury of Uncle Sam's must be quite a place.

### No Special Session

Hurrah for Governor Ehringhaus, who refuses to be pushed into calling a special session of the Legislature. There should be no special session, if at all, till after the supreme court has rendered a decision upon the constitutionality of the county liquor laws.

One can hardly help urging on those Harlem and Texas Negroes who are volunteering to help Ethiopia fight the Italians.