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W. P. CURLEE

It can be truly said that the bar of old Tishomingo County, without an exception, embraced men of established integrity and lawyers of admitted ability in their profession; men who were regarded as the most distinguished jurists in the State, many of them enjoying a high national reputation. Dignified in manners, learned in the law, of personal integrity not to be questioned, their names shed luster upon the history of the legal profession of Mississippi. Among the many illustrious names ornamenting the pages of the juristic history of old Tishomingo County, that of Mr. W. P. Curlee shines forth with refulgent splendor, and future generations in looking back over the years that are past will find in his life much of absorbing interest and well worthy of emulation.

William Peyton Curlee was born in Tipton County, Tennessee, on the 2nd day of November, 1833. Being country-born and bred, his early boyhood was spent amid the green fields and beneath the blue skies of old Tennessee, breathing air as pure as the skies were blue, and early in life decided to carve for himself a place in the world of which his descendants would have just cause to feel proud, and most completely did he succeed. While he was still a small boy his parents removed to Marshall County, Mississippi, and a few years later settle in old Tishomingo County, some two and a half miles west of Rienzi. Mr. Curlee attended the local schools until 1853, when he went to Union University at Murfreesboro, Tenn., entering the Freshman class in that institution. The

following year he took the Sophomore course, and the next, the third and last year, he took both the junior and senior courses at the same time, being graduated in the spring of 1856 with first honors of his class. He next attended the Lebanon Law School, Lebanon, Tenn., graduating in 1858. During his college life he was a member of the Chi Psi fraternity. Mr. Curlee first commenced the practice of law at Ripley, Miss., in partnership with Mr. E. S. Hammond, now a Federal circuit judge, who had been his roommate in college, at both Murfreesboro and Lebanon. This firm later located at Holly Springs, and was enjoying an extensive practice when the civil war came on. When the first call for troops was issued Mr. Curlee enlisted as a private and went with his company to Florida, where he remained for nearly a year. When the famous Twenty-sixth Mississippi regiment of infantry was getting organized in Tishomingo County he was urged by friends to join, and securing a transfer was elected third lieutenant of Company C. When the ten companies mustered at Iuka and organized into a regiment he was elected adjutant, and followed the fortunes of the regiment until the battle of Fort Donelson. On this memorable occasion, where his regiment was complimented by being selected to open the battle, his horse was killed under him, and during the remainder of the engagement he performed the arduous duties of his position afoot, and although under fire for the first time, he contributed much to the success of the regiment by an example of knightly heroism and conspicuous bravery seldom equaled by one who had followed the professions of arms for a lifetime, and his conduct was conducive to much good in inspiring the command to the forward movement which resulted in the turning of the right of Grant's army, and which under ordinary circumstances would have ended in a complete victory. But Fort Donelson was surrendered. The members of the Twenty-Sixth were sent to various Federal prisons, adjutant Curlee being confined at Fort Warren in Boston Harbor. After the exchange of prisoners was effected the survivors of the regiment met at Jackson, Miss., in the spring of 1863, and reorganized. Mr. Curlee resumed his position as adjutant, in which capacity he served in a highly creditable manner until elected lieutenant colonel of the Eleventh Mississippi Cavalry, under General Forrest, and continued thus until the close of the war.

Returning to the home of his parents, Mr. Curlee on the 10th day of October, 1865, married Miss Mary Boone, daughter of Lieutenant Colonel Francis Marion Boone, who

was killed at the battle of the Wilderness, near Richmond, Virginia, while commanding his regiment. In the fall of 1865 Mr. Curlee was elected probate judge of Tishomingo County, serving one term. Shortly after the County of Alcorn was created, Mr. Curlee moved to Corinth, the new county seat, and entered into partnership in the practice of law with Messrs. W. M. Inge and R. O. Beene, the style of the firm being Inge, Beene & Curlee. This firm, after several years of successful practice, was dissolved. Mr. Curlee continued the practice of his profession until his death, being associated at different times with Messrs. R. O. Beene, F. E. Whitfield, and C. E. Stanley, and was practicing with the latter, under the firm name of Curlee & Stanley at the time of his death, which occurred on the 18th day of May, 1878.

Five children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Curlee, as follows: Eleanor Katherine Curlee, now in Philadelphia, Pa.; Shelby Hammon Curlee, president of the Corinth Woolen Mills; Mary Boone Curlee, now the wife of J. W. Park, of Wylam, Alabama; William Peyton Curlee, who died in August, 1878; and Francis Marion Curlee, of the law firm of Boone and Curlee, of Corinth. Mr. W. P. Curlee is also resident of Corinth.

Mr. W. P. Curlee was a prominent Mason and Odd Fellow, and contributed much to the success attained by these orders during his lifetime. As a private citizen he commanded the confidence and respect of the entire county; as a soldier his reputation was without a blemish; as a lawyer he ranked with the best in the State; and as a judge he won distinction for competency and impartiality. He made a success in life by persistent study and close application to his profession, and had he lived the allotted term of three score years and ten would have unquestionably been called by the people of Alcorn County to many additional positions of honor and trust. He lived a pure and honorable life, and dying left to his children the proud heritage of an unsullied name, as well as an enviable reputation.