

On October 15, 1939, at New Orleans, where he had gone on business, Kinnard Taylor McConnico died suddenly in his sixty-fifth year. He was born near Franklin on February 13, 1875, the son of G. H. K. McConnico, who had been a member of Forrest's Cavalry in the Civil War, and Sarah Josephine Taylor McConnico. His ancestry was Virginian and included a long line of Baptist ministers. Some two generations ago his immediate family had settled in Williamson County and from there while he was a child had removed to Nashville.

Because of the limited circumstances of the family he very soon went to work, first in selling newspapers and then as a messenger boy in a clothing store and later for a keysmith, experiences from which, as he said, he drew much that was useful to later in his law practice.

He had a native spirit of independence which was enhanced by this early proof of his capacity to make his own way. His disposition always was to give rather than to receive.

He was the valedictorian of his high school class, and after one academic year at Vanderbilt entered the law school and on his graduation in 1896 won the Founder's medal. Between 1898 and 1901 he was Assistant City Attorney of Nashville and from 1901 to 1905 City Attorney. After leaving that office he came to have an extensive practice in the Criminal Courts and presently in the Circuit Courts, where he distinguished himself as a trial lawyer by his skill and advocacy. In all of these courts he won important cases, many of which are reviewed in the appellate reports, and he early established himself as one of the leaders of the Nashville Bar. He was for many years in partnership with the late John A. Pitts, and later there was associated with them Charles P. Hatcher, who died less than a year ago, and at the time of his death his law partners were William Waller, George H. Armistead, Jr. and J. Paschall Davis.

He loved a judicial fight. But he preferred to fight on equal terms or for the underdog. In his criminal practice he never took the side of the State but always that of the defendant. A short time before his death he said to a friend: "I have never been asked, as so many others have, to sit as a special Judge, and at first I felt sensitive about it, but they probably knew better than to ask me to sit as a judge, for if I was on the bench and saw a rich corporation on one side with a high-priced lawyer, and a poor little devil on the other side with a third-rate lawyer, I would right then begin to organize and say to myself: 'You think all you have to do is to beat that little lawyer. You have got to beat him plus me.'"

While it was a part of his nature to press his views strenuously, he was never discourteous to his associates or to the courts. All through his life he won and held the respect of the judges and, with perhaps a few exceptions that he chose to make, the good will of his fellow lawyers.

He was a partisan by nature. He always took sides, always in politics with a strong bent to the side of his friend, and generally when he took a side he took it openly and even aggressively. He was influential in the political affairs of Tennessee, and probably more influential in his last years than at any other time, but neither then nor earlier - except when he was City Attorney during his twenties - did he seek or hold any public office, or, for that matter help anyone else into office for his private benefit.

He had a taste for politics and was really never out of politics, but the influence he had he exercised for others and not for himself.

He had been a member of the Hermitage Club and the Belle Meade Country Club and of a number of fraternal orders and of the state and local bar associations, but he never held any office or sought any prominence in them. He had no wish or aspiration for such honors. He perhaps too much undervalued them, which may have been because he had so early to win his own way that he did not much care for honors that seemed to him too easily won.

Friendship meant more to him than to most people, and for that reason he was not promiscuous in his friendships. A number of years ago he wrote in a letter: "No man, I believe, appreciates true friendship more than I do. It is not within my memory that I have ever allowed myself to become ungrappled from the ties of such true friendship when it has once been really formed. When my confidence is complete, I am just incapable of experiencing anything that can shake it."

He had a rare sense of fidelity, fidelity to the courts, to his clients, to his political associates and, most of all, to his friends. In now recalling his attributes those who were close to him will think first of this spirit of loyalty that was instinctive in him.

His story at the bar is not at all told in a mere catalogue of the many important cases in which he was engaged - such as the Scopes Case, the Magevney and Farrelly Will Cases - but it is better portrayed in the picture of his vibrant and unique personality. He was a combination of native brilliance and of tireless effort. His qualities of mind and of memory and of eloquence would alone have made him notable at the bar, and, when supplemented, as they were, by his native resourcefulness and dominant aggressiveness, would have carried him far without great effort.

But he never spared the effort. He was incapable of doing anything superficially. His study and his intimate knowledge of medicine and anatomy went far beyond the requirements of any of his cases that were concerned with those subjects. And so while the Scopes Case did not call for any determination of the opposing doctrines of Fundamentalism and Evolution, it had to do with them, and so he bought rare and unusual books on those subjects and studied them profoundly.

And whatever he studied or read or heard or experienced remained in his memory in a surprising degree, and in the front part of his memory, so as always to be available to him. And this with his animation, his intensesness and a rare gift that he had of original expression - and perhaps aided by a slight stutter - combined to make him always an interesting and most often a brilliant talker and advocate.

He married Miss Nina Ferriss on April 16, 1906. Those who were close to him during the period a few years ago when his wife was an invalid will recall how constantly she was in his mind and heart and how happy he was on her recovery. He was devoted to her and to his son who bears his name, both of whom survive him, and he idolized his mother, whose death preceded his by only a few years. His private life was quiet and retiring, spent in the companionship of his family and of his books.

His picture in the earlier bar groups is that of a handsome young man, eager, alert and aggressive, and as time went by and he came into his latter years with hair turned white, those characteristics of his were but slightly subdued.

He never spared himself. He was an intense worker. When he took up a cause it was in a sense a dedication. Everything he went into he went into with all his might,

not precipitately or recklessly, but completely. He worked the hard way. His pleadings and briefs were voluminous, probably too voluminous, because he left nothing out. He more often than not gave to a cause too much of his body and mind - and not infrequently of his means.

In his latter years this wear and tear left visible marks on him which were a matter of concern to his friends. When they protested he always agreed with them but said that he had gone along in his own way too long to change it. With his active and impatient spirit it was happy for him that when he came to die he died quickly.

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