

**ADDRESS**  
**BY HON. FRANK A. DANIELS**  
**ON**  
**PRESENTATION OF A PORTRAIT**  
**OF THE LATE**  
**GEORGE VAUGHAN STRONG**  
**TO THE**  
**SUPREME COURT OF NORTH CAROLINA**  
**ON BEHALF OF HIS CHILDREN AND HIS**  
**NEPHEW, HENRY R. STRONG**  
**28 MAY, 1934**

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At the invitation of his children I present the portrait of George Vaughan Strong.

I know of no reason why they should thus honor me unless it arises out of their knowledge of the long and affectionate friendship which, beginning in my boyhood and extending to his death, existed between us.

I should regard myself most happy if, in this address, I should be able to preserve in some measure the outlines of the life, character and attainments of this great lawyer of a former generation.

George Vaughan Strong, son of Dr. Salmon Strong and his wife Eliza Sampson Strong, was born at Clinton, Sampson County, North Carolina, May 7th, 1827.

The father of Dr. Strong came from Bolton, Connecticut, and was an early settler of Sampson County.

Eliza Sampson was a descendant of Michael Sampson who, with his brother John Sampson, came from England to the colony before the Revolution. They were sons of Samuel Sampson, a bishop of the Church of England, and the offspring of an old family long prominent in their native land.

Sampson County, formed in 1784, from Duplin, was named in honor of John Sampson who had served as a member of the Governor's Council under the Royal Governors Dobbs, Tryon and Martin, from 1761 to 1775.

As a boy young Strong lived for some time with his uncle, Dr. Fred Hill, who later became his guardian, on his estate at Orton, near Wilmington, from which he entered the school of Jefferson Lovejoy, a distinguished educator of that period.

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Concluding his preparation for college, he became a student of the University of North Carolina from which he graduated at the age of eighteen with the highest honors.

After his graduation, his health being somewhat impaired, he worked for a year, as an ordinary farm hand, on his father's farm and achieved his early ambition of ploughing a straighter furrow than any other hand on the plantation.

It was about this time that he wrote and published a volume of poems, evidencing much poetical talent, with every indication that the young man's fancy had lightly turned to thoughts of love.

He dedicated this, the first fruit of his genius, to a Sampson County belle who shortly afterward married another suitor. In his later and more mature years he endeavored to collect and destroy these poems, which to my youthful way of thinking were well worthy of preservation.

He had even in his late years the temperament and intellectual qualities of a poet, and his shapely head bore striking resemblance to that of Shakespeare as seen in some of the great poet's portraits and especially in his bust in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church at Stratford.

For a brief period he taught school in Wilmington where he met and married Anna Eliza Cowan, daughter of a prominent Cape Fear family. There were born to them ten children: Carrie Cowan, Sallie Stone, Eliza Sampson, Anna Cowan, Virginia, George V., Jr., Mary Walker, Robert C., Grace Sampson and William Hunter, of whom the survivors are Virginia, widow of Norwood Giles, of Wilmington, Mary Calvert Wilson, Robert C. Strong and Grace Sampson, widow of John H. Kineoly, together with many grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Judge and Mrs. Strong.

Mr. and Mrs. Strong soon moved to Goldsboro where he taught school and became the owner and editor of the *Goldsboro Telegraph* which, under his management, gained much popularity and influence.

While so engaged he studied law without an instructor; and, securing his license, became the partner of William T. Dortch, under the partnership name of Dortch and Strong, which became one of the strongest legal firms in that section of the State and attained a large and successful practice.

He was for a number of years vestryman and senior warden of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.

He served as a delegate from Wayne in the historic Constitutional Convention of 1861.

The Civil War impending, he raised a volunteer company of soldiers for service to the Confederacy of which he was Captain, but was soon

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after appointed Confederate States District Attorney, and took no part in the actual hostilities which ensued.

As a result of his political activities and of his service as District Attorney, he was, after the close of the war, deprived of his license and debarred from the practice of his profession, but sometime later his disabilities were removed and he was permitted to resume his practice, the certificate permitting such resumption being now preserved in the Hall of History in Raleigh.

After practicing for years in Wayne and adjoining counties, Judge Strong, in 1871, came to Raleigh and formed a copartnership with Hon. Thomas Bragg, former Governor of the State, of which Hon. W. N. H. Smith, an able and learned lawyer who had represented the First Congressional District in the House of Representatives of the Thirty-sixth Congress, was later a member until he retired to become Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

The Capital has not had an abler law firm than that of Bragg, Smith and Strong.

In days when it was a rare thing for a Democrat to be elected from Wake to the General Assembly, Judge Strong was, after a brilliant campaign, chosen to the House of Representatives where he rendered services that greatly enhanced his reputation.

Prominent among these was his advocacy of the bill introduced at the session of 1874-75 for the promotion of the interest of the University which had been defeated in the House where there seemed little hope that an Institution that had been the pride of the Commonwealth would again resume her career of usefulness and blessing to the State.

At this juncture and under these circumstances, dominated by his love for his Alma Mater, he made probably the greatest speech of his life and snatched victory from the jaws of defeat.

That accomplished writer, Col. John D. Cameron, wrote the following account of this event: "Mr. Strong's name hereafter, in the rising prosperity of the University must be inseparably connected with this happy time in the tide of its fortune, for to his determination, his unconquerable zeal, unanswerable argument, his hopefulness when others despaired and his impassioned eloquence are due much of that change of sentiment which at length aroused the House of Representatives to a generous emulation for the honor of the State and interest of education."

It was comparable to the speech made by James C. Dobbin, on the same arena, when the bill to establish the Insane Asylum trembled in the balance. It has been said that Mr. Dobbin was Judge Strong's ideal lawyer and that his powerful arguments which young Strong heard in the Superior Court of Sampson had much to do with kindling the ambition that made Judge Strong a great lawyer.

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It need occasion no surprise that later he served as one of its trustees and that the struggling but grateful University conferred upon this beloved son its most honorable degree.

In 1876 he was elected Judge of the Criminal Court of Wake in which capacity he served with much reputation until he retired to reënter the general practice of his profession which was to him an engrossing passion. During this service his charges to grand juries were so admirable that the bar of Wake requested the publication of the ablest, delivered in June, 1877, because they were of opinion "That if it were printed and generally disseminated among the people, they would have a clearer idea of the criminal jurisprudence of the State," with which he gladly complied. It is with something of a feeling of sadness that I recall and write the names of these lawyers: W. N. H. Smith, Joseph B. Batchelor, George H. Snow, Thomas C. Fuller, R. C. Badger, John Gatling, William P. Batchelor, T. M. Argo, John W. Hinsdale, S. F. Mordecai, T. P. Devereux, Richard H. Battle, Jr., George M. Smedes, and C. M. Busbee, his friends and cotemporaries, who have all passed away and whose various talents and accomplishments gave distinction to the legal profession of the State.

For some years, in connection with his practice, he conducted a private law school largely patronized, whose students have gained eminence at the bar and upon the bench.

I recall the effort we made to nominate him to a place on the Supreme Court Bench, a position for which he was eminently qualified, and the grief that came to us when, for the lack of a few votes, he was defeated. Among those deeply depressed at the unexpected result I remember George H. Brown, Charles B. Aycock, Josephus and Charles C. Daniels.

Upon the death, in 1884, of my friend Abram K. Smedes, one of the best lawyers I have known and one of the finest gentlemen it has been given me to call by that sacred name, with whom Judge Strong was associated in the practice at Goldsboro, the admission of Judge Strong into the partnership of Aycock and Daniels was suggested. The young lawyers had known and admired him from their youth and warmly welcomed the formation of the new firm of Strong, Aycock and Daniels which for several years practiced in Wayne and the surrounding counties.

This intimate and delightful association transformed their regard for him into a deep and lasting affection which the lapse of years has not diminished. He was afterward associated with R. T. Grey and E. R. Stamps, of Raleigh, and later upon the entrance into the practice of his son Robert C. Strong, now for many years Supreme Court Reporter, he organized the law firm of Strong and Strong which continued until ill health forced his cessation from the labors of his profession.

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In Judge Strong were combined the simplicity of greatness, the guilelessness of a child and the virility of a strong man. In the presentation of a cause to the court he preferred the gentle ways of persuasion, of which he was a master, and of quiet but often elaborate argument based upon the fundamental principles of the law and buttressed by all the pertinent authorities within his reach and an appeal to that "law whose seat is the bosom of God, whose voice the harmony of the world."

But when the occasion demanded he was bold, aggressive and pertinacious; and in the presence of injustice or oppression, his eloquence was a flaming sword. An occasion is recalled in which these qualities and their manly exercise created the risk of attachment for contempt from a Federal Judge who had, like some other judges, a fondness for that sort of procedure, but without effect upon the advocate who fearlessly defended his client against a false and malicious accusation.

His arguments abounded in analogies and illustrations drawn from the farm and the shop, from the thoughts and beliefs of the people, from nature and from the store of legal and literary riches his industry had acquired and assimilated and which his remarkably retentive memory held in reserve for instant and effective use.

He surpassed all his associates in literary acquirements and in beauty and felicity of speech. I recall, however, that on one occasion, in Wayne Superior Court, his use of a quotation from Shakespeare was not understood by a large portion of his audience. His great antagonist, William T. Dortch, in his address to the jury made a statement which Judge Strong regarded as a striking admission in his favor, and in his reply, he quoted it, and, turning to Mr. Dortch, he exclaimed in the language of Gratiano to Shylock: "I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word" to the amazement of the jury who had never heard of Shylock and who sat in open-mouthed wonder that Judge Strong should call his old and highly esteemed friend a Jew.

I recall another interesting incident which took place in the early '80's in Wilson Superior Court and illustrated an absence of mind that sometimes affected him and a tendency unconsciously to speak aloud occasionally his secret, innermost thoughts. He had filed twenty exceptions to the report of a referee and was arguing them before Judge McKoy.

The bar sat in silent admiration of the learning, ability and eloquence with which he discussed sixteen of his exceptions, and I thought he had surely won the decision of the court, when, pausing for a moment, he said: "And now, may it please your Honor, I come to the exceptions upon which I really rely," and never understood the quiet ripple of laughter that ran round the bar at this unusual and unexpected statement.



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Twenty years ago I wrote of him this paragraph, which I quote: "He was a most industrious lawyer who never rested content until he had seen and examined every authority on every side of every proposition he considered." His acute and somewhat subtle mind enabled him to see a subject at so many angles that there resulted sometimes an uncertainty of conviction which, however, did not militate against his eloquent and persuasive presentation of his views to the court."

In the trial of causes there were no unseemly bickerings to which he was a party. He never thought that loyalty to his client made necessary or justified unkind or bitter comments upon his adversary. No stretch of imagination could conceive him engaged in verbal hostilities, utterly out of keeping with the respect due a court of justice, resulting in threats of personal violence and invitations to step outside the courtroom and settle controversies in brutal physical combat.

The soul of courtesy, he carried into his practice at the bar the gracious amenities of social life which won and held the respect and affection of his brethren. He was first a man, responsive to all that appeals to the highest manhood—family affection, devotion to friends, faithfulness to clients, loyalty to country, and the greatest of all loyalties, loyalty to truth and righteousness.

And then a lawyer whose career was adorned with the virtues of private life. He loved the law and was its tireless student. It was not dull or dry as dust to him, but full of interest, a living force in the lives of men. He knew by name and cited from memory the leading cases in our reports without referring to indexes or digests. I think Judge William R. Allen was the only lawyer I have known who equalled him in this valuable but unusual acquirement.

To Judge Strong no labor was too arduous that served to winnow the true principle from conflicting decisions and multiplied distinctions and refinements. He was temperate in all things except work. I saw him often perform this labor with signal success but too often at the expense of his physical well being.

In my recollection he was never robust in health, and this devotion to duty, this incessant, intense pursuit of "the true reason of the law" eventually impaired his strength and brought on the illness from which he long suffered and which, on October 10th, 1897, resulted in his death.

I became acquainted with Judge Strong when I was a boy in Wilson where he usually attended the Superior Court. I saw a good deal of him, and his charming manners, his amiability and his thoughtful consideration for those about him, and especially for an over-grown boy, drew me strongly to so attractive a personality. I had a propensity for looking in on the courts which were held in the block in which I

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lived and heard him in debate with the able bar gathered there among whom were Connor & Woodard, William T. Dortch and Hugh F. Murray. I thought there were giants in those days, and during a life which has now passed the limit of three score years and ten and which has been mostly spent in and about the courts, I am not quite sure I have seen their equals, not to say their superiors.

From our first meeting I had a great admiration for this gentleman which, when I was privileged to associate with him as his junior and to experience his fatherly kindness and consideration, grew into an affectionate veneration.

I can now recall his benignant face as he addressed the court with the statement that he was presenting a suggestion of his Brother Aycok or his Brother Daniels and proceeded to argue it with such power as to make his young brethren believe there was much more in the suggestion than they had imagined.

It has been said that he was a gentleman of the old school, but I have always felt that he stood in the front rank of gentlemen of all the schools, old or young.

May I quote Thackeray's definition or description which years ago I applied to my friend Henry G. Connor and which I think describes Judge Strong who resembled Judge Connor in many respects: "What is it to be a gentleman? Is it to have lofty aims, to lead a pure life, to keep your honor virgin, to have the esteem of your fellow citizens, and the love of your fireside; to bear good fortune meekly, to suffer evil with constancy; and though evil or good to maintain truth always?"

Judge Strong was not exempt from the misfortunes and sorrows incident to our common humanity, and he bore them with the patience and fortitude inculcated by the teachings of the great church of which from his youth he was a communicant. When I last saw him shortly before his death, he had suffered from a long illness and was blind. A young lady, one of his daughters, I think, was reading to him one of his early favorites, a novel of Walter Scott. I spent an hour with him in pleasant conversation in which, among other things, he discussed most interestingly the merits of the great novelist.

My last impression of him was derived from the cheerfulness and serenity with which he awaited the end of a well-spent life, and I came away thinking of Milton's poem on his blindness:

"Doth God exact day labor, light denied?  
 I fondly ask. But patience to prevent  
 That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need  
 Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best  
 Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best.  
 . . . . They also serve who only stand and wait."

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REMARKS OF CHIEF JUSTICE STACY, UPON ACCEPTING PORTRAIT  
OF GEORGE VAUGHAN STRONG, IN THE SUPREME  
COURT ROOM, 28 MAY, 1934

It was the verdict of his contemporaries that George Vaughan Strong was a man of brilliant intellect, a lawyer of meticulous care, a citizen of unquestioned patriotism.

His loyalty to the University of North Carolina, his alma mater, was the deciding factor in saving that institution in the dark days of Reconstruction when its very existence hung in the balance. "As long as there is an appreciation of devotion and justice in North Carolina, so long must the name of George V. Strong be inseparably linked with our University" was the tribute paid him by Dr. Kemp Plummer Battle, President of the University at that time. As a reward for his matchless eloquence in behalf of the University, he has ever been held in grateful remembrance by the Alumni of that institution.

Judge Strong was regarded as a lawyer of unusual ability, and won high place at the bars of Goldsboro and Raleigh, where he practiced. Sincerely devoted to his State, he held numerous important public positions. He was a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1861, District Attorney under the Confederacy, member of the General Assembly, and Judge of the Criminal Court of Wake County. No man of mediocre ability could have attained or filled these positions.

It has been said of him that he was an exemplar of courtesy, and seemingly always bore in mind the precept:

"I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not delay or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

The Court is pleased to have this excellent portrait. The Marshal will hang it in its appropriate place. The splendid appraisal of his life and character by one who knew him well and who himself so worthily exemplifies the enduring virtues of right living, will be printed in the forthcoming volume of the Reports.