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HISTORY
OF
I D A H O

The Gem of the Mountains

ILLUSTRATED

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HON. JOHN TRACY MORRISON.

Able lawyer, sagacious business man, a wise and incorruptible governor, a devoted husband and father, a faithful friend and sincere Christian—in these words are summed up the life record of one who for twenty-five years labored for the material, intellectual, social, political and moral progress of the commonwealth of Idaho. His life's journey compassed practically fifty-five years. He often remarked that he had never reached his ideals—but who of us does—and throughout the state there are many who bear testimony to the worth of his influence and his work upon the development of the state. A modern philosopher has said, "Not the good that comes to us, but the good that comes to the world through us, is the measure of our success," and judged by this standard John Tracy Morrison was a most successful man. At memorial services held in Boise two weeks following his demise, which occurred on the 20th of December, 1915, Dr. Boone, president of the College of Idaho at Caldwell, said: "The year 1860 brought a glad Christmas time to the home of John and Sophia Morrison, of old Jefferson county, Pennsylvania, for, as at Bethlehem of old, a son was born. The child grew and developed amid the favorable physical, moral and spiritual environments of a Christian American home. John Morrison, Sr., was a hardy pioneer of the early west and lived to the ripe age of over four score and ten. Sophia was his second wife. She had given a considerable portion of her life to teaching in our public schools. They were a very intelligent, high-thinking, religious couple, with most worthy ambition for the success of their two sons—John Tracy and William Zalmon. Thus our friend was favored with a most noble parentage, an asset for true success that cannot be estimated.

"Having finished his education as far as the schools of his home community could carry him, the school year 1880-1881 found John Tracy Morrison a student in Wooster University, Wayne county, Ohio. And it was here that our lifelong association and friendship began, and while we were not classmates yet we were thrown together in various student organizations, and with the one exception of the pastor of this church, Dr. Donaldson, John Morrison was the longest time my personal friend, close as a brother. It is said that more than half the value of one's education consists in the friendships formed during one's school days, for, after all, the living book is the most closely read.

"In studentship, Morrison was far above the average, and took high rank in essay, oratory and debate, yet he was neither bookworm nor mollycoddle; he had time to play baseball, and often occupied the pitcher's box, and in the gymnasium when he donned the mitts his adversary knew that he was there. After staying out a year to teach, he graduated in 1887, taking the A. B. degree, and we next find our friend an LL. B. from Cornell Law School. As one Abram in the olden time in the highly fertile valley of the Euphrates heard the call of the Lord, 'Get thee up from thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house unto a land I shall show thee,' so, John T. Morrison, standing conscious of his young manhood's strength, well equipped for efficient service through his chosen profession, the law, was ready for a call. He heard, and July, 1890, found him in Caldwell amid the sage plains of Idaho, and later in the year he was joined here by his wife and infant daughter. Just how God made known his will to Abram we may not know, but Abram was certainly most human in executing his call as he loitered along the road. Just how the call to Idaho came to Mr. Morrison we do not know, but I remember that early in 1890 he wrote me inquiring about the opportunity for a young lawyer in Idaho. My reply was not that of the orthodox real estate new country boomer, but was to the effect that I saw nothing but hard foundation work with little pay for any kind of professional man. But a man with

a call was not to be thwarted by any such pessimism, so another letter came. My reply was, 'Come, see for yourself, don't take my word.' He came, and for a few weeks the newness and the extreme primitiveness of the country almost appalled him, but the pioneer spirit soon got him and from that day to his last day he was an enthusiastic citizen of Idaho.

"We leave to others better qualified to speak the estimate of our friend's career as a business man, lawyer and politician, except that we know that in all these he was actuated by the highest motives and ideals, and history shows that as governor of Idaho his administration was clean and constructive.

"The first twelve years of his life in Idaho were spent at Caldwell, and it was here that we were most closely associated through church and school activities. Morrison did not leave his religion on the other side of the divide, but at once entered the religious activities of the community. This was likewise manifest in his choice of a law partner. He could think of no one who would be more helpful as a professional man and a Christian in the town than his friend and classmate in law school, Hon. John C. Rice. So, early in November, 1890, Mr. Rice came to Caldwell, and has proved to be the strong professional and Christian man that his friend had foretold.

"Mr. and Mrs. Morrison soon put their letters into the little Presbyterian Home Mission Church and became active workers, Mr. Morrison superintendent of Sunday school, and with Mr. Rice and others was the founder of the first C. E. Society in Caldwell. He was the third elder elected and ordained in the Caldwell church. Some five times he was sent by the Presbytery of Boise as its lay delegate to the general assembly, and on each occasion the interests of the church were wisely cared for by our friend.

"The College of Idaho had been located in the town of Caldwell in the spring of 1890. John was enthusiastic for the school to open for active work, and a large part of the organization of the school was effected by him and his law partner, Mr. Rice. When we opened, October 7, 1891, Morrison and Rice were on hand as teachers in the new college. Morrison held the chairs of English and history, and Rice Greek and mathematics. Mr. Morrison taught in the college for about two years. His students of those years still testify of his efficiency as a teacher of English. He was also secretary of the college board of trustees for over ten years.

"Mr. Morrison loved the pure and beautiful wherever he found it, in nature, literature or art. He was a delightful companion in the mountains of Idaho; he could describe a sunset or dwell on the beauties of woodland and valley.

"He was a discriminating reader and a real literary critic, and all his own compositions were well finished. His home in Caldwell was a gathering place for all who enjoyed the best in music, literature and art, and Mr. and Mrs. Morrison extended these high ideals through the organization of various literary and musical societies in the community.

"Our brother was a man of large sympathies. He stood for justice as between men. In the hour of calamity or sorrow he was a helpful friend. He was a great home man. To design, build and furnish a house was a delight to him, and to tend the roses on his lawn a real relief after a hard day's work."

On the same occasion Hon. John C. Rice, of Caldwell, who had been associated in law practice with Mr. Morrison there for a number of years and who was asked to speak concerning Governor Morrison as a Christian, professional and public man, said: "A man is known through his various relationships. A man is not abstractly good or bad or mean or generous; his character is known by his relations as husband, father, friend, citizen. And Christianity, when it enters a life, gives tone and color and equality to every relationship which a man assumes. It was my privilege to be associated with Governor Morrison for four years. I could say that I never knew him to do a mean or dishonorable thing. I could say that I never knew him to betray a client or a trust; but I think if I said that I would not be passing a very high compliment upon him. And I think he looked upon the practice of the law and upon his position as a public man in a very different light from that. Nowhere in the Book are we told that it is much of a virtue not to betray your trust and not to do the mean things and the dishonorable things, and I do not think that it occupied a great deal of Governor Morrison's attention or thought to steel himself against doing the things of that sort. But I think that he looked upon his profession and himself as a practitioner at the bar as instru-

ments of justice. Christianity, as applied to the practice of the law, means, first, justice and truth; it means, next, compassion and mercy; and the highest ideal of every Christian man who enters upon that as upon any other profession is that of service. And when I express these ideals I think I am expressing the ideals that actuated Governor Morrison.

"The same ideals possessed him in his public life—the ideals of truth and justice. He was a very democratic man. I did not enjoy the most intimate association with Governor Morrison at all times, but I did happen to know of his attitude toward certain questions that came up while he was governor. In the eyes of Governor Morrison every citizen occupied the same position as every other citizen, and he did not think that any set of men, or any man of any particular faith, occupied any position in the eyes of the State different from the great body of citizens. All were entitled to the same consideration, the same justice, and no one should ask for more.

"It is every man's ambition, or should be, to be a useful citizen. It should be his ambition to leave his State, if he is at all a public man, somewhat advanced on the road. Governor Morrison's purpose ran along that line. His desire was to do something constructive; his desire was that the State, with his help, should make some progress along right lines."

It was on the 8th of July, 1886, in Jamestown, New York, that Governor Morrison was married to Miss Grace Darling Mackey, of Cleveland, Ohio, who was born in Warren, Ohio, a daughter of James Scott and Olive (Susan) Anderson Mackey. The Mackey family was established in Ohio in 1805, becoming pioneers of the Western Reserve. Mrs. Morrison was educated in Lake Erie College and the University of Wooster, completing a course in the musical department of the latter institution, and in the same year her future husband graduated from another department of the school. They became acquainted during their student days and it was the year subsequent to their marriage that they were graduated. Mrs. Morrison is a skilled pianist and is an expert in the teaching of music, particularly piano. The art of music has always been her source of recreation and inspiration throughout her life. Her love for this has led her to teach music ever since her marriage, not of necessity but from choice, because of the great pleasure she has derived in making known to others the beauties and harmony of the art. She has also had great delight in literature and has ever been of a studious nature. She belongs to the leading clubs of Boise, including the Columbian and Fortnightly and of the latter has been the president. Governor and Mrs. Morrison became the parents of a daughter and a son; Mary Louise, now the wife of Allen Wilcox, of Star; and John Mackey, who was a student in Bowdoin College of Maine when the United States entered the war and he enlisted in the aviation branch of the service and was commissioned a first lieutenant. He returned to Bowdoin College in 1919. While a veil of privacy should ever shut off the public gaze from the home life, it is well known that Governor Morrison was largely an ideal husband and father, finding his greatest happiness at his own fireside and sharing in each interest of wife and children. Governor and Mrs. Morrison were no more closely associated in any line of activity or interest than in their church work. They were devoted members of the Presbyterian church and on their removal to Caldwell became active members of the Home Mission church there and united with the First Presbyterian church following their removal to Boise. His pastor and a friend of many years' standing said of Governor Morrison: 'To live in lives made better by our presence is not to die.' I doubt if this sentiment has stronger emphasis anywhere than it has in our relation with this friend who has finished his work and has entered into his rest. He lives where men are measured by the standard of manhood. He lives where human interests are creeping up laboriously toward attainments in righteousness and justice. He lives where the ideals of humanity are becoming more and more comprehensive and where they who seek to serve their fellowmen are not only thinking the thoughts of men but are thinking the thoughts of God after him. He lives where friendship means something that is rich and sacred and personal, for he was such a friend as grappled you to him with hooks of steel. One of the delightful things about friendship is that you are not required always to explain what is in your thought for him or for others. The true friend sits in quietness. The comradeship itself is worth while. He measures your ideals not alone by the words that are spoken but by the life that is lived, and when life's great tests come he does not ask you to explain the things that he has not understood. He believes in you; he believes in your integrity;

he trusts you to make good. Such a friend was John Morrison in college, when we were boys together, through the days and the years that multiplied, until this closing year of 1915 when he finished his work. Friendship means more because many of us have learned to know the warm-heartedness and the sturdy integrity of John Morrison. And Christianity means more because of the frank way in which he gave it expression in his life. For twenty years or more I had slight acquaintance with him, but coming again into this region the old friendship was renewed. I have often said to friends east and west that nowhere did I find a man in public life—not often in private life—who would take you into his office and talk personal religion, initiating the subject himself as naturally as he would speak about the sunshine of Idaho or the opportunities of the future years in material affairs. It was the conversation of a man who has traversed the ground again and again in his own mind—a man who has been studying the principles of truth—a man who has been seeking to apply them to other lives as well as to his own—a man who has learned the lesson of life from the great Teacher of life. He made his mistakes; he had difficulties that no one knew better than himself. Some lives are smaller because of the obstacles they must meet. Some minds have grown narrow and partisan because of the difficulties that present themselves in life. Some hearts have grown bitter because of the hindrances that are in the way of their progress. I think John Morrison grew more kindly in his thought for his fellowmen. I think there was more of gentleness and persuasion in his life in these latter days and months. He learned from life's disappointments and discouragements because he had a fellowship with the Man of Sorrows who was acquainted with grief. . . . If John Morrison has been misunderstood, if his actions have been misinterpreted, he has a large company of men who have suffered with him, when they undertook to stand in any community for the right and the truth. He lived in a state that has adopted some of the ideals which he incorporated but was not permitted to bring to full realization. It is a most fascinating study to see how the states in their development have caught up the ideals of this man, or of that, or of another—how the nations have builded their customs, their laws, their institutions, about the ideals of some man who stands out strikingly at the strategic period of development. Men have said that John Morrison was the first constructive governor of Idaho. I do not know; but I know that he purposed to be a builder—not one that would pull down anything worth while that had ever been built.”