

**MEMOIRS.
VOL. 2**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649154128

Memoirs. Vol. 2 by W. W. Holden

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W. W. HOLDEN

**MEMOIRS.
VOL. 2**

6-11-11
118

Duke University, Trinity College
Historical Society

The John Lawson Monographs
OF THE
Trinity College Historical Society
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

VOL. 11

MEMOIRS OF
W. W. HOLDEN

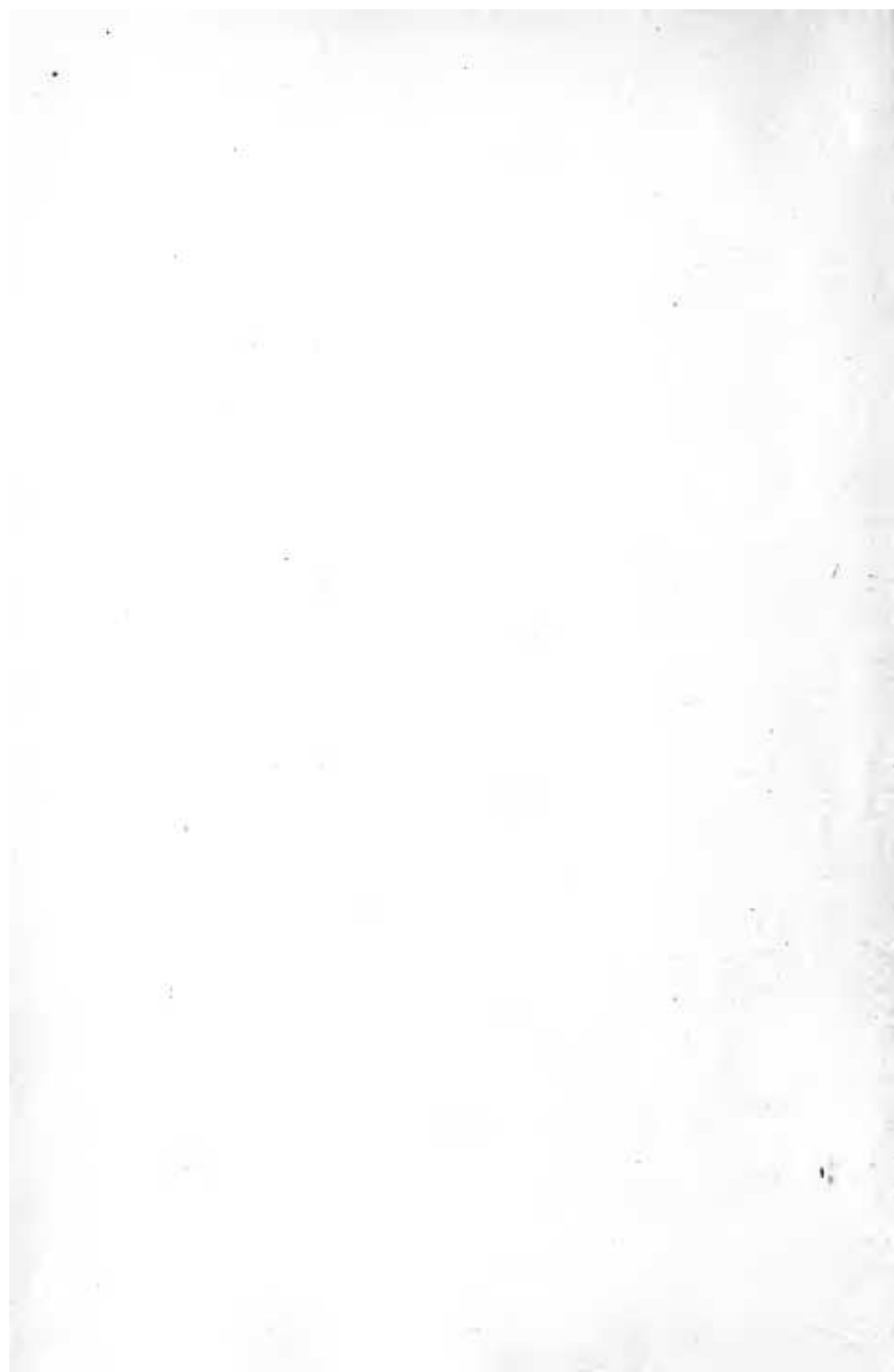


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DURHAM, N. C.
THE SEEMAN PRINTERY
1911

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Introduction

The *Memoirs of W. W. Holden*, which form the present volume of the John Lawson Monographs, were written between November, 1889, and March, 1890. Governor Holden was then seventy-one years of age; in 1882 he had suffered an attack of paralysis; and his health was so feeble that he was compelled to dictate the *Memoirs*, his amanuensis being his daughter, Mrs. C. A. Sherwood, of Raleigh. The morning after the manuscript was finished he was again stricken with paralysis, which completely shattered his faculties. His death occurred in March, 1892.

It was Governor Holden's desire that some one should revise his manuscript and see it through the press. For this work he turned to Theo. H. Hill and John B. Neathery, but neither would undertake the responsibility. He also solicited the aid of Gov. C. H. Brogden in composing the manuscript; the only result was the letter, Brogden to Holden, given on page 169.

The conditions under which the *Memoirs* were written explain several characteristics of the work. Governor Holden's power of organizing material had evidently been shattered by age and illness, for frequently questions relating to the Civil War and Reconstruction are discussed out of chronological order, related topics are often widely separated from each other, and the narrative of certain events is repeated. His memory, also, failed him, for there

are some mistakes in detail and facts of much significance are omitted. Doubtless it was in full realization of these conditions that he writes, on page 25: "And further I will say I am not writing a history. While my mind is full of the events of the past, and men and things of which I am writing swarm before my vision, I have not the physical strength to catch and fix them all on paper, or to refer to documents and handle them, and deduce therefrom the actions and the characters of the men concerned. These are simply stray bits of history. I am innocent of any purpose to do injustice to anyone."

On the other hand, there are certain strong, positive features of the *Memoirs*. One of these is a remarkable absence of any vindictive feeling. The narrative of events which might recall the conflicts and bitterness of the past is, as far as possible, omitted. This is notably true of the contest with Judge Ellis for the gubernatorial nomination in 1858 and of the bond issue in reconstruction days. The discussion of bonds was omitted, I am sure, because of personal attachment to some who were concerned in the bond legislation; in fact, Governor Holden once wrote a newspaper sketch of the influences which shaped the issue of the bonds of 1869, but refrained from publishing it on account of friendship for one deeply involved in the measure.

Another characteristic of the *Memoirs* is that when his own policies are under consideration, the author assumes full responsibility and never shifts the burden to others. A striking example of this is the view of the military movement of 1870, known as the

"Kirk-Holden War." Not a word is given in the *Memoirs* of the pressure brought to bear on the Governor by leading members of his party to take military measures. Yet, when measures which did not involve his own responsibility or the integrity of others are under discussion, Governor Holden often displays an insight into conditions and a power of presentation that are far above the average. Such are the descriptions of the Free Suffrage Movement, the Charleston Convention of 1860, and the realignment of parties in North Carolina after secession was accomplished.

Finally, the *Memoirs* reflect many of the convictions of age and experience, the backward view of one who had lived and fought through some of the memorable political campaigns and movements in the history of North Carolina.

In full cognizance of these limitations, the *Memoirs* are given to the public as an interesting and valuable contribution to the history of North Carolina. Editorial emendations have been withheld as far as possible, with the aim of letting Governor Holden speak without restriction. However, to offset his assumption of full responsibility for the military movement of 1870, a letter of Edward Conigland has been inserted as a foot-note to page 176 and in an Appendix has been added the testimony of R. C. Badger before the Senate Committee of 1871, which investigated the relation of Senator John Pool to the Kirk-Holden War. Both Conigland and Badger were counsel for the defense in the Impeachment and speak from knowledge and conviction. For these

additions to the original manuscript of Governor Holden, editorial judgment is alone responsible. Some details of Governor Holden's career not included in the Memoirs are given in sketches entitled "William W. Holden" in the *Historical Papers of the Trinity College Historical Society*, Series III.

Aug. 1, 1911.

WM. K. BOYD.