



HON. THOMAS F. HARGIS.

The people of Breathitt county may be proud of the fact that their county is named in memory of a governor of Kentucky—John Breathitt—whose success, spirit, and popularity were of that intense character that it has been averred that but for his untimely death (he died at the early age of forty-seven) there was scarcely an honor within the gift of the people but he would have obtained it. They may be proud of their native hills and rich valleys, proud of their coal and iron ore, proud of their advancement and prosperity, but they have need to “plume” themselves upon nothing with more sincerity than the fact that Hon. Thomas F. Hargis was born in their midst; and that amid all his successes and his ever-increasing popularity, he loves to remember that Breathitt is his native county—that with it must forever be associated his tenderest and most endearing recollections of the past.

Thomas F. Hargis is the son of John Hargis, Esq., and his mother's maiden name was Miss Elizabeth Weddington. Her people were of German extraction—excellent, progressive, and endowed with marked

ability. Miss Weddington was American by birth, having been born in Russell county, Va. His father, John Hargis, Esq., came to Kentucky from Washington county, Va., as early as 1823. He was a man of strong character, marked spirit and independence, and took position with the leading men of his day and time. He was a member of the convention which framed the present Constitution of Kentucky, assembled at Frankfort, October 1, 1849. He represented the counties of Breathitt and Morgan. He also represented Breathitt county in the years 1855, 1856, and 1857 in the House of Representatives of the State Legislature. He was a man highly esteemed for his intelligence and integrity, and the ability, zeal, and firmness with which he maintained his principles and adhered to his opinions. His son, Thomas F. Hargis, was born in the quiet hamlet of Jackson (named in honor of Andrew Jackson), situated in Breathitt county. The date of his birth on the family record reads, 24th day of June, 1842. He was reared in his native county, and something of the spirit and strength, capability and resource of it seems to have taken root and flourished in his sturdy, enduring, but affable and sunny disposition.

Breathitt county abounds in picturesque scenery, which would inspire the true artist to behold, and also lend a theme to the poet. The scenery is fine, the waters are pure, and the air is redolent with the perfume of wild flowers growing with profuse luxuriance on those lofty mountain peaks.

Here in his native county he was educated, even then giving promise of future eminence by his remarkable powers of application, and his aspiring mind, which was never satisfied with anything less than his "level best" in his pursuit after knowledge. In that charming time of the year 1861,

When the willow shoots forth a green feather,
And the buttercup burns in the grass,

The fires of youthful ardor began to glow with fervid heat in his heart. His dreams early and late were all of war—and only war. The song of the Lurlie among the rocks could not have equaled in harmony the sounds of the ear-piercing fife and the martial music of the drum, calling the sons of the South to arms to battle for God and the right. At least could not have equaled them when regarded from the standpoint of his youthful judgment. So it was that he joined the Fifth Kentucky Infantry, commanded by General John S. Williams, in Western Virginia, in General Humphrey Marshall's Brigade. From the time he "buckled on his armor" to the close of the war he was constantly in the service of the Confederacy. He was promoted to the position of captain of cavalry at the time that he was wounded at

Milford, in the Valley of Virginia, in November, 1864. He was captured and imprisoned at Johnston's Island. He was peculiarly unfortunate in this regard, having been captured four times. But he was equally fortunate about procuring his liberty, for he every time succeeded in escaping or being exchanged. He was brave and daring, and to-day bears several meritorious scars upon his person which he gained by gallant conduct under fire and scourging sword.

But after the long struggle was over, and peace was restored to our suffering country, many of those who had wandered away from old familiar places returned. Among them was Thomas F. Hargis. He applied himself to the study of law, and in April, 1866, he received his license to practice his profession. He entered upon the same in Rowan county, Ky., but in 1868 he removed to Carlisle, Nicholas county, Ky., where a finer opening awaited his energy and his ambition, and where the culmination of his heart's desire was reached, for in the month of June—the glorious time of sunshine and roses—on the 23d day of said month in the following year, 1869, he was married to Miss Lucy Stewart Norvell, of Carlisle, Ky. From this auspicious moment fortune and honor seemed to have clasped hands and united energies in their desire to shower benefits on him.

At an especial election for county judge held in September, 1869, he was elected to fill the position, which he did with such credit to himself and satisfaction to the general public that in August, 1870, he was re-elected to the same position without opposition. In 1871 he was nominated by a Democratic convention, and at the August election, 1871, he was chosen senator from the Thirtieth district, defeating Judge James W. Anderson by four hundred and fifty-nine majority. He served four years in that position, winning many friends in his public career, and endearing himself to his constituents by a manly and conscientious adherence to their interests.

At the convention held for the purpose of nominating a criminal and equity judge of the Fourteenth Judicial district, Mr. Hargis was nominated unanimously, and was elected in March, 1878, over Colonel John L. Hickman (Republican), of Maysville, Ky., by twenty-two hundred and fourteen majority. He filled this position also with great credit to himself until April 24, 1879, when he received the nomination at Owingsville, Ky., as the choice of the Democratic party for the Court of Appeals for the First Appellate district, and on the 12th day of May, 1879, he was elected over the present incumbent, Judge W. H. Holt, of Mount Sterling, Ky., and this by the handsome majority of thirty-five hundred and fifty-five votes. He served on the bench of the Court of Appeals until the 1st day of September, 1884.

At the close of his term Judge Hargis removed to Louisville, Ky., and began the practice of law, having declined to run for re-election to the arduous position he had so creditably filled. His opinions while on the Supreme Bench of Kentucky met with the highest praise among attorneys in and out of the State. He has formed here a partnership with Captain George M. Eastin, than whom lives not on earth a more gallant and gracious gentleman, and the firm name is "Hargis & Eastin," and I venture the prophecy that it will become a power at the bar throughout the Commonwealth, for as practitioners of the law both gentlemen have a profound and thorough knowledge of its principles, and the most approved forms of practice, and as a consequence are bound to hold their eminence in the profession and add new laurels to their fame as clear, logical, and forcible practitioners.

Judge Hargis is candid and honest, bold and fearless, a ready debater, an able lawyer, and exhaustive thinker. His intellect is of a high order. In every relation of life, by firm and inflexible integrity, he has won the approbation of his fellowmen, and the warm and sincere affection of his many personal friends. He is a self-made man, and is one of the finest examples of the ennobling tendency of Republican institutions, and an encouragement to all meritorious and aspiring young men in America.

His marriage has been a peculiarly happy one, he declaring that his wife has indeed been "the star of his destiny," since he dates all his successes in public life from their wedding day. They have five children, four girls and one boy, who is named after our distinguished citizen, Robert Woolley, Esq.

