

Hon. Temple Houston's Eloquent Plea In Defense of Alfred Son Delivered at El Reno, Okla., Terr., Nov. 16th, 1897

Alfred Son Acquitted After Being Tried Three Time for the Murder of Fred Hoffman

The court house was packed last night to overflowing to listen to the speech of Colonel Temple Houston for the defense. It was a masterly effort, the finest, in fact, ever heard in El Reno. The counsel delivered his speech entirely to the jury without any brass band accompaniment, and the twelve men who listened to it drank in the words as they fell from the learned speaker's lips. After going over in a brief way the evidence which was introduced during the trial, Colonel Houston closed his speech with the following touching remarks:

"Gentlemen, as I told you in the beginning, the territory has shown no motive for the commission of such a crime, and we have given you a reasonable—a true—explanation of every act and utterance of the defendant—even for his trip in that fatal direction. He went only to woo (and win) one of the daughters of the land, tender-eyed, and fair to look upon; and how like a boy, to take the shortest route to see his sweetheart, and, seeing her, take her back by the longest route. The life of this boy, up to the instant of his accusation, has been faultless; and do you believe that he took this sudden and awful plunge from innocence into fathomless depths of crime—from child-like purity into hideous murder? When asked to believe such a supposition, refer to your

duties, as given you in his honor's charge; apply the law as there laid down to the proof, and then follow the dictates of your conscience, and I do not fear the result. This brave boy asks me to say to you that, to him, honor is dearer than life, and, as the old exemplar of purest patriotism thundered in the ears of his country's oppressors, he says in this, his hour of trial, 'give me liberty or give me death.' He demands that you free him or inflict the death penalty. Rather than that you should fix upon his boyish brow the brand of felon, he would prefer to walk from your presence with his body polluted with the scales of whitest leprosy. He appeals to no sentiment of pity; only to the justice of his country's laws, which you are so solemnly charged to administer. You came into that box with light hearts and consciences clear. Oh, may you leave there thus! untortured with the curse of having wrecked the life of him whose life you hold in the hollow of your hands. And he is so young, too. Boyhood's down still softens upon his child-like face. You will not be here long now. Your homes where loved ones are even now watching, waiting, to greet you, and when you clasp them to your manly breasts may the rapture at that moment be not embittered by the memory of having wrecked the life of yonder boy, whom all law and righteous-

ness plead with you to save. Gentlemen, be just; heed not the perjured fiends who thirst for this boy's blood, and in the years yet to come, when the pale messenger summons you before the court where you shall be tried along side of the kings of the earth, each memoried hour of life shall come back to you with awful distinctness, and then happily can you recall that when you judged here, you judged with justice, and in the very spirit of Him who said: 'Even as you did it unto the least of these, so you did it unto me.' So that in the perfection of righteousness you tried the stranger within your gates (for he never saw one of you until he fearlessly placed his fate in your hands) even as you would be tried yourselves. He has a Texas home far across the southern prairies, where the skies were a deeper purple, where the dawn has a brighter glow and the sunset wears a softer gold; where midnight stars look down upon us in a more unspeakable splendor. His loved ones, like yours, are waiting—no! no! not like yours—for his life is darkened even now by the awful shadow of death; and who shall tell what he feels? Gentlemen, break that suspense; dry those tears; bind up these almost broken hearts, for now no power but you can do so. This noble duty done and each hour of life thereafter will grow proud with this recollection."

