

THE MEN IN GRAY

by
Robert Catlett Cave

*Their spirits were victorious;
their bodies only fainted and failed.*

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by Robert Catlett Cave

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To the Memory of
The Men in Gray

who, with matchless courage, fought to maintain the principles of the Constitution and perpetuate the Government established by their fathers, and whose heroic deeds crowned the South with deathless glory.



Robert Catlett Cave

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FOREWORD



When I delivered the oration at the unveiling of the monument to the soldiers and sailors of the Southern Confederacy, in Richmond, Virginia, on May 30, 1894, I supposed that the war was over; that the animosities engendered by it had been buried; that it might be discussed as freely as any other historical event; and that at the dedication of a monument to the Confederate dead a Southerner's attempt to free their memory from reproach by plainly stating the reasons that moved them to take up arms and justifying their action would be received by the people of the North with patience and kindly toleration, if not with approval. However it may have seemed to those who read extracts from it, the speech was not prompted by a malevolent spirit. Indeed, I think I can truthfully say that never, either during or after the war, was I moved by a feeling of enmity toward the brave men who fought under the Stars and Stripes in obedience to what they believed to be the call of duty. I deplored the fact that they had been deceived into taking up arms against what I regarded as the cause of truth, justice, and freedom; but toward them personally I had no feeling of

ill will or hostility. I had friends among them – young men of admirable qualities, whom I had met before the war and esteemed highly, and whom I loved none the less because their uniforms were blue.

Not only was I conscious of no feeling of enmity in my own heart, but, so far as I knew, Southern men generally entertained no such feeling. We of the South believed most firmly that the North had unrighteously made war on us; but we credited the Northern soldiers with the same loyalty to honest conviction that we claimed for ourselves, and freely conceded to them the right to speak without restraint in justification of what they had done. We had so far allayed whatever of animosity we may once have felt that we could read misrepresentations of the South and her cause with an indulgent smile, and excuse them on the ground that those who made them believed them to be true.

Knowing this to be the attitude and feeling of the conquered, to whom the war had brought incalculable loss and suffering, I supposed that the conquerors, who had suffered and lost comparatively little, would be equally magnanimous. But I was speedily undeceived. The storm of unjust criticism and bitter denunciation which the speech called forth showed but too plainly that the embers of hate were still smoldering in some Northern hearts, needing but a breath to fan them into flame, and that the time was not yet come when plain speech in justification of the South would receive calm consideration or even be tolerated.

Deeming it unwise and unpatriotic to add fuel to the flame which I had unintentionally kindled, I did not reply to these animadversions; but I think it well to notice here the objection to the speech as a violation of Decora-

tion Day proprieties. In the words of one of my critics: "Decoration Day in both sections belongs to the bravery of the dead. [May 30 has never been Confederate Memorial Day.] Old issues belong to other places of discussion." With this sentiment I am in full sympathy. When we meet where sleep the heroic dead, to pay a tribute of respect to their high courage and soldierly virtues, and, following a custom which originated with the women of the South, reverently to decorate the graves of Federals and Confederates alike, the calling up of the old differences that arrayed them in opposing lines of battle is a gross impropriety. Had I been speaking on such an occasion, I would have raised no question as to whether Federals or Confederates had fought for the right. But the speech was not made on such an occasion. Although delivered on National Decoration Day, it was not at the graves of any dead, but at the unveiling of a monument to the soldiers and sailors of the South. It was a ceremony which pertained not to both sections, but to the South alone – a ceremony in which the Southern people were formally dedicating a shaft that would bear witness to their appreciation of the worth of the men who fought under the flag of the Confederacy and to their desire to perpetuate the memory of those men. Since the highest courage, if displayed in defense of an unjust cause, cannot deserve a memorial, it seemed to me that this shaft was intended to commemorate not only the valor of the Southern soldiers and sailors, but also the righteousness of the cause in defense of which that valor was displayed. Hence I thought it appropriate to speak in justification of their cause, as well as in praise of their courage.

Many Northern orators seem to think it altogether proper to discuss the old differences between the sections,

even in the usual exercises on Decoration Day. On the same day that the Confederate monument was unveiled in Richmond, Judge J. B. McPherson, as a part of the Memorial Day services held at Lebanon, Penn., delivered an address from which I take the following:

But, while our emotions give this anniversary its peculiar character, we must not forget that its more enduring value lies in the opportunity; it affords to repeat and strengthen in our minds the truths of history for which this tremendous sacrifice was made.... Our school histories today are largely at fault because they do not tell the truth distinctly and positively about the beginning of the war. It is too often spoken of as inevitable.... This is not only not true, but it is a dangerous falsehood, because it tends to lessen the guilt of the rebellion and suggests that after all the South was not to blame. I would be the last to deny that a contest of some kind was inevitable between freedom and slavery until one or the other should prevail over the whole nation.... But I do deny that an armed conflict was inevitable; I do deny that it was impossible by constitutional means to find a peaceful solution. The solutions which other countries have found for similar problems were surely not beyond our capacity,... but the opportunity to try them was refused by the action of the South alone.... This, I repeat, was rebellion, and I am willing to call the Southern soldiers Confederates, since they prefer that title; and while I welcome the dying away of personal bitterness between the soldiers and citizens of both sections, I am not willing to speak of the war as the Civil War or the War between the States, or to use any phrase other than that which the truth of history demands, and that which ought to be taught to every child in our schools for all time to come – the War of the Rebellion. A crime like this, a deliberate attack upon the nation's life, ought not

to be glossed over by a smooth turn of speech or half concealed for the sake of courtesy.

The papers of the country had nothing to say of the impropriety of the speech of which the foregoing extracts are fair samples. On the contrary, it was published under double-headed headlines and declared to be “especially appropriate to the occasion.” Here and there in the North speeches containing such misrepresentations of the South are still made on Decoration Day without calling forth any expressions of disapproval from the press. And if it be especially appropriate in the “customary Memorial Day services” to charge that the South refused to give the country an opportunity to find a peaceful solution of the questions at issue by constitutional means, and was guilty of the “crime” of deliberately and causelessly drawing the sword and attacking the nation’s life, how can it be especially inappropriate, when dedicating a monument to Southern soldiers, to attempt to refute the charge? Does the propriety of discussing the causes of the War between the States belong exclusively to Northern writers and speakers? Did the South, when she laid down her arms, surrender the right to state in self-justification her reasons for taking them up? If not, I fail to see how it can be improper, when perpetuating the memory of the Confederate dead, at least to attempt to correct false and injurious representations of their aims and deeds and hand their achievements down to posterity as worthy of honorable remembrance.

Other comments on the Richmond speech I do not care to notice. In no one of them was there a calm and dispassionate attempt to refute its statements. For the most part they consisted of invective – the means to which small-minded men are prone to resort when they

can find no available argument. Apparently this invective proceeded from misconceptions of my meaning, resulting from a hasty and prejudiced reading of what I said; and I am not without hope that, published now with other matter, the speech may be considered more calmly, be better understood, and, perhaps, be more favorably received.

Surely now, when nearly half a century has elapsed since the flag of the Confederacy was furled in the gloom of defeat; when the loyalty of the South has been placed beyond all question by the fact that her sons, in response to the country's call, have fought as bravely under the Stars and Stripes as they once did under the Starry Cross; when, of those who were engaged in the conflict between the sections, all save an age-enfeebled remnant, are numbered with the dead; when new men, most of them too young to have taken part in the war and many of them unborn when it closed, have come to the front and are directing the affairs of the nation – surely now our Northern friends will be tolerant and charitable and magnanimous enough to concede to a Southerner freedom of speech in defense of his dead comrades and refrain from heaping abuse on him, even though they may wholly dissent from what he says.

It is said, however, that it is disloyal to maintain that the South was right. Disloyal to what? Certainly not to the existing government. The controversy does not involve any question of loyalty to the government as it now is, but only a question of loyalty to a theory of government which was enunciated by the leaders of the Republican party prior to the war, which, by an unfortunate combination of circumstances, triumphed at the polls and elected its representatives to power in 1860, and the triumph of which led to the withdrawal of the Southern

States from the Union. That theory the existing government does not profess to uphold. I believe that no prominent statesman of any party will openly advocate it today. Has any President since the war been willing to say in his inaugural address that in shaping the policy of the government in regard to vital questions he would not be bound by the decisions of the Supreme Court? Has any Secretary of State since the war been willing to say that "there is a law higher than the Constitution," and that a pledge to administer the government according to the constitution as construed by the Supreme Court would be "treason"? I think not. The existing government, professedly at least, repudiates that unconstitutional and "higher law" theory. It professes to respect the Constitution as the supreme law of the land. Surely there can be no disloyalty to it in maintaining that fifty years ago the South repudiated and withdrew from the Union rather than accept what it repudiates now.

But is it consistent with loyalty to the existing government to claim that the secession of the Southern States from the Union was not rebellion? Most certainly. The war changed conditions. It established new relations and obligations. It nationalized States that were previously federalized. It changed the union of independent States, held together by mutual consent, into a union of dependent States, held together by national authority. It abolished State sovereignty and changed the federal government, which derived its powers from the States, into the national government, which exercises authority and power over the States. Some things that may not be lawful under the national government established by the war may have been altogether lawful under the federal government that existed before the war. Secession is one of

them. To maintain that a State now has the right to withdraw from the Union may be disloyal to the existing national government; but there is no such disloyalty in maintaining that a State had that right under the old federal government, and hence that the secession of the Southern States was not rebellion.

But it may be asked, Why seek to revive these old issues? What good can possibly result from discussing them? Why not, as a well-known Southern editor puts it, “pay a tribute to the conspicuous valor of the Southern soldiers without a revival of bootless discussions?” Why not acquiesce in all that has been said and done and “take up the old, sweet tale of Bunker Hill and Yorktown, and pursue it, under God’s blessing, to the end of time? What cause has the South lost which remains to be vindicated or which can be recovered?”

If, as this distinguished editor – somewhat to the discredit of his reputation as a well-informed thinker – affirmed, slavery and secession were the only issues involved in the War between the States, it must be admitted that the South has no cause which remains to be vindicated and has lost nothing that can be recovered. The war abolished slavery, and, with the exception of a few negroes who found that freedom brought them cares and hardships such as they had not known in slavery, I never heard a Southerner say he regretted it. If the war did not abolish the constitutional right of a State to secede from the Union, it clearly demonstrated that the exercise of that right is altogether impracticable when the seceders are the weaker party. In the South slavery and secession are dead, and no discussion of old issues can possibly bring them back to life or excite in the Southern heart a desire to restore them.

Nor can a discussion of the old issues add in any way to the rights of citizenship now enjoyed by the Southern people. As the editor quoted above said, in all save pensions, "it is one with the men who followed Grant and with the men who followed Lee. They sit side by side in Congress; they serve side by side in the Cabinet; they have represented the country and are representing it in its foreign diplomatic service with an ability and loyalty which, as between the two, cannot be distinguished the one from the other." The discussion of old difference is not expected to increase the number of Southern office holders, gain for the South any larger share of Federal patronage, cause any inflow of Northern capital to develop her resources and enrich her people, or add to her material wealth in any way whatever. From the viewpoint of one who has an eye for the "loaves and fishes" only, it must seem altogether bootless.

But there are some who do not see in "loaves and fishes" the only thing worth striving for, who think that unsullied honor is better than material wealth, and who are unwilling to prosper and grow fat by acquiescing in perversions of history that tarnish the fame of their heroic dead. In discussing the causes of the war they have no thought of restoring the antebellum conditions of Southern life; they do not aim to recover any material wealth or political place and prestige that the South may have lost; they are not "seeking to raise up a generation of young vipers to undo the good that God has done;" they are not "seeking to make traitors of the fair lads whom we are sending to West Point and Annapolis." Their sole purpose is to state fairly the South's side of the case, to refute the false charge that she plunged the country into a long and bloody war without the semblance of just cause, to bring

into prominence the real reason of her withdrawal from the Union, to present her action to the world in a truer and fairer light, and to free her from the reproach which unfriendly and calumnious writers have heaped on her.

I acknowledge to its utmost lawful extent the obligation to heal dissensions, allay passion, and promote good feeling; but I do not believe that good feeling should be promoted at the expense of truth and honor. I sincerely desire that there may be between the people of the North and the people of the South increasing peace and amity, and that, in the spirit of genuine fraternity, they may work together for the prosperity and glory of their common country; but I do not think the Southern people should be expected to sacrifice the truth of history to secure that end.

It has been truthfully said that "history as written, if accepted in future years, will consign the South to infamy;" and only by refusing to acquiesce in it as it is now written can we possibly prevent future generations from so accepting it. By keeping these politically dead issues alive as questions of history, freely discussing them, and reiterating the truth in regard to them, we may possibly counteract to some extent the effect of the misrepresentations found in history as it is now written, add something to the luster of the page that records the deeds of the men and women of the South, and hand their story down to posterity so that their children's children will think and speak of them with pride rather than shame.

With this end only in view and conscious of no feeling of bitterness, I delivered the speech at the unveiling of the monument to the soldiers and sailors of the South. With the same end in view and in the same kindly spirit, I now give this little book to the public. If it shall

excite any feeling of enmity in the North or the least disloyal and traitorous feeling in the South, I shall be sincerely sorry; but if it shall give to anyone a truer and juster conception of the South's motives, aims, lofty patriotism, and unwavering devotion to principle, I shall be very glad.

R. C. C.



Confederate Sailors and Soldiers Monument
Libby Prison Park, Richmond, Va.

CHAPTER ONE

The Men in Gray



When I was honored with the invitation to speak on this occasion of the valor and worth of those in memory of whom this monument has been erected, I felt somewhat as I imagine one of old felt when, contemplating the infinite, he said: "It is high; I cannot attain unto it." I keenly felt my inability to rise to "the height of this great argument" and fitly eulogize the soldiers and sailors of the Southern Confederacy.

And yet I felt impelled to speak some word, however weak, in honor of those tried and true men who fearlessly fronted the foe in defense of home and country and battled even unto death for a cause which was dear to my heart while its banner proudly floated over victorious fields, and which I have regarded with an affection sanctified and strengthened by sorrow since that banner was furled in the gloom of defeat.

As death paints our loved ones in softer, fairer colors, and brings us to see as we did not see before

Their likeness to the wise below,
Their kindred with the great of old;

so the overthrow of the cause we struggled to maintain gave me a still higher appreciation of it and brought me to realize more deeply its oneness with the cause of human freedom in every age and land.

I am not one of those who, clinging to the old superstition that the will of heaven is revealed in the immediate results of "trial by combat," fancy that right must always be on the side of might, and speak of Appomattox as a judgment of God. I do not forget that a Suvaroff triumphed and a Kosciuszko fell; that a Nero wielded the scepter of empire and a Paul was beheaded; that a Herod was crowned and a Christ was crucified. And, instead of accepting the defeat of the South as a divine verdict against her, I regard it as but another instance of "truth on the scaffold and wrong on the throne."

Appomattox was a triumph of the physically stronger in a conflict between the representatives of two essentially different civilizations and antagonistic ideas of government.¹ On one side in that conflict was the South, led by the descendants of the Cavaliers, who, with all their faults, had inherited from a long line of ancestors a manly contempt for moral littleness, a high sense of honor, a lofty regard for plighted faith, a strong tendency to conservatism, a profound respect for law and order, and an unfaltering loyalty to constitutional government. Against the South was arrayed the power of the North, dominated by the spirit of Puritanism, which, with all its virtues, has ever been characterized by the pharisaism that

1. Subjoined Note A, page 38.

worships itself and is unable to perceive any goodness apart from itself; which has ever arrogantly held its ideas, its interests, and its will to be higher than fundamental law and covenanted obligations; which has always “lived and moved and had its being” in rebellion against constituted authority; which, with the cry of freedom on its lips, has been one of the most cruel and pitiless tyrants that ever cursed the world; which, while beheading an English king in the name of liberty, brought England under a reign of oppression whose little finger was heavier than the mailed hand of the Stuarts; and which, from the time of Oliver Cromwell to the time of Abraham Lincoln, has never hesitated to trample upon the rights of others in order to effect its own ends.

At Appomattox Puritanism, backed by overwhelming numbers and unlimited resources, prevailed. But mere force cannot settle questions of right and wrong. Thinking men do not judge the merits of a cause by the measure of its success. And I believe

The world shall yet decide
In truth’s clear, far-off light,

that the South was in the right;² that the cause was just; that the men who took up arms in her defense were patriots who had even better reason for what they did than had the men who fought at Concord, Lexington, and Bunker Hill; and that her coercion, whatever good may have resulted or may hereafter result from it, was an outrage on liberty.

I cannot here discuss at length the merits of the Southern cause; but, in justice to the memory of those

2. Subjoined Note B, page 38.

who died in the struggle to maintain it, I wish to protest against the aspersion that they fought to uphold and perpetuate the institution of slavery. Slavery was a heritage handed down to the South from a time when the moral consciousness of mankind regarded it as just and right – a time when even the pious sons of New England were slave owners and deterred by no conscientious scruples from plying the slave trade with proverbial Yankee enterprise. It became a peculiarly Southern institution not because the rights of others were dearer to the Northern than to the Southern heart, but because conditions of soil and climate made negro labor unprofitable in the North and led the Northern slave owner to sell his slaves “down South.”

With slavery thus fastened upon them by the force of circumstances, the Southern people sought to deal with it in the wisest and most humane way. They believed that the immediate and wholesale emancipation of the slaves would be ruinous to the whites and blacks alike, and that, under the then existing conditions, the highest interests of both themselves and the colored wards committed to their keeping demanded that the relation of master and servant should continue.

But it was not to perpetuate slavery that they fought. The impartial student of the events leading up to the “Civil War” cannot fail to perceive that, in the words of Mr. Davis, “to whatever extent the question of slavery may have served as an occasion, it was far from being the cause of the conflict.” That conflict was the bloody culmination of a controversy which had been raging for more than a generation, and the true issue in which, as far as it pertained to slavery, was sharply stated by the Hon. Samuel A. Foote, of Connecticut, when, referring to the de-

bate on the admission of Missouri to the sisterhood of States, he said: "The Missouri question did not involve the question of freedom or slavery, but merely whether slaves now in the country might be permitted to reside in the proposed new State, and whether Congress or Missouri possessed the power to decide." And from that day down to 1861, when the war cloud burst in fury upon our land, the real question in regard to slavery was not whether it should continue in the South, but whether the Southern man should be permitted to take his slaves, originally purchased almost exclusively from Northern slave traders, into the territory which was the common property of the country, and there, without interference from the general government, have an equal voice with his Northern brother in determining the domestic policy of the new State. The question was not whether the negro should be freed or held in servitude, but whether the white man of the South should have the same privileges enjoyed by the white man of the North. It was not the desire to hold others in bondage, but the desire to maintain their own rights that actuated the Southern people throughout the conflict. And it behooves us to insist on this, that the memory of those who "wore the gray" may be handed down to posterity freed from the slanderous accusation that they were the enemies of liberty and champions of slavery, who plunged the country into a bloody war that they might the more firmly fasten fetters on human limbs.³

And it also behooves us, in justice to the men who served under the banner of the Confederacy, to insist that they were not rebels fighting against lawful authority and seeking to destroy the Union formed by the fathers of

3. Subjoined Note C, page 39.

American independence. That Union was dear to the hearts of the Southern people. They regarded it as a fraternal federation founded in wisdom and patriotism, and in no case were they disloyal to the obligations which it imposed upon them.

The impartial student of American history will find that the sons of the South were always among the foremost in the battles of the Union against foreign foes, and that they were ever readiest to make sacrifices in the interest of harmony between the sections.

For the sake of maintaining the Union, the South made concession after concession, surrendered right after right, submitted to unjust taxation, consented to compromises every one of which tended to weaken herself and strengthen the North, and for more than forty years clung to the national compact in flagrant violations of its spirit and letter by Northern men.

If history affords an instance of loyalty to an established form of government more unswerving and self-sacrificing than that of the Southern people to the Union, I fail to recall it. Mr. Davis voiced the feeling of the South when he said in the Senate chamber: "If envy and jealousy and sectional strife are eating like rust into the bonds our fathers expected to bind us, they come from causes which our Southern atmosphere has never furnished. As we have shared in the toils, so have we gloried in the triumphs of our country. In our hearts, as in our history, are mingled the names of Concord and Camden and Saratoga and Lexington and Plattsburg and Chippewa and Erie and Moultrie and New Orleans and Yorktown and Bunker Hill." Had the South loved the Union less and clung to it less tenaciously; had she refused to make concessions and sacrifices for its preservation; had she, instead of weaken-

ing herself by compromises for its sake, withdrawn from it when first her rights were assailed, the pen of the historian would never have recorded the story of Appomattox. It was her attachment to the Union – her unselfish loyalty and patriotism – which caused her so long to endure Northern aggression, yield again and again to Northern demands, and place herself in a position in which her defeat was possible.

But the Union which the men of the South loved, and which they were willing to make concessions and sacrifices to perpetuate, was that formed by the fathers “to establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty.” It was a fraternal federation of sovereign States, guaranteeing equal rights to all and leaving each free to regulate its domestic affairs in its own way. It was a union in which, in reference to questions of foreign policy, every citizen would echo the sentiment expressed by Patrick Henry when, after Concord and Lexington, in a message to Massachusetts, he said: “I am not a Virginian; I am an American.” And yet it was a union in which, in reference to questions of domestic policy, every citizen, like that same great orator and patriot, would recognize the right of his own State to his highest allegiance. It was a union in which the people of each State would enjoy the blessings of local self-government and find in “home rule” a safeguard against any possible attempt of the Federal power to interfere with their peculiar interests.

When it became evident that this Union was to exist in name only; when its essential principles had been overthrown and trampled in the dust; when the spirit of fraternity had given place to a bitter feeling of sectional

hostility; when New England speakers and writers were heaping abuse and slander upon the South and teaching the people that they “would be poor children of seven years’ disobedience to laws” if they supposed that they were obliged to obey the law of the land which protected the Southern people in the peaceful possession of their institutions; when the men of the North, instead of permitting the South to enjoy that domestic peace and tranquility which the Union was intended to secure to every section of the country, were persistently striving to stir up insurrection in the Southern States and glorifying those who attempted to carry outrage and massacre into Southern homes; when the tendency to centralization was threatening to destroy State independence and build on its ruins a despotism akin to that which enslaved France when it was said that “the government was sent down to the subject provinces by mail from Paris, and the mail was followed by the army, if the provinces did not acquiesce;” when the reins of government had passed into the hands of a purely sectional party avowedly hostile to Southern interests and declaring the Constitution to be “a covenant with death and a league with hell” which ought to be supplanted by a so-called “higher law” – in a word, when it became evident that Northern power was to sit on the throne in Washington and make the Yankee conscience rather than the Constitution the fundamental law of the land, the Southern people felt that the preservation of community independence and liberty, won at Yorktown and bequeathed to them by their fathers as an inalienable birthright, demanded the resumption of the powers intrusted by them to the Federal government.

Not as a passion-swept mob rising in mad rebellion against constituted authority, but as an intelligent and

orderly people, acting in accordance with due forms of law and within the limit of what they believed to be their constitutional right, the men of the South withdrew from the Union in which they had lived for three-fourths of a century, and the welfare and glory of which they had ever been foremost in promoting.

They did not desire war, nor did they commence the war. It is true that they fired the first gun; but every one who is familiar with the history of those stormy days knows that the North committed the first overt act of war, which justified and necessitated the firing of that gun.⁴ They made every effort consistent with their safety, self-respect, and manhood to avert war. They parted from their Northern brethren in the spirit in which Abraham said to Lot: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee."

But the North would not have it so. Every proposal looking to peace was rejected by those in power at Washington. Says an English historian of the time: "Twice the Republicans were asked simply to execute the existing law and sustain in the future that exclusive constitutional right of the States over their internal affairs and that equality in the common territories which scarcely admitted of rational dispute; and twice the party pronounced against the least that the South could safely or honorably accept."

At length, on April 15, 1861, the newly inaugurated President, transcending the authority vested in him by the Constitution which he had just sworn to support, issued a proclamation calling for seventy-five thousand men to coerce the States which had withdrawn from the

4. Subjoined Note D, page 40.

Union.⁵

This call for troops destroyed the last lingering hope of peace. It left no doubt as to the purpose of the party in power. It meant a war of invasion and subjugation. It left the South no choice but between cowardly surrender of rights held sacred and manly resistance to the invading foe. Between these alternatives she was obliged to choose. States which had been hesitating on the ground of expediency, hoping for a peaceable adjustment of issues, wheeled into line with the States which had already seceded.

Virginia, mother of States and statesmen and warriors, who had given away an empire for the public good, whose pen had written the Declaration of Independence, whose sword had flashed in front of the American army in the war for independence, and whose wisdom and patriotism had been chiefly instrumental in giving the country the Constitution of the Union – Virginia, foreseeing that her bosom would become the theater of war, with its attendant horrors, nobly chose to suffer rather than become an accomplice in the proposed outrage upon constitutional liberty. With a generosity and magnanimity of soul rarely equaled and never surpassed in the history of nations, she placed herself in the path of the invader, practically saying: “Before you can touch the rights of my Southern sisters, you must cut your way to them through my heart.”

From the Potomac to the Gulf, from the Atlantic to the Rio Grande the sons of the South sprang to arms. From stately mansion and from humble cottage, from the workshop and from the farm, from the storeroom and

5. Subjoined Note E, page 42.

from the study, from every neighborhood and from every vocation of life, with unanimity almost unparalleled, they rallied for the defense of the land they loved and of what in their inmost souls they felt to be their sacred and inalienable birthright.

Traitors and rebels verily they were not. They were true-hearted patriots, worthy to rank with the noblest souls that ever battled for freedom. They fought for home and country and to maintain the fundamental principle of all free government – that the right to govern arises from and is coexistent with the consent of the governed.

And if patient self-denial and cheerful self-sacrifice and unquailing fortitude and unfaltering devotion to country and unwavering loyalty to duty and dauntless courage in defense of the right make heroism, the men whom we honor today, and whom we would not have our children forget, were sublime heroes. History has no more illustrious page than that which tells of their achievements. Poorly equipped, poorly clad, poorly fed, and virtually without pay, they confronted more than three times their number of as well-equipped, well-clothed, well-fed, and well-paid soldiers as ever marched to battle, wrested from them a series of victories unsurpassed in brilliancy, and for four years, stormy with the red blasts of war, successfully resisted all their power. In dangers and hardships that “tried men’s souls” the defenders of the South were tried and always found “true as tempered steel.” Laboring under disadvantages which even their friends can never fully appreciate, supplementing their scanty rations with weeds and grasses, their bare feet often pressing the frozen ground or blistered on the burning highway, their garments as tattered as the battle-torn banners that they bore, they bravely fought on for the cause they loved and sealed

their devotion to it with their blood.

I need not name the many glorious fields on which the soldiers of the Confederacy, by their splendid courage, hurled back army after army, each one outnumbering them and supposed by the North to be strong enough to crush them. I need not recount the battles in which the sailors of the Confederacy made up in skill and daring for lack of equipment and fought with a valor unsurpassed in naval warfare. On the land and on the sea they made a record to which their country may point with a just and noble pride. History bears witness to their unrivaled martial qualities. By their deeds they "set with pearls the bracelet of the world" and won for themselves a place in the foremost rank of mankind's Legion of Honor. And although, worn out by ceaseless conflict, half famished, and overwhelmed by numbers, they were at last forced to yield, those to whom they surrendered might well envy the glory of their defeat.

And the glory of that great struggle for constitutional liberty and "home rule" belongs not alone to those who wore the officer's uniform and buckled on the sword, but as well to those who wore the coarser gray of the private and shouldered the musket. We do well to honor those who served in the ranks and faithfully and fearlessly performed the duties of the common soldier or sailor. It was their valor and worth, no less than the courage and genius of the officers who led them, that won for the battle flag of the South a fame which

...on brightest pages
Penned by poets and by sages,
Shall go sounding down the ages.

In education, intelligence, and thought they were

from training and associations far above the average soldiery of the world. Notwithstanding all that has been said about the illiteracy of the South, I believe that no country ever had a larger percentage of intelligent and thinking men in the ranks of its army. Thousands of them were highly educated, cultured, refined, and in every way qualified to command. Sitting on the brow of the mountain over-looking the winding Shenandoah and the little town of Strasburg and the beautiful valley stretching away toward Winchester, at that time dark with the blue columns of Federal soldiers, a Louisiana private, idly talking of what he would do were he in command, gave me almost every detail of the plan which, afterwards perceived and executed by the commanding officer, carried confusion and defeat to the Federals. Had the need arisen, as in the case of the Theban army in Thessaly, more than one Epaminondas might have been found serving as a private in the Confederate ranks.

And I believe that no army was ever composed of men more thoroughly imbued with moral principle. With comparatively few exceptions, they were men who recognized the obligation to be just and honest and merciful and to respect the rights of others even in time of war. Never flinching from conflict with armed foemen, their moral training and disposition forbade them to make war upon the weak and defenseless. To their everlasting honor stands the fact that in their march through the enemy's country they left behind them no fields wantonly laid waste, no families cruelly robbed of subsistence, no homes ruthlessly violated. "In no case," says an English writer, "had the Pennsylvanians to complain of personal injury or even discourtesy at the hands of those whose homes they had burned, whose families they had insulted,

robbed, and tormented. Even the tardy destruction of Chambersburg was an act of regular, limited, and righteous reprisal." The Pennsylvania farmer whose words were reported by a Northern correspondent paid the Southern troops a merited tribute when he said: "I must say they acted like gentlemen, and, their cause aside, I would rather have forty thousand rebels quartered on my premises than one thousand Union troops."

And they acted like gentlemen not merely because the order of the commanding general required them so to act, but because the spirit within themselves was in harmony with and responded to that order. In the ranks of the Southern army, uncomplainingly and cheerfully performing the duties of the humble soldier, with little hope of promotion when intelligence, ability, and daring were so common, were men

True as the knights of story,
Sir Launcelot and his peers.

And these humble privates no less than their leaders deserve to be honored. It was Jackson's line of Virginians rather than Jackson himself that resembled a stone wall standing on the plains of Manassas while the storm of battle hissed and hurtled and thundered around them. And if I mention the name of Jackson rather than that of the ruddy-faced boy who fell, pierced through the brain, and was buried on one of Virginia's hills, in a lonely grave over which today the tangled wild weeds are growing, it is not because the one was more heroic than the other, but because Jackson, by his greater prominence, more fully embodies before the eyes of the world the patriotism and courage and heroism that glowed no less brightly and steadily in the heart of the beardless boy. These noble

qualities, possessed by both and displayed by each as his ability and position permitted, bind them together in my thought, not as officer and private, but as fellow-soldiers and brother patriots. Exalted virtue, like deepest shame, ever obliterates rank and brings men into a common brotherhood.

As my mind recalls the persons and events of those years in which the Confederacy struggled for life, there rises before me the majestic figure of the great Southern chief – the peerless soldier and the stainless gentleman; the soldier who was cool, calm, and self-possessed in the presence of every danger, and who, with marvelous foresight and skill, planned masterly campaigns, directed the march of war, ruled the storm of battle, and guided his men to victory on many a well-fought field; the gentleman who was as pure as a falling snowflake, as gentle as an evening zephyr, as tender as the smile of a flower, and as patient as the rock-ribbed mountains. I need not name him, for his name is written in ever-enduring letters on the heart of the South and honored throughout the civilized world. Around him I see a company of intrepid leaders whose achievements have surrounded their names with a glory which outshines the luster of coronets and crowns. I would not pluck one leaf from the laurel with which they are garlanded. I would, if I could, lift to a still higher note and sing in still loftier strains the paeans that are chanted in their praise. But I see also the men whom these noble captains led – men unswerving in their devotion to a noble purpose, self-forgetful in their fidelity to what they saw to be right, and sublimely self-denying and self-sacrificing in their adherence to the cause they espoused; men who loved their country with a love stronger than the love of life, and who,

with no thought of compensation beyond that country's freedom and honor and safety, bravely toiled and suffered and endured and gave their bodies to be torn by shot and shell, and shed their blood like water to the thirsty ground. And with uncovered head and profoundest reverence I bow before those dauntless heroes, feeling that, if the greatest suffering with the least hope of regard is worthy of the highest honor, they deserve to stand shoulder to shoulder with Lee and his lieutenants in the brotherhood of glory.

They *are* honored by all the true and brave who have heard the story of their valiant struggle. Courageous self-sacrifice resulting from honest conviction of duty touches an answering chord in all manly hearts. The heroic soul greets all heroes as kindred spirits, whether they are found fighting by its side or leveling lance against it. It is the narrow, ungenerous, and selfish soul that can find nothing to admire in the courage, devotion, and heroism of its enemies. Hence the Northern writers who have disparaged and ridiculed the valor and devotion of the Southern troops have shown themselves to be wanting in true nobility. In vain have they sought to dim the fame of the Confederate warriors. That fame will emblaze the pages of history when they and all that they have written shall have perished from the memory of man.

Though the earth
Forgets her empires with a just decay,
The enslavers and the enslaved, their death and birth;
The high, the mountain majesty of worth
Should be, and shall, survivor of its woe,
And from its immortality look forth
Into the sun's face, like yonder Alpine snow,
Imperishably pure above all things below.

Yes, the high, majestic worth of the Confederate soldiers and sailors shall be “survivor of its woe,” and, surviving, shall help to lift the world into higher life. Although they were defeated, their struggle was not in vain. In the world’s life wrong has often triumphed for a season. There have been many times of oppression when human rights were trampled in the dust by despotic power and the hopes of men seemed dead. But the student of history will find that every chaos has been followed by a cosmos. The agony and sweat and tears and blood of every age have brought forth a new and better era.

Step by step since time began
We see the steady gain of man.

And reasoning from what has been to what shall be, I believe that not in vain were the battles and not in vain was the fall of those who battled and fell under the banner of the Confederacy. Having by their glorious deeds woven a crown of laurel for the brow of the South that drew to her the admiring mind of the world, by their fall they entwined in that crown the cypress leaves that draw to her the sympathizing heart of the world. The land in which we live is dearer to our hearts since it has been hallowed by their sacrifices and watered with their blood. Though dead, they still speak, admonishing us to prove ourselves worthy of kinship with them by being heroes in peace as they were heroes in war.

In our country “the war drum throbs no longer, and the battle flags are furled.” The quiet stars that, thirty years ago, looked down on sentineled camps of armed and march-wearied men, resting for the morrow’s conflict

...’midst flame and smoke,
And shout, and groan, and saber stroke,
And death shots falling thick and fast,

now look down night after night on quiet homes where the sleepers, disturbed by no call to arms, peacefully slumber until singing birds wake them to the bloodless labors of a new-born day. Fields that were clouded by the smoke of battle and trampled by charging thousands and torn by the hoof beats of the war horse and plowed by the shot of cannon and drenched with the blood of dead and mangled men are now enriched by tillage and contributing their fruits to sustain the life and increase the wealth of the people. "Peace folds her wings over hill and valley."

But peace as well as war demands of us high devotion and unswerving loyalty. If with peace we have decay of patriotism and loss of virtue and the triumph of private over public interests and the sacrifice of law and justice to secure partisan ends – if with peace we have the accumulation of wealth at the cost of the country's welfare and the honest manhood of its citizens, that peace must prove but the slippery, downward path to the ruin in which so many nations, once great and prosperous, have been swallowed up. Better far the desolations and horrors of war than such peace.

From such peace – peace joined with corruption and enjoyed at the expense of true and noble manhood – the soldiers and sailors of the Confederacy, speaking through this monument of their self-sacrificing and heroic devotion, shall help to save our land. Their spirits, glory-crowned, hover over us and beckon us on in the paths of patriotism and honor. Their example bids us nobly live for the principles for which they bravely fought and died⁶ – the principles of State sovereignty and home rule on which this government was wisely founded by our fathers,

6. Subjoined Note F, page 46.

without which no vast territory like ours; can possibly remain democratic, departure from which is rapidly hurrying the country to a choice between anarchy and imperialism, and return to which is essential to the preservation of the life of the republic.⁷

In the fourteenth century, when the sturdy sons of Switzerland confronted their Austrian oppressors at Sempach, Arnold Winkelried, commending his family to the care of his countrymen and crying, "Make way for liberty," rushed forward with outstretched hands and, gathering an armful of spears into his own breast, made an opening in the seemingly impenetrable line of the enemy, through which his comrades forced their way to victory. Thus falling in the cause of liberty, he won imperishable fame; and his deed, immortalized in song, has awakened noble and generous emotions and nurtured the love of freedom in the hearts of millions. So shall the story of the men who battled for the Confederacy go down through the ages, kindling the fires of patriotism and devotion to the principles of free government in the hearts of generations to come.

Thinking of the mighty dead,
The young from slothful couch will start,
And vow with lifted hands outspread,
Like them to act a noble part.

And so

...the graves of the dead with the grass overgrown
May yet prove the footstool of liberty's throne,
And each single wreck in the warpath of might
Shall yet be a rock in the temple of right.

7. Subjoined Note G, page 46.