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Address at the Unveiling
of the Confederate
Monument, Raleigh
A.M. Waddell

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ADDRESS

—AT THE—

UNVEILING OF THE

CONFEDERATE MONUMENT,

AT RALEIGH, N. C..

MAY 20th, 1895.

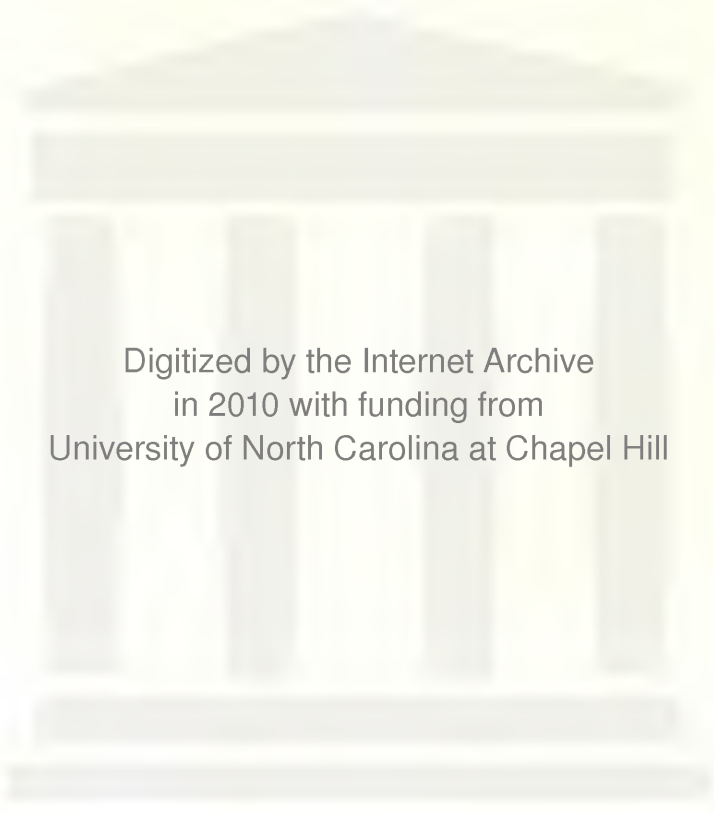


By Col. Alfred Moore Waddell.



WILMINGTON, N. C.:
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ADDRESS.

I salute you with unfeigned emotion, my countrymen and countrywomen, upon the return of this historic day which you have assembled here to reconsecrate by a new act of piety and patriotism. It marks an epoch in our annals. It is indeed a monumental day, and one upon which the women of North Carolina, who have wrought long and unceasingly, and have waited for its dawning, may reverently repeat the words of the Psalmist and say, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

A year ago, in the presence of thronging thousands, and with imposing ceremonies which were crowned by splendid oratory, you laid the corner-stone of this structure, which now, in finished beauty, stands sentinel in the western gateway of your Capitol.

The work of the artist and the artisan is done. Beneath their transforming touch this column, rough hewn from the ribs of the everlasting hills, with base firm-set and summit lifted high, now towers before you in majestic and graceful proportions. So the genius of Christian civilization shapes the homely virtues of a brave and true people into the noble edifice of free government.

It is dumb granite, but it is not voiceless to us and will not be to our children, for it will be a perpetual appeal to their pride and patriotism. It is inanimate stone, but instinct with glorious memories. It is a silent

memorial, but it is also an eloquent history, and a tender poem. The poem each heart among you will translate for itself. Mine be the task to-day to trace in brief outline the history, of which no descendant of a Confederate soldier can honorably remain in ignorance, and to which he cannot, without abdicating his manhood and self-respect, be indifferent.

A distinguished scholar and statesman of the South, who has recently made a valuable contribution to historical literature, says :

"The establishment of truth is never wrong. History, as written it accepted in future years will consign the South to infamy. If she were guilty of rebellion or treason, if she adopted and clung to barbarisms, ungentle sins, and immoralities, then her people would be branded, as it were, with the fabled shirt of Nessus, fatal to honor, to energy, to noble development, to true life."

And a recent newspaper writer says :

"For indestructible vitality and sublime assurance, the HISTORICAL lie is the most magnificent of all the family of falsehoods."

Now, the accepted history of the late war, like the previous history of the United States, has been written by Northern men, and a Southerner, reading it, cannot help recalling what Froude said about history generally; namely, that it seemed to him "like a child's box of letters with which we can spell any word we please. We have only to select such letters as we want, arrange them as we like, and say nothing about those which do not suit our purpose."

It has seemed to me that I could not better employ a brief part of the hour allotted to me to-day than by speaking—in kindness and charity, but with candor and fearlessness—the plain unvarnished truth concerning the causes of and the responsibility for the war in which the men to whose memory this monument is erected, were sacrificed. If this is not an occasion for vain regrets or bitter reviling (and it is not), neither is it a time for

false sentiment or a suppression of the truth, and it is because the truth is either unknown, or is a matter of indifference to many of this generation, that I feel it to be a duty to *them* to speak as I shall.

Let no man say that in discharging this duty I am digging up sectionalism, and trying to revive the animosities of the past. I utterly disclaim any such desire or intention, and I could not if I would, for they are things now buried, it is to be hoped, forever; but I cannot forget that for thirty years past, my countrymen, my kinsmen and my friends have been pilloried before the world as ignorant, barbarous, cruel traitors and rebels, who, without the slightest justification or excuse, sought to destroy the best government under the sun, and deluged a continent in blood. The charge is still made and reiterated in conversation, in school books, in magazine articles, in public speeches, in public records, and in published histories. It is a monstrous perversion of the truth, which self-respect and a decent regard for the memory of our heroic dead, compels us to denounce. And now to the facts and the proof.

This day one hundred and twenty years ago the men of Mecklenburg—first of all Americans, despite the doubting Thomases—renounced allegiance to the British crown, declared themselves a free and independent people, and afterwards with their compatriots gloriously maintained, on many a bloody field, the declaration thus gloriously made. A year later the Great Declaration made by all the colonies proclaimed them to be, not a nation or union, but free and independent States. They made a treaty of alliance with France in 1778, and again in 1782 with the Netherlands

and in 1783 with Sweden, in each of which each State was named a party to it. Great Britain, in the final treaty of peace in 1783, acknowledged and named them *seriatim* as free, sovereign and independent States. They entered into a compact of government with each other which they called Articles of Confederation, in which, while it was declared to be a perpetual government, it was also expressly declared that each State retained its sovereignty, freedom, and independence. They afterwards seceded from and destroyed that "perpetual" government, and proposed a new government, from which, when formed, the declaration of perpetuity was deliberately dropped. When the convention to form that government first met in 1787, and while only a minority of States was represented, the first attempt was made to commit the delegates to a declaration in favor of a *national* government as contra-distinguished from a federal union, and a resolution was passed to that effect by a vote of only six States; but as soon as a full delegation assembled this resolution was objected to, reconsidered and rescinded by a unanimous vote, and the title "The United States" was retained. The man who objected was Oliver Ellsworth, of Connecticut, who was afterwards Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, and his words were "I propose, and therefore move, to expunge the word "National" and place in room of it, "government of the United States"—which was agreed to unanimously.

Astounding to relate, the argument of those who have denied the right of a State to secede has been largely built on this resolution *which was unanimously rescinded by the convention*, and on the Preamble to the Constitution which says "We, the people of the United States,"

which they construe to mean, not the people of the several States, but the aggregate people of the whole country as one nation—a political entity which never had any existence. A writer on this subject, after showing how and why the words “We, the people of the United States” were used, calls attention to the amazing fact that Edward Everett, in a speech on the 4th of July, 1861, had said that “the States are not named in the Federal Constitution,” in face of the fact that in the second clause of Article I, each State is mentioned by name; and also calls attention to a similar statement of Mr. Motley in the *London Times* in 1861, that “the name of no State” is mentioned in the whole document, and that “it was not ratified by the States” but “by the people of the whole land in their aggregate capacity acting through conventions,” when there stands the express provision of Article VII “that the ratification of the conventions of nine States shall be sufficient for the establishment of this Constitution *between the States so ratifying the same!*”

The State of Virginia, in sanctioning the call of a Convention in November, 1786, and appointing delegates with Washington at their head, expressly stipulated that the new Constitution should be ratified, not by the legislatures of the States, but by the States themselves—that is to say, by conventions in each State—and this was done by the several States, at different times, between November 1787, and May 29th, 1790, and *not* by the people of the whole land in their aggregate capacity.

As has been well said: “Every iota of the Constitution was decided upon and found a place in that written instrument by a vote of the States, each State having one vote. No fact should be more perfectly notorious

or well known than this, for it stands out everywhere on the very face of the proceedings of the Convention which framed the Constitution." And Virginia in ratifying the Constitution, announced that the powers granted therein might be resumed whenever the same should be perverted to the injury or oppression of the people. New York, in ratifying, made the same declaration, and each declared that every power not granted remained to the States. North Carolina, for several reasons, one of which was the selfish and sectional spirit manifested by Massachusetts and other New England States, refused to accede to the new government, and remained, as she had always been, a separate, sovereign and independent State, for nearly two years, until November 21st, 1789, when, being persuaded that her doubts and fears were not well founded, she joined the eleven ratifying States. Rhode Island held back until May 29th, 1790, and then expressly reserved the right to withdraw whenever, in her opinion, her interests required it.

The idea that the Constitution was ordained by the whole people of all the States acting as one aggregate nation was never suggested until nearly fifty years after its adoption, and the pretence that there was any right to interfere with the separate sovereignty of, much less to coerce, a State in any way, if it had been made would have been instantly repudiated, and, if insisted upon, would have dissolved the Convention then and there. The Constitution of the United States was to be the supreme law of the land, by mutual agreement of the States, but no such grant of power as that of coercing a State was contained in the Constitution, and all powers not granted were reserved to the States, or to the people.

The States created a government of limited powers and the limits were defined in the instrument creating it, and yet, notwithstanding this unquestionable truth, there has been from the beginning a persistent, and finally a violent and successful effort to transform it into a consolidated nation.

The antagonism of interests between the North and the South, which had existed from the beginning, and which was the great source of anxiety to patriots of that day, increased with the ever-increasing wealth and power of the North, and with this ever increasing power and wealth came (naturally, if you choose,) a growing impatience of any restraint upon their action, and a stronger temptation to disregard those provisions of the Constitution which had been put into it for the protection of the minority and the preservation of the equality of the States. This tendency was increased by the fact that, by the acquisition of territory the Federal Government had become the creator of States, instead of being, as at the beginning, their creature—a fact which explained, but did not justify, the claim of the right of coercion over the original parties to the compact. But it is ever to be remembered that a large part of this territory was given by the South—that the North reaped all the benefits from it—that every concession of any kind which was made, was made by the South—that in every war, the Revolution, the war of 1812, the Florida and Indian wars, and the war with Mexico, she furnished largely more than her proportion of soldiers and claimed far less than her proportion of pensions—and that in all the legislation of Congress conferring trade bounties, or commercial or financial benefits, the North was always

the beneficiary, the South never. Still the South remained ardently loyal to the Union.

It is impossible, of course, on an occasion like this, to give a detailed history of the events upon which these general statements as to the progress of the great struggle are based, and I shall, therefore, not attempt to do so.

Suffice it to say that all protests and warnings were ignored, or sneered at. The legislatures of fourteen Northern States nullified acts of Congress which had been passed in plain pursuance of the Constitution, a judgment of the Supreme Court was openly and insolently defied, and "the legislature of a State whose officers had been guilty of a lawless defiance of constitutional authority, denounced the act of the highest judicial tribunal known to the law as an act of arbitrary power, and therefore null and void." Vituperation exhausted itself upon the Court—the execution of the law was openly resisted, and public sentiment in New England sustained those who thus acted. Finally, under the influence of this hostile spirit, a body of armed men invaded the State of Virginia, seized Harper's Ferry, where there was a government arsenal, and attempted to execute their purpose of inaugurating a servile insurrection with its accompaniments of rapine and murder. The leader of that insurrection was apotheosized at the North, and his name was an inspiration to the Northern army during the war. The next year, for the first time in the history of the United States, a President was elected exclusively by one section of the country—that is to say, the one great evil of which the framers of the Constitution were most in dread—that which they declared had been the ruin of

all previous republics—namely, a majority *constituting a faction*—had at last been realized. It has been justly pronounced “the most terrible faction the world has ever seen.” Its true character was not only not denied, but was openly proclaimed by its leaders, one of the most distinguished of whom said :

“No man has a right to be surprised at this state of things. It is just what we have attempted to bring about. It is the first sectional party ever organized in this country. It does not know its own face, and calls itself national; but it is not national, it is sectional. The Republican party is a party of the North pledged against the South.”

Thus the “irrepressible conflict” was precipitated, and the Southern States were left no choice but to submissively accept the change which destroyed all hope of preserving the equality and rights of the States under the Constitution, or to seek peace and safety by withdrawing from the Union.

They chose the latter alternative. In doing so were they guilty of treason, or rebellion? If so, against whom? Their allegiance was not given to any government, but to the Constitution of the United States, and they never violated it, but, on the contrary, only seceded because others violated it to their injury and threatened ruin. Did Virginia, and New York, and Rhode Island, when they expressly reserved the right to withdraw from the Union, mean to say that they reserved the right to rebel and commit treason? What did Massachusetts mean when, in 1803, her legislature “Resolved that the annexation of Louisiana to the Union transcends the constitutional power of the Government of the United States,” and that “it formed a new confederacy to which the States united by the former compact are not bound to adhere”? Could there be a plainer declaration of the right of a State to secede?

And what did the Hartford Convention, at which the New England States were gathered in 1815, mean by their declaration :

“That in cases of deliberate, dangerous and palpable infractions of the Constitution, AFFECTING THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE STATE and liberty of the people, it is not only the right but the duty of such State to interpose its authority for their protection in the manner best calculated to secure that end.”

And that :

“When emergencies occur which are either beyond the reach of judicial tribunals, or too pressing to admit of delay incident to their forms, States which have no common umpire, must be their own judges and execute their own decisions.”

John Quincy Adams, in a letter of December 30th, 1828, in regard to that movement, said :

“That their object was, and had been for several years, a dissolution of the Union and the establishment of a separate Confederation he knew from unequivocal evidence, although not provable in a court of law ; and that in case of a civil war, the aid of Great Britain, to effect that purpose, would be assuredly resorted to, as it would be indispensably necessary to their designs.”

Was John Quincy Adams a slanderer of his own people, or were they guilty, as he plainly alleged, of a treasonable design to subvert the government in a time of dire distress, and ask the assistance of Great Britain in the accomplishment of their purpose ? Yet these are the people who have cried the loudest about Southern rebels and traitors, when the plain and undeniable truth of history is, that nullification and secession were born and nursed in New England. I appeal to writers and records of that section for the verification of this statement. From these it will appear that, beginning in 1786, with the excitement over Jay's treaty, and repeated in 1792, 1794, 1796 to 1800, and from 1805 to 1815, there was a concerted plan of secession and disunion—a plan which John Quincy Adams said :

“Was so far matured, that the proposal had been made to an individual to permit himself, at the proper time, to be placed at the head of the military movement, which, it was foreseen, would be necessary to carry it into execution.”

The biographer of Daniel Webster, who is now one of the Senators from Massachusetts, after admitting that "unfortunately the facts were against" Mr. Webster's argument that the Constitution was not a compact between the States, goes on to say :

"When the Constitution was adopted by the votes of States at Philadelphia, and accepted by the votes of States in popular conventions, it is safe to say that there was not a man in the country from Washington and Hamilton, on the one side, to George Clinton and George Mason on the other, who regarded the new system as anything but an experiment entered into by the States, and from which each and every State had the right to peaceably withdraw, a right which was very likely to be exercised."

And yet, this same biographer, who, *when writing history*, is compelled to pen this candid paragraph, is the author of a Force Bill against the Southern people, and a representative of the extremest views of Massachusetts.

There are at least three extraordinary facts which will arrest the attention of the future student of American history in connection with secession. One is that, notwithstanding the right of a State to secede was disputed, and, after acrimonious discussion, was finally fought over for four years, still, when the struggle ended, although three different amendments were added to the Constitution of the United States to secure the freedom, and the civil and political rights of the negro race, there was no amendment adopted, or offered, denying the right of secession; and that, therefore, so far as any declaration in the Constitution is concerned, it remains just as it was before the war.

Another—and it borders on the absurd—is that out of the forty-four States of the Union, there are just nine of the seceding States, two border States, (West Virginia and Maryland) and one of the Western States (Nevada,

which was admitted during the war, whose Constitutions now deny the right of secession.

The third extraordinary fact is that, although the Northern people unanimously and vehemently denounced secession as treason and rebellion, yet when he who was characterized as the arch traitor and rebel was captured, and after proceedings had been begun against him, the government abandoned them for some other reason than clemency to him.

Of course these things have been accounted for in one way or another, but there has always been and always will be a belief that the true explanation of them will be found in the future history of the country.

Now, a few words about the other great "crime" of the Southern people, which shocked the moral sense of their Northern brethren and caused them to visit them with fire and sword, and lay waste their homes.

Slavery existed in Massachusetts, and the slave trade in its most cruel form, was conducted by her people for a hundred years before North Carolina became a State. Some of the largest fortunes in New England to-day were based upon it. They not only imported negroes, and exported them again, but they sold Indians also, and, worse still, white slaves. Mrs. Earle, a New Englander, who wrote a book entitled "Customs and Fashions in Old New England," says among other things of the same kind: "I have never seen in any Southern newspapers advertisements of negro sales that surpass in heartlessness and viciousness the advertisements of our New England papers of the Eighteenth Century. Negro children were *sold by the pound, as other merchandise.*" Even Jonathan Edwards owned slaves, and "left, among other property, a negro boy."

When Thomas Jefferson was penning his indictment against George the Third, in the Declaration of Independence, he put in as one of the outrages the forcing of the slave trade on the Colonies, but it was stricken out, not only for the supposed benefit of the Southern States, but because it reflected on the slave traders of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, whose slave ships infested the seas in the traffic. Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia had all passed laws either prohibiting the importation of slaves, or imposing a very heavy tax per head on them. In 1786 the North Carolina law was passed, imposing a duty of five pounds per head, which was very nearly the value of a slave at that time, but the next year the New England and extreme Southern States combined, and a compromise was inserted in the Constitution by which the slave trade was prolonged until 1808. As a domestic institution, slavery existed in every State except one when the Constitution was adopted, and it was expressly provided for in that instrument. The Supreme Court of the United States, in many cases, solemnly declared that the protection of the right of property in slaves "was a fundamental article, without the adoption of which the Union would not have been formed." When the Northern States, in 1851, were openly and defiantly nullifying the Constitution and the laws on this subject, Daniel Webster said :

"I do not hesitate to say and repeat that if the Northern States refuse wilfully and deliberately to carry into effect that part of the Constitution which respects the restoration of fugitive slaves, and Congress provide no remedy, the South would no longer be bound to observe the compact. A bargain broken on one side is broken on all sides."

Indeed, no sane person ever raised any question as to the provision of the Constitution. It was admitted, but was contemptuously repudiated by Northern States.

and especially by the New England States, while to shift responsibility and excite the sympathy of foreign nations, they filled the air with false cries as to the "aggressions of the slave power," although the South had been in the minority ever since the government was formed. The true feeling was expressed by William Cullen Bryant in the following sentence, contained in his History of the United States, published since the war :

"Webster would not, or could not, see that the question was not simply of the ownership of black men, but of the supremacy of an ill-born, ill-bred, uneducated and brutal handful of slaveholders over a people of a higher strain of blood, with centuries of gentle breeding, and a high degree of moral and intellectual training behind them."

And when the South finally sought a separation from such insolent and treacherous associates, they "cried havoc and let slip the dogs of war" upon her, denouncing her withdrawal as treason and a slaveholder's rebellion, and finally converting it from a war for the preservation of the Union into a fanatical crusade for the abolition of slavery, and the advancement of the negro to the fullest privileges of American citizenship.

So much for this topic, which, like that of secession, I have merely touched upon, and which would require for its just and full treatment, a hundred speeches. The South did not go to war for slavery. As has been said a thousand times it was the *occasion*, not the cause of the war. It was an institution, guaranteed and protected by the Constitution, as exclusively within the control of the States, and when the equality and reserved rights of the States were attacked by interference with it, there was just ground to believe that other reserved and guaranteed rights would be assailed, and

the equality of the States destroyed. Therefore the Southern people resorted to the only remedy which had ever been suggested, even by New England, and that was secession.

They sought peace and not a quarrel—they asked that there might be no violence or blood-shed, but a separation and an equitable and honorable adjustment of all interests. But it was not to be. They were forced to defend their liberties and their homes, and the Confederate Soldier appeared—to attract the admiring gaze of the world, and win an immortality of fame, but alas! only to suffer and be strong in a hopeless struggle.

He needs no vindication from mortal lips. Taught from his childhood, as all American youth had been, that in any event and under all circumstances, his first allegiance and whole duty was to his State, her call for his services was his all-sufficient justification, as it was his proudest badge of citizenship. He did not hate, but had always loved the Union, and would have been ready, as his fathers always were, to give his fortune and his life in its defense against a foreign foe; but he loved his State more, and to her appeal his heart leaped responsive and his hand grasped the sword.

Who shall frame in fitting words the story of his career? Courage on the battle field is the common attribute of good soldiers everywhere, and if that constituted his only claim to admiration, he would be but an ordinary figure on the page of history.

But it is the moral aspect of his career that is sublime. It was his magnificent struggle against overwhelming odds for the preservation of constitutional liberty, for the right of self-government, for all, indeed, that was sacred in his heritage that has made him a hero and a

martyr for all time. And this magnificent struggle was made, not only against overwhelming forces, and resources, and equipments, but in a country blockaded at every port, gradually stripped of the commonest means of subsistence, unable to pay him for his services, and finally reduced to rags and starvation. Still, throughout it all, even to the last moment, he stood inflexible, patient, cheerful, self-sacrificing, brave and true. Who can withhold from such virtues the tribute of praise, and honor, and respect, and who that bath the semblance of a man dare call their possessor a traitor?

Just as at the formation of the Union North Carolina held back and refused accession to it, so at the formation of the Confederacy, with characteristic conservatism, she withheld her assent, in the hope of an amicable adjustment, until the proclamation of the newly elected sectional President, calling on her for troops to war on her Southern sisters, fell upon her ears, and fired her soul. On this same historic day, 34 years ago, she again declared her independence, and girded herself for battle. The war cloud burst, and for four years its pitiless pelting fell upon her people. How did they acquit themselves in the conflict? Did they prove themselves worthy of their Revolutionary sires? For answer I turn, not to the testimony of any commanding officer, living or dead, Federal or Confederate,—not even to that utterance of the stainless Lee, in the last agonies of Appomattox: "God bless old North Carolina." I point to the inscription on that stone, "First at Big Bethel, last at ~~Bentonville~~." *Appomattox*

I appeal to the records, written alike by friend and foe. I tender her poll-list of voters of 1861—113,000, and the total of her Confederate rank and file—125,000.

I point to the fact that she contributed nearly one-fifth of the soldiers of the Confederate army—that she lost one-fourth of those killed in battle—that she lost more than one-fourth of those who died of wounds—that she lost one-third of those who died of disease.

I cite the appalling and unprecedented fact that at Gettysburg, her ever-memorable Twenty-Sixth Regiment lost 90 per cent. of the men carried into action.

I put in evidence the fact that, on several battle fields of Virginia, she left more dead and wounded than all the Southern States combined.

I remind you that her Thirty-Second Regiment floated the standard of the Confederate States at the farthest point North which it ever reached.

I proudly show that one of her sons, commanding a Confederate ship, was the only man who carried the Confederate flag around the world.

And, finally, I show that when the end came, and her banners were furled, both at Appomattox and at Greensboro, she stacked twice as many rifles as any other State of the Confederacy.

This is the answer, the glorious answer, which North Carolina makes to those who ask where she was and what she did during the war between the States. To every call of duty—whether to stain with bleeding feet the rough line of march, or to labor in the trenches, or to lead the way into the flaming hell of battle, or to cover a retreat—her steady answer always was “Adsum.”

Shall I recite the times, and the places, and the deeds? Ask me to condense years into an hour, a volume into a word, a prolonged and thrilling tragedy into a brief sigh.

Go, listen to the Atlantic breeze that sings in the pine

forests from the Virginia peninsula to the capes of Florida; go, sit beside the waters of any of the great rivers of the South, and hear their voices as, rushing through rocky passes, or gliding grandly through lowland stretches, they seek the sea; go, stand upon the heights of Cemetery Ridge, or South Mountain, or the blue hills which overlook the valley of the Shenandoah, or the steep ascent of Lookout—and to him that hath ears to hear, from breeze and stream, eye, and from the very rocks will come a tribute of praise and honor to the Old North State.

She boasts not: she never did of any of her achievements. So far from it, she has never preserved the memorials of them, which other people are careful to keep of their own, but has been content to substitute for them a sacred shrine in her own heart, to which, when unkind neighbors sneer, or degenerate sons dishonor her, she turns with gratitude and honest pride. May God forever bless and preserve her!

I invoke, too, His choicest blessings upon you, Oh, women of North Carolina! who have pursued with unflagging zeal and devotion the noble design which is this day accomplished, and upon which you may now look with supremest satisfaction. You have not erected this monument exclusively to the Confederate Dead of our own State, nor do we confine our loving tributes to them alone.

We embrace in the wide sweep of our affectionate remembrance all who laid down their lives in defence of the rights and liberties of the Southern States and people.

From the cold blue lakes upon the Canadian border to where the warm waves lap softly upon the yellow sands

of the Gulf, on a thousand hill-sides and in a thousand valleys they sleep—some beneath monuments like this, some in private cemeteries, thousands, alas! in unknown graves. We love and honor the memory of all alike. They deserve such tribute if mortal men ever did, and never was it paid more sincerely than now and here.

Stand then, bronze image of him who wore the gray! Thou canst not meet with calmer mien than did he the sunshine and the storm. Not more enduring is thy granite base than the love on which he rests. Thou art a triumph of Art; he was God's gift to his country. Thou shalt perish, but he shall live forever in the hearts of his people.







