

ADDRESS

Delivered at the Opening of the Building

of the

CONFEDERATE MEMORIAL INSTITUTE

AT RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

ON MAY 3, 1921

By H. SNOWDEN MARSHALL

Published by the Board of Managers of the Institute

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Mr. President — Ladies and Gentlemen — Comrades of my father :

When your distinguished President did me the great honour of asking me to address you today, he told me that the reason for asking me was that I was my father's son. My father served on the Staff of General Lee from about the time when General Lee took command of the Army of Northern Virginia throughout the war. My father was the Staff Officer who accompanied General Lee to meet General Grant at Appomattox.

One of the duties which devolved upon my father, in connection with his work on General Lee's Staff, was to prepare reports of operations of the Confederate Army. He has told me a story about the first report that he prepared. He had seen deeds of stirring valour which moved him to the very depths of his soul. He prepared his first report and submitted it to General Lee for his examination. In this report he had described the things which he had seen and the things which he had known about, in terms of youthful enthusiasm; he had spoken of the resolute courage of our gallant troops; and had used other words of eulogy in various parts of his narrative.

General Lee examined the report, and then took a pen and struck from it every adjective of a complimentary character which had been inserted in the report, leaving it a dry narrative of fact. He gave to my father one of those admonitions, which when they came from General Lee were never forgotten by any man: "State the facts about these operations without comment. If the facts deserve compliment or adulation, the world will give them; but it is not for you or me to pay compliments to our own people."

Since I started to prepare my address for this occasion, I have had this story in mind. I have endeavoured to the best of my ability to strike out the characterizations which always spring to our minds when we think of these glorious days, and have tried to give the same treatment to my proposed remarks that General Lee gave to my father's report. I am not at all sure that I have succeeded, but I shall try to confine myself to bald statements of fact.

Before taking up the particular subject which we are here to discuss, I wish to ask you to cast your minds back into the recent past. From the sixth day of April, 1917, and for a long time thereafter, there existed in the United States of America the most perfect union of all the states and of all the people that has ever been known in the history of this country.

There was no sectional split except an honourable rivalry in the effort of each section to do more for the common cause than any other section. There was in every portion of the land a free and willing contribution of our bravest and our best to the cause to which the whole heart and soul of the country was committed. The spontaneous eagerness of every part of the country to do its share and more than its share in the task that confronted us all in those recent days is the first thing that I ask you to pause and think about.

If we can imagine a spectator from another planet observing the conditions in this country which I have just described during the Great War, we can also imagine his astonishment if he had been told that about half a century previously this country had been riven into two warring sections. It would have been hard to make such a visitor believe that from the fifteenth day of April, 1861, and for four years thereafter, the whole power of a large majority of the United States had been directed at the subjugation of a small Southern portion of the country. It would have seemed incredible to such a visitor had he been told that, even after this subjugation had been effected, there were years and years in which the unquenchable hatred directed against the South, from which this war had been bred, was apparently as violent as before; that for years after this war the principal business for which the Government of the United States seemed to exist was to devise new schemes of torment for the inhabitants of the conquered territory. If this visitor had been told that after the conquest of the South, a pertinacious and serious effort had been made to destroy the whole civilization of the conquered country and to place the white people of this section under the domination of a semi-savage race of negroes just freed from slavery; if he had been told that the bayonets of the conquerors upheld and supported in the almost ruined land a set of adventurers who were encouraged to loot and

despoil the wretched population, then I think his comment would have been that these statements could not be true, because such occurrences must have made a chasm between two sections of the country that could never have been healed, as he had seen it healed in 1917.

We are consecrating this building today as a memorial to the generation which bore these trials, and as a lesson to the descendants of the men and women of our Southern country who lived in those dark and terrible times. We are asking all of their posterity to understand and believe the same thing that we know about them.

We look back with happiness and pride on many things that have been done by our ancestors. Why is it that we rate, first of all, the accomplishments of this generation in whose honour we are dedicating this building? Why is it that when we arrange the places at the table of that Valhalla of our History where sit our heroes, we put the place of General Lee at the head, and rank below him even such commanding figures as George Washington?

It is not only because our generals and soldiers made our country and its cause glorious throughout the world.

It is not only because of the modest, unpretentious courage that did not gloat in victory, or falter in the face of dire disaster.

It is also and chiefly because they were thrice armed for that they had their quarrel just; because the blood of our dead is part of that ceaseless stream that has for so many ages been flowing as a sacrifice to the cause of the freedom of English-speaking peoples before the throne of our God.

I do not intend to relate to you in detail facts which you have all known since you were children, but there are some occasions, and this seems to me to be one of them, when it is in order to make a short statement of the causes which evoked the deeds which are commemorated wherever we look in this beautiful building. General Wade Hampton said:

“We of the South have been derelict in not presenting to the world our version of the causes which led to the Civil War.”

We still are derelict in this respect, and the repetition of falsehood, unchallenged by weary listeners, sometimes produces an accepted fact.

It is said that we learn from history that no one ever learns anything from history.

We surely can learn nothing from false history.

If our people fought for the preservation of slavery, we ought to tear down this building and wreck the statues that beautify this historic city.

If they were rebels, or traitors to any government that was entitled to their allegiance, we ought to teach the next generation to despise their memory.

Let us carry ourselves back to the fateful date of April fifteenth, 1861. On that day the President of the United States proclaimed a war against the inhabitants of the seven states then constituting the Confederacy; that is to say, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas. He called for volunteers to invade these states, and appealed to "loyal citizens to maintain the honour, integrity and existence of our national union, and the perpetuity of popular government, and to redress wrongs already long enough endured."

Let us examine for a moment what had gone before this order of mobilization and declaration of war.

The institution of slavery had been established, at the close of the Revolution, in all of the American colonies except one. It was a decadent and doomed institution, dying out among all civilized peoples. It had among its antagonists many people in the Southern states. Movements to get rid of it in the Southern states had had the backing of the leading men of the South. Thousands of slaves had been liberated by individual slave-owners.

For example, in Virginia, in 1832, a bill for emancipation by deportation and colonization of free negroes and those who should become free was passed by the lower house and only failed of passage by one vote in the Senate.

In other countries, in which the worn-out system of slavery still found itself in existence in the Nineteenth century, the effort to get rid of it had been met helpfully and successfully, and slavery was disposed of peacefully and

easily, in almost every other country, through the change of sentiment brought about by modern thought, and by conditions which rendered the institution an entire anachronism.

It was not destined to be so in this country. There arose in certain Northern states a party, which found for itself more political profit in using the existence of slavery as a means of stirring up factional and sectional strife, than could be gained by co-operating in the efforts of slave-owners themselves to get rid of this ancient yoke, which rested as heavily upon the white man as upon the black. Intemperate objurgation took the place of any sensible discussion of the questions involved. Violent, malignant and vicious abuse of the people of the South comes sounding down in rancous uproar out of those times. At the same time that these people engendered discord between the two sections of the country, there were placed powerful obstacles in the way of that large party in the South who were trying to get rid of slavery. State after state in the North passed laws making it impossible for a man who wished to free his slaves in the South to obtain land for them in any of the states where negroes were free. The difficulties of transporting freed negroes to Africa were almost insuperable. The freeing of slaves and leaving them in states where slavery existed was of little or no benefit to the freedmen.

It is to be borne in mind that this movement did not get under way until the white people of the North had practically rid themselves of the curse of slavery. They had comparatively few slaves to dispose of, and their task was not difficult. Some of their slaves were freed, and some sold into slavery in states where slavery still existed. But the slave traders of England and New England had filled the Southern colonies with a disproportionate number of African slaves, and the problem of getting rid of them, was very difficult when the public sentiment of the civilized world called for the termination of the ancient system of slavery.

The preaching of the gospel of hate against the Southern people went on.

The dissolution of the union between the North and the South was openly urged by the abolitionists; one of their favorite demonstrations was to burn the Constitution of the United States, which they described as "a covenant with death

and an agreement with hell, involving both parties in atrocious criminality.”

They openly advocated the stirring up of civil war in the South; they avowedly aimed at arming the slaves and repeating in the South the bloody history of San Domingo and Haiti. They applauded in their public meetings and in their churches the efforts of a fanatical band actually to incite the slaves in the South to bloody insurrection.

For thirty years before 1860, the efforts of these people continued, and after awhile it became apparent that a political party could be organized which could get the benefit of votes produced by this malevolent propaganda.

Nearly every great statesman who took part in the organization of our government and in its early history had pointed out in clear and convincing terms the certainty of disintegration of the union which would ensue if a party should arise which did not make its appeal to all the people in all the states, or which was frankly at political war with any section of the country as a section.

In the face of these warnings there was organized, in 1856, a party which elected its president in 1860, and which did not seek votes in the South, or nominate candidates to office in the South, or ask for delegates to its conventions from any but a very few of the Southern states.

To this party, as had been expected and intended, the abolitionists attached themselves. It is true that the party did not dare to openly espouse the whole program of hate; they did not openly advocate the dissolution of the United States; they did not clamor for the propagation of civil war in the Southern states; they put in their platforms and in their official declarations the statement that they did not oppose at all the institution of slavery, and yet by inflammatory utterances, in many respects similar to the statements of the most extreme abolitionists, they sought to gain the advantage of the voting power which had been established by this venomous and malignant set of agitators.

This party selected, as a passably legal cover for their anti-sectional propaganda, the assertion that a slave-owner ought not to be allowed to take slaves out of the states and into the territories. Practically no slaves were ever so transported, either before the Supreme Court, in 1857, decided that

a man could transport his slaves into a territory of the United States, or after that decision. The whole pretended issue was a fictitious one, but it furnished a more legalistic position for frothy denunciation of the white inhabitants of the states where slavery remained, than the more frank proposition of the abolitionists, that the union should be destroyed, and the slaves aroused to massacre the white people of the South.

The election of a President in 1860 by this party was deemed by the states from South Carolina to Texas to be a just cause for withdrawing from the union. These states accordingly withdrew and formed the Southern Confederacy. South Carolina seceded on the seventeenth of December, 1860, and was followed by the Cotton and Gulf states, the last to go out being Texas, which withdrew from the union the second of March, 1861.

Having made this brief statement of what had preceded the fifteenth day of April, 1861, let us note the condition of affairs on that important day.

The states which had seceded from the union contained about one-third of the voting population of the Southern states. The remaining Southern states, containing about two-thirds of the population of the South, had not seceded; and, wherever a vote had been taken, had voted strongly not to secede.

In each of the states which retired from the union, and which had formed the Confederacy, there was a strong minority opposed to secession, and in favor of a return to the union. This minority in each of these states had been vastly strengthened by the fact that such states as Virginia, North Carolina, Maryland, Kentucky and Arkansas had refused to secede. The voices of many of the strongest and best beloved leaders of the South had been urgently opposing secession and advocating the return of the states which had left. Allow me to read to you what General Lee said on the subject, writing from Texas in January, 1861:

“The South, in my opinion, has been aggrieved by the acts of the North, as you say. I feel the aggression and am willing to take every proper step for redress. It is the principle I contend for, not indi-

vidual or private benefit. As an American citizen, I take great pride in my country, her prosperity and her institutions, and would defend any state if her rights were invaded. But I can anticipate no greater calamity for the country than a dissolution of the union. It would be an accumulation of all the evils we complain of, and I am willing to sacrifice everything but honor for its preservation. I hope, therefore, that all constitutional means will be exhausted before there is a resort to force. Secession is nothing but revolution. The framers of our Constitution never exhausted so much labor, wisdom and forbearance in its formation, and surrounded it with so many guards and securities, if it were intended to be broken by every member of the confederacy at will. It is intended for perpetual union, so expressed in the preamble, and for the establishment of a government (not a compact) which can only be dissolved by revolution, or by the consent of all the people in convention assembled. It is idle to talk of secession. Anarchy would have been established, and not a government, by Washington, Hamilton, Madison, and all the other patriots of the revolution.

“Still an union that can only be maintained by swords and bayonets, and in which strife and civil war are to take the place of brotherly love and kindness, has no charms for me. I shall mourn for my country, and for the welfare and progress of mankind. If the union is dissolved and the government disrupted, I shall return to my native state and share the miseries of my people, and, save in defense, will draw my sword no more.”

The Southern states which had refused to secede had joined in an effort to have a peace conference, feeling as they did, the certainty that they could bring about a restoration of friendly relations without the disruption of the union.

I have tried to make the foregoing statement brief, as I want to ask you to put this question to yourselves: Was there any substantial difficulty, if the United States Government wanted peace and not war, in restoring the union of

the United States without firing a shot and without the tragedy which was to follow? Of course, as everyone saw at the time, and as events proved, the situation was one in which war could easily be provoked.

Ask yourselves this question: Suppose the Southern states had not seceded, but the New England states had carried out the threats which had so frequently been made to secede from the union. Suppose part of them had retired from the union, and the rest had remained in the United States, protesting against the secession of their brethren. Suppose the New England States which remained in the union had sent a peace mission to the other union states imploring time for the preservation of peace; would this appeal have met with the same response? Would an expedition have been sent to provoke a fight in some harbour of one of the seceding New England states? Would this have been followed by an executive declaration of war, and an order for the invasion of New England?

If the party in power had been a party which represented the whole country; if the President had been the President of the whole United States; if he had not been nominated by delegates in a convention to which the Southern states were not asked to send delegates; if he had been accountable for his re-election to a constituency which comprised the whole people of the United States — would there have been the least difficulty in bringing about a peaceful restoration of the union?

But the constituency to which the President owed his election was comprised in large degree of people to whom hatred of the white man of the South was a cardinal article of faith. The prevailing party had control of the organization of the government; they had the army, the navy and the treasury. They had none of our people among them, and knew nothing of our people. They expected a prompt submission to their overwhelming power. They thought that their war on the South, which they were planning, would not last more than ninety days at the outside. The Southern people seemed small and helpless; the chance had come to destroy them and the edict for their destruction went forth on this fifteenth day of April, 1861.

Thus, there was presented to the whole people of the South a question: They were told that the people in the states which had seceded were to be compelled, by force of arms, to submit themselves to a government, whose ultimate principle was that the just powers of government are derived from the consent of the governed. They were asked to contribute their share of military force for the purpose among others, "to redress wrongs already long enough endured." They were thus summoned to a war of vengeance, dictated by a party which had no other stock in trade than hatred of the South.

What was their answer to be? What was to be said in answer to this challenge by that generation of men and women of our people, whom we have met here today to honour? Would they stand and argue that the chances were all against them? Would they give consideration to the fact that in man-power and resources and wealth the odds were four to one against them; and that this advantage was enormously multiplied by the fact that they had no organized government? Would they take the easy course, or would they resolutely tread the hard path of honour?

The answer which they were destined to give had been written for each of them before he was born. People of the race from which they came could not have given a different answer, had they tried. Had their brains commanded their tongues to say, "We submit to this odious oppression," the tongue of each would have cloven to the roof of his mouth before these words were spoken.

You all know what they did — what happened after this declaration of war, among the states which had seceded and those which had hopefully clung to the union and refused to secede.

The pro-union minority in the states which had seceded disappeared overnight.

The Convention of Arkansas, which on March 18, 1861, had rejected an ordinance of secession, met again on the sixth of May and passed that ordinance by a vote of 69 to 1.

North Carolina, which had refused in February to call a convention for the purpose of considering secession, called a convention on the twentieth of May, which passed the secession ordinance the next day.

Tennessee, which had refused to call a convention for considering secession in February, passed the ordinance of secession by an enormous popular majority on the twenty-fourth of June, 1861.

The Virginia convention, which had rejected an ordinance of secession on the fourth of April, 1861, and as late as the eleventh of April had refused to adopt a conditional declaration in favor of secession, passed the ordinance of secession on the seventeenth of April by a large majority.

Maryland and Missouri were over-run before state action could be taken, but their sons have nothing to be ashamed of. The best people of each of these states found their way to spend their lives and fortunes in the great cause in which their people were engaged.

I do not know of any way to give you a better picture of the change of sentiment brought about by the proclamation of April fifteenth, 1861, than to tell a story, attributed to the late Senator Vance. He said that he was making a speech at a town in North Carolina against secession. He had his arm raised in a gesture to emphasize a point he was making, when a man came into the hall and announced that the President had called for volunteers to invade the South. He said, "The arm which I had raised to emphasize my point against secession, fell by the side of the most convinced secessionist in America."

And so it came about that these people took their place in that high rank which history gives to small nations fighting for the right. Leonidas might have made his peace with the great King of Persia, and history would have had no Thermopylae. King Albert of Belgium might have submitted to the overwhelming power of the German Empire, and the most glorious page of Belgian history would never have been written. Our people might have taken the easy course of dishonour; but, had they done so, they would have lost the chance to write their names in the place which they occupy upon the monument of history.

On April fifteenth, 1861, where were the ancient allies of our people? Where was New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and other Northern states in which the party of sectional hatred had gained but little foothold? In other

times of trouble, Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, had not been niggardly in helping them. There was no cause of war between them and old friends bound to them by historic ties. There were numberless links of friendship that seemed unbreakable. How did they come to array themselves among our enemies? They could have stopped this war of hate and vengeance. Why did they not do so?

After the election of President Lincoln the expression of their views was plain enough. They deplored the secession of the Cotton states, as did Virginia and North Carolina and the other border states of the South. They shared the views of the Southern border states that secession was unnecessary and uncalled for. But the great majority of their people were utterly and on principle opposed to the use of force to subjugate the Cotton states. They had not forgotten the American Revolution. They still believed that King George the Third was wrong and that George Washington was right. Mr. Horace Greely, Editor of The New York Tribune, a paper which has never been suspected of affection for our part of the country, said:

“If it (the Declaration of Independence) justified the secession from the British Empire of three millions of colonists in 1776, we do not see why it would not justify the secession of five millions of Southerners from the Federal Union in 1861. If we are mistaken on this point, why does not some one attempt to show wherein and why?”

I could multiply such quotations indefinitely, but I take it that no one will deny the statement that the vast preponderance of opinion in New York and many other Northern states was utterly opposed to the use of force against the South. When the party in power determined to wage war upon our people it was essential to them to overcome this feeling and array these powerful states upon their side. How was it done?

Oceans of ink have been spent to prove that the fight at Fort Sumter was not deliberately provoked by the administration at Washington. Northern historians have not been deterred by the hopeless improbability of the proposition that

the little state of South Carolina started without cause actual warfare against the United States.

I shall not debate these shopworn arguments, but would like to read to you the account of this affair written by a careful and accurate English historian. He says:*

“The Confederates had obviously done their very utmost to postpone or avert hostilities. Mr. Lincoln, Mr. Seward and their colleagues intentionally and deliberately forced on the collision, determined to leave the South no choice but between surrender at discretion and instant war. They gained their end. Northern feeling would not sanction an offensive war till every effort at peaceful settlement had been exhausted. Hence it was imperative if Lincoln’s Presidency were not to be signalized by the immediate dissolution of the Union and to bring the Republican party into universal odium and contempt, or the Chicago platform to be ignominiously retracted, that the North should be hurried into war on false pretences. The authors of the collision, the men who had publicly pledged themselves to peace while secretly preparing war, profited by their own duplicity, and concealed the transactions which had rendered the reduction of Sumter an instant necessity of self-defence. The North was persuaded that the South had struck the first blow — had ‘fired on the uniform,’ ‘had insulted the flag.’ The imperious self-will of a dictatorial democracy was successfully inflamed to fury; and from this point it would be as profitable to trace the sequence of fancies in a fever dream as to follow the unreasoning impulses of a deluded people.”

And, he says further:*

“The double policy of the Republican Cabinet—the peace negotiations, the war measures of Lincoln and Seward — had served their double purpose; had baffled the earnest efforts of the Confederates to keep the peace, and hidden those efforts from the great ma-

*Percy Greg. History of the United States, Book VI, Chap-III, p. 169.

jority of the Northern people. The South had been forced, the North tricked into war. The players of that double game have gone where 'all hearts are open, all desires known.' Their secrets cannot long be hidden from the scrutiny of biographers and historians; already enough is known to reveal, not perhaps their individual intentions, but their collective responsibility."

Did this war, which was waged against the Southern people, have a tendency to preserve the union of the United States — a claim which has frequently been made for it? It certainly maintained the territorial integrity of the United States; it brought back under the dominion of the conquering arms of the United States the wretched population of the conquered provinces of the South. But, was this union? Some people whom I address are among those that lived and took part in the great deeds which this building commemorates, and they remember the whole story well. Some of us were born after that day, and we know all we have been told and some things that we have seen about the union which this war preserved. God save the country from such a union as it was for many years after 1865. It is not union, except in a bald physical sense, when through a large section of the country the flag of the United States is hated by every eye that looks upon it. It is not union when every boy who is growing up in a section of the country hopes and prays for the day to come when his generation will have a chance to see the war between the sections break out again.

The kind of union that has been restored is not the kind that can be created by bayonets. It is no part of my task now to describe the way in which our present union came about. It never came, however, until the disappearance from American politics of those patriots who made their easy political living by blackguarding the South.

I know no Southern man who is not glad to see the restoration of a real union in this country. Nor do I know one who does not thank God for what our people did in those days, and for the heritage which they left behind them.

Was this war fought on the part of the North to abolish slavery or on the part of the South to maintain slavery?

*id. Chap. IV, p. 172.

In the first part of the first inaugural address of President Lincoln, he quoted and repeated past speeches of his and declared: "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so."

I need not follow up like statements of his made from time to time orally and in writing. It was not until the war had made considerable progress that any step was taken looking towards the abolition of slavery. The grotesque pretension of the people who had provoked the war,—that the weaker side had been the assailant,—was treated with derision by the enlightened opinion of the whole world. The idea suggested by them that they were subduing the South for the purpose of giving to the Southern people the blessings of that "liberty" which had been won for the American people by the sword of George Washington was equally derided. Mr. Gladstone, on the 28th of April, 1862, in a speech at Manchester, referring to the attitude of the Federal Government and the Northern people, said: "We have no faith in the propagation of free institutions at the point of the sword."

It had proved to be no war of ninety days, into which the party that hated our people had deluded the people of the Northern states.

The stout hearts of our soldiers fighting for their altars and their firesides — the flaming patriotism which has so often been in history the reaction of honorable people against intolerable wrong — had made of this war a war which was to exact, — to use the language of the people of General Smuts, — "a price which would stagger humanity."

It was not until the party in power in the United States ascertained their situation in the face of the public opinion of the world, and until they discovered the difficulties which had arisen between them and what they had thought to be an easy victory, that they sought to camouflage a war of oppression by masquerading as crusaders attempting to abolish slavery.

I need go no further with this subject. If the people in the South had been interested in the question of retaining their slaves, a short and easy way to keep them would have been to

remain in the union and rely upon the constitutional provisions then protecting slavery and the announcement of the President of the United States, to which I made allusion a few moments ago.

Did the war prove that secession is wrong — that the resistance by a minority of the people to wrongful aggression is not right and not honourable? If it is supposed that this principle was established by the war, what view must be taken of the secession of the American Colonies under the leadership of George Washington?

What did the war prove beyond the fact that a powerful and wealthy majority of the people can conquer and subdue a small minority?

I think it proved one thing conclusively, and that is that the people who founded this government were right when they predicted that the formation of a sectional party would necessarily cause disruption of the United States. That fact was true in 1861; it is true today; it will be true tomorrow.

When the people of this country have been political antagonists, they have always found ways to settle their differences. When the members of a party become, not political antagonists of the opposing party, but physical enemies of a section of the country, the consequence which ensued in 1861 will occur again.

There is one more thing which the war proved. It established the fact that there was in this new country a set of people who, in the language of Edmund Burke, had "that chastity of honour which felt a stain like a wound." It showed that in this country there existed people who were willing to make those extreme, unselfish, prodigal sacrifices, to which alone History has accorded the *Spolia Opima* of fame. It demonstrated that in this country, discovered not four hundred years before 1861, there had been bred a race of people who could do a thing which can be fairly compared with the greatest things that have been done by any people in the history of the world.

