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ADDRESS

BY

MAJ. JOHN W. MOORE,

DELIVERED AT

OAKWOOD CEMETERY, MAY 10TH, 1881,

BY REQUEST OF THE

LADIES' MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

OF

NORTH CAROLINA.

RALEIGH :

EDWARDS, BROUGHTON & Co., PRINTERS AND BINDERS,
1881.

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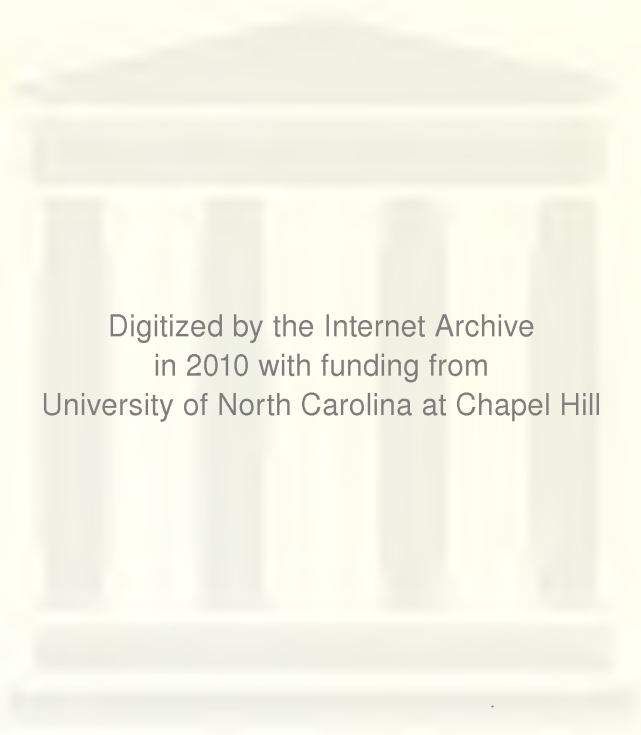
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ADDRESS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

We have gathered here in this quiet city of the dead to recall the images of our loved and lost. We do not come in sack-cloth and ashes as badges of our woe—we do not lie down in despair to utter lamentations over broken idols—but, in the plentitude of an ancient sorrow, we are here to mark the return of the most sacred day in all our secular calendar. Once again we adorn the graves and garland the memories of our Confederate dead. Heaven smiles upon our purpose—for the sunlight is glorious and only gentlest breezes blow upon this throng engaged in the discharge of a high and holy duty. No human emotion is nobler than gratitude. Frail humanity never assumes an aspect more pleasing to the angels than when benefits conferred are remembered. Add to this that our benefactors can no longer recognize our thanksgiving, and this day's pageantry becomes sublime in the height and purity of its promptings. We renew our tokens of love to those who once loved us; and feel assured that no words of ours will be misconstrued by the men we honor—for flattery is never addressed to the dull, cold ears of death.

Alas, my friends! how empty and tame are all our words in the face of these imposing symbolismes of our grief? The solemn procession, this great gathering of our people, these wailing dirges for the dead, and above all, these garlanded graves, are so full of majesty and pathos, that they dwarf into insignificance all the resources of mere rhetoric. How can we, who knew and loved these dead men find words to portray their worth or our appreciation of their service? How are we to rise to the height of so noble an argument

as is implied in such an eulogium as they deserve? We can only bring the tribute of our thanks and tears; and with faltering utterance repeat the story of how they fought and died for us. It was said by the Saviour of the world that "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend." So, also, it is true that he who loves a cause well enough to die in its defence hallows it by his blood, and in the nobility of the sacrifice precludes the possibility of unworthy imputation upon his motives. Here, my countrymen are the tombs of our martyrs. Here, in the long silence of eternity, rest the stilled hearts that were once the pride and bulwark of our people. Give all your reverence to this solemn presence, and remember that we this day tread on holy ground. It holds the ashes of heroes! It is a shrine whereon we may well crucify all that is base in our natures, and, inspired by such exemplars, rise to higher things. Alas! all that we have left of these dauntless defenders of our soil is now but handfulls of dust, hidden forever from our sight.

The bugle's call no more they hear;
The drums are silent on each ear;
They moulder from us year by year.

The wild flower blooms upon their graves;
The robin chants his sweetest staves;
The green grass softly o'er them waves.

The lily droops its pensive head;
The hawk sails silent far o'erhead;
And they sleep on long dumb and dead.

It cannot be they died in vain,
Or fruitless all their toil and pain—
The martyr's blood must have its gain.

A purpose deep was in their loss;
No storm in vain the waves shall toss—
God lifts us by each heavy cross.

As richer grows the pruned tree—
So nobler new humanity
Is born of blood shed full and free.

We this day renew our testimony to the world, that lapsing years are powerless to erase from the tablets of our hearts the memory of the men who sleep beneath these mounds. In all the blood and upheaval of the two last decades we are still mindful of those we saw depart so long ago as they went forward to do battle in our behalf. We do not claim that they were demigods like those warriors on the windy plains of Troy of whom Homer sung; these friends of ours could not, on the perilous edge of battle, call down aid from Olympic courts. They were only plain American citizens, who, of their own accord, left all the endearments of home at the call of duty. They were the flower of our gay and gallant youth, who in all patience endured the horrors of a long and mortal struggle. They were soldiers who held at bay through years of blood and toil vast hordes gathered from many lands. They were a wall of defence against invaders seeking to desecrate our altars. It seemed to spectators, who observed from every portion of the civilized world, that these Confederates were to reverse military maxims concerning heavier battalions and superior resources. Time and again the great hosts sent against them went back from their front in terrified rout. They seemed for four years as unconquerable as Cæsar's legions or the Spanish infantry of the sixteenth century. After a hundred battles they were still like some rock in the sea which has endured through unimagined ages the assaults of wind and wave; thus worn down by attrition, when countless foes drove them to the wall there was nothing left but the grim and scarred skeleton of an army that had grown forever immortal.

So it is, that with all our regret for the fate of these sleepers, we can yet mingle thanks to God that they died so bravely. If it is sad to recall the ruin of their cause, there is still unspeakable consolation in the epic of their glory. In the lapse of time gentler thoughts have come to both parties in the great controversy. They who love these dead Confederates best have no desire to sully the wreaths that

adorn the victorious brows of their adversaries ; they can see now that patriotism and honor actuated the followers of both the hostile flags. In the providence of God we are again countrymen all. The hour is fast approaching when honor will be accorded without stint alike to the wearers of the gray and blue. To the great heart of America the graves of her slain sons are all equally dear ; they are the joint inheritance of an imperial race, and will ever be the proudest monuments of the patriotism of our people.

There can be no sweeter savor to heaven than a patriot's blood. All ages and climes hold dear the memories of men who surrender life for the public good. The tall monument, the tuneful lay and the glowing pages of history unite in homage to that grandeur of soul which can face death in the discharge of duty.

"It is not all of life to live, nor all of death to die."

We may shudder with apprehension at the thought of a change so full of unknown contingencies ; but many souls are too strong to falter at the expense of honor and self-approval. Of such stuff, my countrymen, were these dead Confederates. Where else in all the world have others been found more entitled to the gratitude and reverence of their compatriots. Their aims were noble ; they sought only the defence of their homes ; they waged no war of aggression ; they were not mercenaries expending their blood in another's quarrel. They were just and magnanimous ; they were so bravely patient that, amid the sorest privations, they, through heroic years, endured all the attacks of men outnumbering them four-fold. They not only held the field against a majority of their own countrymen, but the levies and resources gathered from many lands. With their sea-ports closed in blockade and the world sending men and munitions to their foes, these dead Confederates not only bravely took up the wager of battle, but for four years bore their part in a struggle that filled all Christendom with its resonance.

Thus, my hearers, we can afford to dry our tears and thank heaven we are the friends, kinsmen and survivors of such soldiers. We cherish their memories as the most precious legacy of the past, and earnestly desire that our children and posterity should continue this homage to our dead. We are not content to leave their names to the cold keeping of monumental inscriptions. It is not enough that history, with her solemn vindication, will embalm their record. Let us, in hymn and elegy—in oration and epic, with all the added pomp of pageant and festival—keep green in Southern hearts the memory of men who were thus faithful unto death.

In the sum of human endowments there is no higher gift than the faculty which makes us capable of appreciating the virtues of others. We rise to our highest level when glowing with pride and satisfaction in the contemplation of deeds done in long vanished centuries. The soul that is fired with emulous admiration in the perusal of Plutarch is on the high road to honor and usefulness. Horatius upon the bridge of death, Leonidas and his Spartans at Thermopylæ, and the French guardsmen at Waterloo, are as potent to-day as when men first wept for joy at the thought of such heroism. Martin Luther at Worms, as he stood unmoved amid so many of the world's frowning potentates, the dying Sir Philip Sidney, and the majestic figure of our own Washington "moulded in colossal calm," still "rule our spirits from their urns." The world is wiser and better for the example of such men. They are as necessary for human progress as the benefactors who have given to our use the railway, the steamship and the throbbing pulses of the electric telegraph. We shall ever be a nobler and more generous people in the recollection of these dead Confederates. It will never be forgotten how gladly they went down to the carnival of death. It seems but yesterday that they were streaming through this city on their way to Manassas and Yorktown. Their blood has scarcely yet been washed out from

the soil of the battle-fields. They are, dear friends, as palpable to me as when luminous with the glory of Chancellorsville or sublime in their failure at Gettysburg.

It is well, then, for us to be here to-day! It is our sacred duty to instruct our children as to the causes that led these men from their homes down into the valley of death. To the innocent soul that at this late day enquires what induced these dead Confederates to take up arms, we have only to say, that they were the exponents of a passionate and pervading determination of a free people to defend and assure their threatened autonomy. They drew swords as the last argument against men who, they believed were pushing them to thralldom. These descendants and inheritors of the fathers who had achieved liberty and independence for America were resolved that the compact made in 1787 should not be construed either to their injury or dishonor. They were unwilling that others should thrust themselves into control of our domestic concerns. They could not abide the thought that they, who were at best only allies, should repeat the Athenian habit of altering alliance to legemony and that into empire. These dead Confederates knew that the slogan of slavery was at best a subterfuge. They well understood how that was to be an excuse for assuming control of Southern lives and fortunes. It was not hidden from them that the accomplishment of African emancipation would not suspend the incursions of men, who had resolved that all the States should conform to the Boston decrees. It was to preserve the great American idea of free and equal commonwealths that these dead friends of ours sought to establish a government that would for ages transmit such a public blessing. They feared to consort longer with men who had pronounced the great compact "a league with death and a covenant with hell." The slow torture of years of insult and recrimination culminated in the election of 1860. The authorities at Washington would listen to no terms but those of submission. A roar of artil-

lery was heard in Charleston harbor ; the starry bunting went down, and then the dance of death began. These men asleep around us were tilling peaceful fields, but the sound of coming invasion was in the air :

They drew their swords and wielded them
 'Till shattered in their grasp ;
 A belt of blood from sea to sea
 The whole broad land did elasp :
 Let others tell of what they did,
 The tale will never die—
 How mighty hosts grew pale and fled
 Before their battle-cry.

How they toiled and died during the war is too sad to be here recounted. Like King Francis at Pavia they lost every thing but honor. Now to their children and surviving comrades no guerdon remains but the stern retributions of time. But let no man dream they died in vain. As the blood of the martyr is the seed of the church, so can no noble and costly sacrifice be lost to the world. We are richer in our ruined homesteads and trampled fields than if the demon of strife had never wasted our high places. The scarred and desolate battle grounds have become Marathons and Runnymedes to mankind. They are a prouder heritage than boundless plains crowded with cities and seamed with the mighty high-ways of traffic.

It cannot be forgotten by us or the generations of the future what manner of females were the friends and consorts of these dead Confederates. It was not alone by soldiers on the field of battle that heroism was displayed. In those sad and stormy years there were in all parts of the South multitudes of pure and tender hearts that went out in anguish to the suffering men of our armies. The sentry as he walked his lonely beat well knew far away at home were white hands lifted in prayer for his safety and return. It could not be that such fair and delicate beings should head the charging squadrons, but when the roar of conflict

would cease and the stricken field lay thick with the flower of our youth, pallid and helpless amid the dead and the dying, what angels of mercy seemed the radiant beings that crowded to the reeking hospitals. Who but God will ever know the height and depth of their devotion to the cause they loved? What agony of suspense was theirs, as they listened from afar with ever increasing dread of the fatal news that at last told how these men around us were slain. Where else in the tide of time has been seen such sublime fortitude—as without complaint every thing dear and valuable to them was surrendered to the beloved cause? They clung to it when the manliest hearts had grown desperate and when the last battle-flag had been furled and the broken remnant of the vanquished went back to their homes: who will ever forget how true to the ruined cause were still these beautiful and matchless Southern women?

It cannot be that the lessons of the war will be lost upon the American people. Providence will never permit such seas of blood to have been shed in vain. Our martyrs have shown us that the most enduring benefits are not won in struggles for self-advancement. If we have drained the chalice of woe, it has made possible a grander future. Let us widen the skirts of our humanity as the best commentary in our power upon the services of our dead. As a soft answer averteth wrath, so is an ancient malignity disarmed in the face of concession. Let us cherish these graves but let us also realize the significance of the living present. The spirit that feels an imputation like a wound despises a lasting resentment. The weakling and the coward may brood over injuries, but ‘the bravest are the tenderest,’ as they also are the most forgiving. Julius Cæsar could out-face the world in arms but could also weep like a woman over the death of betrayed Pompey. Nothing is so irresistible as good will. It transfigures the human face and beams from the eye with a light beautiful enough to stream out from the windows of heaven. Whatever it may

please others to do, let us of the South be true to God, to these dead men and to ourselves. Let us lift our hands in prayer that peace and love may again rule in our councils.

America! last birth of time—
 How great thy mission none may tell,
 Upon thy stately argosies
 The stars of hope beam strong and well;
 Oh! land oft washed in freedom's blood
 And born of travail long and sore,
 God help us keep thee on the course
 Our fathers marked in days of yore.

And now, dear friends, it but remains for us to strew flowers upon the resting places of our dead. Alas! much of our hearts is buried in these graves with them. I am satisfied that God keeps and blesses these martyrs to duty. After life's fitful fever they sleep so well we have nothing left but to give them our thanks and tears. "Such a sleep they sleep, these men we loved," we may well leave them to heaven and the high keeping of history. In the temple of renown they fill niches so high that they are safe in all contingencies. They rest in an immortality of fulfilled duty. We may be troubled by party feuds and winter's cold but they are as deaf to human strife as to the wars of the elements. We may be surfeited with success or broken-hearted in the stress of some great calamity, but these heroes slumber on forever undisturbed.

"On Fame's eternal camping grounds
 Their silent tents are spread,
 And glory guards with solemn round
 The bivouack of the dead."



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