

# The Roanoke Beacon.

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THE ROANOKE BEACON,  
Plymouth, N. C.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1889.

## C. L. PETTIGREW'S SPEECH.

BEFORE THE EX-CONFEDERATES AT THE COURT HOUSE, ON MONDAY, OCT. 7TH.

Mr. President of Confederate Veteran Association, Ladies and Gentlemen:

There are times in our lives, when we should step aside out of the current of busy daily life. Like the times taken for the repair of machinery, this complicated human machine must take some time to repair its waste in action, must make its plans for the future, and learn its lessons from the past. If this is not done, life is but a hard surface life, and men become narrow, selfish and forgetful of their noblest instincts. The past through which we have gone, though we are to know it and to know us no more forever, is full of memories near and dear to all of us—private memories which mean so much to us, but with which no stranger can interfere, and common memories which we share with friends—men who have worked and toiled and thought and fought with us. The nobles of them all is called up to-day by the meeting of the Confederate Veterans—their cause, their champions and their comrades.

When I received the invitation of your executive committee, it came more as a command than an invitation; a call to duty and reverence which my heart compels me to obey. This is my only justification in appearing before you, to take up the solemn and glorious story of the South that was to be that germ of an empire, vanished save the stain of life had dimmed its glory—a story told by poets and orators, with lips of eloquence touched with life coals from the altars of genius.

I am no orator. I have not even experienced that I might talk over with you in the language of a comrade the thrilling scenes of 25 years ago. Oh! that I could call you comrades—that I could [?] that with you, I was a part and a parcel of that mighty past, whose echoes still shake to its foundation the heart of this great continent; but like the noble apostle of old in a still grander cause—the warfare between heaven and hell—I feel like one born out of due time.

I can only bring you for myself and those who will join with me, the offerings of the heart, the reverence of the succeeding generation.

This deep reverence for that glorious cause—for those who died for it in vain, and those who not less nobly passed through the jaws of death to take up the cross of the vanquished, is one of those unpeakable feelings that live at home in the heart—the lips cannot utter them—words upon words came forth without the precious burden, but the great heart of the world has felt the story and thrills in sympathy to-day. Can I put these feelings into words? Oh no!

Just like the wavelet that moans on the beach  
And sighing sinks back to the sea,  
So the soul that just touches the radiance of speech  
And its music melts back into me.

I can only hope that my words may kindle in you those emotions and memories of the past, which I know are yet alive, though perhaps buried under the loads and anxieties of every-day work; and may suggest in you resolutions for the future, which is a sacred duty to carry out.

Your association is to keep alive and fresh, and merge into a harmonious whole your several memories of the conflict—united they stand, divided they fall and are forgotten; and to make provision for a soldier's home—those soldiers about whom no pension agent ever asks and whose only provision lies in the generosity of their comrades and the public charity of their State.

Though the bitter truth is known that some of them are objects of charity, let the charity that helps them be not stained by the shame and degradation of the almshouse, but enabled by the sweet savor of gratitude and generosity. Let them have in fact as well as in name a home, where their fast declining days may be spent in honorable peace—rest of body and peace of mind, after the wreck of the great warfare.

There can be no danger of you, Confederate Veterans forgetting the Cause, the Chieftains, or the Soldiers—your comrades. Those days, though far away in what is called the dead past, can never be dead to you. They have made you what you are. They were your harvest time in fame. The days now passing day by day, with their slow dull hours of toil, lengthening the long prospect behind, can never sink into distant silence, the thunders of that time.

You will hear them in undying tones—tones of mingled life and death, of hope and despair, of wild joy and bitter agony, of madness and scorn, but your dust and grief becomes stopped with dust; and one by one with your great Captain you cross the river and rest under the shade of the trees.

But the younger generation—the men who are in middle life and hearing the burden and heat of the day, teach them, so they cannot forget. Let it not pass away from them like a tale that is told, like a dream when one awakes. Make it real to them. Make them know that though now there are no wars to fight, except what is called the battle of life, not death, yet true noble men are required just the same in each; as it is no noble to live well for your state as to die for it, perhaps even better.

Think of the vast amount of steady heroism, of earnest purpose, of brave facing what never was to be done, of unflinching self-sacrifice even to the giving up of life with all its pleasant promises which the soldiers of the South laid on the altar of their country. For all that in the service of life, not death, and we too may be worthy sons of the Old North State, and give her a prouder place among men than could be achieved by the slaughter of the whole race of mankind. Peace hath its victories no less renowned than war.

But there was more in that conflict than

the constitutional questions and property as states. Whether we were right or wrong, has nothing to do with the chief reasons of the cause for the rising generation. That war with its causes and its consequences has passed into history, where the cold glare of impartial reason will do it justice some day in the future, when the clouds of prejudice are left below.

The storms of passion, which ever now are muttering in sudden departing cadence in some parts of this re-united land will then have passed away; the bitter hatreds of some breasts which death alone can end will have been buried in ancient graves. The life-blood poured out in piteous sacrifice on both sides will have been dried up like the dew of a century ago; and a calmer and wiser generation will declare where was the truth, and who had the right among the actors in that terrible tragedy. But on whichever side the judgment of condemnation shall fall, history while pointing out errors will justify the motives, and make for us the pure record on the long annals of time, that if the head was sometimes wrong, the heart was always right.

We are always working in the hands of an almighty power for purposes we know not of, and perhaps from the blood of those dead heroes of the South will spring up some flower of liberty, to bless generations of men yet unborn in the grand progress of mankind.

But for us in this generation everything was settled by the sword—that judge from which there is no appeal; and while bowing in submission to the result, let us learn its lessons. Loyalty to the Union does not require us to be ashamed of ourselves or the noble army of warriors who fell for what they believed the right.

I know, Mr. President, these are men in every community, who take no interest in work like yours, who try with cold lips and selfish heart to stab it with the snare that it is senseless and dead sentiment merely.

You know them. These are the great warriors in time of peace, and in war the skulkers and the rear. These are the men traitors and deserters are made of.

In peace they despise the old Veteran's ragged worn-out clothes, and forget the noble heart that beats beneath, in whose presence they are not worthy to stand.

These are the jaw-hawkers and hen-roost robbers of the war, the traders upon other men's necessities and sufferings.

But don't mind them. They have their reward in the daily harvest of the penitents they worship, and the contempt of every honest patriot.

Of the great leaders of the Confederate Veterans, history will take care. They are enrolled among the great names of the ages, and will shine out in living characters across the chasm of distant time. And as a background to this glorious picture will be spread in equal immortality the history of the cause they made—the field upon which they moved. But they will have a still better life than this—to live in their people's hearts.

When we think of these men and see that they could not save us, when victory after victory turned to nothing in our hands, leaving us a glory which though real was as unsubstantial as the sunlight that falls upon that window to-day; when we think of the noble young lives of the South heaped up in egulating sacrifices on the altar of their country all in vain, we feel that in the ordinances that govern the world it was written, "That it was best for us to fall."

There is one person to whom we come now, without whom there would have been no glory for Lee or Jackson. He is as much a part of their triumph, as their own transcendent abilities. He is as noble as either one of them. It is not his fact that he only had one talent to their ten. He used it just as well, eye even better, for his part was to do and die and not know the reason why.

To move like a pawn on a chessboard in the hands of another man, to go down blindly into death in ways pointed out by another, without his reason, guide, or his own mind to approve, without the stimulus which every true man feels in carrying out his own purposes, without the alluring of ambition to urge him on, this was his part. "Duty nobly done for duty's sake alone." Nothing but pure manliness. Do you know him? Is he a general? No. Is he a colonel? No. A captain? No. Who is he? He is Johnnie Reb, the private. Do you know him now? Aye do you not see him in the familiar faces before you, men who move in daily intercourse with us, bearing in the secret of their own soul the heroism which was their country's pride and protection, and privately without any boasting or complaining, bearing in their bodies their wounds—those seals of honor. Is it not hard that they are no better thought of than other men, and that to-day the hard and heavy world goes on as if they had never been? They are as old fogies and crotchets, unless they can turn their hand that had wielded the saber flashed, to some money making occupation.

But at that time came Johnnie Reb., in response to the call of the voice of his country and his conscience flocking to that banner, which he swore would float over his country's freedom or his grave. There never was a higher call, or a nobler response than that made by the men of the South. As was said by Gen. Grant, it must have been in admiration of such unanimous devotion, "The South for its army has pushed the cradle and the grave."

The old men who had given the strength of their prime to other things, who had left behind all the impulsiveness of youth with calm judgment and stern regard for principle, which is the only thing that does not fly away with the numerous illusions of life offered up when of it was left to them. Most of them are passed away and have gone and received their reward.

And next the youth. There is no nobler sight in the annals of reposed time than the response of the youth of the South. See them with their fresh young life, full of great hopes and promises, every intention almost a gorgeous reality, with the world and its boundless avenues of thought, feeling and action, spread out before them where to choose, and every prospect suffused with young life of ambition, like a glorious sunrise; and all laid down in death or what is scarcely less a sacrifice in a unaimed and broken life. It is sublime, and what makes it more so, is that they did not stop to think of it and perhaps only thought of it to-day, as simply a duty done.

Mr. President, some of them we have among us in this very town. You know them. Let us make our acknowledgments gratefully, thoughtfully and silently, for their modesty forbids the mention of their names.

But what did Johnnie Reb do to have any claims on the gratitude of his State, and every honest patriot?

Men have no use for and do not display in ordinary life those deep thoughts and resolutions of the heart, which lie on the border land of life itself, but he had them and gave the use of them to his country. For four long and weary years, unless cut off by death, he fought on and entered on. With heroic courage he met death in every

form, and with still more heroic fortitude he suffered wounds, disease, fatigue, hunger, cold, the loathsome plagues of camp life, above all the suffering of the near and dear one at home, and all this in the face of a despair, that all must be in vain.

"See him, wadded in faded, tattered rags, shoeless and weather beaten, gnat with hunger, laggard with want, but with the fire of unconquerable heroism burning in their sunlit eyes, fixed on something they held priceless above gold, fame or life itself." Do we not think of him with gratitude, which is almost reverence.

There is one other person moving in calm and beautiful patriotism among the bloody scenes of that time, nobler even than Johnnie Reb, the private, and that is the woman of the South. Man has the force and power, woman gives a motive and turns this force into proper action. Like the philosopher stone that was to turn all base metals to gold, her influence upon man can alone touch his actions into true nobility. What is courage? What are all those resolutions that roll off of force and power within man's breast, unless they are the servants of truth—of right—of love—of home? And over this wonderful field of the earth, can you find any such thing as love where there is no woman, or a home without a woman. And it was the love of these Southern homes that made the men what they were.

The noble women at home, how they suffered all sorts of privations, hardships and danger, and the horrible suspense of impending calamity—the overhanging shadow of the sword, and yet the brave, loving heart held fast to its faith, and not a murmur but only words of cheer.

And then those other devoted patriots of the South, those heroic women who left their homes for the hospital, wearing their own gentle lives away in nursing the sick and wounded.

To them how many of your comrades owe the precious boon of life to-day? Can you be grateful enough to them? They were ministering angels indeed and more than that, for would not an angel desire to have that sweet fountain of human tenderness and sympathy that springs up in every true woman's breast? Yes, our women are the reason why our Southern land is the land of chivalry, and may Southern men be always richly endowed with it, and prize it as their highest quality.

And now, Mr. President, ought not our Confederate dead be remembered? Ought not the State year by year gather her living children around the graves of her dead, and consecrate their memories to immortal gratitude?

She will remember them. She will speak of them, all through the coming years, not in whispers, as if they were rebellious children who brought her to shame and dishonor, but she will declare in tones of triumph her glowing love and gratitude to her dead heroes who died that she might have a better life, and point to their graves as sources of inspiration for future sons.

And for us individually, are there some of those graves, quiet resting places in the broad bosom of this sunny Southern land, those little mounds, it may be, unknown and unmarked, softly wearing away under the sun and under the stars, that keep alive in us some noble impulse—patriotism or devotion to duty, and make death too near to be feared? Call you that; death in vain?

Ought not also the living to be remembered? They are scarcely less dear to the State. The time is getting short, in which they can be made to feel this, for twenty-five years have passed since the war. Many a brave spirit has gone to join its comrades and without the comfort of knowing that anything in recognition of its services would be done. The ranks are thinning year by year, and before many years roll by, the last hero of them all will be gathered into the vast treasury of the past, which time has been filling these six thousand years. The record of the war will soon be sealed. Let us do good while we have time.

Many of them are too proud to receive any help but the gratitude of their country. Let us pay that with an overflowing heart. These men met disaster with resignation, and took up the dull routine of business without money, with broken fortunes, and broken hearts and hopes.

Let us not forget them. Let us remember that beneath the common clothes beats a heart that Kings might proudly own, but now crushed under the load of daily cares and anxieties.

But there is another class of these same men, who have gone down into the bitter depths of poverty. Oh! who can tell the sorrows that cluster around that word? These are the men we can help in what the man of the world calls, a sensible way. Let us provide a Soldiers Home for them. Let it be a free offering of our hearts in gratitude, which they can honorably receive as a Soldiers' discharge—a protection for him in return for protection to us. Let no shadow of the need home or shadow of want, giving touch this gift—to kill it with its blighting name. The way to do it is to co-operate with the State Association.

Mr. President, we hear of the New South. Whether that is the right name or not, a brighter day is opening on us. The South is blessed by nature in climate, soil and other natural advantages, and capital, that great lever that wags the financial world, is moving Southward. But above all she has the men—men of the same blood we have been speaking of to-day, and like their sires they will not down, but will stand in the forefront of the Government and will take a leading place in the future as she did in the past before the war. What the world calls the shadow of the apple tree at Appomattox, will have lifted from the gloom of prospect which the future promises. Our State must and will rise and by men of the same blood that war so justly sacrificed in vain.

Mr. President, there is a presence among us to-day to which we must do honor. It is a mysterious, wonderful presence—not of ordinary life, nor yet of death. It is the presence of what that banner stands for—the spirit of a dead nation. Is it not an awe inspiring sight in all its meaning? It was once the emblem of the hopes of millions. "Once ten thousand wildly, madly swore it would forever wave."

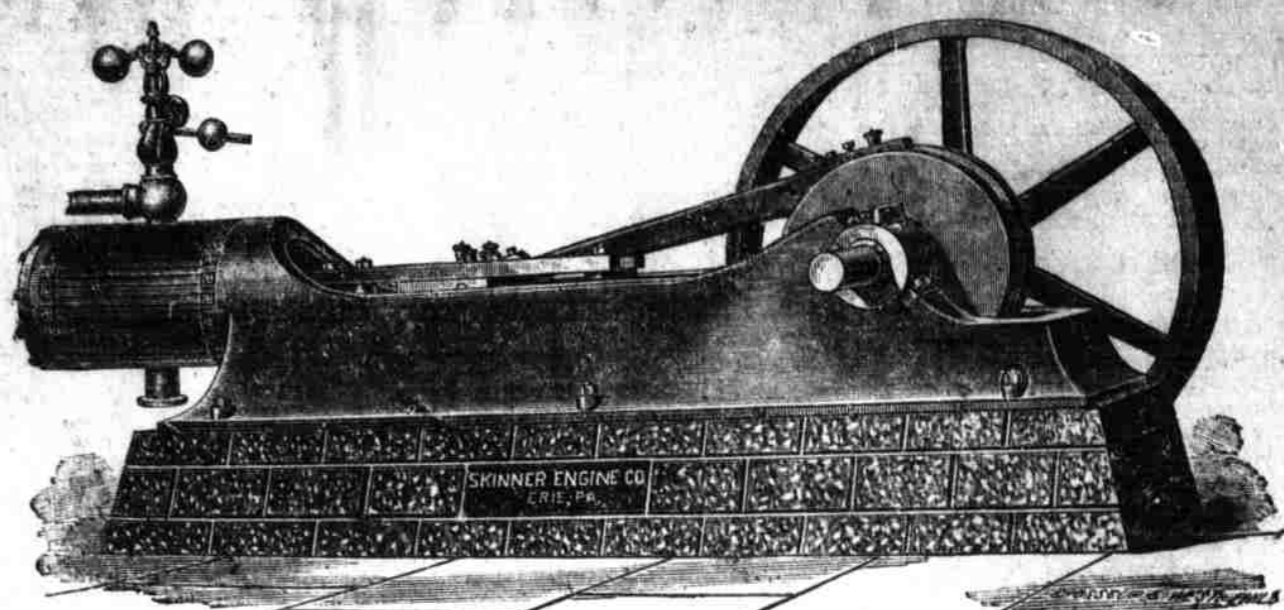
Our banner has trod as many roads to glory, as any that ever floated in any land, and this tattered fragment that you see before you was among the foremost and most glorious of all, in the hands of its heroic bearer. What a history was worked out by this faded standard! Now its work is done—good and faithful soldier.

"Put that banner, for its waving, Round its staff, its drooping dray Put it, fold it, let it rest."

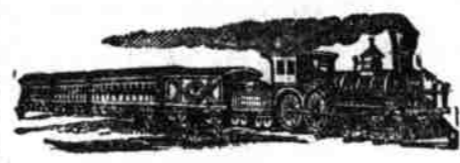
Let it rest from toil, from war, from victory and from the sorrows of the death of its hopes, in peace. Let it rest a blessed memory.

It is faded and put away forever and over its land floats its proud triumphal star sprang banner. While we look upon that banner as the symbol of a kindred and reunited country, its stars must shine kindly over our State, and its ample folds as they float over the sea and over the land, must cast no shadow of shame on the graves of the Confederate dead.

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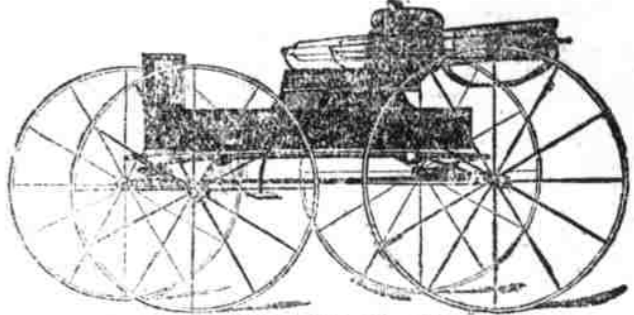
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