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Robert E. Lee

Written for the Richmond Dispatch on the unveiling of the Lee monument May 29, 1890. He loved the battle as the petal sands...

Col. Anderson's Eloquent Address.

The orator, Col. Archer Anderson, at the unveiling ceremonies said: "Fellow Citizens: A people carves its own image in the monuments of its great men..."

untary offering of the people, not the governments of the Southern States; and standing as a perpetual memorial of our great leader it will stand no less an enduring record of what his fellow-citizens deemed most worthy to be honored.

What kind of greatness, then, may be fitting in this spot to ask—what kind of greatness should men most honor in their fellow men? Strong and natural as is the inclination of those given up to the imagination and the reason, such is not the impulse of the great heart of the multitude...

Thus, standing before that marvelous monument in Berlin from which Frederick, "in his habit as he lived," looks down in homely greeting to his Prussian people...

And now come into play the qualities of heart and soul. Consecrated to this his high office, a general ought to be morally the best, the most just, the most generous, the most patriotic man among his countrymen.

from city and plain and mountain top the deep and reverent voice of this vast multitude, will this day confirm our solemn declaration that the monument to George Washington has found its only fitting complement and companion in a monument to Robert Lee.

With this fierce passion for fight, the general must unite the self-control which will refuse battle, or calmly await attack, and, not least, the fortitude which can endure defeat.

It is the recognition in Lee of the principal elements of this high ideal—courage, will, energy, insight, authority—the organized mind with its eagle glance and the temperament for command, broad, based upon fortitude, hopefulness, joy in battle, all exalted by heroic purpose and kindled with the glow of an unconquerable soul!

And now come into play the qualities of heart and soul. Consecrated to this his high office, a general ought to be morally the best, the most just, the most generous, the most patriotic man among his countrymen.

passions of thousands of individual men into a single mass of martial ardor, all these gifts may be present, and the true commander absent.

And over and above all these must preside some God-like power, which, in the crisis of strategy or the storm of battle, not only preserves to the commander all these high faculties, but actually intensifies and expands them.

It is the recognition in Lee of the principal elements of this high ideal—courage, will, energy, insight, authority—the organized mind with its eagle glance and the temperament for command, broad, based upon fortitude, hopefulness, joy in battle, all exalted by heroic purpose and kindled with the glow of an unconquerable soul!

And now come into play the qualities of heart and soul. Consecrated to this his high office, a general ought to be morally the best, the most just, the most generous, the most patriotic man among his countrymen.

mainly the soldier's blood which flowed in his veins that impelled him to seek a place in the military academy at West Point.

After leading up to the period when it became necessary for Gen. Lee to make his choice of which side he should fight in the coming conflict, Col. Anderson said: "No more painful struggle ever tore the heart of a patriot."

He regarded slavery as an evil; and the South had inherited and must be left to mitigate, and if possible extirpate, by wise and gradual measures.

Against the urgent solicitations of General Scott, in defiance of the temptings of ambition—for the evidence is complete that the command of the U. S. Army was offered him—in manifest sacrifice of all his pecuniary interests, he decided that duty bade him side with his beloved Virginia.

many apparent violations of sound principles of war. The various movements and the resultant battles by which he sought to effect this object...

In such moments the army felt the lofty genius of their leader. They acknowledged his royal right to command; they recognized their proud privilege to follow and obey.

Such is the commanding figure which will presently be unveiled to your view, and dull indeed must be the imagination that does not henceforth people this plain with livable hosts and compass Lee about, now and forever, with the love and devotion of embattled ranks of heroic men in gray.

"What a catastrophe! What a tragedy and pathetic contrast! On the one side, complete and dazing triumph after a long succession of humiliating disasters; on the other, absolute ruin and defeat—a crown of thorns for that peerless army which hitherto had known only the victor's laurel!

General Anderson then closed his address with the following beautiful tribute to General Lee: "The surrender of the fragments of the Army of Northern Virginia closed the imperishable record of his military life."

"They died for their country—their country perished with them!" Thus would have spoken the voice of despair.

"Far different were the thoughts of Lee. He had drawn his sword in obedience only to the dictates of duty and honor, and looking back in that moment of utter defeat he might have exclaimed with Demosthenes: 'I say, that if the event has been manifest to the world beyond a doubt, the great course of Athens had, in regard to her glory, or for her part, or for the ages to come.'"

For five years he was now permitted to exhibit to his countrymen in the discharge of the duties of president of Washington College the best qualities of citizen, sage, and patriot.