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Z. B. VANCE.

His Life and Character Portrayed by Senator Ransom.

EULOGY DELIVERED IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE—VANCE THE GREATEST TRIBUNE OF THE PEOPLE.

Mr. President, the Senate is asked to render its last duties of honor and sorrow to the memory of the Hon. Zebulon Baird Vance, late a Senator from North Carolina.

In this Chamber on the 16th of last April, two days after his death, the Senate lighted its black torches around the lifeless form of that most honored and beloved son of our State, and his mortal figure, covered with the white flowers of spring and love, and hallowed by the sacred devotions of religion, passed amid tears like a shadow from these portals forever. To-day his associates on this floor are here to place on the ever-living annals of the Senate the record of their admiration and affection for his virtues.

I take this summary from the Congressional Directory:

Zebulon B. Vance, of Charlotte, was born in Buncombe county, North Carolina, May 13, 1830, was educated at Washington College, Tennessee, and at the University of North Carolina, studied law; was admitted to the bar in January, 1852, and was elected county attorney for Buncombe county the same year; was a member of the State House of Commons in 1854; was a representative from North Carolina in the Thirty-fifth and Thirty-sixth Congresses; entered the Confederate army as captain in May, 1861, and was made Colonel in August, 1861; was elected Governor of North Carolina in August, 1862, and re-elected in August, 1864; was elected to the United States Senate in 1870, but was refused admission, and resigned in January, 1872; was elected Governor of North Carolina for the third time in 1876; and in January, 1878, was elected to the United States Senate; was re-elected in 1885, was again re-elected in 1891, and died at his residence in Washington, April 14, 1894.

His Birth-place.

His paternal and maternal ancestors both were revolutionary patriots. I have passed the spot where he was born. The "Vance homestead" was a large frame building of the "olden time," with broad stone chimneys, indicate of comfort and hospitality. It stood near the French Broad River and in the midst of the Blue Ridge mountains. Now the house has been taken down and only a few stones remain to mark the site where it once was. It is a place of beauty. In front of it the river is smooth and placid as a lake; above and below, it dashes and roars into a mountain torrent, and you almost hear the echoes of the ocean. Around it the great mountains tower like giants, and their dark forests are mirrored in the deep blue bosom of the stream. On this scene, amid sublimity and beauty, Vance first beheld the light of heaven. From this beautiful river, from these sublime mountains, from neighboring scenes, all bristling with heroic and patriotic recollections, he received his first impressions. These were the books from which he learned the lessons that were to be the foundations of his illustrious career. He was a son of the mountains, and I rarely looked on him without being reminded of them.

His Boyhood.

I know but little of his boyhood, but if the Senate will pardon me I will speak of an incident that illustrates his character. In the canvass of 1872 I was with Governor Vance in the mountain counties of our State. Passing from Asheville over the mountain to Burnsville, we made a short stop at the home of Nehemiah Blackstock, not far from Ivy Creek. Squire Blackstock was nearly 80 years of age and his good wife was but little younger. He had been the surveyor of Buncombe county for more than thirty years. I shall never forget the meeting of Governor Vance and that venerable couple. They fell on each other's necks—they embraced and wept. They had not met for years before. The conversation was short, not an hour long, and consisted mainly of reminiscences. Vance when a boy had lived with the old people and attended a country school close by. Mrs. Blackstock, beaming with joy, asked him if

he remembered the scenes of his schoolboy days and vividly depicted his wild, wayward mischief, his pranks, his plays with the girls, his wrongs to the boys, his visits to the orchards, his raids upon the watermelons, his practical jokes, his offences to the teacher, and many similar aberrations.

When old Mr. Blackstock, with a benignant smile, said, "Well, you may say what you will about Zeb; he was a mighty bad boy and hard to control, but he had one redeeming quality that made up for all his faults. Zeb would tell the truth. When you missed your eggs that you wanted so much for the preacher, and were so mad that they were gone, and all the boys denied everything about them, Zeb came up like a man and told them he took them, but he would not tell who helped him eat them. He would always tell the truth." Then I knew that from his boyhood on Truth had been Vance's star; and what a star!

At the University.

At the University Vance remained two years, and pursued a selected course of studies, and soon made a name for genius, wit and oratory. He was an especial favorite of President Swain, who for so many years had exerted a powerful influence in elevating and directing the youth of the South and made all of us who came under it better citizens and better men. Young Vance was extremely popular with the students and also with the people of the village of Chapel Hill. Even then reports came from the University of his brilliant wit, his striking originality, and his high promise.

Beginning of His Political Career.

He served one session in the State Legislature, and there gave unmistakable earnest of the illustrious life before him.

He was elected to the House of Representatives in the Thirty-fifth and Thirty-sixth Congresses, and took distinguished position in that Assembly, which has been the lists of so many statesmen. In 1861, upon the adjournment of Congress, he returned home, and seeing that war was inevitable raised a company of volunteers, marched to Virginia, and was soon after elected Colonel of the Twenty-sixth Regiment North Carolina infantry, a regiment justly distinguished for the largest loss of killed and wounded at Gettysburg.

He had always been opposed to the secession of the Southern States, did everything possible to avert it, and was one of the very last Southern men to declare his love and devotion to the Union.

In the battle of Newbern, N. C., in 1862, Colonel Vance was conspicuous for courage and coolness, and received the highest commendation for his soldierly conduct on that field. In August of that year he was elected Governor of the State, and received the almost unanimous vote of the soldiers. In 1864 he was re-elected governor by a very large majority, and held the executive office until until the occupation of Raleigh by Gen. Sherman in April, 1865.

The Great War Governor.

As the executive of North Carolina his administration was signally distinguished by great ability, vigor, and energy, by ardent and constant fidelity to the Southern cause, and by wise foresight and prudent husbandry of all the resources of the State. He was in every sense governor of the State. From the day on which he entered upon the duties of the office until the hour when he laid it down his commanding genius asserted his competence for the great responsibilities of the position, and his administration deserved and received the unbounded confidence, support, and approbation of all the patriotic people of North Carolina. He called to his councils the wisest, the best, the most trusted men in the State of all shades of patriotic sentiment. He inspired the people with renewed love for the struggle, he united the discordant elements among us, he animated the despondent, he tolerated the conscientious lovers of peace, he rebuked the timid, he brought back to life the spirit of our revolutionaries. He gave new hope to the army, he aroused the pride of the State, he strengthened all its

means, and prepared for war to the end. Well may he have been designated as the "great war governor of the South."

These acts of his administration are justly entitled to be ranked as historic. First: The organization of a fleet of vessels to sail from Wilmington, N. C., to Europe with cargoes of cotton and return with supplies for the soldiers and essential necessities for the people. This supreme enterprise was eminently successful. For months and years the Advance and other vessels commanded by skillful officers, well manned and adequately equipped, went like sea birds across the Europe laden with the great staples of the South and returning with stores of the needed supplies, triumphantly eluded the blockading squadron, and sailed with colors flying up the Cape Fear to Wilmington. The soldiers were clothed and fed, cards and spinning wheels, sewing and knitting needles, were furnished to our noble women, machinery for looms, surgical instruments, medicines, books and seeds, were all brought home to a suffering people. The history of the war does not present an example of greater wisdom and success.

Second: In 1864 and 1865, when the resources of the South were absolutely exhausted, when our noble armies were reduced and hemmed in on every side, ragged, hungry and almost without ammunition; when starvation and famine confronted every threshold in the South and a morsel of bread was the daily subsistence of a family; in that dark and dreadful hour Governor Vance first appealed to the Government at Richmond, and finding it perfectly helpless to give any relief, summoned his council of State and by almost superhuman efforts prevailed upon the destitute people of North Carolina to divide their last meal and their pitiful clothing with the suffering Union prisoners at Salisbury. Humanity, chivalry, piety, I invoke from you a purer, better, holier example of Christian Charity in war!

Third: During his administration as Governor of North Carolina, although war was flagrant, though camps covered the fields, though soldiers were conscripted by thousands, though cold-hearted men of ample means refused supplies to soldiers with bleeding feet, though thousands of deserters, refugees from duty, were arrested, though the War Department daily called for more men, though every art and artifice and device was practiced to keep the soldiers from the field, though spies and traitors were detected and seized, though traders in contraband of war were constantly caught flagrante delicto and captured, though in all countries in time of war civil authority has been compelled to submit to military necessity and power, yet in North Carolina during the war the writ of habeas corpus, the great writ of liberty, was never for one moment suspended. Immortal history! Worthy of Mecklenburg and the 20th of May, 1775.

Third Time Elected Governor.

In 1876 Governor Vance was for the third time elected Governor of the State, and his administration was the beginning of a new era for North Carolina. During this administration the fraudulent bonds issued by a reconstruction Legislature were made null and void by constitutional amendment. The debt of the State was adjusted on terms of equity and justice. Important railroad enterprises were revived and new internal improvements organized and begun. The public schools were extended, enlarged and improved. Education was provided for the colored people; asylums for the insane, the deaf, dumb and blind were established. A great duty nobly performed!

It was at this period that the legislature established the county of Vance and named it in honor of him, which fact contributed largely to the popularity of the measure creating the county.

Elected to the Senate.

In 1878 he was elected to the Senate, and until he died remained a member of this body, having been elected four times a Senator. His record in the Senate is part of the Nation's history. From the beginning he was an active, earnest debater, a constant, faithful worker, a dutiful, devoted

Senator, aspiring and laboring for the welfare and honor of the whole country. He was at all times on the important committees of the body and took a prominent part in the discussion of almost every leading question. He was the unceasing advocate of revenue reform, uncompromisingly opposed to civil service, and the ardent friend of silver money and its free coinage by the government. He vigilantly defended the rights, honor, and interests of the Southern States, not from sectional passion or prejudice, but because it was his duty as a patriot to every State and to the Union. He was bold, brave, open, candid, and without reserve. He desired all the world to know his opinions and positions, and never hesitated to avow them.

An Uncommon Orator.

His heart every moment was in North Carolina. His devotion to the State and people was unbounded, his solicitude for her welfare, his deep anxiety in all that concerned her, and his ever readiness to make every sacrifice in her behalf was daily manifested in all his words and actions. Senator Vance was an uncommon orator. He spoke with great power. His style was brief, clear, and strong. His statements were accurate and definite. His arguments compact and forcible, his illustrations unsurpassed in their fitness, his wit and humor were the ever waiting and ready handmaids to his reasoning, and always subordinated to the higher purpose of his speech. They were torchbearers, ever bringing fresh light. He always instructed, always interested, always entertained, and never wearied or fatigued an audience, and knew when to conclude. The Senate always heard him with pleasure, and the galleries hung upon his lips, and with bended bodies and out stretched necks would catch his every word as it fell.

He rarely if ever spoke without bringing down applause. His wit was as inexhaustible as it was exquisite. His humor was overflowing, fresh, sparkling like bubbling drops of wine in a goblet; but he husbanded these resources of speech with admirable skill, and never displayed them for ostentation. They were weapons of offence and defense, and were always kept sharp and bright and ready for use. He was master of irony and sarcasm, but there was no malice, no hatred in his swift and true arrows. Mortal wounds were often given, but the shafts were never poisoned. It was the strength of the bow and the skill of the archer that sent the steel through the heart of its victim. But strength, force, clearness, brevity, honesty of conviction, truth, passion, good judgment were the qualities that made his speech powerful and effective.

Believed What he Said.

He believed what he said. He knew it was true, he felt its force himself, his heart was in his words, he was ready to put place, honor, life itself upon the issue. This was the secret of his popularity, fame and success as a speaker. He studied his speeches with the greatest care, deliberated, meditated upon them constantly, arranged the order of his topics with consummate discretion, introduced authorities from history, and very often from sacred history, presented some popular faith as an anchor to his ship, and concluded with a sincere appeal to the patriotic impulses of the people. No speaker ever resorted to the bayonet more frequently.

He did not skirmish, he marched into the battle, charged the center of the lines, and never failed to draw the blood of the enemy. Sometimes he was supreme in manner, in words, in thought, in pathos. He possessed the thunder-bolts, but, like Jove, he never trifled with them, he only invoked them when gigantic perils confronted his cause. In 1876, upon his third nomination for governor, speaking to an immense audience in the Statehouse Square at Raleigh, he held up both hands in the light of the sun and with solemn invocation to Almighty God declared that they were white and stainless, that not one cent of corrupt money had ever touched their palms. The effect was electric; the statement was conviction and conclusion. The argument was unanswerable. It was great nature's action. It was eloquence. It was truth.

His Integrity Absolute.

Senator Vance's integrity and uprightness in public and in private life were absolute; they were unimpeached and unimpeachable—he was honest—it is the priceless inheritance which he leaves to his family, his friends, his country. He was an honest man. Calumny fell harmless at his feet; the light dissipated every cloud and he lived continually in its broad rays; his breastplate, his shield, his armor was the light, the truth. There was no darkness, no mystery, no shadow upon his bright standard.

Senators will all remember the loss of his eye in the winter of 1889. How touching it was—a sacrifice, an offering on the altar of his country. For no victim was ever more tightly bound to the stake than he was to his duty here. How bravely, how patiently, how cheerfully, how manfully he bore the dreadful loss! But the light, the glorious light of a warm heart, a noble nature, a good conscience, an innocent memory, was never obscured to him. It was to him a great bereavement, but it was another, a more sacred tie that again and again bound his countrymen to him.

His Long Illness.

In his long and tedious illness no complaint, no murmurs escaped his calm and cheerful lips. He was composed, firm, brave, constant, hopeful to the last. His love of country was unabated, his friendships unchanged, his devotion to duty unrelaxed. His philosophy was serene, his brow was cloudless, his spirit, his temper, his great mind, all were superior to his sufferings.

His great soul illuminated the physical wreck and ruin around it and shone out with clearer luster amid disease and decay. Truly he was a most wonderful man. His last thoughts, his dying words, his expiring prayers, were for his country, for liberty and the people. A great patriot, a noble citizen, a good man, it is impossible not to remember, to admire, to love him.

I cannot compare Senator Vance with Caesar, Napoleon, or Washington. I cannot place him at the side of Webster, Clay, and Calhoun. I do not measure him with Chatham and Gladstone. He was not a philosopher like Franklin, he was not an orator like Mirabeau, but placed in any company of English or American statesmen he would have taken high position.

He Loved the People.

He had not the wisdom and virtue of Macon. He was not like Badger, a master of argument. He was not like Graham, a model of dignity and learning—he had not the superb speech and grand passion of Mangum, he wanted the tenacious and inexorable logic of Bragg, but in all the endowments, qualities, faculties and attainments that make up the orator and the statesman he was the equal of either. No man among the living or the dead ever so possessed and held the hearts of North Carolina's people. In their confidence, their affection, their devotion, and their gratitude he stood unapproachable—without a peer. When he spoke to them they listened to him with faith, with admiration, with rapture and exultant joy. His name was ever upon their lips. His pictures were in almost every household. Their children by hundreds bore his beloved name, and his words of wit and wisdom were repeated by every tongue.

What Tell was to Switzerland, what Bruce was to Scotland, what William of Orange was to Holland, I had almost said what Moses was to Israel, Vance was to North Carolina. I can give you but a faint idea of the deep, fervid, exalted sentiment which our people cherished for their greatest tribune. His thoughts, his feelings, his words were theirs. He was their shepherd, their champion, their friend, their guide, blood of their blood, great, good, noble, true, human like they were in all respects, no better, but wiser, abler, with higher knowledge and profounder learning.

Why They Loved Him.

Nor was this unsurpassed devotion unreasonable or without just foundation. For more than the third of a century, for upwards of thirty years, in peace and in war, in prosperity and in adversity, in joy and in sorrow, he had stood by them like a broth-

er—a defender, a preserver, a deliverer. He was their martyr and had suffered for their acts. He was their shield and had protected them from evil and from peril. He had been with them—he had been with them and their sons and brothers on the march—by the camp fires, in the burning light of battle; beside the wounded and the dying; in their darkest hours, amid hunger and cold, and famine and pestilence, with watchful care had brought them comfort and shelter and protection. They remembered the gray jackets, the warm blankets, the good shoes, the timely food, the blessed medicines, which his sympathy and provision had brought them. In defeat, amid tumult, amid ruin, humiliation, and the loss of all they had, he had been their adviser, he had guided them through the wilderness of their woes and brought them safely back to their rights and all their hopes. He had been to them like the north star to the storm-tossed and despairing mariner. He had been greater than Ulysses to the Greeks. He had preserved their priceless honor, had saved their homes, and was the defender of their liberties. He was their benefactor. Every object around them reminded them of his care, every memory recalled, every thought suggested his usefulness and their gratitude.

Other States Honored Him.

The light from their school houses spoke of his services to their education. The very sight of their graves brought back to their hearts his tender devotion to their sons. And the papers and the wires with the rising of almost every sun bore to their pure bosoms the news of his success, his triumphs and his honors. They were proud of him; they admired him—loved him. These, these were the foundations, the solid foundations of his place in their minds and in their hearts. From the wind-beaten and storm-bleached Capes of Hatteras to the dark blue mountain tops that divided North Carolina and Tennessee there is not a spot from which the name of Vance is not echoed with honor and love. But his influence and his fame were not confined within State lines.

In New England the sons of the brave Puritans admired his love of liberty, his independence of thought, his freedom of speech, his contempt for pretensions, and his abhorrence of deceit. The hardy miners in the far West and on the Pacific hills felt his friendship and were grateful for his services. Virginia loved him as the vindicator of her imperiled rights and honor. From the farms and fields and firesides of the husbandmen of the Republic there came to him the greeting of friends, for he was always the advocate of low taxes and equal rights and privileges to all men. From all the South he was looked upon as the representative of their sorrow and the example of their honor; and all over the civilized world the people of Israel—"the scattered nation," everywhere bowed with uncovered heads to the brave man who had rendered his noble testimony and a tribute to the virtues of their race. Even the officers, the sentinels and watchmen over him in the old capitol prison, in which he was confined on the alleged and wrongful charge that he had violated the laws of war, were spellbound by his genial spirit and became his devoted friends up to the hour of his death. His genius, his ability, his humanity, his long continued public service, his great physical suffering, a martyrdom to his duty, the sorcery of his wit, the magic of his humor and the courage of his convictions had attracted the universal sympathy and admiration of the American people.

His Was a Great Life.

In the brief summary, in the Directory, is embraced a great life; County Attorney, member of the State House of Commons; Representative in two Congresses; Captain and Colonel in the Southern Army; three times elected Governor of his State, and four times elected to the Senate of the United States. What a record and what a combination. A great statesman, a good soldier, a rare scholar, a successful lawyer, an orator of surpassing power

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