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Hon. R. M. T. Hunter.

Post-Bellum Mortality Among Confederates.

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Confederate Survivors' Association

AT ITS

QUARTERLY MEETING

IN

AUGUSTA, GEORGIA, AUGUST 2D. 1887.

BY

COL: CHARLES C. JONES, JR., LL.D.,

PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION.

PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE ASSOCIATION.

AUGUSTA, GA.
CHRONICLE PUBLISHING COMPANY.
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THE ADDRESS.

COMRADES:

Since our pleasant Reunion on the 26th of April last, five of our companions have joined the legions encamped on the Further Shore *Robert Wallace*,—second lieutenant of the Washington Artillery,—died on the 10th of May; *J. C. Allen*,—private in Company A, Cobb's Legion of Cavalry,—on the 28th of the same month; *William Delane*,—private in Company A, Fifth Regiment Georgia Infantry,—on the 9th of June; *Charles A. Platt*,—captain of the same company—on the 21st of July—memorable as the anniversary of the First Battle of Manassas—and to-day we receive the afflictive intelligence that our comrade *Theodore D. Caswell*,—Lieutenant Colonel of the Second Battalion, Georgia Sharp Shooters—is lying dead in Asheville North Carolina.

The strong hand of mortality has also been laid upon two noted Confederates. *William Smith*,—a war-governor of Virginia, and a Major-General in Confederate service—departed this life at his home in Warrenton, Virginia, on the 18th of May, at the advanced age of ninety years; and, on the 18th of July, *Robert Mercer Taliaferro Hunter* quietly ended his long and honorable earthly career.

Born in Essex County, Virginia, on the 21st of April, 1809, Mr. Hunter acquired his collegiate education at the University of Virginia. Having completed his professional preparation at the Winchester Law School, he was called to the Bar in 1830. In early manhood his active interest in public affairs, an honorable ambition for preferment, and the exhibition of unusual abilities were recognized and rewarded by an election to the Virginia House of Delegates, of which he remained a member for three years.

In 1837 he was advanced to a seat in Congress, which he filled for two consecutive terms. Returned to the National Assembly in 1847, he presided over the Twenty-Sixth Congress as Speaker of the House of Representatives. From his earliest participation in national affairs he manifested an intellectual superiority, an independence of thought and action, and broad views of measures and government which, maintained and heightened during subsequent years, secured for him an enviable reputation for integrity, political sagacity, and wise statesmanship. Possessing uncommon intellect, and exhibiting admirable traits of character, he was an earnest student, an engaging speaker, was gifted by nature with a noble presence, and was in every way a man of commanding influence. In 1847 he became a Senator of the United States, and continued to be a prominent member of that august body until, in 1861, Virginia severed her connection with the Union.

When the State of Virginia passed her Ordinance of Secession and sanctioned a resolution adopting the constitution of the Provisional Government of the Confederate States of America, a delegation, consisting of Mr. Hunter, and the honorable William C. Rives, John W. Brockenbrough, and W. R. Staples, was elected to represent that State in the Provisional Congress at Montgomery. Upon the adjournment of that Congress to meet at Richmond—the designated capital of the infant Republic—Mr. Hunter was again chosen as a delegate from the Old Dominion.

It will be remembered that Mr. Toombs resigned the portfolio of the State Department and accepted service in the field with the rank of brigadier general. In this emergency President Davis summoned Mr. Hunter to his cabinet. He accepted the appointment of Secretary of State, and discharged the duties of that responsible position until the organization of the Confederate Senate, when he became a member of that body, and retained his seat, as the leading Senator from Virginia, until the close of the war. The valuable services he rendered both in the National Assembly of the United States and in the Confederate Congress, are well remembered. The conspicuous part borne by him when, at the instance of Mr. Davis, and in association with Vice-President Stephens and Judge Campbell, he participated in the Fortress Monroe Conference is fresh in our recollection.

Subsequent to the conclusion of the war Mr. Hunter was for some time the treasurer of his native State. Of late years he has led a retired life, toiling for bread in the midst of disappointments and losses. At the last, we doubt not, he welcomed surcease from labor and anxieties in the repose of a simple but honored grave.

Thus do we inscribe a page in memory of one who held high office and discharged important duties in the civil service of the Confederacy.

Although only twenty-two years have elapsed since the fall of the Confederacy, the catalogue of the dead who, while in life, bore prominent parts in the maintenance of that government, is remarkable. Not the flight of time only, but, burthen-some losses, weighty disappointments, mental and physical tension, and unusual afflictions have had much to do in bringing about a heavy mortality. This will increase during the next decade in a greater than geometrical ratio, and very soon there will be none among the living who bore personal allegiance to the Confederate Flag. The youngest survivor of the Confederate Army and Navy—well-kept benedict or spruce bachelor though he be—must surely have attained at least to his fortieth year. The head of the average soldier is silvered with age, and multitudes who were in the meridian of life when the storm raged have succumbed to the inevitable law which fixes the bounds of human longevity.

Let us see, in a general way, how the record stands.

Our venerable President still lives and, at Beauvoir, enjoys a serene old age beneath the grateful shadows of Southern Live-Oaks and Magnolias ; but the Vice-President of the Confederacy four years ago terminated his active and useful career.

Of those who held the portfolio of State—Robert Toombs, R. M. T. Hunter, and Judah P. Benjamin,—all are dead.

Of the four Attorneys General, only two,—Ex-Governor Thomas H. Watts, and the honorable George Davis—survive.

Mr. Memminger, of the Treasury Department, still lives. The other Secretary,—the gifted George A. Trenholm—has, for years, been sleeping that sleep which knows no waking.

Of the five Secretaries of War—Leroy Pope Walker, Judah P. Benjamin, George W. Randolph, James A. Seddon, and John C. Breckinridge—not one is alive.

The accomplished Adjutant General Samuel Cooper, R. G. H. Kean—chief of the bureau of War,—A. C. Myers—Quartermaster General,—L. B. Northrup—Commissary General,—General L. M. St. John—chief of the bureau of Subsistence,—General Josiah Gorgas—chief of Ordnance,—Col. T. S. Rhett—in charge of the Ordnance bureau,—General J. F. Gilmer—chief Engineer,—General John S. Preston—chief of the bureau of Conscription,—General John H. Winder—commanding Prison Camps,—Robert Ould—chief of the bureau of Exchange,—Richard Morton—chief of the Nitre and Mining bureau,—and A. H. Carrington—acting Provost-Marshal General,—are, I believe, all dead. Quartermaster General Alexander R. Lawton, now verging upon seventy, represents the United States at the Austrian Court.

Rufus R. Rhodes—Commissioner of Patents—is thought to be no longer among the living.

Turning to the Navy Department we find upon the death-roll the names of Secretary Stephen R. Mallory, of Commodore F. Forrest—chief of the bureau of Orders,—of Admirals Franklin Buchanan and Raphael Semmes,—of Commodores Tattnall, Maury, Whittle, Hollins, Ingraham, and of many other prominent officers.

Post Master General John H. Reagan lives, and is a member of the National Legislature.

Of the Commissioners who represented the Confederacy abroad, James M. Mason and William L. Yancey—accredited to Great Britain,—John Slidell—accredited to France,—P. A. Rost—accredited to Spain,—John T. Pickett—accredited to Mexico,—Bishop Lynch—accredited to the States of the Church,—and John Forsyth, Martin J. Crawford, A. B. Roman, and Charles J. Faulkner—accredited to the United States,—are dead. The octogenarian, A. Dudley Mann—accredited to Belgium—resides in France. The honorable Lucius Q. C. Lamar—accredited to Russia—is a member of President Cleveland's Cabinet, and General William Preston—accredited to Mexico—rejoices in his broad acres in the blue-grass region of Kentucky.

Among the Consular, Confidential, and Foreign Agents of the Confederacy we note the demise of C. C. Clay, Jacob Thompson, James P. Holcombe, Charles J. Helm, Colin J. McRae, George N. Sanders, J. L. O'Sullivan; and of others holding less important positions.

Of those who bore rank as Full Generals in the armies of the Confederacy only two survive:—Generals Joseph E. Johnston and G. T. Beauregard. General Albert S. Johnston fell in the memorable battle of Shiloh, and Generals Robert E. Lee and Braxton Bragg died since the cessation of hostilities.

There were two generals with temporary rank—E. Kirby Smith, and John B. Hood. The former lives, and the latter, in dying, commended his orphans to the care of the soldiers of the Confederacy.

Twenty-one officers were complimented with the grade of Lieutenant General. The only survivors are Generals James Longstreet, E. Kirby Smith, D. H. Hill, Stephen D. Lee, Wade Hampton, Jubal A. Early, Alexander P. Stewart, Joseph Wheeler, Simon B. Buckner, and John B. Gordon.

Of the one hundred who were commissioned as Major Generals in Confederate service, if my information be correct, only forty-five are now numbered among the living,

Of four hundred and eighty who rose to the grade of Brigadier General, an inquiry—by no means partial,—inclines me to the belief that there are not two hundred in life.

With the exception of Thomas H. Watts of Alabama, Joseph E. Brown of Georgia, Zebulon B. Vance of North Carolina, M. L. Bonham and A. G. Magrath of South Carolina, Isham G. Harris of Tennessee, and perhaps Richard Hawes of Kentucky, all the War-Governors of Confederate States are dead.

We have not sufficient data to speak with certainty in regard to the Senators and Representatives in Confederate Congress, but we do know that the mortality among them has been commensurate with that which has occurred in other departments. Of those who tarry with us, not a few have almost reached the last span in the bridge of life, and must soon fall into the dark stream which bears away the generations of men.

The Constitution of the Confederate States was signed by forty-nine delegates. All who affixed their signatures to that memorable document are dead except C. G. Memminger, W. Porcher Miles and William W. Boyce of South Carolina, Augustus R. Wright of Georgia, David P. Lewis and Jabez L. M. Curry of Alabama, W. P. Harris, Alexander M. Clayton, and

J. A. P. Campbell of Mississippi, Alexander de Clouet of Louisiana, and Thomas N. Waul and John H. Reagan of Texas.

And who can furnish even a partial roster of the field, company, and non-commissioned officers, privates, subordinates in various departments, and servants of the Confederacy, who have died since the final surrender? Surely none, save the Recording Angel, is competent for such a task. Wounds, bruises, poverty, desolation, exposures, want, and disappointments have exerted a potent influence in shortening the lives of many who escaped death upon the march, on the field of battle, or in prison camp and hospital. In the natural order of affairs the multitude of those who have thus gone to their graves must be great. Sad as the fact is, we may rest assured that with the close of this century there will remain comparatively few, competent, from personal experience, to narrate any of the incidents connected with the Confederate struggle for independence.

This being so, the obligation is laid upon all, who can, to perpetuate in enduring form the true philosophy of events, the genuine circumstance of the action, the inspirations, the exalted aspirations, the patriotic impulses, the heroic endeavors, the illustrious achievements, and the grand memories which impart to the defensive war maintained by Confederates an importance, an interest, a dignity, an elevation, and a sanctity beyond compare in the history of kindred revolutions.

Unfortunately, the historian too often busies himself so largely with laudations of the victor that justice is lamely meted out to the aims and the exploits of the vanquished. There is, however, apart from recorded history, a general sentiment, an honest appreciation of fact, a faithful narrative of event, a true interpretation of purpose, which may be transmitted from sire to son, and which will prove very potent in forming the judgment, moulding the thought, and shaping the appreciation of the rising generation. Let us see to it, my Comrades, that we are not misinterpreted by our sons. Our children should be thoroughly taught the noble lessons inculcated by the lives and acts of those who died for country and for right. A proper conception and a due observance of the principles and conduct of those who, in the past, illustrated the integrity, the virtues, and the valor of the Old South, will best ensure the manliness, the honor, and the courage of the future.

The present, alas! is essentially a utilitarian age. It is iconoclastic in its tendencies, and lamentably debauched by commercial methods. Ennobling sentiments and worthy purposes are too often supplanted by schemes for the accumulation of wealth, and the sordid manipulation of money-making enterprises. I fear me, in losing our distinctive characteristics, we are lowering the standard of our fathers.

While life lasts, let us proclaim in our walk and conversation and illustrate in our conduct the vital influence of a consecrated past—the elevating sway of hopes and principles dear to the hearts and consciences of all who venerate truth, admire fortitude, abhor questionable thoughts and acts, and acknowledge the claims of neighbor, country, and God. In the light of that bravest epoch in the history of nations, with all its heroic actors, noble deeds, and marvelous examples of self-sacrifice, virtue, and high emprise, let no word of apology be uttered in the present. Let no sentiment be cherished which is not loyal to the traditions of that wondrous period. Let no act be committed which does not savor of reverence for its inspirations and deeds. And thus, when all who participated in the struggle shall have passed away, the blessed memories which appertain to the dead nation and peoples will remain unimpaired, and the examples of patriotism, of self-sacrifice, of heroism, and of sublime endeavor will stand for the honor of the days that are gone, and challenge the emulation of the ages.

In time to come, as now, when the names and valorous deeds of those who died in defense of home and right are repeated, in glad acclaim will admiring hearts respond :

“Roll back, O Time, the sacred scroll
On which is told their story:
For by the light that falls to-day
We’d read their quenchless glory.
For no historic page proclaims
Such deeds of high endeavor
As those the South enshrines within
Her heart of hearts forever.

Awake! fond memories of the past,
E’en though ye bring us weeping:
Unroll, O Time! the precious scroll
We gave into your keeping.
Flash all the golden letters out
That tell their glorious story:
Proclaim from every mountain peak
‘Dead on the field of glory’.”

