

# IN HONOR OF THE GRAY

## GEN. HAMPTON'S ORATION AT THE UNVEILING OF THE BEN- TONSVILLE MONUMENT.

### THE LAST BATTLE OF THE WAR.

Though the Cause for Which the Southern Soldier Died Was Unsuccessful  
The Principles for Which he Fought  
Still Lives--To the State Which Sells  
Her Birthright no Day of Redemption  
Can Ever Dawn--In Honoring its  
Dead North Carolina Honors Herself.

Mr. Chairman, My Comrades and Friends:

You meet here to-day to perform one of the most pious and sacred duties which human hearts can feel, and human hands can discharge, that of doing honor to our noble dead who fell in defense of a lost, but, to us, a patriotic and just cause. In thus honoring the memory of these brave martyrs, you do honor to yourselves, but the dedication of this noble monument will be a mere idle ceremony if it has not a deeper significance than the mere consecration of it by prayer implies. With its spire pointing to heaven, and its foundation laid deep in the earth that holds the ashes of our dead comrades, it may defy the tempest and the corroding touch of time, to tell to future generations that the brave sons and noble daughters of North Carolina erected it to mark the spot where Confederate soldiers

"For faith and for freedom,

Lay slaughtered in vain."

It may accomplish all these worthy objects, telling at the same time of the love and veneration in which you hold the memory of our heroic dead, but it seems to me that the solemn ceremonies of this occasion should typify far more than all these things. They should impress on our minds, and we should teach our children that the men resting here, and the thousands of their comrades who are sleeping on the fields their valor won, were neither rebels nor traitors; that they were freemen, who believed, as firmly as they did in the existence of their God, that their cause was right; that they were the sons of the men who gave their blood to establish the liberty of America; that they had contributed their full share to the glory, the genius, the fame and the prosperity of the great Republic founded by their fathers; that they were the equals of the proudest in that Republic, and that, whatever may be the verdict of History, the men who wore the gray have nothing to be ashamed of.

It makes small difference here, and it will make none at the last great day, when the actions of all men are weighed in the scales held by the impartial hands of the Almighty Ruler of the universe, whether our cause was successful or unsuccessful. God does not judge as man judges, and we are nowhere told in the revelations of His Holy Word, that the just are to be rewarded in this world and the unjust punished; that truth is to prevail here over falsehood; or that right is to overcome might. On the contrary, we are expressly taught by the whole plan of Christian redemption, that this world is only one of probation, to fit us for another and a better one, and history is full of melancholy examples to show that many of the noblest causes that ever inspired a people's hopes, or moved their arms, have been allowed to sink, apparently forever, under the iron rule wielded by despotic power.

Do not allow yourselves, my friends, to be misled by that false doctrine—false to your faith, to your country and to your God—which tells you that as your case has failed, the principles for which you contended are forever obliterated. Any human undertaking, however just it may be, may fail; but the ever living principles of right and of justice can never be buried. A great truth like the God head whence it emanates is eternal, and it will live 'till the "last syllable of recorded time." You are often told that, as our cause was submitted to the arbitrament of the sword, no appeal lies from the verdict which was rendered against us.

This doctrine is as pernicious as it is false, and if we accept it, we shall brand our heroic dead, as well as the living, as traitors, branding all alike with deserved infamy. Will the living soldiers who followed the starry cross through the storm of war, who looked so proudly at that banner "brave the battle and the breeze," ever consent to denounce their dead comrades? Will the sons of these men forget the sufferings, the sacrifices, the heroism of their fathers? Will the women of the South, who for a quarter of a century have so tenderly and reverently cherished the memory of our dead, ever be willing to brand them as traitors? Ah, No! These things can never happen as long as truth, patriotism, honor, virtue and its synonym, courage, are respected, as long as the fame of the men in gray rolls sounding down the ages, as long as the page of History is made lustrous by the names of Lee, of Johnston and of Jackson!

Let me not be understood as wishing to reawaken sectional animosity, now happily dying out, nor as counseling one act of disloyalty to the restored Union. I recognize, as every true Confederate soldier should do, the supremacy of the Constitution, the integrity of the Union, and all the obligations we assumed when our arms were laid down. The South is now an integral part of this great Republic, the flag of the latter waves unchallenged from the rock-ribbed coast of Maine to the golden gate of the bright Pacific and far-off Alaska, from the snow-crowned mountains of the North to the orange groves of Florida; and it is the duty of every patriot to make this country of ours the fit abode of freemen for all time to come, but I appeal earnestly and reverently for justice to my Confederate comrades, living and dead. They discharged their duties as they saw them bravely and heroically, and God alone can and will judge whether they were right or wrong. It would certainly ill become us to admit that neither justice nor right was on our side, and every brave man who met us in battle would justly despise us were we to do so. No earthly tribunal