

XIX

1890

The Robert E. Lee Memorial

ON May 26, 1890 Annie Jennings Wise Hobson wrote to her son about an upcoming event in Richmond:

I wish I could find words to make you feel, my dear loving son, how those short letters written in Court go right to my heart. They show that my far off boy is never too busy, too occupied in mind and heart to think of his mother... You are fast approaching that grand climatic life— 35, when so many people who inherit disease show weakness & often die. If I could only impress upon you the importance of taking care of yourself in every way till you had safely passed that period. After that all of our family grow stronger & more capable of enduring... On Saturday I took a hansom cab & with little Annie M— went to Hollywood to inspect our sections there to see if they would be in order for the Memorial Day Friday... The turf is growing beautifully on Cannon's grave & our corner looks as if love took care of it. Alice & I joined together in putting it in order. I do hope that after this year we can begin to put by something to erect a central monument there. My idea is a large rustic cross on rock where the names of all can be engraved. Hollywood looked so lovely, & was [illegible] with the perfume of flowers. I felt it would be so restful to be there when life's work is done... Alice will come down with the dear children & here with me the dear boys shall see the reunion of our Confederate soldiers... I want the boys to remember that they saw the scene of the procession by my side. I shall not attempt to take them to the statue till tomorrow for the crowd will be too great. I asked Mr. Williams today to send you a Saturday eve's *State*. Notice the tribute to General Lee from an Englishman soon after the war— at the time he was paralyzed. Keep it to read to our Baby someday & read it to Katherine now... We are going to decorate the front porch... A confederate flag & shield, the St. Andrews Cross flag, a Virginia flag & drape the red & white of our bars, but no U. S. stars & stripes— this is our funeral! ...I cannot see how Richmond can accommodate the crowd that is coming. I wrote to Katherine last week. I shall look eagerly to hear you are safely back from your trip... Everyone sends love to you and our darlings... I sent you some verses about the first series of the pictures & there will be some more about the others. My love to Mrs. Thayer & God bless you all. Your devoted mother, *A.J.W.H.*



In 1890 Annie published a pamphlet about the dedication of the Lee Memorial that is reprinted here. Robert E. Lee had died twenty years earlier, on October 12, 1870, at his home in Lexington, Virginia.

The front cover of Annie Hobson's memorial pamphlet with the artwork, signed "A. W." in the lower right, and otherwise described as a "youthful artist," a "debutante in art."



“Memorial of the Unveiling of Lee’s Statue”
Richmond, Virginia. May 29th, 1890
Wm. Ellis Jones, Book and Job Printer —1890

Preface to the second edition:

The first edition of this unpretending memorial was hastily sent out as a venture. The friendly appreciation which it has received, warrants a second edition. The first met with the impartial criticism of a true friend and competent critic. He insisted that the “Memorial Ode” and “Address to the Battle Flag,” could be expanded and made more worthy of the theme. Like the fugitive attempts of even true genius, these humble emanations, required more thought and labor, than the first impulse of strong emotion had bestowed. Therefore, both have been revised and expanded.

The Ode, describing the bringing home of the statue, and conducting it to the site where the pedestal awaited it, seemed an appropriate addition. This Ode can claim the merit of being historically true, from the first verse, invoking the “Trusted Bark” that bore the precious freight, and telling the eager expectation of a people’s heart, to the last stanza, which left the veiled statue upon the pedestal.

The beautiful design on the cover, which illustrates the prologue of two sonnets, is the first attempt at original illustration, by a youthful artist. This *debutante* in art, whose rare powers of exquisite delineation give promise of a bright future, is a faithful

art student. Virginia should be proud to claim her as a daughter, and can feel assured, that if cherished and encouraged by her own people, she will be an honor to the State.

The address to the “Editor of the Mail and Express” is left out, as unworthy a place in this memorial. From the first, it was only a *jeu d’esprit*, intended for all fanatics, who objected to the display of the Confederate flag, and for every narrow soul who misrepresented our motives in bringing out our war banners, as memorial tributes on the day of the unveiling of the beloved Hero of the “lost Cause.”

Two critics, who did not witness the extraordinary scenes of May 29th, thought that the dedication was overdrawn, too highly colored. It came spontaneously from the writer’s very soul, and has found a response from so many hearts and minds, that it must be an unexaggerated sketch and true to the spirit of the day. Therefore only a few verbal changes have been made in this dedication, and General Lee’s own declaration inserted where one sentence was omitted.

Another objected to the sentiment which declared, that “our Chieftain was more sublime and heroic in defeat than the victors in their triumph,” etc. He said that it was invidious to Grant’s deserved reputation as a general and ungrateful to his magnanimity as a victor. No such meaning was intended, nor is it necessarily implied. Lee is spoken of as “the *man* divine from God,” not merely as a military leader.

To the tribute there given to him, we are glad of an opportunity to add another. We claim that the history of mankind can show no manhood, excelling in harmonious proportions and rare combinations Robert E. Lee, our “Stonewall” Jackson, and our earliest martyr leader, Albert Sydney Johnston.

These representative leaders of the South were men of high mental endowments, strong in moral virtue and Christian excellence, cultured gentlemen and chivalrous knights. We say with gratitude unspeakable and noble pride, these men are the outcome of a civilization so often maligned, as being barbaric in cruelty, contemptibly ignorant and sinfully voluptuous. The whole life of the South denies this charge, and History will do justice to a long suffering people.

Again the word “martyr” has been criticised as used in the dedication and poems. The North has its martyrs as well as the South. The fanaticism and prejudices of the extremest of the extreme led North and South to contest, war and death.

The South fought for self-preservation against unwarranted interference and the tyranny of compulsion; and our martyrs fell by thousands. The Northern martyr gave his life for what he deemed essential to self-preservation—the Union.

There will be more martyrs arising from strife in some form, unless there is a Union of “just men” “through all the land,” who will view the responsibilities of the hour, and the difficulties of the political situation with the eye of truth, and who will establish not only a rule of justice, but a higher law of “peace and good will,” which shall rise above sectional prejudice and party faction. God grant us the harmony which must result from such a rule, and a peace which shall insure a free government.

October 15th, 1890. *Annie J. W. Hobson.*



Robert E. Lee

THE PROLOGUE

The Lost Cause buried lies, its winding sheet
 By Glory made and wrapped by Liberty;
 Grief placed the flag of its Confederacy
 Beside its grave, where Love and Honor meet—
 The Sun of its brief day, which ne’er shall greet
 Another dawn sinking to fateful night,

A covenant of freedom writes in light
Behind disaster's clouds—the last rays feat—
A Bow of promise, that new life shall rise
From Martyrs' graves, and battle wage
Against oppression, born from section's rage,
Against hypocrisy's bland cant and lies,
When Truth's own starlit standard shall unite
Just men, through all the land, in wisdom's might.

The Wraith of that Lost Cause now soars in flight
To bear on high our blood-stained Southern Cross,
Our hallowed Oriflamme of Valor's loss,
Amidst the constellations of God's night;
Reflecting deeds of proved, heroic might,
The glorious radiance of the righteous fame
Inscribed by Virtue's hand around each name
Of Leaders brave, who battled for the right,
Of dauntless Chiefs, who 'neath this banner fought,
Defending sacred homes and Sovereign State
From Tyranny, which claimed to be the mate
Of Liberty, in freedom's mail, truth wrought.
Now there its stars shall guide to heights sublime
Tried souls, who climb the adverse steep of Time.

ODE

O trusted Bark, with sure speed bring
The precious freight consigned to thee,
While winds of heaven blow warily
Across a tranquil, solemn sea;
For on towards the setting sun,
Expectant throbs a people's heart,
To welcome that grand form you bear,
By woman's love evoked from art.

The magic spark the tidings flashed,
The ship has reached the Western shore;
Ah! earnest praise uplifted hearts
To Him who safely brought it o'er.
That freight transferred was borne right on—
As clouds pass swiftly overhead—
Towards the site which rightly lies
Between the living and the dead

Virginia, noblest mother, stood
With wreaths of Amaranth in hand,
And called her children to come forth
As love's devoted, reverent band;

Hollywood Cemetery and the
City.

She bade them meet with homage due
 The image of that filial son,
 Who fought the fight for her dear sake,
 Where glory, if not triumph, won.

In silence waits the sacred charge
 On threshold of Lee's city fair,
 When through the golden, pulsing light
 Low murmurs stirred his native air.
 Hark! How the sound swells fast and far!
 Now echoing footsteps throng each street,
 While woman's voice and childhood's words,
 And manhood's tones each other greet.

Around each decked, triumphal car
 A strong, tense cord—ne'er used before—
 Was bound and tied by loving hearts;
 That cord, now sacred evermore,
 No hireling touch could desecrate,
 For baby clasp and maiden's hand,
 Manhood and youth by hoary age
 Made strong the strength of love's command.

There one was drawn by boyhood's throng,
 Who shouted out with youth's own glee,
 The privilege and glory great
 Of bearing on our Chieftain Lee!
 The next was drawn by maidens fair,
 And tiny girls with gladsome smile,
 While right in front a tottering babe
 Was borne aloft or walked a while.

Now women grave and gray bent heads
 Commingle in another line,
 Where hearts were filled with sobs suppressed,
 While many a tear unshed did shine
 In eyes, which had our hero seen
 In all the glory of the past,
 From hearts, which ne'er the woes he felt
 Could cease to feel while life shall last.

The ways were lined with every age
 Afoot, on horse, in densest rows,
 All saw, with solemn joy, the sight,
 While e'en to some fond memory shows
 Another scene of long ago;
 A hero passes through the streets
 A Chieftain in adversity;
 Oh! sad the woe his coming greets!

He rode through this same city when
She mourned in ashes o'er her dead,
And bowed her every grief to share
His noble and uncovered head.
"The paling fires" gleamed on his face
"The death lights of Confederacy";
And e'en to foes revealed the man
In all his calm sublimity.

For generous Federals gave three cheers
To greet him as he passed along,
The tribute of their soldier hearts
To him, who in defeat was strong
With honor's strength and valor's might,
In duty's deeds so bravely done,
Who leading on a hope forlorn
His greatest trophies nobly won.

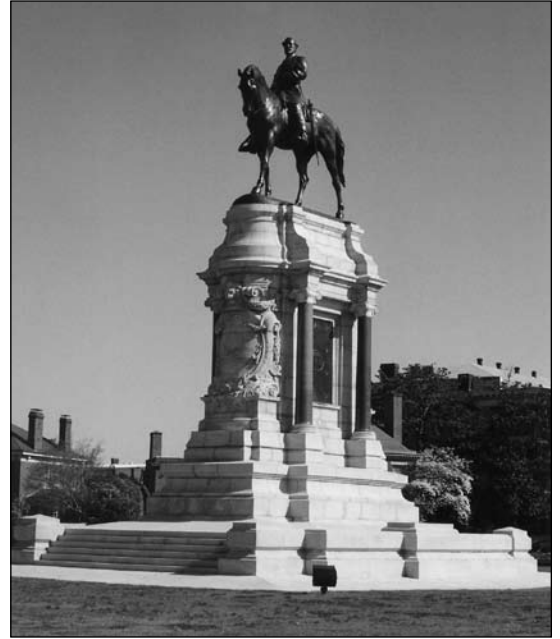
Today in triumph he is borne,
For love and glory here unite,
While memory nerves the feeblest arm
To help conduct him to the site
Where Lee upon his faithful steed,
Shall stand fore'er beneath God's sky,
The highest type of noble life
While heroes live and martyrs die.

Now, there Virginia's tender care
Shall gently raise him to the place
Where all will be close-veiled from sight,
Till from our leader's noble face,
A living hero's honored hand
Removed the veil, revealing Lee
Before an eager, waiting host
In all his calm, grand majesty.

DEDICATION

my grandchildren At the time this was written, Annie Hobson had seven grandchildren—the six living children of John Cannon Hobson, her oldest son, and Katherine Thayer Hobson, Henry Wise Hobson's oldest child.

To my grandchildren—the great-grandchildren of General Henry A. Wise, whose brigade covered the last of the retreat of the Army of Virginia, until the surrender at Appomattox, and whose enduring veterans claim that they fired the last Confederate muskets which flashed their protest on Virginia soil—I dedicate these verses. They were fugitive from heart and brain when the soul was deeply stirred by the memories of the past revived by the surroundings of the present. They are bound to gather as "In Memoriam" leaflets of a day, which witnessed one of the most remarkable pageants, and the most exceptional, which mankind has ever seen. On that day a vast assemblage—youth and maturity, childhood and old age—were called together by love and reverence; and they met to form a mighty retinue, whose martial grandeur was evoked



from the dead years under the banner of “A lost Cause;” whose civic display was a tribute from memory; whose notes of triumph were only echoes from an irrevocable past, where the end was defeat; whose lights of glory were reflected from the heroes of fruitless victories, and from the haloes of Martyred souls who passed through the fires of battles lost. Let these verses prolong the echoes of that day through the chambers of your souls. I would that you should never forget the shout which ascended to the translucent dome of God, when the hand of love and homage unveiled the form majestic—a shout echoing the universal verdict—that our chieftain was more sublime and heroic in defeat than the victors in their triumph, and grander in adversity than their greatest in prosperity. By the side of Lee, you should ever honor the living hero, General Joseph E. Johnston, who was the last to surrender before the inevitable, in the face of disparities which only a miracle could counteract.

I enjoin upon you never to forget that, while there were tears amidst our smiles and great sobs from our hearts, as the battle worn and bullet torn war-banners were unfolded before our eyes, and while hands were clasped in pathetic grief over the old veterans marching their last round upon Time’s history, there was not a cheek which blushed to own the “Lost Cause,” and every head was proudly lifted to see the “Starlet Banner” waving in new glory, exultant, because it was the flag unfurled by Lee in defence “of the inalienable rights sacred to freemen.”

In the name of honor and valor, of liberty and morality, I adjure you, amidst the vicissitudes of life, and the changes of political creeds and human governments, never fail to do justice to the integrity of motives, and to recognize the inspiration of duty and honor, which led the heroes of the “Lost Cause” to do and dare, to risk defeat in opposition to a compulsion, which was clothed in the hypocrisy of freedom, and claimed a Divine Right which contradicted the very laws of God. Write upon your memories, in golden letters, the declaration of Robert E. Lee: “*We had sacred principles to maintain and rights to defend, for which we were in duty bound to do our best, even if we perished in the endeavor.*”

Robert E. Lee Memorial, Monument Avenue, Richmond, Virginia. Dedicated 1890.

The Southern Confederacy belongs to the dead who rest with God; whatever power of resurrection it has in the cause of liberty and right, we leave to Him. Southern principles and fidelity, Southern honor and valor should live with the living to accomplish God's purposes in the grand march of progress and civilization for a nation's highest good and the enlightenment of the dark places of the earth.

June 6th, 1890.

Annie J. W. Hobson.

ADDRESS TO THE BATTLE FLAG

St. Andrew's Cross on Crimson Ground —
The Cross Studded with Stars,
the Same in Number as the Confederate States.

O scared Stars, O hallowed Cross,
On banner dyed in blood red hue;
To-day, no emblem of our loss,
Unfurl thy glories to our view.
Now, wave exultant e'er each head,
No longer prone beside our dead.

Love calls on memory to display
The record of thy glorious past,
Love brings a chrism here to-day
To consecrate while time shall last
Anew the meaning of thy fame,
Enwrapped around our hero's name.

Above the Chieftain loved the best,
Proclaim the praise our hearts would tell,
To North and South, to East and West—
"This man his birthright would not sell."
Wave out, "Beneath this Cross our Lee
Won honor's immortality."

Wave out, how every Southern heart,
In love for our Confederate Lee,
Perpetuates by highest art
The story of that loyalty,
Which, through defeat and country's loss,
Ne'er blushed to own thy Stars and Cross.

Beside Virginia's standard tell
The contest of unequal might,
While Southern flags the echoes swell
Of every deed of Valor's fight.
Recall each grand war bugle blast
When Victory crowned thy noble past.

Yet other flags to-day should droop
 Beneath thy Cross all hallowed there,
 Above the man who ne'er did stoop
 Beneath his burden of despair—
 Who kept, through every direful ill,
 A blood red Cross, his emblem still.

Some day, upon the crystal walls
 Where time records its history,
 Thou shalt be hung—e'en in those halls
 Where heroes dwell eternally,
 This shall be writ: "Beneath this Cross
 Men fought and died, nor counted loss."

AN EPIC

UNVEILING OF THE STATUE OF GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE.

May 29th, 1890.

With tender hand and reverent mien unveil
 That form of Majesty! Let heaven's own light
 Reveal the man sublime who bore aloft
 A banner, whose device—a Cross starlit—
 Meant this to his great soul, from first to last,
 That duty's voice bade honor's hand unfurl
 That flag—a sign for men to dare and die
 Protesting 'gainst compulsion's tyranny.

Immortal love invoked the Muse of Art,
 To show to all posterity the grand
 Calm man of fortitude divine, who bore
 A country's loss in meek humility
 Before Christ's Cross—the Hero of Defeat!
 Bid Music come, with anthems toned like chaunt
 Of winds that sweep around our martyred dead,
 To join in unison with this high theme.

Behold our Chieftain! That uncovered head
 Ne'er bowed before dishonor's shrine, but faced
 The will of God with brave, uplifted front.
 O'erpowered by disaster's cruel might,
 He met inevitable loss, which came
 By dire, disparate force, unconquered still;
 To him a world admiring gave applause,
 Yet to his dying cause could give no aid.

Where is the Poet Seer, with wings to soar
To that high peak serene, above the clouds
Of black adversity, whose towering height
Was never scaled by triumph's heroes in
Prosperity, above the dissonance
Of strife, where Glory stands in robes of light,
To crown the heroes of true valor's might
With wreaths unfading from th' eternal hills?

Ah! when this Bard inspired shall here descend
With Lyre, whose strings of gold were drawn through fire
From Heaven, eyes dim shall full, clear vision have
To see our Chief upon his own lone height.
Then summon here the Muse of History,
With torch lit from the altar fires of Truth,
Illumed to show the things concealed now
By faction's hand or silent by our graves.

Bid Clio seek Minerva's shield, which can
Reflect the Gorgon head of prejudice
By error's serpent locks encoiled, and then
Reveal where fettered liberty was chained;
Thus seeing, write: "This Chief a phalanx led
To victory oft—always to valiant deeds—
Against a mighty host, whose ranks could be
Replenished by the myriads of the world."

Behold those lines attenuate by Death!
Those men, with souls alive and iron will,
In bodies starved, half clad and worn as were
Their rifles and their blood-stained, unsheathed swords,
Encompassed by the burnished bayonets
Of vigorous, serried legions, numbered five
To one. They never faltered in the fight
And victory won while human strength held out.

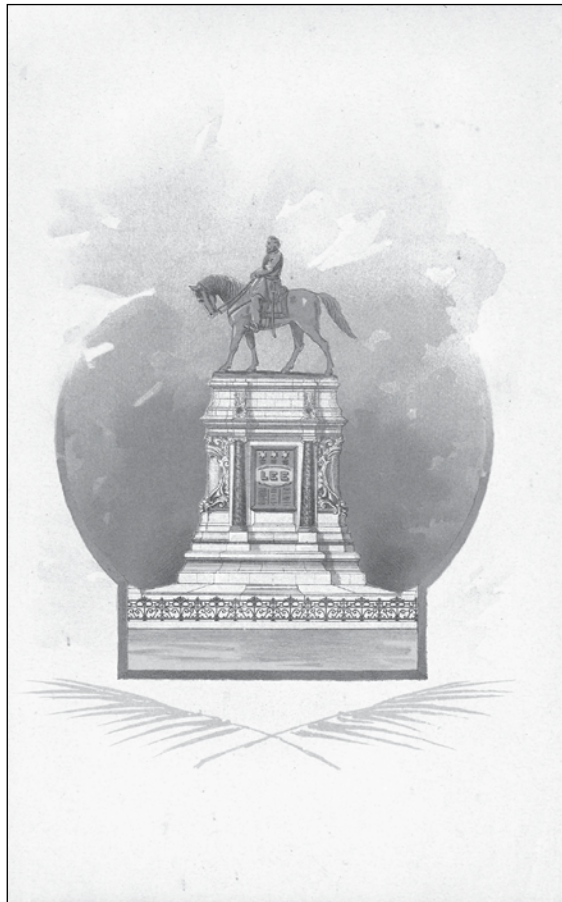
Whene'er she would record the rightful praise
Of our loved Chief, her pen of gold should dip
Into the life blood of a people's heart, and write—
"The Lost Cause furled its flag and found a grave
Beside our sacred dead. The Leader who
Had held the pass of its Thermopylæ
Ne'er quailed, until he heard the widow's wail,
The orphan's call, and mother's cry bereft."

'Twas then he asked the shield of power to guard
Their rifled homes, all desolate and dark,
From more calamity. On his great height
He proved his saintly life, in very truth
The martyr yielding up himself without

One thought of his own loss. In woman's heart
 He finds a shrine fore'er! Aye, she will crown
 Him as King Arthur's peer through every age.

True, knightly men in every land shall bring
 The homage due to our immortal Lee,
 And recognize a man from out God's own
 Divinity, who great in war, was grand
 In peace, as there he stood, a sentinel
 At Duty's post, until a messenger
 From God the solemn summons brought, to meet
 The final contest and the last great foe.

O paradox divine! That foe, e'en Death
 Upon his "pale horse," blew the bugle blast
 Which bore him on to certain victory!
 This summons brought commission sure for life—
 Triumphant life attained by mortal life
 Laid down! Our Lee shall live forevermore
 By Glory wreathed on his own height serene,
 With Aureole crowned amidst the saints of God.



The back cover of the memorial pamphlet with a drawing of the Lee statue.

