

**ROBERT EDWARD LEE. AN ADDRESS
DELIVERED AT THE DEDICATION OF
THE MONUMENT TO GENERAL
ROBERT EDWARD LEE AT RICHMOND,
VIRGINIA, MAY 29, 1890**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649194537

Robert Edward Lee. An address delivered at the dedication of the monument to General Robert Edward Lee at Richmond, Virginia, May 29, 1890 by Archer Anderson

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Cover @ 2017

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ARCHER ANDERSON

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AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

Dedication of the Monument

TO

GENERAL ROBERT EDWARD LEE

AT

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA,

MAY 29, 1890,

BY

ARCHER ANDERSON.

PUBLISHED BY THE LEE MONUMENT ASSOCIATION.

RICHMOND:
WM. ELLIS JONES, PRINTER.
1890.

ADDRESS.

FELLOW CITIZENS,—

A people carves its own image in the monuments of its great men. Not Virginians only, not only those who dwell in the fair land stretching from the Potomac to the Rio Grande, but all who bear the American name may proudly consent that posterity shall judge them by the structure, which we are here to dedicate and crown with a heroic figure. For, as the Latin poet said that, wherever the Roman name and sway extended, *there* should be the sepulchre of Pompey, so to-day, in every part of America, the character and fame of Robert Edward Lee are treasured as a "possession for all time."

And, if this be true of that great name, what shall be said of the circumstances which surround us on this day of solemn commemoration?

That at the end of the first quarter of a century after the close of a stupendous civil war, in which more than a million men struggled for the mastery during four years of fierce and bloody conflict, we should see the Southern States in complete possession of their local self-government, the Federal Constitution unchanged save as respects the great issues sub-

mitted to the arbitrament of war, and the defeated party—whilst in full and patriotic sympathy with all the present grandeur and imperial promise of a reunited country—still not held to renounce any glorious memory, but free to heap honors upon their trusted leaders, living or dead—all this reveals a character in which the American people may well be content to be handed down to history.

All this, and more, will be the testimony of the solid fabric we here complete. It will recall the generous initiative and the unflagging zeal of those noble women of the South to whom in large measure we owe this auspicious day; it will bear its lasting witness as the voluntary offering of the people, not the governments of the Southern States; and, standing as a perpetual memorial of our great leader, it will stand not less as an enduring record of what his fellow-citizens deemed most worthy to be honored.

What kind of greatness, then—it may be fitting on this spot to ask—what kind of greatness should men most honor in their fellow-men? Vast and varied is the circle of human excellence—where is our paramount allegiance due?

In that "temple of silence and reconciliation," that Westminster Abbey of Florence, whither so many paths of glory led, you may read one answer to this question on the cenotaph of Dante in the inscription: "Honor the sublime poet." These words the medi-

æval poet himself. applied to his great master, Virgil. After near six centuries they still touch some of the deepest feelings of the heart. And with them come crowding on the mind memories of a long line of poets, artists, historians, orators, thinkers who have sounded all the depths of speculation, princes of science who have advanced the frontiers of ordered knowledge, of the least of whom it may be said—as Newton's gravestone records of the greatest—that he was an honor to the race of men. Yes, if our life were only thought and emotion, if will and action and courage did not make up its greatest part, men might justly reverence the genius of poets and thinkers above all other greatness. But strong and natural as is the inclination of those given up to the intellectual life thus to exalt the triumphs of the imagination and the reason, such is not the impulse of the great heart of the multitude. And the multitude is right. In a large and true sense conduct is more than intellect, more than art or eloquence—to have done great things is nobler than to have thought or expressed them.

Thus, in every land, the most conspicuous monuments commemorate the great actors, not the great thinkers of the world's history; and among these men of action, the great soldier has always secured the first place in the affections of his countrymen. What means this universal outburst of the love and

admiration of our race for men who have been foremost in war? Is the common sense of mankind blinded by the blaze of military glory? Or does some deep instinct teach us that the character of the ideal commander is the grandest manifestation in which man can show himself to man? The power and the fascination of this ideal are attested by the indulgent admiration we bestow on men who, on the one side, grandly fill it out, while, on the other, falling grievously below it, weighed down by something base and earthly. Thus, standing before that marvellous monument in Berlin from which Frederick "in his habit as he lived" looks down in homely greeting to his Prussian people, and seems still to warn them that the art which won empire can alone maintain it, we forget the selfish ambition, the petty foibles, the chilling life—we remember only the valor, the consummate skill, the superhuman constancy of the hero-king. Or if, turning from a career so crowned with final triumph, we recall how, for lack of a like commander, France in our own day has been trampled under foot, we may conceive the devotion with which Frenchmen still crowd about the tomb of Napoleon—a name that, in spite of all its lurid associations, in spite of all the humiliations of the Second Empire, has still had power to lift the French nation, during these latter years, from abasement and despair.

Surely there must be something superhuman in the

genius of a great commander, if it can make us forgetful of the woes and crimes so often attending it. How freely, then, may we lavish our admiration and gratitude, when no allowance has to be made for human weakness, when we find military greatness allied with the noblest public and private virtue! Here, at last, in this ideal union is that rare greatness which men may most honor in their fellow-men.

It is the singular felicity of this Commonwealth of Virginia to have produced two such stainless captains. The fame of the one, consecrated by a century of universal reverence and the growth of a colossal empire, the result of his heroic labors, has been commemorated in this city by a monument, in whose majestic presence no man ever received the suggestion of a thought that did not exalt humanity. The fame of the other, not yet a generation old and won in a cause that was lost, is already established by that impartial judgment of foreign nations, which anticipates the verdict of the next age, upon an equal pinnacle, and millions of our countrymen, present here with us in their thoughts and echoing back 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.

I ventured to say that, if we take account of human

nature in all its complexity, the character of the ideal commander is the grandest manifestation in which man can show himself to man. Consider some of the necessary elements of this great character. And let us begin with its humbler virtues, its more lowly labors. If we take the commander merely on his administrative side, what treasures of energy, forecast, and watchfulness do we not see him expending in the prosaic work of providing the means of subsistence for his army! He is always confronted on a vast scale with man's elemental and primitive want—his daily bread. The matter is so vital that he can never commit it entirely to the staff. The control of the whole subject must be ever in his own grasp.

Then, he must have not only an intimate knowledge of the geography and resources of the theatre of war as maps and books give them, but an instinct for topography and an unerring faculty for finding the way by night or day through forest and field, usually to be met with only in men who pass their whole lives in the open air. To this add a complete acquaintance with all parts of army work and organization—a very genius for detail, an artilleryist's eye for distance, and an engineer's judgment and inventiveness, with a wide and critical comprehension of all the great campaigns of history. But he must possess a still higher knowledge. He must know human nature, he must be wise in his judgment and