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Brigadier-General Robert Toombs.—An Address delivered before the Confederate Survivors Association in Augusta, Georgia, at its Eighth Annual Meeting, on Memorial Day, April 26th, 1886, by Colonel Charles C. Jones, Jr., LL.D., President of the Association.

Comrades and Friends :

Mirzah* saw in a vision a bridge, with a hundred arches, rising out of a thick mist at the one end, and losing itself in a thick mist at the other, spanning a portion of time, and with the great tide of eternity flowing beneath. Of the vast multitudes essaying to pass over this *pont de vie*, not a single individual, at some stage or other of the transit, escaped falling through the uncertain flooring. Many there were who, indulging in mirth and jollity, unexpectedly lapsed into the dark waters. Others, looking up toward heaven with the signs of calm speculation and Christian resignation upon their countenances, stumbled and disappeared. Others still, pursuing baubles which glittered in their eyes and danced before them, lost their footing, and were swallowed up by the flood. Others still, their foreheads wreathed with bays, rich, powerful, influential, and saluted with honor; were, in a moment, lost to sight. And some went down with swords in their hands; some with crowns upon their heads; and a few there were who, having hobbled on almost to the furthest arch, tripped and fell, one after another, in feebleness and silence, as though tired and spent after a long journey. As he looked upon the further end of the cloud-enveloped valley, toward which the tide was bearing the generations of mortals, and ere the good Genius had revealed unto him the vast ocean of futurity stretching beyond, divided by a rock of adamant, the one part covered with darkness, and the other dotted with innumerable islands, peopled with beings in glorious habits with garlands upon their brows, vocal with the harmony of celestial music, beatified with fruits, flowers and fountains, and interwoven with a thousand shining seas, Mirzah—his heart moved with deep melancholy—exclaimed surely man is but a shadow, and life a dream.

But, my comrades, it needs no journey to Grand Cairo, or inspection of oriental manuscripts, to persuade us, on this Memorial Day, that—

“ All flesh is grass, and all its glory fades
Like the fair flow'r dishevel'd in the wind;
Riches have wings, and grandeur is a dream;
The man we celebrate must find a tomb,
And we that worship him.”

* The *Spectator*, No. 159.

The last twelve-month has been unusually lethiferous, and lessons of mortality have been rapidly multiplied in every station, in every land. Besides the unnumbered and the unrecorded dead falling like the leaves of autumn noiselessly and unheeded upon the bosom of mother earth, not a few there were, so famous in rank, fortune, literary attainment, and special service, that, in descending into their graves, they challenged public attention and evoked general sorrow.

But yesterday, amid the tears of the French people, Pere Lachaise opened its solemn gates to receive into the close companionship of warriors and statesmen, prelates and artists, astronomers and dramatists, physicians, poets, lawyers, novelists and philosophers, whose fame envious time has not yet impaired, all that was mortal of the venerable and idolized Victor Hugo.

Shadows are resting upon the German Empire, for the Baron Von Manteufel, Frederick Charles—the dashing Red Prince of many campaigns—and the charming song-writer—Franz Abt—are not.

England laments the tragic fate of the gallant Burnaby, the unique Gordon, and their brave companions—regrets that Sir Moses Montefiore—the noble Jewish philanthropist—has been gathered to his fathers, and scatters white roses over the new-made graves of Sir Francis Hincks and Lord Houghton.

The gonfalons of Spain are drooping in honor of King Alphonso and the sagacious Serrano. The soul of music is even now breathing a requiem for Dr. Damrosch, and the Mussulman sits with bowed head for the careers of El-Mahdi and Oliver Pain are ended.

Within the limits of this country, since our last annual convocation, the death harvest of prominent personages has been perhaps unprecedented. Ulysses S. Grant—commander-in-chief of the Federal armies during the civil war, twice president of these United States, and complimented abroad with tokens of respect and distinguished consideration never before accorded to a living American; Thomas A. Hendricks—vice-president of this puissant Republic, of exalted statesmanship and manly qualities, a citizen of national fame and a Christian gentleman; Cardinal McCloskey—supreme prelate, in this land, of the Roman Catholic Church, venerated for his professional attainments, his charitable ministrations, and his saintly virtues; William H. Vanderbilt—the richest man in America, fostering commercial schemes of gigantic proportions, and the controlling spirit of immense corporations; Horace B. Claffin—the greatest shop-keeper on this continent; Richardson—the wealthiest and most successful planter in the South; George B. McClellan—erstwhile the

organizer of the grand Army of the Potomac, a captain of lofty impulses, and a civilian of high repute; John McCullough—possessing a fine conception of, and manifesting a conscientious devotion to, “the purpose of playing whose end both at the first, and now, was and is to hold as ’twere the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure,”; Richard Grant White—a capable scholar, a conscientious student, and an intelligent interpreter of the immortal lines of the Bard of Avon; Horatio Seymour—a lover of constitutional liberty, a genuine patriot, and well qualified to fill the chair rendered illustrious by Jefferson and Madison; Winfield Scott Hancock—a noble type of the warrior and statesman who was “wont to speak plain and to the purpose like an honest man and soldier,” whose escutcheon was never smirched even by the breath of suspicion; who, at an epoch of misrule, uncertainty, and oppression, subordinated military despotism to civil rule and accorded fair play to the vanquished; superb in person, head and heart; Father Ryan—the Poet-Priest of the South, who sang so eloquently of the “Sword of Lee,” the “Conquered Banner,” and of

“The land with a grave in each spot,
And names in the graves that shall not be forgot,”—

all these, and others scarcely less distinguished, have since our last annual meeting, passed into the realm of shadows, bequeathing memories of peace and war, state-craft and finance, literature and art, politics and religion, of no ordinary significance. Verily the harvest has been most abundant, and the insatiate Reaper may well pause at sight of the swath his remorseless scythe has made.

Busy too has he been within the circle of our special companionship. During the month of May three of our Associates died—Major Frederick L. Smith, of Kershaw’s division, Army of Northern Virginia; Sergeant-Major Fee Wilson, of Byrne’s battery, First Kentucky brigade, and Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph T. Armand, of the Thirty-seventh regiment, Georgia infantry. Private John Gallagher, of Company C, Forty-eighth regiment, Georgia infantry, responded to the final summons on the 11th of July, and, on the 15th of the following August, our venerable comrade, Brigadier-General Goode Bryan, fell on sleep. A graduate of the Military Academy at West Point, he was an active participant in two wars. For gallantry in the battles of Molino del Rey and Chapultepec he was promoted to a majority in the Army of Occupation. The Mexican campaign

ended, he led the gentle life of a planter until summoned from that repose by the call of his native State. Entering the service of the Confederacy as the Lieutenant-Colonel of the Sixteenth regiment, Georgia infantry—then commanded by that distinguished Georgian, Howell Cobb—he gave to the Southern cause his loyal and unswerving allegiance. Shortly after the memorable battle of Sharpsburg, in which, as Colonel of his regiment, he bore a brave part, he was advanced to the grade of Brigadier-General and assigned to the command of the Tenth, Fiftieth, Fifty-third, and Fifty-fifth regiments, Georgia infantry, McLaws's division, Longstreet's corps, Army of Northern Virginia. With this brigade he continued to share the perils, the privations, and the glories of that hitherto invincible army until, on the 10th of April, 1865, it was, in the language of its illustrious commander, after four years of arduous service, marked by unsurpassed courage and fortitude, compelled to yield to overwhelming numbers and resources. All struggles, dangers and uncertainties ended, he rests with those he loved, and the flowers of affection, respect, and veneration are blooming above his peaceful grave.

On the 12th of January last another of our companions—Captain DeRosset Lamar—was taken from us. He was an aide-de-camp at first to Brigadier-General Robert Toombs, then to Major-General William H. T. Walker, and lastly to Brigadier-General Alfred Cumming. When General Cumming was wounded, Captain Lamar was assigned to duty with Colonel Roman as an Assistant Inspector-General.

Then, on the 15th of February, after a long illness, Private Eugene Conner, of the Washington Artillery, found friendly sepulture in our Confederate section.

And, on the 18th of last month, Private William Teppe, of Company D, Fifth regiment, South Carolina cavalry, Butler's division, Hampton's corps, Army of Northern Virginia, responded to the trump which summoned him to the bivouac of the dead.

Alas! the circle of our fraternity is narrowing. It will grow rapidly smaller as the years roll on; and soon, aye, very soon, so far at least as we are concerned, there will be only silent graves to greet the sun as he ushers in the return of this Memorial Day.

There is another name high on the roll of the distinguished dead who have departed within the last twelve-month—a name prominent in the annals of this State and nation—a name intimately associated with the memories of this region, and suggestive of much that was great and attractive—a name which should not be forgotten in this

presence and on this occasion—a name borne by a gifted Georgian who, a lawyer by profession, a statesman by education, an orator by inspiration, and a citizen of marked individuality and acknowledged ability, for nearly half a century attracted the public notice, fascinated the popular ear, and, to a large extent, moulded the general thought. Aside from the prominent positions which he filled in the councils of this Commonwealth and Republic, he was the first Secretary of State upon the organization of the Confederate Government, and, for some time, held the rank of Brigadier-General in the Southern army. To most, if not all of us, he was personally known. Meet it is that we render some tribute to his memory.

In Wilkes county, Georgia, on the 2d of July, 1810, Robert Toombs was born. He came of good parentage and sprang from the loins of Revolutionary sires. In the schools of the neighborhood did he acquire his elementary education. His collegiate course—began at Franklin College, in Athens, Georgia—was completed at Union College, in Schenectady, New York, where, in 1828, he received his degree of A. B. from the hands of that famous instructor, President Eliphalet Nott. Selecting the law as a profession, he repaired to the University of Virginia, and there spent a year as a member of its law-class. At school, at college and at the university he was, by teacher and student, regarded as a youth of unusual promise and of remarkable intellect. His natural gifts were almost marvellous, and his powers of acquisition and utterance quite phenomenal. United with this mental superiority were a superb physical organization, a striking originality of thought and speech, and social characteristics most attractive. Before he attained his majority he was, by a special act of the General Assembly, admitted to the Bar. Opening an office in the town of Washington, in his native county, he rose rapidly in his profession. Impressed by the ability evinced during his early efforts in the legal arena, that great Georgian, William H. Crawford—then the presiding judge of the Northern Circuit—prophesied for Mr. Toombs a career of marked distinction. To the pursuit of his calling, and to the establishment of a reputation, enviable both within and beyond the confines of the court-room, did he devote himself with great assiduity.

In 1836, as the captain of a company of volunteers, he served under General Scott in an expedition for the pacification of the Creek Indians.

The following year he was elected a member of the lower house of the General Assembly of Georgia. This position he filled until 1840,

and again during the session of 1842-'43. From his earliest connection with political life he became a central figure. His views were bold, enlarged, emphatic; and his utterances eloquent, aggressive, and weighty. In 1844 he was, by an admiring constituency, advanced to a seat in the Representative Chamber of the National Assembly. Here he made his *debut* on the Oregon question. In the judgment of Mr. Stephens, his first speech placed him in the front rank of the debaters, orators, and statesmen of that body.

Educated in and a firm disciple of the Jeffersonian school of politics, Mr. Toombs then sympathized with the Southern Whigs.

In March, 1853, he quitted the Hall of Representatives for a chair in the Senate Chamber of the United States. This he continued to occupy until the passage by Georgia of her ordinance of secession, when he withdrew from the National Assembly and cast his lot with the Southern people in their struggle for a separate political existence.

The public utterances of Mr. Toombs as a Representative and Senator from Georgia have passed into history. Among them will be specially remembered his speeches defining his position on the organization of the House in 1849—on the power of the House to adopt rules prior to its organization—on the admission of California—in which he arraigned the North for repeated breaches of good faith, and demanded equality for the South in the Territories, and in justification of the right of secession. His lecture, delivered in Boston on the 24th of January, 1856, was carefully considered, and created a profound impression. On all these, and on kindred occasions, he exhibited wonderful physical and intellectual prowess. He was now in the zenith of his fame, in the full possession of his magnetic influence and kingly gifts—fearless, honest, and marvellously eloquent. In the language of another, those who did not see him then can form no conception of the “splendor with which he moved amid those dramatic scenes. A man of marked physical beauty, the idol of a princely people—golden-tongued and lion-hearted—the blood of the cavaliers flashing in his veins and the heart of the South throbbing in his breast—he recalled the gifted Mirabeau, who, amid scenes scarcely less fiery or fateful, ‘walked the forum like an emperor and confronted the commune with the majesty of a God.’” He gloried in the whirlwind and caught his inspiration from the storm. As though born to kindle a conflagration, he inflamed by his wonderful power of speech and swayed by his electric fire. Like unto a Scythian archer scouring the plain, he traversed the field of argument and

invective, and, at full speed, discharged his deadliest arrows. In forensic battle the wheels of his war-chariot, sympathizing with the ardent and resistless valor of him who guided them, grew incandescent.

Demosthenes, mingling the thunders of his eloquence with the roar of the Ægean; Cicero, his eyes fixed on the capitol, wielding at will the fierce democracy and inspiring all hearts with a love of freedom and an admiration for the triumphs of the Roman race; Otis, kindling a patriotic flame wherein the "Writs of Assistance" were wholly consumed; Warren, inscribing upon the banners of the sons of liberty, "Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God;" Henry, the "incarnation of Revolutionary zeal," ringing the alarum bell and giving the signal to a continent; the impassioned Barre, defending, even within the shadow of the throne, the claims of the oppressed—were not more forcible in utterance, magnetic in action, or majestic in mien than Robert Toombs when contending for the privilege of free speech, or proclaiming the rights of the South, as he comprehended them. The latter were paramount in his esteem. To his assertion was his supreme devotion pledged, his best effort directed. Bold, even to temerity, in his assertions; in tone and manner emphatic, to the verge of menace; by sudden bursts, savoring almost of inspiration, essaying at critical moments to decide the fate of great questions; iconoclastic sometimes in his suggestions—he was, nevertheless, always true to the principles of exalted statesmanship, and loyal in the last degree to the best interests of the South as he forecast them. Mighty was his influence in precipitating the Confederate revolution. Most potent were his persuasions in inducing Georgia to secede from the Union. It was his boast that he would live and die an uncompromising opponent of the unconstitutional acts and assumed authority of the General Government.

Upon his return from Washington, Mr. Toombs took his seat in the Secession Convention of Georgia, where he freely participated in its deliberations, and acted a conspicuous part.

As a delegate to the Confederate Congress, which assembled at Montgomery, Alabama, on the 4th of February, 1861, and as the chairman of the committee from Georgia, he was largely instrumental in framing the Constitution of the Confederate States. Upon the inauguration of the Hon. Jefferson Davis as President of the Southern Confederacy, the port-folio of State was tendered to, and, after some hesitation on his part, was accepted by Mr. Toombs. He was content to discharge the duties of this office only during the

formative period of the government. His restless spirit and active intellect could not long brook the tedium of bureau affairs, or rest satisfied with the small engagements then incident to that position. In the following July he relinquished the port-folio of a department, the records of which he facetiously remarked "he carried in his hat," and accepted service in the field with the rank of Brigadier-General. His brigade was composed of the Second, Fifteenth, Seventeenth, and Twentieth regiments, Georgia infantry, and the First regiment of Georgia regulars. It formed a part of Longstreet's corps, Army of Northern Virginia.

To his imperious spirit, unused to subjection and unaccustomed to brook the suggestions and commands of others, the discipline and exactions of a military life were most irksome, and sometimes the orders emanating from those superior in rank very distasteful. In open defiance of well known army regulations he did not hesitate, on more than one occasion, to criticise, publicly and severely, military movements and instructions which did not commend themselves to his approbation. To such an extent did this show of insubordination obtain that he was suspended from the command of his brigade to await the determination of charges preferred. He resumed his command, however, at the memorable battle of Second Manassas, and at Sharpsburg held the bridge with the courage and pertinacity of a modern Horatius. In the latter engagement he was wounded. In both battles he behaved with conspicuous gallantry, and received the commendation of General Lee.

On the 4th of March, 1863, he resigned his commission in the army and returned to Georgia. General Toombs was not in accord with President Davis's administration of public affairs, nor did he acquiesce in the propriety of some of the most important enactments of the Confederate Congress. Although his affections, his hopes, and his aspirations were wholly enlisted in the Southern cause—although he stood prepared to render every assistance in his power—he reserved and exercised the right of passing upon men and measures, and of gainsaying the qualifications of the one and the expediency of the other, where they did not challenge his personal sanction. This attitude did not conduce to general harmony. Without hesitation he claimed and enforced the dangerous privilege of denouncing publicly what he disapproved, and of freely deriding that which his judgment did not countenance. Such conduct in one of his acknowledged ability and wide-spread influence would have been more tolerable in a period of peace; but when a new-born nation, confronting

difficulties the most overwhelming, and struggling against odds without parallel in the history of modern wars, was engaged in a death grapple for life—when all, repressing personal preferences, and refraining from harsh criticism, should have been intent upon making the best of the situation, and rendering full service in the common cause, his attitude, to say the least, appeared obstructive of unity. It was characteristic of General Toombs to measure men and laws by his own standard of character, excellence and propriety. Beyond question that standard was bold, advanced, colossal; but in its application it was sometimes dangerous, above the common apprehension, and suggestive of rule or ruin. If the order or enactment, no matter how august the source from which it originated, or how potent the authority by which it was promulgated, did not coincide with his views of right or necessity, he did not scruple openly to criticise, to condemn, or to disobey. He was largely a law unto himself, and in some instances did violence to the expectation which, under circumstances then existent, might well have been formed with regard to the judgment and conservative action of one possessing his grand powers and overshadowing gifts. At the outset of the Confederate revolution he apparently underestimated the determination, the martial spirit, and the resources of the North. So intent was he upon the unification of the Southern States, so eager was he for the immediate success of Confederate arms, that he did not refrain from denouncing the leaders upon whom, by any possibility, the blame of hesitation, mistake or defeat could be cast. He was an avowed enemy of West Point, and ridiculed the idea, so generally entertained, of the superiority of the officers of the regular army. Of President Davis's ability to fill the exalted station to which he had been elected, General Toombs did not cherish a favorable opinion. The conscript act—the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*—regulations restricting the planting of cotton—laws governing the impressment of animals and the collection of supplies for the army—and some orders of the Executive and enactments of Congress—he pronounced ill-advised if not unconstitutional, and lent no helping hand for their enforcement. The consequence of all this was, that this distinguished Georgian, who occupied so prominent a place in the public esteem, who was so richly endowed, and who had been so instrumental in precipitating hostilities between the sections, did not, *bello flagrante*, in the advice given, in the support extended, and in the services rendered to the Confederate government, fulfill the general expectation.

Upon retiring from the Army of Northern Virginia he took service with the State forces of Georgia, and retained his connection with them until the close of the war.

Eluding the pursuit of a body of Federal soldiery detached to compass his arrest when Confederate affairs were *in extremis*, he fled from his home and succeeded in making his escape to Cuba and thence to Europe. Upon the restoration of the privilege of the writ of *habeas corpus* within the States lately in arms against the General Government, he returned to Georgia and resumed, with undiminished power and marked success, the practice of his profession. The angry billows of civil war were rocking themselves to rest. After the great storm there came a calm. Hate was giving place to reason, and no attempt was subsequently made to execute the order for his arrest.

The last political service rendered by General Toombs was performed by him as a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1877, which was presided over by our venerable fellow-citizen, ex-Governor Charles J. Jenkins. In framing the present Constitution of Georgia, General Toombs exerted an almost overshadowing influence. The suggestion and the adoption of its leading and, in the opinion of some, its questionable features, are to be referred to his thought and persuasive eloquence.

His last public utterance, we believe, was heard when, with tearful eye, trembling voice, and feeble gesture, he pronounced, in the Hall of Representatives at Atlanta, a funeral oration over the dead body of his life long friend, Governor Alexander H. Stephens. For some time prior to his demise, General Toombs had been but the shadow of his former great self. The death of a noble wife, to whom he was devotedly attached, proved an affliction too grievous for his declining years. The light went out of his home and gladness no longer dwelt in the chambers of his heart. Impaired vision deprived him of the ability either to read or to write except at intervals and with difficulty. His idols broken, his companions departed, his ambition blighted, his physical and intellectual forces abated, he lingered almost alone in a later generation which knew him not in his prime. His splendid person, months ago, suffered impairment at the advance of age and the multiplication of sorrows, and the commanding presence gave place to the bent form and the unsteady gait of the feeble old man. His intellect, too, formerly so authoritative, massive, and captivating, became uncertain in its action. To the last, however, he continued to denounce the reconstruction measures of Con-

gress, and proclaimed himself an "unpardoned, unreconstructed, and unrepentant Rebel."

In the morning, at high noon, and even beyond the meridian of his manhood he was intellectually the peer of the most gifted, and towered Atlas-like above the common range. His genius was conspicuous. His powers of oratory were overmastering. His mental operations were quick as lightning, and, like the lightning, they were dazzling in their brilliancy and resistless in their play. Remarkable were his conversational gifts, and most searching his analyses of character and event. In hospitality he was generous, and in his domestic relations tender and true. The highest flights of fancy, the profoundest depths of pathos, the broadest range of biting sarcasm and withering invective, generalizations of the boldest character, and arguments the most logical, were equally at his command. As a lawyer, he was powerful; as an advocate, well nigh resistless. He was a close student, and deeply versed in the laws, state-craft, and political history of this Commonwealth and nation. In all his gladiatorial combats, whether at the bar, upon the hustings, or in legislative halls, we recall no instance in which he met his over match. Even during his years of decadence there were occasions when the almost extinct volcano glowed again with its wonted fires; when the ivy-mantled keep of the crumbling castle resumed its pristine defiance with deep-toned culverin and ponderous mace; when, amid the colossal fragments of the tottering temple, men recognized the unsubdued spirit of Samson Agonistes.

In the demise of this distinguished Georgian we chronicle the departure of another noted Confederate, and this Commonwealth mourns the loss of a son whose fame for half a hundred years was intimately associated with her aspirations and her glory. He was the survivor of that famous companionship which included such eminent personages as Crawford, Cobb, Johnson, Jenkins, Hill, and Stephens. While during his long and prominent career General Toombs was courted, admired, and honored, while in the stations he filled he was renowned for the brilliancy of his intellectual efforts, the intrepidity of his actions, the honesty of his purposes, and for loyalty to his section, while his remarkable sayings, epigrammatical utterances, caustic satires, and eloquent speeches will be repeated, it would seem that he has bequeathed few lasting monuments. Among his legacies will, we fear, be found few substantial contributions to knowledge. Scant are the tokens of labor which will perpetuate his

name and minister to the edification of future generations. Trusting largely to the spoken word, which too often dies with the listener, he will live mainly as a tradition.

Natural gifts so superior as those which he possessed, and opportunities so famous as those which he enjoyed, should have borne fruit more abundant and yielded a harvest less insubstantial. By permanent record of grand thoughts and great ideas, he should have commended his memory more surely to the comprehension of the coming age, so that there might be no lack of "historic proof to verify the reputation of his power."

Enjoying a present fame as a legislator, a statesman, a counsellor, an advocate, an orator, a Confederate chieftain, a defender of the South, and a lover of this Commonwealth, towering among the highest and brightest of the land, this illustrious Georgian is also remembered as a leader not always wise and conservative in his views, as a mighty tribune of the people sometimes dethroning images where he erected none better in their places.

Thus are we reminded that the children of men, be they of high or low estate, be they rich or poor, be they intellectually great or of the common measure,

"Are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."

Although this is true, let us remember, my comrades, it is not all of death to die ; that the actions of the just are not wholly swallowed up in the oblivion of the tomb ; that there are virtuous memories, which, at least for a season, are not confined with our bones ; and, thus persuaded, may we, one and all, heed the injunction of the great American poet—

"So live, that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan that moves
To that mysterious realm where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but sustain'd and sooth'd
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
Like one that draws the drapery of his couch
About him and lies down to pleasant dreams.