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THE BATTLE OF THE CRATER,

July 30, 1864.

*An Address delivered before the A. P. Hill Camp of Confederate Veterans,
of Petersburg, Va., in that city, on the 24th of June, 1890.*

BY COMRADE GEORGE S. BERNARD.

COMRADES:

It was my fortune as a member of the Petersburg Riflemen, Company E, Twelfth Virginia Infantry, General William Mahone's brigade, to take part in the memorable engagement known as "The Battle of the Crater," and it is now proposed to give some account of the action—to tell a war story from the standpoint of a high private in the rear rank, supplementing information within my personal knowledge with some material drawn from other sources believed to be reliable—this being necessary to a proper understanding of what will be told.

On Saturday morning, the 30th of July, 1864, when the mine under the angle in the Confederate's works around Petersburg, known as "Elliott's saient," was exploded, blowing up, or burying under the debris of earth and timber, between two hundred and fifty and three hundred officers and men occupying the works at this point, making therein a huge chasm, described in the report of the Committee on the Conduct of the War as "from 150 to 200 feet in length, about 60 in width, and from 25 to 30 feet in depth, and aptly called 'a crater,'" from its resemblance to the mouth of a volcano, Mahone's brigade was occupying the breastworks on the Willcox farm, immediately south of our city—say about a point which would be reached by a prolongation of Adams street. The site of the "Crater," as is well known probably to all now present, is east of the Jerusalem plank-

THE TOASTS.

Colonel Dickinson made the opening address, and the following toasts were responded to: "The Memory of Lee," Colonel Charles Marshall, of Baltimore; "Let Us Have Peace," General Daniel E. Sickles; "The Confederate Veteran," General William C. Oates, of Alabama; "Our Country, the United States," Colonel Charles T. O'Ferrall, of Winchester, Va.; "The Soldier-Journalist of '61-'65," Colonel John A. Cockrill; "Our Old Home, the South," Hon. Benton McMillan, of Nashville, Tenn.; "Our Soldier Dead," drunk in silence.

THE MUSIC.

The Confederate Veteran Camp quartette, consisting of Messrs. Wilbur Gunn, Frederick Schilling, S. Cameron, and Alfred Poindexter, rendered some excellent music during the evening, "The Star-Spangled Banner," "I'se Gwine Back to Dixie," and "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," being among their selections. Messrs. Gunn and Poindexter sang solos.

In Memoriam.

GENERAL JOSEPH EGGLESTON JOHNSTON.

The last but one of the six full generals of the war for Southern Independence (General Beauregard now alone remaining), General Joseph Eggleston Johnston, died at his residence in Washington, D. C., on the night of March 21st, 1891. His death excited profound emotion, and throughout the Southern States the testimony of regard in which he was held was touchingly manifested.

RICHMOND.

In Richmond, Lee Camp of Confederate Veterans led in the initiative. At a meeting of this body, held March 23d, a committee

of which Colonel Archer Anderson was chairman, was appointed to prepare resolutions to the memory of General Johnston.

The following chaste and touching tribute from the pen of Colonel Anderson was submitted by him in a meeting of Lee Camp, held March 27th, and was unanimously adopted by a rising vote:

"A great soldier has passed from among us.

The death of General Joseph Eggleston Johnston has filled every southern veteran's heart with sorrow, and we have met to give utterance to the deep and abiding feelings of respect and veneration which must ever be associated with his honored name.

His career will occupy a great space in the military annals of his country. It illustrates almost every species of military excellence.

As a youth he had stored his mind with all the lessons to be drawn from the great campaigns of history and the deductions of military science. This exact knowledge was supplemented and adorned by a general culture unusual in the training of a soldier. But his love of books never impaired his eagerness for action. The records of the past kindled in his whole nature a passionate ardor to emulate the great deeds of the heroes celebrated by poet and historian. He was essentially a man of action, and on the very first occasion when he confronted a force of hostile Indians he signaled his fitness to lead men in battle.

SECOND ONLY TO LEE.

Distinguished in the Florida war he showed himself at each step of his career equal to every call of duty. No officer, save only Robert E. Lee, emerged from the Mexican war with a more brilliant reputation for vigor, forecast, and valor. But the war between the States furnished the arena on which he was to display the great qualities of head and heart and soul, which alone fit men for the command of armies.

The secrecy and rapidity of his movement from Patterson's front to Beauregard's support secured victory at Manassas. During the next eight months his bold countenance concealed his paralyzing inferiority of numbers and resources, and held in inglorious inactivity the grand army of McClellan.

Quickly changing his line of operations to confront the Federal army in its advance upon the Peninsula he now illustrated that distinguishing quality of his genius which led him always—even at the cost of distrust and reproach—to sacrifice everything subordinate

and unessential to bring about the substantial and necessary conditions of decisive military success. He withdrew his army skilfully from a faulty position to bring McClellan to battle at a distance from his base, where, after the concentration of all our resources, a Confederate victory might determine the issue of the campaign.

In the act to win the rich prize of his strategy he was stricken down at the head of his columns at Seven Pines by two severe wounds—always, like Hannibal, the first to go into battle and the last to come out.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST SHERMAN.

But his campaign against Sherman will furnish the imperishable justification of his fame. The most brilliant military critic of our time, the English officer, Chesney, has declared that it places him by the side of Turenne in the roll of the world's great generals. Those who followed Robert Lee in what was perhaps the grandest of his campaigns, the campaign of 1864, will understand the greatness of Johnston's leadership when they consider how nearly Lee's campaign resembled in method and results Johnston's fighting march from Dalton to Atlanta. But there was this striking difference. When Lee reached Richmond and Petersburg, his adversary gained possession of a better base and a shorter line of communications than he ever before possessed. When Johnston reached Atlanta his army was in as high a state of vigor, cohesion, and military devotion as Lee's, and Sherman was dragging a lengthening chain of weak and attenuated communications. The opportunity long sought and prepared for a decisive stroke was snatched from Johnston's hand, as many think, by the Executive mandate, which deprived the Army of Tennessee of its beloved and trusted chief. The absolute devotion of that army to him established his possession of one of the prime characteristics of a general—the power to arouse enthusiasm in his followers. But he had done enough for enduring fame. The verdict of the skilful and vigorous soldiers who led the Federal army, including their brilliant chief, Sherman, declaring Johnston to have been a great and daring commander, is one of the most striking tributes to military merit known to the annals of the war. The men who felt his blows admired him most.

RECALLED TO HIS SHATTERED COMMAND.

One crowning testimony to his worth was reserved to heal the hero's wounded pride. At the darkest hour of the war Robert E.

Lee recalled Johnston to the command of the shattered fragments of the Army of Tennessee. In the heroic spirit of the great of old, whose custom was "*inadversis vultum secundae fortunae gerere, moderari animos in secundis,*" Johnston answered that call of duty. The audacity and fierceness of his attack, with a mere handful of Confederates, on Sherman's army at Bentonville showed what great aggressive strokes might have been delivered had adequate means been wielded by that daring spirit. Men who had stood near him in battle had long before read this in his flashing eye and grim, firm-set, lion-like mouth. Never was war-like temper more visibly stamped on feature, gesture, and bearing, than in the person of this grand leader in the crisis of action. To see him then was to receive a new impulse to battle.

A MODEST AND FAITHFUL CITIZEN.

But the soldier who had been so great in war was ready when peace returned to discharge with modesty and fidelity every duty of the citizen. For the last twenty-five years he has lived among us a life of quiet and unassuming fulfilment of public and private trusts. Crowned with honor, revered and cherished by his countrymen of all sections and parties, he has completed in peace and dignity the span of an existence prolonged beyond the ordinary limit, and comforted in its later years by an abiding conviction of a life beyond the grave, and by all the assurances of Christian faith and piety.

His fame is secure in the keeping of his countrymen.

Profoundly imbued with these sentiments R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, of Confederate Veterans, has heretofore ordered its hall to be draped in mourning for thirty days in honor of the illustrious commander, a member of this camp, and now resolves that the foregoing minute be placed upon its records and communicated to the family of General Johnston."

WANT THE REMAINS INTERRED IN HOLLYWOOD.

Mr. D. Smith Redford, Colonel F. A. Bowery, Colonel William P. Smith, Major James W. Pegram and Mr. E. C. Crump were appointed a committee to request Mayor Ellyson to call a mass-meeting of the citizens, at such time and place as he may designate, to pass resolutions requesting that the remains of General Johnston be interred in Hollywood. The committee was instructed to request the Mayor to invite such citizens as he may select to deliver addresses at the mass-meeting.

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA.

DISCOURSE OF REV. B. M. PALMER, D. D.

On the occasion of the Johnston memorial services held in the First Presbyterian Church, in New Orleans, La., Sabbath evening, April 26th, a highly thoughtful and impressive discourse was delivered by Rev. B. M. Palmer. At the request of the Associations of Confederate Veterans, before whom it was delivered, Dr. Palmer wrote it out from memory for publication. This rendition is here presented. Its earnest and dispassionate spirit commands regardful consideration.

DANIEL ii. 20-22: "Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God forever and ever; for wisdom and might are His; and He changeth the times and the seasons; He removeth kings and setteth up kings; He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding; He revealeth the deep and secret things; He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him."

There is a pathos in this assemblage which will subdue any heart that duly considers its significance. The life of a generation has almost passed since the two sections of this country were locked in deadly strife. It was a conflict which put to the test the strength and manhood of both the contending parties. Immense forces were put in the field, and were recruited as fast as they were depleted. These, marching from either extreme, met in the centre with a force of encounter that caused the continent to tremble to its base. It was a conflict gigantic in its proportions and heroic in its endurance—terminated at length only through the exhaustion of one of the combatants, when the stained and battered banner must needs be furled upon its staff, and peace resume its gentle sway.

During the six and twenty years which have elapsed nearly all the leaders in the stupendous struggle, both in council and in camp, have been summoned into the land of silence and of shadow. With the field-glass ranging over the whole plain of battle, the eye detects here and there only a single commander left, now bending under the weight of years and infirmity, who once led brave men to the fray. And of these few we meet to-night to mourn the departure of one who was among the most conspicuous of them all.

Providence has its symbols no less than Grace—through which it gives shape and substance to the truths it would seal upon the minds and hearts of men. Of these impressive emblems nothing could be more suggestive than the consentaneous death of the two commanders who were pitted against each other through a great part of this historic struggle—pre-eminently so in the memorable retreat from the mountains of Tennessee to the border of the Atlantic, and then northward through the Carolinas almost to Virginia. I cannot here undertake to signalize this retreat, except to say it is difficult which most to admire, the prowess and energy of the advance, or the masterly, strategic defence which retarded that advance and conducted an orderly retreat. It was a retreat which will take its place in future history with that of the famous Ten Thousand under Xenophon from the neighborhood of Babylon along the upper Tigris, through the mountains of Kurdistan and Armenia, to the Greek settlements upon the Euxine.

The whole nation stood in solemn silence when the first of these warriors, at an advanced age, breathed his soul into the hands of his Creator. But when the Confederate chieftain, whom we mourn to-night, stood with an ungloved hand beside the bier of his formal rival and foe, performing the last act of earthly friendliness in reverently bearing the body to the repose of the tomb, a sublime object-lesson was furnished by an ordaining Providence to the entire republic. Then, as if the destinies of the two were interblended to the last, he who had assisted at the funeral rites of the other reached home himself to die. And now the comrades and followers of this distinguished leader are assembled in the house of God, in the solemn Sabbath hour when night has drawn her curtain around the earth, to gather the memories of the past into garlands, which shall be laid in affectionate reverence upon this new-made grave.

It appears to me almost a sacred inspiration, veterans, which prompted the observance of this memorial with religious rites. Had it occurred in an earlier year, it would perhaps have called for a great civic demonstration, with all the pomp and circumstance of military display, disinterring the records of the past and throwing the furled banner again upon the breeze. But the instinct of reverence has brought you here, without the blare of trumpet or flash of armor, to sit between these twin graves and recognize the burial of an ancient feud. That these two warriors, almost the last who fought on either side,

should simultaneously sleep in death, marks this as an epoch in our career, when a new leaf must be turned in the nation's record, and a new history must be written on a clean page. When great men die they and their achievements are consigned to history, beyond the vain applause which vexes the ears of mortal men. For be assured, long before the final tribunal at which all actions are uncovered in the presence of an unerring Judge, there is a human court, the solemn Tribunal of History, whose verdict, purged of prejudice and passion, will render at least a proximate vindication of justice and of truth. The time for vapid oratory has ceased, when the pallid shades appear before the Rhadamanthus and the Minos, who decree to the true Immortals the prize of eternal fame. I trust that I construe your purpose aright, when I decline to re-open the issues of the past, leaving them to the adjudication of that day when the record shall be purged of calumny and error, and every false judgment shall be revised in the final verdict of mankind. In these obsequies of the past let us learn from the Supreme Ruler the lesson which He intends to teach.

For this purpose I read to you the words of the Prophet Daniel, after the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream had been disclosed in a vision by night: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever; for wisdom and might are His; and He changeth the times and the seasons; He removeth kings and setteth up kings; He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding; He revealeth the deep and secret things; He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him." The leading thought here is the divine supremacy over the affairs of men; the same truth announced afterward to Nebuchadnezzar by Daniel, in declaring the downfall of his greatness: "This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones, to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." Daniel iv., 17. But a deeper truth lies covered here than simple superintendence of human fortunes. It is the divine purpose running throughout history, the secret thread around which all events crystalize. The Supreme Ruler renders His own thought in the free actions of intelligent and responsible agents; who, in accomplishing their designs, at the same time execute His infinite and eternal purpose. Thus, He who is the author of history, must also be its interpreter—disclosing a contin-

uous plan in the rise and fall of empires. Hence the Prophet ascribes to Him the "wisdom and might" which are necessary to this sovereign administration; and in "removing and setting up kings." He alone "reveals what is in the darkness" by means of "the light that dwelleth with Him."

Our relations to God are not alone those of the individual. Observe that we are born in the bosom of relationships, so that no one liveth or dieth to himself. From the first breath we depend upon others for the preservation of that life which from others was derived. Until in adult years we assume our own position in the world, we are under the law of the household and yield subjection to the authority of the parent. In this primary commonwealth man finds himself face to face with God, not in the isolation of his individual being, but in the association with others where joint duties are imposed and correlative obligations are assumed. Indeed, in all the stages of life we drift upon the current of our social instincts into associations of various kinds, and the guilds thus constituted, as they turn upon a common interest, are all animated by a common spirit; which gives to each a communal character and form. Countless as may be the units of the human race, they co-exist as the factors of a constituted whole. The threads may be single, but they are woven into a texture which combines them all. How minute soever each may be when separated and alone, it is indispensable to the integrity of the fabric, whose beauty and strength would alike be impaired by the slightest flaw. The Providence, therefore, over the individual necessarily aligns him with the society to which he belongs; and thus the Divine rule is extended over the whole breadth of history through all ages. Thus we find men distributed into races and nations, each enclosed within corporate limits, under such environment and acted upon by such influences as to evolve a composite character.

It is thus we speak of race and national characteristics that differentiate entire communities as clearly as the personal traits which distinguish the individual. It is a most interesting study to investigate the elements of which this aggregate character is composed, and to enumerate the subtle influences by which it has been fashioned. But whether the analysis be successful or not, we are obliged to accept the obtrusive fact that there is, for example, such a thing as national integrity and honor, quite as sensitive as that of the individual—

and for the assertion and protection of which, as all history attests, the most desolating wars have been waged.

No less true is it, that organized societies are invested with trusts, greater or less, for which they are held responsible before God. Just as individuals are thrown into different providential positions, are endowed with different capacities, and are called to the exercise of different functions, so it is with kingdoms and nations. Why, there is China, with her four hundred millions of people—nearly one-half the population of the globe—yet without adding a fraction to the general history of the world. There is Africa, stretching its length between the Tropics and beyond them, occupied for thousands of years by naked savages engaged in internecine and tribal wars; yet, so far as the broad record of mankind is concerned, the Dark Continent might just as well have been sunk in the depths of the two oceans which wash its borders—utterly dead, without a history.

Going back to what is termed the history of the past, look at the monotonous continent of Asia, with its ancient colossal empires, following each other in almost funeral procession, without diplomatic intercourse, each swallowing its predecessor, and without breaking the dead level of Asiatic civilization, until it was impinged by the progressive people of Europe. Here again is this Western Hemisphere on which we dwell, and where from the beginning the Red man has roamed through primeval forests; so far as history is involved, it might as well have emerged only three hundred years ago from the waters of the sea to become the home of a ripe civilization and of its immortal records.

Now, in contrast with all of this, look at little Palestine, of no larger extent than one of the smallest States of this Union, yet the historic pivot upon which the Old World empires were balanced. What an illustration of the sovereignty which allots to nations the trusts which they are to fulfil—that around this little Hebrew State Tyre and Sidon, Egypt and Syria, Babylon and Persia, Greece and Rome, should revolve as satellites, finding their significance in its history, as the moons of Jupiter find their office in attending the orb around which they sweep! Who can interpret these anomalies in the divine administration? Only He who knows His own purpose in the creation and distribution of races and nations, can explain why the few and the weak should be chosen for the highest achievements. In what we fondly style the philosophy of history, the attempt is made to fix the

value of each element in the life of a people, reducing the actions of men to mere forms of logic. But even where the interpretation is just, it is partial at best; and the world's history is read in sections and patches at last. But if the entire record could be placed before us in a single view, disclosing a unity of design in all its parts, how grand the lesson to those who decipher the one thought of the Deity pervading and illuminating the whole!

I have but half expressed the majesty of the conception. This earth of ours is but a speck or mote in the vastness of the universe. Look above you upon the face of the sky, and see uncounted worlds in the immensity of space. Not single worlds only, but worlds collected into systems, grouped into families, bound to each other by domestic ties, swinging together in wider orbits around a centre common to them all—for aught we know, the Sapphire Throne, from which the power of a supreme will issues to uphold and control them all. Has each of these a history of its own? And do their several records blend in a history that is truly universal? The creative thought is greater than all combined. What if this thought should throb as the mighty pulse of universal life and action? What if in the august future the vast canvas should be unrolled, disclosing in a single panorama the history of all worlds, in the connection of all the parts with the ineffable glory of Him who thus reveals Himself in the stretch of His wisdom and in the grandeur of His power? Truly "the Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof."

I have not uttered these sentences merely to dazzle you with the splendor of this generalization; it is full of comfort as well. A single life may be insignificant in its isolation, whilst in its relation to society it may be of inestimable value. Here, for illustration, is a piece of tapestry into which has been woven the history of a kingdom. The separate gossamer thread may be tinged with a color inappreciably faint, yet without its presence there would be no shading of the picture. Precisely so the most obscure life may be indispensable to the design which is in the mind of the Infinite Artist.

Our distinctions between great and small disappear from history when projected on the scale of the divine purpose. In like manner disasters and defeats occur in the career of every people; yet they no more disturb the march of universal history than do the regressions of the planets the harmony of the stellar world. God is in

providence, whether its control be over the world of matter or of mind; and the pious heart bows in reverence to the Supreme Will, assured that failure can be written upon nothing within the scope of its comprehensive design.

These reflections may be brought closer to ourselves. Reference has already been made to the severe civil conflict through which this country has recently passed. A civil war, as waged between citizens of the same Commonwealth or State, is necessarily a contention for principles which are drawn into dispute to be more fully defined. These lie, more or less, at the foundation of all governments, sometimes rather by implication than in formal statement. Even when embodied in constitutional provisions there may arise differences of interpretation; or the full sweep of a recognized principle may not be understood except through its outworking in the experience of a century. In the conflict which ensues one of the parties may be overthrown; yet in so far as they stood for what is true, their defeat is not the death of their cause. Truth is immortal, and can never die. It is the thought of God translated into the dialect of man. Often in the history of our race truth has been buried in a protest until the world is ready for its assured resurrection. Hence it comes to pass, at the close of a protracted struggle, there is neither undue exaltation with the victor, nor undue depression with the vanquished. The dignity of the conflict, and the conviction that living principles cannot be displaced by physical force, preserves the one party from unseemly vanity or contemptuous scorn; and protect the other, even in the bitterness of defeat, from any sense of humiliation or shame. He greets the generation after him, assured that no child can arise to be ashamed of his father or of the deeds he has wrought.

Another consequence ensues. Such a conflict can only occur among a people both intelligent and brave; and so far from necessarily disrupting them, often consolidates them in a union more strong and lasting. Ours is not the only country which has been torn by internal strife. There is England, for example, in her long conflict between prerogative and privilege, so graphically described by Macaulay, yet more securely standing than ever before upon the principles of constitutional freedom. So it must prove with ourselves. The principles which are true will survive all conflicts, and while it has been determined that we remain together, all else is remanded

as before to the council chamber and the halls of debate, until the mind of God shall be further disclosed in the future fortunes of our people.

The practical lesson taught us to-night has already been set before our eyes in the example of our great leaders who now sleep in death. They instantly accepted the will of Jehovah in the defeat of their arms ; and, without a murmur of discontent, turned to the civil duty of building up all the interests of our common country. Let us imitate their example, and with them sleep at last under the benediction of a land restored to peace. My fervent prayer for you, and for all who share with us the memories of the eventful past, is that we may sit down together in the kingdom which cannot be moved, and unite in the eternal song: "Allelulah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

MAJOR-GENERAL STEPHEN D. RAMSEUR :

HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER.

An Address before the Ladies' Memorial Association of Raleigh, North Carolina, May 10th, 1891.

BY HON. WILLIAM R. COX.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

When Xerxes looked upon the countless hosts of Persia, he is said to have wept when he reflected that within one hundred years from that time not one of those then in his presence would be living. It is with similar emotions every survivor of the war between the States must be moved, when called upon to pass in review and comment upon the heroic deeds and still more heroic sufferings, of those who participated in that fierce and unrelenting conflict.

It is now over a quarter of a century since the last hostile gun of the war was fired; the laws are everywhere respected and obeyed; and every citizen, irrespective of section or service, recognizes it as its first duty to march to the defence of his government, whenever menaced by foes either from within or without.