

The South's Obligation in Statesmanship and Business Endeavor.

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FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

Mr. President, and you men and women of Georgia, my fellow Georgians, and my fellow Americans. My friends, it gives me more pleasure than you can imagine to be here with you this evening. I suppose I ought to apologize to Atlanta for coming to visit her again so quickly, but you must know that you make the mistake of treating me so well and you have made me so thoroughly at home here that it is a constant temptation to come back to be among you and to be here in my mother's state, and especially to come to this meeting to speak on behalf of this movement, and I have a right to speak to you. I am half a Georgian and wholly an American.

I have listened to what Mr. John Temple Graves said about the Confederate soldier, and I thought of my uncle, a native of this State who wore the Confederate uniform, an admiral as he was in the Confederate service, James Bullock, than whom I have never in my life met a man who came nearer to the picture portrayed by Thackeray of Colonel Newcomb.

And friends, think how blessed we are above other people. Less than half a century has gone by since the

close of the greatest war that has occurred since the Napoleonic struggles ended, that less than half a century has gone and we can come together with every particle of bitterness lost and feeling that we are all the heirs of the men who won imperial glory for themselves and for their children in that contest. And we have a right to glory in every act of valor and devotion and fealty to the right as it was given each man to see the right performed either by the men who wore the blue or by those who wore the gray in the great contest.

You see it is a little difficult to get down to a trite, economic discussion after Mr. Graves has closed. I remember, a number of years ago, a conversation I had with the then Secretary of the Navy, Mr. Tracy, and his saying to me: "Do you realize, young man, that you will see, although I shall not, the South develop as no other part of the country develops? And do you realize further that the South is that portion of the country in which the old American stock and the old American spirit exists and will exist in the utmost perfection and in the clearest and most unmixed manner?"

"Yes," I said, "I had thought of that but I had never heard another man say it."

Here in Georgia, here in the South, the old American Revolutionary stock exists and is active, a thing that is not true anywhere else, and I look to see in the Southern States, within the next half century, a development unparalleled in any other portion of our great land.

Now, as has been said to you tonight, and what it is especially necessary for you to hear, is not merely the things that are pleasant, but the things that ought to be told.

Fortunately, for me, most of what I have to say to you is only what is pleasant.

Here in the South you have a population descended almost exclusively from the loins of the men and women who founded our Republic. I am glad to say that during the past quarter of a century you have waked up to the need of educating the younger generation; you are beginning to have the kind of school system and school training which not only will be of incalculable benefit to yourselves, but it serves as an example to the rest of the country.

I can tell you that I came down here to see certain of your schools to see if I could not get from them information which would enable me to be of help to the schools in the North.

You are not merely on the threshold of a great commercial development, you are over the threshold, it has begun. You have fairly entered on an extraordinary period of great industrial development.

I want to see you prosper in it. I want to see you go on with it. And yet, friends, let a man who is half in blood of the old South, who is wholly in the spirit of the new South say to you this—I trust that you will step forward along the lines pointed out by the new South and yet I hope that you will never lose the idealism of the old South.

I want to see the South aroused with the rest of the country in the spirit of industrialism. I want to see the South not merely share, but more than share in the extraordinary material development of the country. And nevertheless, I earnestly hope that in taking your full share of that material development you will not lose the fine quality

of your forefathers. That you will keep their capacity of fealty to a high ideal; their understanding that the things of the body, important though they are, are important chiefly as serving for the foundation upon which the superstructure of a higher life can be built.

I last came to Atlanta to speak with those who wished to build a monument to the memory of Joel Chandler Harris. And in speaking now to you, to the men who are building up the business interests of the South, I want you not to forget the idealisms of that man, Joel Chandler Harris. In other words, my friends, you must not make your development only one-sided; and right here I want to protest against the habit of public speakers of speaking on any given occasion as if there were but one interest in life.

Not infrequently I have been asked to speak at Sunday school gatherings. I would have been glad to do so, but I always felt an acute revolt against the half of the speakers I listened to, for half of the speakers would tell their unfortunate audiences that they were not to pay any heed to the needs of the body at all. Well, inasmuch as that advice was either dishonest or foolish, I felt that that doctrine was peculiarly unhappy advice for a Sunday School orator to give.

Now, I need not tell you to pay heed to the needs of the body. On the contrary, I am here to say that the shortcomings in the history of the South have been due more than to any other one cause to failure to pay sufficient heed to the things of the body—failure to pay sufficient heed to industrial and to agricultural interests. You must have

prosperity or you can not have a successful National or State life.

It is with the country as it is with the individual. I think mighty little of any man who has not it in him to live a higher life, but he isn't going to live that higher life if he can not first of all pay his bills.

Isn't that good common sense? Exactly. He has to pay his bills first; if he does not do anything to pay his bills, he is a useless citizen of the community. But he has to pay them first, or he is worse than useless, useless to himself and a great deal worse than useless to his wife and family.

As I may have told you the last time I was here—there is no human being for whom I have less sympathy than for the kind of individual who is filled with the loftiest aspirations for the benefit of mankind, and who is down by the cross-roads store and talks them over, and meanwhile his ability to live at all is due to the fact that his wife takes in washing.

A man to be worth his salt has to apply his own weight first. He has to be able to keep himself and those dependent upon him before he can be of use in a community. He cannot stop there. It is with the individual just as it is with the community. The community that is to play its part in the life of a Nation must be able to utilize its great natural resources.

The coal, the iron, the cotton, the crop products of the South, all must be utilized to the fullest degree before the South can take the full position that it should take in the Union, and to make the United States take the position that it should take in the world at large.

That must be done first. All I ask is that having done that you shall not forget that there are other things to do also. Work as hard as you can work; as effectively as you can for the things of the body; but do not let the fact of so working cause you to forget the things of the soul. Remember what your fathers were. Remember to keep alive their spirit, their capacity, their power of devotion to an ideal.

Only show that power in the practical fashion now if you are to keep the South as it can and shall be kept abreast, and more than abreast of any other part of the Union, or of any other part of the civilized world.

Friends, another thing. A gathering such as this could not have taken place forty or even thirty years ago. We are realizing more and more that men, speaking largely, disregard temporary matters of purely temporary importance. The true way to make the country rise is to have all parts of the country rise; in the long run all of us benefit by anything that benefits any of us.

It is in a Nation just as it is in our own neighborhoods. The man that is most prosperous you will always find living in a prosperous neighborhood. His neighbors prosper and that helps him to prosper. If a man's neighbors do not prosper, he won't; and so it is with us in this land of ours.

In the long run, all of us are going to go up or go down together. And the growth that I foresee is going to be a benefit primarily to the South and secondarily, also, for every other part of the Union. You are the architects of your own fortunes. When you build up the South, you build up the North and the West also. You build them

up to a less degree, but in helping yourselves you help them some also.

The welfare of all of us is indissolubly bound together. We prosper on the whole, or fail on the whole; and that is the great lesson to be taught, the great lesson to be taught by all of us who believe in the full development of the American people, and, who believe that great though the American name has become, it is to become infinitely greater in the century upon which we have just entered.

There is not any section of this country, there is not any community in this country, that can not learn from other communities. It can learn in a double sense. It can learn what to follow and what to avoid. I hope to see the South repeat and more than repeat the industrial success of the North, and yet to avoid the mistakes of the North.

It is not to the permanent advantage of the community, to have the wealth concentrated in a few hands. Now I hope I need not say that I have no patience with the demagogic attacks on mere wealth. I have known a little of wealthy men and a little of men who did not have any wealth, and a lot of men who had a little but not very much. The thing that impressed me most about them was that they were all about alike.

Whenever you find any public man who can only see wickedness in one class, who can only find wickedness in the wealthy, look out for him; and whenever you find a man who can only see wickedness in the poor, look out for him also.

The line that divides good conduct from bad conduct runs at right angles to the line that divides the man of

property from the man of a less amount of property. Now I grant that in the fullest way, and yet it remains true that our laws should be shaped as far as possible to encourage the growth of the small man rather than to prosper the growth of a few very rich men.

I do not pretend to tell you; I am not going to inflict upon you my own theories as to particular kinds of legislation you should follow. But here in the South I do hope that you will shape your legislation conscientiously, with the effort to help the small farmer, for instance, and to help the man of moderate means in the cities; to build up that type of man rather than to encourage the advent of the man of solid fortune.

And now, in governmental proceedings, I can illustrate just what I mean by asking your attention to perfectly familiar facts. You sometimes see it asked why we need any kind of legislation that shall affect only the man of enormous wealth—the men of great aggregations of capital dealing with modern business. I think that I can give you the reason in a way which will bring it home to you.

Every man here deals with the grocer, the baker, the butcher, and the carpenter, and the blacksmith, and various men of that kind. Now each one of us can deal with these men because they are about our size. If you do not pay your grocer, he won't give you groceries; and if he gives you bad groceries, you will go somewhere else because you and he are just about the same size. If the carpenter does a poor job, you change him for another carpenter, and if you are not a satisfactory man to work for, he will work for some one else.

We can carry on those relations in our private lives because the men are just about our own size; but when the grocer becomes what is technically termed a captain of industry, when he owns mines or oil, or railroads, he joins with others and makes a corporation, capitalized with three or four hundreds of millions of dollars and then you have to deal not with the man of your own size, but with a man so big, an artificial entity so big that no one of us can deal with him on equal terms.

As has been said tonight, when corporations affecting our vital well-being come under the control of one great entity, with which we cannot deal, we have to get something the size of that entity that can deal with it.

We can swap grocerymen if they do not treat us well, but if the railroads do not treat us well, we can not help ourselves—we have got to ship by that railroad; there is no other way by which we can get our goods to market. Very good. Then it becomes necessary to call into being some other entity as big as the great corporation, and that is the Government.

The state Government, if it is a corporation doing work within the state; and if it is a corporation working through several states, then the only man big enough to tackle it is Uncle Sam.

In consequence, Uncle Sam has to appear and put his hand on the big corporation and say I am going to treat you well, but I want you to treat us well. I have no doubt you would like to do it, but if you do not like to do it, I will make you. I don't ask it as a favor; I ask it as a right. And then people say how do you want them to

behave and how do you want the Government to behave to the great corporations. The answer is perfectly clear. Just exactly as we behave ourselves to the small business men who are our size, and with whom we can deal. Let me come back to the grocer.

If we expect the grocer to serve us with food free, he won't do it. If we don't pay his bills, he will refuse to do business with us. On the other hand, if we pay his bills without looking at them, it does not show that we are wise. It does not show that we are kind-hearted; it shows that we are foolish; it shows that we need a guardian.

That is obvious. That is all that I want to have the Government, either state or national, do with the great corporations. I want the Government, whether state or national, to be scrupulously careful to do justice to the great corporation. I am glad to hear you applaud that. I am glad to know that you want to do justice to the corporations. Now, if you do not do justice to them, the shareholders or the stockholders can not be paid, and the corporation will have to go out of business, or at least no other corporation will be formed.

It is just as much the interest of the community to have the railroads built, to have the great corporations carrying on business, as it is the interest of individuals to have the grocer and the carpenter and the other people deal with us. In the first place, because it is square, and we must not do anything crooked; and in the next place because it is not, in the long run, any body's interest to cheat any one else. And above all, it is not the interest of the people as a whole to permit their servants to cheat any one else. So we must be careful to do justice to the big corporation.

But, as Abraham Lincoln said: "There is a deal of human nature in mankind." And you will find that if you decline to look over the accounts of the grocer, in the long run, you will find some grocer who will over-charge you. When he does, he will gradually force others to do the same; or else they will be driven out of business. So, in doing justice to the corporation, it is absolutely necessary that you should have the power to exact justice from the corporation.

Now, personally, I have not been in sympathy with part of the legislation of Congress about corporations. I doubt very much—I will put it strongly—I do not believe it at all—that under modern conditions you can prevent combinations. Combination is the law of business development at the present time. Personally, I would let them combine as much as they want to, but after they have combined to a certain point I would say, all right! go ahead! but as you have now cut out all competition, you have got to have somebody to boss you, and the Government will do the bossing.

When you have to compete with your fellows, you can not charge more than a certain price. I would rather that the price was regulated by competition, but as we have gotten beyond the reach of competition, the Government will step in and see that you do not charge an excessive price.

We are doing that already with the railroads, and my belief is that we will have to do it ultimately with the big corporations. I have had a good deal of experience with them, some of it mutually unpleasant and none of it of

a character that has won me any lively sense of gratitude from Wall Street.

After a good deal of experience we have found out that merely observing is not the way to get at it. You make them split up, and they split up in name rather than in fact; and make some kind of an agreement, making a lot of corporations take the place of one corporation.

I would not make them split up. I would, on the contrary, simply say, go ahead and combine, but after you have combined to a certain extent, after you reach a certain point, then the Government, national or state, will exercise a close and rigid supervision over you. You are too big to allow any one to grapple with you, so we are going to put our men to work to watch you to see that you do no wrong. I think that is the logical way.

Now here in the South I hope that you will act in matters like this so as to check the evils at the very beginning. Do not do as we have done at the North, let the evil go on until, when you root it up, you inevitably cause only less suffering than you would if you did not root it up.

Start at the beginning, enact wise laws about corporations. I think that great, organized demagogic ignorance as against greed and dishonesty has caused as much harm to the people at large, and I warn you against the fallacy that wishes you to attempt too much as against the greed that wishes you to attempt nothing.

Try to shape your legislation so that you will not check prosperity; so that you will assist in bringing about prosperity; and yet that you will avoid some of the evils at least that have come to the North in the course of its industrial development.

Finally, and in closing, my friends, I ask you to remember this—it is of enormous consequence to get material prosperity. It must be gotten. Do not get it in any way that will mean a sacrifice of what is higher and more essential. Nothing impressed me more in traveling through Europe last spring than these two things, wherever I went I found that on the one hand, America has stood as a symbol of hope for every man who had been oppressed; for every man who felt that he did not have the right chance in life; and on the other hand, wherever I went, I was met by the anxious inquiry by the friends of America, who wanted to know what was meant by the stories of political and business corruption and of lawlessness and disorder that reached them on the other side.

Every time that there is carried abroad a tale of political corruption, or of business corruption, or an account of mob violence, that means by just so much the saddening of the hearts of those who believe in liberty, who believe in a government of the people and by the people; and it means that every reactionary finds in it a subject for sneering mirth, for mirth at our expense, alienating thousands, thousands here in this great Republic, because by just so much we have failed to make good our boast and our promise.

I suppose that if we do not act wisely and justly for the sake of ourselves and our children, it is idle to hope that we shall so act for the sake of other peoples; and yet I fail to see how any man can really understand the attitude of foreign nations and at the same time fail to understand the burden of obligation that rests upon us.

We are here engaged in the greatest experiment of self-government by the people that has ever been undertaken on the face of the globe. Other republics have been started in time past, but they have been small in extent and small in population, and sooner or later they fell with a crash. And they fell because of a division of the people into classes, rich against poor; and it mattered little whether it was the rich who plundered the poor or the poor who plundered the rich, the minute that you had substituted class government for government of the people as a whole, the republic fell—the republic was doomed.

This Government is not, and shall never become, either the government of a plutocracy or the government of a mob; and if it became either, it would be doomed—and it would deserve its doom. And if this Republic fails, with it fail the hopes of the nations of mankind. We bear upon our shoulders a great burden; a great responsibility. What we have and what we are, friends, should not be a subject for light boastfulness, for light exultation on our part. On the contrary, it should have the most sobering effect upon us.

In the fundamentals, when I come down here to speak in the South I have to speak exactly as I speak in the North; for at bottom our problems are the same, our difficulties are the same, our hopes are the same.

If we lose; if this republic goes down in ruin—as go down in ruin it will if we come short in honesty, in self-mastery, in adherence to the ideals of the men who founded it and of their successors—if we lose, and the experiment perishes, then the hope of every nation of mankind is dimmed; then men everywhere on the wide earth will

despair of its being possible to create a government under which the people shall rule themselves with wisdom and self-restraint and do justice one to another.

And if we win—and win we shall—whatever may be the temporary setbacks or shortcomings—and if we win, not only do we assure to the children that are to come to us a place in the forefront of the march of civilization, but we gladden the hearts of every man in every nation, who is looking now anxiously across the ocean to see what we do with our experiment in self-government. We gladden the hearts of all men who do believe that there is a chance of realizing, approximately at least, on this earth the ideal of a government by the people themselves, in the interests of the people, conducted in a spirit of the broadest charity and love toward mankind, and based upon a recognition in our innermost heart of hearts of the great truth that righteousness, and righteousness alone, exalteth a nation.

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