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MEMORIAL ADDRESS

BY

HON. SAMUEL PASCO,
OF FLORIDA,

UPON THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

HON. EDWARD C. WALTHALL

(Late a Senator from the State of Mississippi).

DELIVERED IN THE

SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

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MEMORIAL ADDRESS UPON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER
OF HON. EDWARD C. WALTHALL.

Mr. PASCO. Mr. President, on the 24th of March last our late associate, EDWARD CARY WALTHALL, united with his brother Senators in the memorial services held in this Chamber on the death of the late Senator Isham G. Harris, of Tennessee, and was among those who addressed the Senate on that occasion. Two weeks later, on the 7th of April, similar services were held in memory of his former colleague, James Z. George. Senator WALTHALL offered appropriate resolutions expressing the regret and sorrow of the Senate at the death of the late Senator and the condolence of the Senate with the family of the deceased and the people of Mississippi in their bereavement, and delivered an address which will no doubt be preserved among the historic archives of that great State. These two distinguished sons were long associated together in public service, and the recollections and views and opinions of the survivor have a special value for this reason.

But the occasion will always be remembered with peculiar interest by Senator WALTHALL's immediate friends in the Senate, because it was the last time he met with us here. He had been in a low state of health during the latter part of the winter, and for many weeks was absent from his accustomed seat. Through great care and attention he got over the attack, and when convalescing was advised to seek rest from his public duties. He was unwilling to do so, and believed that his strength would be gradually restored if he did not overtax himself. He resumed his work in the Senate and set his mind upon delivering the two addresses I have referred to. We hoped that when these duties were discharged he would spare himself and grow stronger as the spring advanced.

None of us realized when he asked at the close of the memorial services that the resolutions of the State legislature and of the supreme court of Mississippi in memory of Senator George be included with the Senate proceedings that his voice would never again be heard in the Senate. But his last adjournment had come. When we next met he was confined to his bed, and never again arose. Two weeks after the close of the memorial services, at about the same hour of the day, he crossed the dark river and left earth's scenes behind him.

My personal acquaintance with Senator WALTHALL commenced after my election to the Senate in 1887. But I had often seen him before then, when we were both engaged in the military service of the Confederate States during the late war, and I thus became familiar with his military career during some of the years that that terrible struggle continued. The regiment to which I belonged joined the Western army in the summer of 1863, and accompanied

General Bragg in his famous march through Tennessee and Kentucky. WALTHALL was in that campaign as colonel of the Twenty-ninth Mississippi in Chalmers's Brigade, and his regiment suffered severely at Munfordville. The Mississippi and Florida troops were afterwards engaged near one another at Perryville, and later in other great battles of the Western armies, and his face and form were familiar to all the old veterans who marched and fought in the Army of Tennessee. It was soon after this Kentucky campaign that, in recognition of his distinguished services, he was promoted to the rank of brigadier-general.

When I entered the Senate, it was my good fortune to be assigned to a seat near him. There was much in the history of the past to draw us together; our views were alike on many subjects. Our closer contact increased the admiration and regard I had long cherished for him. Though he never volunteered any aid, I felt the influence of his experience and sound judgment and example in reaching my own conclusions and determining my own action; and an acquaintance was formed which ripened, as the years passed, into intimacy and friendship, the recollections of which will always be revived with pleasure and satisfaction as long as life lasts.

I shall not attempt in this brief and hastily prepared sketch to do more than give a mere outline of his career. When Mississippi passed her ordinance of secession January 9, 1861, he was a resident of Coffeeville, and was serving his second term as district attorney of his judicial district. He was about 30 years of age, well connected, popular with his people, of engaging manners, and with every promise of a bright future before him. In his profession he had already established a reputation as a sound adviser and a fearless and successful advocate. The war soon followed, and WALTHALL resigned his office and entered the military service of the Confederacy in the early spring. He first served as a lieutenant in the Fifteenth Mississippi and was soon made lieutenant-colonel. Other promotions followed his brilliant career, until he became a major-general in 1864, and those who are familiar with the inner history of the closing months of the Confederacy tell us that still higher honors were before him if the struggle had been much longer continued.

His services were especially conspicuous on many occasions in resisting the tide of defeat and holding back overwhelming numbers until a successful retreat was practicable, as at Fishing Creek or Mill Springs, Lookout Mountain, and Missionary Ridge. After the last-named engagement I was separated from my command by the fortunes of war, but I have been informed upon high authority that when General Hood fell back from Nashville, in December, 1864, General WALTHALL was selected at the request of General Forrest to aid him in covering the retreat. This he successfully accomplished with a picked body of infantry, and he was the last to cross the Tennessee River.

When the banner of the Confederacy was furled and the terms of peace had been accepted, the soldiers returned to their homes and General WALTHALL, like the other great leaders of the South, went quietly back to his State and resumed the duties and accepted the obligations of private citizenship. For twenty years he continued the practice of law, first at his old residence in Coffeeville until 1871, and later at Grenada, winning his way to the very front of his profession and gaining its highest rewards.

But it was not easy to discharge the duties of citizenship in the States which had formed the Southern Confederacy during the years immediately succeeding the war. The plan of reconstruction inaugurated by the Executive in 1865 was accepted by the people; they returned to their usual vocations, and peace and order were gradually restored; but before the new State governments were fully organized, the plans of the Executive were overthrown by the legislative authority and the newly enfranchised freedman became a potent political factor under the second reconstruction. Years of strife, confusion, corruption, and misgovernment followed. They were hard years for the old inhabitants of the States which had been identified with the Southern cause. No other teacher than experience can enable one to form a correct idea of the trials and difficulties and perplexities of those days. In sections of country, as in many of the counties of Mississippi, where the white people were in a large minority, the conditions were aggravated. It was a contest for the preservation of our civilization, and in the end we regained control of our States because here and there were found such leaders as WALTHALL and George, his old colleague, with wisdom and prudence and determination to take advantage of suitable opportunities as from time to time they were presented.

When, as the work of restoration progressed, these representative men were sent by their States and districts to this Capitol, there were many who declared that the war had been a failure, that those who had once been in arms against the Government could not be trusted to legislate for its maintenance, and that their admission to seats in the Senate and House and to other high places threatened the permanence of the Union. When WALTHALL entered the Senate more than one-fourth of its membership was made up of those who had filled important positions in the Southern Confederacy, military and civil, and one in whose mind the recollections and prejudices of the past still lingered might naturally fall into the error of supposing that this was an element of weakness in the body politic. But this personal contact of Senators and Representatives who were on different sides during the civil war has been a potent influence in bringing the sections into closer and more friendly relations, and whatever fears may have been entertained of the effects of the return of the Southern leaders to place and power in the National Government, they have long since been dissipated.

It is worthy of mention that about the time of WALTHALL'S death our differences with Spain developed into actual war: and if any bitterness or heartburnings still existed between the people of the North and the South, they were banished and forgotten in the presence of a foreign foe, and all were ready to unite together to carry the flag of our country to victory. How the heart of this patriotic man would have rejoiced had he been spared to us a few days longer to hear the message of the President nominating Lee and WHEELER among the generals of the army to lead soldiers of all sections of a reunited country against the armies of Spain and to see their unanimous confirmation without reference to party lines or to the old strife which was fought to a finish more than thirty years ago.

Although General WALTHALL was always ready to serve his people and his party during the years that he practiced his profession after the war, and on several occasions served as chairman

of the Mississippi State delegation in the Democratic national convention, he held no public office till he became a member of the Senate March 12, 1885.

The Democratic party had gained a national victory in the campaign of 1884, and the newly elected President, in recognition of the generous support he had received from the South, desired the assistance of able and prominent men from that section to assist him in his Cabinet. He very naturally turned to Lamar, who was conspicuous among the great leaders on the Democratic side of the Senate for his learning, his eloquence, his sound judgment, his intimate knowledge of public affairs, and his widespread popularity, not in Mississippi alone, but throughout the entire South. Besides this, the conservative course he had pursued as a Senator and his courage in maintaining his convictions in the face of public opposition had won the confidence and admiration of many in other parts of the country besides his own.

When he became Secretary of the Interior, Governor Lowry did himself great credit and satisfied the wishes and desires of the people of his State by selecting WALTHALL to fill the vacant chair, and Mississippi, through her legislature, thrice ratified this action by successive elections whenever it was necessary to renew his credentials, his last election extending his term to March 4, 1901. In January, 1894, he had suffered from a serious illness. His recovery was slow and his condition unsatisfactory. He required change and rest from the engrossing duties of his office. His friends urged him to secure the desired release from confinement and responsibility by obtaining a prolonged leave of absence, which the Senate would readily have granted him.

There was much to make this advice acceptable, for he had won his way to the chairmanship of the Committee on Military Affairs, and a resignation meant a surrender of his committee appointments and some of the advantages which are connected with continuous service in the Senate; but he had a high conception of what was due to his people and to the country. He felt that his State was entitled to the service of two Senators and that his personal wishes and interests ought not to control his action. If the condition of his health prevented him from rendering his portion of the service due from or belonging to his State for an indefinite period, he felt that he should ask the legislature to select another to assume the duties and responsibilities of the office. As the result of this action, Mr. McLaurin, now governor of the State, was chosen to fill the vacancy and served to the end of that term. On the 4th of March of the following year, 1895, the new term commenced, to which WALTHALL had already been elected prior to his resignation, and his old associates welcomed him back to the Senate, gratified that his restored health permitted him to resume his labors and duties.

Before WALTHALL had completed half of his first term the President appointed Secretary Lamar to fill a vacancy in the Supreme Court. Opposition arose to his confirmation because of his connection with the Confederate cause, and it developed so much strength that serious apprehension was felt by his friends that he might be defeated on the final vote. A warm friendship had long existed between these two distinguished men, and WALTHALL felt that the services of Lamar were so valuable to the country that they should be continued, even if the confirmation failed. This feeling, and his entire unselfishness, lead to an interesting

incident which has been communicated to me by a near relative of Justice Lamar who occupies a prominent position in the State which I have the honor in part to represent. He has given it to me in the following language:

While matters were in this uncertain state, Mr. Lamar received a most striking and gratifying evidence of unselfish friendship from Senator WALTHALL. General WALTHALL had implored Mr. Lamar not to leave the Senate and accept a Cabinet position, although it was more than likely that the General would be his successor. He now thought that Mr. Lamar would be the most useful man to the State and to the South that could be sent to the Senate, believing that he had so proven while a member of that body. He feared that the opposition to Mr. Lamar's confirmation would succeed, and, so fearing, thought that the State legislature should make him a Senator again, both for his personal vindication and for the good of the State.

It was his intention to bring this about by resigning his own seat in order to create a vacancy. This intention he communicated to Mr. Muldrow, the Assistant Secretary. The fact was stated by Mr. Muldrow to Mr. Lamar while the action of the Senate was still in suspense, and Mr. Lamar replied: "Sir, before I would permit WALTHALL to do that I would go upon the streets of Washington and break rock for a living."

So generous a rivalry in renunciation for the sake of friendship is not often encountered in these days of selfish office seeking.

Senator WALTHALL enjoyed the entire confidence of the Senate. He was seldom absent from his seat either in the committee room or in this Chamber. He was diligent in looking after the interests of his people as they were affected by the legislation pending here. He did not often participate at length in the debates of the Senate, but when he spoke his words had great weight and he always had an attentive audience. But though he was not a frequent debater, few Senators were more successful with the measures they took in hand or exercised a greater influence upon the legislation before this body. His judgment was sound; he kept up with the current events of the country, and he was a safe and prudent counselor. No Senator on either side of the Chamber was more generally admired and beloved, and his death has left a void that will not be soon filled.

But the sorrow and mourning has not been confined to his family, nor to the circle of relatives and friends who were near to him, nor to the Senate, nor to the city of Washington. The great State of Mississippi laments the loss of a distinguished son, who had served her long and faithfully, in peace and in war, under the dark shadows of the period of reconstruction and in the happier days that followed her redemption. In his lifetime she trusted him and showered upon him her highest honors, and the news of his death brought forth expressions of grief and regret from all classes of her people.

It was my privilege to serve upon the committee appointed to accompany his remains to their last resting place at Holly Springs, the home of his early days. Thousands had already gathered there from near and far in the early morning when our train reached the city. The cadets from the State Agricultural College served as a guard of honor and conveyed the body to the church where he used to worship with his parents; and in the afternoon the funeral services were there conducted in the presence of a vast gathering of mourners.

The loving wife was there who had accompanied him in many of his marches and campaigns during the war, nursed him when wounded, cared for him when sick, and added to his happiness during the years of their wedded life. Relatives and friends and old neighbors, political associates, and public officials had all



gathered together to pay the last tribute of respect to his memory. Floral decorations in beauty and profusion had been sent from all parts of the State and were heaped around the casket and the altar. As the services closed at the church an organized body of battle-scarred veterans who had served under him during the late war came forward and each taking one of these floral tributes, carried them in their procession to the cemetery, where they were appropriately arranged in the family lot, and there, amid the fragrant flowers of spring, surrounded by a vast concourse of the people among whom he had lived, we laid him to rest in the bosom of the State he loved so well. There may he repose in peace till the morning of the resurrection.



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