

ADDRESS OF MAJOR JOSEPH B. CUMMING

ON OCCASION OF CELEBRATION OF MUNICIPAL CENTENNIAL OF
THE CITY OF AUGUSTA.

One hundred years ! A century ! How great ! How small ! What a mere span compared with the life of the human race, even when measured by the Mosaic account which attributes only six thousand years to man's presence on this planet ! What a mere needle's point beside those eons, which in the belief of the learned of this age have elapsed in the building of the everlasting hills, in fixing the shores of old ocean, in hollowing the river's rock-bound beds ! Oh, the littleness of a hundred years, measured by the great facts of nature, which represent time too long for our minds to grasp or our thoughts to hold ! Even in our habits of thought, we belittle a century soon after it has drifted back into the boundless past. We are apt, for instance, to think of William the Conqueror and Richard the Lion Hearted as practically contemporaries ; yet a century and more rolled between them. Coming down nearly to our own times, we are prone, of course in a careless way, to regard our original thirteen states as belonging to the same period. Yet between the oldest and the youngest there was a stretch of one hundred and twenty-five years. How little is a century ! And yet how great ! A single one of many solemn facts attests its greatness. In its course it removes from beneath the sun and the stars, from under the bending sky, from city and from country, from hill and field, from the banks of rivers and from the riverless prairies, from the ocean's shores and from the ocean's waves—from every habitation and haunt of man, it removes, by the time it has run its course, every mortal whom it found at its beginning. If nothing else could be said of the greatness of a century than that it sweeps away before its close every mortal it found at its opening, we would say great and awful is a century of time !

While any subject might be selected for my discourse without violating any express condition of my commission to speak to you on this Centennial occasion, I feel, nevertheless, that there is an implied undertaking on my part to make Augusta my theme.

When I approach it, I find myself perplexed in deciding how to deal with it. Shall I transport myself, in imagination and by the

aid of records, to that point in Augusta's history, the centennial of which we are here to celebrate, and I live for a time only in it? Shall I, by the aid of traditions and of contemporaneous documents, and confining myself to the one point of view, present a sketch of the place and its people as they were then? This were easy and safe but meagre. Or shall I endeavor to lead you down the path of a century through all the story? This were long and tedious. Indeed, the subject is one which I find difficult and tiresome, for it holds nothing of thrilling, soul-stirring interest.

I trust that none of my hearers have come here expecting anything like a consecutive and detailed historical sketch of Augusta. To any such I must say at the outset that their expectations will not be fulfilled. I shall not say that they will be disappointed, for nothing, me thinks, could be more interesting, even to the degree of dreariness, than a minute recital of the uneventful history of a small town during the course of a hundred years. Such is the drama of human life, that in no year of the hundred have there not been episodes and experiences of more absorbing interest to the actors therein than the history of wars or famine or pestilence or any of the tragedies in the lives of States. But their interest lived and died with the actors in them, the memory of them has perished, and, even if it could be revived, it would invoke no interest from the living of today, absorbed, as they are, by the concerns of the all exacting present. Certainly, too, there have lived in Augusta in the century, the close of which we are now celebrating, citizens in all walks of life, in all its avocations, of peace and of war, of whom any city may be proud. But if I should undertake to speak of them, what could I do in the compass of this occasion but present to you a catalogue of names? Homer could make a catalogue interesting and even poetic, as when, in the close of the second book of the *Iliad*, he gives a list of the ships that sailed from Greece and her islands and the men they carried to the siege of Troy, and called the long roll of the defenders of that devoted city. But a less than Homer should not undertake such a feat.

The way, in part at least, in which I shall endeavor to comply with the expectations of the occasion, will be to present to you pictures of Augusta at various periods of her history, and, as if a hundred years were not field enough, I will go back to her very origin one hundred and sixty-three years ago.

The first thing to do for the infant then just beginning to live was to name it, and the loyal Oglethorpe gave her the name of the Princess Augusta. Augusta, unlike some of her neighbors, has not been moved to change her name bestowed by her father in her infancy. Atlanta, for instance, commenced life as "Marthasville." Of course she could not be expected to tolerate long so plain a name as that, sure to be corrupted into "Marthysville." Its rusticity could not comport with the fine airs and metropolitan ways she was soon taking on. She must have a name suggestive of greatness, vastness, expansion as wide as ocean or at any rate as far as to the shores of ocean. Think of the great and brilliant "Gate City" covering all her glory with the name of "Marthysville!" But Augusta, whether because her name had been chosen more wisely at the first or because she is proverbably conservative and slow, has been satisfied to retain the name she received from her sponsors in baptism.

Let us take a glimpse of this infant in her cradle. The striking feature of the little Augusta was then, as it is now and ever will be while waters seek the sea, the noble river which bathes her northern limits. Not only was it and is it and ever will be it, her great feature, but it was her cause. Because a water highway could connect her with Savannah and thence with the mother country and the world, Augusta came into existence. How beautiful was her tutelary river then! The axe had not denuded its banks. The plowshare had not reduced its hillsides to red powder to stain forever its then crystal waters. The willow and the reed dipped into its stream on either bank, lining with emerald both sides of an unpolishing conduit for its waters. Noble forests came down to its very edge and spread their shade far over its bed. Between such banks and in such shadow flowed a vast volume of water, clear and cold as the springs from which they took their source. Over rapids the beautiful river came with a roar, or through long stretches it flowed in impressive silence. But ever, in roar or in silence, the same clear limpid water, a suggestion of which is given us dwellers in this age sometimes in a long autumnal drought, but the perfect beauty of which is lost forever. In this glorious stream abounded such fish as rejoice in clear waters. The fresh water mussel, to which mud is death, was found in myriads, furnishing food for man, and a pearl of no mean beauty as an ornament—for woman. No wonder that the Indian haunted the shores of this magnificent river as of a Pactolus, a river of gold for all his wants. Not strange

that along its banks the school boy still finds the frequent Indian arrow head. No wonder that the archologist unearths on its islands the populous Indian burying ground—for where men live their graves soon outnumber their habitations.

The existence of the rapids a few miles northwest of this spot, presenting an impassible barrier to further navigation of the river, except by the canoe of the Indian, determined the general site of town. The high bluff, emerging here from the alluvial lowlands, decided its particular location.

But why, it may be asked, was this settlement made at all at that period? There were thousands of square miles and millions of acres of fertile, finely watered and nobly timbered lands between Savaunah and this bluff below the rapids, sufficient to provide the increasing population for generations with ample farms and plantations. Why was this extensive intervening region left unpeopled by the white man?

Again, what was to be the business of this isolated and remote settlement?

Both questions may receive one and the same answer. It was the trade with the Indians. Pelfry, skin of every kind, including even that of the buffalo, which were in those days a not distant neighbor to the spot where we are now assembled, was the staple of a brisk trade with the aborigines. I read in the sketch which our fellow townsman, Mr. John North, has lent me, of the half-breed German Cherokee Indian, Se-quo-yah, or George Gist: "Augusta was the great center of this commerce, which in those days were more extensive than would be now believed. Flatboats, barges and pirogues floated the bales of pelf to tide water. Above Augusta trains of pack horses, sometimes numbering one hundred, gathered in the furs and carried goods to and from remote regions."

While there was a strong element of romance and adventure in this trade, the threading of the primeval forests by mere paths, the constant association with nature presenting here a novel and virgin aspect, the floating down a beautiful stream of limpid waters between banks covered with noble and variegated growth, gorgeous with flowers and musical with the song of birds—so different from the dusty beaten paths of commerce in this prosaic day, alas! I fear that these sentimental features of the situation had no effect on the keen traders of that day. Trade is trade. Its ultimate objective is money making. It is successful only when it brings

profits. It is most successful when its profits are greatest. Primitive nature, grand forests, noble rivers, song birds, the jasmine, the wild honeysuckle, the bay and magnolia about its paths do not modify its essential spirit. So we find our trader, who gave importance to infant Augusta, plying his avocation not for the romance which in that age accompanied it, but for colossal profits. I read in the same sketch as follows: "The trader immediately in connection with the Indian hunter expected to make one thousand per cent. The wholesale dealer made several hundred. The governors, councils and superintendents made all they could. It could scarcely be called commerce. It was a grab game."

History repeats itself! The poor Indian was the real producer in this business. With tireless foot, with scanty food, with, at the first at least, ineffective weapons of the chase, in sunshine and storm, through forest and across streams, by day and by night, he pursued the beasts of the woods. His labor, his fatigue, his hunger, his privation, at last have the reward of a skin stripped from the deer or the buffalo. More weary leagues to get his pelf to the trader. There the fruit of the toil and danger of the chase is exchanged for a few colored beads, a yard of cheap calico, or at most a few ounces of powder and a scanty weight of lead, and the trader has closed a transaction—"made a deal"—which pays him one thousand per cent. profit.

Thus history repeats itself. Then, as now, trade furnished greater rewards than production. Then, as now, the producer toiled for its benefit more than for his own.

The chapter in Augusta's history which I have thus far considered, extended from its first settlement in 1735 to the outbreak of the Revolution. During this period it grew steadily, but its population even at the end of the period was probably not high up in the hundreds.

If anything of man's work of this first period remains, I do not know it, except a few streets and their names, Centre, Broad, Ellis, and Reynolds.

The Revolutionary history of Augusta is most interesting. But I shall not dwell on it, for the reason that less than a year ago at this same place, and in the hearing of substantially this same audience, an eminent citizen of the State delivered a most eloquent and exhaustive oration on that subject. Nothing of interest, whether of matter or style, of form or of substances, could be added to that

masterly presentation by Hon. Emory Speer. It was heard by you at the time with deep interest, and doubtless abides fresh and vivid in your memory. I shall only say in passing that the little town witnessed deeds of valor by friends and foe not surpassed on more imposing theatres. It also witnessed acts of barbarity, not only by Indian allies, but by men of our own race, not outdone by the alleged horrors of the Cuban war. For, my hearers, war is war, war is cruel, war is barbarous, war makes fiends of men, whether they be Spanish or Anglo-Saxon, whether they strike for conquest or for freedom, whether they fight to impose or to shake the yoke.

The next division in the history of Augusta covers the years between the close of the Revolutionary war and the end of the century. I shall call this the "Tobacco Age." Up to the war, it may be said with substantial accuracy, that the life of Augusta, its reasons to exist, was the Indian trade. The little agriculture which existed near and around it was for the purpose of home support. Nothing left it for export except the peculiar yield of the forest. Nothing came to it from beyond the woods seaward, but the articles to be exchanged for these sylvan products and a few staples for consumption by its meager population and on a few outlying, not distant plantations. But by the end of the Revolutionary war the yield of the forest had greatly diminished. Its denizens themselves were fewer. They were already feeling the pressure of deadly civilization, and, depressed in spirit, were retiring towards the setting sun. The red man was still not an infrequent figure in the little town. The deer skin—but no longer the buffalo robe—Indian ponies and various simple articles of Indian handiwork were still brought to Augusta for sale or barter. But this commerce had shrunk to a very slender rivulet compared with the great stream which a few years earlier had flowed through the little town. But now, first to supplement and then to replace this waning traffic, came the tobacco business. As we are informed by that conscientious and accurate historian, who to our great sorrow departed from our midst a few years ago, Charles Colcock Jones, the settlers from Virginia brought them the seed and the cultivation of this plant. The industry soon attained in soil and climate admirably adapted to it, large and flourishing proportions. Government tobacco-warehouses were established at various points in the interior of the State west and northwest of Augusta, and were presided over by government inspectors. To these warehouses the tobacco was brought by

the producers of the contiguous country, was inspected, weighed and packed in hogsheads, all under governmental supervision. The market where this tobacco was to pass from the hands of the producer into the hands of the merchant was Augusta. How did it make the journey from the interior warehouse to this mart? Some of it, in districts contiguous to the Savannah, floated down the river in boats, the precursors of the Petersburg merchantmen of the present day. But the most of it made the trip in a mode which, as far as my knowledge goes, was peculiar to this trade and absolutely unique. The day of pack horses, sufficient for the transportation of loads of small bulk but comparatively large value, as pelfry, was passed. The wagon roads of the country were few. The wagons themselves were not numerous. So, as Col. Jones tells us, "the hogshead or cask being made strong and tight and having been stoutly coopered, was furnished with a temporary axle and shafts to which a horse was attached. By this means it was trundled over the country roads to market.

Thus for a while Augusta was, as greatness went in that day, a great tobacco market, and whether nurtured by skins or tobacco it continued to grow. Under the conditions of transportation of that age it could not but grow. A navigable river flowing past its doors to the ocean gave it an immeasurable advantage over any place not similarly situated. What would have become of poor little "Marthysville" having no river, without the railroads? But the lordly Savannah was to Augusta as the Thames to London, the Tiber to Rome, and the Nile to all Egypt. So, by the end of the century Augusta had grown to be a very flourishing town of about 2,000 inhabitants.

It was in this tobacco age, but when it was waning, and at the opening of the next period, which I shall call the cotton age, that the event occurred of which we are now celebrating the 100th anniversary. In January, 1798, the Legislature incorporated the freeholders residing in a certain area, which may be roughly described as lying between the river on the north and Telfair street on the south, and between Elbert and Marbury streets on the east and west. The charter then granted has never been repealed. We live under it at this day. Movements have been made from time to time of late years to substitute a new charter for this venerable instrument; but they have come to naught. It has been built upon and enlarged in some particulars to meet the wants of a later civilization,

but in its essential parts it remains as it was in the beginning. A most liberal and comprehensive "general welfare" clause, which provided: "The said City Council shall also be vested with full power and authority to make such assessments on the inhabitants of Augusta, or those who have taxable property within the same, for the safety, benefit and convenience of said city, as shall appear to them expedient," has served the city a good turn on many an occasion, when progress in public works would otherwise have been arrested for lack of some specific authority from the Legislature to the City Council. But this provision of the charter has lost much of its beneficent elasticity since the constitution of 1877.

I trust that this audience will, at this point in my remarks, permit me the indulgence of a gratified feeling by reminding them that the first executive of the city, intendent, as that official was then called, inaugurated on the occasion which now, after the lapse of one hundred years, we are celebrating, was my grandfather, Thomas Cumming. Then just completing his thirty-third year, for thirty-six years thereafter he resided in Augusta, leading and closing here a life which, I trust I may be pardoned for speaking of as that of the good and just man, "vir integer vitæ scelerisque purus," the good citizen, seeking no office, but avoiding no public duty. He was not only the first intendent of the city; he was also the president of its bank, and held that office from the foundation of the bank until his death in 1834, the old Bank of Augusta, chartered in 1810, and pursuing its honorable and prosperous career until swept away, like so many hitherto solid institutions, by the great war between the states. If a breath of reproach ever attached to the name of this good citizen, it has not reached the ears of his descendants of this day, who still in the fifth generation cherish his memory and seek in it inspiration for unambitious and faithful citizenship.

The next period in the history of Augusta I shall call the "Cotton Age" by the opening of the century, near whose close we are now standing, the cotton gin had come into common use. With climate and soil adapted the best in the world to the cultivation of cotton, with this product itself more universally adapted than any other to all the uses for which cloth is needed, whose place in preceding periods was supplemented and inadequately supplied by the fabrics of wool and flax and silk, its cultivation had been discouraged previously by the impracticability of separating

the fibre from the seed. Where this result was effected at all it was accomplished slowly, laboriously, expensively and scantily by hand. Whitney's cotton gin produced a stupendous industrial revolution. It is a fact of no small interest in connection with the history of Augusta that Whitney manufactured his gins at a little factory, the power of which was furnished by the little Rocky Creek on the plantation of the late Mr John Phinizy, now almost included in the present boundaries of the city.

At once the kingdom of a new and great monarch, King Cotton, rose to power. Practically all the cultivable land in Georgia and Carolina was speedily embraced in his wide domain. The comparatively feeble forces of tobacco and indigo were promptly subdued and banished into the unreturning past. This great potentate made rapid and extensive inroads on the primeval forest. In the service of this great king roads were opened; and at the right season of the year, in the beautiful autumnal weather, when the skies were at their bluest, when the air held a light haze, softening and mellowing the landscape, when the forests were glorious in their robes of the turning leaf, these roads were crowded with the royal progress of the king from the interior of his realm to the great outer world. Right merrily did his majesty descend from his rural seats to his busy mart. In those days, when the railroad was not, fine teams of mules were the motive power of land transportation. Great care was taken in their selection and pride felt in their equipment. A part of the equipment was a bow of bells, raised high over the withers of at least the leaders of every team. These were not the dull little tinklers of the horse car, heard only when that now almost obsolete affair is close upon the foot passenger; but bells—bells that rang loud, clear and musical on the still autumnal air. And thus, with music along his route, coming up from the valleys and resounding from hill top to hill top, King Cotton came marching down.

Let us pause here and unroll a map of this period before our mental vision. Our map shall have no regard for State lines. It will be in the form of nearly half of a circular disc, whose base line shall run through Augusta as its centre. This half circle shall have a radius of 200 miles, and shall sweep around the city from a point 200 miles northeast of it to a point 200 miles southwest. Throughout this region cotton is raised. In this truly vast area where is

there a cotton market but Augusta? Atlanta, Macon, Columbus, Chattanooga, Athens were unborn. Where could the cotton come for a market but to Augusta?

All roads led to our little city. As the traveler even of this day still occasionally encounters the old Roman milestone in every part of Europe, with the Roman inscription "S. P. Q. R.," "Senatus populusque Romanus," reminds us of the time when all roads led to Imperial Rome, so throughout the region I have sketched all the mile stones, to have their truest significance, should have marked the distance to Augusta—Augusta on the Savannah.

Where could the cotton come except here? Why must it, of necessity, under the conditions of that age, come hither? Oh, the river, the river! Our Thames, our Tiber, our Nile! It beckoned it to its banks and solicited it to embark on its bosom. Here, then, it was in fact collected. Hence, in the first years of this century, in flat boats and barges, and later by steamboats, it was floated down the river to Savannah, where it found itself at the gateway of the outer world. So already at the commencement of the century one hundred thousand bales of cotton found a market in Augusta, and one hundred thousand bales represented then many times the amount of money enclosed in the same number now.

This period was Augusta's most prosperous. Without rivals, without competitors, she collected on the banks of her fostering river the wealth producing crop of a vast tributary, and gathered in its magnificent proceeds. For the boats, at first barges and flat-boats, and then several distinct fleets of steamboats, which took the cotton to the port, brought back the hardware, the groceries, the dry goods, the furniture, in a word all the necessaries and luxuries of life of that age, for consumption in that extensive back country, from which the cotton was drawn. The wagons which brought the staple to Augusta, marched back with the same merry chimes, laden with the merchandise I have mentioned for the use of the producers of the cotton—master and slave—in the interior. How easy then for the merchant of Augusta to grow rich. It is true the one thousand per cent. profit of the Indian trader was a thing of the past. Even the three or four hundred per cent. of an earlier generation of Augusta merchants had ceased. Still his profits were very large. And they came so easily. How little of wear and tear was in his life! How different from the strain on the faculties of the business man of this day! His at first weekly, then semi-

weekly mail was received. It was then his business to write in reply a few of those formal, ceremonious, stilted letters of the period, which he subscribed; "With great esteem and distinguished consideration, I have the honor to be your obedient, humble servant." This done with great deliberation, not to say solemnity, and the letters turned over to a clerk to be copied by hand, there was nothing to make even a ripple of excitement in the business life of your solid merchant of that age until the arrival of the next weekly and semi-weekly mail. Our tormentors, the three or four daily mail deliveries, and those fiends of modern life, the telephone, the telegraph and the "ticker," afflicted him not. What steadiness of nerve, what sweetness of temper, ought not your merchant of that time to have had! What piety, too, for with his leisurely, easy going life, he could attend church Sunday, and was not obliged to make that day one of literal and absolute rest of body and brain to repair the ravages of six days of physical and mental tension. The fortunes of that period are in a large measure what Augusta is living on at this day. The struggles of these later times have been considered successful if they have been able to keep the accumulations of that period from being worn away by the attrition of many years of "hard times."

The next period of Augusta's history I shall call "The Manufacturing Age." The immediately preceding period, which I have just been speaking of as the "Cotton Age," was not only the time of Augusta's greatest prosperity to her own people, but also of her greatest relative importance to the rest of the world. At that time she dominated commercially a wide territory, in which she found not a single rival. She possessed in the Savannah river a magnificent highway of the only kind then used for heavy traffic, between herself and the outer world. In the last quarter of that period, it is true that a new kind of highway, one, as the future was to show, of stupendous potentialities, was extended to her doors from the sea. I refer to the old South Carolina railroad. But this rather added to than subtracted from Augusta's relative importance; it diverted no commerce from her, and it increased the facilities of that which she already had.

But all this was soon to change. About 1840 the Georgia railroad became a potent factor in Augusta's history. Its tendency, so long as it was merely a local road, extending 100 miles or so into the interior, was not so much to bring trade to Augusta—for that

trade already came by the wagon roads—as to build up rival markets in the interior. Moreover, Macon, Columbus, Athens and other places in the interior began to divide with her the commerce of a back country, which was once all her own tributary province. I shall not dwell tediously on this evolution of a new situation. Suffice it to say that the relative, if not absolute, decline of Augusta was apparent. At this time thoughtful and public spirited citizens realized the fact that something must be done to invigorate her languishing life. The scheme which commended itself to them was the construction of a canal to furnish water power for manufacturing purposes. The result was the old Augusta canal, constructed between 1845 and 1847. This project did not at first meet with unanimous approval. Respectable and conscientious citizens opposed it on honest grounds of public policy. I shall not weary you with the details of that struggle. I shall not even pause, though sorely tempted to do so, to say a few words of affectionate eulogy of that private citizen, the originator and master spirit of the enterprise, who in the midst of an exacting professional practice, and with the cares of a large family, gave, as president of the Board of Canal Commissioners, several years out of the prime of his life to unselfish and gratuitous devotion to this public work. This old canal was a slight affair compared with the present work, which was brought up from its former small estate to its present magnificent proportions, under the administration as Mayor and largely by the wise measures of our venerable fellow citizen, Mr. Charles Estes, who still abides with us. Neither was the first effort at manufacturing on the canal successful, but it failed not from any inherent error in the general idea of making Augusta a manufacturing centre, and the failure brought no discouragement to this aspiration. The old canal accomplished its purpose. It directed the business thought of Augusta into an additional channel. Previously nothing was considered but commerce. Naturally, for trade had made Augusta one of the most favored places in the country. When that trade began unmistakably to withdraw from her, it is not strange that she became alarmed and felt the forebodings of death. But since the advent of the Manufacturing Age a new stream of life has been coursing through her veins.

The next period in the history of Augusta was "The War Age." Short it was, compared with the shortest of other periods, but not to be measured by its duration in years as to the place it will hold in

her history. It is true that Augusta, unlike in this respect many Southern towns, knew not the actual tramp of hostile armies; but she knew and felt the exultation and the bitterness of war in every other aspect of the dreadful scourge. How glorious, too, is her war record! Of the military companies forming her volunteer battalion in the peace time preceding the war, the Clinch Rifles, the Oglethorpe Infantry, the Irish Volunteers, the Richmond Hussars, the Washington Artillery, all went promptly to the field with full ranks and took their places in the earliest organizations of the Confederacy. But these old and already historic companies were but a fraction of those which Augusta sent to that great conflict. There were at least ten other companies which came into life with that crisis. All these were at "the front," and most of them from the beginning to the end of the struggle. That meant that there were men constantly falling in their ranks and new men going to take their places. Besides this, not a few young men of Augusta for one reason and another joined military organizations elsewhere. I think I am safely within bounds when I say that first and last Augusta sent two thousand of her sons to the battlefield. How many of these were numbered among the "unreturning brave!" How many returned only on their shields!

But that was not all. There was the front and there was the rear. There was the field where the men battled, and there was the home where the women waited. There were the brave hearts in the camps, and the aching hearts by the firesides—not in a few homes, but in all. There were mingled sorrow and pride, grief and joy—sorrow for the fallen, pride for the hero. Grief for the death of dear ones, joy for their glorious memory! We who are still living and were living then know that that was the period of Augusta's highest as well as intensest life. We know that that was the time when the sordid, the selfish, the commercial in us was subdued by our higher nature. While we live we can attest with our tongues the nobility of Augusta in her war period. But in a few more mornings such witnesses will have taken on the silence of the tomb. Well then is it that enduring monuments commemorate that period of Augusta's history. They will ever be her most glorious memorials. As the stately shaft in her principal thoroughfare towering heavenward is the loftiest of all her monuments, so it marks the culmination of her spiritual life. In the time to come great railroad systems may rear huge habitations for themselves on her soil. Successful commerce

may build themselves palatial exchanges within her borders. Learning may here construct for itself some vast temple, dedicated to books and science. Religion itself may here upheave ostentatious fanes. But while God and man rate the spiritual above the material, self-sacrifice above self-indulgence, duty above success, so long will the private soldier of the Confederacy, fronting the eternal east from the top of that noble column, be a type and a memento of Augusta's highest life. Spare it ye forces of nature! Disturb it not, thou dreadful earthquake! Pass it by, ye destroying cyclone! Blast it not, thou deadly lightning! Touch it not, ye frosts, with insidious fingers! Guard it, ye spirits of air and earth, that it may speak to distant ages of Augusta's noblest and highest life!

But one other period remains—the period stretching from the close of the war to the present day—which I shall call “The Iron Age.” Primarily I so denominate it for the reason that it is the period when the iron road has become a tremendous factor, an upbuilder or destroyer, in the history of towns and cities. Augusta, like all other industrial centres, has felt the influence of this force, whose enormous development is a thing of this post bellum period. I make bold to believe that that influence has been on the whole beneficial to Augusta. I cannot explain her steady and satisfactory growth on a contrary supposition. But I would not discuss that intricate question on an occasion like this. Suffice it to say that she has become and is a very important railroad centre, from which distribution can be made in all directions, inward and outward, to the land and to the sea.

But I have called this period “The Iron Age” for another reason. There has ever been among the myths of the human race a belief in a golden age. The characteristics of that mythical period are ease and plenty, love and peace, life blessed with good things acquired without effort, and crowned with tranquil happiness. Those same traditions have ever taken note also of an “Iron Age.” That age has always been the then present. The dwellers in every period have regarded it as an iron age. Pressed with the hard conditions, the bitter struggles of life, they have been prone to regard the past and the future as more to be desired than the present. Their thought has been: Life was easy in the past; it will be happy in the future. In the past it was golden in its beauty and excellence. Now it is iron in its hardness.

Very justly, I think, we may call this latest period of Augusta's

history an iron age in a business sense as compared in the same sense with the golden past. The struggle for business success in these latter times has been severe. The conditions, not merely locally but generally, have been unfavorable. Notwithstanding, to her credit be it said, she has gone ahead. She has taken no step backward, but many forward. She has grown, and she has taken to herself in nearly every particular the fruits of a progressive civilization. But why should I prolong this already too tedious discourse by speaking of this phase of her history to those who not only know it, but have made it?

Thus, with no design on my part to distribute Augusta's life up to the present hour into seven ages, like Shakespeare's division of man's life, I find that it has naturally and of itself fallen into those parts. And now, one lingering look backward and I am done.

We dwellers in this age, looking over this relatively long period, have just grounds, as citizens of Augusta, to be gratified at the retrospect. From the day she came into life, an isolated outpost of the white race, a speck of civilization in the wilderness, down to the present hour, her course has been respectable, honest, honorable. True, no brilliant "boom" period with its inevitable reaction finds a place in her history. But her progress has been steady and her advance always held *nullum vestigium retrosum*. The little settlement at the head of navigation, perched on the very bank of its river of life, has gradually spread far and wide over the adjacent plain and climbed the sides of its circumscribing hills. In the bitter times of war, she has risen heroically to the fullest measure of patriotic duty. In the long periods of blessed peace she has been conspicuous for her civic virtues—the chiefest of which are law and order and financial integrity. Of these, she now reaps the rich reward in credit unsurpassed and in respect unfeigned. In time of pestilence, which has twice visited her habitations, she has had the fortitude for the trial and has uttered no cry for help. When swept by devastating floods, she has found in her own stout heart and in her own reserved resources, strength to meet the ordeal, and has declined, not churlishly but proudly, all proffered assistance from without. All this she has done without the blare of trumpets or the beating of drums or the waving of flags. Quiet, self-contained and self-sufficient, she has maintained her steady way onward and upward. Our fathers and our fathers' fathers planted wisely, and if from that far shore whither they went long since, their vision could

revert to this time and this expansion of their work, they would know that those who came after them have been true to their trust and their opportunities.

Why, then, should I withhold high sounding words in speaking of Augusta? Why should I hesitate and falter at the epithet "great?" Wherein consists the greatness of a city? Not in population. Athens, the light of whose greatness in art and arms shines on and on down ages, would have been engulfed in the population of any of a thousand cities of inglorious Cathay. Sparta and Thebes, great and immortal, how slender were they in population! Rome was already great when her citizens were less numerous than our own. It is the quality not the number of citizens that makes the greatness of a city. The patriotic in war—the law abiding and honest in peace—the constant in adversity—on these firm foundations is built a city's greatness.

Then, oh, Augusta, strong in this test, call thyself "Great." For once sound a loud trumpet, blow a clear clarion blast to the world, proclaiming in tones not to be challenged thy real merits. And hope for thyself—aye, secure for thyself—excellence in all the time to come. My people are of the same blood and lineage as of old. Civic virtue is prized as much now as in the days of our fathers. The soil that nourished them is equally generous to us. The atmosphere in which they lived lives of industry and usefulness, many of them through four score years, plays about your heads. The same beneficent sky bends over us. And our river! With it my story began, and with it will end. Oh, our river! Shorn of much of thy pristine beauty, thou art strong and beneficent still, thou great and lordly Savannah! Thou everlasting traveler from the mountains to the sea, didst lure the little Augusta to nestle on thy banks. Here thou didst nourish her infancy. Thou didst give her strength as she grew. In time thou didst bring her wealth. Thou art still beneficent to her, furnishing her drink, for her fighting the fire fiend, for her turning the wheels of her factories. Let no man think thou art not also still the guardian and protector of her commerce, not dead but sleeping. At any threat of danger to her prosperity, thou mayst awake and, as of old, show to thy beloved city how powerful thou canst be in her behalf. For thy God-built highway all the works of puny man are impotent to abolish or annul. Augusta's fostering river still flows by her gates and will do so forever. *Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.*