

July 22, 1864.

ADDRESS OF

JOSEPH B. CUMMING,

.....AT THE.....

Unveiling of the Monument


.....TO.....

Maj. Gen'l William Henry Talbot Walker

.....ON THE.....

BATTLE FIELD OF ATLANTA,

JULY 22, 1902.



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2016 with funding from  
Duke University Libraries

July 22, 1864.

ADDRESS OF

JOSEPH B. CUMMING,

..... AT THE .....

# Unveiling of the Monument

..... TO .....

Maj. Gen'l William Henry Talbot Walker

..... ON THE .....

BATTLE FIELD OF ATLANTA,

JULY 22, 1902.



Surely this is a most remarkable occasion. If any man of the thousands assembled on this field 38 years ago, had ventured to predict what we now see with our eyes and hear with our ears, the apparently rational explanation would have occurred to all who heard him that the excitement of battle had affected his brain and dethroned his reason—so wild would have seemed his prophecy.

What are the salient features of this remarkable occasion? The men, who then stood apart in hostile ranks, united here in a contest as to which will do the greatest honor to his foeman of that dreadful day. The gray vying with the blue in laying flowers on the monument of the brave Federal McPherson. The blue side by side with the gray to unveil a monument to the gallant Confederate Walker. The cannon, the characteristic feature of that monument, contributed to do honor to Walker by the government against which he fought. The same government sending a company of its gallant officers and men to salute the unveiling of that monument.

What a contrast, too, between that day of booming cannon and roaring musketry, of smoke and bursting shells, of blood and passion and this scene of peace and good will with nothing in the air more deadly than the rays of the July sun and no sound more discordant than the rustling of the leaves in the summer wind.

The like of this, so far as I know, has never occurred in history, and, as I verily believe, could not happen elsewhere than in this wonderful country, which the greatest war in history could not rend in twain.

A short sketch of the man whose memory we are seeking to honor this day will probably be more interesting than any mere declamation or words of eulogy of the present speaker. In presenting such sketch, no attempt will be made to arrive at perfect exactness as to mere dates.

William Henry Talbot Walker was born in Richmond county, Georgia, November 26, 1816. He was the son of Freeman Walker, a distinguished lawyer and a senator of the United States. He graduated at the West Point military academy in July, 1837. The following Christmas day he was borne as a dead man from the bloody field of Okeechobee—that fierce battle with the Indians in the Everglades of Florida. But it was not written in the Book of Fate that that wiry form should per-

ish thus early, or that that dauntless spirit should be dismissed from its earthly career by the bullet of the Seminole. While Ponce de Leon had vainly sought in this same Land of Flowers for the Fountain of Youth, there seemed, on this occasion at least, to be some potent life preserving quality in its waters. This brave young soldier, being carried from the battlefield to be consigned at the very outset of his career to a soldier's grave, was laid by his bearers, as they stopped to rest, where no perfectly dry ground was to be found. The touch of the water of this mysterious fairy land set that gallant heart to beating once more.

If even at that early day he had been borne to a soldier's grave, he had achieved enough to make his resting place worthy to receive such a monument to his memory, as now, sixty-five years later, we unveil this day. But instead of to a glory-haunted tomb, he was borne to a bed of anguish, where that brave spirit wrestled with and baffled the hand of death.

Ten years later we find him in Mexico. Where would one look for Walker in the day of battle? Surely in the forefront of it—a place where his superiors, who wished daring deeds to be done, would place him and whither his own gallant spirit would carry him. Here again his career seemed to be closing and this day to be rendered impossible. Hopelessly wounded, as it was thought by the surgeons, as he led the assault at Molino del Rey, it seemed that, like Lady Macbeth, “more needed he the divine than the physician.” When the man of God approached him with such ministrations as alone his case seemed to call for, our hero dismissed him not irreverently, not disrespectfully, but with the rational purpose of concentrating all the resources of his brave spirit upon the task of coming up again from the jaws of death. And then, when, in his own opinion, but not that of his surgeon, he had sufficiently recovered for the attempt, he commenced that long retrograde movement, which was to bring him again to home and country. And so this young captain, who had marched gaily and gallantly at the head of his company from the sea to the plateau of Mexico, from Veracruz to the ancient capital of Montezuma, retraced his steps, stretched on a litter, keeping a spark of life aglow by his unconquerable spirit and high hopes of the future.

In those far off days how long and how weary the way from Mexico to Albany on the Hudson, where his young wife awaited him! How meagre the means of transportation of those times! How comfortless, how rough compared with the luxurious appointments of today! No comfortably equipped hospital ships, no smooth running ambulance trains then! What tempestuous tossings on the Gulf! How slowly the steamboat labored up the Mississippi! How descending currents retarded the progress of the wounded man, when, leaving the “Father of Waters,” he

journeyed eastward up the Ohio! How many weary days and weeks before, still hovering between life and death, loving hands received him on the Hudson! Even then, long after he had reached this goal, which in those days was so far off, his condition was precarious and his sufferings extreme. But still, in spite of the prophecies of the surgeons, he would not die. It was left for two bullets through the heart seventeen years later to quench that dauntless spirit here on this hallowed spot.

But while, as I have said, there remained to him seventeen years of life—and a part of them the most active and the most glorious—he never recovered from the shock of the desperate wounds, whose scars he bore to the grave. Those of us who recall his erect and spirited figure, whether on foot or on horseback, remember how attenuated it was, how frail it seemed to be, and how it was a never ending marvel to us that he was capable of so much exertion and fatigue. And those of us nearest to him knew what a martyr he was to several phases of bodily suffering.

During the twelve or thirteen years between his recovery from his Mexican wounds and the outbreak of the Great War, he was, when his health permitted, on the active list of the United States army. His most conspicuous tour of duty during that period was as commandant of the corps of cadets at West Point during the years 1854, 1855 and 1856. The election of Lincoln found him major and brevet lieutenant colonel. On the happening of that event, believing that war was inevitable, he resigned from an army, which he foresaw would be used against his people. He was at that time at his home on an indefinite leave on account of his shattered health. When the state of Georgia seceded, there being at that time no Southern Confederacy, he offered his service at once to the great war governor of Georgia, the father of the gentleman, to whom is due the credit of this occasion. Gov. Brown proceeded immediately to raise two regiments of infantry, to the command of one of which he appointed Colonel Walker and to the other Colonel Hardee. When, however, a few weeks later the Confederacy was formed, both these veteran soldiers offered their services to that government. I pause here in this narrative to say that the two contemplated Georgia regiments, which I have mentioned, were consolidated into one, which achieved a glorious record in the army of Northern Virginia as the First Georgia Regulars.

His offer of his services to the Confederacy was met with the tender of a colonelcy. This he considered not commensurate with his record and reputation as a soldier, and it was declined. The Confederate government soon took the same view and tendered him a brigadier-generalship, which he accepted. He assumed command of a brigade composed of Louisiana troops in the Army of Northern Virginia, and soon brought it to a high



state of discipline and devotion to him. In December, 1861, the Confederate war department, following out a policy of brigading together troops from the same state and appointing over them a brigadier from the same state, took the Louisiana brigade from General Walker and assigned to its command the president's brother-in-law, General Richard Taylor. In an impulse of disappointment and indignation General Walker resigned his commission.

At that time Governor Brown was organizing for the defense of Savannah a division of three brigades of excellent troops. The division commander was already appointed, or doubtless that position would have been offered to General Walker. He was given a brigade which he accepted. But the passage of the conscript act in April, 1862, dissolved this division, and he was again out of service, and so continued until February, 1863.

Thus a great war raged around him without any participation in it by him for nearly a year. During this period of inaction the battles around Richmond, Second Manassas, Sharpsburg and Fredericksburg had been fought by the Army of Northern Virginia, and Perryville and Murfreesboro by the Army of Tennessee. Those who knew well our hero can imagine how that fiery spirit chafed against this inaction. The sound of battle in his ears and he pursuing the ways of peace! Human nature is radically the same in all ages, and doubtless in that home on the Sand Hills there was a repetition of the inner life, the chafing, the rage, the restlessness, the unsuccessful search for justification of his inaction in real or fancied wrongs, which three thousand years before were compassed by the tent of Achilles, raging against his treatment by Agamemnon. To our hero it was an intolerable situation. A war, in which his beloved country was in a death grapple, and he a soldier by nature, by taste, by education and experience taking no part therein! Feeble health and a frame shattered by the wounds of two wars furnished to his knightly soul no good reason why he should not be at the front. So, repressing his sense of the injustice done him, he again offered his sword to his country. He was immediately re-appointed to a brigadier-generalship. This was in February or early March, 1863. It was at this time that my association with him in military life began. I was ordered from other fields to report to him as his brigade adjutant. Now, nearly 40 years thereafter, at a time of life when one expects little of the future and turns with anxious inquiry to the past to find, among its vicissitudes, its errors, its failures and its disappointments, peradventure at least here and there some firm ground, where the spirit may encamp with satisfaction, I look back on that association as one of those cherished resting places. I cannot refrain from so much of egotism as will voice the deep satisfaction I feel in knowing and remembering that



from the day I reported to him until the words of respectful remonstrance, which I addressed to him a short half hour before this spot received his blood, I enjoyed his friendship and his entire confidence in camp and field.

His rank of brigadier was of short duration. In a few weeks, on the application of General Joseph E. Johnston, to whom he had reported and between whom and himself there continued to the last the closest friendship, he was promoted major general.

In the Chicamauga campaign he commanded the Reserve Corps of the Army of Tennessee. When the generalship of Rosecrans deranged Bragg's plan of battle, this corps, intended to be kept in reserve, was the first to be attacked in an isolated position, and for hours, Saturday, September 19, 1863, bore with Forest's cavalry the brunt of the fierce and bloody battle, but held its ground until reinforcements arrived and the new order of battle was inaugurated. On the reorganization of the army at Dalton in January, 1864, he resumed command of his division.

It is not my purpose to follow our departed friend's career day by day and movement by movement during the arduous campaign of the summer of 1864, in the midst of which he rendered up his life. What more I have to present to you in the way of narrative shall be confined to the twenty-four hours, whose end was marked by his fall on this very spot, the morning of the 22d of July of that summer.

General Hood in his book "Advance and Retreat" says that Hardee's Corps was selected for the main attack of that day, because among other reasons, after the battle of Peachtree Creek on the 20th, it was fresh and unfatigued. How different from this view is my vivid recollection of that night march from the line of the creek through Atlanta and then south to the position where we were to reach the left flank and rear of the federal army. How many miles of that weary march I slept in my saddle! How many better men fell literally out of the ranks having first fallen asleep! One incident in the early stages of the march I would recall: As we reached Gen. Hood's headquarters at the Leyden house still standing on Peachtree street, General Walker dismounted and went in. In a few minutes he returned full of serious enthusiasm. He told me, as we rode, that Hood had earnestly impressed him with the conviction that a battle next day was necessary to prevent the immediate fall of Atlanta, and had rapidly unfolded his plan and the arduous nature of the undertaking. That was enough to tone the noble spirit of our hero up to its highest pitch. He was aglow with martial fire from that moment and his attenuated, tireless figure sat his horse erect all through that weary night, and his uplifted spirit soared above all suggestion of fatigue or danger.

I hasten on to what, relatively to this occasion, was the culminating event of the day, pausing only on one incident. I have

spoken of a respectful remonstrance on my part as among the last words which passed between us. When we had filed out of the road on which we had been marching, and formed line of battle under the orders of the corps commander to do so and to advance in line in the direction of the enemy, I observed a thick tangled briar patch in front of one of our regiments. I called General Walker's attention to it and to the difficulty of breaking through it in line and suggested that that regiment should pass this obstacle in the movement "by right of companies to the front." He approved this suggestion. Any other commander of his rank would have taken the discretion to modify the orders, which he had received, in this small particular. But so scrupulous was he in his exact obedience of orders that he would not make the change without the corps commander's approval. So he rode up to General Hardee, who was near by, and began to state the situation. Without waiting to hear him through, General Hardee turned roughly and rudely upon him and said loudly in the presence of staff officers and orderlies: "No, sir! This movement has been delayed too long already. Go and obey my orders!" Near at hand then was the hour when he should fall dead from his saddle; but the bullets that pierced that proud and sensitive heart had not for it the sting of those bitter tones. The fiery reply rose to his lips, but was checked there, but the fierce glare at his commander was not to be repressed. He saluted, turned his horse and slowly rode back. As we rode, he said in tones in which rage and self-control contended, "Major, did you hear that?" I replied: "Yes, General Hardee forgot himself." He answered: "I shall make him remember this insult. If I survive this battle, he shall answer me for it." Our line soon advancing, some order to carry or other exigency took me for a few minutes from his side. When I returned, he told me that a staff officer from General Hardee (I think it was Lieutenant Colonel Black) had just come to him to say that General Hardee regretted very much his hasty and discourteous language and would have come in person to apologize, but that his presence was required elsewhere, and that he would do so at the first opportunity. I said, "Now, that makes it all right." But being still in great wrath, he said: "No, it does not. He must answer for this." Then it was that I ventured to remonstrate with him and to say that the occasion called for other thoughts. It was enough. At once everything was forgotten, except the requirements of the hour. The whole man was once more only the patriot soldier and the zealous commander wholly devoted to the duty in hand.

Our advance through the woods continued. So dense was the growth that it was impossible in places for each brigade to see the flank of its neighbor brigade, and thus to preserve the proper intervals and alignment. To meet this difficulty, he dis-

patched three of his staff, Captain Ross, Captain Troup and myself, one to each of the three brigades, keeping with him his volunteer aid, Captain Talbot, and Lieutenant Bass, of his escort. It was but a short while after this, before the battle was fairly begun, while I was conducting to the best of my ability Stevens' brigade, a courier brought me the intelligence that General Walker had fallen. My immediate duty was to find the senior brigadier, General Mercer, and report to him. This I did, and from that moment the exigencies of the battle, which lasted all day and into the night, demanded my poor services on the field. And thus it happened that after my few well received words of remonstrance and his brief words of command, never again did I look upon that martial figure or that noble countenance in life or in death. Before I left that field, his body, bearing its recent wounds and the scars of two other wars, was on its way to its resting place in his mother earth, which never took back to her bosom a nobler son.

What manner of man was he, whose memory we are honoring today? I have labored in vain if in the tedious narrative I have given you I have not presented his career in such a way as to enable you to characterize him. What can any feeble word of mine add to the facts of his honorable life and glorious death? If I tell you that he was bravest of the brave, the soul of honor and generosity, the incarnation of truth, the mirror of chivalry, the devotee, I had almost said the fanatic, of duty, what do I say which his life and death have not proclaimed with more of eloquence? I who knew him best in the latest and most marked period of his life, pronounce, in addition to all I have said and to what his life and death have eloquently proclaimed, that of all things under the vault of heaven, for nothing, not whistling bullet, nor shrieking cannon ball, nor bursting shell, nor gleaming bayonet had he any fear—for nothing except one thing—failure to obey orders to the letter and do his soldierly duty to the uttermost. Only at times, when unexpected circumstances rendered impossible the literal performance of orders, have I known anything in the semblance of fear to approach that dauntless soul.

While we do honor this day to him who stood above the ranks as leader, let us not forget the followers who fell on the same field. Not less worthy were they. The low lying valleys are just as much a part of this beautiful world as are the mountain peaks; but it is these latter which are glorified by the rays of the morning and evening sun. And so it is a part of the fortune of war that he, who by merit or fortune has risen high in command, draws to himself the fame and glory which brave followers have helped him to win. What dangers they encountered, how hotly his division fought, will appear from a few simple facts. On the 20th of July its major general and its three brig-

adiers led their respective commands. By eventide of July 22<sup>o</sup> the major general and one brigadier general were dead on the field and another brigadier general grievously wounded. A few months later I saw Gist, one of these brigadiers, and Smith, who after General Stevens was killed, July 20, commanded Stevens' brigade in the battle of the 22<sup>d</sup>, dead on the bloody field of Franklin. Of one division and four brigade commanders, all but one had in four short months fallen on the battlefield.

Whatever estimate may be made of the battle on this spot thirty-eight years ago, the general cause in which we fought it was lost. Must it be held, therefore, that Walker and the many other brave men who perished in it gave up their lives in vain? Is it true that there is no good thing but success? Oh, God in heaven! Is it permitted that men shall in honest devotion to a cause and in the noblest spirit of self-sacrifice endure suffering and surrender life, and no good thing spring from such planting of what is best in human nature? Are the noblest deeds and sacrifices to be considered wasted unless they achieve the very thing at which they were aimed? Shall courage, patriotism, fidelity to convictions be pursued even unto death, and no fair flower spring from such precious seed unless, peradventure, they be watered with what short sighted mortals call success? To each of these questions, had I the tones of Jove, I would thunder No! and that negation should roll through the empyrean till it was heard of all people. Nothing worth having comes without toil and sacrifice more or less, and the price which a people pay for glory, for the respect of the world and their respect for themselves is counted in tears and blood. That we people of the South have presented to all the world an exhibition of unsurpassed courage, energy, devotion, heroism and endurance, and have, though failing in the particular objects of our efforts, made the world ring with our praises; and especially that we have acquired for ourselves and shall transmit to our posterity the consciousness that we were capable of great deeds and untold sacrifices, that we have heroic memories as a people instead of a dull record of commonplace, commercial, money-seeking history—these precious possessions have we obtained in the only obtainable way, through tears and blood and wounds and death.

And when we turn from this general view to the contemplation of the particular case of our hero, dare we say that he was a loser by his glorious death? "*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.*" The prospect of failing in the discharge of duty on the battlefield is ever before the true soldier, until it comes to pass that he falls in love with that picture and looks to it as the fitting crown of his career. Lifting our eyes from this little span of human life and regarding the ages which will roll over this imperishable monument, what a gainer he was by the day which

we are commemorating! On that day he exchanged for what of life may have remained to him in the order of nature, filled as it might well have been with sorrows and trials and disappointments, and which in any event would have terminated long before this morning—on that day he exchanged for that fragment of mortal life the lasting fame, which this monument will make perpetual.

We, therefore, salute thee, thou stately shade, who, we fain would believe dost move invisible across this scene; we salute thee not only with honor, but with felicitations, thou brave and gallant soldier, thou true and knightly gentleman, thou of the generous heart, thou of the dauntless spirit, who didst fall on this spot, which we can only mark but thou didst consecrate.









## INSCRIPTION

Written for the Georgia Monument on the Battlefield of Chickamauga:

---

To the lasting Memory and perpetual Glory  
Of all her Sons, who fought on this Field,  
Those who fought and lived and those who fought and died,  
Those who gave Much and those who gave ALL  
G E O R G I A  
Erects this Monument.  
Around it sleep Slayer and Slain  
All brave, all sinking to rest  
Convinced of Duty done.  
Glorious Battle! Blessed Peace!  
This Monument stands for both of these—Glory and Peace;  
For this Memorial of her soldiers' valor  
Georgia places on a foundation, laid for it,  
In this day of Reconciliation,  
By those 'gainst whom they fought.  
Glory and Peace encamp about this stately Shaft!  
Glory perennial as Chickamauga's flow,  
Peace everlasting as yon Lookout Mountain!

---

Only the first six lines (with the words "and perpetual Glory" omitted) are actually inscribed on the Monument.





# DATE DUE
