

Various Authors



*Joel Chandler Harris'
life of Henry W. Grady
including his writings
and speeches*

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IN MEMORIAM.

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IT is within the bounds of entire accuracy to say that the death of no man ever created a deeper and more universal sorrow than that which responded to the announcement that Henry Woodfin Grady had paid his final debt of nature, and was gone to his last account. The sense of grief and regret attained the dignity of a national bereavement, and was at one and the same time both public and personal. The young and gifted Georgian had made a great impression upon his country and his time; blending an individuality, picturesque, strong and attractive, and an eloquence as rarely solid as it was rhetorically fine, into a character of the first order of eminence and brilliancy. In every section of the Union, the people felt that a noble nature and a splendid intellect had been subtracted from the nation's stock of wisdom and virtue. This feeling was intensified the nearer it approached the region where he was best known and honored: but it reached the farthest limits of the land, and was expressed by all classes and parties with an homage equally ungrudging and sincere.

In Georgia, and throughout the Southern States, it rose to a lamentation. He was, indeed, the hope and expectancy of the young South, the one publicist of the New South, who, inheriting the spirit of the old, yet had realized the present, and looked into the future, with the eyes of a statesman and the heart of a patriot. His own future was fully assured. He had made his place; had won his spurs; and he possessed

the qualities, not merely to hold them, but greatly to magnify their importance. That he should be cut down upon the threshold of a career, for whose magnificent development and broad usefulness all was prepared, seemed a cruel dispensation of Providence and aroused a heart-breaking sentiment far beyond the bounds compassed by Mr. Grady's personality.

Of the details of his life, and of his life-work, others have spoken in the amplest terms. I shall, in this place, content myself with placing on the record my own remembrance and estimate of the man as he was known to me. Mr. Grady became a writer for the press when but little more than a boy, and during the darkest days of the Reconstruction period. There was in those days but a single political issue for the South. Our hand was in the lion's mouth, and we could do nothing, hope for nothing, until we got it out. The young Georgian was ardent, impetuous, the son of a father slain in battle, the offspring of a section, the child of a province; yet he rose to the situation with uncommon faculties of courage and perception; caught the spirit of the struggle against reaction with perfect reach; and threw himself into the liberal and progressive movements of the time with the genius of a man born for both oratory and affairs. At first, his sphere of work was confined to the newspapers of the South. But, not unreasonably or unnaturally, he wished a wider field of duty, and went East, carrying letters in which he was commended in terms which might have seemed extravagant then, but which he more than vindicated. His final settlement in the capital of his native State, and in a position where he could speak directly

and responsibly, gave him the opportunity he had sought to make a name and fame for himself, and an audience of his own. Here he carried the policy with which he had early identified himself to its finest conclusions; coming at once to the front as a champion of a free South and a united country, second to none in efficiency, equaled by none in eloquence.

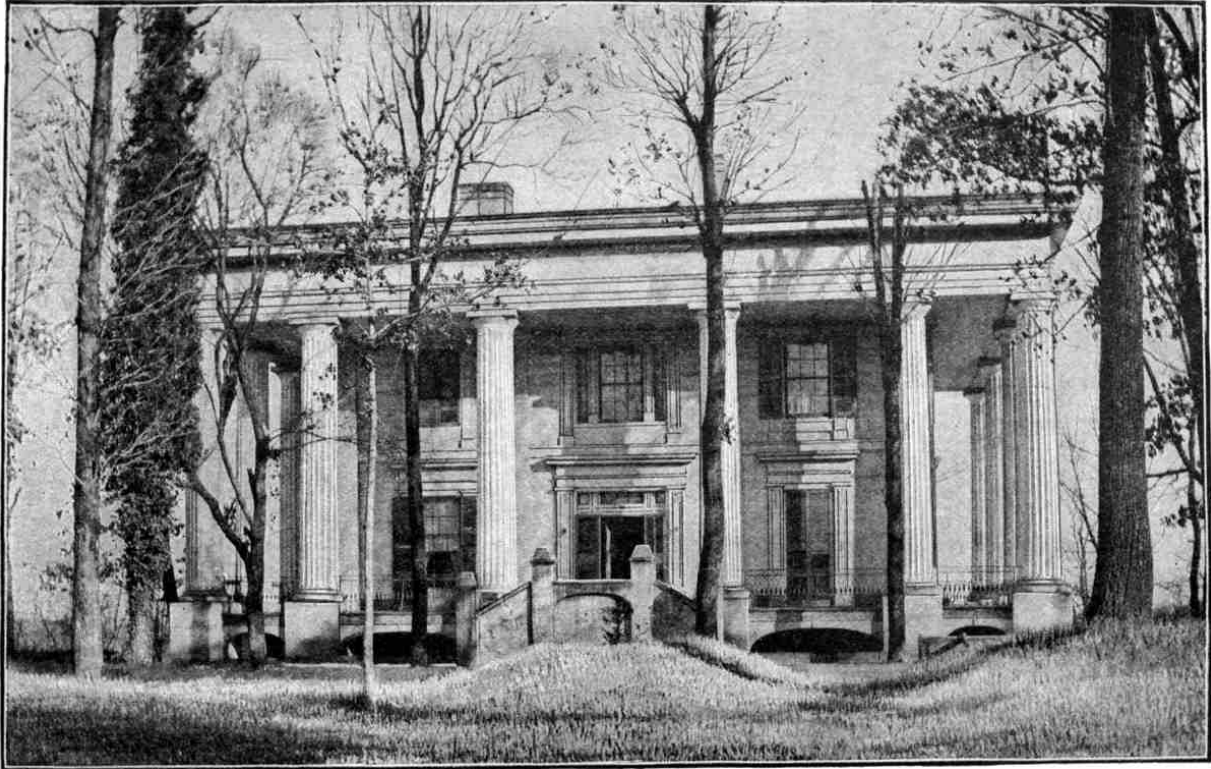
He was eager and aspiring, and, in the heedlessness of youth, with its aggressive ambitions, may not have been at all times discriminating and considerate in the objects of his attacks; but he was generous to a fault, and, as he advanced upon the highway, he broadened with it and to it, and, if he had lived, would have realized the fullest measure of his own promise and the hopes of his friends. The scales of error, when error he felt he had committed, were fast falling from his eyes, and he was frank to own his changed, or changing, view. The vista of the way ahead was opening before him with its far perspective clear to his mental sight. He had just delivered an utterance of exceeding weight and value, winning universal applause, and was coming home to be welcomed by his people with open arms, when the Messenger of Death summoned him to his God. The tidings of the fatal termination of his disorder, so startling in their suddenness and unexpectedness, added to the last scene of all a feature of dramatic interest.

For my own part, I can truly say that I was from the first and always proud of him, hailed him as a young disciple who had surpassed his elders in learning and power, recognized in him a master voice and soul, followed his career with admiring interest, and recorded his triumphs with ever-

increasing sympathy and appreciation. We had broken a lance or two between us; but there had been no lick below the belt, and no hurt which was other than skin-deep, and during considerably more than a year before his death a most cordial and unreserved correspondence had passed between us. The telegram which brought the fatal news was a grievous shock to me, for it told me that I had lost a good friend, and the cause of truth a great advocate. It is with a melancholy satisfaction that I indite these lines, thankful for the opportunity afforded me to do so by the kindness of his associates and family. Such spirits are not of a generation, but of an epoch; and it will be long before the South will find one to take the place made conspicuously vacant by his absence.

Henry Watterson.

Louisville, *February 9, 1890.*



THE HOME OF GRADY'S BOYHOOD, ATHENS.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF HENRY W. GRADY.

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By Joel Chandler Harris.

ORDINARILY, it is not a difficult matter to write a biographical sketch. Here are the dates, one in faded ink in an old Bible, the other glistening under the morning sun, or the evening stars, on the cold gravestone. Here is the business, the occupation, the profession, success or failure—a little scrap of paper here and there, and beyond and above everything, the fact of death; of death that, in a pitiful way, becomes as perfunctory as any other fact or event. Ordinarily, there is no difficulty in grouping these things, throwing in a word of eulogy here and there, and sympathizing in a formal way with the friends and relatives and the community in general.

But to give adequate shape to even the slightest sketch of the unique personality and the phenomenal career of Henry Woodfin Grady, who died, as it were, but yesterday, is well-nigh impossible; for here was a life that has no parallel in our history, productive as our institutions have been of individuality. A great many Americans have achieved fame in their chosen professions,—have won distinction and commanded the popular approval, but here is a career which is so unusual as to have no precedent. In recalling to

mind the names of those who have been most conspicuously successful in touching the popular heart, one fact invariably presents itself—the fact of office. It is not, perhaps, an American fact peculiarly, but it seems to be so, since the proud and the humble, the great and the small, all seem willing to surrender to its influence. It is the natural order of things that an American who is ambitious—who is willing, as the phrase goes, to serve the people (and it is a pretty as well as a popular phrase)—should have an eye on some official position, more or less important, which he would be willing to accept even at a sacrifice if necessary. This is the American plan, and it has been so sanctified by history and custom that the modern reformers, who propose to apply a test of fitness to the office-seekers, are hooted at as Pharisees. After our long and promiscuous career of office-seeking and office-holding, a test of fitness seems to be a monarchical invention which has for its purpose the destruction of our republican institutions.

It is true that some of the purest and best men in our history have held office, and have sought it, and this fact gives additional emphasis to one feature of Henry Grady's career. He never sought office, and he was prompt to refuse it whenever it was brought within his reach. On one occasion a tremendous effort was made to induce him to become a candidate for Congress in the Atlanta district. The most prominent people in the district urged him, his friends implored him, and a petition largely signed was presented to him. Never before in Georgia has a citizen been formally petitioned by so large a number of his fellow-citizens to accept so important an office. Mr. Grady regarded the