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James Barron Hope : Virginia's Poet-Laureate

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at Richmond College. Session 1900-1901.
Green S. Pitt.

JAMES BARRON HOPE-----VIRGINIA'S POET-LAUREATE.

Previous to the Civil War comparatively little literary work had been done in the South. Of course if we take into consideration all kinds of composition, such as narratives of adventure, diaries, histories, speeches, sermons and the like, we are forced to admit that the total amount was very large. But when we speak of literature in the higher and more restricted sense, we mean that which stimulates the imagination, awakens thought and aims to please as well as to instruct. And, using the word in this narrow and more restricted sense, it is quite evident that there had been quite a scarcity of literature in the South. Various causes account for this scarcity. One of the most potent was the entire absence of large publishing-houses. Our greatest literary genius, Poe, was forced to depend almost entirely on Northern publishing-houses for the publication of his works. This may be accounted for by the fact that cultured and educated people were, very scarce, and it is this class of people upon whom publishers have to depend for purchasers.

Another cause was the size of the settlements. There were no great cities and it is a well-established fact that literature always flourishes best in town life. Of course cities like Richmond and Charleston may have had some local influence, but it is not to be compared to that exerted by Boston and New York.

Then again, by reason of the very peculiar position in which we were placed, the best minds were in demand in the fields of

(2).

politics and statesmanship. Men like John C. Calhoun were making for themselves imperishable records in the realm of oratory and debate and did not apply their talent in a literary direction. Thus it was not so much the lack of intellectual ability as it was the application of this ability to other tasks, which was so powerful a factor in preventing the growth of literature.

Still another cause was the distressing scarcity of schools. Education was not widely diffused. In addition to the scarcity of schools, that great educator, the public library, was not to be found anywhere and the few private libraries were very small. This dearth of education was one of the most powerful of all the retarding causes.

In this period poetry especially was greatly neglected and if we except Poe, there was really no great poetic genius in the South before the War. After 1865, however, the scene changed and things began to take on a new aspect. Manufacturing industries in great and growing number, publishing houses of influence and systems of public schools have been established. These served as incentives to literary productions of the highest order, and now it became possible for a man endowed with literary talent to earn a comfortable livelihood by his pen.

Unfortunately, it has been true since the war also, that more attention has been paid to fiction and poetry has commanded a very small share of attention. This has been true not only in the South, but every where in this country and even in Europe. In the last ten or twelve years men like Maurice Thompson, Thomas Nelson Page and

Joel Chandler Harris and such women as Marion Harland and Mary Johnston have contributed a large share to romantic and realistic fiction in this country, and have helped to give Southern literature a prominent place in American literature. In the realm of Southern poetry, unquestionably the three greatest names since 1865 are Sidney Lanier of Georgia, Paul Hamilton Hayne of South Carolina, and James Barron Hope of Virginia. I have selected the last-named of this illustrious trio as the subject of this paper.

James Barron Hope, the poet laureate of the Old Dominion, was born Monday, March 23, 1829, at the residence of his maternal grandfather, Commodore James A. Barron, who at that time was commandant of the Gosport Navy Yard at Norfolk, Va. His father was Wilton Hope, youngest son of George Hope of Bethel, Elizabeth City Co., Va., a refined, handsome and talented man and a landed proprietor, belonging to a family whose territory lay upon the banks of the picturesque Hampton River. His mother was Jane A., eldest daughter of Commodore James Barron, whose father organized the Virginia Colonial Navy of which he was the commander-in-chief during the Revolutionary War, and whose sons, Samuel and James, won renown in the United States Navy. It was from such gallant ancestors as these that Mr. Hope inherited that steadfast loyalty to his native state, for which he was so pre-eminently noted. His mother, we are told, was her father's favorite daughter and was a gentle, attractive lady of the Old Virginia type, who made many friends by her generous, vivacious and congenial nature. She was no novice in writing or painting and imparted to her

son the ability to handle cleverly the crayon and the brush. They were deeply and closely bound to each other by ties of sincerest loyalty and most tender devotion and his letters to her betray his undying love and in them he lays before with child-like confidence the inmost secret feelings of his soul. While on a cruise later on in life, he kept, to please and entertain her, a record of his voyage which is alive with interest and is colored by the hand of an artist.

The founder of the family on the paternal side was George Hope, who accumulated during his lifetime a large estate, and on the maternal side was one Samuel Barron, a captain in the British Navy, who during England's supremacy in America, commanded Fort George which then occupied the site of what is at the present day Fortress Monroe. When quite young, Mr. Hope was sent to school in Germantown, Pa. probably in order that he might be near Commodore Barron, who was at that time in command of the Naval Asylum and who thought the world of his namesake. After spending a short while in Pennsylvania, he returned home and entered Hampton Academy, whose principal was Colonel John B. Cary, a man whose ideals and methods were such as to make him revered, nay even worshipped by the people of that section of the state, if not as widely, certainly as sincerely as the noted Dr. Arnold was in England. It was while under his teaching that the life-long affection sprang up between teacher and pupil, an affection which was later manifested in the dedication by Hope of his first volume of poems (1857) to his beloved instructor. After leaving Hampton Academy, he entered William and Mary College, adopted law as his chosen profession,

and was graduated in 1847 with the degree of Bachelor of Laws. While at school in this historic old town, he made many friends and such of them as still survive hold him in loving remembrance. A little incident occurred while there which gives us a glimpse of the humorous side of his nature. A certain Miss Hart, a very attractive and handsome young lady, was on a visit to the quaint old town and, after hearing a great deal of comment on the gifted young student, requested a visit from him. He returned a courteous promise, but, on account of various unforeseen interruptions, days passed and still no visit. "Tell Mr. Hope," said the fair damsel finally, "that I am tired of hearing that he is coming to see me." "Yes," came the retort, "I have always heard that Hope deferred maketh the Heart sick."

Upon receiving his degree, he practiced his chosen profession for about twelve months. While at William and Mary there arose a personal difficulty between Mr. Hope and J. Pembroke Jones, who is now living, then a passed midshipman in the navy. This difficulty developed into a duel, which took place at Fortress Monroe in April 1849. At the first fire both were badly wounded and narrowly escaped death. Mr. Hope was shot through the right side near the waist, the ball lodging near the spinal column and causing a serious wound from the effects of which he never fully recovered. An intimate friend of his said to me recently that he used to suffer agonies at times and when, a few years thereafter, he enlisted in the army, although his natural courage prompted him to apply for a position of active service, yet he

had to be assigned subsequently to the quartermaster's department on account of his physical inability to fight in the line. An evidence of his popularity was shown in the large crowd of friends and admirers who were waiting at the wharf in Hampton for the steamer to arrive on which he was conveyed home after the duel. This difficulty, by the way was afterwards most honorably and satisfactorily settled. During the whole time that Mr. Hope suffered from this painful wound, none not even excepting his most intimate friends, ever heard a groan or complaint from his lips. This is only one of the many evidences of that endurance and fortitude so characteristic of the man. After the duel, he accepted the position of secretary to his uncle, Commodore Samuel Barron, of the navy. He was first assigned to the Pennsylvania but was afterwards transferred to the U. S. sloop-of-war Cyane, in which he made a cruise to the West Indies. Besides keeping the journal which has been mentioned before, Mr. Hope composed while on this cruise some of the most beautiful of all his poetry. The following exquisite and dainty little lyric written upon leaving the United States was among the first:

I see yon dreary sand-beach yet,
 And the ghost-like lighthouse tall,
 Which by the ocean's wave is wet,
 For there the billows foam and fret,
 Like a mountain water-fall.

The night comes on; the lighthouse sinks,

But flingeth o'er the sea,

A light that winks

And fades and blinks,

In sooth right drowsily!

The spray flits by in whiter flow

And gathers fast the fog;

The hammocks have been "pip'd below"---

The bell rings out deep, stern, and slow---

The reefer marks the foam, like snow,

Fret round the drifting log.

The moon comes up, with a ghastly light,

That struggles through the mist;

And a ghostly white,

Are the sails to-night---

Like spectres they, I wist!

My heart is sad; tears in these eyes---

Tears in these eyes to-night?--

When swift I go to sunny skies

Where perfum'd flowers of rarest dyes,

Bloom in a blaze of light.

Where purple mountains rise from seas
 Where painted dolphins play;
 Where blossoms cluster on the trees,
 So sweet, that the enamor'd breeze
 Makes love to them all day.--

Tears in these eyes! Ah, mother mine:
 I little thought so soon,
 I should be on the heaving brine,
 Away from that deep love of thine,
 Wearing the pilgrim shoon.

A little while after this he wrote "A Sick Man's Fancies," a very sad and melancholy poem, but it is an evidence of his attachment to his sainted mother. It was while on this very voyage that he composed the beautiful and prophetic poem, entitled "Cuba" which is so appropriate just now that I cannot forbear to quote it in full:

O'er thy purple hills oh, Cuba!
 Through thy valleys of romance,
 All thy glorious dreams of freedom
 Are but dreamt as in a trance.

Mountain pass and fruitful valley--
 Mural town and spreading plain,
 Show the footstep of the Spaniard,
 In his burning lust for gain,

since the caravel of ~~colon~~

Grated first upon thy strand,
Everything about thee, Cuba,
Shows the iron Spanish hand.

Hear that crash of martial music?
From the plaza how it swells!
How it trembles with the meaning
Of the story that it tells!

Turn thy steps up to Altares--
There was done a deed of shame!
Helpless men were coldly butchered--
'Tis a part of Spanish fame.

In the Morro, in the market,
In the shadow, in the sun,
Thou wilt see the bearded Spaniard
Where a gold piece may be won.

And they fatten on thee, Cuba!
Gay soldado- cunning priest!
How these vultures flock and hover
On thy tortured breast to feast.

Thou Prometheus of the ocean,
Bound down,- not for what thou'st done,
But for fear thy social statue
Should start living in the sun!

And we give thee tears, O Cuba!
And our prayers to God uplift,
That at last the flame celestial
May come down to thee--a gift!

We can see already in these verses the love of liberty, the sympathy for the downtrodden and oppressed, which were shown later in his intense devotion to the Lost Cause. He returned from the cruise in 1852 and four years thereafter was elected Commonwealth's Attorney of Elizabeth City County in which the beautiful and historic little town of Hampton is located.

The next important event in his life was his marriage in 1857 to Miss Annie Beverly Whiting of Hampton. Beauty of form and face, purity of character, strength of will and intellectual ability were charms irresistible to the fancy of our poet. This union was a most happy and congenial one, for she was a help meet for him in his work acting in the capacities of both critic and adviser.

Four years later when the South called for volunteers, Mr. Hope answered the voice of duty and, forsaking home and loved ones, pressed valorously forward to take part in that terrible conflict.

He served gallantly throughout the bloody struggle and attained the rank of captain, which he was forced to relinquish and had to be assigned to another department for reasons before mentioned. He was paroled at the capitulation of the forces of General Joseph E. Johnston at Greensboro, N.C. Like a great many others he emerged from the war broken in health and spirits, and penniless, but his was not the nature to yield to these adverse conditions. Returning to Norfolk, with that indomitable energy and dauntless courage which characterized his whole career, he, forsaking his chosen profession, entered the domain of journalism. Along with Mr. Holt Wilson, he was editor of the Norfolk "Day Book" under its Democratic auspices from 1866 to 1869. From 1869 to 1872 he edited the "Norfolk Virginian" which is now known as the "Virginian-Pilot". In 1872 he founded the "Norfolk Landmark" of which he was editor to the day of his death, and its editorial page bears to-day the name of no editor, but simply the inscription, "Founded by James Barron Hope." Its widespread influence is due no doubt to his former connection with it.

In a few years he was appointed Superintendent of Public Schools in Norfolk. In this office he was very active and by his indefatigable exertions proved to be the very best School Superintendent the city ever had. It is highly probable that he overtaxed his strength in this position, and that this over-exertion was indirectly responsible for his sudden death. About six o'clock in the evening of Thursday, September 15th., 1887, while at home with his family,

Mr. Hope placed his hand ^{over} ~~upon~~ his heart and, without uttering a word, walked straight to his bed and, upon attempting to unbutton his collar, expired. His wife and two married daughters survived him. The funeral was held at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Norfolk, at four o'clock on the afternoon of Saturday, September 19th., 1887, and was attended by a large and sorrowing throng.

Mr. Hope had always said he would be carried off suddenly, and often expressed the wish that he might die at home as he greatly feared he might fall on the street or in his office. About two months before his death, while sitting in his office, he had an attack very much like that which ended his life. Upon rallying from the paroxysm he remarked with great cheerfulness to a friend, "Old fellow, I shall die this way. I am glad I escaped this time. I cannot afford to die. I have too much to do." It is a remarkable coincidence that on the night before he died, he put the finishing touches on the poem which he intended to deliver at the laying of the corner-stone of the Lee Monument in Richmond, and on the next morning he placed the manuscript in the hands of the copyist. This seemed to give him great satisfaction and he was greatly relieved that the work was done. He said to a friend, "I am now ready to go to Richmond and I wish it was at once and not more than a month off." There is general and profound regret that the distinguished author did not live to see that grand and inspiring occasion, an occasion to which he had so long looked forward with such unbounded pleasure and well-deserved pride.

He lies buried in Elmwood Cemetery, Norfolk, and the spot

is marked by a tall graceful granite shaft, suitably inscribed as the tribute of his friends to the

"P O E T, P A T R I O T , S C H O L A R, A N D
J O U R N A L I S T, A N D T H E K N I G H T L Y V I R G I N I A
G E N T L E M A N."

At the unveiling of this monument, his old and dearly beloved teacher, Colonel John B. Cary, delivered the address.

In regard to his personal appearance, I cannot do better than to use the words of his daughter, Mrs. Janey Hope Marr, of Lexington, Va. She says: "In person he was a little under six feet in height, graceful and finely proportioned, with hands and feet of distinctive beauty. His pale face flashed in conversation out of its regnant thoughtfulness into vivid animation. His eyes shone, under his broad white forehead, wise and serene, until his dauntless spirit or his lofty enthusiasm awoke to fire their gray depths. His fine head was crowned with soft hair fast whitening before its time. His was a countenance that women trusted and looked up into with smiles. Those whom he called friend learned the meaning of that name and he drew and bound men to him from all ranks and conditions of life. It was said of him that his manner was as courtly as that of Sir Roger de Coverly-- words which, though fitly applied, are but true as the bare outlines of the picture, for, gifted with a rare charm, he was the embodiment of what was best in the old South. Beloved by many, those who guard his memory, coin the very fervor of their hearts into the very speech

with which they link his name. "A very Chevalier Bayard," he was called,

Captain Hope was, indeed, one of those superbly brave and intensely chivalrous characters of Old Virginia, whose accomplishments lay in both the realms of journalism and of poetry. Thoroughly fitted by nature for the doubledrole which he essayed of actor and dramatist of war-like deeds, he was a veritable poet-soldier and soldier-poet. He was a public-spirited and patriotic citizen, a model husband and father, always tender and sympathetic with young people and had a countless number of admiring and devoted friends. As a conversationist he was extremely entertaining; he had an inexhaustible fund of anecdote, was a delightful 'raconteur' and his speech always sparkled with a racy wit and a genial humor. Although Mr. Hope was, as I have said, of an intensely chivalrous nature, yet upon one occasion he told a friend that he was more afraid of public sentiment than of the point of a pistol. He was always inclined to be a peacemaker and whenever he knew of a duel that was to come off, he did everything in his power to dissuade the principals from fighting and to induce them to settle the affair by honorable arbitration.

In the capacity of journalist he represented the highest type of the profession. He was one of the most talented, devoted, and fearless of editors. In his dealings with his contemporaries, he was ever kind and gentle, but on the other hand he absolutely refused to tolerate deceit and treachery and was ever willing to lend his aid in unmasking and denouncing them, however great the personal risk

might be to himself. Here, as everywhere else, that gentleness and retiring modesty were visible, and of him might be quoted those beautiful lines of the poet Wordsworth:

" He is retired as noontide dew,
Or fountain in a noon-day grove,
And you must love him, ere to you
He will seem worthy of your love.

The outward shows of sky and earth,
Of hill and valley he has viewed;
And impulses of deeper birth
Have come to him in solitude.
In common things that round us lie
Some random truths he can impart,--
The harvest of a quiet eye
That broods and sleeps on his own heart."

The following is ^{from} the editorial of the "Richmond Dispatch", which appeared the day after his death:

"A braver, truer, gentler man never lived. He was indeed as brave as a lion, as gentle as a woman, and magnanimous and self-sacrificing to a fault. As an editor he was ever courteous, ever forgiving. He was a thorough, classical scholar, and the bent of his genius led him to prefer the "sweetness and light" of the literary domain of journalism to the harshness of its political sphere. Yet when

duty to his party or the state he loved demanded it, he could and would deal telling blows--blows from which his sensitive nature suffered as much as did those they were aimed. As a poet his name will be embalmed and cherished. His work in this field will stand whatever test the criticism of the future may apply to it. His verses are at times

"As gentle

As zephyrs blowing below the violet."

while again they rise to the full measure of epic force and grandeur.

"Vita enim mortuorum in memoria vivorum posita." "

Mr. Herbert L. Worthington wrote the following lines in his memory which were published in the "Norfolk Virginian" Sept. 16, 1887:

Oh, Master, tuneful of our Southern Lyre;
Is this the end? Is this the end? We ask.
Where lingers now the rapt and wondrous fire
That blazed upon the altar of ~~thy~~ task ?
The songs whilom thou sang, jarred out of tune,
The broken strings are mute beneath our hand,
No more we list the ravishment of rune,
Death claims thee, Dweller of the shadowy land--
Bear Poe a greeting from this work-day world;
Tell Burns his melting metres ring and ring,
Despite the cruel strife and chaos hurled,
Still men grow human when they hear him sing;
Take then this laurel leaf dewed with mine eyes
To weave thy chaplet fresh in Paradise."

The longest and most ambitious of the tributes to Mr. Hope is the memorial ode by Hon. Wm. E. Cameron, formerly Governor of Virginia. I reproduce the first and last stanzas only:

"Although his armor had been hammered out

By no deft artist of Milan,

There was a majesty compassed him about

Of purity unstain'd and faith beyond all doubt

(The heart of gold within, the coat of mail without)

In which he walked unharmed of any man,

As only they in fullest panoply can,

Erect, invulnerable through all the strife,

That marks the record of this troublous life.

:: :: :: :: :: :: ::

'And meet it was, O Poet, and O Friend,

That summons so to thee should come!

Could Fate unto your lovers for a moment lend

Your ear, and allow prayers straightway ascend

From this fair land o'er which your heavens bend

From the far vaults of that high dome

In which all singers find congenial home,

'Reply would echo through the sounding skies,

'Life's fulness only comes to him who dies.'

HIS LITERARY WORK.

When quite a young man, Mr. Hope , under the 'nom de plume' 'The Late Henry Ellen, Esq.' commenced contributing poetry to Pryor's paper, 'The South', a violent secession organ published in Richmond previous to the war. From the very beginning his productions attracted most favorable attention. After this he published from time to time poems and essays in the 'Southern Literary Messenger' under the same 'nom de plume. It is said that it was during this connection that he first became acquainted with John R. Thompson, an acquaintance which afterwards developed into a deep and lasting affection. Mr. Thompson took especial delight in telling the following little anecdote which serves to illustrate Hope's keen intellect as well as his wide acquaintance with literary men at home and abroad. It happened that one day in Paris Thompson was dining with Owen Meredith. After dinner, Meredith read to Thompson his poem, 'The Wife's Tragedy', which he had just completed. Thompson at once begged Meredith to let him have the manuscript, as he was so charmed by the story and flattered by the confidence Meredith had placed in him. Meredith good-naturedly complied and Thompson carried it over to America with him. The first thought that occurred to him was to give Hope a look at the poem and at the same time make his friend the victim of a little joke. So accordingly he made a copy in his own handwriting and sent it to Hope, suggesting and hinting that it was his (Thompson's) work. Although the poem was not published for some months after this and the only copy in this country was in Thompson's hands, yet Mr. Hope replied by the next mail

with his characteristic shrewdness and literary penetration: "No, you don't; you don't catch me in your trap. You never wrote 'The Wife's Tragedy', and the only man now living who could have written it is Owen Meredith." It is worth while to remember just here that on the same occasion on which Mr. Hope recited his poem at the base of the equestrian statue of Washington, Thompson recited one also.

In 1857 his first volume of poems was published by the Lippincotts of Philadelphia. The title was "Leoni di Monota: and Other Poems," and the volume was affectionately inscribed to Colonel John B. Cary. "Leoni di Monota," "A Legend of Verona," is the longest of his poems, and bears unmistakable evidences of the influence of the Italian poets. It is an epic poem of about seventeen hundred lines and is divided into six cantos, the titles of which indicate the general character of the poem: The Mirror, The Dungeon, The Square, The Trial, The Apparitions, The Doom. The poem is ~~very~~ remarkable for its beauty of description and for its dramatic ^{power} and the spirit of gloom which pervades the whole of it. The meter employed is iambic tetrameter in rhyming couplets. The hero is Leoni di Monota,

"A knight most bravely dress'd,
With jewell'd orders on the breast
Of his dark crimson gala-vest;
While clouds of costly laces float
Around his shoulders and his throat.

Most splendidly he is arrayed,

Save, that his baldric bears no blade."

He pictures to us Linda

With her long, fair curls--

Her girlish form and eyes of gray,

Was fair as lily that unfurls

When midnight dreams of coming day,

A blooming girl--a woman, too--

A blossom blown, yet damp with dew,

Still damp with April's morning dew."

And we are told in the fifth canto when the apparitions
appear that

"As certain sounds make harp-strings quiver,

So the clear tones that then uprose,

In floating round made heart-chords shiver,

And froze the flow of that red river

Whose tide to passion ebbs and flows.

Think, gentle sirs, that it must be,

This tide that flows with every breath

Must rush on to the silent sea,

The solemn sea of death!"

The poem ends very tragically:

"The ring unto his lips he rais'd--

He press'd a spring and as men gaz'd,

Leoni di Moneta fell

Dead on the marble floor."

Although this production elicited quite favorable comment, the "Charge at Balaklava" in this same volume attracted more attention from critics and ~~many~~ some, among them G. P. R. James, went so far as to pronounce it as superior in all the essentials of musical versification and heroic thought to Tennyson's "Charge of the Six Hundred." There are several differences between the two poems. Hope's poem contains more than twice as many lines. It begins at an earlier stage of the action, and treats of the preparation for the fray, the thoughts and emotions which came to the men when they heard the order to charge, the ride forward into the jaws of death, and closes with the poet's reflections on the majesty of the conflict and its dread and dire results. The meter used throughout is trochaic tetrameter, the final half-foot of the second and sixth lines of each stanza being omitted. Tennyson, on the other hand, uses the dactylic movement, employing both dimeter and trimeter. The movement is grand and heroic from the very first line:

'Dashing onward, Captain Nolan

Spurring furiously is seen--

And altho' the road meanders,

His no heavy steed of Flanders,

But one fit for the commanders

Of her majesty the Queen."

How finely descriptive is the third stanza:

'All that morning they had waited,

--As their frowning faces showed,--

Horses stamping; riders fretting,

And their teeth together ~~stamping~~ setting--

Not a single sword-blade wetting

As the battle ebbed and flowed."

Now we are in the midst of the conflict:

'Onward! on! the chargers trample,

Quicker falls each iron heel,

And the headlong pace grows faster;

Noble steed, and noble master,

Rushing on to red disaster,

Where the heavy cannons peal."

'In the very next stanza occurs the death of Captain Nolan:

'In the van rides Captain Nolan,

Wide his flying tresses wave,

And his heavy broadsword flashes

As upon the foe he dashes--

God! his face turns white as ashes,

He has ridden to his grave."

And still the awful conflict continues:

"Onward still the squadrons thunder,

--Knightly hearts were theirs and brave!--

Men and horses without number

All the furrowed ground encumber,

Falling fast to their last slumber--

Bloody slumber! Bloody grave!"

The closing stanza is indeed majestic:

"And the sleepers, ah! the sleepers,

Made a Westminster that day,

'Mid the seething battle's lava;

And each man who fell shall have a

Proud inscription--BALAKLAVA,

Which shall never fade away!."

The Southern Literary Messenger said of this poem that it
"combines all the wild and incongruous elements of battle, victory,
&
defeat, death and glory in its triumph and rhythm."

There are a number of exquisitely beautiful little poems
in this volume and would that I could have space for all of them. In
the "Lines Written on a Hyacinth" he appears to me to have been
unquestionably influenced: by Poe:

'Twas an evening dark and shady,
When a certain nameless lady
Gave this hyacinth to me;
And I took it, never deeming,
That its petals fair and white,
Would appeal to me in dreaming,
On that very self-same night.
· - · - · - · - · - · -
Long I had been calmly sleeping,
But how long I cannot guess,
(For the moon no watch was keeping
In her solemn loneliness;)
When I dreamt that I was sleeping,
Lulled by a mysterious swell
Of delicious music creeping
From each white and perfumed bell;
Which distinctly, clearly fell,
With a drowsy, dreamy spell,
From their leaves
Making music soft as rain-drops
When they dance upon the eaves."

For regularity of meter and rhythmical beauty, this little poem is hard to surpass. Some of the most beautiful of the other poems in this volume, which I can refer to by name only are: "The Night We Parted," "A Story of the Caracas Valley," the "Three Summer

"Studies" and "A Winter Night at Sea;" the last two I shall have occasion to refer to more fully later.

In the same year in which the above-mentioned collection was published, Mr. Hope was selected by a committee in charge of the Jamestown celebration as the poet best suited to prepare and deliver the ode on that occasion (May 13, 1857). The result was the "Jamestown Ode." This majestic poem, with its efflorescent eloquence, still awakens the fires of patriotism within us and makes the heart of every true Virginian stir with pride. I must be content to quote one brief, but beautiful passage:

"Here, the red Canute, on this spot, sat down,
 His splendid forehead stormy with a frown,
 To quell, with the wild lightning of his glance,
 The swift encroachment of the wave's advance;
 x x x x x x x
 But, o'er this wild, tumultuous deluge glows
 A vision fair as saint to Heaven e'er shows;
 A dove of mercy o'er the billows dark
 Fluttered awhile, then fled within God's ark.
 Had I the power, I'd reverently describe
 That peerless maid-the "pearl of all (her) tribe,"
 As evening fair, when coming night and day
 Contend together which shall wield its sway.

x x x x x x x x x

And though Fame's grand and consecrated fane
No kingly statue may, in time, retain,
HER name shall linger, nor with age grow faint;
Its simple sound- the image of a Saint!"

The meter employed here is iambic pentameter in rhyming couplets.

Mr. Hope next had a chance to display his genius on the 22nd. of February of the following year. He was chosen, along with John R. Thompson to compose and deliver a poem at the unveiling of ~~the~~ Crawford's Equestrian Statue of Washington. Hope's poem here, like the Jamestown Ode, flows along in rhyming couplets of iambic pentameters. In this poem he gives to that intense patriotism and pride in Virginia which were such prominent ~~features~~ characteristics of his nature. On this same occasion, Governor Wise made the address of welcome, while R. M. T. Hunter delivered the oration of the occasion. From this Ode I select his tribute to Virginia:

'Oh, proud old Commonwealth! Thy sacred name
Makes frequent music on the lips of fame!
And as the nation in its onward march,
Thunders beneath the Union's mighty arch,
Thine the bold front which every patriot sees,
The stateliest figure on its massive frieze.
Oh, proud old State! Well may thy form be grand,
'Twas thine to give a Saviour to the land.

For in the past, when upward rose the cry,
"Save, or we perish", thine 'twas to supply
The master-spirit of the storm whose will
Said to the billows in their wrath, "Be still!"
And though a great calm followed, yet the age
In which he stood saw that mad tornado rage
Made in its cares and wild tempestuous strife
One solemn Passion of his noble life."

On the 4th. of July of this same year, he was called upon to deliver a poem before the Φ.Β.Κ Society and Graduating Class of his alma mater. (William & Mary) It was in this poem that he gave expression to the following beautiful sentiment:

"But Indolence is seen a pallid Ruth-
A timid gleaner in the fields of youth-
A wretched gatherer of the scattered grain
Left by the reapers, who have swept the plain;
But with no Boaz, standing by the while,
To watch its figure with approving smile.
No manly bosom to it homage yields-
No master woos it in life's harvest fields-
With drooping spirit and dejected eyes,
Save in despair, it never fronts the skies."

No more volumes were published by him now until ten years after the war, when the volume called, "An Elegiac Ode and Other Poems",

which was published at Norfolk in 1875. After repeated endeavors, I have been unable to get my hands on this volume. His novel entitled "Under the Empire; or the Story of Madelon", published at Norfolk in 1878 is a fine example of his prose style. This and his "Little Stories for Little People", published about the same time, show him to be a novelist and story-teller who wrote in a style easy and attractive, but forceful and vigorous withal. His editorials were powerful and went straight to the mark, yet he was always kind and generous to his contemporaries. Besides his editorials and novel, he wrote a great many essays and critiques in ante-bellum newspapers and prepared several very fine addresses, among the most notable being, "The Press and the Printer's Devil", "Virginia, Her Past, Present and Future", and "Washington." During the period from 1870 to 1887, he composed a large number of memorial and dedicatory odes, among the most prominent being the poem at the celebration of the founding of Lynchburg; at the unveiling of the monument to Miss Annie Carter Lee, daughter of General Robert E. Lee, erected by the ladies of Warren Co., N.C.; and memorial odes in Warrenton, Portsmouth, Norfolk and Lexington.

The next great event in his life came in 1881, when he was chosen by a joint committee of both houses of Congress to deliver the poem at the Yorktown Centennial Celebration(1881). I reproduce here the correspondence exchanged on that occasion to which I have had access and which serves so well to show the retiring modesty of Mr. Hope.

(29).

Washington, D.C., Dec. 16, 1880.

Sir:

On the 19th. of October, 1881, Congress will celebrate the Centennial Anniversary of the Surrender of Lord Cornwallis at York town, and will lay the corner-stone of a monument to be erected to mark the spot of this decisive battle. It is especially desired that some gifted son of Virginia should pronounce a poem on that occasion, and we would respectfully invite you to perform that service, assuring you that we shall feel under great obligations to you for a favorable reply.

We have the honor to be

Respectfully your obedient servants

To J. B. Hope, Esq., Norfolk, Va. (signed) The committee.

Loring
Kernan
Goode
Rollins
Anthony

No. 59 Freemason St.,
Norfolk, Va., Dec. 17, 1880.

Gentlemen:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of the 16th. of Dec. 1880 and with no little trepidation and distrust of my humble powers, I beg leave to say that I will endeavor to the best of my ability to discharge the high trust it has been your pleasure to confer upon

Your very obedient servant

James Barron Hope.

To Messrs. Loring, Kernan, Goode, Rollins and Anthony, Committee of the House and Senate.

{30}.

Yorktown Centennial Commission,
Washington, D.C., Oct. 31, 1881.

Dear Sir:

I have the honor to enclose herewith a copy of a resolution adopted by the Yorktown Centennial Commission at a meeting held on the 25th. inst.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,

John S. Tucker, Secretary.

To Captain James Barron Hope.

Resolution.

Yorktown Centennial Commission,
Washington, D.C. Oct. 25, 1881.

At a meeting of the Joint Congressional Commission charged with the conduct of the Yorktown Centennial, held this day at the Capitol in Washington, it was voted, "That this Commission tender its thanks to Captain James Barron Hope for the eloquent and appropriate Centennial Poem, delivered by him in response to its invitation at Yorktown on the nineteenth of October, 1881.

"That Captain Hope be requested to furnish a copy of his poem to the Secretary of the Commission, in order that it may be transmitted to Congress and published with the report of the Commission.

John W. Johnston,

Chairman.

Attest:

John S. Tucker,

Secretary.

(31).

No. 59 Freemason St.,

Norfolk, Va. Nov. 10, 1881.

Dear Sir:

In compliance with the request of the Committee, I forward to-day the MS. of my poem, and in so doing beg you to return my thanks to the Committee for the kind manner in which they have been pleased to recognize the poor services of

Your friend and servant,

James Barron Hope.

To Capt. Jn^o. S. Tucker, Secretary to the Centennial Committee,
Senate Chamber, Washington, D.C.

"Arms and the Man", the title which he gave to the poem, was published in book form in 1882 at Norfolk by the Landmark Publishing Co. and was inscribed to "The Sovereign People." The full title is "Arms and the Man; a Metrical Address." The phrase "A Metrical Address" was adopted to suggest the theory under which it was constructed, for it was composed to be spoken and for immediate effect before a great assembly. The poem is a long and brilliant account of the Revolution, setting forth its principal events and its dramatic personae with fine dramatic power and vivid life-likeness. It does not contain a single commonplace line and is a worthy companion to the eloquent and masterly oration delivered on that occasion by Robert C. Winthrop. It is composed of nineteen cantos. After the first or prologue he treats the Colonies, then gives a hearty welcome to France and emphasizes her importance in the conflict; then follow the Ravages of War,

and a description of the Colonial Army; next we see the beleaguered town and the storming of the redoubt and the two leaders. The closing lines are taken up with the surrender of Lord Cornwallis and a noble tribute to the Heroes and Statesmen. The finale is a brilliant eulogy on, "The South in the Union." The meter varies greatly but the prevailing measure is iambic pentameter in rhyming triplets, and is well adapted to the general character and style of the poem. Everywhere in his poems is noticed that undying devotion to his native State. In his artistic grouping of the colonies, he has this to say of her:

'Virginia thence, stirred by a grand unrest,
Swept o'er the waters, scaled the mountain's crag,
Hewed ~~out~~ a more than Roman roadway West
And planted there her flag.

Her fortune was forewritten even then-
That fortune in the coming years to be
'Mother of States and unpolluted men',
And nurse of Liberty.

* * * * *
I see her interposing now her frame
Between her sisters and the alien bands,
And ~~taking~~ both of Freedom and of Fame
Full seisin with her hands."

Throughout this poem, Hope lays especial emphasis time and again on the importance to us of France in the conflict:

"Welcome to France!

From sea to sea,

With heart and hand!

Welcome to all within the land!

Thrice welcome let her be!

Of Freedom's guild made free!

Welcome!

Thrice welcome!

Welcome let her be!"

When he comes to the storming of the redoubts, the poet uses a more martial and stirring meter- iambic heptameter in rhyming couplets- and it is better suited to the action:

"~~Charge! en Avant!~~!"

"Fall in! Fall in! The stormers form, in silence stern and grim

Each heart full-beating out the time to Freedom's battle hymn.-

Charge! en Avant!- the word goes forth and forth the stormers go,

Each column like a mighty shaft shot from a mighty bow.

And tumult rose upon the night like sound of roaring seas,

Mars drank of the horn of Ulphus and drained it to the lees!

x x x x x
And then, the columns won the works and then uprose the cheers

That have lasted us and ours for a good one hundred years!"

Again, in the closing scene we seem to be on the field, so brilliant is the coloring when

"Superb in white and red, and white and gold,
And white and violet, the French unfold
Their blazoned banners on the Autumn air,
White cymbals clash and brazen trumpets blare:
Steeds fret and foam, and spurs with scabbards clank
As far they form, in many a shining rank."

In the gallery of "Heroes and Statesmen" we are given some
vivid and life-like miniatures. Let us look at some of the best:

"Henry is there beneath his civic crown;
He speaks in words that thunder as they flow,
And as he speaks his thunder-tones bring down

An avalanche below!

And Marshall in his ermine white as snow,
Wise, learned, and profound Fame loves to draw,
His noble function on the Bench to show

That Reason is the Law.

And 'mid his fellows in those days of need,
Impassioned Jefferson burns like a sun,
The New World's Prophet of the New World's Creed

Prophet and Priest in one!"

And then the poem closes with a noble and eloquent appeal
for the South, utterly devoid of any traces of sectional feeling as
he gives voice to the prophetic utterance:

(35).

'And so this day

To you I say-

Speaking for millions of true Southern men-

In words that have undertow-

I say and say agen:

Come weal or woe,

Should this republic ever fight,

By land, or sea,

For present law or ancient right,

The South will be

As was that lance,

Albeit not found

Hid under ground

But in the forefront of the first advance!

'Twill fly a pennon fair

As ever kissed the air,

On it, for every glance,

Shall blaze majestic France

Blent with our hero's name

In everlasting flame,

And written, fair in gold,

This legend on its fold:

Give us back the ties of Yorktown!

Perish all the modern hates!

Let us stand together, brothers,

In defiance of the Fates;

FOR THE SAFETY OF THE UNION

IS THE SAFETY OF THE STATES!"

This prophecy has found sudden and unexpected fulfilment in the promptitude and ~~goodness~~ willingness with which our Southern soldiers responded to the Country's call for volunteers in the recent Spanish-American war.

The last and crowning event of his career occurred when Governor Fitzhugh Lee extended to him the invitation to deliver a suitable poem at the laying of the corner-stone of the monument to General Robert E. Lee, at Richmond, Va. This event was to take place on Thursday, October 27, 1887. The result of his efforts was his masterpiece, "Memoriae Sacrum." Although Mr. Hope prepared and finished the poem, he was not destined to read it, for, just a little more than a month before the event was to occur, he passed away to join the "Choir Invisible." His family, Governor Lee and the committee agreed unanimously that no more suitable man could be selected to read the poem than Mr. Hope's lifelong and devoted friend and admirer, Captain W. Gordon McCabe, then of Petersburg, now of Richmond. Before reading the poem, Captain McCabe paid the following beautiful and eloquent tribute to his departed friend:

'Nearly thirty years ago, when Virginia, in this beautiful capital of our Old Dominion, dedicated yonder noble and impressive monument to George Washington, she sent her bravest singer, James Barron Hope, then in the first flush of his youthful genius, to swell the chorus of praise and reverence due her greatest son of our first Revolution.

Nobly did he ~~command~~ perform the command laid upon him, and his stately poem with its sonorous eloquence and lofty epic inspiration still stirs the pulse's play and has become a classic to every Virginian not dead to the heroic past of his mother State.

Thus when the men and women of Virginia, despite their poverty, resolved to erect a statue in enduring bronze to Robert Lee on yonder spot o'erlooking those "labor'd rampart lines", where, after countless victories, at last "he greatly stood at bay"- thus it was that by acclaim the same brave singer, whose genius had crown but mellowed and his touch the purer with the lapse of time, was once more summoned to celebrate in song the deeds and virtues of Virginia's greatest son of her second Revolution, the peer of Washington in military genius, patriotism, constancy and valor.

Again he wrought in noblest mood , and as the only true poet can, but alas! scarce had he finished his task when Death struck the votic pencil from the busy fingers and hushed that deep, rich voice, whose manly cadences had made doubly musical for us this day the rhythmic sweep of his stirring numbers.

Thus, in the service of his native State, in some sort still serving his old commander, fell on sleep this knightly spirit, this accomplished man of letters, this loyal friend, who in his public as in his private life ever 'bore without reproach the grand old name of gentleman.'"

Captain McCabe's recitation of the poem was interrupted by frequent outbursts of applause

The poem is divided into five cantos, and is composed of forty-two stanzas of six verses each making a total of 252 lines. The meter is about evenly divided between iambic and trochaic tetrameters, trimeters and dimeters, many of the lines being mixed and occasionally we find dactyls and spondees. The second, fourth and sixth verses of each stanza rhyme. In spite of its heterogeneous structure, we find it an eloquent memorial to the lamented chieftain, throbbing throughout with praiseworthy devotion to the Lost Cause. The opening verse are characteristic of Hope:

"Great mother of great Commonwealths

Men call our Mother State;

And she so well has earned the name

That she may challenge Fate

To snatch away the epithet

Long given her of 'great'.

:: :: :: :: :: :: ::

Her names are the shining arrows
Which her ancient quiver bears,
And her splendid sheaf has thickened
Through the long march of the years,
While her great shield has been burnished
By her children's blood and tears."

How majestically does he describe the advent of Lee:

"Till at last there broke the tempest
Like a cyclone on the sea,
When the lightnings blazed and dazzled
And the thunders were set free-
And riding on that whirlwind came
Majestic Robert Lee!"

From his description of Lee I select the following:

"His was all the Norman's polish
And sobriety of grace;
All the Goth's majestic figure;
All the Roman's noble face;
And he stood, the tall exemplar
Of a grand historic race.

x . x . x . x . x . x . x . x . x . x . x . x .

Truth walked beside him always,

From his childhood's early years,

Honor followed as his shadow,

Valor lightened all his cares:

And he rode- that grand Virginian-

Last of all the Cavaliers!

x x x x x x x x x

As his troubles gathered round him,

Thick as waves that beat the shore,

Atra cura rode behind him,

Famine's shadow filled his door;

Still he wrought deeds no mortal man

Had ever wrought before.

Then came the end, ny countrymen,

The last thunderbolts were hurled!

Worn out by his own victories

His battle flags were furled

And a history was finished

That has changed the modern world.

(41).

He is not dead! There is no death!
He only went before
His journey on when CHRIST THE LORD
Wide open held the door,
And a calm celestial peace is his:
Thank God! forevermore.

The closing stanza is full of reverence:

And here and now, my Countrymen,
Upon this sacred sod,
Let us feel: It was "OUR FATHER"
Who above us held the rod,
And from hills to sea
Like Robert Lee
Bow reverently to God."

The orator on this occasion was Colonel Charles Marshall,
Lee's military secretary.

In 1895, about eight years after his death, Mrs. Janey Hope Marr, his daughter, of Lexington, Va., brought the last volume of his poems under the title "A Wreath of Virginia Bay-Leaves." It was published by West, Johnston and Company of Richmond and dedicated to the memory of Mr. Hope's little grandson, Barron Hope Marr.

III.

James Barron Hope was not a war poet, but was distinctly the bard of the ex-Confederate soldier. His memorial songs are fitting

examples of his work in this line and will bear out this statement Martial and stirring in movement, intensely patriotic in sentiment, lofty in motive and aim, choice in diction, full of musical rhythm and splendid specimens of poetic art, they will live forever as imperishable memorials to the name and fame of those noble sons of a lost, but not forgotten cause.

Again, Hope is the poet of liberty. His verses are in many places full of sympathy and love for the oppressed, downtrodden victims of tyranny. That miracle of prophetic utterance, the poem on Cuba, is a splendid testimony to his love of liberty. He could sincerely exclaim:

"Yet Freedom! yet, thy banner, torn but flying,
Streams like a thunderstorm against the wind."

or like Shelley he could with truth say:

"I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power; for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannize
Without reproach or check."

And lastly James Barron Hope is the poet of nature and as such is unsurpassed. The trees, the sky, the lakes, the rivers, the mountains, the sea were all his and he painted them in glowing colors with an artist's skill. He believed sincerely that Nature was alive with a conscious life and that

"Every flower

Enjoys the air it breathes."

His poems celebrate the beauty and the sublimity of Nature. His masterpiece in this department is unquestionably the "Three Summer Studies", a beautiful little lyric, which pictures a summer day on the farm. It is composed of three separate little poems, the first showing us sunrise and early morning, the second midday and the third the afternoon with the coming and the going of the storm. The ^{first} poem is so beautifully conceived and the coloring so artistic that I reproduce it in full as the best example of his work along this line. We are out on the farm early in ~~the~~ morning and

"The cock hath crow'd. I hear the doors unbarr'd;

Down to the moss-grown porch my way I take,
And hear, beside the wall within the yard,

Full many an ancient, quacking, splashing drake,
And gabbling goose and noisy brood-hen-all
Responding to yon strutting gobbler's call.

The dew is thick upon the velvet grass-

The porch-rails hold it in translucent drops,
And as the cattle from th'enclosure pass,

Each one, alternate, slowly halts and crops
The tall, green spears with all their dewy load,
Which grow beside the well-known pasture-road.

A lustrous polish is on all the leaves-

The birds flit in and out with varied notes-

The noisy swallows twitter 'neath the eaves-

A partridge-whistle through the garden floats,
While yonder gaudy peacock harshly cries,
As red and gold flush all the eastern skies.

Up comes the sun: through the dense leaves a spot

Of splendid light drinks up the dew; the breeze
Which late made leafy music dies; the day grows hot,

And slumb'rous sounds come from marauding bees:
The burnish'd river like a sword-blade shines,
Save where 'tis shadow'd by the solemn pines.

In the second part there is only one good stanza:

A trembling haze hangs over all the fields-

The panting cattle in the river stand,
Seeking the coolness which its wave scarce yields.

It seems a Sabbath thro' the drowsy land
So hush'd is all beneath the summer's spell,
I pause and listen for some faint church bell.

Of the last section of the poem only the last three stanzas are worth repeating:

The air of evening is intensely hot,

The breeze feels heated as it fans my brow-

Now sullen rain-drops patter down like shot-

Strike in the grass or rattle 'mid the boughs.

A sultry lull; and then a gust again,

And now I see the thick advancing rain.

It fairly hisses as it comes along,

And where it strikes bounds up again in spray

As if 'twere dancing to the fitful song

Made by the trees which twist themselves and sway

In contest with the wind which rises fast

Until the breeze becomes a furious blast.

And now, the sudden, fitful storm has fled,

The clouds lie piled up in the splendid west,

In massive shadow tipp'd with purplish red,

Crimson or gold. The scene is one of rest;

And on the bosom of yon still lagoon

I see the crescent of the pallid moon."

The first and third cantos of this poem are more vigorous and life-like than the second, but I am inclined to think that this ^{is} due more to the nature of the scene portrayed than to any fault of the poet.

Another poem of nature, but one which deals with an entirely different season of the year and whose setting is the sea rather than the land is the "Winter Night at Sea". We are indebted to it for the following lines:

"The bell toll'd eight; the watch was called-

The night was wild, I trow!

One that I can never forget,

For all the deck was thickly set

With sheets of ice and snow;

And the hail fell fast

On the driving blast.

God! how the wind did blow!

While a ghastly light

Thro' the weary night

Came from the pallid snow.

x x x x
From the frozen ~~d~~eck

I saw a wreck,

Like a phantom-ship drive by.

Away! Away!

Through mist and spray,

And through the driving snow,

She hurried past,

Nor sail, nor mast,

Did that poor vessel show;

And thro' the snows

There upward rose-

Great God! how wild a cry!

And well, full well, that frenzied sound

Told where the drifting ship was bound

Upon that winter sea."

As the poet of liberty and nature, we may regard Hope as the disciple of Byron and Wordsworth and his sentiment as the poet of nature may be expressed in these lines of Wordsworth:

"What want we? have we not perpetual streams,
Warm woods, and sunny hills, and fresh, green fields,
And mountains not less green and flocks and herds,
And thickets full of songsters, and the voice
Of lordly birds, an unexpected Sound
Heard now and then from morn till latest eve,
Admonishing the man who walks below
Of solitude and silence in the sky."

Of his poetry as a whole, it is worthy of note that the poems composed before the War were of a general character and many of them showed the influence of the Italian poets, while those written after 1865 were largely of a specific character, dealing for the most part with the ex-Confederate. Then, too, the productions of the ante-bellum period show more the broad culture and wide reading of the man than do those subsequent to the War.

The chief characteristics of his verse in general are strong dramatic effect, minute observation, and deep thought, due doubtless to his close analytical and logical power. In view of the many memorial odes to the Confederate soldiers, and the eloquent and tender references to this his beloved State, it seems extremely fitting and proper that we should bestow upon him ~~the title~~, above all others, the title, which he has so fairly earned and so richly deserves, "The Poet-Laureate of Virginia."

Charles S. Pitt

Tuesday, April 20, 1901