

Mrs. Thomas B. Gresham's Valuable Collection Of Confederate War Relics

A Baltimore Lady, Who Was The Personal Friend Of Confederate Leaders Famous In History, Has Assembled In Her Home Souvenirs Of Men And Of Battles Fought That Are Sufficient In Importance And Number To Constitute A Museum.

By EMILY EMERSON LANTZ.

Old tales still tell some miracle
Of saints in holy writing—
But who shall say why hundreds fled
Before the few that Mosby led,
Unless the noblest of our dead
Charged with us then when fighting?
—“Mosby at Hamilton,” by Madison
Cousin.

THE Confederate Museum at Richmond, Va., is the shrine of the Southern Confederacy. Here are assembled memorials of battles unforgotten and souvenirs of heroes who revered the bonnie blue flag and gallantly followed it to fight for the principle of the individual State's right to secede from the Union, when the Southern States, in 1861, no longer agreed with the national policy. What Washington's home at Mount Vernon is to the people of the United States, the old-time home in Richmond of Mr. Jefferson Davis, President of the short-lived Southern Confederacy, is to those who sympathize with the lost cause.

But right here in Baltimore there is a Confederate shrine that includes war souvenirs quietly collected for many years by one Southern lady—Mrs. Thomas B. Gresham, of Baltimore—that are so rare and so absolutely authenticated as to make them extremely valuable both from a historical and a Confederate viewpoint.

Mrs. Gresham is the wife of Mr. Thomas B. Gresham, of the Baltimore bar, and was a little girl when the war between the States rent the South. The men of her family were all fighting for the Southern cause, and the leaders of Confederate soldiers were among the intimate friends of her family circle. With youth's enthusiasm she advocated fervently the cause for which so many whom she loved were fighting. Names now familiar to history signified, to her, personal friendships as well as heroic endeavor, and, she says, even now she cannot quarrel with her own age since, were she younger, these cherished memories of war days and brave men could not be hers.

From The Brave To The Fair.

It is over a cup of tea that women often talk with women of their memories of past days, and it was while drinking a cup of fragrant tea in the pleasant library of Mrs. Gresham's Park avenue residence that a picture of the old White Sulphur Springs, Va., and of Gen. Robert E. Lee, caught the eye of the guest. With them was framed a letter bearing the signature of General Lee. In one corner was a bit of the first national Confederate flag, and in the other a fragment of the headquarters flag of the Stonewall Brigade.

"I have had the pictures since I was a girl of 16," said the hostess. "I had been spending some time at White Sulphur Springs and was leaving to go to another watering place. I ran across the lawn and encountered General Lee, who asked whither I hastened. I replied, to a little bazar where pictures of the Springs were sold, as I especially wanted one. We found the place closed and I had to leave the Springs without securing any picture. Shortly after a messenger brought me a package. It contained these pictures and a note from General Lee."

The letter beneath its glass shield read:
"WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, VA.
"My Dear Miss Bessie: I send a stereoscopic view of the Springs—the only one I could get. I hope it may serve to recall sometimes a spot to the visitors of which you have given so much pleasure. I also inclose a photographic picture of an old man who will think of you and whom I do not wish to forget.
(Signed) ROBERT E. LEE."

It was this charming bit of correspondence, drifted from the Southland of the past, that directed conversation toward gallant men who served the Confederacy and led the way to two cabinets in which Mrs. Gresham has long kept her personal souvenirs of Confederate war days.

The value of Mrs. Gresham's souvenirs is that almost without exception they have been given her either by the Southern soldiers themselves or by their nearest relatives.

The Poetry Of A Fan.

A Chinese fan, also reminiscent of the owner's girlhood days, bears the signatures of Lee, Beauregard, Johnston, Ewell, Sidney Smith Lee, Maury, Mosby and R. T. Merrick. Beauregard's contribution—two lines of verse—the soldier laughingly told the fan's youthful possessor, was the only piece of poetry he ever wrote in his life and that it took him half an hour to compose it. Since it was written exclusively to her, he added the word "copyright" after his signature, and the sentiment expressed in the verse was, Beauregard said, what he supposed the Chinaman in the picture on the fan was saying to the Oriental lady listening coyly to his words. There are other pleasant souvenirs of the same gallant leader—letters, a photograph of himself taken in 1866 and the only one he told his friend, ever taken of him in the Confederate States uniform. "He also gave me a Tonga bean," said that friend, "to keep with my embroideries, as he always, he said, kept one with his handkerchiefs."

Stonewall Brigade Flag.

One interesting relic is a piece of the Stonewall Brigade flag set in a round locket and given Mrs. Gresham by the Hon. George Savage. The letter that accompanied the presentation states that "it was cut from the Virginia flag that designated the headquarters of the immortal Jackson from the time he took command of the Stonewall Brigade to the last." After General Jackson's death his body was wrapped in that beloved flag and laid in state in the Capitol at Richmond. The historic flag was then presented to the State of Virginia and hung with others in the State Library—then in the Capitol. A faithful colored janitor took the flag the night that Richmond was evacuated and hid it

of the war between the States that occurred on Maryland waters. This was the incident of the "French lady" and the capture of the St. Nicholas, a vessel that plied between Baltimore and various landings on the Potomac. On this occasion the St. Nicholas left her wharf as usual on a summer's afternoon, carrying some 50 passengers, among them 25 mechanics and a "French lady," heavily veiled, who retired at once to her cabin. At Point Lookout a gentleman came on board who afterward proved to be Captain Hollins, then lately resigned from the Federal Navy to enter the Confederate service. As the boat neared Cone Point on the Virginia shore, the "French lady" emerged from seclusion transformed into a military man—Col. Richard Thomas Zarvona—wearing a Zouave uniform. The 25 mechanics also threw off their disguises and appeared as Confederates. Captain and crew were seized, the vessel was commandeered for Confederate privateering service, and Colonel Zarvona earned the distinction of capturing the first Federal flag on Maryland waters.

"Colonel Zarvona's real name was Thomas," said the possessor of the autographs. "He was captured shortly after his taking the St. Nicholas and confined in Fort McHenry. My brother Henry occupied the adjoining cell and often sent me to take the 'French lady' cake and fruit. One day he gave this card to his little visitor, saying he could not return my visits so I must take his card. The Zouave cap was given me by his brother, who said he could give me no history of it, but believed Colonel Zarvona wore it during his imprisonment and in Virginia. My own recollection of him is clear as wearing, at Fort McHenry, such a cap, with a beautiful blue Zouave suit embroidered in gold."

Memories Of President Davis.

There are many touching souvenirs, portraits and letters associated with the family of President Davis. Some sedge from Mrs. Davis' room at Fortress Monroe while Mr. Davis was a prisoner there and—most pathetic to those who revered his name—a large photograph of the jury appointed to try the President of the Southern Confederacy. On the library wall hangs a bas-relief portrait of President Davis in holly-wood, accompanied by his autograph, written while in Fortress Monroe. Two of these reliefs were made for the owner's family, one being retained and the second presented to Mr. Davis. The first, during one of the frequent "searches" constantly occurring during the war period, had to be concealed for a time in a meat barrel, as the owner once told Mr. Davis herself many years ago.

Southern belles and soldier boys sang during war days, despite the ever-lowering shadow of parting, and one of the most treasured amid these relics of the past is a book of war songs printed in Richmond in the early days of the conflict. "It was found," said Mrs. Gresham, "lying in our vestibule one Sunday morning in summer, sent through the lines and was taken in and, with fear and trembling, concealed in the piano."

In 1904 the widow of Gen. Stonewall Jackson wrote Mrs. Gresham and inclosed the signature of General Jackson, saying that she thought the latter might like to have what is now so rare, adding that she was at the same time sending one to Gen. Lord Wolseley at his

request. Very fine portraits of both General and Mrs. Jackson were also sent by the latter to Mrs. Gresham.

A Virginia button, mounted in gold and attached to a long strip of blue cloth, was given its present owner by Mrs. Jackson, who stated she had cut with her own hands both button and strip from the coat of the Virginia Military Institute uniform which her husband, Gen. Stonewall Jackson, wore during the early part of the war. Mrs. Gresham had the button mounted in its present setting.

General Johnston's Sword.

A sword, carried by Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, has an interesting history. It was given by Mrs. Louis McLane Tiffany, wife of General Johnston's nephew. A letter which accompanies it tells its story. Mrs. Tiffany writes:

"I am sending you the sword of Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, feeling very certain that it will be prized and cared for while you live and will form part of your valuable Confederate collection, to be preserved as in your wisdom you may think best. General Johnston wore this sword for many years during the Indian and Mexican wars, and for the first years of the Confederacy. He replaced it with a much heavier one, giving this sword in 1863 to his wife with the request that she give it to his nephew and his godchild, Louis McLane Tiffany. My husband gave it to me, knowing my love for the Confederacy and also for 'Uncle Joe,' as we called General Johnston. I am glad to pass this precious sword on to you, dear Mrs. Graham, as you valued General Johnston and he valued and loved you."

Mrs. Gresham had known General and Mrs. Johnston during her girlhood days when, because of the fact that Mrs. Gresham's maiden name was also Johnston, the old General and his wife were accustomed to call her their "little daughter." Now, like a veritable daughter, she treasures the sword which the military man carried so long and so gallantly.

The very beginning of the war between the States was visualized in splinters of the flagstaff of Fort Sumter, shattered April, 1861, by Confederate batteries. There was also a fragment of a handkerchief which Gen. Louis T. Wigfall, father of the late Mrs. D. G. Wright, wife of Judge Wright, of Baltimore, tied to his sword as a flag of truce when he, as an officer on Beauregard's staff, made the demand from Anderson for the surrender of the fort. His crossing the bay in an open boat and under fire was an extraordinary piece of daring.

Portraits of almost all the most distinguished men of the Confederate service may be found among these souvenirs and personal letters written by most of them. Among them are autograph letters of Col. John S. Mosby written subsequent to the war to Mrs. Gresham's brother, Major Elliott Johnston, of Ewell's staff, and the latter's replies. This correspondence is most interesting, as it refers to a dispatch carried by Major Johnston from Ewell to Early before Gettysburg and which is mentioned by Early in his "Autograph and Narrative," page 263.

A cannon ball found among the war souvenirs tells its own history upon a tiny silver plate. It went completely through the Henry House at the battle of first Manassas and was picked up by Major Edgeworth Bird, of Georgia.