

## Poem In Honor of Robert E. Lee-Translation of Homers Iliad.

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### The Idol of the South: Worsley's translation of Homer dedicated to him

*It was a "Translation of Homer's Iliad by Philip Stanhope Worsley, Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, England*

In many other letters at this time and later on, especially in one to Professor Minor, who had been appointed with him upon a board by the Educational Society of Virginia, did he urge the importance of education for the present and future safety, welfare, and prosperity of the country. Among the many tokens of respect and admiration, love, and sympathy which my father received from all over the world, there was one that touched him deeply. It was a "Translation of Homer's Iliad by Philip Stanhope Worsley, Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, England," which the talented young poet and author sent him, through the General's nephew, Mr. Edward Lee Childe, of Paris, a special friend of Mr. Worsley. I copy the latter's letter to Mr. Childe, as it shows some of the motives influencing him in the dedication of his work:

"My Dear Friend: You will allow me in dedicating this work to you, to offer it at the same time as a poor yet not altogether unmeaning tribute of my reverence for your brave and illustrious uncle, General Lee. He is the hero, like Hector of the Iliad, of the most glorious cause for which men fight, and some of the grandest passages in the poem come to me with yet more affecting power when I remember his lofty character and undeserved misfortunes. The great names that your country has bequeathed from its four lurid years of national life as examples to mankind can never be forgotten, and among these none will be more honoured, while history endures, by all true hearts, than that of your noble relative. I need not say more, for I know you must be aware how much I feel the honour of associating my work, however indirectly, with one whose goodness and genius are alike so admirable. Accept this token of my deepest sympathy and regard, and believe me,  
"Ever most sincerely yours,  
"P. S. Worsley."

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On the fly-leaf of the volume he sent my father was written the following beautiful inscription:

**"To General Lee, The most stainless of living commanders and, except in fortune, the greatest, this volume is presented with the writer's earnest sympathy and respectful admiration "**

**and just beneath, by the same hand,  
the following beautiful verses:**

**"The grand old bard that never dies,  
Receive him in our English tongue!  
I send thee, but with weeping eyes,  
The story that he sung.**

**"Thy Troy is fallen,--thy dear land  
Is marred beneath the spoiler's heel--  
I cannot trust my trembling hand  
To write the things I feel.**

**"Ah, realm of tears!--but let her bear  
This blazon to the end of time:  
No nation rose so white and fair,  
None fell so pure of crime.**

**"The widow's moan, the orphan's wail,  
Come round thee; but in truth be strong!  
Eternal Right, though all else fail,  
Can never be made Wrong.**

**"An Angel's heart, an angel's mouth,  
Not Homer's, could alone for me  
Hymn well the great Confederate South--  
Virginia first, and LEE.**

**"P. S. W."**

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His letter of thanks, and the one which he wrote later, when he heard of the ill health of Mr. Worsley--both of which I give here--show very plainly how much he was pleased:

"Lexington, Virginia, February 10, 1866.

"Mr. P. S. Worsley.

"My Dear Sir: I have received the copy of your translation of the Iliad which you so kindly presented to me. Its perusal has been my evening's recreation, and I have never more enjoyed the beauty and grandeur of the poem than as recited by you. The translation is as truthful as powerful, and faithfully represents the imagery and rhythm of the bold original. The undeserved compliment in prose and verse, on the first leaves of the volume, I received as your tribute to the merit of my countrymen, who struggled for constitutional government.

"With great respect,

"Your obedient servant,

"R. E. Lee."

"Lexington, Virginia, March 14, 1866.

"My Dear Mr. Worsley: In a letter just received from my nephew, Mr. Childe, I regret to learn that, at his last accounts from you, you were greatly indisposed. So great is my interest in your welfare that I cannot refrain, even at the risk of intruding upon your sickroom, from expressing my sincere sympathy in your affliction. I trust, however, that ere this you have recovered and are again in perfect health. Like many of your tastes and pursuits, I fear you may confine yourself too closely to your reading. Less mental labour and more of the fresh air of Heaven might bring to you more comfort, and to your friends more enjoyment, even in the way in which you now delight them. Should a visit to this distracted country promise you any recreation, I hope I need not assure you how happy I should be to

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see you at Lexington. I can give you a quiet room, and careful nursing, and a horse that would delight to carry you over our beautiful mountains. I hope my letter informing you of the pleasure I derived from the perusal of your translation of the Iliad, in which I endeavoured to express my thanks for the great compliment you paid me in its dedication, has informed you of my high appreciation of the work.

"Wishing you every happiness in this world, and praying that eternal peace may be your portion in that to come, I am most truly, Your friend and servant,  
"R. E. Lee."

That winter, my father was accustomed to read aloud in the long evenings to my mother and sisters "The Grand Old Bard," equally to his own and his listeners' enjoyment.