

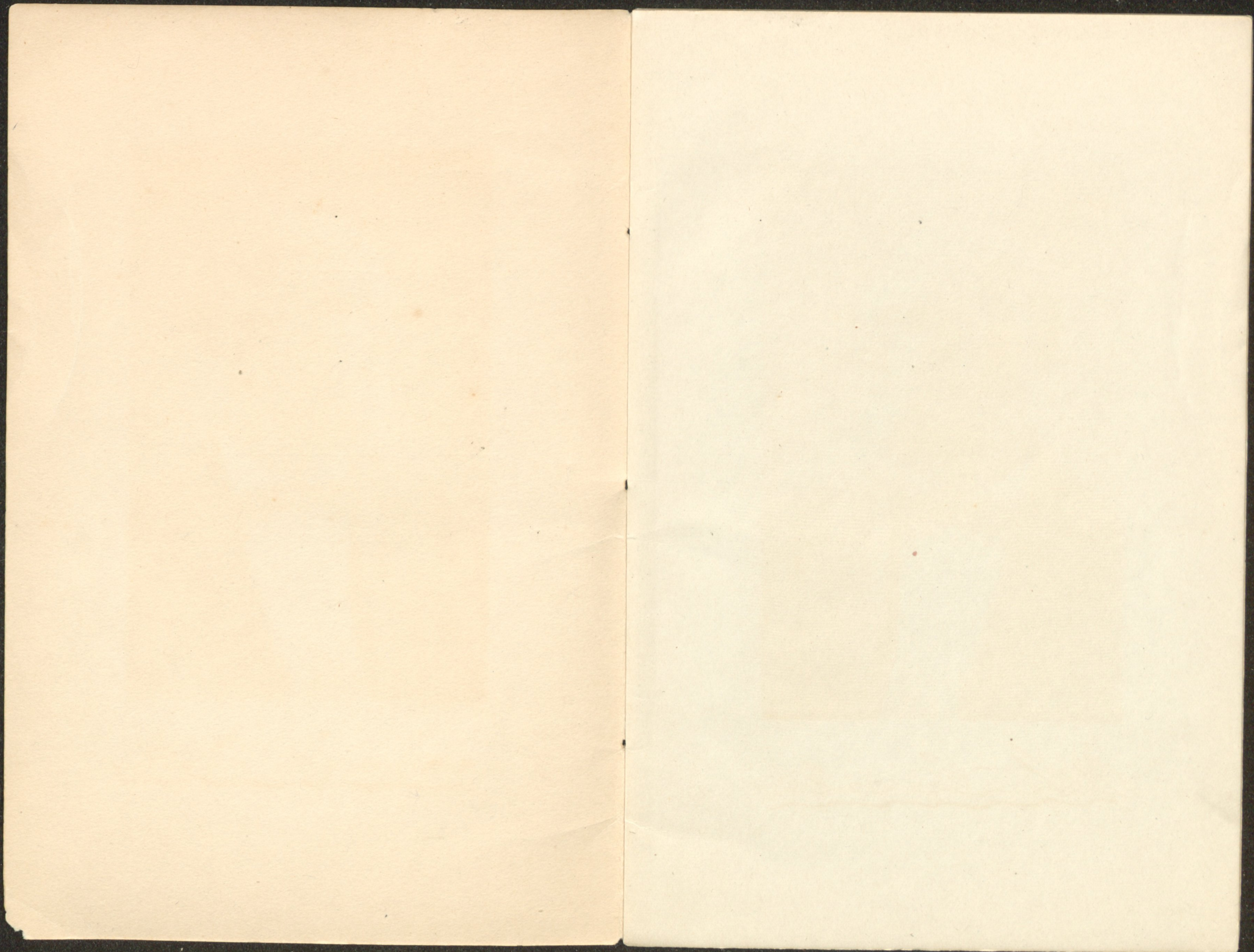
DEDICATION

OF THE

**Alston Grimes Memorial Auditorium**

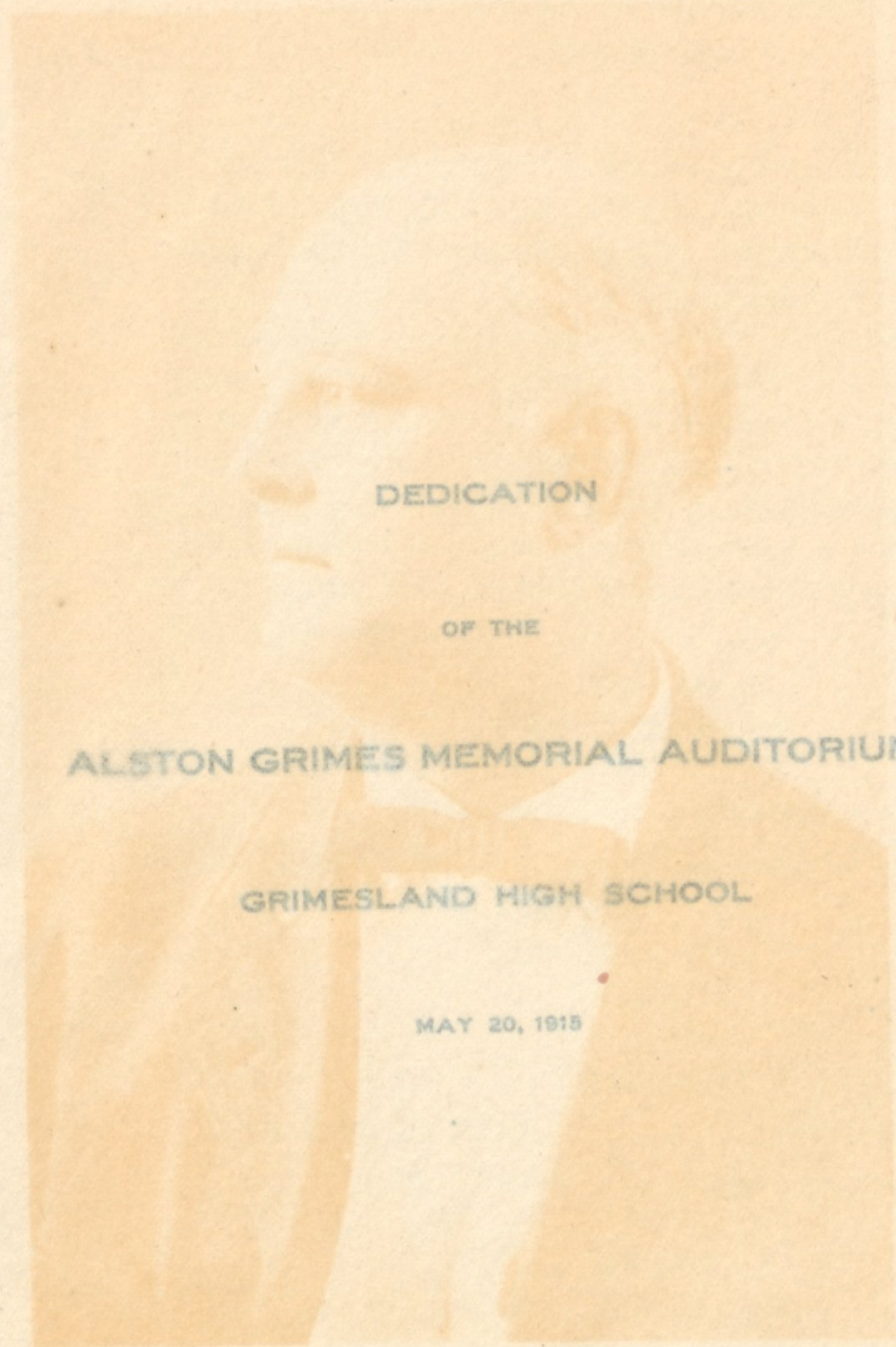
GRIMESLAND HIGH SCHOOL

MAY 20, 1915



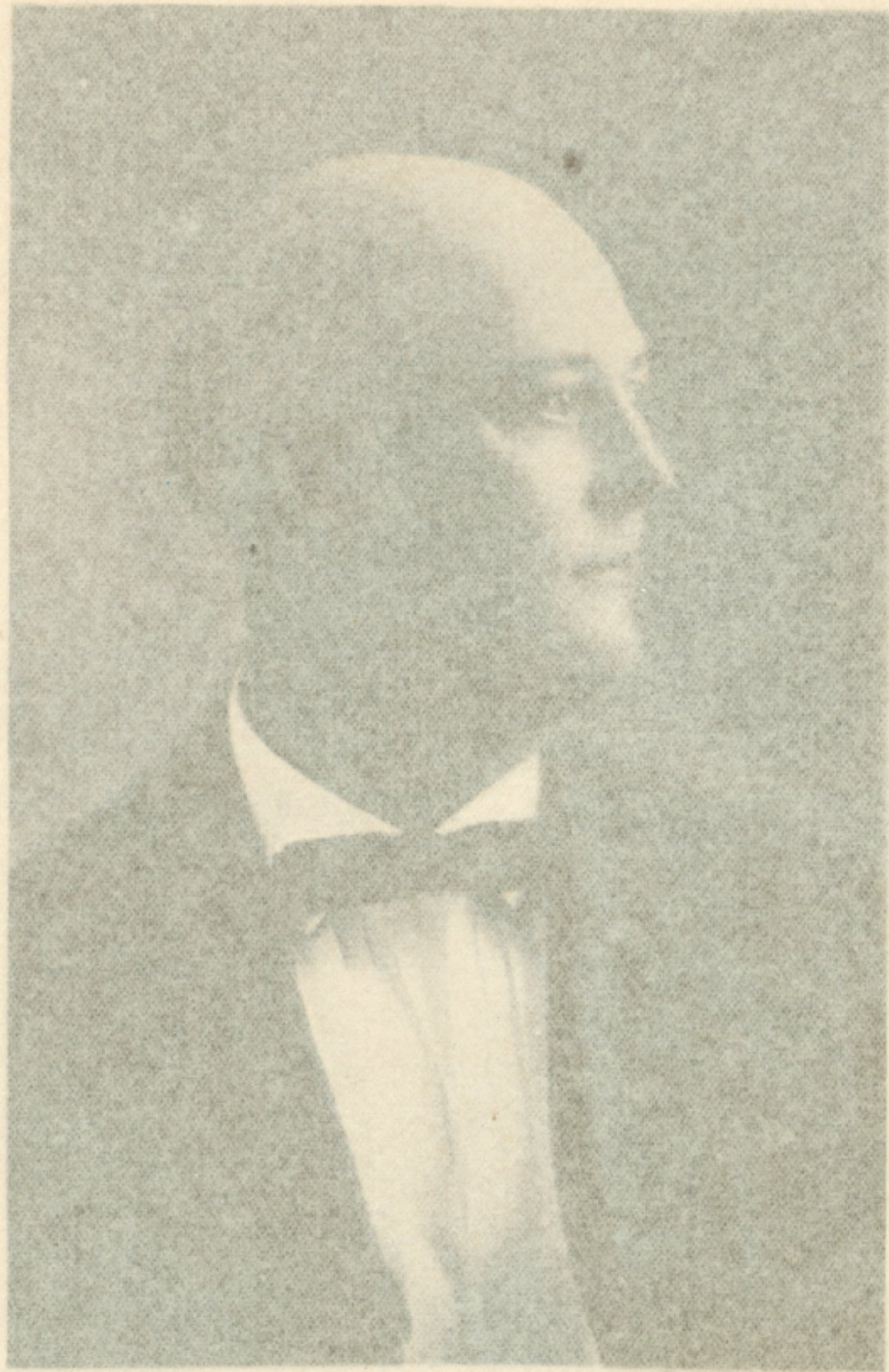


*Alston Grimes*



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OF THE  
ALSTON GRIMES MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM  
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May 20, 1915.

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On May 20, 1915, the Alston Grimes Memorial Auditorium was dedicated at the Commencement of the Grimesland High School at Grimesland, Pitt County, N. C.

Dr. C. M. Jones presiding opened the meeting, stating that the exercises were held in response to a resolution of the Board of School Trustees to dedicate the building to the memory of the late Col. Alston Grimes. It was to be called the Alston Grimes Memorial Auditorium in recognition of Colonel Grimes' great work, noble efforts and eager desire to see erected on this spot such a building as they now have.

Dr. Jones then introduced the speakers according to the following programme:

PRAYER

Rev. J. D. Waters

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PRESENTATION OF AUDITORIUM

Prof. S. B. Underwood, Superintendent of Public Instruction  
of Pitt County

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DOXOLOGY

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TRIBUTES BY

Hon. John H. Small                      Prof. C. W. Wilson  
Dr. Charles O'H. Laughinghouse

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ADDRESS

Hon. J. Y. Joyner

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SONG

Old North State

At the conclusion of the programme Dr. Jones closed the meeting with appropriate remarks which were in part as follows:

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We have now come to the close of the dedicatory exercises. I know the speakers have impressed upon you the true character of Col. Alston Grimes as a neighbor, as a friend as a citizen and as a man. We think of him kindly and gratefully and will ever hold his memory dear. His death in the prime of life cast a gloom over this community.

We needed the land on which to erect this building and he gave it; we needed his advice and counsel and he gave it. He also assisted us in the erection of this building, and this school will be a constant reminder of his splendid services and unfailing interest in the welfare of the people.

REMARKS BY  
HON. JOHN H. SMALL

*Ladies and Gentlemen:*

The plan to dedicate this auditorium as a memorial to Col. Alston Grimes was a very happy and appropriate conception; appropriate for two reasons, what he did for the school and what he would have done could he have been spared to the community. One feature of our present day attitude in North Carolina which differentiates our people from the fathers, is the disposition to preserve and perpetuate our history and to erect in some suitable form memorials to those who have wrought well for their community and their State. Gratitude is a virtue to be encouraged, and a man may not achieve the best unless he is grateful for his heritage.

Social life is a matter of evolution and the living are best fitted to serve well who have inherited a past worthy of emulation. Some one has sententiously said that the past was dead; that tomorrow may never come, and that the present is the time for earnest endeavor. The past may be dead in that it cannot be recalled, but the worthy things which were done in the past ought not to be permitted to be forgotten, because they furnish an inspiration to more earnest and effective endeavor in the living present.

Alston Grimes kept the faith as he was given the opportunity to see it, and he did much in life which we may happily recall on this occasion when we are gathered to pay tribute to

his memory. I wish at this time to congratulate the men and women of this community who were so generous and unselfish as to appreciate his work for this community and section, and who have resolved in this fitting way to perpetuate the memory of his life by the dedication of this spacious Auditorium in this modern and attractive public school building. The children who gather here in the coming years for their morning exercises, and the citizens who will come together from time to time for community service will feel an additional inspiration in their mutual work and sacrifice for the upbuilding of community life.

On an occasion like this the tendency is to exaggerate the virtues of the dead, but I think this disposition, though creditable to the heart, ought to be checked. Alston Grimes was a plain man who lived the simple life, and was direct in speech and action. If he were here today and his counsel were asked as to these exercises, he would enjoin us to speak truly about him, and for our expressions of friendship and admiration he would be truly grateful but his altruistic, modest nature would not seek our praise.

Therefore, in plain and simple words I wish to endeavor to characterize some of his prominent virtues. Though in former years I was thrown much in his company, yet during these last ten years my intercourse with him was less frequent, and personal contact was to a certain extent supplanted by correspondence. In this hour I am glad to bear witness to our personal friendship. It is gratifying to feel that I possessed his confidence and to recall my friendship for him.

Alston Grimes was primarily and essentially honest. He spurned simulation and hypocrisy. He could not yield adherence to any proposition or to any man, unless he felt that both were based upon and actuated by the truth. He was sometimes critical, as all of us are, but with scarcely an exception this was directed against those who had perpetrated some wrong or who were seeking to take advantage of the unsuspecting and the credulous. In his individual relations, in business, in politics, and in the varied public movements which confront citizens, his attitude was always that of the

honest man. He loved the truth for truth's sake, and he despised hypocrisy, and he always expected that others should follow where truth leads.

He was always frank and open in his expressions, and in his dealings with others. It can scarcely be said that tactfulness was one of his qualities. This was not due to any desire or intention to give offense, because he had a kindly heart, but was simply the manifestation of this innate prompting of candor. Others might seek to accumulate or to obtain promotion, or reputation, by the gentle arts of flattery, but it was not for him to

"Crook the pregnant hinges of the knee,  
Where thrift might follow fawning."

Such men constitute a valuable asset in any community. Commendation may not always be given them at the moment, but in the final analysis when men reason with themselves and with one another, they are guided and impelled by the attitude of strong men who speak the truth as they see it, and will not stoop to flatter.

I would not convey the impression that Alston Grimes was vindictive. The honest, open mind does not harbor fancied grievances, or cherish resentments. He did not permit his heart to canker and corrode with the spirit of hate. It was the unmanly thing, the deceptive act, and the unholy alliance with wrong, which provoked his indignation, and the guilty person was only secondary. He who cultivates the spirit of hate and harbors resentment, cannot be happy. On the other hand, one of his possessions was that of genuine contentment and happiness. Who cannot recall his open countenance, his genial smile, and his sense of humor? I cannot remember a single instance when he was too serious or absorbed to exhibit a smiling face or respond to a touch of humor.

He possessed what I am pleased to call a teachable spirit. Unfortunate is the man whose consciousness of facts, or whose convictions are so deeply rooted, that they cannot be changed. We receive impressions today and reach conclusions which appear correct with the information at hand and with our environment, and yet they may be erroneous. Life

is a process of evolution. We either retrograde or we progress. We cannot remain stationary. While we ought to be slow to discard impressions and convictions which we have reached, yet at the same time we should be alert and attentive to receive better reasoning or some higher truth. There are very few men whose intelligence are really ripening and whose spirits are becoming more mellow who have not had many occasions to revise and correct their earlier impressions. While he was sometimes impulsive and quick to think and act, and while he was often emphatic in his expressions and tenacious of his views, yet he was not unwilling to hear the other side. Little men, although convinced of their error will be of the same opinion still, but if he was convinced he was equally as open in acknowledging his error and in proclaiming his changed views as in his original convictions and expressions. This constitutes what I call the teachable spirit, and the honesty to revise our errors and embrace the truth wherever we find it.

One of the most attractive traits of Alston Grimes was his loyalty. He was loyal to his family and to his home. The lights and the crowds and the gaiety of the city had little attraction for him. He loved the simple, wholesome atmosphere of his home. Whether this tenacity to home ties was in part due to his sense of duty or to his natural fondness for the scenes of his boyhood and maturity, is immaterial. Location and association implied more to him than a mere habitation. His fealty was actuated by an innate affection for family and home.

He was loyal to his friends. To him friends were not a mere convenient appendage, to be adopted and cast aside as necessity or selfish interests might dictate. To him they were friends because of mutual attachments and sympathies. He was rather slow to extend his confidence and affection to others, but when the tie was once formed he was reluctant to break it.

He was loyal to his immediate community and section. He believed North Carolina was a great State, and he loved her history and had faith in her people, but to him Pitt was the

imperial county in all the Commonwealth, and Chicod Township was the choice spot of the earth. Grimesland as the center of this attractive area was always the object of his loyal consideration. Nothing was too good for these people. I think I can testify truthfully that in my official capacity I have had more correspondence with him regarding the improvement of the mail service, and in furtherance of other local activities, than with any other citizen in this District. He was constant and unremitting in his zeal for the betterment of his neighbors. I recall very well his exhibiting to me on one occasion at my home the original Act of the Legislature authorizing the election for a bond issue with which to construct this school building, and his enthusiasm was really contagious. I am not surprised to learn of his activity in the election and of the pride with which he followed the construction of this building. I can almost see him studying the plans, conferring with the builder and mechanics, as the foundation was laid and as the walls were reared. Of all the activities with which his life was connected, I am sure he would prefer that his name should be linked with this school building.

Alston Grimes had gradually grown into a life devoted to service. One by one his vision had detected defects and needs in the social life of his community, and he had undertaken to supply the need or provide the remedy. The more we help others, the more the necessities multiply, and the more we grow in the capacity to serve. So it was with him. Opportunities multiplied and his disposition and capacity to help increased in proportion.

Finally, may I who for the moment represent the kind hearts and generous spirits of those who made this occasion possible, tender to the mother, the widow, and the brothers and sisters the respectful consideration and a sincere condolence of those who also loved him whose memory and life we are seeking to commemorate.

REMARKS BY  
DR. CHAS. O'H. LAUGHINGHOUSE

*Ladies and Gentlemen:*

Your Committee has graciously accorded me the privilege of speaking to you today of "Alston Grimes as Alston Grimes." The man who gave so gladly of his interest in the land on which is situated your Methodist Church; its Parsonage; your Christian Church; your Masonic Lodge and your Negro Church. The man whose love for your township and your town was so deep, so sincere and so altruistic, that it directed his money and thought toward your sustenance.

His voice was not heard on the hustings; his pen did not plow the fertile furrows in the fallow fields of journalism; he said little—wrote less; but his last words, uttered on the operating table as the ether mask was being placed over his face, was a message to your School Trustees; and his last letter was a plea to complete this auditorium promptly and well.

He was a constant, persistent worker, in the vineyard that is breeding better things. Gladsomely and well did he cultivate; pruning here, placing an arbor there, growing and ripening his thoughts and ideals into nourishing, luscious fruit, that you yourselves, may use for your pleasure, your progress, your betterment.

You are doing honor today to his memory, which honor is his due. I am proud of him for what he has helped to accomplish. I am proud of you for this evidence of your appreciation, and I am deeply grateful for the personal privilege of sharing it.

This is Alston Grimes as I knew his public life. Splendid as it is, 'tis hardly so mellow, hardly so fine, as was the life that he lived among his intimates. I knew him from my boyhood, and as I look back over the years, I am astonished to see how clearly, consistently and faithfully the man developed in accordance with the lines the boy laid down.

He was the most natural boy I ever knew, spontaneous, whole-hearted, generous, inquisitive, always discovering, studying and learning things which he adapted, in his own



way, to his environment and to his use. As a man this was his most prominent characteristic.

As a boy he gave always and under all circumstances, due obeisance to his mother. As a man this chivalrous care, affectionate attention, and constant consideration of her, is an example to be emulated by would-be worthy sons, and a pearl beyond price to the mothers of men.

His boyish willingness to saddle his sisters' horse, or pick the briars from their skirts, developed a man whose fraternal care, supervision and affectionate service will linger with these sisters as sweet and sacred memories.

As a boy he was without bitterness, and throughout the vicissitudes of his busy responsible years, he kept out of himself all wormwood and gall. His joyous laugh with its rippling mellow music staid with him all his days. His genial, open, carefree face, harmonizing to the merriment of his laugh proved a benediction to himself and his associates.

He was constancy itself—possessing the rare faculty of holding close unto himself the things that he obtained. Once his gun, always his gun; once his dog, always his dog; once his servant, always his servant; once his friend, always his friend.

He was not a complainer; as a boy he burned his face with powder, wrapped it in a veil and laughed. As a man he took his disappointments, pains, sorrows and hid them away within himself with such success that those who knew him best feel that he has earned a place among the great unwhimpering.

Honesty was the warp and woof of his boyish nature, and in later years he gripped men by it, holding them to him with confidence, sincerity and love.

The esteem in which he was held was most strongly exemplified on the day of his interment. Just his friends were there; his life long friends, his neighbors, his daily associates. They came to mingle their tears, their sympathy and their respect. As I stood arm in arm with a life long mutual friend and gazed out into that gathering of people, I thought of the significance of the crowd, and the manner of man, whose life had earned such homage.

I had been reading the life of Napoleon, which impressed me as the very antithesis of the life of my dead friend. My mind's eye pictured the great Napoleon walking along the banks of the Seine, contemplating suicide. I saw him at Toulon, and in the streets of Paris quelling a seething, ominous, dangerous mass of human beings called a mob. I saw him in Italy. I saw him on the Bridge of Lodi. I saw him in Egypt—in the shadows of the Pyramids. I saw him conquer the Alps and mingle the eagles of France with the eagles of the mountain crags. I saw him at Ulm and Austerlitz. I saw him in Russia, where the infantry of snow, and the cavalry of wild blasts swept away his army, as would a wintry wind demolish withered leaves. I saw him at Leipsic in disaster and in defeat—driven back to Paris, snarling, growling, clutching at, and shrinking from the enemy, which was on every hand. I saw him banished to Elba. I saw him escape, and, by the sheer force of his genius, will and ambition, re-take an empire. I saw him at Waterloo, where Chance, Fate and Wellington joined hands against him and left him as a Samson shorn of his strength. I saw him at St. Helena—with his hands behind him, gazing out upon a sad and solemn sea; a sea whose breakers came to him with naught but the song of loneliness, and departing, took all but helplessness without hope.

I thought of the widows he had made—of the tears he had shed, and of the storm of blood and carnage he had cost. I thought of him, in comparison with my friend when they came to the bar of God—Napoleon, with his failure, plus all that failure wrought; my friend, with his success, plus all the good and the love and the uplift his sweet and mellow life had earned.

My friends, this, your Auditorium, is a memorial to Alston Grimes; take it and make it what you believe he would have it be—a place to educate the young, and a temple wherein the grown-ups too may learn. Let it stand for plenty and peace; community betterment and concord; for happiness and for health; for religion and for personal regeneration, the regeneration of education, business, bodies, hearts and souls.

