

Mrs. Higgins appeal to the
Society of Colonial Dames for contributions
to the National Relief Association, for the
Spanish American War
April 1898

Ladies;

I have a two-fold ^{purpose} object in the special meeting I have called to-day, and I hope for a generous and sympathetic response. As an introduction, I will quote a few words from the preamble of the National Constitution, which ^{outlines the object & work} ~~lays the foundation stone of~~ the Society of Colonial Dames.

This preamble says most emphatically that the object of our Society is not only to honor "the heroic achievements of our fore-fathers, but to encourage true heroism in all who come under its influence and to stimulate in the young a spirit of patriotism and genuine love of country". When we incorporated these words, in the laws which govern us, they bore no special significance, save pride in the heroic deeds of our fore-fathers, and the remembrance of a Nation's glory in the past.

So long had we walked in the ways of pleasantness and the paths of peace and basked in the hallowed quiet of the present that war and its tragedies, its heart-aches and desolations seemed but the faint echo of a far off past, but like a thunder clap in a clear sky has come the cry to arms, and there is no North, no South, no East, no West, but a country united under one flag--with all sectional differences wiped out--sends forth her bravest and best for the cause of humanity.

It matters little whether or not we are in sympathy with this war--that is not for us to discuss--we only know that war has come and in its wake suffering, sickness and disaster. Our duty is not only to unearth the history of the past, but as the foremost of patriotic Societies to take our part in the events of to-day and thus make for ourselves a place in the history of the future.

Only the facts of life make us think, and true heroism excites our enthusiasm. If the deeds of valor of a dead and gone generation appeal

to us, how much more are we thrilled by the daring and courage of the men of our own day, with whom we are in touch by word and thought and kinship. Foremost among them is North Carolina's brave young Ensign--foremost because he was the first martyr, and as such will go down conspicuously into history.

" He ventured love and life and youth
For the great prize of death in battle."

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin", and the law of universal motherhood makes us--a body of patriotic women--claim this young hero as our own and calls forth a tender and hearty response to the appeal for a Monument to his memory. Through the efforts of one of North Carolina's brightest women and one of the ablest members of our Society, Mrs. Peter M. Wilson, a Monument Fund has been started among North Carolina's residents in Washington, but so wide-spread is the interest that responses have come from all parts of the country, even from far away New England. All patriotic Societies are speeding the good work. The Sons of the Revolution and the daughters of the Revolution have taken it up. Shall we, the Colonial Dames of America, remain inactive? Ladies, there can be from such a body of women but one answer.

Another and broader field of patriotic work is that embodied in the Resolution of Mrs. Mason of Rhode Island for the organization of a National Relief Association to administer to any suffering, privation or distress incident to the war. A splendid woman whose intelligence, womanliness and foresight inaugurated this grand movement recommended only to the State Societies and left the methods of disbursing the funds as *each* they thought best, and although the idea of a National Relief Associa-

tion was received in the most enthusiastic manner by the Council, yet all important resolutions provoke debate, and after occupying two days of the time and attention of the Convention as to the best method of disbursing funds collected, it was at last referred to a Committee, upon which I was placed. The Committee's report which was brought in was upon my amendment of the original resolution. This amendment was that the State Society should form into a National Relief Association and all funds collected should go to the able Treasurer of the National Society; the States calling upon her as the needs of their sufferers required. This amendment was more binding upon the States, but it seemed to me that a movement important enough to occupy two days of the National Council and endorsed by the Chief Executive of the United States and the Surgeon General of the Army should be carried on by a uniform method in all the State Societies and that the able Treasurer of the National Society was the proper one for receiving all funds collected.

You will thus see that I am particularly interested in this humane work, because by my amendment, North Carolina becomes the sponsor really for the offspring of Rhode Island.

I have several times been asked by men of intelligence, whose wives and sisters were perhaps members of our Society--What does your Society intend to do? What work--charitable patriotic or philanthropic --is it doing? What place will it make for itself in history? I often felt ashamed to say that we were looking up our ancestors and had formed a social reading club, yet that was all we were doing--but the tragedies of the past few weeks have aroused us from our apathy and thrust upon us work for willing hands and womanly hearts. Shall we reject it? A thousand times No. Great disaster--National or individual--oft-times brings out all that is finest and best in men and women. Let us then respond to the

cry of distress and privation and sufferings. Let the good ship Solace and all others that go to the relief of our soldiers carry from the Old North State and from her patriotic daughters, the Society of Colonial Dames, a generous response, and let us remember that nothing was ever accomplished without enthusiasm, self sacrifice and unremitting toil, and that inspiration for any cause comes from unceasing effort.

Florence H. Kidder
President of the
North
Carolina Society of Colonial
Dames of America -