Henry Woodfin Grady was born in Athens, Georgia, in 1850. His father, William S. Grady, was a Confederate Major who was killed during the siege of Petersburg in 1864. After the war, Henry Grady graduated from the University of Georgia and began a career in journalism. In 1874, he published an editorial in the Atlanta Daily Herald titled “The New South,” in which he argued that the south should develop its industries and railroads in order to rebuild its economy and society. His “New South” program hinged on northern investment, southern industrial growth, diversified farming, and white supremacy.

“The New South” was read by a wide audience and led to Grady receiving a job as managing editor of the Atlanta Constitution, which he used to promote industrial development.

In 1886, Grady spoke before a meeting of the New England Society in New York City. In his address, which we’ve excerpted here, Grady spoke about the idea of a New South and the need for unity between North and South.

In speaking to the toast with which you have honored me, I accept the term, “The New South,” as in no sense disparaging to the Old. Dear to me, sir, is the home of my childhood and the traditions of my people; I would not, if I could, dim the glory they won in peace and war, or by word or deed take aught from the splendor and grace of their civilization—never equaled and, perhaps, never to be equaled in its chivalric strength and grace.

There is a New South, not through protest against the Old, but because of new conditions, new adjustments and, if you please, new ideas and aspirations. It is to this that I address myself, and to the consideration of which I hasten lest I become the Old South before I get to it. Age does not endow all things with strength and virtue, nor are all new things to be despised. The shoemaker who put over his door “John Smith’s shop. Founded in 1760.” was more than matched by his young rival across the street who hung out this sign: “Bill Jones. Established 1886. No old stock kept in this shop.”

Dr. Talmage has drawn for you, with a master’s hand, the picture of your returning armies. He has told you how, in the pomp and circumstance of war, they came back to you, marching with proud and victorious tread, reading their glory in a nation’s eyes! Will you bear with me while I tell you of another army that sought its home at the close of the war—a army that marched home in defeat and not in victory—in paths and not in splendor, but in glory that equaled yours, and to hearts as loving as ever welcomed heroes home. Let me picture to you the footsteps Confederate soldier, as, buttoning up in his faded gray jacket the parole which was to bear testimony to his children of his bravery, and faith, he turned his face southward from Appomattox in April, 1865. Think of him as ragged, half-starved, heart-tired, enfeebled by want and wounds; having fought to exhaustion, he surrenders his gun, wings the hands of his comrades in silence, and lifting his tear-stained and pallid face for the last time to the graves that dot the old Virginia hills, pulls his gray cap over his brow and begins the slow and painful journey. What does he find—let me ask you, who went to your homes eager in the wish to find you had justly earned, full payment for four years’ sacrifice—what does he find when, having followed the battle-stained cross against overwhelming odds, drooping death not half so much as surrender, he reaches the home he left so grasping and beautiful? He finds his house in ruins, his farm devastated, his slaves free, his stock killed, his barns empty, his trade destroyed, his money worthless; his social system, feudal, in its magnificence, swept away; his people without law or legal status, his comrades slain, and the burdens of other heavies on his shoulders. Crushed by defeat, his past traditions are gone, without money, credit, employment, material or training; and, besides all this, confronted with the gravest problem that ever met human intelligence—the establishment of a status for the vast body of his liberated slaves.

What does he do — this hero in glory with a heart of gold? Does he sit down in sullenness and despair? Not for a day. Surely God, who had stripped him of his property, inspired him in his adversity. As ruin was never before so overwhelming, never was restoration swifter. The soldier stepped from the trenches into the farmyard, horses that had charged Federal guns march before the plow, and fields that ran red with human blood in April were green with the harvest in June; women reared in luxury cut up their dresses and made breeches for their husbands, and, with a patience and heroism that fit women almost always a great man, gave their hands to toil. There was little bitterness in all this. Cheerfulness and frankness prevailed. “Bill Arn’” struck the keynote when he said: “Well, I killed as many of them as they did of me, and now I am going to work.” [Laughter and applause.] Or the soldier returning home after defeat and roasting some corn on the roadside, who made the remark to his comrades: “You may leave the South if you want it; but I am going to Sandiersville, and I wish to raise a corn. And if the Yankees fool with me any more I will whip ‘em again.” [Renewed applause.] I want to say to General Sherman—who is considered an able man in our hearts, though some people think he is a kind of careless man about fire—that from the ashes he left us in 1864 we have raised a brave and beautiful city; that somehow or other we have caught the sunshine in the bricks and mortar of our homes, and have builted therein not one ignoble prejudice or memory. [Applause.] But in all this what have we accomplished? What is the sum of our work, kiss my face and raise a crop, and if the Yankees fool with me any more I will whip ‘em again.” [Renewed applause.] I want to say to General Sherman—who is considered an able man in our hearts, though some people think he is a kind of careless man about fire—that from the ashes he left us in 1864 we have raised a brave and beautiful city; that somehow or other we have caught the sunshine in the bricks and mortar of our homes, and have builted therein not one ignoble prejudice or memory. [Applause.] We have challenged your spinners in Massachusetts and your iron-makers in Pennsylvania. We have learned that the $400,000,000 annually received from our cotton crop will make us rich, when the price of cotton is paid.

In 1886, Grady spoke before a meeting of the New England Society in New York City. In his address, which we’ve excerpted here, Grady spoke about the idea of a New South and the need for unity between North and South.

In 1886, Grady spoke before a meeting of the New England Society in New York City. In his address, which we’ve excerpted here, Grady spoke about the idea of a New South and the need for unity between North and South.
This 1872 map shows the distribution of per capita (per person) wealth in the United States. Why was it concentrated so heavily in the North? Which parts of North Carolina had the most wealth?

3 January 2018