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Richmond

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Richmond

by H. Bruce McEver

Undeterred by over a century
of industrial progress since the War
the cold stone-cobbled James
runs through this city's heart.

The river floods the brick-clutter relics
of old cannon foundries, tumbled tobacco warehouses,
and wracked bridges, dams, and locks.
Now on the banks, modern glass towers taint pink
toward sunset and shadow Corinthian columned porticos.

It's charming and everywhere:

I negotiate with a landed banker whose family financed the Cause
or casually chat with an ex-Marine cabby back to the airport.
His great-granddaddy dug and manned those earthworks
strongholding and surrounding this sacred capital.

It even seems alive in the glimmering eyes
of the great generals' oils arrayed at the Commonwealth Club.
JEB Stuart, Stonewall, and Lee
whose stares of determination and damnation
glow like the end of the day
and secretly ember
in the bosom of the citizenry:

that certain, courteous,
soft-spoken southern character,
somewhat deceptive,
but capable of taking on vastly
superior forces
and sometimes
whipping them.

