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# AN ADDRESS

BY

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N. P. HALLOWELL, '61.

DELIVERED ON MEMORIAL DAY,  
MAY 30, 1896,

AT A MEETING CALLED BY THE GRADUATING  
CLASS OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY.



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THE  
MEANING OF MEMORIAL DAY.

*An Address*

DELIVERED ON MEMORIAL DAY, MAY 30, 1896, AT A MEETING  
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As we stand before the tablets in yonder hall and read the familiar names of our old classmates and comrades in arms, there is somewhat of satisfaction in the thought that there never was an internecine struggle in which principle played so great, passion so small a part as in the war of 1861-65. In making this broad and general remark it is not necessary to forget the crimes committed in Kansas and in Missouri by the guerilla chief Quantrell, the massacre of unarmed recruits at Fort Pillow by General Forrest, the intended indignity put upon the body of Colonel Shaw at Fort Wagner, and the pitiless cruelty of the Andersonville pen; but, in spite of these somewhat serious exceptions, it remains true that one of the characteristics of the war was the absence of personal antagonism. Every veteran within sound of my voice will readily recall familiar examples coming within his observation and experience illustrative of my meaning, — how the opposing pickets would begin by chaffing each other, and would end by a pleasant interchange of courtesies: the rebel would crave a little quinine or other medical store of which he was

always in sore need; the Yankee would accept a bit of tobacco, of which the supply at times was scant.

Those whose good fortune it was to be in Sedgwick's division on the day of Fair Oaks will remember the passage of the Chickahominy on Sumner's floating bridge, — a structure held in position against the rising torrent only by the weight of the marching column; and they will remember, when the further side was reached, how the victorious rebel battalions, on the point of sweeping Casey's division into the river, butted against this unknown and unexpected reinforcement, and met with a bloody repulse. When darkness closed upon the field of battle, the ground was thickly strewn with rebel dead and rebel wounded in every stage of suffering. To add to the discomforts of the situation, a drizzling rain set in. As the men of Sedgwick's division were about to dispose of themselves for the night, and to get what protection from the elements they could with the rubber blankets they had slung round their shoulders that morning when they broke camp, a colonel of a certain Massachusetts regiment walked down the ranks, and made a call for rubber blankets with which the rebel wounded might be covered. Not a rubber was held back; so far as one could tell, every blanket was handed in, and the exhausted men of that regiment, who had marched and fought from midday until sundown, stood up in the rain through that dreary night without a murmur.

When General Grant, at Appomattox, with a nicety of feeling and simplicity of statement which were the certain marks of that great captain, said to the surrendered foe, "Retain your side-arms; keep your horses, — they will be needed for the spring ploughing," he not only stamped his

own character with the noble attribute of magnanimity, but at the same time gave fitting expression to that spirit of humanity which always pervaded the old Army of the Potomac.

Generals Grant and Sherman, and Sheridan, too, never failed to draw a sharp line of distinction between a traitor and a fighting rebel. The one is a thing greatly to be despised; the other, a person much to be respected. Jefferson Davis, Howell Cobb, Floyd of Virginia, and Thompson, the Secretary of the Interior, — one a United States senator, three members of President Buchanan's cabinet, — while still under oath of office, conspired to overthrow the government they had sworn to maintain. They scattered our navy over remote waters of the globe; they stationed our little army in the far distant posts of Texas; they crammed our munitions of war into the arsenals of the South; — Secretary Floyd even put the hand of a thief upon the trust funds of the United States. Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, James Longstreet, and other men of their kind, handed back their commissions to the government first, and cast their lots with their respective States second. Whatever was good in the lives of such men is the common inheritance of their children and of ours.

With some little pride, which I know you will excuse, I shall read a letter written by the schoolmaster of Robert E. Lee, my kinsman, Benjamin Hallowell, a venerable Quaker, late of Alexandria, Va. Mr. Hallowell writes: "Robert E. Lee entered my school in Alexandria, Va., in the winter of 1825-26, to study mathematics preparatory to his going to West Point. He was a most exemplary student in every respect. He was never behind-times at

his studies ; never failed in a single recitation ; was perfectly observant of the rules and regulations of the institution ; was gentlemanly, unobtrusive, and respectful in all his deportment to teachers and his fellow-students. His specialty was finishing up. He imparted a finish and a neatness, as he proceeded, to everything he undertook. One of the branches of mathematics he studied with me was conic sections, in which some of the diagrams were very complicated. He drew the diagrams on a slate ; and although he well knew the one he was drawing would have to be removed to make room for another, he drew each one with as much accuracy and finish, lettering and all, as if it were to be engraved and printed.

“The same traits he exhibited at my school he carried with him to West Point, where, I have been told, he never received a mark of demerit, and graduated at the head of his class.”

Lee's record as a soldier is almost as perfect as his record as a schoolboy. In the long list of battles which he planned and fought there is only one not worthy of his genius. “When the Army of the Potomac had forced its way through siege and battle to within sight of the spires of Richmond, it was rolled back upon the James in a seven-days' conflict.” Hard pressed, our divisions gathered themselves together upon the plateau of Malvern Hill, and, encircling their lines with artillery, stood at bay. Lee came on, flushed with success, hot with pursuit, and hurled his brigades, first, one upon our lines there, then another here, all without concert of action. Five thousand rebel dead and wounded were the penalty of his rashness. It was McClellan's best, Lee's worst, fought battle of the war. Lee never repeated his mistake ; nor did McClellan.



There are few pages in history more pathetic than the beginning and the ending of Robert Lee as a rebel. He was the favorite of General Scott. At the instance of President Lincoln, the command of the armies of the North was offered to him. But neither the confidence of Lincoln, nor the affection of Scott, nor the instincts of his better nature could prevail. Out of an agony of conflict with himself he came to the fatal conclusion to draw his sword against his country. When defeated and crushed, he rode from Appomattox to his home; and from his home he was soon borne to his grave. There was no great bodily ailment. The man had simply died of a broken heart.

You may think that I have lapsed into an eulogy of rebels. And indeed it is pleasant to dwell upon the virtues of our old friends, the enemy. And yet there should be neither mental nor moral confusion as to the real meaning of this Memorial Day and this Memorial Hall. I unite with the late William J. Potter, of the Class of 1854, who warns us not to be caught by the sentimental sophistry that since there were heroism and fidelity to conviction on both sides, we may commemorate those virtues of both armies as American, and thereby try to forget there were ever two armies or two causes. Fidelity to conviction is praiseworthy; but the conviction is sometimes very far from praiseworthy. Slavery and polygamy were convictions. Such monuments as Memorial Hall commemorate the valor and heroism that maintained certain principles,—justice, order, and liberty. To ignore the irreconcilable distinction between the cause of the North and that of the South is to degrade the war to the

level of a mere fratricidal strife for the display of military prowess and strength. War, horrid war, waged for its own sake is ignoble, brutal; but when waged in defence of convictions which deserve to prevail, then indeed may war be glorified and sanctified by the sufferings and lives of its victims. So long, then, as there is a distinction between the principles of liberty and those of slavery, may monuments to Confederate dead be erected on Southern, not on Northern soil, and may this Memorial Hall stand for those Harvard men who fought for liberty, and not for those who fought for slavery.

The courage necessary to face death in battle is not of the highest order; that of the non-resistant is of a better kind. Some forty Friends, called Quakers, of North Carolina, were forced into the rebel service. Their religious convictions would not let them fight. They refused to drill or carry a musket. They were prodded with bayonets, strung up by the thumbs, knocked down with the butt-ends of muskets, lashed on the bare back, starved in jails until, in some instances, death ended their sufferings. You and I, my veteran friends, were courageous, I dare say; but to sustain us we had the vicissitudes of camp life, of the march, and of battle. The women who stayed at home to work, to endure, and to suffer in silence,—they, too, were courageous.

One of the best examples of courage, combined with dignity, self-respect, and self-control, was the conduct of our colored troops in the matter of pay. They were promised the same pay and in general the same treatment as white soldiers. No one expected the same treatment in the sense of courtesy, but every one believed a great nation would keep faith with its soldiers in the beggarly matter

of pay. They were promised \$13 per month. They were insulted by an offer of \$10. Massachusetts resented the insult, and endeavored to remedy the wrong by offering to make good the difference between the \$13 promised and the \$10 offered. The State agents with money in hand visited the camps on Folly and Morris Islands, and pleaded with the men by every argument, by every persuasion they could command, to accept State money. In vain. They were soldiers of the Union, not of a State. They would be paid by the United States in full or they would not be paid at all. The nation might break its faith, but they would keep theirs. Every mail brought letters from wives and children asking for money. In some instances homes were broken up and the almshouse received their families. At times our regiments were driven to the verge of mutiny. In point of fact, the Fifty-fifth did stack arms one morning, not in an angry, tumultuous way, but in a sullen, desperate mood that expressed a wish to be marched out to be shot down rather than longer hear the cries from home and longer endure the galling sense of humiliation and wrong. But better counsels prevailed, and a grand catastrophe was averted by the patriotism and innate good sense of the men, added to the sympathy and firmness of the officers. One poor fellow, a sergeant in the Third South Carolina, induced his company to stack arms on the ground that he was "released from duty by the refusal of the Government to fulfil its share of the contract." He was logical, but it was in time of war. The only thing to be done, was done. He was court-martialled and shot. In the scathing words of Governor Andrew, "The Government which found no law to pay him except as a nondescript and a contraband, neverthe-

less found law enough to shoot him as a soldier." Seven times were our regiments mustered for pay. Seven times they refused and pointed to their honorable scars to plead their manhood and their rights. The men of the Fifty-fifth for sixteen, of the Fifty-Fourth for eighteen months, toiled on and fought on without one cent of pay. At last they won — won through long suffering and patient endurance, won through a higher and rarer courage than the courage of battle — a victory that is not inscribed on their flags by the side of Wagner, James Island, Olustee, and Honey Hill, but which, none the less, fills one of the best and brightest pages in the history of their race.

Among the names inscribed upon the shaft on Soldiers' Field is that of Robert Gould Shaw. How he and Russell and Simpkins and other brave men went down in death on the bloody slopes of Wagner, is known to all. Colonel Shaw was then twenty-five years of age. How young it seems now! His clean-cut face, quick, decided step, and singular charm of manner, full of grace and virtue, bespoke the hero. The immortal charge of his black regiment reads like a page of the Iliad or a story from Plutarch. I have always thought that in the great war with the slave power, the figure that stands out in boldest relief is that of Colonel Shaw. There were many others as brave and devoted as he, — the humblest private who sleeps in yonder cemetery, or fills an unknown grave in the South, is as much entitled to our gratitude, — but to no others was given an equal opportunity. By the earnestness of his convictions, the unselfishness of his character, his championship of an enslaved race, and the manner of his death, all the conditions are given to make Shaw the best historical exponent of the underlying cause, the real meaning of

the war. He was the fair type of all that was brave, generous, beautiful, and of all that was best worth fighting for in the war of the slaveholders' rebellion.

It is an awe-inspiring sight,— the charge of men upon a fort to be stormed or a battery to be taken. The popular conception of a charge is a rush. There is indeed a final rush, should there be any survivors to make it. But to my mind the grandeur of a charge is in the quiet advance which precedes the final struggle. One does not run through life; no more did Pickett double quick his mile or more over the open fields of Gettysburg. His lines came on slowly, majestically. They were ploughed with solid shot; blown into shreds by bursting shells; decimated by canister in front, by musketry on flank. At every step those torn ranks would shrivel and shrink. The survivors closed in on their colors and calmly walked to their fate. For one brief moment they struck the Union centre, and then — they were no more.

Comrades, who are the remnant of a once mighty host, we must thus march shoulder to shoulder. There is work ahead for each one of us! Our ranks are thinning. A comrade drops out to-day, another to-morrow. Peace to them! But, steady, men! Close in on the colors! With old-time courage oppose a bold front to the foe, until the last survivor shall hand over the standard to these younger men, and rejoin his comrades in that land where there are "neither wars nor rumors of wars."



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