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S P E E C H

by the

Secretary of War, Mr. ROOT

Upon the Unveiling of St. Gaudens'
Statue of General Sherman in the
City of New York, May 30th, 1903



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SECRETARY OF WAR,

MR. ROOT,

UPON THE UNVEILING OF ST. GAUDENS'
STATUE OF GENERAL SHERMAN IN THE
CITY OF NEW YORK, MAY 30, 1903.



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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Mayor, Fellow Citizens :

Of all the statues with which the affection of friends and the admiration of contemporaries are adorning or disfiguring the public places of the modern world, few will carry any personal meaning to future generations, or serve to perpetuate the memory of the men whom they are designed to honor. The little great men of the hour pass across the stage of the world's life with their generations, and are forgotten. Neither granite shaft nor monumental bronze can confer upon them immortality, or rescue them from the individual oblivion which merges their achievements and their sacrifices into the general progress of the nation and the race.

Rarely, as the centuries pass, some great national crisis, with the inspiration of struggle and the test of requirements beyond the capacity of common men, sifts the ma-

terial of a nation, and reveals a man equal to great occasion; whose deeds link his name forever with the decisive events which determine the world's progress, render his existence a fact of historic significance, and make what he was, a part of the common and familiar knowledge of mankind. Such a crisis was the American war for the Union. Such a man was William Tecumseh Sherman. The tremendous consequence to mankind of the decision whether America was to be one nation or a group of small and discordant States, dimly foreseen by the men of half a century ago, even now only begins to be realized by the world, which sees looming large in the horizon of the future the immeasurable possibilities for good or evil in hundreds of millions of people, free, independent, self-governing, with limitless resources, with vital force and energy never surpassed, and united under one government by common institutions, a common sentiment of nation-

ality, and general loyalty to the same ideals.

The part that Sherman played in that great struggle was not merely courageous, loyal, devoted, brilliant. It was essentially decisive. Erase it from the pages of history and no human mind can divine how the blanks would have been filled. No one will dare to say another could have done what Sherman did. Shiloh and Corinth and Vicksburg and Chattanooga and Missionary Ridge crowned him with laurels. The desperate and resourceful campaign which ended in the capture of Atlanta established his place in history as a great commander. The march from Atlanta to the sea, and still on from Savannah northward through the Carolinas, to Raleigh and the surrender of Johnston, ranks among the great and impressive military events of history. But more than all these, in the general maintenance and conduct of the war, the powerful influence of

his military genius, the strong support of his indomitable will, the forward impulse of his tremendous energy, the singular nobility of his unselfish character, which, meeting like characteristics in Grant, enabled them to work together like brothers; all these made the personality of Sherman an essentially decisive part of the great consummation which determined that America was to be free and united. We cannot add to his fame; we cannot contribute to his immortality. The statue we raise to-day can but point future generations to the pages of history where his name and deeds are imperishably recorded. Neither praise can set up nor detraction pull down the immortals in that Valhalla of the truly great where he has taken his eternal place.

But we who knew him living can record our admiration and personal affection. We can tell those who come after us that not only was Sherman great but his people

loved him. This stern and relentless master of horrid war had a heart as gentle and as tender as a woman's. The veterans who had served under his command came to him in after years as to a father, to find always open his sympathy and his purse. His magnanimous nature accorded a generous meed of praise to every degree of merit exhibited by others associated in his great undertakings. He fought, not urged by ambition or for fame or for fortune, but inspired by loyalty and love of country. Before Sumter was fired upon he declared :

“On no earthly account will I do any act or think any thought hostile to or in defiance of the old Government of the United States.”

And when the great struggle was ended he declared :

“War's legitimate object is more perfect peace,”

and turned with alacrity and gladness to the path of mercy and conciliation. He was a disciplinarian without being a martinet, and his broad sympathies with all his countrymen made him the ideal commander of volunteer soldiers. In peace he was constantly solicitous for the adoption of measures for the future welfare and greatness of his country. He urged on to success the building of the Pacific roads which he foresaw would pacify and civilize the plains and bind together our widely separated seaboard. He founded the Leavenworth School of Military Instruction, and entered actively into the execution of broad and far-seeing plans for utilizing the lessons of the Civil War and improving the military system of the country, until checked and made powerless by a vicious organization which now in this year we are happily bringing to an end. Every good and noble cause found in him encouragement and support. The

simplicity and directness of his mind found a counterpart in the fearless frankness of his expression. His conversation and his life taught always the lessons of courage, of hope, of cheerfulness, and of light. He was free from all envy and uncharitableness, broad-minded, loyal and generous friend, good and patriotic citizen, honorable gentleman. Again and again he put the Presidency away from him, and chose rather the independence and dignity of citizenship than the honors of high office which could add nothing to his laurels.

Many of us remember the charm and beauty of his declining years; when he had come to the time when men begin to live over in memory the stirring scenes of their youth; when he was wont to seek a familiar corner in the old club-house below us on this avenue—the club formed to support him in the great conflict—and there to discourse with his friends, with quaint

wisdom and genial humor and many a brilliant flash of insight, upon the days that were passed. Enjoying life to the end, amid universal respect and affection, secure, in the consciousness of great deeds done, he rested here in peaceful and honored age. It is a fitting and a happy thing that here, too, the genius of the great sculptor who owns this city as his home, should make imperishable by his art this silent witness to the honor that we and our children shall ever pay to Sherman, the soldier, the patriot and the friend.

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