

**BROTHERHOOD AND THE
HEROIC VIRTUES**

**ADDRESS AT VETERANS' REUNION, BURLINGTON, VERMONT,
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1901**

BROTHERHOOD AND THE HEROIC VIRTUES



I SPEAK to you to-night less as men of Vermont than as members of the Grand Army which saved the Union. But at the outset I must pay a special tribute to your State. Vermont was not a rich State, compared with many States, and she had sent out so many tens of thousands of her sons to the West that it is not improbable that as many men of Vermont birth served in the regiments of other States as in those of her own State. Yet, notwithstanding this drain, your gallant State was surpassed by no other State of the North, either in the number of men according to her population which she sent into the army, or in the relative extent of her financial support of the war. Too much cannot be said of the high quality of the Vermont soldiers; and one contributing factor in securing this high quality was the good sense which continually sent recruits into the already existing regiments instead of forming new ones.

It is difficult to express the full measure of obligation under which this country is to the men who from '61 to '65 took up the most terrible and vitally necessary task which has ever fallen to the lot of any generation of men in the western hemisphere. Other men have rendered great service to the country, but the service you rendered was not merely great—it was incalculable. Other men by their lives or their deaths have kept unstained our honor, have wrought marvels for our interest, have led us forward to triumph, or warded off disaster from us; other men have marshaled our ranks upward across the stony slopes of greatness. But you did more, for you saved us from annihilation. We can feel proud of what others did only because of what you did. It was given to you, when the mighty days came, to do the mighty deeds, for which the days called, and if your deeds had been left undone, all that had been already accomplished would have turned into apples of Sodom under our teeth. The glory of Washington and the majesty of Marshall would have crumbled into meaningless dust if you and your comrades had not buttressed their work with your strength of steel, your courage of fire. The Declaration of Independence would now sound like a windy platitude, the Constitution

of the United States would ring as false as if drawn by the Abbé Sieyès in the days of the French Terror, if your stern valor had not proved the truth of the one and made good the promise of the other. In our history there have been other victorious struggles for right, on the field of battle and in civic strife. To have failed in these other struggles would have meant bitter shame and grievous loss. But you fought in the one struggle where failure meant death and destruction to our people; meant that our whole past history would be crossed out of the records of successful endeavor with the red and black lines of failure; meant that not one man in all this wide country would now be holding his head upright as a free citizen of a mighty and glorious republic.

All this you did, and therefore you are entitled to the homage of all men who have not forgotten in their blindness either the awful nature of the crisis, or the worth of priceless service rendered in the hour of direst need.

You met a great need, that vanished because of your success. You have left us many memories, to be prized forevermore. You have taught us many lessons, and none more important than the lesson of brotherhood. The realization of the under-

lying brotherhood of our people, the feeling that there should be among them an essential unity of purpose and sympathy, must be kept close at heart if we are to do our work well here in our American life. You have taught us both by what you did on the tented fields, and by what you have done since in civic life, how this spirit of brotherhood can be made a living, a vital force.

In the first place, you have left us the right of brotherhood with the gallant men who wore the gray in the ranks against which you were pitted. At the opening of this new century, all of us, the children of a reunited country, have a right to glory in the countless deeds of valor done alike by the men of the North and the men of the South. We can retain an ever-growing sense of the all-importance, not merely to our people but to mankind, of the Union victory, while giving the freest and heartiest recognition to the sincerity and self-devotion of those Americans, our fellow-countrymen, who then fought against the stars in their courses. Now there is none left, North or South, who does not take joy and pride in the Union; and when three years ago we once more had to face a foreign enemy, the heart of every true American thrilled with pride to see veterans who had fought in the

Confederate uniform once more appear under Uncle Sam's colors, side by side with their former foes, and leading to victory under the famous old flag the sons both of those who had worn the blue and of those who had worn the gray.

But there are other ways in which you have taught the lesson of brotherhood. In our highly complex, highly specialized industrial life of to-day there are many tendencies for good and there are also many tendencies for evil. Chief among the latter is the way in which, in great industrial centers, the segregation of interests invites a segregation of sympathies. In our old American life, and in the country districts where to-day the old conditions still largely obtain, there was and is no such sharp and rigid demarcation between different groups of citizens. In most country districts at the present day not only have the people many feelings in common, but, what is quite as important, they are perfectly aware that they have these feelings in common. In the cities the divergence of real interests is nothing like as great as is commonly supposed; but it does exist, and, above all, there is a tendency to forget or ignore the community of interest. There is comparatively little neighborliness, and life is so busy and the population so crowded that it is impos-

sible for the average man to get into touch with any of his fellow-citizens save those in his immediate little group. In consequence there tends to grow up a feeling of estrangement between different groups, of forgetfulness of the great primal needs and primal passions that are common to all of us.

It is therefore of the utmost benefit to have men thrown together under circumstances which force them to realize their community of interest, especially where the community of interest arises from community of devotion to a lofty ideal. The great Civil War rendered precisely this service. It drew into the field a very large proportion of the adult male population, and it lasted so long that its lessons were thoroughly driven home. In our other wars the same lessons, or nearly the same lessons, have been taught, but upon so much smaller a scale that the effect is in no shape or way comparable. In the Civil War, merchant and clerk, manufacturer and mechanic, farmer and hired man, capitalist and wage-worker, city man and countryman, Easterner and Westerner, went into the army together, faced toil and risk and hardship side by side, died with the same fortitude, and felt the same disinterested thrill of triumph when the victory came. In our modern life there are only a few occupations where risk

has to be feared, and there are many occupations where no exhausting labor has to be faced; and so there are plenty of us who can be benefited by a little actual experience with the rough side of things. It was a good thing, a very good thing, to have a great mass of our people learn what it was to face death and endure toil together, and all on an exact level. You whom I am now addressing remember well, do you not, the weary, foot-sore marches under the burning sun, when the blankets seemed too heavy to carry, and then the shivering sleep in the trenches, when the mud froze after dark and the blankets seemed altogether too light instead of too heavy? You remember the scanty fare, and you remember, above all, how you got to estimate each of your fellows by what there was in him and not by anything adventitious in his surroundings. It was of vital importance to you that the men on your left and your right should do their duty; that they should come forward when the order was to advance; that they should keep the lines with ceaseless vigilance and fortitude if on the defensive. You neither knew nor cared what had been their occupations, or whether they were in worldly ways well off or the reverse. What you desired to know about them was to be sure that they would "stay put" when the

crisis came. Was not this so? You know it was.

Moreover, all these qualities of fine heroism and stubborn endurance were displayed in a spirit of devotion to a lofty ideal, and not for material gain. The average man who fought in our armies during the Civil War could have gained much more money if he had stayed in civil life. When the end came his sole reward was to feel that the Union had been saved, and the flag which had been rent in sunder once more made whole. Nothing was more noteworthy than the marvelous way in which, once the war was ended, the great armies which had fought it to a triumphant conclusion disbanded, and were instantly lost in the current of our civil life. The soldier turned at once to the task of earning his own livelihood. But he carried within him memories of inestimable benefit to himself, and he bequeathed to us who come after him the priceless heritage of his example. From the major-general to the private in the ranks each came back to civil life with the proud consciousness of duty well done, and all with a feeling of community of interest which they could have gained in no other way. Each knew what work was, what danger was. Each came back with his own power for labor and endurance strength-

ened, and yet with his sympathy for others quickened. From that day to this the men who fought in the great war have inevitably had in them a spirit to which appeal for any lofty cause could be made with the confident knowledge that there would be immediate and eager response. In the breasts of the men who saw Appomattox there was no room for the growth of the jealous, greedy, sullen envy which makes anarchy, which has bred the red Commune. They had gone down to the root of things, and knew how to judge and value, each man his neighbor, whether that neighbor was rich or poor; neither envying him because of his wealth, nor despising him because of his poverty.

The lesson taught by the great war could only be imperfectly taught by any lesser war. Nevertheless, not a little good has been done even by such struggles as that which ended in insuring independence to Cuba, and in giving to the Philippines a freedom to which they could never have attained had we permitted them to fall into anarchy or under tyranny. It was a pleasant thing to see the way in which men came forward from every walk of life, from every section of the country, as soon as the call to arms occurred. The need was small and easily met, and not one in a hundred

of the ardent young fellows who pressed forward to enter the army had a chance to see any service whatever. But it was good to see that the spirit of '61 had not been lost. Perhaps the best feature of the whole movement was the eagerness with which men went into the ranks, anxious only to serve their country and to do their share of the work without regard to anything in the way of reward or position; for, gentlemen, it is upon the efficiency of the enlisted man, upon the way he does his duty, that the efficiency of the whole army really depends, and the prime work of the officer is, after all, only to develop, foster, and direct the good qualities of the men under him.

Well, this rush into the ranks not only had a very good side, but also at times an amusing side. I remember one characteristic incident which occurred on board one of our naval vessels. Several of these vessels were officered and manned chiefly from the naval militia of the different States, the commander and executive officer, and a few veterans here and there among the crew, being the only ones that came from the regular service. The naval militia contained every type of man, from bankers with a taste for yachting to longshoremen, and they all went in and did their best. But of course it was a little hard for some of them to adjust

themselves to their surroundings. One of the vessels in question, toward the end of the war, returned from the Spanish Main and anchored in one of our big ports. Early one morning a hard-looking and seemingly rather dejected member of the crew was engaged in "squeegeeing" the quarter-deck, when the captain came up and, noticing a large and handsome yacht near by (I shall not use the real name of the yacht), remarked to himself: "I wonder what boat that is?" The man with the squeegee touched his cap and said in answer: "The *Dawn*, sir." "How do you know that?" quoth the captain, looking at him. "Because I own her, sir," responded the man with the squeegee, again touching his cap; and the conversation ended.

Now, it was a first-rate thing for that man himself to have served his trick, not merely as the man behind the gun, but as the man with the squeegee; and it was a mighty good thing for the country that he should do it. In our volunteer regiments we had scores of enlisted men of independent means serving under officers many of whom were dependent for their daily bread upon the work of their hands or brain from month to month. It was a good thing for both classes to be brought together on such terms. It showed that we of this generation had not wholly

forgotten the lesson taught by you who fought to a finish the great Civil War. And there is no danger to the future of this country just so long as that lesson is remembered in all its bearings, civil and military.

Your history, rightly studied, will teach us the time-worn truth that in war, as in peace, we need chiefly the every-day, commonplace virtues, and, above all, an unflagging sense of duty. Yet in dwelling upon the lessons for our ordinary conduct which we can learn from your experience, we must never forget that it also shows us what should be our model in times that are not ordinary, in the times that try men's souls. We need to have within us the splendid heroic virtues which alone avail in the mighty crises, the terrible catastrophes whereby a nation is either purified as if by fire, or else consumed forever in the flames. When you of the Civil War sprang forward at Abraham Lincoln's call to put all that life holds dear, and life itself, in the scale with the nation's honor, you were able to do what you did because you had in you not only the qualities that make good citizens, but in addition the high and intense traits, the deep passion and enthusiasm, which go to make up those heroes who are fit to deal with iron days. We can never as a nation afford to

forget that, back of our reason, our understanding, and our common sense, there must lie, in full strength, the tremendous fundamental passions, which are not often needed, but which every truly great race must have as a well-spring of motive in time of need.

I shall end by quoting to you in substance certain words from a minister of the gospel, a most witty man, who was also a philosopher and a man of profound wisdom, Sydney Smith:

“The history of the world shows us that men are not to be counted by their numbers, but by the fire and vigor of their passions; by their deep sense of injury; by their memory of past glory; by their eagerness for fresh fame; by their clear and steady resolution of either ceasing to live, or of achieving a particular object, which, when it is once formed, strikes off a load of manacles and chains, and gives free space to all heavenly and heroic feelings. All great and extraordinary actions come from the heart. There are seasons in human affairs when qualities, fit enough to conduct the common business of life, are feeble and useless, when men must trust to emotion for that safety which reason at such times can never give. These are the feelings which led the ten thousand over the Carduchian mountains; these are the feelings by which

a handful of Greeks broke in pieces the power of Persia; and in the fens of the Dutch and in the mountains of the Swiss these feelings defended happiness and revenged the oppressions of man! God calls all the passions out in their keenness and vigor for the present safety of mankind, anger and revenge and the heroic mind, and a readiness to suffer—all the secret strength, all the invisible array of the feelings—all that nature has reserved for the great scenes of the world. When the usual hopes and the common aids of man are all gone, nothing remains under God but those passions which have often proved the best ministers of His purpose and the surest protectors of the world.”

**THE
STRENUOUS LIFE**

**ESSAYS AND
ADDRESSES**

**BY
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