DECORATION DAY.

The Nation Honors its Dead—Decorating Soldiers' Graves—Literary Exercises—Full Report of Orations—Etc.

Yesterday the people of our nation, both North and South, devoted themselves to recalling to their minds the glorious deeds of daring, heroic acts and sacrifice of our soldier heroes, and to decorating with floral tributes the graves of those who have passed into eternity. The citizens of this city showed that, although many years have passed since these brave men offered up their lives on their country's altar, they had not forgotten their services, and that their memories were as green as ever in the minds of our people. Under the auspices of Sumner and Warren Posts, G. A. R., Decoration Day was appropriately observed in this city. Flags were floated at half-mast generally throughout the city, and some buildings were decorated in honor of the day. At the Grand Army headquarters, Eintracht Hall, K street, between Fifth and Sixth, bountiful donations of flowers were received in the morning from the citizens of Sacramento, whose gardens were well stripped of choice flowers to make wreaths, bouquets, crosses and other emblems for the occasion. The gifts of flowers were indeed never more bounteous nor beautiful. At the hall were a large number of ladies who tastefully arrranged the flowers. During the forenoon delegations from the Posts visited the Helvetia and St. Joseph's cemeteries and there decorated the soldiers' graves.

So many had contributed flowers that it would be a fruitless effort to try to give the names of all. Among those from abroad who contributed floral offerings were General John McComb, of Folsom; Senator Wm. Johnston, Richland, and Senator Routier.

In answer to a call from the Post at Virginia City, the Posts of Sacramento sent an abundance of the choicest flowers to them by rail, which arrived there on the 29th.

The First Artillery Regiment turned out in full force, as is their usual custom, and acted as escort to the Grand Army. The military formed at their armory, Sixth and L streets at 1:30 P. M. Headed by a squad of eight uniformed policemen, commanded by Chief of Police Jackson, they marched to Sixth and K streets where the Grand Army, one hundred and twenty strong, were drawn up in line, and acted as an escort to the latter.

Brigadier-General John T. Carey was in command as Grand Marshal, and with him were his staff officers, Majors Hubbard, Gardner, Heilbron, Davis, Hahn, Van Fleet, Weaver, McLaughlin and Captain Sheehan, mounted and in uniform. Next followed the First Artillery Regiment headed by the regimental band and commanded by Colonel T. W. Sheehan, who was accompanied by his staff officers, Major McKee, Adjutant Neary, Lieutenant-Colonel Gudbrie, Lieutenants Long, Bush and Chaplain Rice.

The regiment was in the following order: Company A, two companies equalized, Captain Burke and Lieutenant Steinmiller in command; Company G, three companies equalized, Captain White and Lieutenants Sheehan and Flaherty; Company E, Lieutenant Lowell; Company B, two companies equalized, Captain Cook and Lieutenant Ryan; Cadets, two companies, Captain Kay and Lieutenant Allen. The Battery was commanded by Lieutenant Carroll. The ranks were full, the line long, and the military never marched better nor made a finer display.

Next came carriages containing the Orator (General N. P. Chipman, of Red Bluff) and officers of the day.

Following the carriages came the Grand Army of the Republic, Sumner Post first and Warren second. Both had full ranks, tasty uniforms, and each individual carried bouquets and wreaths of flowers. A fife-drum corps preceded the Posts.

About thirty small boys, carrying banners, and uniformed similarly to the Grand Army, marched in the rear, and kept time to the music of a drum beat by one of the number. They carried a banner, and were also laden with flowers.

G. J. Cross, a veteran of the Mexican war, brought up the rear, proudly carrying the banner of the Mexican veterans of this city.

The line of march was as follows: K to Ninth, to J, to Seventh, to K, to Second, to J, to Tenth, to the City Cemetery.

The procession was very lengthy, hundreds of carriages falling into line, and was admired by thousands who congregated on the sidewalks and balconies on either side of J and K streets.

The procession reached the cemetery at 4 o'clock. Long before its arrival, however, people had been assembling, and it is estimated that fully 12,000 people were present to witness the decorating of graves. The usual exercises, reading of the ritual and prayer were conducted by Chaplain Isaiah Hurlburt, of Sumner Post, and Chaplain Winchell, of Warren Post. After the graves had all been decorated, the line was reformed and marched back to the city.

EVENING EXERCISES.

The literary exercises were held in the evening at the Metropolitan Theater, and attended by a very large concourse of people. The stage was handsomely decorated with flags and flowers, and flanked upon the two sides with stands of muskets, presenting a very attractive appearance.

The exercises were opened with an address by H. A. Burnett, Jr., Vice-Department Commander and President of the Day, which was as follows:

Another Memorial Day has been added to the past. Again have we wreathed the garlands and scattered the flowers of gratitude and love. Again has the heart of a nation thrilled with loyalty and pride over the graves of her fallen heroes. Their monument is builded high in a country's love. No words are necessary urging comrades to renewed zeal in the due observance of each return of this hallowed day. As our numbers decrease, and we fall in with those who lie asleep in the ranks of the dead, to our sons and daughters will fall these loving labors; to them the duty of guarding and keeping this day sacred to the memory of our country's defenders. May it remain the soldier's day, devoted to cherishing the remembrance of all honor, all loyalty, all patriotism, and with pure hearts and holy impulses may it stimulate to deeds of a noble and patriotic nature.

For this purpose an Order called the Sons of Veterans has been formed. Posts will before long be instituted, and it is hoped they will soon be strong enough to take an active part in our memorial observances. In connection with the Grand Army, there has also been formed, in nearly every department, ladies' auxiliary corps. The ladies of Sacramento have always been true to the soldier. Your affection has not wavered or been extinguished by time. Each succeeding year you desolate your gardens and twine the wreaths of remembrance anew. We hope you will take up this work with interest, to which we now invite you, promising cordial support.

A Veterans' Home has been established in this Department. It is pleasantly situated in Napa Valley, in the edge of the foothills, where almost perpetual summer reigns, and it is a delightful spot for the weary veteran to pass the remnant of his days. Its affairs are being placed upon a firm basis. State aid has been granted to the extent of twelve dollars and fifty cents per month for each inmate, but not available until the Home has been opened six months. The Association is at present very much embarrassed by the urgent need of funds, to furnish and equip the building for the old soldiers who are now knocking at its doors for admission. Let every Post and comrade and soldier throughout this Department give this Home their united support. Their interest and enthusiasm will arouse that of others, and enlist the sympathies of a generous public, and with such co-operation we feel confident that our Home can be made such a success that every comrade can look upon it with pride. The men who stood in the ranks with us, shoulder to shoulder, who faced the cannon's mouth without hope of reward or recompense of glory, for our country and our country's flag, must not sleep in almshouses. So let us build the walls of our Home high enough and wide enough to shelter every old veteran who needs a home in his declining years, and, gathered there, soothed by his comrades' kind care, may his few remaining years glide peacefully away till mustered in the grand parade above.

The progress of the Grand Army throughout the past year has been most gratifying. Its membership has increased at least one-third, and now numbers over 250,000 strong. To-day the Order is a recognized power in the land. Standing in the background of the national defenses, its aim is to keep alive all feelings of purest loyalty and loftiest patriotism, to cherish all fraternal regard, to keep green in our hearts all tender memories of those comrades we mourn with regret and pride, and to transmit these noble impulses to our children, to guide them in upholding the principles of Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty.

Following the address a recitation was given by Mamie Blanche Ficks entitled, "The Soldier's Welcome," and as an encore, "The Soldier's Day."

General N. P. Chipman, of Red Bluff, delivered the oration as follows:

CITIZENS AND COMRADES: Twenty-three years ago a cannon shot in Charleston harbor startled the American people out of its long dream of peace.

The flag of our Union floating proudly over Sumter—the flag which had never been lowered in the face of foreign foe—went down in sorrow and shame before the gathering cohorts of rebellion.

Our standing army, scattered and emasculated by treasonable councils at Washington, looked hopelessly and helplessly on. One after another walked forth defiantly from the halls of Congress men who had been intrusted with the guardianship of our country's safety and our country's honor, and trampling upon their oaths to support the Constitution and the Union, hastened to place themselves at the head of rebel hosts, and soon the heavens were lurid with the camp fires of treason.

The people of the North sprang indignantly to arms, and civil war, with all its untold horrors and sufferings, began its desolation.

All the proud memories of the past, the glories and triumphs of the Revolution—our common heritage—were for the time obliterated; the immortal Declaration of Independence was silent; the Constitution under which we existed lost its cohesive force; the proud names of the past no longer possessed their charm; our nation trembled and tottered under the awful strain of intercecine strife.

The graves of more than half a million loyal souls who fell in defense of the nation's integrity and the nation's life during the succeeding four years of carnage are scattered all over this fair land—a mighty holocaust of freedom!

Here, two thousand miles from the more stirring scenes of that great struggle, here on the Western borders of that country whose preservation was more precious to them than life itself, some of the survivors of that war came to die and be buried; here, where the sun is last to set and where perpetual verdure decks their graves, some of that noble army have sepulture; and here, to-day, still fresh and warm with the glow of patriotic fervor, are found loving hands and loyal hearts to lay our floral wealth at the last earthly resting-place of those noble martyrs, fit emblem of the sweet remembrance in which they are held.

And why should we not do this? In all ages, in all countries, in all civilizations the memory of those who fell in defense of country has been the sacred trust of the living.

Monuments, pyramids, mausoleums rear their lofty heads all over the face of Europe, connecting the dim and obscure historic past with the active, living present, in one harmonious tribute to the valor and heroism of the world's soldiery. Wherever the footprints of man are to be found, even in the wilds of barbarous tribes, there may be seen perpetual fires burning fragrant incense to the memory of battle-scarred and battle-worn warriors.

Who among mankind better deserve such distinction? Is it the author, the statesman, the philanthropist, the artist, the messenger of Christ? All these and their proud achievements and noble work would perish, the very possibility of their existence to enrich the world by their labors would disappear, and all organized society and government would cease but for the protecting arm of the nation's defenders in times of war.

The millennium is far, very far off, and until it comes Governments and peoples can only be maintained by armed forces; and, as life is the dearest thing to man, so always will the memory of those who freely give it up to save their country be man's most precious heritage.

But it was for the survivors of the loyal armies of the Rebellion to institute the unique and fitting ceremony of Memorial Day in honor of our sacred dead.

On the 6th day of May, 1868, by direction of General John A. Logan, Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, I had the honor to promulgate to comrades of that society an order designating the 30th of May "for the purpose of strewing with flowers and otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the Rebellion, and whose bodies lie in almost every city, village and hamlet churchyard in the land." No form of ceremony was prescribed, but Posts were left to adopt such fitting services as they might choose.

I trust I may with propriety refer to the origin of this observance, and that I may, with some profit to us, read a paragraph from General Order No. 11 of the date given:

"HEADQUARTERS
GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC,
WASHINGTON, D. C., May 5, 1884.

"*General Orders No. 11.*

"We are organized comrades, as our regulations tell us, for the purpose, among other things, of preserving and strengthening those kind and fraternal feelings which have bound together the soldiers, sailors and marines who united to suppress the late Rebellion. What can aid more to assure this result than cherishing tenderly the memory of our heroic dead? Their soldier lives were the reville of freedom to the race in chains, and their deaths the tattoo of rebellious tyranny in arms. We should guard their graves with sacred vigilance. All that the consecrated wealth and taste of the nation can add to their adornment and security is but a fitting tribute to the memory of her slain defenders. Let no wanton foot tread rudely on such hallowed grounds. Let pleasant paths invite the coming and going of reverend visitors and fond mourners. Let no vandalism of avarice or neglect, no ravages of time testify to the present or to the coming generations that we have forgotten, as a people, the cost of a free and undivided Republic.

"If other eyes grow dull and other hands slack, and other hearts cold in the solemn trust, ours shall keep it well as long as the light and warmth of life remains to us.

"Let us then, at the appointed time, gather around their sacred remains and garland the passionless mounds above them with the choicest flowers of springtime; let us raise above them the dear old flag they saved from dishonor; let us, in this solemn presence, renew our pledges to aid and assist those whom they have left among us as a sacred charge upon a nation's gratitude—the soldier's and sailor's widow and orphan."

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JOHN A. LOGAN,
Commander-in-Chief.

N. P. CHIPMAN, Adjutant-General.

In each of the sixteen succeeding years the observances then inaugurated have been faithfully kept, and Decoration Day has become a national memorial, and has received recognition by most of the States of the Union and by the General Government.

I now desire to say what I may never again have an opportunity of saying publicly—that the suggestion of such a memorial day came from a comrade of the Grand Army living in Cincinnati, by a letter written me while Adjutant-General. I laid the letter and the plan it suggested before Commander-in-Chief General Logan, and by his direction the general order already referred to was prepared and Decoration Day was instituted.

The great battles of the war were fought and won by the common soldier. Their names were never heralded in the bulletins and never appeared in army reports; they were known only by mathematical quantities—so many killed, so many wounded, so many survived. In the nature of things, this must have been so, but it only increases the obligation, now that we may do so, to pay a just tribute to their memories. We cannot single them out as we have done Farragut, McPherson, Thomas and a score or more typical soldiers and sailors of the war, but we can by this Memorial Day dedicate ourselves afresh each year to the sacred cause for which they fell, and in renewing our loyalty and devotion to country pay our highest tribute to the memory of those who died to preserve it. And it is a significant and interesting fact that out of the ranks of the common soldiery came the idea of a Memorial Day. All honor then to the common soldiers of the war.

My friends, comrades of the Grand Army of the Republic, Memorial Day had in its institution a purpose higher than merely to arouse our emotional natures and kindle a recollection of the companionship of the war. It is something more than a sentiment.

Your dead comrades have a right to expect more of you and you have pledged them that it shall have a higher significance. The loyal people of this land have united with you to make this day the occasion for asserting their readiness to aid you in inculcating the great and leading object of your society. That object is formulated and made part of your creed: "To maintain true allegiance to the United States of America, based upon a paramount respect for and fidelity to the National Constitution and laws; to discountenance whatever tends to weaken loyalty, incites to insurrection, treason or rebellion, or in any manner impairs the efficiency and permanency of our free institutions, and to encourage the spread of universal liberty, equal rights and justice to all men."

No man or woman has a right to mar the fitness or harmony of to-day's observances; no man or woman has a right to disturb the sacred repose of a Union soldier, who can not come with us and be rededicated to the principles here embodied.

And this leads me to say a word, which I trust will not be misinterpreted, but which duty to our fallen heroes, and duty to the living as well, compels me to say.

Our National Encampment has declared one of the purposes of Memorial Day to be "to preserve the memories of those *only* who fought in defense of national unity." How can we, without an utter and complete overthrow of our pledge to "discountenance whatever tends to weaken loyalty," step aside and pay the same homage to the memory of those who died in its defense? If treason is a crime, as our laws declare it to be, we cannot afford to honor those who commit the crime. If our comrades fought and died in a noble cause, we cannot honor them or the cause by honoring those and their cause who fought against them. To do so would be fraught with untold danger. Those who would list