

purpose and permanently designated as a National holiday. On this day, throughout our broad land, the people bury, as it were, their soldier dead anew. Again, as in the days when the land was covered with the dark and sombre cloud of civil war, funeral trains, with muffled drums and drooping flags, wend their way to the sepulchres of the heroes who fell in the war against treason, who died that the Nation might live. They bring not the tears of the burial, the agony of the parting; but instead they bring the flowers of remembrance—the fit emblems of the noble heroes who shut their eyes on life at an age when the whole future was flushed with hope like the eastern sky with the rising sun.

The air of to-day breathes a soft, sad story of death, and the low, faint zephyrs seem but the lingering echoes of the lisping farewells from the lips of those who, amid the melting smoke of a Corinth, or the parting clouds of a Lookout Mountain, turned their faces from home and their eyes toward God, and breathed but their lives with a heroism only less sublime than the sacrifice on the cross. On this day the Nation bows the knee of grief, half-masts its starry flag and lets the plumed shadows of death crape its folds. There is a peculiar appropriateness in the people of this country spontaneously assembling, over all our broad land, at the graves where the Nation's heroes are buried, to do them honor—in a grateful people, with hands still thrilling with the remembrances of the last pressing touch of farewell, bringing their votive tributes to garland the graves of those they mourn.

As on the 22d of February we remember the birth of the first savior of our country—as on the Fourth of July we commemorate the great act of the Continental Congress—as on the 8th of January we celebrate the crowning victory of our second war with Great Britain—so it seems fitting that the American people should assemble on this 30th day of May, from the granite hills of New England, where the pine tree keeps silent vigil with the dead, over the broad prairies of the West, where the waving wheat and tassled corn hold watch and ward, to the distant slope of the Pacific, where the towering Sierras stand as silent sentinels, and with uncovered heads and bountiful hands plant flowers in remembrance of those heroes who went out from the calm scenes of quiet life to their country's shrine, to lay there the offering of their lives—who went down to death, amid scenes of horror, that their country might live redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled.

Years have passed since the loved ones were stricken down by our side, or taken from the home circle, or snatched from social life; yet those years have not been long enough to heal the wounds made

or cause us to forget them. We meet to-day as a part of the hundreds of thousands of the fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and above all, the wives and children of the noble dead. We meet to honor them; we meet to beautify their resting places; we meet to express to the world our remembrance of them; we meet to re-write their names on memory's tablet, that we may tell the generations to come of their noble deeds, of their lofty patriotism, and of their heroic sacrifices which have secured to them the gratitude of their countrymen and won the applause of nations. While upon other occasions we celebrate, upon this one we simply commemorate with respectful solemnity. From time immemorial it has been the custom of the people of every nation to pay honor and offer tributes of affection to the memory of those of their number who fell in battle or in other ways sacrificed their lives for the sake of their country. Everywhere and at all times the soldier's grave has been the shrine of devotion to his countrymen. All nations and all peoples, from those who have reached the highest type of civilization to the lowest and most degraded tribes, unite in the payment of honors at the graves of their fallen heroes. To their soldier dead the Egyptians builded obelisks and pyramids; the Greeks and Romans temples; the ancient Scandinavian piles of weapons and skulls of slaughtered enemies. Modern nations erect monuments and cryptographs and mausoleums, of marble and bronze and granite. Of all modes of paying honor to the dead, none is more appropriate or beautiful or more emblematic, than to strew their graves with flowers. Monuments of brass will molder and decay, marble and granite will blacken and crumble, but flowers bloom perennially, and as each recurring year we strew the graves of our heroes with flowers, so each recurring year we recall their glorious deeds, and thus perpetuate their memory in monuments of hearts from generation to generation down the corridors of time. If ever a people had cause to be grateful to their fallen heroes, we, the people of this country, should feel and acknowledge the deepest gratitude to those of our patriot countrymen who fell willing martyrs to the cause of liberty; who sacrificed the sacrifices of all the mortal hopes and endearments of their homes, of their friends, and of their lives, to secure the preservation of our venerated form of government, with all the sublime guarantees which it vouchsafes to the humblest citizen thereof. It is to their heroic sacrifices, unswerving valor, pure and lofty patriotism and disinterested devotion to country, that we are indebted for the liberty of to-day—the enjoyment of the privileges and protection of a Government whose benignity endears

it to lovers of liberty everywhere, and whose strong arm protects the humblest and weakest of our citizens as well as the greatest and most powerful.

Let us, who live to enjoy the fruit of their labors, give them honor with no sparing hand, pour out upon them with no grudging spirit all that we can give them—respect, and love, and veneration, and undying memory. If those who fought in 1812 because the nation's honor was impugned, and because the nation's flag was insulted, are held in enduring remembrance, how can we measure the meed of those who battled to save the nation's life—who upheld the nation's flag amidst the heat of battle, and in whose hands, if it ever drooped in disaster, drooped only to rise again with brighter stars. But, independent of all these blessings and privileges which have resulted to us from the achievements of our noble dead, we should cherish their memories and commemorate their heroic deeds for the sufferings they endured, the privations they withstood, and the personal sacrifices which they made. If we stop to contemplate these, we will see that they who died, cannot receive honor over much. For who can fully appreciate the long and tiresome marches, the wet bivouac, the listless camp life, the weary hospital days and nights, when death itself seemed a welcome boon, the horrors of the prison pens of Andersonville, Libby and Belle Isle, the endless and innumerable privations and dangers to which our soldiers cheerfully submitted. Those who lie beneath yonder green sward were once as full of life and health and anticipation as we are to-day. Yet, at the call of their country, they left their pleasant homes, full of attraction, turned from those they fondly loved, and, with no repining words, buckled on their armor and went forth, like the Spartans of old, to do battle even unto death against those who stood with uplifted hands ready to destroy the Government that owned us all as children. Softly were the farewells spoken to the mothers and wives, who fondly caressed the faces of those they loved, while sisters gave the last tribute of affection to brothers who had mingled with them in the daily pleasures and sorrows of their homes. Some who thus went out full of youth's ardor and manly vigor fell at bloody Belmont; some bit the dust on Shiloh's famous and fatal field; some sank, gun in hand, in Vicksburg's trenches; some looked their last on earthly things amid the blood and smoke and carnage of Stone River, Mission Ridge and the Golgotha round Atlanta; while others sleep their last earthly sleep whose lives went gasping out amid the sickening scenes of the hospital. And all for what purpose? To rescue our greatly beloved country, not simply

from the humility of denationalization, but from the very agony of its national life; and could they on this day burst the infolding coverments of their graves, and rise to witness the scenes of heartfelt gratitude so beautifully symbolized in the simple and expressive ceremony of decking their graves with these beautiful spring flowers, they would, it seems to me, without question signify to us in some way their complacency and satisfaction at so remarkable an exhibition. Let monumental piles rise on all our great battle-fields to show the greatest conflicts of the age. Let partial friends and admiring States build monuments to the more distinguished dead, who were, mayhap, favored by golden opportunity. Let artists sketch in colors the memorable actions which will to all ages illustrate the science of war. Let songs recount the heroic labors of the Union brave. But let a grateful people never forget that no spots on earth should be more sacred in their recollections than the lowly resting places of our soldier dead; that they should pay the same honor to a wooden board with name, or marked "unknown," as to the most priceless memorial tomb. And as you strew the graves of those in yonder cemetery, forget not their comrades who are sleeping on the battle-field or picket line—heroes all. Let not the thoughts of heart or the prayer of lips forget one. None so humble, none so much unknown, but that he deserves every laurel of honor, and every tribute of affection.

But, independent of these posthumous honors which we pay the dead, is there not another sacred obligation incumbent on us, from which there is no honorable retreat, namely: That of remembering, also, their widows and orphans? Great as were the sacrifices of the dead, greater by far were those of their dependent families. Their hearts still bleed at the recollection of their losses. These beautiful services bring them no joy, for they bring not back the departed. None gave so much for their country as they who gave their all. The poor widow who cast her mite into the treasury, will carry a Savior's commendation to the end of time. She cast in all she had, even her living. Should not the poor widows of our land, who gave their country all their living, be cherished, as not only a legacy of the dead, but the noblest benefactors of their race? It is a Christian duty to "visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions." How sacred and pleasant that duty when they have become fatherless, and widows for us. The women of this country, during the war, ennobled humanity by their sacrifices, lofty patriotism and sweet charities. Let man enable humanity by giving to those sacrifices the remembrance and tender care which are their

due. We must not, however, keep the promise to the ear and break it to the hope; nor must we permit the apple of promise to turn to ashes on the lips of those to whom we owe this sacred obligation. Our hands must not be closed, nor our offering stinted to those whose natural protectors died for all of us. The orphans are the Nation's wards. See to it that they are not neglected; and, though the father's place can never be filled, heart-strings severed cannot be re-united, let the widows and orphans see that we are faithful to our trust as their protectors.

But let us remember that while we honor our dead, and are not unmindful of our duty to their dependent widows and orphans, something is due from us to the surviving soldiers of the late war. In our daily avocations, how often do we meet these veterans, often broken down in health and maimed for life in their country's service, who have received no testimonials of the people's gratitude or partiality for past military services. This is in part due to lack of opportunity; and when I call to mind the number of soldiers who hold honorable positions in our land, I am constrained to say they have not been forgotten wholly and entirely, or that their services and sacrifices are unappreciated by the American people. Mr. President, it is a proud reflection to know that the sentiment of gratitude does find a sure lodgment in the great American heart, despite that ill-natured saying that Republics are ungrateful, and that no apprehension need be felt that either our dead or living heroes will soon be forgotten. Let me inquire what it was that made General Grant, the great captain of the age, President of these United States, or Generals Rawlins and Belknap Cabinet Ministers in the Government? How does it happen that so many of our gubernatorial chairs, halls of legislation, and other places of distinction, are filled by our gallant soldiers? The answer is threefold: Their own individual worth of character, their great military renown, and the gratitude of the people. The very honorable position which our worthy President, Captain Mercer, holds in this community is due to the same cause. And so it is all over this broad land. Our people are not prone to forget those who periled their all—including life itself—to save them and their country, which they are wont to love so well and so wisely.

Sacred henceforth should be the annual return of the 30th of May; and on that day, till time and revolution shall level the graves of the dead, and palsify the hearts of the living, let the resting places of the American soldier be hallowed with the laurel and the rose.

Buy your meat at Howard's.