



MEMORIAL DAY

The American Calendar

Amy A. Kass | Leon R. Kass

THE MEANING OF MEMORIAL DAY

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Amy A. Kass | Leon R. Kass

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Table of Contents

* Suitable for students grades 5–8

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. MEMORIAL DAY: AN AMERICAN HOLIDAY | |
| The Origins and Traditions of Memorial Day | 2 |
| John A. Logan, General Orders No. 11* | 7 |
| James A. Garfield, Decoration Day Address | 9 |
| Joseph B. Foraker, Address at Arlington Cemetery | 12 |
| Calvin Coolidge, “Freedom and Its Obligations” | 18 |
| Ronald Reagan, Remarks at a Memorial Day Ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery | 23 |
| Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., “In Our Youth Our Hearts Were Touched with Fire” | 26 |
| Pat C. Hoy II, “Homage to Vietnam” | 31 |
| 2. WHY GO TO WAR? THE REASONS OF NATIONS AND THE MOTIVES OF MEN | |
| Christopher G. Memminger, Declaration of Secession of South Carolina | 39 |
| Sullivan Ballou, Letter to Sarah* | 44 |
| James Sloan Gibbons, “We Are Coming, Father Abraham”* | 46 |
| Lindley H. Miller, Marching Song of the First Arkansas Regiment* | 48 |
| George F. Root, “The Battle Cry of Freedom”* | 50 |
| William H. Barnes, “The Battle Cry of Freedom” (Southern Version)* | 52 |
| Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address* | 54 |
| Frederick Douglass, “Why Should a Colored Man Enlist?” | 55 |
| Woodrow Wilson, Address to Congress Requesting a Declaration of War | 59 |
| Joyce Kilmer, “The Peacemaker” | 65 |
| Franklin D. Roosevelt, “A Date Which Will Live in Infamy” | 66 |
| Dwight D. Eisenhower, Order of the Day: 6 June 1944 | 68 |
| Franklin D. Roosevelt, “D-Day Prayer”* | 69 |
| George W. Bush, Address to a Joint Session of Congress Following the 9/11 Attacks | 71 |
| 3. THE EXPERIENCE OF WAR | |
| . . . <i>By Those Who Fight</i> | |
| Walter Kittredge, “Tenting on the Old Camp-Ground”* | 80 |
| Herman Melville, “Shiloh: A Requiem” | 82 |
| Stephen E. Ambrose, “Night on the Line,” from <i>Citizen Soldiers</i> | 83 |
| E. B. Sledge, “Brave Men Lost,” from <i>With the Old Breed</i> | 84 |
| Ernie Pyle, Stories from the Front | 86 |
| “Brave Men, Brave Men!” | |
| “The Death of Captain Waskow” | |
| “A Long Thin Line of Personal Anguish” | |
| . . . <i>And Those Who Care for Them</i> | |

| | |
|--|-----|
| <u>Louisa May Alcott, “A Night,” from <i>Hospital Sketches</i></u> | 93 |
| <u>Abraham Lincoln, Letter to Mrs. Bixby</u> | 105 |
| <u>Abraham Lincoln, Letter to Fanny McCullough*</u> | 106 |
| <u>Archibald MacLeish, “Memorial Rain”</u> | 107 |
| <u>John Ciardi, “A Box Comes Home”</u> | 109 |
| <u>Ninette M. Lowater, “Roy’s Decoration Day”*</u> | 110 |
| | |
| 4. HONORING THE FALLEN DEAD | |
| <i>The Dead</i> | |
| <u>Michael R. Strobl, “A Marine’s Journey Home”</u> | 113 |
| <u>Richard Watson Gilder, “The Dead Comrade”</u> | 114 |
| <u>Theodore O’Hara, “Bivouac of the Dead”</u> | 115 |
| <u>Mary B. C. Slade, “Soldier’s Memorial Day”</u> | 118 |
| <u>Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “Decoration Day”</u> | 120 |
| <u>Joyce Kilmer, “Rouge Bouquet”</u> | 121 |
| <u>John McCrae, “In Flanders Fields”*</u> | 123 |
| <u>Moina Belle Michael, “We Shall Keep the Faith”*</u> | 124 |
| <u>Henry James, “The Story of a Year”</u> | 125 |
| | |
| <i>The Cause</i> | |
| <u>Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Voluntaries”</u> | 164 |
| <u>Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address</u> | 168 |
| <u>Francis Miles Finch, “The Blue and the Gray”*</u> | 170 |
| <u>Frederick Douglass, Address at the Monument of the Unknown Dead</u> | 172 |
| | |
| <i>Monuments and Memorials</i> | |
| <u>Herman Melville, “Memorials: On the Slain at Chickamauga”</u> | 176 |
| <u>Rutherford B. Hayes, Address at the Unveiling of the Soldiers’ Monument</u> | 177 |
| <u>James Whitcomb Riley, “A Monument for the Soldiers”</u> | 179 |
| <u>William Hubbard, “A Meaning for Monuments”</u> | 181 |
| | |
| <u>Appendix: Caitrin Nicol, “A Very Peculiar God”</u> | 187 |
| | |
| <u>About the Cover</u> | 193 |
| | |
| <u>Acknowledgments</u> | 195 |

1



Memorial Day:
An American Holiday

The Origins and Traditions of Memorial Day

Celebrated on the last Monday in May, Memorial Day marks the beginning of summer. Families fire up the grill or flock to the lake house, while those who remain in town are able to take advantage of the weekend's sales. But Memorial Day is also the day we set aside to honor those who died in service to their country. It is more than a day of remembrance, for it is also a day for "us the living" to re-dedicate ourselves to civic renewal and to perpetuate our form of government.

Death in the Civil War

Memorial Day grew out of the grief and tragedy wrought by the Civil War, and to appreciate the day—and continue its traditions—one must first understand the context from which it arose.

On April 9, 1865, at the McLean House in Appomattox Court House, Virginia, Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered his Army of Northern Virginia to General Ulysses S. Grant, commander of the armies of the United States. Though it took another few months for the remaining Confederate armies to follow Lee's example and for hostilities to end, Lee's surrender signaled the close to the bloodiest four years in US history.

By the end of the Civil War, some 750,000 Americans in the North and South—more than two percent of the population—had been killed. In 2013 numbers, such a percentage would exact a death toll of more than 6.3 million Americans. As historian Drew Gilpin Faust notes in her vivid portrayal of death and the Civil War, *This Republic of Suffering*, during the war "loss became commonplace; death's threat, its proximity, and its actuality became the most widely shared of the war's experiences." She continues:

[F]or those Americans who lived in and through the Civil War, the texture of the experience, its warp and woof, was the presence of death. . . . As they faced horrors that forced them to question their ability to cope, their commitment to the war, even their faith in a righteous God, soldiers and civilians alike struggled to retain their most cherished beliefs, to make them work in the dramatically altered world that war had introduced. Americans had to identify—find, invent, create—the means and mechanisms to manage more than half a million dead: their deaths, their bodies, their loss. How they accomplished this task reshaped their individual lives—and deaths—at the same time that it redefined their nation and their culture. The work of death was Civil War America's most fundamental and most demanding undertaking.¹

Dying away from home was an especially distressing prospect for Civil War Americans. The last words of the dying were given an especial significance by these

¹ Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Random House, 2008), xxiii.

Victorian Christians, for they represented the state of the soon-to-be-departed's eternal soul. Parents and siblings who were given news of their loved one's injuries rushed to the battlefield hospital to care for their dying beloved and to witness his final moments. More often, news came too late—if it came at all—and so others tried to record the last breaths of their dying comrades—or, in some cases, of their enemy. Hospital workers and other civilians likewise tried to bridge the divide between battlefield and home, writing letters to next-of-kin, encouraging soldiers to write their families, and filling in for absent mothers and sisters. Many did so with the hope that their own soldiers might be receiving the same care elsewhere should they need it. One popular wartime song described the gratitude those at home had for such nurses and caregivers:

Bless the lips that kissed our darling,
As he lay on his death-bed,
Far from home and 'mid cold strangers
Blessings rest upon your head. . . .

O my darling! O our dead one!
Though you died far, far away,
You had two kind lips to kiss you,
As upon your bier you lay.²

Being buried away from home was a constant worry for the soldiers themselves. Letters from the period are filled with soldiers' wishes to be buried in their family plots, and some dying soldiers used their last written words to describe where they had fallen so their families could come and retrieve their bodies. "Death is near," wrote 26-year-old James Montgomery in a blood-stained letter to his father in Mississippi, "I will die far from home. . . . I would like to rest in the graveyard with my dear mother and brothers."³ His sentiment was a common one.

When a family came looking for their deceased, their search—even if they knew generally where to look—often ended in anguish. (The Montgomery family, despite their efforts, never found James' grave.) Due to the incredible scale of carnage, the bodies of most dead soldiers were, of necessity, treated impersonally. Though an officer could expect that his body would be sent home to his family, the remains of the enlisted were treated with less care. Burial was haphazard, frequently en masse—especially if the graves were for the enemy dead—and it was not uncommon for shallowly-dug burial grounds to give up their dead when a change of the weather demanded them.

A Civil War Holiday

² J. A. C. O'Connor, "Bless the Lips that Kissed Our Darling: Answer To: Let Me Kiss Him For His Mother" (New York: H De Marsan, c. 1863), in Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 13.

³ James Robert Montgomery, Letter to His Father, May 10, 1864, in David Skinner, "The Living and the Dead," *Humanities* 33, no. 5 (September/October 2012), www.neh.gov/humanities/2012/septemberoctober/feature/the-living-and-the-dead.

Given the broad reach of death, soon after the Civil War ended grassroots efforts to honor the dead arose. Citizens first sought to identify and properly bury the fallen soldiers. Clara Barton, a Civil War nurse and founder of the American Red Cross, established the Missing Soldiers Office to help families find information about their missing loved ones. Edmund Burke Whitman, a quartermaster during the war, became the superintendent of America's new national cemeteries—established by Congress in 1867—and led expeditions to the war-torn South to find the buried Union dead; with the aid of black troops and former slaves, he located more than 100,000 graves. By 1870, the nation had re-interred some 300,000 Union soldiers in the new federal cemeteries. Roughly 120,000 of them remained unidentified.

In April 1865—the month that Abraham Lincoln was assassinated—blacks in Charleston, South Carolina performed their own re-burial service. Four long years after the war had begun there, the city lay in ruins. Most of the city's white population had deserted the city and so were not around to see the 21st US Colored Infantry Regiment march into Charleston that spring. The regiment was instead greeted by the thousands of former slaves who still lived there.

During the final years of the war, Confederates had converted the city's Washington Race Course and Jockey Club into an outdoor prison, and at least 250 Union soldiers succumbed to exposure and disease there. Now, a small group of black workmen re-buried the Union dead who had been buried in a mass grave behind the track's grandstand and built a whitewashed fence around the new cemetery, naming it "Martyrs of the Race Course."

On May 1, 10,000 Charlestonians—many of them former slaves—paraded around the slaveholders' race course, with the procession led by 3,000 black children carrying flowers and singing "John Brown's Body." Historian David W. Blight describes what came next:

The children were followed by three hundred black women representing the Patriotic Association, a group organized to distribute clothing and other goods among the freed people. The women carried baskets of flowers, wreaths, and crosses to the burial ground. The Mutual Aid Society, a benevolent association of black men, next marched in cadence around the track and into the cemetery, followed by large crowds of white and black citizens. . . . [T]hey declared the meaning of the war in the most public way possible—by their labor, their words, their songs, and their solemn parade of roses, lilacs, and marching feet on the old Planters' Race Course. One can only guess at which passages of scripture were read at the graveside on this first Memorial Day. But among the burial rites the spirit of Leviticus was surely there: "For it *is* the jubilee; it shall be holy unto you . . . in the year of this jubilee ye shall return every man unto his possession."⁴

⁴ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 70.

After the dedication of the cemetery, the crowds retired to hear speeches, enjoy picnics, and watch parading Union soldiers—much like a modern-day Memorial Day.

Other cities—approximately 25—also claim to be the progenitor of Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day.⁵ In March 1866, for example, nearly a year after the parade in Charleston, the Ladies Memorial Association of Columbus, Georgia set aside April 26 as a day to “wreath the graves of our martyred dead with flowers”—and encouraged women elsewhere to do the same.⁶ In many Southern states, April 26 is still celebrated as Confederate Memorial Day. In 1966, Congress and President Lyndon B. Johnson tried to settle the question by declaring Waterloo, New York as the birthplace of Memorial Day, for it was there that, on May 5, 1866, businesses closed and residents flew flags at half-staff in commemoration of the Civil War dead.⁷

But Decoration Day did not take on a widespread prominence and become a shared day of celebration until May 1868. John A. Logan, a retired general in the US Army and commander in chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, a fraternal organization of Union Civil War veterans, set aside May 30 of that year “for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating, the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village, hamlet, and churchyard in the land.”⁸

Logan’s orders were heeded, and three years after the Civil War ended a crowd of 5,000 gathered at Arlington National Cemetery. At the ceremony, Congressman and future president James A. Garfield spoke,⁹ and veterans and orphaned children decorated the graves of their fallen comrades, countrymen, and family members. Similar ceremonies were held that day at 183 cemeteries across 27 states. The following year, 336 cities in 31 states—including in the South—observed the call to remembrance.

Memorial Day: Beyond the Civil War

In 1873, New York became the first state to institutionalize the observance of Decoration Day on May 30. By 1890, all the Northern states had done so. As the meaning of the day shifted from celebrating the cause of the Union to a more general commemoration of the Civil War and its dead, Southern states also made Decoration Day their own. Over time, too, the name of the holiday shifted from Decoration Day to Memorial Day, perhaps to encompass the feeling that memorializing entails an act even greater than simply decorating or caring for the resting place of the fallen. “Memorial Day,” Blight writes,

⁵ For a good roundup of many of these claims, see Campbell Robertson, “Birthplace of Memorial Day? That Depends Where You’re From,” *New York Times*, May 27, 2012, www.nytimes.com/2012/05/27/us/many-claim-to-be-memorial-day-birthplace.html.

⁶ Mary Ann Williams, Letter to the Editor, *Columbus Times*, March 12, 1866, <http://files.usgwarchives.net/ga/muscogee/history/memorial.txt>.

⁷ Lyndon B. Johnson, Proclamation 3727 – “Prayer for Peace, Memorial Day, 1966,” May 26, 1966, www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=27618.

⁸ John A. Logan, General Orders No. 11, Grand Army of the Republic, May 5, 1868, see below.

⁹ See Garfield’s remarks below.

“provided a means to achieve both spiritual recovery and historical understanding. . . . [It] became a legitimizing ritual of the new American nationalism forged out of the war.”¹⁰

With over 116,000 Americans killed in World War I, Memorial Day broadened its scope even further in order to honor all of America’s war dead. As in other allied countries, Americans began using the poppy as a flower of remembrance, and the sale of poppies was used to provide aid to children orphaned by the war. (The popularity of the poppy comes from John McCrae’s 1915 poem “In Flanders Fields,” in which the Canadian soldier paints a haunting picture of the flowers growing amid the graves of World War I.)

After World War II—in which another 405,000 American lives were lost—Memorial Day also became a day to pray for peace, and since 1950 every president has included such a plea in his Memorial Day remarks. Since the year 2000, each president has also asked Americans to pause at 3 p.m. local time for a moment of silent reflection.

One hundred years after John Logan issued his order for the first national Decoration Day, in 1968, Congress finally declared Memorial Day a national holiday.¹¹ In so doing, however, Congress moved the celebration from May 30 to the last Monday in May, as part of the Uniform Holiday Bill that created the three-day weekend, in part, “to stimulate greater industrial and commercial production.”¹² As with the other holidays affected—Washington’s Birthday, Labor Day, Columbus Day, and Veterans Day—the change has been met with some resistance, and many veterans’ groups advocated for returning the day’s observance to May 30.

Despite the distractions, despite the long weekends and barbecues and beginning-of-summer festivities, many Americans still memorialize the nation’s dead each May. About 5,000 people gather each year at Arlington National Cemetery, where the president or the vice president of the United States places a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. (“Here rests in honored glory an American soldier known but to God.”) Members of the Army’s Third US Infantry (“The Old Guard”) place miniature American flags in front of more than 260,000 gravestones at the national cemetery. Communities across the nation hold similar ceremonies, decorating graves, attending parades, giving speeches, remembering the dead, and enjoying food and one another—just as the first American celebrators of Memorial Day did 150 years ago.

¹⁰ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 72.

¹¹ 90th US Congress Title 5, U.S.C. § 6103 a, June 28, 1968.

¹² Lyndon B. Johnson, Statement by the President Upon Signing the Uniform Holiday Bill, June 28, 1968, www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=28963.

General Orders No. 11

JOHN A. LOGAN

Our current holiday of Memorial Day traces its origins to this document. John A. Logan (1826–86) was a Mexican War veteran and congressman from Illinois when, in 1862, he resigned his seat to join the Union Army. Wounded at the Battle of Fort Donelson, Logan saw extensive action in the western theater and rose to the rank of major general. After the war, he resumed his political career, first as senator and later as an (unsuccessful) candidate for vice president, and also helped found the Grand Army of the Republic, a Union veteran’s organization, leading the effort to establish a holiday in memory of the soldiers who died in defense of the Union.

What, according to this order, is the purpose of Decoration Day? For what reasons do we honor these dead? Why should we do it communally? Why is strewing the graves with flowers a fitting tribute?

General Orders No. 11

Headquarters, Grand Army of the Republic
Washington, DC, May 5, 1868

I. The 30th day of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating, the grave of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village, hamlet, and churchyard in the land. In this observance, no form or ceremony is prescribed, but posts and comrades will, in their own way, arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit.

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 by cherishing tenderly the memory of our heroic dead, who made their breasts a barricade between our country and its foes? Their soldier lives were the reveille of freedom to a race in chains, and their deaths the tattoo¹³ 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 reverent 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.

¹³ *An evening drum or bugle signal recalling soldiers to their quarters.*

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 remain to us.

Let us, then, at the time appointed, gather around their sacred remains, and garland the passionless mounds above them with 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 sacred charges upon the nation's gratitude,—the soldier's and sailor's widow and orphan.

II. It is the purpose of the Commander-in-Chief to inaugurate this observance, with the hope it will be kept up from year to year, while a survivor of the war remains to honor the memory of his departed comrades. He earnestly desires the public press to call attention to this order, and lend its friendly aid in bringing it to the notice of comrades in all parts of the country, in time for simultaneous compliance therewith.

III. Department commanders will use every effort to make this order effective.

By order of:
JOHN A. LOGAN
Commander-in-Chief.

N.P. CHIPMAN
Adjutant-General.

Decoration Day Address

JAMES A. GARFIELD

On May 30, 1868, a crowd of 5,000 gathered at Arlington National Cemetery for the first Decoration Day exercises. Before strewing flowers upon the graves of the dead, the crowd listened to an address by James A. Garfield (1831–81), then an Ohio congressman who had also served as a major general in the Civil War. In this first of such annual addresses at Arlington National Cemetery, Garfield, who in 1881 would become the 20th president of the United States, sets a standard by explaining what Decoration Day is all about and why it should be commemorated.

Garfield begins by asserting the poverty of speech in comparison to the deeds of the fallen. How does he ask us to regard the dead? And why should we the living envy them their lives and their deaths? What, according to Garfield, motivated the men to “condense life into an hour” and “joyfully welcom[e] death”? What does he mean by invoking the “unconscious influence” of past heroic sacrifices? How can “this silent assembly of the dead” become “voices [that] will forever fill the land like holy benedictions”? Why is Arlington National Cemetery a fitting resting place for these dead?

I am oppressed with a sense of the impropriety of uttering words on this occasion. If silence is ever golden, it must be here beside the graves of fifteen thousand men, whose lives were more significant than speech, and whose death was a poem, the music of which can never be sung. With words we make promises, plight faith, praise virtue. Promises may not be kept; plighted faith may be broken; and vaunted virtue be only the cunning mask of vice. We do not know one promise these men made, one pledge they gave, one word they spoke; but we do know they summed up and perfected, by one supreme act, the highest virtues of men and citizens. For love of country they accepted death, and thus resolved all doubts, and made immortal their patriotism and their virtue. For the noblest man that lives, there still remains a conflict. He must still withstand the assaults of time and fortune, must still be assailed with temptations, before which lofty natures have fallen; but with these the conflict ended, the victory was won, when death stamped on them the great seal of heroic character, and closed a record which years can never blot.

I know of nothing more appropriate on this occasion than to inquire what brought these men here; what high motive led them to condense life into an hour, and to crown that hour by joyfully welcoming death? Let us consider.

Eight years ago this was the most unwarlike nation of the earth. For nearly fifty years¹⁴ no spot in any of these states had been the scene of battle. Thirty millions of people had an army of less than ten thousand men. The faith of our people in the stability and permanence of their institutions was like their faith in the eternal course of nature.

¹⁴ From the end of the War of 1812 to 1861.

Peace, liberty, and personal security were blessings as common and universal as sunshine and showers and fruitful seasons; and all sprang from a single source, the old American principle that all owe due submission and obedience to the lawfully expressed will of the majority. This is not one of the doctrines of our political system—it is the system itself. It is our political firmament, in which all other truths are set, as stars in Heaven. It is the encasing air, the breath of the Nation's life. Against this principle the whole weight of the rebellion was thrown. Its overthrow would have brought such ruin as might follow in the physical universe, if the power of gravitation were destroyed and

“Nature's concord broke,
Among the constellations war were sprung,
Two planets, rushing from aspect malign
Of fiercest opposition, in mid-sky
Should combat, and their jarring spheres confound.”¹⁵

The Nation was summoned to arms by every high motive which can inspire men. Two centuries of freedom had made its people unfit for despotism. They must save their Government or miserably perish.

As a flash of lightning in a midnight tempest reveals the abysmal horrors of the sea, so did the flash of the first gun disclose the awful abyss into which rebellion was ready to plunge us. In a moment the fire was lighted in twenty million hearts. In a moment we were the most warlike Nation on the earth. In a moment we were not merely a people with an army—we were a people in arms. The Nation was in column—not all at the front, but all in the array.

I love to believe that no heroic sacrifice is ever lost; that the characters of men are molded and inspired by what their fathers have done; that treasured up in American souls are all the unconscious influences of the great deeds of the Anglo-Saxon race, from Agincourt to Bunker Hill. It was such an influence that led a young Greek, two thousand years ago, when musing on the battle of Marathon, to exclaim, “the trophies of Miltiades will not let me sleep!” Could these men be silent in 1861; these, whose ancestors had felt the inspiration of battle on every field where civilization had fought in the last thousand years? Read their answer in this green turf. Each for himself gathered up the cherished purposes of life—its aims and ambitions, its dearest affections—and flung all, with life itself, into the scale of battle.

And now consider this silent assembly of the dead. What does it represent? Nay, rather, what does it not represent? It is an epitome of the war. Here are sheaves reaped in the harvest of death, from every battlefield of Virginia. If each grave had a voice to tell us what its silent tenant last saw and heard on earth, we might stand, with uncovered heads, and hear the whole story of the war. We should hear that one perished when the first great drops of the crimson shower began to fall, when the darkness of that first disaster at Manassas fell like an eclipse on the Nation; that another died of disease while wearily waiting for winter to end; that this one fell on the field, in sight of the spires of

¹⁵ *John Milton, Paradise Lost, Book VI.*

Richmond, little dreaming that the flag must be carried through three more years of blood before it should be planted in that citadel of treason; and that one fell when the tide of war had swept us back till the roar of rebel guns shook the dome of yonder Capitol, and re-echoed in the chambers of the Executive Mansion. We should hear mingled voices from the Rappahannock, the Rapidan, the Chickahominy, and the James; solemn voices from the Wilderness, and triumphant shouts from the Shenandoah, from Petersburg, and the Five Forks, mingled with the wild acclaim of victory and the sweet chorus of returning peace. The voices of these dead will forever fill the land like holy benedictions.

What other spot so fitting for their last resting place as this under the shadow of the Capitol saved by their valor? Here, where the grim edge of battle joined; here, where all the hope and fear and agony of their country centered; here let them rest, asleep on the Nation's heart, entombed in the Nation's love!

Address at Arlington Cemetery

JOSEPH B. FORAKER

On May 30, 1905, Senator Joseph B. Foraker of Ohio delivered the annual Memorial Day address at Arlington National Cemetery. Foraker (1846–1917) had fought in the Civil War as a member of the 89th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, where he eventually rose to the rank of brevet captain. As a veteran and a political leader, he uses this speech to marvel at the progress made by the United States since the war, progress that would have been unattainable without the sacrifices of the Union dead. It is useful to compare his remarks, made from a greater distance, with those of Garfield 38 years earlier, made while memories of the war were still fresh.

What does Foraker regard as the “great work” of the heroes of the Civil War? What is the relation between the “moral question” and the “legal question” about which the two sides differed? Why does he emphasize, as Garfield did not, the moral purpose of the war and its meaning for the outcome? Why does Foraker celebrate the growth of the power of the federal government? How, according to Foraker, has the Civil War led to American greatness? What, finally, is the larger purpose of celebrating Memorial Day?

Fellow Comrades, Ladies and Gentlemen:

This day belongs to our soldier dead; not of one war, but of all our wars; and particularly here, in this cemetery, where on these shafts and stones we read names that illumine so many periods of our history.

But while it belongs to all who have at any time or place upheld the flag on land or on sea, yet it had its origin in the sorrow and gratitude that filled the heart of the Nation, as it emerged from the Civil War, stricken with grief, but crowned with glorious triumph.

For these reasons it is no disparagement of others to speak here to-day chiefly of that conflict; its character and results.

We have reached the time when this can be done dispassionately.

As the traveler sailing away from the land sees the shore, the trees, the houses, and the hills receding, blending and disappearing until only the mountain peaks are longer visible, so have the details and minor features of that great struggle blended and faded out of sight, leaving, as we look back to it across the forty years that have since elapsed, only those strong and commanding facts that have taken permanent places in history.

We no longer see regiments, brigades, divisions, corps, or even separate armies, but only one mighty and invincible host, wearing the blue and relentlessly pressing on and on, and ever onward, through success and adversity alike, from battlefield to battlefield,

until, with waving flags, flashing sabres and gleaming bayonets, they marched home flushed with final victory.

It would be interesting and inspiring to recall that time and review in detail those days of sacrifice, of hardship, of battle, of death, of heroism, of patriotic devotion, of thrilling triumph; and here in this presence there comes an almost irresistible impulse to do so. But all that would be only repeating familiar history.

I shall, therefore, say but little in an abstract way of our heroes and their deeds of daring, that I may speak more fully of their great work.

As we behold the people of this land to-day all at peace, all prosperous, all happy, all imbued with love for our flag and our Government, it seems almost incredible that so recently we should or could have been distracted and brought to the very brink of destruction by one of the most ruthless wars of modern times.

It seems so strange and unnatural that we instinctively inquire, what was it all about? And what has happened that those who were at fatal war with each other should so soon become friends and be bound together in common interest and common aspirations.

It is unnecessary to trace the development or discuss the respective merits of the differences that made our country sectional and almost destroyed it. It is sufficient to recall the fact that, plainly stated, we had two questions about which we differed. One a moral question, and the other a legal question; one slavery, and the other secession; one appealing to the conscience and the other to the Constitution.

Both demanded settlement, but we strove to confine the war to the settlement of only one. Even Abraham Lincoln said he would save the Union with slavery if he could; without slavery if he must.

But on that basis we did not make much progress. So long as the war meant no more than whether a State had a right under the Constitution to secede from the Union and thus break up and destroy it, we did not get along very well.

Manassas, Balls Bluff, and other defeats and humiliations, one after another, overtook us, with only enough of success and victory interspersed to keep us from becoming utterly discouraged and abandoning the field.

Finally Lincoln saw, as in due time most men saw, that if the Union armies were to be successful the Union cause must be based on something broader and more important than a cold legal proposition, important as that might be and was.

Our fathers of the Revolution commenced their struggle merely to redress grievances and enlarged their purpose to include and secure independence only when more than a year after Lexington and Concord they learned the necessity for a more inspiring cause.

In the same manner we learned and progressed. Not until after Antietam¹⁶ did the Nation see, appreciate and rise to its opportunity. Then it was the war for the preservation of the Union was placed on a basis that appealed to the moral sentiment of the people by the declaration that the bond should go free, thus striking at the root of all our differences and making it possible to conquer a lasting peace and establish a durable Union. From that moment the Union cause had a new strength and the Union soldier a new life. He marched with a firmer tread and held his musket with a more determined grasp. He felt that he was on God's side of the great contest, and that if he should be called upon to make the highest sacrifice it would at least not be made in vain.

It was a long, hard struggle. It cost hundreds of thousands of lives and hundreds of millions of treasure. It filled the land with mourning and piled up colossal burdens of debt, not only to creditors who took our securities, but to the pensioners who constitute the Nation's roll of honor.

It was a tremendous price to pay, greater than any language can adequately portray; but so too was the reward that followed.

When the smoke of battle cleared away it could be seen that not only was slavery gone forever, but that some things had been settled that it was of transcendent importance to have settled. In the first place, it was made plain that there was a right and a wrong side to the great controversy that had been so long in progress, and that the right side had triumphed and been vindicated. And that is as true to-day, and will be forever, as it was then. The fact that those who fought against the Government fought bravely and gallantly, and believed that they were right, does not change the fact that they were nevertheless in the wrong, and that their defeat was a blessing from them as well as for us and all concerned.

It was also settled that American heroism and valor were the same no matter under which flag displayed, for neither side could justly charge the other with any lack of these

¹⁶ *For a superb account of the battle of Antietam and its significance, which also spells out what Foraker is claiming here, see Bruce Catton, "Crisis at the Antietam," (American Heritage 9, no. 5 [1958], www.americanheritage.com/content/crisis-antietam). The victory enabled Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation from a position of strength, rather than weakness. The Proclamation, says Catton,*

finally determined that the Civil War was not merely a war for reunion but also a war to end human slavery; turned it from a family scrap into an incalculable struggle for human freedom . . . It harnessed to the Union cause the basic dreams and aspirations of the [human] race, and nailed to the American flagpole the charter of human rights. Everything in American history—and within reason, in world history would be different after this. The bloody showdown in the cornfield and along the sunken lane and over the little stone bridge that spanned the narrow Antietam had enabled the nation to take a decisive step forward along the road to destiny. . . . Out of it came reunion and freedom, neither one fully attained even a century later, but each one riveted into the American consciousness in a way time cannot undo.

What America is and hopes to be dates from the fight along Antietam Creek. The fight cost an enormous number of lives, and inflicted pain and disability on many thousands more; but in the infinite economy of the advance of the human race it may have been worth what it cost.

high qualities of vigorous manhood; and in this fact, that cost us so much at that time, was another blessing; for since then there has been profound mutual respect, where before there was so much lack of it as to make impossible any true feeling of real homogeneity.

It furthermore settled for all time to come that this is a Nation, not only in the sense that the Constitution is our supreme law, binding the States together in perpetual union, but also in the sense that our Government is invested with all the powers that properly belong to sovereignty.

If nothing more had been accomplished the victory would have been worth more than all it cost, but its value is to be measured, not alone by what it secured, but also by what it prevented.

Defeat of the Union cause would have meant, not only two governments, but general disintegration, with corresponding sacrifice of that power, prosperity, prestige and greatness that a common country, a common flag, a common interest and a common destiny have brought us.

We know what the terms of peace were as Grant dictated them; but who can tell what they would have been had they been prescribed by Lee?

Where would he have run the boundary lines? How many States would have gone with the Southern Confederacy? and who would have stayed the spread of slavery? How many States would have remained to constitute the Union, if any at all? And how long would it have been until other secessions would have occurred? Who would have assumed the burdens of the public debt, and whose soldiers would have been pensioned? and who would have paid that obligation?

What indemnity would the South have exacted? and what kind of guarantees would she have imposed for the safety of her institutions and the preservation of her domination?

There is no end to the reasonable speculation that may be fairly indulged as to the ruinous consequences that would have followed if the result had been reversed.

In one sense such speculation may be idle, but not until we thus attempt to conjecture can we form any measure of the debt of gratitude we owe to the brave men whom we are here to honor.

But they accomplished more still; as already indicated, they not only prevented all the disasters suggested, and achieved for us the blessings of an indissoluble Union and universal freedom, but they freed us from the paralysis of the doctrines of States rights and strict construction, by which the power of the Federal Government was minimized to the point of helplessness to even save our national life, and gave it in turn that vitality, vigor and scope which belong to full national sovereignty. They made a reality of the

belief in that respect of Alexander Hamilton and John Marshall, for, since Appomattox, what they taught has been fundamental truth, and we have been developing our constitutional powers until at last all recognize that our Government is as completely sovereign as any other, and that what others can do we can do, for we are equal in the family of nations to the strongest and the greatest.

Thus it was that we were able to intervene in Cuba and take there all the steps necessary to establish an independent government for another people; and by the same token we had the power, when necessity seemed to call for its exercise, to acquire our insular possessions, and, without incorporating them into the Union, hold them as dependencies to be governed by forms and laws and institutions suited to their conditions and requirements.¹⁷ The time was when the power to build the national road from Maryland to Ohio was challenged, but to-day no one doubts our power to construct a great international highway uniting the oceans and accommodating the commerce of the world.

And so might be specified a great chapter of achievements, both at home and abroad, of which all Americans are justly proud, for which it was denied that our Government had the requisite power until after these men fought and won.

With the Union preserved, slavery abolished, the Constitution amended, our finances rehabilitated, and this national idea fully developed and firmly established, our country entered upon a career of such unprecedented growth of strength and wealth and achievement that the spirit of sectionalism and the animosities of war have been literally drowned out by the ever-rising flood of a common pride in the greatness of a common country. . . .

It is no exaggeration, but only the sober truth, to say that we were never so strong, never so prosperous, never so contented, never so respected, never so powerful to do good in the world, and never doing so much good, either at home or abroad, as we are to-day. And great as is the present, greater by far, exceeding all power of description, is the career that lies before us.

The men of other wars showed bravery, heroism and capacity for great deeds, and all added glory to our flag, honor to our name and renown to our arms, but no men since our independence was established have done so much for the American people as the men of the Union Army. They were mere boys, most of them yet in their teens, and all of the more than two millions who were enlisted, except less than 50,000, were under twenty-five years of age. But, measured by their work and its far-reaching consequences, they belong among the truly great men of history.

Through good report and bad, victory and defeat, summer and winter, sunshine and storm, they unflinchingly and uncomplainingly met every requirement of the great task

¹⁷ *Here, Foraker refers to the Treaty of Paris of 1898, which ended the Spanish-American War and resulted in Spain surrendering control of Cuba and ceding Puerto Rico, parts of the West Indies, Guam, and the Philippines to the United States.*

that fell upon them. No hardship was too severe for them to undergo, no loss was too heavy for them to bear, no sacrifice too comfort, or blood, or life was too great for them to make. They laid all unsparingly upon their country's altar, and behold the result—this mighty Nation, so full of honour and so full of promise. Only the shortcomings of ourselves, or of those who are to come after us can bring their work to naught. Our presence here to-day is our pledge that it shall not fail through fault of ours, for we have come, not only to strew flowers on their graves, recount their deeds, extol their virtues, and pay tribute to their memory, but also that we may study the lessons they taught, and by these sacred and beautiful ceremonies consecrate ourselves anew to the great duty of perpetuating what they preserved. May God give us wisdom and courage to do our duty as well as they did theirs. If so, the Union they saved and the institutions they perfected will endure for long ages to come, and with passing years bear ever-increasing blessings to humanity.

Freedom and Its Obligations

CALVIN COOLIDGE

On May 30, 1924, President Calvin Coolidge (1872–1933) offered this reflection on the meaning of Memorial Day at Arlington’s annual commemorations. By then, the Civil War had largely faded from living memory and the scars of another war, World War I, were quite fresh. Coolidge took the opportunity of distance from the Civil War to draw larger meaning from the observance of Memorial Day. We see here another example of how changing historical circumstances lead people to find different lessons in the same historical past.

Coolidge sees the Civil War as but an instance in an age-old conflict. What is that conflict? To which side of that conflict does Coolidge offer most support? Why does he emphasize the need for national unity, a strong national government, and the duty of each citizen “to remember that he must be first of all an American”? What, according to Coolidge, is the connection between the American Union and the goal of peace? What does he see as the meaning of Memorial Day today? How, according to this speech, can Americans continue to honor the men who died in the Civil War? Do you agree?

We meet again upon this hallowed ground to commemorate those who played their part in a particular outbreak of an age old conflict. Many men have many theories about the struggle that went on from 1861 to 1865. Some say it had for its purpose the abolition of slavery. President Lincoln did not so consider it. There were those in the South who would have been willing to wage war for its continuation, but I very much doubt if the South as a whole could have been persuaded to take up arms for that purpose. There were those in the North who would have been willing to wage war for its abolition, but the North as a whole could not have been persuaded to take up arms for that purpose. President Lincoln made it perfectly clear that his effort was to save the Union, with slavery if he could save it that way; without slavery if he could save it that way. But he would save the Union. The South stood for the principle of the sovereignty of the States. The North stood for the principle of the supremacy of the Union.

This was an age old conflict. At its foundation lies the question of how can the Government govern and the people be free? How can organized society make and enforce laws and the individual remain independent? There is no short sighted answer to these inquiries. Whatever may have been the ambiguity in the Federal Constitution, of course the Union had to be supreme within its sphere or cease to be a Union. It was also certain and obvious that each State had to be sovereign within its sphere or cease to be a State. It is equally clear that a government must govern, must prescribe and enforce laws within its sphere or cease to be a government. Moreover, the individual must be independent and free within his own sphere or cease to be an individual. The fundamental question was then, is now, and always will be through what adjustments, by what actions, these principles may be applied.

It needs but very little consideration to reach the conclusion that all of these terms are relative, not absolute, in their application to the affairs of this earth. There is no absolute and complete sovereignty for a State, nor absolute and complete independence and freedom for an individual. It happened in 1861 that the States of the North and the South were so fully agreed among themselves that they were able to combine against each other. But supposing each State of the Union should undertake to make its own decisions upon all questions, and that all held divergent views. If such a condition were carried to its logical conclusion, each would come into conflict with all the others, and a condition would arise which could only result in mutual destruction. It is evident that this would be the antithesis of State sovereignty. Or suppose that each individual in the assertion of his own independence and freedom undertook to act in entire disregard of the rights of others. The end would be likewise mutual destruction, and no one would be independent and no one would be free. Yet these are conflicts which have gone on ever since the organization of society into government, and they are going on now. To my mind this was fundamental of [*sic*] the conflict which broke out in 1861.

The thirteen Colonies were not unaware of the difficulties which these problems presented. We shall find a great deal of wisdom in the method by which they dealt with them. When they were finally separated from Great Britain, the allegiance of their citizens was not to the Nation for there was none. It was to the States. For the conduct of the war there had been a voluntary confederacy loosely constructed and practically impotent. Continuing after peace was made, when the common peril which had been its chief motive no longer existed, it grew weaker and weaker. Each of the States could have insisted on an entirely separate and independent existence, having full authority over both their internal and external affairs, sovereign in every way. But such sovereignty would have been a vain and empty thing. It would have been unsupported by adequate resources either of property or population, without a real national spirit, ready to fall prey to foreign intrigue or foreign conquest. That kind of sovereignty meant but little. It had no substance in it. The people and their leaders naturally sought for a larger, more inspiring ideal. They realized that while to be a citizen of a State meant something, it meant a great deal more if that State were a part of a national union. The establishment of a Federal Constitution giving power and authority to create a real National Government did not in the end mean a detriment, but rather an increment to the sovereignty of the several States. Under the Constitution there was brought into being a new relationship, which did not detract from but added to the power and the position of each State. It is true that they surrendered the privilege of performing certain acts for themselves, like the regulation of commerce and the maintenance of foreign relations, but in becoming a part of the Union they received more than they gave.

The same thing applies to the individual in organized society. When each citizen submits himself to the authority of law he does not thereby decrease his independence or freedom, but rather increases it. By recognizing that he is a part of a larger body which is banded together for a common purpose, he becomes more than an individual, he rises to a new dignity of citizenship. Instead of finding himself restricted and confined by rendering obedience to public law, he finds himself protected and defended and in the exercise of increased and increasing rights. It is true that as civilization becomes more

complex it is necessary to surrender more and more of the freedom of action and live more and more according to the rule of public regulation, but it is also true that the rewards and the privileges which come to a member of organized society increase in a still greater proportion. Primitive life has its freedom and its attraction, but the observance of the restrictions of modern civilization enhances the privileges of living a thousand fold.

Perhaps I have said enough to indicate the great advantages that accrue to all of us by the support and maintenance of our Government, the continuation of the functions of legislation, the administration of justice, and the execution of the laws. There can be no substitute for these, no securing of greater freedom by their downfall and failure, but only disorganization, suffering and want, and final destruction. All that we have of rights accrue from the Government under which we live.

In these days little need exists for extolling the blessings of our Federal Union. Its benefits are known and recognized by all its citizens who are worthy of serious attention. No one thinks now of attempting to destroy the Union by armed force. No one seriously considers withdrawing from it. But it is not enough that it should be free from attack, it must be approved and supported by a national spirit. Our prime allegiance must be to the whole country. A sentiment of sectionalism is not harmless because it is unarmed. Resistance to the righteous authority of Federal law is not innocent because it is not accompanied by secession. We need a more definite realization that all of our country must stand or fall together, and that it is the duty of the Government to promote the welfare of each part and the duty of the citizen to remember that he must be first of all an American.

Only one conclusion appears to me possible. We shall not promote our welfare by a narrow and shortsighted policy. We can gain nothing by any destruction of government or society. That action which in the long run is for the advantage of the individual, as it is for the support of our Union, is best summed up in a single word; renunciation. It is only by surrendering a certain amount of our liberty, only by taking on new duties and assuming new obligations, that we make that progress which we characterize as civilization. It is only in like manner that the citizens and the States can maintain our Federal Union and become partakers of its glory. That is the answer to every herald of discontent and to every preacher of destruction. While this is understood, American institutions and the American Union are secure.

This principle can not be too definitely or emphatically proclaimed. American citizenship is a high estate. He who holds it is the peer of kings. It has been secured only by untold toil and effort. It will be maintained by no other method. It demands the best that men and women have to give. But it likewise awards to its partakers the best that there is on earth. To attempt to turn it into a thing of ease and inaction would be only to debase it. To cease to struggle and toil and sacrifice for it is not only to cease to be worthy of it but is to start a retreat toward barbarism. No matter what others may say, no matter what others may do, this is the stand that those must maintain who are worthy to be called Americans.

But that great struggle was carried on by those whom this day is set apart to commemorate, not only for the preservation of the Union. The authority of the Federal Government had been resisted by armed force. They were also striving to restore peace. It must be remembered that our Republic was organized to avoid and discourage war, and to promote and establish peace. It is the leading characteristic of our national holidays that they are days of peace. The ways of our people are the ways of peace. They naturally seek ways to make peace more secure.

It is not to be inferred that it would be anything less than courting national disaster to leave our country barren of defense. Human nature is a very constant quality. While there is justification for hoping and believing that we are moving toward perfection, it would be idle and absurd to assume that we have already reached it. We can not disregard history. There have been and will be domestic disorders. There have been and will be tendencies of one nation to encroach on another. I believe in the maintenance of an Army and Navy, not for aggression but for defense. Security and order are our most valuable possessions. They are cheap at any price. But I am opposed to every kind of military aggrandizement and to all forms of competitive armament. The ideal would be for nations to become parties to mutual covenants limiting their military establishments, and making it obvious that they are not maintained to menace each other. This ideal should be made practical as fast as possible.

Our Nation has associated itself with other great powers for the purpose of promoting peace in the regions of the Pacific Ocean. It has steadily refused to accept the covenant of the League of Nations, but long before that was thought of, before the opening of the present century, we were foremost in promoting the calling of a conference at The Hague to provide for a tribunal of arbitration for the settlement of international disputes. We have made many treaties on that basis with other nations.

But we have an opportunity before us to reassert our desire and to lend the force of our example for the peaceful adjudication of differences between nations. Such action would be in entire harmony with the policy which we have long advocated. I do not look upon it as a certain guaranty against war, but it would be a method of disposing of troublesome questions, an accumulation of which leads to irritating conditions and results in mutually hostile sentiments. More than a year ago President Harding proposed that the Senate should authorize our adherence to the protocol of the Permanent Court of International Justice, with certain conditions. His suggestion has already had my approval. On that I stand. I should not oppose other reservations, but any material changes which would not probably receive the consent of the many other nations would be impracticable. We can not take a step in advance of this kind without assuming certain obligations. Here again if we receive anything we must surrender something. We may as well face the question candidly, and if we are willing to assume these new duties in exchange for the benefits which would accrue to us, let us say so. If we are not willing, let us say that. We can accomplish nothing by taking a doubtful or ambiguous position. We are not going to be able to avoid meeting the world and bearing our part of the burdens of the world. We must meet those burdens and overcome them or they will meet

us and overcome us. For my part I desire my country to meet them without evasion and without fear in an upright, downright, square, American way.

While there are those who think we would be exposed to peril by adhering to this court, I am unable to attach great weight to their arguments. Whatever differences, whatever perils exist for us in the world, will come anyway, whether we oppose or support the court. I am one of those who believe we would be safer and that we would be meeting our duties better by supporting it and making every possible use of it. I feel confident that such action would make a greater America, that it would be productive of a higher and finer national spirit, and of a more complete national life.

It is these two thoughts of union and peace which appear to me to be especially appropriate for our consideration on this day. Like all else in human experience, they are not things which can be set apart and have an independent existence. They exist by reason of the concrete actions of men and women. It is the men and women whose actions between 1861 and 1865 gave us union and peace that we are met here this day to commemorate. When we seek for the chief characteristic of those actions, we come back to the word which I have already uttered; renunciation. They gave up ease and home and safety and braved every impending danger and mortal peril that they might accomplish these ends. They thereby became in this Republic a body of citizens set apart and marked for every honor so long as our Nation shall endure. Here on this wooded eminence, overlooking the Capital of the country for which they fought, many of them repose, officers of high rank and privates mingling in a common dust, holding the common veneration of a grateful people. The heroes of other wars lie with them, and in a place of great preeminence lies one whose identity is unknown, save that he was a soldier of this Republic who fought that its ideals, its institutions, its liberties, might be perpetuated among men. A grateful country holds all these services as her most priceless heritage, to be cherished forevermore.

We can testify to these opinions, not by our words but by our actions. Our country can not exist on the renunciation of the heroic souls of the past. Public service, from the action of the humblest voter to the most exalted office, can not be made a mere matter of hire and salary. The supporters of our institutions must be inspired by a more dominant motive than a conviction that their actions are going to be profitable. We can not lower our standards to what we think will pay, but we must raise them to what we think is right. It is only in that direction that we shall find true patriotism. It is only by that method that we can maintain the rights of the individual, the sovereignty of the States, the integrity of the Union, the permanency of peace, and the welfare of mankind. You soldiers of the Republic enrolled under her banner that through your sacrifices there might be an atonement for the evils of your day. That is the standard of citizenship for all time. It is the requirement which must be met by those who hold public place. That must be the ideal of those who are worthy to share in the glory which you have given to the name of America, the ideal of those who hold fellowship with Washington and Lincoln.

Remarks at a Memorial Day Ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery

RONALD REAGAN

When President Ronald Reagan (1911–2004) made these Memorial Day remarks at Arlington National Cemetery on May 26, 1986, the world looked very different from how it had appeared to Calvin Coolidge 62 years before. The post-World War I dream of a world without war had been shattered by the horrors of World War II, though the nation mourned its dead as the heroes that they were. Over the next 40 years, a stalemated war in Korea, an unpopular and unsuccessful war in Vietnam, and understandable nervousness that the Cold War against the Soviet Union might turn hot and nuclear left the nation in a highly ambivalent mood about Memorial Day and why it should be celebrated. (In keeping with this altered mood, Congress in 1968 changed the traditional May 30th date of the Memorial Day to the last Monday in May, as part of the Uniform Monday Holiday Act, in order to transform public holidays into three-day weekends for American workers and families.) Reagan, speaking thematically about memory but in his disarmingly folksy style, tried to remind those present of why a national holiday of remembrance still matters.

Why does Reagan say that “today is a day to be with the family and to remember”? How does he characterize what all his named heroes had in common? What does it mean to say “they loved with the sureness of the young”? How do you respond to his discussion of the sacrifices of youth? How does Reagan treat the veterans of Vietnam? How does Reagan’s speech about peace and strength compare with the speeches about peace made by President Coolidge (see above) or President Woodrow Wilson (see below)? What exactly would Reagan have Americans remember on Memorial Day?

Today is the day we put aside to remember fallen heroes and to pray that no heroes will ever have to die for us again. It’s a day of thanks for the valor of others, a day to remember the splendor of America and those of her children who rest in this cemetery and others. It’s a day to be with the family and remember.

I was thinking this morning that across the country children and their parents will be going to the town parade and the young ones will sit on the sidewalks and wave their flags as the band goes by. Later, maybe, they’ll have a cookout or a day at the beach. And that’s good, because today is a day to be with the family and to remember.

Arlington, this place of so many memories, is a fitting place for some remembering. So many wonderful men and women rest here, men and women who led colorful, vivid, and passionate lives. There are the greats of the military: Bull Halsey and the Admirals Leahy, father and son; Black Jack Pershing; and the GI’s general, Omar Bradley. Great men all, military men. But there are others here known for other things.

Here in Arlington rests a sharecropper's son who became a hero to a lonely people. Joe Louis came from nowhere, but he knew how to fight. And he galvanized a nation in the days after Pearl Harbor when he put on the uniform of his country and said, "I know we'll win because we're on God's side." Audie Murphy is here, Audie Murphy of the wild, wild courage. For what else would you call it when a man bounds to the top of a disabled tank, stops an enemy advance, saves lives, and rallies his men, and all of it single-handedly. When he radioed for artillery support and was asked how close the enemy was to his position, he said, "Wait a minute and I'll let you speak to them."

Michael Smith is here, and Dick Scobee, both of the space shuttle Challenger. Their courage wasn't wild, but thoughtful, the mature and measured courage of career professionals who took prudent risks for great reward—in their case, to advance the sum total of knowledge in the world. They're only the latest to rest here; they join other great explorers with names like Grissom and Chaffee.¹⁸

Oliver Wendell Holmes is here, the great jurist and fighter for the right. A poet searching for an image of true majesty could not rest until he seized on "Holmes dissenting in a sordid age." Young Holmes served in the Civil War. He might have been thinking of the crosses and stars of Arlington when he wrote: "At the grave of a hero we end, not with sorrow at the inevitable loss, but with the contagion of his courage; and with a kind of desperate joy we go back to the fight."

All of these men were different, but they shared this in common: They loved America very much. There was nothing they wouldn't do for her. And they loved with the sureness of the young. It's hard not to think of the young in a place like this, for it's the young who do the fighting and dying when a peace fails and a war begins. Not far from here is the statue of the three servicemen—the three fighting boys of Vietnam. It, too, has majesty and more. Perhaps you've seen it—three rough boys walking together, looking ahead with a steady gaze. There's something wounded about them, a kind of resigned toughness. But there's an unexpected tenderness, too. At first you don't really notice, but then you see it. The three are touching each other, as if they're supporting each other, helping each other on.

I know that many veterans of Vietnam will gather today, some of them perhaps by the wall. And they're still helping each other on. They were quite a group, the boys of Vietnam—boys who fought a terrible and vicious war without enough support from home, boys who were dodging bullets while we debated the efficacy of the battle. It was often our poor who fought in that war; it was the unpampered boys of the working class who picked up the rifles and went on the march. They learned not to rely on us; they learned to rely on each other. And they were special in another way: They chose to be faithful. They chose to reject the fashionable skepticism of their time. They chose to

¹⁸ *Here, Reagan remembers the astronauts who were killed commanding the Space Shuttle Challenger, which suffered catastrophic booster failure during the launch of its tenth mission in 1986. Gus Grissom (1926–67) and Roger Bruce Chaffee (1935–67) were NASA astronauts who died during a pre-launch test for the Apollo 1 mission in 1967.*

believe and answer the call of duty. They had the wild, wild courage of youth. They seized certainty from the heart of an ambivalent age; they stood for something.

And we owe them something, those boys. We owe them first a promise: That just as they did not forget their missing comrades, neither, ever, will we. And there are other promises. We must always remember that peace is a fragile thing that needs constant vigilance. We owe them a promise to look at the world with a steady gaze and, perhaps, a resigned toughness, knowing that we have adversaries in the world and challenges and the only way to meet them and maintain the peace is by staying strong.

That, of course, is the lesson of this century, a lesson learned in the Sudetenland, in Poland, in Hungary, in Czechoslovakia, in Cambodia. If we really care about peace, we must stay strong. If we really care about peace, we must, through our strength, demonstrate our unwillingness to accept an ending of the peace. We must be strong enough to create peace where it does not exist and strong enough to protect it where it does. That's the lesson of this century and, I think, of this day. And that's all I wanted to say. The rest of my contribution is to leave this great place to its peace, a peace it has earned.

Thank all of you, and God bless you, and have a day full of memories.

In Our Youth Our Hearts Were Touched with Fire

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES JR.

The final two selections in this chapter are included here because they deal explicitly with the problem and purposes of national memory. As personal memories of past wars fade, people—especially young people, and especially in times of peace—may wonder why Memorial Day matters. Just such a question is the point of departure for this Memorial Day address (excerpted) that Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. (1841–1935) delivered on May 30, 1884, in Keene, New Hampshire, before John Sedgwick Post No. 4, Grand Army of the Republic. In the first half of the speech, Holmes, a Civil War veteran and later a distinguished justice of the United States Supreme Court (1902–35), provides, as he puts it, “an answer which should command the assent of those who do not share our memories, and in which we of the North and our brethren of the South could join in perfect accord.”

What is that answer? Does it persuade you? “To fight out a war,” Holmes writes, “you must believe something and want something with all your might. . . . One may fall—at the beginning of the charge or at the top of the earthworks—but in no other way can he reach the rewards of victory.” What things, then, are worth fighting for? Dying for? Before his very moving tribute to the dead and our duty to honor them,¹⁹ Holmes says we observe Memorial Day because it helps us, the living: “I believe from the bottom of my heart that our memorial halls . . . are worth more to our young men by way of chastening and inspiration than the monuments of another hundred years of peaceful life could be.” What does Holmes mean by this claim? Are you persuaded? What is the meaning of the title? What does it say about your own youthful heart?

Not long ago I heard a young man ask why people still kept up Memorial Day, and it set me thinking of the answer. Not the answer that you and I should give to each other—not the expression of those feelings that, so long as you and I live, will make this day sacred to memories of love and grief and heroic youth—but an answer which should command the assent of those who do not share our memories, and in which we of the North and our brethren of the South could join in perfect accord.

So far as this last is concerned, to be sure, there is no trouble. The soldiers who were doing their best to kill each other felt less of personal hostility, I am very certain, than some who were not imperiled by their mutual endeavors. I have heard more than one of those who had been gallant . . . officers on the Confederate side say that they had had no such feeling. I know that I and those whom I knew best had not. We believed that it was most desirable that the North should win; we believed in the principle that the Union is indissoluble; we, or many of us at least, also believed that the conflict was inevitable,

¹⁹ *This speech, and especially the last part of it, should also be read with the selections in Chapter Four, “Honoring the Fallen Dead.”*

and that slavery had lasted long enough. But we equally believed that those who stood against us held just as sacred convictions that were the opposite of ours, and we respected them as every man with a heart must respect those who give all for their belief. . . . You could not stand up day after day in those indecisive contests where overwhelming victory was impossible because neither side would run as they ought when beaten, without getting at last something of the same brotherhood for the enemy that the north pole of a magnet has for the south—each working in an opposite sense to the other, but each unable to get along without the other. . . . The soldiers of the war . . . can join in commemorating a soldier's death with feelings not different in kind, whether he fell toward them or by their side.

But Memorial Day may and ought to have a meaning also for those who do not share our memories. When men have instinctively agreed to celebrate an anniversary, it will be found that there is some thought of feeling behind it which is too large to be dependent upon associations alone. The Fourth of July, for instance, . . . stripped of the temporary associations which gave rise to it, . . . is now the moment when by common consent we pause to become conscious of our national life and to rejoice in it, to recall what our country has done for each of us and to ask ourselves what we can do for the country in return.

So to the indifferent inquirer who asks why Memorial Day is still kept up we may answer, It celebrates and solemnly reaffirms from year to year a national act of enthusiasm and faith. It embodies in the most impressive form our belief that to act with enthusiasm and faith is the condition of acting greatly. To fight out a war you must believe something and want something with all your might. So must you do to carry anything else to an end worth reaching. More than that, you must be willing to commit yourself to a course, perhaps a long and hard one, without being able to foresee exactly where you will come out. All that is required of you is that you should go somewhither as hard as ever you can. The rest belongs to fate. One may fall—at the beginning of the charge or at the top of the earthworks—but in no other way can he reach the rewards of victory.

When it was felt so deeply as it was on both sides that a man ought to take part in the war unless some conscientious scruple or strong practical reason made it impossible, was that feeling simply the requirement of a local majority that their neighbors should agree with them? I think not: I think the feeling was right—in the South as in the North. I think that as life is action and passion, it is required of a man that he should share the passion and action of his time at peril of being judged not to have lived.

If this be so, the use of this day is obvious. It is true that I cannot argue a man into a desire. . . . But, although desire cannot be imparted by argument, it can be by contagion. Feeling begets feeling, and great feeling begets great feeling. We can hardly share the emotions that make this day to us the most sacred day of the year and embody them in ceremonial pomp without in some degree imparting them to those who come after us. I believe from the bottom of my heart that our memorial halls and statues and tablets, the tattered flags of our regiments gathered in the Statehouses, and this day with its funeral

march and decorated graves, are worth more to our young men by way of chastening and inspiration than the monuments of another hundred years of peaceful life could be.

But even if I am wrong, even if those, who come after us are to forget all that we hold dear, and the future is to teach and kindle its children in ways as yet unrevealed, it is enough for us that this day is dear and sacred.

Accidents may call up the events of the war. You see a battery of guns go by at a trot, and for a moment you are back at White Oak Swamp or Antietam or on the Jerusalem Road. You hear a few shots fired in the distance, and for an instant your heart stops as you say to yourself, The skirmishers are at it, and listen for the long roll of fire from the main line. You meet an old comrade after many years of absence; he recalls the moment when you were nearly surrounded by the enemy, and again there comes up to you that swift and cunning thinking on which once hung life and freedom—Shall I stand the best chance if I try the pistol or the sabre on that man who means to stop me? . . . These and the thousand other events we have known are called up, I say, by accident, and, apart from accident, they lie forgotten.

But as surely as this day comes round we are in the presence of the dead. For one hour, twice a year at least—at the regimental dinner, where the ghosts sit at table more numerous than the living, and on this day when we decorate their graves—the dead come back and live with us.

I see them now, more than I can number, as once I saw them on this earth. They are the same bright figures, or their counterparts, that come also before your eyes; and when I speak of those who were my brothers the same words describe yours.

I see a fair-haired lad, a lieutenant, and a captain on whom life had begun somewhat to tell, but still young, sitting by the long mess-table in camp before the regiment left the State, and wondering how many of those who gathered in our tent could hope to see the end of what was then beginning. For neither of them was that destiny reserved. I remember, as I awoke from my first long stupor in the hospital after the battle of Ball's Bluff, I heard the doctor say, "He was a beautiful boy,"²⁰ and I knew that one of those two speakers was no more. The other, after passing harmless through all the previous battles, went into Fredericksburg with strange premonition of the end and there met his fate.²¹

I see another youthful lieutenant as I saw him in the Seven Days, when I looked down the line at Glendale.²² The officers were at the head of their companies. The advance was beginning. We caught each other's eye and saluted. When next I looked he was gone. . . .

There is one who on this day is always present to my mind.²³ He entered the army at

²⁰ *Lt. William L. Putnam, 20th Massachusetts Regiment.*

²¹ *Cpt. Charles F. Cabot, 20th Massachusetts Regiment.*

²² *Lt. James T. Lowell, 20th Massachusetts Regiment.*

²³ *Henry Abbott, 20th Massachusetts Regiment.*

nineteen, a second lieutenant. In the Wilderness, already at the head of his regiment, he fell, using the moment that was left him of life to give all of his little fortune to his soldiers. . . . I observed him in every kind of duty, and never in all the time that I knew him did I see him fail to choose that alternative of conduct which was most disagreeable to himself. He was indeed a Puritan in all his virtues without the Puritan austerity; for, when duty was at an end, he who had been the master and leader became the chosen companion in every pleasure that a man might honestly enjoy. In action he was sublime. His few surviving companions will never forget the awful spectacle of his advance alone with his company in the streets of Fredericksburg.²⁴ In less than sixty seconds he would become the focus of a hidden and annihilating fire from a semicircle of houses. His first platoon had vanished under it in an instant, ten men falling dead by his side. He had quietly turned back to where the other half of his company was waiting, had given the order, "Second Platoon, forward!" and was again moving on, in obedience to superior command, to certain and useless death, when the order he was obeying was countermanded. The end was distant only a few seconds; but if you had seen him with his indifferent carriage, and sword swinging from his finger like a cane, you would never have suspected that he was doing more than conducting a company drill on the camp parade ground. He was little more than a boy, but the grizzled corps commanders knew and admired him; and for us, who not only admired but loved, his death seemed to end a portion of our life also. . . .

I have spoken of some of the men who were near to me among others very near and dear, not because their lives have become historic, but because their lives are the type of what every soldier has known and seen in his own company. In the great democracy of self-devotion private and general stand side by side. Unmarshaled save by their own deeds, the armies of the dead sweep before us, "wearing their wounds like stars. . . ." I speak of those whom I have seen. But you all have known such; you, too, remember!

It is not of the dead alone that we think on this day. There are those still living whose sex forbade them to offer their lives, but who gave instead their happiness. Which of us has not been lifted above himself by the sight of one of those lovely, lonely women, around whom the wand of sorrow has traced its excluding circle—set apart, even when surrounded by loving friends who would fain bring back joy to their lives? I think of one whom the poor of a great city know as their benefactress and friend. I think of one who has lived not less greatly in the midst of her children, to whom she has taught such lessons as may not be heard elsewhere from mortal lips. The story of these and of their sisters we must pass in reverent silence. . . .

Comrades, some of the associations of this day are not only triumphant but joyful. Not all of those with whom we once stood shoulder to shoulder—not all of those whom we once loved and revered—are gone. . . . On this day, at least, we still meet and rejoice in the closest tie which is possible between men—a tie which suffering has made indissoluble for better, for worse.

When we meet thus, when we do honor to the dead in terms that must sometimes

²⁴ *The legendary suicidal charge of the 20th Massachusetts Regiment occurred on December 11, 1862.*

embrace the living, we do not deceive ourselves. We attribute no special merit to a man for having served when all were serving. We know that if the armies of our war did anything worth remembering, the credit belongs not mainly to the individuals who did it, but to average human nature. We also know very well that we cannot live in associations with the past alone, and we admit that if we would be worthy of the past we must find new fields for action or thought and make for ourselves new careers.

But, nevertheless, the generation that carried on the war has been set apart by its experience. Through our great good fortune, in our youth our hearts were touched with fire. It was given to us to learn at the outset that life is a profound and passionate thing. . . . [W]e have seen with our own eyes beyond and above the gold fields the snowy heights of honor, and it is for us to bear the report to those who come after us. But above all, we have learned that whether a man accepts from Fortune her spade, and will look downward and dig, or from Aspiration her axe and cord, and will scale the ice, the one and only success which it is his to command is to bring to his work a mighty heart.

Such hearts—ah me, how many!—were stilled twenty years ago; and to us who remain behind is left this day of memories. Every year—in the full tide of spring—at the height of the symphony of flowers and love and life—there comes a pause, and through the silence we hear the lonely pipe of death. Year after year lovers wandering under the apple boughs and through the clover and deep grass are surprised with sudden tears as they see black veiled figures stealing through the morning to a soldier's grave. Year after year the comrades of the dead follow with public honor, procession and commemorative flags and funeral march—honor and grief from us who stand almost alone, and have seen the best and noblest of our generation pass away.

But grief is not the end of all. I seem to hear the funeral march become a paean. I see beyond the forest the moving banners of a hidden column. Our dead brothers still live for us, and bid us think of life, not death—of life to which in their youth they lent the passion and glory of the spring. As I listen, the great chorus of life and joy begins again, and amid the awful orchestra of seen and unseen powers and destinies of good and evil our trumpets sound once more a note of daring, hope, and will.

Homage to Vietnam

PAT C. HOY II

The present selection, like the Holmes speech preceding, speaks to the subject of national memory, but written in a very different time, it speaks in a very different way. While not explicitly about Memorial Day, this essay (from 1999; excerpted) powerfully raises crucial questions about the meaning of the holiday and the importance of remembering, for a nation fragmented by disputes over the Vietnam War. Pat C. Hoy II (b. 1938), award-winning essayist and professor of writing who has taught at Harvard, West Point, and (now) at New York University, graduated from West Point and served in Vietnam. His concerns remain germane for a time in which many Americans have grave doubts about any war and about the worth of risking one's life in combat.

What does Hoy mean by saying, "The cost of forgetting might just bankrupt us"? What is the point of his story about attending the funeral of George? What sort of wisdom is this "old soldier" seeking to grasp? Why are his students unable to see any cause worth dying for? What difference does the absence of conscription make for the impulse to serve and the sense of obligation to something larger than oneself? Why, despite his grave reservations about the Vietnam War and his appreciation of the efforts of the anti-war protesters, does he still endorse answering the call to serve? What is it that he wants his children—and all of us—not to forget? How are you moved by his argument?

I woke to consciousness against the echoes of the Second World War, so my earliest memories remain charged by a frenzy of national unity—my older sister at the Ration Board, dispensing stamps for sugar, gasoline, tires, shoes; my oldest brother in North Africa in the Army Air Corps; my other brother dying in the sky over Germany; the VE Day parade down Main Street in the small south Arkansas town where I was raised; the veterans who returned and found a place that understood *their* sacrifice and *their* pain—a place unified and preserved by the war.

I remember that time from the vantage post of a five-year-old whose life was unalterably affected by the sense of community engendered by the "war effort." I would not begin to lose that sense of unity for nearly 35 years—not until, a soldier of 40, I sensed deep in my bones the vast damage that my war in Vietnam was doing to the nation and to me.

Now, at 59, as I sit here trying to figure out what drew us together during the earlier war, I fret about the splintering effects of Vietnam. But on rare occasions I catch fleeting glimpses of something deep inside that eases my mind, something about surviving that I suspect neither I nor the nation can afford to forget. The cost of forgetting might just bankrupt us.

* * *

As I stood with Elizabeth on one side and my wife Ann on the other—sheltered from the hot August sun by a massive pin oak that cast a long shadow over the empty grave—Elizabeth took my arm, steadying herself as the minister began to speak. I tried to listen, but the high mound of fresh dirt and the resting shovels had more drawing power than God’s word passing through the warp of a Yankee pastor’s clipped accent. And so I heard little of the scripture he was reading as I gazed up into the pin oak and then down at the rough, pine casket suspended just in front of us, directly over the grave. In the background, across the road, workers hammered a new roof onto the old church.

The creaking of the casket yanked my mind back to the grave, and I saw that under his own dead weight Elizabeth’s father had begun to move himself down into the ground. It seemed to take a long, long time for George to reach bottom as the straps unrolled and the box eased its way through the irregular shaped hole, as if he had been practicing for this singular descent all his life. I stood there wishing that the movement would never end, that I could watch him going down forever and forever because during that long pause I could also hold him and Elizabeth together in my mind—her standing beside me, him just a shovel’s length away, both of them together warding off my own descent.

As her father disappeared into the earth, Elizabeth was holding on, as I could feel the press of her body against me—her arm cradled inside mine, her irregular breathing accentuating the haunting sadness of her struggle to find a composure suitable for the role she had been called to play. Supporting her, I was, of course, keenly aware that at my age I could be George and, in that case, had Elizabeth been there watching me going down into earth, someone else would have been privy to her body’s rhythmic tremors—someone else would have felt her confusion and her silent plea for help. But it was George and not I who was departing, and Elizabeth, who had once spoken out about heroism in my Harvard classroom, was calling me out of myself in the cemetery, making me attentive to duty and obligation as she tightened her grip on my arm, rejuvenating me. It was one more piece of an old, old story.

* * *

As I move into late middle age, I yearn to spin truth out of the yarns of my experiences. But I’m up against a powerful hindrance. Almost no one wants to hear an old soldier grasp at wisdom. Yet who else besides old soldiers have chanced to look into the eye of death and study it long enough to find a well of plenty—an enchanting realm brimming with secrets about the strange entangling rhythms that draw us out of ourselves into community, into irresistible relationships of promise—with those we love and even with the nation itself. Today, I wonder whether those rhythms still compel younger men—my sons and their friends—and the men and women they love. *Saving Private Ryan* seemed to rekindle awareness about the meaning and value of past sacrifices, but awareness does not necessarily compel men and women to set personal considerations aside and serve the general welfare.

* * *

I can't seem to get wars off my mind, can't help wondering after three of them—my brothers' in Europe and North Africa, my own in Vietnam, and my West Point students' in the Gulf—what keeps us from understanding that as a nation we must be united enough, always, to answer war's hunting call . . . or what keeps us from knowing what we need to know to stop the killing and devastation when the time comes. I suspect the confusion stems from our quick and easy willingness to turn a deaf ear to the voices within us—some audible, some barely discernible—that suggest who we are and how we must be drawn together if we intend to last. Some of those voices well up from inside as if they've been waiting there for us to listen; others evolve out of our upbringing, giving us a sense of identity, suggesting our place in the world . . . or perhaps, our isolation from it.

* * *

My students at New York University, many of them bright, young aspiring writers and actors studying in the Tisch School of the Arts, have just written essays about the relationship between their own work and truth. To prepare for the assignment, they heard a lecture by Fred Ritchin, now a Tisch faculty member but once the photo editor of *The New York Times Magazine*. Fred explains how, in this digitized world, it is now possible to create pictures of things that never were—and to create those pictures so well, even on a home computer, that the viewers can't tell the difference between fabricated images and events shot with a camera. Fred wants students to think about what can become of a world that can no longer vouch for itself in its own images.

When we got back to the classroom and began discussing their essays, I asked students if they knew how to locate *themselves* against the demands of truth. No one said a word. I drew a triangle of words on the board—*representation* to the left, *truth* to the right—across the top of the blackboard—and then wrote the word *value* down below, halfway between the words higher up. I connected the three words with lines to form an inverted triangle. Inside the triangle, I wrote *YOU*. I asked the question again. Can you locate yourself against these concepts: representation, truth, and value?

As we sat there during the awkward silence, I could sense their difficulty.

"What do you mean by *value*?" David finally asked. I was almost too surprised to answer.

"Let's start with boundaries," I eventually began. "Think about what it means to say, *No*, or to say, *I'm not going to do this in my photography because it violates what I believe*." Heads began to nod in agreement, as if to say, okay, we're beginning to see what you're getting at. Say something else.

“Is there anything you’d be willing to die for?” I asked. It was an old-fashioned question that puzzled them. And they said so through their silence. It was a question they seemed never to have thought about.

David told me he found it interesting that I believed “*truth* and *death* were so tightly bound.” He was “curious as to where *life* fit in, if it did indeed fit in at all.” He concluded that young poets like him were essentially “detectives” trying to “solve the mystery with no clues”—equipped only with heart, soul, and pen. Inclined toward the romantic, David always extols freedom, unbridled freedom, as the essence of life. His own essay would eventually close with a powerfully rendered scene in which he and his friends draw sustenance from one another and from nature—isolated, separate from civilization, feasting on Thoreau and the manna of a prelapsarian wilderness.

For most of the students, the overwhelming question was, “How can one construction of reality be better than another? We’ve made all of them up anyway. How can any of them be worth dying for?” They persist in those questions because they haven’t yet had experiences of their own that could lead them to see how they can be bound up in the preservation of a community and a way of life they have inherited—because they have not yet acknowledged that deep within themselves there is a persistent inclination to belong, to be a part of something beyond themselves.

Now, for the first time in the nation’s history, we can imagine that young men and women may never face an experience that will call them out of themselves into the larger community. Vietnam changed all that, and the change is still affecting us. Young men no longer have to reckon with service so demanding that they may be asked to lay down their lives. And neither young men nor young women consider such compulsory service an inherent part of their growing up.

In the past, that call could stiffen the backbone of the privileged as well as the needy. It demanded that all of us, somewhere in the recesses of the soul, hold ourselves accountable. Today, soldiers are no longer conscripted in the national interest. They enlist for a fee, and we call that “volunteering.” The Volunteer Army. But it is not a representative army; it is not a national army; it is not, in fact, a volunteer army.

The Revolution that made us has receded into the mythic past. The more recent war in Europe that set the world free from the domination of a tyrant remains primarily an idea for most Americans younger than 40. Those of us who have a different perspective are becoming the old folks, easy to dismiss because we seem too romantic or too encrusted in our own past to trust. Even our memory of World War II has been clouded by those other conflicts—Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf. Of those three, only Vietnam engaged the nation, and its significance had to do with failure rather than victory, with diminution of trust, with the loss of national consensus and political resolve. It clouded our memory of ourselves as Americans.

By now almost everyone is keenly aware that the nation’s leaders led us astray in Vietnam. Yet there is more to the story. What of the rest of us—ordinary citizens who sat

by watching, out of harm's way, silent; boys who fled to Canada, or, taking advantage of education and privilege, remained at home; soldiers who went because they had to; women who sat in rooms of their own, shook their heads in despair, and found no voice; veterans who knew better, having long ago learned war's lessons the hard way, but said little? Where are all of us now? What have we resolved?

The ghosts of those 58,000 dead who served in Vietnam haunt the entire nation and are likely to do so until we can once again decide what it means to have peace and honor and community. Those ghosts, the ghosts of young soldiers who went to Vietnam and died—most of whom believed in the obligation to serve or were spurred on by some inherited sense of glory or were simply afraid not to answer the call—those ghosts remind us what it once meant to have to measure up as an American.

But those ghosts remind us too, that no American, man or woman, can ever again accept freely *the obligation to serve and die* unless the nation can assure its soldiers that it will not, having asked them to serve, abandon them when they come home. That commitment will take some doing.

Our confusion about the contractual obligation may eventually turn into a blessing, but we will not know, for sure, until we know more about what happened to us at a moment in history when we revealed to the rest of the world how our well-founded self-assurance had turned into national arrogance and divisiveness, when the earlier call to make the world safe for democracy had been transformed into a call to preserve, no matter what the cost, the sanctity of a bad idea.

Those of us who fought in Vietnam should long be grateful to those who did what they had to do to stop the war. Many stayed home, resisted, and faced the consequences. One who did, would become a good friend. A few years ago, at a writing conference, our talk turned to Vietnam for the first time.

After hearing his stories about police brutality at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago, I said to him, "I suspect you may have been in more day-to-day danger than I was most of the time in Vietnam."

My judgment seemed to tip the scale of nostalgia in Eric's favor, and he told me the story of a friend who resisted the war with him. As they worried over whether they would die or go to prison, Eric's friend laughed about wanting burial in the Baltimore Harbor. He wanted to be buried at sea, close to home. He had one other wish.

"If I die before this war is over," he told Eric, "and if Ho Chi Minh wins, I want you to tether a balloon to an anchor near my burial site in the harbor. And on the balloon I want it to say, *Here Lies a Happy Motherfucker.*"

When Eric told me the story, I laughed. But I have been haunted by the story and my laughter ever since. I remain grateful to Eric and his friends for helping bring the war to an end, but they too remain culpable—not for cowardice in the face of physical danger

but for the unacknowledged indulgence that accompanied their flight from national service.

And yet I know that I may well be alive today because of them, just as I know that they were driven to do what they did, and could justify doing it, because, *and only because*, the government that was sending men and women out to die in service had lost the confidence of its people, and had diminished its sacred power to enlist people to preserve it. By war's end, it had become very difficult for any American to negotiate the boundaries between self-service and national service.

Now, years later, we've almost stopped trying to figure out what we really believe in, what it is *we might be willing to die for*. Only Clinton's bizarre example of adolescent selfishness seems to have the power to renew a spirited debate about whether we have moved into an age of amorality, whether underneath the surface of our national life there is something that binds us, whether we can still identify together, once again, what we consider to be our bedrock values. But we are not likely to know again what we're trying to preserve until we know more about ourselves, more about what it is that prompts each of us to serve or to turn away, seeking shelter inside a smaller, more personal world of our own making.

The voices within that urge us to independence and also into relationships have something to do with national character, but I suspect that they draw from a deeper, human source. They are not American, even though America was once a place that asked us to respond to them. Those voices speak to the need to belong and to serve. They correspond to that invigorating urge I felt at George's funeral—with Elizabeth by my side and death in my sights—when standing there, I was once again roused to duty.

* * *

At 19 I left that small town in south Arkansas to begin a life of soldiering. I did not leave under the spell of romance. The calling was deeper. My two older half-brothers had already been to war; one lived to come home from Egypt; the other, blown to bits in the sky over Germany, enjoys the honor of an empty grave in Luxembourg. News of his death on Jan. 1, 1945, came to me outside my first-grade classroom, when I was six.

My father also disappeared around that time. Patrick Cleburne Hoy, named after his own father's commanding general from an earlier war, fell under the compelling influence of a woman he carried around in his head; she set him on a chase, and as far as I can tell, he never found a real woman to match the specter in his head, never guessed that what he was searching for was deep inside himself, muffled in the whispers he never came to understand. He was unable to deal with the destructiveness that accompanied the chase, yet I suspect that the losses he suffered mattered less to him than the relief he occasionally won over loneliness. He sought communion on a level that was strictly personal; the nation, like his family, played no part in it.

My mom left me a different inheritance—a love complicated by her own need to compensate for her considerable losses. It was she who sent me off to West Point—she,

who had already lost a son to war. Now, 40 years later, I can see that she justified her earlier loss against the nation's needs, that having sacrificed her flesh and blood, she could still believe in an idea of community that bound her to the nation and to all those others in the small Arkansas town where she rests today under the warm spring breezes, secure in the 90 years she lived to enjoy the community's blessings.

But I know too that sending me off to a life of soldiering was tainted by her own need for compensation. In her mind, I would represent her. I would serve, and she would be honored. We sacrifice one thing and get another. National service is particularly complicated, because when we first enter into it we are so young that we have to trust those enlisting us. We have to sense that they are not misusing us, just as they have to do everything in their power to earn our trust. And always, we look back—all of us do—for a reckoning. . . .

* * *

I look back on my life and wish, in the words of Bob Seger's song, "I didn't know now what I didn't know then," almost 40 years ago when I embraced a life of soldiering. But service called me at 19. And it could call me now, as the ocean does.

I could never wish for my own sons a life of soldiering, but I want them to sense deep in their bones a commitment strong enough to call them beyond self-interest. At the same time, I want them to be spared the higher costs of self-abnegation. I wish only to leave them a legacy of knowing, along with a heightened awareness that will permit them to attend the whispers—to hear in those ancient promptings within themselves what I could barely discern at their age about adventure and community and the will to survive. I want them not to forget, as I want us all not to forget, what it takes to create a nation's character and unity. For in that creation we still bind ourselves, one to another—even when in the binding there is danger, and excitement, and sometimes death.

2



Why go to War?
The Reasons of Nations
and the Motives of Men

Declaration of Immediate Causes which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union

CHRISTOPHER G. MEMMINGER

On December 20, 1860, shortly after the election of Abraham Lincoln as the 16th president of the United States, the state of South Carolina, through representatives meeting in convention in Charleston, seceded from the federal Union. Four days later, this declaration of justification was issued, drafted chiefly by Christopher G. Memminger (1803–88), future Treasury Secretary of the Confederate government. In making the case for South Carolina’s departure from the Union, Memminger drew heavily from arguments in the Declaration of Independence, used to justify the American Revolution, and argued that the Lincoln administration could not be trusted to uphold the constitutional order.

What are the grievances of South Carolina, and what is her argument for secession? On what principles does that argument rest? Carefully compare this declaration with the original Declaration of Independence:²⁵ how closely do the arguments and principles correspond? How good are the arguments that the government was not fulfilling its constitutional obligations with regard to the defense of property? How good is the argument that each state, under the Constitution, retains its right to leave the Union? Why, according to this declaration, was South Carolina willing to go to war?

The people of the State of South Carolina, in Convention assembled, on the 26th day of April, A.D., 1852, declared that the frequent violations of the Constitution of the United States, by the Federal Government, and its encroachments upon the reserved rights of the States, fully justified this State in then withdrawing from the Federal Union; but in deference to the opinions and wishes of the other slaveholding States, she forbore at that time to exercise this right. Since that time, these encroachments have continued to increase, and further forbearance ceases to be a virtue.

And now the State of South Carolina having resumed her separate and equal place among nations, deems it due to herself, to the remaining United States of America, and to the nations of the world, that she should declare the immediate causes which have led to this act.

In the year 1765, that portion of the British Empire embracing Great Britain, undertook to make laws for the government of that portion composed of the thirteen American Colonies. A struggle for the right of self-government ensued, which resulted,

²⁵ Read the Declaration of Independence at What So Proudly We Hail:
www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/curriculum/the-meaning-of-america/declaration-of-independence.

on the 4th of July, 1776, in a Declaration, by the Colonies, “that they are, and of right ought to be, FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES; and that, as free and independent States, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent States may of right do.”

They further solemnly declared that whenever any “form of government becomes destructive of the ends for which it was established, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government.” Deeming the Government of Great Britain to have become destructive of these ends, they declared that the Colonies “are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.”

In pursuance of this Declaration of Independence, each of the thirteen States proceeded to exercise its separate sovereignty; adopted for itself a Constitution, and appointed officers for the administration of government in all its departments—Legislative, Executive and Judicial. For purposes of defense, they united their arms and their counsels; and, in 1778, they entered into a League known as the Articles of Confederation, whereby they agreed to entrust the administration of their external relations to a common agent, known as the Congress of the United States, expressly declaring, in the first Article “that each State retains its sovereignty, freedom and independence, and every power, jurisdiction and right which is not, by this Confederation, expressly delegated to the United States in Congress assembled.”

Under this Confederation the war of the Revolution was carried on, and on the 3rd of September, 1783, the contest ended, and a definite Treaty was signed by Great Britain, in which she acknowledged the independence of the Colonies in the following terms: “ARTICLE 1—His Britannic Majesty acknowledges the said United States, viz: New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, to be FREE, SOVEREIGN AND INDEPENDENT STATES; that he treats with them as such; and for himself, his heirs and successors, relinquishes all claims to the government, propriety and territorial rights of the same and every part thereof.”

Thus were established the two great principles asserted by the Colonies, namely: the right of a State to govern itself; and the right of a people to abolish a Government when it becomes destructive of the ends for which it was instituted. And concurrent with the establishment of these principles, was the fact, that each Colony became and was recognized by the mother Country a FREE, SOVEREIGN AND INDEPENDENT STATE.

In 1787, Deputies were appointed by the States to revise the Articles of Confederation, and on 17th September, 1787, these Deputies recommended for the adoption of the States, the Articles of Union, known as the Constitution of the United States.

Declaration of Secession of South Carolina

The parties to whom this Constitution was submitted, were the several sovereign States; they were to agree or disagree, and when nine of them agreed the compact was to take effect among those concurring; and the General Government, as the common agent, was then invested with their authority.

If only nine of the thirteen States had concurred, the other four would have remained as they then were—separate, sovereign States, independent of any of the provisions of the Constitution. In fact, two of the States did not accede to the Constitution until long after it had gone into operation among the other eleven; and during that interval, they each exercised the functions of an independent nation.

By this Constitution, certain duties were imposed upon the several States, and the exercise of certain of their powers was restrained, which necessarily implied their continued existence as sovereign States. But to remove all doubt, an amendment was added, which declared that the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States, respectively, or to the people. On the 23d May, 1788, South Carolina, by a Convention of her People, passed an Ordinance assenting to this Constitution, and afterwards altered her own Constitution, to conform herself to the obligations she had undertaken.

Thus was established, by compact between the States, a Government with definite objects and powers, limited to the express words of the grant. This limitation left the whole remaining mass of power subject to the clause reserving it to the States or to the people, and rendered unnecessary any specification of reserved rights.

We hold that the Government thus established is subject to the two great principles asserted in the Declaration of Independence; and we hold further, that the mode of its formation subjects it to a third fundamental principle, namely: the law of compact. We maintain that in every compact between two or more parties, the obligation is mutual; that the failure of one of the contracting parties to perform a material part of the agreement, entirely releases the obligation of the other; and that where no arbiter is provided, each party is remitted to his own judgment to determine the fact of failure, with all its consequences.

In the present case, that fact is established with certainty. We assert that fourteen of the States have deliberately refused, for years past, to fulfill their constitutional obligations, and we refer to their own Statutes for the proof.

The Constitution of the United States, in its fourth Article, provides as follows: “No person held to service or labor in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up, on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due.”

This stipulation was so material to the compact, that without it that compact would not have been made. The greater number of the contracting parties held slaves, and they

had previously evinced their estimate of the value of such a stipulation by making it a condition in the Ordinance for the government of the territory ceded by Virginia, which now composes the States north of the Ohio River.

The same article of the Constitution stipulates also for rendition by the several States of fugitives from justice from the other States.

The General Government, as the common agent, passed laws to carry into effect these stipulations of the States. For many years these laws were executed. But an increasing hostility on the part of the non-slaveholding States to the institution of slavery, has led to a disregard of their obligations, and the laws of the General Government have ceased to effect the objects of the Constitution. The States of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin and Iowa, have enacted laws which either nullify the Acts of Congress or render useless any attempt to execute them. In many of these States the fugitive is discharged from service or labor claimed, and in none of them has the State Government complied with the stipulation made in the Constitution. The State of New Jersey, at an early day, passed a law in conformity with her constitutional obligation; but the current of anti-slavery feeling has led her more recently to enact laws which render inoperative the remedies provided by her own law and by the laws of Congress. In the State of New York even the right of transit for a slave has been denied by her tribunals; and the States of Ohio and Iowa have refused to surrender to justice fugitives charged with murder, and with inciting servile insurrection in the State of Virginia. Thus the constituted compact has been deliberately broken and disregarded by the non-slaveholding States, and the consequence follows that South Carolina is released from her obligation.

The ends for which the Constitution was framed are declared by itself to be “to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.”

These ends it endeavored to accomplish by a Federal Government, in which each State was recognized as an equal, and had separate control over its own institutions. The right of property in slaves was recognized by giving to free persons distinct political rights, by giving them the right to represent, and burthening²⁶ them with direct taxes for three-fifths of their slaves; by authorizing the importation of slaves for twenty years; and by stipulating for the rendition of fugitives from labor.

We affirm that these ends for which this Government was instituted have been defeated, and the Government itself has been made destructive of them by the action of the non-slaveholding States. Those States have assumed the right of deciding upon the propriety of our domestic institutions; and have denied the rights of property established in fifteen of the States and recognized by the Constitution; they have denounced as sinful the institution of slavery; they have permitted open establishment among them of

²⁶ *Burdening*

societies, whose avowed object is to disturb the peace and to eloign²⁷ the property of the citizens of other States. They have encouraged and assisted thousands of our slaves to leave their homes; and those who remain, have been incited by emissaries, books and pictures to servile insurrection.

For twenty-five years this agitation has been steadily increasing, until it has now secured to its aid the power of the common Government. Observing the *forms* of the Constitution, a sectional party has found within that Article establishing the Executive Department, the means of subverting the Constitution itself. A geographical line has been drawn across the Union, and all the States north of that line have united in the election of a man to the high office of President of the United States, whose opinions and purposes are hostile to slavery. He is to be entrusted with the administration of the common Government, because he has declared that that "Government cannot endure permanently half slave, half free," and that the public mind must rest in the belief that slavery is in the course of ultimate extinction.

This sectional combination for the submersion of the Constitution, has been aided in some of the States by elevating to citizenship, persons who, by the supreme law of the land, are incapable of becoming citizens; and their votes have been used to inaugurate a new policy, hostile to the South, and destructive of its beliefs and safety.

On the 4th day of March next, this party will take possession of the Government. It has announced that the South shall be excluded from the common territory, that the judicial tribunals shall be made sectional, and that a war must be waged against slavery until it shall cease throughout the United States.

The guaranties of the Constitution will then no longer exist; the equal rights of the States will be lost. The slaveholding States will no longer have the power of self-government, or self-protection, and the Federal Government will have become their enemy.

Sectional interest and animosity will deepen the irritation, and all hope of remedy is rendered vain, by the fact that public opinion at the North has invested a great political error with the sanction of more erroneous religious belief.

We, therefore, the People of South Carolina, by our delegates in Convention assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, have solemnly declared that the Union heretofore existing between this State and the other States of North America, is dissolved, and that the State of South Carolina has resumed her position among the nations of the world, as a separate and independent State; with full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent States may of right do.

Adopted December 24, 1860.

²⁷ *To remove or carry away.*

Letter to Sarah

SULLIVAN BALLOU

Examples of individual self-sacrifice in the service of country and of personal courage in the face of mortal danger are the subject of story, song, and legend. But rarely do we have a more moving and self-conscious account than the one presented in this letter by Major Sullivan Ballou (1829–61) of the Second Rhode Island regiment of the Union army to his wife, Sarah, early in the Civil War.

How does Ballou understand and explain the choice he faces? What reasons does he give for choosing to face death in battle? Imagining yourself as the recipient of this letter, how would you receive and judge his choice?

July 14, 1861
Camp Clark, Washington

My very dear Sarah:

The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days—perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write again I feel impelled to write a few lines that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more. . . .

Our movement may be one of a few days duration and full of pleasure—and it may be one of severe conflict and death to me. “Not by my will, but Thine O God be done.” If it is necessary that I should fall on the battlefield for my country, I am ready. I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how strongly American Civilization now leans on the triumph of the government, and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and sufferings of the Revolution. And I am willing—perfectly willing—to lay down all my joys in this life, to help maintain this Government, and to pay that debt. . . .

But, my dear wife, when I know that with my own joys I lay down nearly all of yours, and replace them in this life with cares and sorrows—when, after having eaten for long years the bitter fruit of orphanage myself, I must offer it as their only sustenance to my dear little children—is it weak or dishonorable, while the banner of my purpose floats calmly and proudly in the breeze that my unbounded love of you, my darling wife and children, should struggle in fierce, though useless, contest with my love of Country?

I cannot describe to you my feelings on this calm summer night, when two thousand men are sleeping around me, many of them enjoying the last, perhaps before that of death—and I, suspicious that Death is creeping behind me with his fatal dart, am communing with God, my Country, and thee.

I have sought most closely and diligently, and often in my breast, for a wrong motive in thus hazarding the happiness of those I loved and could not find one. A pure love of my Country and the principles I have often advocated before the people, and “the name of honor that I love more than I fear death” have called upon me, and I have obeyed.

Sarah, my love for you is deathless, it seems to bind me with mighty cables that nothing but Omnipotence could break; and yet my love of Country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me unresistably on with all these chains to the battle field.

The memories of the blissful moments I have spent with you come creeping over me, and I feel most gratified to God and to you that I have enjoyed them so long. And hard it is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when, God willing, we might still have lived and loved together, and seen our sons grown up to honorable manhood, around us. I have, I know, but few and small claims upon Divine Providence, but something whispers to me—perhaps it is the wafted prayer of my little Edgar—that I shall return to my loved ones unharmed. If I do not, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battlefield, it will whisper your name. Forgive my many faults, and the many pains I have caused you. How thoughtless and foolish I have often times been! How gladly would I wash out with my tears every little spot upon your happiness . . . and struggle with all the misfortunes of this world to shield you and my dear children from harm. But I cannot. I must watch you from the spirit land and hover near you, while you buffet the storms with your precious little freight, and wait with sad patience till we meet to part no more.

But, O Sarah! if the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you, in the gladdest days and in the darkest nights . . . always, always, and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath, as the cool air fans your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by. Sarah, do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for thee, for we shall meet again. . . .

As for my little boys, they will grow up as I have done, and never know a father’s love and care. Little Willie is too young to remember me long, and my blue-eyed Edgar will keep my frolics with him among the dimmest memories of his childhood. Sarah, I have unlimited confidence in your maternal care and your development of their characters and feel that God will bless you in your holy work.

Tell my two mothers I call God’s blessing upon them.

O Sarah, I wait for you there. Come to me, and lead thither my children.

Sullivan Ballou was killed a week later at the First Battle of Bull Run.

We Are Coming, Father Abraham

JAMES SLOAN GIBBONS

At the start of the Civil War, the entire United States Army numbered but 16,000 men. After the firing on Fort Sumter in April 1861, President Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to serve for three months. Later that year, in response to mobilization by the Confederacy, Congress increased the call to 100,000 men under arms, each to serve for up to one year. But by 1862, with the war going badly for the Union and volunteering for service down, it became clear that the war would grind on and that more soldiers were needed. In July, President Lincoln issued a call for 300,000 more Union troops.²⁸ His call was greatly aided with this song, written by James Sloan Gibbons (1810–92) and published on July 16, 1862 in the New York Evening Post. Gibbons was a New York abolitionist and a Quaker, who had “a reasonable leaning, however, toward wrath in cases of emergency.”²⁹

Why, according to the song, are “we coming”? For what reasons, and for what purposes, do the men go to war? Why do you think President Lincoln is here referred to as “Father Abraham”? How important is “Father Abraham”—and the Biblical resonance in his personal call—to their choice to enlist?

For a musical rendition, listen to the 97th Regimental String Band play “We Are Coming, Father Abraham” at www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnixGHLIqD4.

We are coming, Father Abraham,
Three hundred thousand more,
From Mississippi’s winding stream
And from New England’s shore
We leave our ploughs and workshops,
Our wives and children dear,
With hearts too full for utterance,
With but a silent tear.
We dare not look behind us
But steadfastly before—
We are coming, Father Abraham,
Three hundred thousand more!

(Chorus)

We are coming, we are coming,
Our Union to restore;

²⁸ In April 1862, the Confederacy passed a draft law for men aged 18–35, exempting slave overseers, government officials, and clergymen. In July 1862, the US Congress also instituted a militia conscription within each state, should the state fail to meet its quota with volunteers. The threat of conscription contributed to increases in voluntary enlistment.

²⁹ Smith, *Great National Songs*, 124.

We are coming, Father Abraham,
Three hundred thousand more.
We are coming, Father Abraham,
Three hundred thousand more.

If you look across the hilltops
That now meet the northern sky,
Long, moving lines of rising dust
Your vision may descry,
And now the wind, an instant
Tears the cloudy veil aside,
And floats aloft our spangled flag
In glory and in pride;
And bayonets in the sunlight gleam,
And bands brave music pour—
We are coming, Father Abraham,
Three hundred thousand more!

If you look all up our valleys,
Where the growing harvests shine,
You may see our sturdy farmer boys
Fast forming into line;
And children from their mothers' knees
Are pulling at the weeds,
And learning how to reap and sow,
Against their country's needs;
And a farewell group stands weeping
At every cottage door—
We are coming, Father Abraham,
Three hundred thousand more!

You have called us, and we're coming,
By Richmond's bloody tide,
To lay us down for freedom's sake,
Our brothers' bones beside;
Or from foul treason's savage grasp
To wrench the murderous blade,
And in the face of foreign foes,
Its fragments to parade.
Six hundred thousand loyal men
And true have gone before—
We are coming, Father Abraham,
Three hundred thousand more!

Marching Song of the First Arkansas Regiment

LINDLEY H. MILLER

After the Emancipation Proclamation, signed January 1, 1863, newly freed black slaves were urged to join the Union Army. Almost immediately, the First Arkansas Volunteer Infantry Regiment (African Descent) was organized, and it saw action that year and the next in Mississippi and Louisiana. This marching song, sung to the tune of “John Brown’s Body,” was written for this regiment by Lindley Hoffman Miller (1834–64), lawyer, orator-poet, son of a United States Senator, and Union officer who requested assignment to a colored unit, joining the First Arkansas Regiment in November 1863. Originally written in Negro dialect, we reproduce here a version in standard English.³⁰

What is the spirit of the song and its singers? Why, according to the different verses, are these ex-slaves fighting? How do their reasons differ from those expressed in “We Are Coming, Father Abraham”? Can you imagine the scene of the last stanza, as the Regiment, proudly bedecked in Union blue beneath the Stars and Stripes, passes other “colored brethren,” inviting them to join their ranks? Does it move you? If so, how and why?

For a musical rendition, listen to Tennessee Ernie Ford perform the Marching Song of the First Arkansas Regiment at www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6c3dF0oATs.

Oh, we’re the bully soldiers of the “First of Arkansas,”
We are fighting for the Union, we are fighting for the law,
We can hit a Rebel further than a white man ever saw,
As we go marching on.

(Chorus)

Glory, glory hallelujah.
Glory, glory hallelujah.
Glory, glory hallelujah.
As we go marching on.

See, there above the center, where the flag is waving bright,
We are going out of slavery; we’re bound for freedom’s light;
We mean to show Jeff Davis how the Africans can fight,
As we go marching on!

(Chorus)

We have done with hoeing cotton, we have done with hoeing corn,
We are colored Yankee soldiers, now, as sure as you are born;

³⁰ *This song is a personal favorite of the editors, who find it a supreme expression of human dignity.*

When the masters hear us yelling, they'll think it's Gabriel's horn,
As we go marching on.

(Chorus)

They will have to pay us wages, the wages of their sin,
They will have to bow their foreheads to their colored kith and kin,
They will have to give us house-room, or the roof shall tumble in!
As we go marching on.

(Chorus)

We heard the Proclamation, master hush it as he will,
The bird he sing it to us, hoppin' on the cotton hill,
And the possum up the gum tree, he couldn't keep it still,
As he went climbing on.

(Chorus)

They said, "Now colored brethren, you shall be forever free,
From the first of January, Eighteen hundred sixty-three."
We heard it in the river going rushing to the sea,
As it went sounding on.

(Chorus)

Father Abraham has spoken and the message has been sent,
The prison doors he opened, and out the pris'ners went,
To join the sable army of the "African descent,"
As we go marching on.

(Chorus)

Then fall in, colored brethren, you'd better do it soon,
Don't you hear the drum a-beating the Yankee Doodle tune?
We are with you now this morning, we'll be far away at noon,
As we go marching on.

(Chorus)

The Battle Cry of Freedom

GEORGE F. ROOT

“The Battle Cry of Freedom” quickly became one of the war’s most popular songs, even inspiring a Southern version. Written in 1862 by prolific patriotic composer George F. Root (1820–95), it was so highly demanded that printing presses could not produce enough copies. Ultimately, 500,000 to 700,000 copies were produced.

Look closely at each stanza and at the chorus. What are the reasons given for going into battle? What do you think “Freedom” means in this song? What is the relation among “the battle cry of Freedom,” “the Union forever,” and the flag? What role is played by the “call of our Brothers gone before”?

For a musical rendition, listen to the 97th Regimental String Band perform the song at www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ccQ6cT-9kk. Another version can be heard at www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhCheCryopA.

Yes we’ll rally round the flag, boys, we’ll rally once again
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom,
We will rally from the hillside, we’ll gather from the plain,
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom.

(Chorus)

The Union forever, Hurrah boys, Hurrah!
Down with the traitor, up with the star,
While we rally round the flag, boys, rally once again,
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom.

We are springing to the call of our Brothers gone before,
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom,
And we’ll fill the vacant ranks with a million freemen more
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom.

(Chorus)

We will welcome to our numbers the loyal true and brave,
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom,
And altho’ he may be poor he shall never be a slave,
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom.

(Chorus)

So we’re springing to the call from the East and from the West,
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom,

And we'll hurl the rebel crew from the land we love the best,
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom.

(Final Chorus)

The Battle Cry of Freedom (Southern Version)

WILLIAM H. BARNES

Soon after George F. Root's publication of the immensely popular "The Battle Cry of Freedom," lyricist William H. Barnes, the manager of the Atlanta Amateurs, a group of volunteer musicians who performed for the benefit of various soldiers' relief funds, produced a Southern version, for which the composer Hermann L. Schreiner modified Root's music.

Like Root's original, this Southern version makes "Freedom" its battle cry. How can both sides be crying "Freedom"? Do they understand the same thing by "freedom"? Where the Northern version says, "Down with the traitor," the Southern version says "Down with the eagle," and speaks of the motto of resistance—"To the tyrants we'll not yield!" Do these differences point to different reasons for why these men are fighting?

For a musical rendition, listen to a performance at www.youtube.com/watch?v=5kWADI4umuM.

Our flag is proudly floating on the land and on the main,
Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!
Beneath it oft we've conquered, and we'll conquer oft again!
Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!

(Chorus)

Our Dixie forever! She's never at a loss!
Down with the eagle and up with the cross!
We'll rally 'round the bonny flag, we'll rally once again,
Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!

Our gallant boys have marched to the rolling of the drums,
Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!
And the leaders in charge cry out, "Come, boys, come!"
Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!

(Chorus)

They have laid down their lives on the bloody battle field.
Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!
Their motto is resistance—"To the tyrants we'll not yield!"
Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!

(Chorus)

While our boys have responded and to the fields have gone,
Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!
Our noble women also have aided them at home,
Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!

Gettysburg Address

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

On November 19, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln (1809–65) delivered his most memorable speech at a ceremony dedicating the cemetery for the Union dead at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, site of the great victory in July of that year which marked a turning point in the Civil War. Lincoln used the occasion to offer his interpretation of the war and the reasons for which it was being fought. To do so, he revisits the Declaration of Independence, summoning the nation to achieve a “new birth of freedom” through renewed dedication to the founding proposition of human equality.

Lincoln says that the great civil war is a “test.” Of what is the war a test? Can the truth of principles be demonstrated by fighting—and winning—a war? What is the difference between “holding” equality as a “self-evident truth” and regarding it as a “proposition” to which we are dedicated? What is the difference between the “new birth of freedom,” which Lincoln hopes will emerge from the bloody war, and the original birth of the nation, “conceived in Liberty”? How does he understand the relation between equality and freedom? What, according to Lincoln, is “the cause for which they gave their last full measure of devotion”? How are the living properly to honor their sacrifice?

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Why Should a Colored Man Enlist?

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

How to lift people out of degradation and despair? Others may provide material aid and encouragement, but a case can be made that full success requires people to stand up for themselves. Few better understood this necessity than Frederick Douglass (circa 1818–95), who during the Civil War urged his fellow black Americans to overcome the degradation of slavery. Shortly after the Emancipation Proclamation (January 1863), Douglass published a stirring message—“Men of Color, To Arms!”—and worked tirelessly to recruit soldiers for the black regiment being organized in Massachusetts. Resistance to the idea that blacks should fight for the Union led him, in April 1863, to write the article reprinted here. By war’s end, there were upwards of 180,000 black troops.

Imagine yourself an African American reader at the time: how would you respond to Douglass’ article? Which of the nine reasons for enlisting would move you and why?

This question has been repeatedly put to us while raising men for the 54th Massachusetts regiment during the past five weeks, and perhaps we cannot at present do a better service to the cause of our people or to the cause of the country than by giving a few of the many reasons why a colored man should enlist.

First. You are a man, although a colored man. If you were only a horse or an ox, incapable of deciding whether the rebels are right or wrong, you would have no responsibility, and might like the horse or the ox go on eating your corn or grass, in total indifference, as to which side is victorious or vanquished in this conflict. You are however no horse, and no ox, but a man, and whatever concerns man should interest you. He who looks upon a conflict between right and wrong, and does not help the right against the wrong, despises and insults his own nature, and invites the contempt of mankind. As between the North and South, the North is clearly in the right and the South is flagrantly in the wrong. You should therefore, simply as a matter of right and wrong, give your utmost aid to the North. In presence of such a contest there is no neutrality for any man. You are either for the Government or against the Government. Manhood requires you to take sides, and you are mean or noble according to how you choose between action and inaction.—If you are sound in body and mind, there is nothing in your *color* to excuse you from enlisting in the service of the republic against its enemies. If *color* should not be a criterion of rights, neither should it be a standard of duty. The whole duty of a man, belongs alike to white and black.

“A man’s a man for a’ that.”

Second. You are however, not only a man, but an American citizen, so declared by the highest legal adviser of the Government, and you have hitherto expressed in various ways, not only your willingness but your earnest desire to fulfil any and every obligation

which the relation of citizenship imposes. Indeed, you have hitherto felt wronged and slighted, because while white men of all other nations have been freely enrolled to serve the country, you a native born citizen have been coldly denied the honor of aiding in defense of the land of your birth. The injustice thus done you is now repented of by the Government and you are welcomed to a place in the army of the nation. Should you refuse to enlist *now*, you will justify the past contempt of the Government towards you and lead it to regret having honored you with a call to take up arms in its defense. You cannot but see that here is a good reason why you should promptly enlist.

Third. A third reason why a colored man should enlist is found in the fact that every Negro-hater and slavery-lover in the land regards the arming of Negroes as a calamity and is doing his best to prevent it. Even now all the weapons of malice, in the shape of slander and ridicule, are used to defeat the filling up of the 54th Massachusetts (colored) regiment. In nine cases out of ten, you will find it safe to do just what your enemy would gladly have you leave undone. What helps you hurts him. Find out what he does not want and give him a plenty of it.

Fourth. You should enlist to learn the use of arms, to become familiar with the means of securing, protecting and defending your own liberty. A day may come when men shall learn war no more, when justice shall be so clearly apprehended, so universally practiced, and humanity shall be so profoundly loved and respected, that war and bloodshed shall be confined only to beasts of prey. Manifestly however, that time has not yet come, and while all men should labor to hasten its coming, by the cultivation of all the elements conducive to peace, it is plain that for the present no race of men can depend wholly upon moral means for the maintenance of their rights. Men must either be governed by love or by fear. They must love to do right or fear to do wrong. The only way open to any race to make their rights respected is to learn how to defend them. When it is seen that black men no more than white men can be enslaved with impunity, men will be less inclined to enslave and oppress them. Enlist therefore, that you may learn the art and assert the ability to defend yourself and your race.

Fifth. You are a member of a long enslaved and despised race. Men have set down your submission to Slavery and insult, to a lack of manly courage. They point to this fact as demonstrating your fitness only to be a servile class. You should enlist and disprove the slander, and wipe out the reproach. When you shall be seen nobly defending the liberties of your own country against rebels and traitors—brass itself will blush to use such arguments imputing cowardice against you.

Sixth. Whether you are or are not, entitled to all the rights of citizenship in this country has long been a matter of dispute to your prejudice. By enlisting in the service of your country at this trial hour, and upholding the National Flag, you stop the mouths of traducers and win applause even from the iron lips of ingratitude. Enlist and you make this your country in common with all other men born in the country or out of it.

Seventh. Enlist for your own sake. Decried and derided as you have been and still are, you need an act of this kind by which to recover your own self-respect. You have to some

extent rated your value by the estimate of your enemies and hence have counted yourself less than you are. You owe it to yourself and your race to rise from your social debasement and take your place among the soldiers of your country, a man among men. Depend upon it, the subjective effect of this one act of enlisting will be immense and highly beneficial. You will stand more erect, walk more assured, feel more at ease, and be less liable to insult than you ever were before. He who fights the battles of America may claim America as his country—and have that claim respected. Thus in defending your country now against rebels and traitors you are defending your own liberty, honor, manhood and self-respect.

Eighth. You should enlist because your doing so will be one of the most certain means of preventing the country from drifting back into the whirlpool of Pro-Slavery Compromise at the end of the war, which is now our greatest danger. He who shall witness another Compromise with Slavery in this country will see the free colored man of the North more than ever a victim of the pride, lust, scorn and violence of all classes of white men. The whole North will be but another Detroit, where every white fiend may with impunity revel in unrestrained beastliness towards people of color; they may burn their houses, insult their wives and daughters, and kill indiscriminately. If you mean to live in this country now is the time for you to do your full share in making it a country where you and your children after you can live in comparative safety. Prevent a compromise with the traitors, compel them to come back to the Union whipped and humbled into obedience and all will be well. But let them come back as masters and all their hate and hellish ingenuity will be exerted to stir up the ignorant masses of the North to hate, hinder and persecute the free colored people of the North. That most inhuman of all modern enactments, with its bribed judges, and summary process, the Fugitive Slave Law, with all its infernal train of canting divines, preaching the gospel of kidnapping, as twelve years ago, will be revived against the free colored people of the North. One or two black brigades will do much to prevent all this.

Ninth. You should enlist because the war for the Union, whether men so call it or not, is a war for Emancipation. The salvation of the country, by the inexorable relation of cause and effect, can be secured only by the complete abolition of Slavery. The President has already proclaimed emancipation to the Slaves in the rebel States which is tantamount to declaring Emancipation in all the States, for Slavery must exist everywhere in the South in order to exist anywhere in the South. Can you ask for a more inviting, ennobling and soul enlarging work, than that of making one of the glorious Band who shall carry Liberty to your enslaved people? Remember that identified with the Slave in color, you will have a power that white soldiers have not, to attract them to your lines and induce them to take up arms in a common cause. One black Brigade will, for this work, be worth more than two white ones. Enlist, therefore, enlist without delay, enlist now, and forever put an end to the human barter and butchery which have stained the whole South with the warm blood of your people, and loaded its air with their groans. Enlist, and deserve not only well of your country, and win for yourselves, a name and a place among men, but secure to yourself what is infinitely more precious, the fast dropping tears of gratitude of your kith and kin marked out for destruction, and who are but now ready to perish.

When time's ample curtain shall fall upon our national tragedy, and our hillsides and valleys shall neither redden with the blood nor whiten with the bones of kinsmen and countrymen who have fallen in the sanguinary and wicked strife; when grim visaged war has smoothed his wrinkled front and our country shall have regained its normal condition as a leader of nations in the occupation and blessings of peace—and history shall record the names of heroes and martyrs who bravely answered the call of patriotism and Liberty—against traitors, thieves and assassins—let it not be said that in the long list of glory, composed of men of all nations—there appears the name of no colored man.

Address to Congress Requesting a Declaration of War

WOODROW WILSON

If the Civil War was the defining national experience of the 19th century, the two World Wars were arguably the defining American experiences of the 20th century, for they involved the United States in protracted and costly struggles on the international stage and catapulted the United States into world prominence as a military and political power. Hoping to avoid participation in the First World War (1914–18), the United States was finally dragged into the war as a result of unprovoked submarine attacks on American ships by the Imperial German Navy. A disappointed but determined President Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924) gave this (excerpted) speech before the US Congress on April 2, 1917, asking for a declaration of war on Germany. His request was granted, and on April 6, the United States officially entered World War I.

What, according to Wilson, is the immediate cause of America's going to war? What broader meaning does he give to the war, and what does he regard as the war's ultimate purpose? Why does Wilson appear to rule out retribution, or even national self-interest, as a reason for giving battle? Why is he at such pains to insist that the United States has no quarrel with the German people, only with their autocratic rulers? What, according to Wilson, would constitute success in this war? What does Wilson mean by making the world "safe for democracy"? Do you find his arguments compelling? Why or why not?

GENTLEMEN OF THE CONGRESS:

I have called the Congress into extraordinary session because there are serious, very serious, choices of policy to be made, and made immediately, which it was neither right nor constitutionally permissible that I should assume the responsibility of making.

On the third of February last I officially laid before you the extraordinary announcement of the Imperial German Government that on and after the first day of February it was its purpose to put aside all restraints of law or of humanity and use its submarines to sink every vessel that sought to approach either the ports of Great Britain and Ireland or the western coasts of Europe or any of the ports controlled by the enemies of Germany within the Mediterranean. That had seemed to be the object of the German submarine warfare earlier in the war, but since April of last year the Imperial Government had somewhat restrained the commanders of its undersea craft in conformity with its promise then given to us that passenger boats should not be sunk and that due warning would be given to all other vessels which its submarines might seek to destroy when no resistance was offered or escape attempted, and care taken that their crews were given at least a fair chance to save their lives in their open boats. The precautions taken were meager and haphazard enough, as was proved in distressing instance after instance in the progress of the cruel and unmanly business, but a certain degree of restraint was observed. The new policy has swept every restriction aside. Vessels of every kind,

whatever their flag, their character, their cargo, their destination, their errand, have been ruthlessly sent to the bottom: without warning and without thought of help or mercy for those on board, the vessels of friendly neutrals along with those of belligerents. Even hospital ships and ships carrying relief to the sorely bereaved and stricken people of Belgium, though the latter were provided with safe conduct through the proscribed areas by the German Government itself and were distinguished by unmistakable marks of identity, have been sunk with the same reckless lack of compassion or of principle.

I was for a little while unable to believe that such things would in fact be done by any government that had hitherto subscribed to the humane practices of civilized nations. International law had its origin in the attempt to set up some law which would be respected and observed upon the seas, where no nation had right of dominion and where lay the free highways of the world. . . . This minimum of right the German Government has swept aside under the plea of retaliation and necessity and because it had no weapons which it could use at sea except these which it is impossible to employ as it is employing them without throwing to the winds all scruples of humanity or of respect for the understandings that were supposed to underlie the intercourse of the world. I am not now thinking of the loss of property involved, immense and serious as that is, but only of the wanton and wholesale destruction of the lives of noncombatants, men, women, and children, engaged in pursuits which have always, even in the darkest periods of modern history, been deemed innocent and legitimate. Property can be paid for; the lives of peaceful and innocent people cannot be. The present German submarine warfare against commerce is a warfare against mankind.

It is a war against all nations. American ships have been sunk, American lives taken, in ways which it has stirred us very deeply to learn of, but the ships and people of other neutral and friendly nations have been sunk and overwhelmed in the waters in the same way. There has been no discrimination. The challenge is to all mankind. Each nation must decide for itself how it will meet it. The choice we make for ourselves must be made with a moderation of counsel and a temperateness of judgment befitting our character and our motives as a nation. We must put excited feeling away. Our motive will not be revenge or the victorious assertion of the physical might of the nation, but only the vindication of right, of human right, of which we are only a single champion.

When I addressed the Congress on the twenty-sixth of February last I thought that it would suffice to assert our neutral rights with arms, our right to use the seas against unlawful interference, our right to keep our people safe against unlawful violence. But armed neutrality, it now appears, is impracticable. Because submarines are in effect outlaws when used as the German submarines have been used against merchant shipping, it is impossible to defend ships against their attacks as the law of nations has assumed that merchantmen would defend themselves against privateers or cruisers, visible craft giving chase upon the open sea. It is common prudence in such circumstances, grim necessity indeed, to endeavor to destroy them before they have shown their own intention. They must be dealt with upon sight, if dealt with at all. The German Government denies the right of neutrals to use arms at all within the areas of the sea which it has proscribed, even in the defense of rights which no modern publicist has ever

before questioned their right to defend. The intimation is conveyed that the armed guards which we have placed on our merchant ships will be treated as beyond the pale of law and subject to be dealt with as pirates would be. Armed neutrality is ineffectual enough at best; in such circumstances and in the face of such pretensions it is worse than ineffectual: it is likely only to produce what it was meant to prevent; it is practically certain to draw us into the war without either the rights or the effectiveness of belligerents. There is one choice we cannot make, we are incapable of making: we will not choose the path of submission and suffer the most sacred rights of our Nation and our people to be ignored or violated. The wrongs against which we now array ourselves are no common wrongs; they cut to the very roots of human life.

With a profound sense of the solemn and even tragical character of the step I am taking and of the grave responsibilities which it involves, but in unhesitating obedience to what I deem my constitutional duty, I advise that the Congress declare the recent course of the Imperial German Government to be in fact nothing less than war against the government and people of the United States; that it formally accept the status of belligerent which has thus been thrust upon it, and that it take immediate steps not only to put the country in a more thorough state of defense but also to exert all its power and employ all its resources to bring the Government of the German Empire to terms and end the war. . . .

While we do these things, these deeply momentous things, let us be very clear, and make very clear to all the world what our motives and our objects are. My own thought has not been driven from its habitual and normal course by the unhappy events of the last two months, and I do not believe that the thought of the Nation has been altered or clouded by them. I have exactly the same things in mind now that I had in mind when I addressed the Senate on the twenty-second of January last, the same that I had in mind when I addressed the Congress on the third of February and on the twenty-sixth of February. Our object now, as then, is to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power and to set up amongst the really free and self-governed peoples of the world such a concert of purpose and of action as will henceforth insure the observance of those principles. Neutrality is no longer feasible or desirable where the peace of the world is involved and the freedom of its peoples, and the menace to that peace and freedom lies in the existence of autocratic governments backed by organized force which is controlled wholly by their will, not by the will of their people. We have seen the last of neutrality in such circumstances. We are at the beginning of an age in which it will be insisted that the same standards of conduct and of responsibility for wrong done shall be observed among nations and their governments that are observed among the individual citizens of civilized states.

We have no quarrel with the German people. We have no feeling towards them but one of sympathy and friendship. It was not upon their impulse that their government acted in entering this war. It was not with their previous knowledge or approval. It was a war determined upon as wars used to be determined upon in the old, unhappy days when peoples were nowhere consulted by their rulers and wars were provoked and waged in the interest of dynasties or of little groups of ambitious men who were accustomed to use

their fellow men as pawns and tools. Self-governed nations do not fill their neighbor states with spies or set the course of intrigue to bring about some critical posture of affairs which will give them an opportunity to strike and make conquest. Such designs can be successfully worked out only under cover and where no one has the right to ask questions. Cunningly contrived plans of deception or aggression, carried, it may be, from generation to generation, can be worked out and kept from the light only within the privacy of courts or behind the carefully guarded confidences of a narrow and privileged class. They are happily impossible where public opinion commands and insists upon full information concerning all the nation's affairs.

A steadfast concert for peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations. No autocratic government could be trusted to keep faith within it or observe its covenants. It must be a league of honor, a partnership of opinion. Intrigue would eat its vitals away; the plottings of inner circles who could plan what they would and render account to no one would be a corruption seated at its very heart. Only free peoples can hold their purpose and their honor steady to a common end and prefer the interests of mankind to any narrow interest of their own.

Does not every American feel that assurance has been added to our hope for the future peace of the world by the wonderful and heartening things that have been happening within the last few weeks in Russia?³¹ Russia was known by those who knew it best to have been always in fact democratic at heart, in all the vital habits of her thought, in all the intimate relationships of her people that spoke their natural instinct, their habitual attitude towards life. The autocracy that crowned the summit of her political structure, long as it had stood and terrible as was the reality of its power, was not in fact Russian in origin, character, or purpose; and now it has been shaken off and the great, generous Russian people have been added in all their naive majesty and might to the forces that are fighting for freedom in the world, for justice, and for peace. Here is a fit partner for a League of Honor.

One of the things that has served to convince us that the Prussian autocracy was not and could never be our friend is that from the very outset of the present war it has filled our unsuspecting communities and even our offices of government with spies and set criminal intrigues everywhere afoot against our national unity of counsel, our peace within and without, our industries and our commerce. Indeed it is now evident that its spies were here even before the war began; and it is unhappily not a matter of conjecture but a fact proved in our courts of justice that the intrigues which have more than once come perilously near to disturbing the peace and dislocating the industries of the country have been carried on at the instigation, with the support, and even under the personal direction of official agents of the Imperial Government accredited to the Government of

³¹ *The February Revolution of 1917 was the first of two revolutions in Russia in 1917. Public outrage at military failures and economic conditions led to mass protests and rallies in the capital of Petrograd, culminating in the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II and the end of both the Romanov dynasty and the Russian Empire. The Tsar was replaced by a Provisional Government, an alliance of liberals and socialists who sought political reform.*

the United States. Even in checking these things and trying to extirpate them we have sought to put the most generous interpretation possible upon them because we knew that their source lay, not in any hostile feeling or purpose of the German people towards us (who were, no doubt, as ignorant of them as we ourselves were), but only in the selfish designs of a Government that did what it pleased and told its people nothing. But they have played their part in serving to convince us at last that that Government entertains no real friendship for us and means to act against our peace and security at its convenience. That it means to stir up enemies against us at our very doors the intercepted note to the German Minister at Mexico City is eloquent evidence.³²

We are accepting this challenge of hostile purpose because we know that in such a Government, following such methods, we can never have a friend; and that in the presence of its organized power, always lying in wait to accomplish we know not what purpose, there can be no assured security for the democratic Governments of the world. We are now about to accept gauge of battle with this natural foe to liberty and shall, if necessary, spend the whole force of the nation to check and nullify its pretensions and its power. We are glad, now that we see the facts with no veil of false pretense about them to fight thus for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its peoples, the German peoples included: for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience. The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind. We shall be satisfied when those rights have been made as secure as the faith and the freedom of nations can make them.

Just because we fight without rancor and without selfish object, seeking nothing for ourselves but what we shall wish to share with all free peoples, we shall, I feel confident, conduct our operations as belligerents without passion and ourselves observe with proud punctilio³³ the principles of right and of fair play we profess to be fighting for. . . .

It will be all the easier for us to conduct ourselves as belligerents in a high spirit of right and fairness because we act without animus, not in enmity towards a people or with the desire to bring any injury or disadvantage upon them, but only in armed opposition to an irresponsible government which has thrown aside all considerations of humanity and of right and is running amuck. We are, let me say again, the sincere friends of the German people, and shall desire nothing so much as the early reestablishment of intimate relations of mutual advantage between us,—however hard it may be for them, for the time being, to believe that this is spoken from our hearts. We have borne with their present Government through all these bitter months because of that friendship,—exercising a patience and forbearance which would otherwise have been impossible. We shall, happily, still have an opportunity to prove that friendship in our daily attitude and

³² *The Zimmermann Telegram was a 1917 diplomatic proposal from the German Empire to Mexico to make war against the United States. It was intercepted and decoded by British intelligence.*

³³ *Strictness or exactness in the observance of formalities.*

actions towards the millions of men and women of German birth and native sympathy who live amongst us and share our life, and we shall be proud to prove it towards all who are in fact loyal to their neighbors and to the Government in the hour of test. They are, most of them, as true and loyal Americans as if they had never known any other fealty or allegiance. They will be prompt to stand with us in rebuking and restraining the few who may be of a different mind and purpose. If there should be disloyalty, it will be dealt with with a firm hand of stern repression; but, if it lifts its head at all, it will lift it only here and there and without countenance except from a lawless and malignant few.

It is a distressing and oppressive duty, Gentlemen of the Congress, which I have performed in thus addressing you. There are, it may be many months of fiery trial and sacrifice ahead of us. It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance. But the right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts—for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own Governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free. To such a task we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, every thing that we are and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other.

The Peacemaker

JOYCE KILMER

In this poem, written in the last year of his life and the last year of World War I, the American poet Joyce Kilmer (1886–1918) offers a complex and moving picture of the American soldier then giving battle in Europe. When the United States entered the war, Kilmer was 31 years old. Although he was exempted from his service obligation (married with four children), Kilmer voluntarily joined the New York Seventh Regiment, later transferring to the “Fighting 69th” Regiment when it was chosen to be the first New York unit sent to France. During the war, he continued to write. Kilmer was killed while scouting for enemy gun positions on July 30, 1918.

What is the mood of the poem, and what is its image of the soldier? How can a warrior be not only a peacemaker, but the peacemaker? Why, according to the poem, does the soldier fight, and why does he “gladly” die? What is the connection between fighting for freedom and fighting to banish war? What is the meaning of the last two lines of the poem—and what is the connection between this earthly battle and the captivity of Jesus on the Cross? How, according to the poem, should the fallen soldier be remembered?

Upon his will he binds a radiant chain,
For Freedom’s sake he is no longer free.
It is his task, the slave of Liberty,
With his own blood to wipe away a stain.
That pain may cease, he yields his flesh to pain.
To banish war, he must a warrior be.
He dwells in Night, eternal Dawn to see,
And gladly dies, abundant life to gain.

What matters Death, if Freedom be not dead?
No flags are fair, if Freedom’s flag be furled.
Who fights for Freedom, goes with joyful tread
To meet the fire of Hell against him hurled,
And has for captain Him whose thorn-wreathed head
Smiles from the Cross upon a conquered world.

A Date Which Will Live in Infamy

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

The catastrophic “war to end all wars” produced a shaky peace that lasted barely two decades. When World War II broke out in 1939, the United States was again slow to enter, as many Americans hoped that we could remain peacefully on the sidelines. All that changed when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The next day, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882–1945), 32nd President of the United States (1933–45), delivered this famous speech to a joint session of Congress, calling for an official declaration of war.

How does Roosevelt make the case for going to war? Why does he emphasize the surprise of the attack, its premeditation, and the “treachery” of hiding it behind ongoing diplomacy? Why is it not sufficient to declare the need to defend “our people, our territory, and our interests,” which “are in grave danger”? Compare the tone and the arguments of Roosevelt’s appeal to Congress with those of President Wilson, in the selection above—especially with respect to appeals to righteous indignation, self-interest, and national pride. What is the point of remembering “a date which will live in infamy”?

Listen to President Roosevelt deliver the remarks at www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCYw9MA0djo.

Yesterday, December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

The United States was at peace with that Nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its Government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in Oahu, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to the Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. While this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. I regret to tell you that very many American lives have been lost. In addition American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu.

Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack against Malaya.

Last night Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong.

Last night Japanese forces attacked Guam.

Last night Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands.

Last night the Japanese attacked Wake Island. And this morning the Japanese attacked Midway Island.

Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our Nation.

As Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense.

But always will our whole Nation remember the character of the onslaught against us.

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory. I believe I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will make very certain that this form of treachery shall never again endanger us.

Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory, and our interests are in grave danger.

With confidence in our armed forces—with the unbounded determination of our people—we will gain the inevitable triumph—so help us God.

I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.

Order of the Day: 6 June 1944

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

After almost five years of devastating war in the European theater, the Allies mounted what turned out to be the decisive operation in the liberation of France and the final defeat of Nazi Germany. On June 5, 1944, Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890–1969), Supreme Allied Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, gave the order to commence Operation Overlord, the invasion of France. The next day, 24,000 paratroopers poured from Allied planes over Normandy, while the largest amphibious assault in history—over 160,000 soldiers and nearly 200,000 navy personnel and merchant seamen from 5,000 ships—took place on the beaches. Each member of the expeditionary force received a copy of General Eisenhower’s Order of the Day for June 6, D-Day.

What is the tone of Eisenhower’s order, and how does it compare with Roosevelt’s speech after Pearl Harbor (see previous selection)? What is a “crusade,” and why does he call this “the Great Crusade”? What are its goals, and the reasons for fighting? What is “great and noble” about this undertaking? Try to imagine yourself receiving General Eisenhower’s order: how would you respond?

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers in arms on other fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle hardened, he will fight savagely.

But this is the year of 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940–41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man to man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our home fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full victory!

Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.

D-Day Prayer

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

On the evening (in the United States) of June 6, 1944, after the Normandy invasion had already been launched, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882–1945) spoke to the nation, praying for the soldiers fighting across the Atlantic and for those at home who supported their efforts. How does he characterize the struggle and the reasons for fighting the war? For what does he pray? In what sense might the fallen soldiers be regarded as God’s “heroic servants”?

Listen to President Roosevelt recite the prayer at www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-weBUzQleo.

My fellow Americans: Last night, when I spoke with you about the fall of Rome, I knew at that moment that troops of the United States and our allies were crossing the Channel in another and greater operation. It has come to pass with success thus far.

And so, in this poignant hour, I ask you to join with me in prayer:

Almighty God: Our sons, pride of our Nation, this day have set upon a mighty endeavor, a struggle to preserve our Republic, our religion, and our civilization, and to set free a suffering humanity.

Lead them straight and true; give strength to their arms, stoutness to their hearts, steadfastness in their faith.

They will need Thy blessings. Their road will be long and hard. For the enemy is strong. He may hurl back our forces. Success may not come with rushing speed, but we shall return again and again; and we know that by Thy grace, and by the righteousness of our cause, our sons will triumph.

They will be sore tried, by night and by day, without rest—until the victory is won. The darkness will be rent by noise and flame. Men’s souls will be shaken with the violences of war.

For these men are lately drawn from the ways of peace. They fight not for the lust of conquest. They fight to end conquest. They fight to liberate. They fight to let justice arise, and tolerance and good will among all Thy people. They yearn but for the end of battle, for their return to the haven of home.

Some will never return. Embrace these, Father, and receive them, Thy heroic servants, into Thy kingdom.

And for us at home—fathers, mothers, children, wives, sisters, and brothers of brave men overseas—whose thoughts and prayers are ever with them—help us, Almighty God, to rededicate ourselves in renewed faith in Thee in this hour of great sacrifice.

Many people have urged that I call the Nation into a single day of special prayer. But because the road is long and the desire is great, I ask that our people devote themselves in a continuance of prayer. As we rise to each new day, and again when each day is spent, let words of prayer be on our lips, invoking Thy help to our efforts.

Give us strength, too—strength in our daily tasks, to redouble the contributions we make in the physical and the material support of our armed forces.

And let our hearts be stout, to wait out the long travail, to bear sorrows that may come, to impart our courage unto our sons wheresoever they may be.

And, O Lord, give us Faith. Give us Faith in Thee; Faith in our sons; Faith in each other; Faith in our united crusade. Let not the keenness of our spirit ever be dulled. Let not the impacts of temporary events, of temporal matters of but fleeting moment—let not these deter us in our unconquerable purpose.

With Thy blessing, we shall prevail over the unholy forces of our enemy. Help us to conquer the apostles of greed and racial arrogancies. Lead us to the saving of our country, and with our sister Nations into a world unity that will spell a sure peace—a peace invulnerable to the schemings of unworthy men. And a peace that will let all of men live in freedom, reaping the just rewards of their honest toil.

Thy will be done, Almighty God.

Amen.

Address to a Joint Session of Congress Following the 9/11 Attacks

GEORGE W. BUSH

On September 20, 2001, nine days after the surprise terrorist attacks by al Qaeda that leveled the World Trade Center in New York, damaged the Pentagon in Washington, and took the lives of some 3,000 American civilians, President George W. Bush addressed a joint session of Congress with the following remarks. Unlike the previous wars in which the United States had been involved, the difficult and challenging “war on terror” that began at this time (and that continues, as of this writing) was not directed against specific hostile nations but against an inchoate transnational foe, operating from secret bases within many different nations. Yet one can still examine the reasons for going to war and for sending young men and women into harm’s way.

How does Bush describe the character of the new danger, and what new challenges does it pose for the United States? What are the responses the United States needs to make? Why does Bush say that this battle against terrorism is every nation’s concern? Does it make sense for an American president to say to other nations, “Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists”? What is at stake in this struggle? What is required of us—service men and women and civilians alike—if we are to prevail? How will one know that this war is over?

Listen to President Bush deliver the remarks at www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Uie6uKmano.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President Pro Tempore, Members of Congress, and fellow Americans:

In the normal course of events, Presidents come to this Chamber to report on the state of the Union. Tonight, no such report is needed. It has already been delivered by the American people.

We have seen it in the courage of passengers, who rushed terrorists to save others on the ground, passengers like an exceptional man named Todd Beamer. And would you please help me to welcome his wife, Lisa Beamer, here tonight.

We have seen the state of our Union in the endurance of rescuers, working past exhaustion. We’ve seen the unfurling of flags, the lighting of candles, the giving of blood, the saying of prayers in English, Hebrew, and Arabic. We have seen the decency of a loving and giving people who have made the grief of strangers their own.

My fellow citizens, for the last nine days, the entire world has seen for itself the state of our Union, and it is strong.

Tonight we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief

has turned to anger, and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done.

I thank the Congress for its leadership at such an important time. All of America was touched, on the evening of the tragedy, to see Republicans and Democrats joined together on the steps of this Capitol, singing "God Bless America." And you did more than sing; you acted, by delivering \$40 billion to rebuild our communities and meet the needs of our military.

Speaker Hastert, Minority Leader Gephardt, Majority Leader Daschle, and Senator Lott, I thank you for your friendship, for your leadership, and for your service to our country.

And on behalf of the American people, I thank the world for its outpouring of support. America will never forget the sounds of our National Anthem playing at Buckingham Palace, on the streets of Paris, and at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate. We will not forget South Korean children gathering to pray outside our Embassy in Seoul, or the prayers of sympathy offered at a mosque in Cairo. We will not forget moments of silence and days of mourning in Australia and Africa and Latin America.

Nor will we forget the citizens of 80 other nations who died with our own: dozens of Pakistanis; more than 130 Israelis; more than 250 citizens of India; men and women from El Salvador, Iran, Mexico, and Japan; and hundreds of British citizens. America has no truer friend than Great Britain. Once again, we are joined together in a great cause—so honored the British Prime Minister has crossed an ocean to show his unity with America. Thank you for coming, friend.

On September 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. Americans have known wars, but for the past 136 years, they have been wars on foreign soil, except for one Sunday in 1941. Americans have known the casualties of war, but not at the center of a great city on a peaceful morning. Americans have known surprise attacks, but never before on thousands of civilians. All of this was brought upon us in a single day, and night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack.

Americans have many questions tonight. Americans are asking, who attacked our country? The evidence we have gathered all points to a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as al Qaeda. They are some of the murderers indicted for bombing American Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya and responsible for bombing the USS *Cole*. Al Qaeda is to terror what the Mafia is to crime. But its goal is not making money. Its goal is remaking the world and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere.

The terrorists practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism that has been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics, a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam. The terrorists' directive commands them to kill

Christians and Jews, to kill all Americans, and make no distinctions among military and civilians, including women and children.

This group and its leader, a person named Usama bin Laden, are linked to many other organizations in different countries, including the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. There are thousands of these terrorists in more than 60 countries. They are recruited from their own nations and neighborhoods and brought to camps in places like Afghanistan, where they are trained in the tactics of terror. They are sent back to their homes or sent to hide in countries around the world to plot evil and destruction.

The leadership of al Qaeda has great influence in Afghanistan and supports the Taliban regime in controlling most of that country. In Afghanistan, we see al Qaeda's vision for the world. Afghanistan's people have been brutalized. Many are starving, and many have fled. Women are not allowed to attend school. You can be jailed for owning a television. Religion can be practiced only as their leaders dictate. A man can be jailed in Afghanistan if his beard is not long enough.

The United States respects the people of Afghanistan—after all, we are currently its largest source of humanitarian aid—but we condemn the Taliban regime. It is not only repressing its own people; it is threatening people everywhere by sponsoring and sheltering and supplying terrorists. By aiding and abetting murder, the Taliban regime is committing murder.

And tonight the United States of America makes the following demands on the Taliban: Deliver to United States authorities all the leaders of al Qaeda who hide in your land. Release all foreign nationals, including American citizens, you have unjustly imprisoned. Protect foreign journalists, diplomats, and aid workers in your country. Close immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan, and hand over every terrorist and every person in their support structure to appropriate authorities. Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so we can make sure they are no longer operating.

These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. The Taliban must act and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate.

I also want to speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world. We respect your faith. It's practiced freely by many millions of Americans, and by millions more in countries that America counts as friends. Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah. The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself. The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends; it is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists and every government that supports them.

Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated.

Americans are asking, why do they hate us? They hate what they see right here in this Chamber, a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms—our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.

They want to overthrow existing governments in many Muslim countries, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. They want to drive Israel out of the Middle East. They want to drive Christians and Jews out of vast regions of Asia and Africa.

These terrorists kill not merely to end lives but to disrupt and end a way of life. With every atrocity, they hope that America grows fearful, retreating from the world and forsaking our friends. They stand against us, because we stand in their way.

We are not deceived by their pretenses to piety. We have seen their kind before. They are the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions, by abandoning every value except the will to power, they follow in the path of fascism and Nazism and totalitarianism. And they will follow that path all the way, to where it ends, in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies.

Americans are asking, how will we fight and win this war? We will direct every resource at our command—every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war—to the disruption and to the defeat of the global terror network.

This war will not be like the war against Iraq a decade ago, with a decisive liberation of territory and a swift conclusion. It will not look like the air war above Kosovo two years ago, where no ground troops were used and not a single American was lost in combat.

Our response involves far more than instant retaliation and isolated strikes. Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen. It may include dramatic strikes, visible on TV, and covert operations, secret even in success. We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place, until there is no refuge or no rest. And we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make: Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.

Our Nation has been put on notice: We're not immune from attack. We will take defensive measures against terrorism to protect Americans. Today dozens of federal departments and agencies, as well as State and local governments, have responsibilities affecting homeland security. These efforts must be coordinated at the highest level.

So tonight I announce the creation of a Cabinet-level position reporting directly to me, the Office of Homeland Security. And tonight I also announce a distinguished

American to lead this effort to strengthen American security, a military veteran, an effective Governor, a true patriot, a trusted friend, Pennsylvania's Tom Ridge. He will lead, oversee, and coordinate a comprehensive national strategy to safeguard our country against terrorism and respond to any attacks that may come.

These measures are essential. But the only way to defeat terrorism as a threat to our way of life is to stop it, eliminate it, and destroy it where it grows. Many will be involved in this effort, from FBI agents to intelligence operatives to the reservists we have called to active duty. All deserve our thanks, and all have our prayers. And tonight, a few miles from the damaged Pentagon, I have a message for our military: Be ready. I've called the Armed Forces to alert, and there is a reason. The hour is coming when America will act, and you will make us proud.

This is not, however, just America's fight, and what is at stake is not just America's freedom. This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom.

We ask every nation to join us. We will ask, and we will need, the help of police forces, intelligence services, and banking systems around the world. The United States is grateful that many nations and many international organizations have already responded with sympathy and with support, nations from Latin America, to Asia, to Africa, to Europe, to the Islamic world. Perhaps the NATO Charter reflects best the attitude of the world: An attack on one is an attack on all.

The civilized world is rallying to America's side. They understand that if this terror goes unpunished, their own cities, their own citizens may be next. Terror, unanswered, can not only bring down buildings, it can threaten the stability of legitimate governments. And you know what? We're not going to allow it.

Americans are asking, what is expected of us? I ask you to live your lives and hug your children. I know many citizens have fears tonight, and I ask you to be calm and resolute, even in the face of a continuing threat.

I ask you to uphold the values of America and remember why so many have come here. We are in a fight for our principles, and our first responsibility is to live by them. No one should be singled out for unfair treatment or unkind words because of their ethnic background or religious faith.

I ask you to continue to support the victims of this tragedy with your contributions. Those who want to give can go to a central source of information, libertyunites.org, to find the names of groups providing direct help in New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

The thousands of FBI agents who are now at work in this investigation may need your cooperation, and I ask you to give it.

I ask for your patience with the delays and inconveniences that may accompany tighter security and for your patience in what will be a long struggle.

I ask your continued participation and confidence in the American economy. Terrorists attacked a symbol of American prosperity. They did not touch its source. America is successful because of the hard work and creativity and enterprise of our people. These were the true strengths of our economy before September 11th, and they are our strengths today.

And, finally, please continue praying for the victims of terror and their families, for those in uniform, and for our great country. Prayer has comforted us in sorrow and will help strengthen us for the journey ahead.

Tonight I thank my fellow Americans for what you have already done and for what you will do. And ladies and gentlemen of the Congress, I thank you, their representatives, for what you have already done and for what we will do together.

Tonight we face new and sudden national challenges. We will come together to improve air safety, to dramatically expand the number of air marshals on domestic flights and take new measures to prevent hijacking. We will come together to promote stability and keep our airlines flying, with direct assistance during this emergency.

We will come together to give law enforcement the additional tools it needs to track down terror here at home. We will come together to strengthen our intelligence capabilities, to know the plans of terrorists before they act and to find them before they strike. We will come together to take active steps that strengthen America's economy and put our people back to work.

Tonight we welcome two leaders who embody the extraordinary spirit of all New Yorkers, Governor George Pataki and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. As a symbol of America's resolve, my administration will work with Congress and these two leaders to show the world that we will rebuild New York City.

After all that has just passed, all the lives taken and all the possibilities and hopes that died with them, it is natural to wonder if America's future is one of fear. Some speak of an age of terror. I know there are struggles ahead and dangers to face. But this country will define our times, not be defined by them. As long as the United States of America is determined and strong, this will not be an age of terror; this will be an age of liberty, here and across the world.

Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered great loss. And in our grief and anger, we have found our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom, the great achievement of our time and the great hope of every time, now depends on us. Our Nation—this generation—will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire; we will not falter; and we will not fail.

It is my hope that in the months and years ahead, life will return almost to normal. We'll go back to our lives and routines, and that is good. Even grief recedes with time and grace. But our resolve must not pass. Each of us will remember what happened that day and to whom it happened. We'll remember the moment the news came, where we were, and what we were doing. Some will remember an image of a fire or a story of rescue. Some will carry memories of a face and a voice gone forever.

And I will carry this: It is the police shield of a man named George Howard, who died at the World Trade Center trying to save others. It was given to me by his mom, Arlene, as a proud memorial to her son. It is my reminder of lives that ended and a task that does not end. I will not forget this wound to our country or those who inflicted it. I will not yield; I will not rest; I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security for the American people.

The course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them.

Fellow citizens, we'll meet violence with patient justice, assured of the rightness of our cause and confident of the victories to come. In all that lies before us, may God grant us wisdom, and may He watch over the United States of America.

Thank you.

3



The Experience of War



. . . By Those Who Fight



Tenting on the Old Camp-Ground

WALTER KITTREDGE

This famous Civil War song was written in 1863, by which time the casualties and miseries of the protracted conflict had become well known throughout the land. It was composed by Walter Kittredge (1834–1905), a traveling singer and songwriter from New Hampshire, on the evening before he was to be inducted into the Union Army, for which he had been drafted. Failing his physical examination, Kittredge never experienced battle himself, but his poignant song captured the spirit of the men at war. He gave the song to the Hutchinson Family singing group, whose rendition of it made it immediately popular with Union and Confederate camps alike. Indeed, officers often forbade singing it at night, for fear that their positions would be compromised. After the war, the song became a staple at reunions of the Grand Army of the Republic.

What is the mood of the song? What experiences of war does it convey? What do you think accounted for its enormous popularity? Is there any connection between the words and spirit of the song and the larger purposes of the Civil War? Does the actual experience of war transcend partisan differences and the goals and merits of the opposing sides?

For a musical rendition, listen to the 97th Regimental String Band perform the song at www.youtube.com/watch?v=oixO-TIOLTU.

We're tenting tonight on the old camp-ground,
Give us a song to cheer
Our weary hearts, a song of home
And friends we love so dear.

(Chorus)

Many are the hearts that are weary tonight,
Wishing for the war to cease;
Many are the hearts looking for the right
To see the dawn of peace.
Tenting tonight, tenting tonight,
Tenting on the old camp-ground.

We've been tenting tonight on the old camp-ground,
Thinking of days gone by,
Of the lov'd ones at home that gave us the hand,
And the tear that said, "Good bye!"

(Chorus)

We are tired of war on the old camp-ground;

Many are dead and gone,
Of the brave and true who've left their homes;
Others been wounded long.

(Chorus)

We've been fighting today on the old camp-ground,
Many are lying near;
Some are dead, and some are dying—
Many are in tears.

(Final Chorus)

Many are the hearts that are weary tonight,
Wishing for the war to cease;
Many are the hearts looking for the light,
To see the dawn of peace.
Dying tonight, dying tonight,
Dying on the old camp-ground.

Shiloh: A Requiem

HERMAN MELVILLE

The Battle of Shiloh took place on April 6–7, 1862, in Tennessee. Confederate troops took the forces of Union General Ulysses S. Grant by surprise, but the tenacity of the defenders, the death of Confederate commander Albert Sidney Johnston, and reinforcements helped the Federals turn the tide and win the day. However, it came at a frightful cost. The combined casualty list totaled 23,746, more than all of America's previous wars. This haunting poem from 1866 by Herman Melville (1819–91), one of America's greatest novelists and author of Moby-Dick (1851), is taken from his Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War. This collection of poetry, inspired by the Civil War, deserves to be much better known.

Why is the poem called "A Requiem"? What mood and tone does it convey? What purpose is served by the "skimming swallows" that appear at the beginning and end of the poem? What is the point of emphasizing that the fight took place around the church at Shiloh—"the church so lone, the log-built one"? What does Melville mean when he says of the "dying foemen" who "mingled" on the field of Shiloh: "Fame or country least their care: / (What like a bullet can undeceive!)" Were the soldiers who fought and died at Shiloh "deceived"? Do you think that they shared the poem's view of their battle?

Skimming lightly, wheeling still,
The swallows fly low
Over the field in clouded days,
The forest-field of Shiloh—
Over the field where April rain
Solaced the parched ones stretched in pain
Through the pause of night
That followed the Sunday fight
Around the church of Shiloh—
The church so lone, the log-built one,
That echoed to many a parting groan
And natural prayer
Of dying foemen mingled there—
Foemen at morn, but friends at eve—
Fame or country least their care:
(What like a bullet can undeceive!)
But now they lie low,
While over them the swallows skim,
And all is hushed at Shiloh.

Night on the Line from *Citizen Soldiers*

STEPHEN E. AMBROSE

American historian Stephen E. Ambrose (1936–2002) gained fame for his popular histories, which often focused on stories of ordinary soldiers in times of war. This selection, excerpted from Chapter 10 of his book, Citizen Soldiers: The U.S. Army from the Normandy Beaches to the Bulge to the Surrender of Germany (1997), provides a vivid account of the nighttime experience of combat soldiers on the front lines in the European theater of World War II. He begins by comparing conditions on the line in the Civil War, World War I, and World War II.

How do nights on the line during World War II differ from those during the Civil War or World War I? Imagine yourself spending many nights in a foxhole, experiencing the ever-present “life-threatening violence,” the trench foot and dysentery, sleep deprivation, bone-numbing cold, feelings of fear, helplessness, degradation, and depression, or any of the other horrors that Ambrose describes. Can you understand why the “million-dollar wound” or “getting out of there, honorably, was every man’s dream”? Can you also understand why, despite it all, the men preferred staying on the line to going to the stockade? How do you think such an experience might affect your own attitude toward death? Why does Ambrose conclude, “There are no unwounded foxhole veterans”?

In the winter camps of 1864–65, Civil War soldiers drilled, marched in closed ranks, built log shelters, repaired equipment, foraged for food. On outpost duty they swapped tobacco, coffee, and insults with the enemy. At night they cooked and ate, sang around the campfire, and retired to bunks. Night was the best time for Johnny Reb and Billy Yank.

Read the whole story in *Citizen Soldiers*:
<http://books.google.com/books?id=IUI76I0bjI0C>.

Brave Men Lost from *With the Old Breed*

E. B. SLEDGE

In his memoir, With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa (1981), Eugene Bondurant Sledge (1923–2001), a United States Marine and afterwards a professor of biology, provides a first-hand account of his combat experiences in the Pacific theater during World War II.³⁴ In this selection, excerpted from Chapter 6, Sledge reports and reflects on his own first combat experience with Marine unit K/3/5 (Company K, Third Battalion, Fifth Marine Division), from the time it was called to the front during the final successful assault against the Japanese positions on Peleliu to the time they left the island.³⁵ His unit fought against the Umurbrogol Ridge pocket, “an area about 400 yards by 1,200 yards in the roughest, worst part of the ridges.”

In a footnote to the beginning of the account, Sledge compares the distinctness of his memory of the “events of horror and death and violence” at Peleliu to a “long nightmare where specific events are recalled vividly the next day.” He records also his “sensation”—both back then and as he writes—that “time and duration have absolutely no meaning in relation to those events.” In light of what you read here, can you explain what he means and why he says this? How does the experience described by Sledge compare with that reported by Ambrose? How does the difference in terrain and in behavior of the enemy affect the experience of Sledge and his fellow Marines?

Imagining yourself in Sledge’s position, experiencing the nightmarish sights, smells, and sounds of the assault, feeling the emotional strains, and witnessing the barbaric atrocities, can you understand his attitude toward “the eloquent phrases of politicians and newsmen about how ‘gallant’ it is for a man to ‘shed his blood for his country’”? Can you understand why he and his comrades “lost” their “sensibilities,” or how they came to hate the enemy? Can you understand why he claims “None of us would ever be the same after what we endured”? And, at the same time, can you understand the positive things he claims at the end to have learned from the experience? Are those positive things redemptive?

“OK, you people, stand by to draw rations and ammo. The battalion is going to reinforce the 7th Marines in the ridges.”

³⁴ This memoir was subsequently used as a source by Ken Burns for his PBS documentary, *The War*, as well as in the HBO miniseries on *The Pacific*.

³⁵ Peleliu is one of the islands in the island nation of Palau, east of the Philippines. The casualties on Peleliu were huge. The First Marine Division was shattered, losing over 6,500 men (1,252 dead; 5,274 wounded). Out of Sledge’s unit (K/3/5) of 235 men, only 85 left unhurt. Fighting almost to the last man, nearly 11,000 Japanese soldiers died, and among the 302 who became prisoners, there were only seven soldiers and 12 sailors.

We received the unwelcome but inevitable news with fatalistic resignation as we squared away our weapons and gear. Our information had the casualty figure of the 7th Marines rapidly approaching that of the 1st Marines. And our own regimental strength wasn't much better than that of the 7th. All of Peleliu except the central ridges was now in our hands. The enemy held out in the Umurbrogol Pocket, an area about 400 yards by 1,200 yards in the ruggedest, worst part of the ridges.³⁶

Read the rest of the essay in *With the Old Breed*:

<http://books.google.com/books?id=Qttbd2dQUQIC&lpg=PP1&pg=PA127#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

³⁶ My memory of the remaining events of horror and death and violence amid the Peleliu ridges is as clear and distinct as a long nightmare where specific events are recalled vividly the next day. I remember clearly the details of certain episodes that occurred before or after certain others and can verify these with my notes and the historical references. But time and duration have absolutely no meaning in relation to those events from one date to the next. I was well aware of this sensation then.

Stories from the Front

ERNIE PYLE

Ernie Pyle (1900–45) was an American journalist and war correspondent known for covering World War II from the soldiers' perspective. Pyle was killed on April 18, 1945, on Ie Shima, an island off Okinawa, by Japanese machine-gun fire. In the following columns, Pyle tells of the life and sacrifices of and by the American soldier in World War II.

Brave Men, Brave Men!

“Brave Men, Brave Men!” explores the change that happens to combat veterans as they become used to performing the act their nation asks of them—killing another human being. Do you think that the acquired attitude toward killing described by Pyle is inevitable? Necessary? Desirable? Why? How does a “professional” who kills in the name of and for his country differ—morally and psychologically—from a Mafia “hit man” or a mercenary soldier who fights only for a living? Is Pyle right in saying that only the frontline soldier is “truly at war”? What about the medics or the supply personnel? Can we not say that a nation is truly at war?

NORTHERN TUNISIA, April 22, 1943—I was away from the front lines for a while this spring, living with other troops, and considerable fighting took place while I was gone. When I got ready to return to my old friends at the front I wondered if I would sense any change in them.

I did, and definitely.

The most vivid change is the casual and workshop manner in which they now talk about killing. They have made the psychological transition from the normal belief that taking human life is sinful, over to a new professional outlook where killing is a craft. To them now there is nothing morally wrong about killing. In fact it is an admirable thing.

I think I am so impressed by this new attitude because it hasn't been necessary for me to make this change along with them. As a noncombatant, my own life is in danger only by occasional chance or circumstance. Consequently I need not think of killing in personal terms, and killing to me is still murder.

Even after a winter of living with wholesale death and vile destruction, it is only spasmodically that I seem capable of realizing how real and how awful this war is. My emotions seem dead and crusty when presented with the tangibles of war. I find I can look on rows of fresh graves without a lump in my throat. Somehow I can look on mutilated bodies without flinching or feeling deeply.

It is only when I sit alone away from it all, or lie at night in my bedroll recreating with closed eyes what I have seen, thinking and thinking and thinking, that at last the enormity of all these newly dead strikes like a living nightmare. And there are times when I feel that I can't stand it and will have to leave.

* * *

But to the fighting soldier that phase of the war is behind. It was left behind after his first battle. His blood is up. He is fighting for his life, and killing now for him is as much a profession as writing is for me.

He wants to kill individually or in vast numbers. He wants to see the Germans overrun, mangled, butchered in the Tunisian trap. He speaks excitedly of seeing great heaps of dead, of our bombers sinking whole shiploads of fleeing men, of Germans by the thousands dying miserably in a final Tunisian holocaust of his own creation.

In this one respect the front-line soldier differs from all the rest of us. All the rest of us—you and me and even the thousands of soldiers behind the lines in Africa—we want terribly yet only academically for the war to get over. The front-line soldier wants it to be got over by the physical process of his destroying enough Germans to end it. He is truly at war. The rest of us, no matter how hard we work, are not.

The Death of Captain Waskow

In this column, Pyle describes the reactions of soldiers to the newly dead bodies of their comrades, and especially to the corpse of their beloved commanding officer. One might think that men who fight and kill must be aware of the possibility of being killed and hardened to the sight of dead bodies. But are they? Can you account for the reactions of the men to the presence of the newly dead? Describe and try to explain the reactions of the different men to the death of Captain Waskow.

AT THE FRONT LINES IN ITALY, January 10, 1944—In this war I have known a lot of officers who were loved and respected by the soldiers under them. But never have I crossed the trail of any man as beloved as Capt. Henry T. Waskow of Belton, Texas.

Capt. Waskow was a company commander in the 36th Division. He had led his company since long before it left the States. He was very young, only in his middle twenties, but he carried in him a sincerity and gentleness that made people want to be guided by him.

“After my own father, he came next,” a sergeant told me.

“He always looked after us,” a soldier said. “He’d go to bat for us every time.”

“I’ve never knowed him to do anything unfair,” another one said.

I was at the foot of the mule trail the night they brought Capt. Waskow's body down. The moon was nearly full at the time, and you could see far up the trail, and even part way across the valley below. Soldiers made shadows in the moonlight as they walked.

Dead men had been coming down the mountain all evening, lashed onto the backs of mules. They came lying belly-down across the wooden pack-saddles, their heads hanging down on the left side of the mule, their stiffened legs sticking out awkwardly from the other side, bobbing up and down as the mule walked.

The Italian mule-skinners were afraid to walk beside dead men, so Americans had to lead the mules down that night. Even the Americans were reluctant to unlash and lift off the bodies at the bottom, so an officer had to do it himself, and ask others to help.

The first one came early in the morning. They slid him down from the mule and stood him on his feet for a moment, while they got a new grip. In the half light he might have been merely a sick man standing there, leaning on the others. Then they laid him on the ground in the shadow of the low stone wall alongside the road.

I don't know who that first one was. You feel small in the presence of dead men, and ashamed at being alive, and you don't ask silly questions.

We left him there beside the road, that first one, and we all went back into the cowshed and sat on water cans or lay on the straw, waiting for the next batch of mules.

Somebody said the dead soldier had been dead for four days, and then nobody said anything more about it. We talked soldier talk for an hour or more. The dead man lay all alone outside in the shadow of the low stone wall.

Then a soldier came into the cowshed and said there were some more bodies outside. We went out into the road. Four mules stood there, in the moonlight, in the road where the trail came down off the mountain. The soldiers who led them stood there waiting. "This one is Captain Waskow," one of them said quietly.

Two men unlash his body from the mule and lifted it off and laid it in the shadow beside the low stone wall. Other men took the other bodies off. Finally there were five lying end to end in a long row, alongside the road. You don't cover up dead men in the combat zone. They just lie there in the shadows until somebody else comes after them.

The unburdened mules moved off to their olive orchard. The men in the road seemed reluctant to leave. They stood around, and gradually one by one I could sense them moving close to Capt. Waskow's body. Not so much to look, I think, as to say something in finality to him, and to themselves. I stood close by and I could hear.

One soldier came and looked down, and he said out loud, "God damn it." That's all he said, and then he walked away. Another one came. He said, "God damn it to hell anyway." He looked down for a few last moments, and then he turned and left.

Another man came; I think he was an officer. It was hard to tell officers from men in the half light, for all were bearded and grimy dirty. The man looked down into the dead captain's face, and then he spoke directly to him, as though he were alive. He said: "I'm sorry, old man."

Then a soldier came and stood beside the officer, and bent over, and he too spoke to his dead captain, not in a whisper but awfully tenderly, and he said:

"I sure am sorry, sir."

Then the first man squatted down, and he reached down and took the dead hand, and he sat there for a full five minutes, holding the dead hand in his own and looking intently into the dead face, and he never uttered a sound all the time he sat there.

And finally he put the hand down, and then reached up and gently straightened the points of the captain's shirt collar, and then he sort of rearranged the tattered edges of his uniform around the wound. And then he got up and walked away down the road in the moonlight, all alone.

After that the rest of us went back into the cowshed, leaving the five dead men lying in a line, end to end, in the shadow of the low stone wall. We lay down on the straw in the cowshed, and pretty soon we were all asleep.

A Long Thin Line of Personal Anguish

In this column, Pyle describes the collection of objects strewn along the Normandy beach, left behind by those who there lost their lives. What do we learn from these leavings about their now deceased owners? Some of the relics—the banjo, the tennis racket—were highly incongruous. Can you understand why the men who carried these items might have done so? What do you think you might have carried with you on the Normandy Invasion? Rank and explain each of your choices. What does that exercise, and this column, tell you about the experience of war?

NORMANDY BEACHHEAD, June 17, 1944—In the preceding column we told about the D-day wreckage among our machines of war that were expended in taking one of the Normandy beaches.

But there is another and more human litter. It extends in a thin little line, just like a high-water mark, for miles along the beach. This is the strewn personal gear, gear that will never be needed again, of those who fought and died to give us our entrance into Europe.

Here in a jumbled row for mile on mile are soldiers' packs. Here are socks and shoe polish, sewing kits, diaries, Bibles and hand grenades. Here are the latest letters from home, with the address on each one neatly razored out—one of the security precautions enforced before the boys embarked.

Here are toothbrushes and razors, and snapshots of families back home staring up at you from the sand. Here are pocketbooks, metal mirrors, extra trousers, and bloody, abandoned shoes. Here are broken-handled shovels, and portable radios smashed almost beyond recognition, and mine detectors twisted and ruined.

Here are torn pistol belts and canvas water buckets, first-aid kits and jumbled heaps of lifebelts. I picked up a pocket Bible with a soldier's name in it, and put it in my jacket. I carried it half a mile or so and then put it back down on the beach. I don't know why I picked it up, or why I put it back down.

Soldiers carry strange things ashore with them. In every invasion you'll find at least one soldier hitting the beach at H-hour with a banjo slung over his shoulder. The most ironic piece of equipment marking our beach—this beach of first despair, then victory—is a tennis racket that some soldier had brought along. It lies lonesomely on the sand, clamped in its rack, not a string broken.

Two of the most dominant items in the beach refuse are cigarets and writing paper. Each soldier was issued a carton of cigarets just before he started. Today these cartons by the thousand, water-soaked and spilled out, mark the line of our first savage blow.

Writing paper and air-mail envelopes come second. The boys had intended to do a lot of writing in France. Letters that would have filled those blank, abandoned pages.

Always there are dogs in every invasion. There is a dog still on the beach today, still pitifully looking for his masters.

He stays at the water's edge, near a boat that lies twisted and half sunk at the water line. He barks appealingly to every soldier who approaches, trots eagerly along with him for a few feet, and then, sensing himself unwanted in all this haste, runs back to wait in vain for his own people at his own empty boat.

* * *

Over and around this long thin line of personal anguish, fresh men today are rushing vast supplies to keep our armies pushing on into France. Other squads of men pick amidst the wreckage to salvage ammunition and equipment that are still usable.

Men worked and slept on the beach for days before the last D-day victim was taken away for burial.

I stepped over the form of one youngster whom I thought dead. But when I looked down I saw he was only sleeping. He was very young, and very tired. He lay on one elbow, his hand suspended in the air about six inches from the ground. And in the palm of his hand he held a large, smooth rock.

I stood and looked at him a long time. He seemed in his sleep to hold that rock lovingly, as though it were his last link with a vanishing world. I have no idea at all why he went to sleep with the rock in his hand, or what kept him from dropping it once he was asleep. It was just one of those little things without explanation that a person remembers for a long time.

* * *

The strong, swirling tides of the Normandy coastline shift the contours of the sandy beach as they move in and out. They carry soldiers' bodies out to sea, and later they return them. They cover the corpses of heroes with sand, and then in their whims they uncover them.

As I plowed out over the wet sand of the beach on that first day ashore, I walked around what seemed to be a couple of pieces of driftwood sticking out of the sand. But they weren't driftwood.

They were a soldier's two feet. He was completely covered by the shifting sands except for his feet. The toes of his GI shoes pointed toward the land he had come so far to see, and which he saw so briefly.



. . . And Those Who Care for Them



A Night from *Hospital Sketches*

LOUISA MAY ALCOTT

American novelist Louisa May Alcott (1832–88), later famous for Little Women and Little Men, drew on her personal experience as a volunteer nurse during the Civil War to write Hospital Sketches (1863). During her time in a Washington, DC hospital, nursing wounded Union soldiers fresh from the battle of Fredericksburg (1862), she wrote letters home, from which she soon after composed the Sketches, narrated by a novice nurse “Tribulation Periwinkle.” The work was a milestone in Alcott’s career, bringing her critical and commercial notice. In this selection (Chapter 4), Nurse Periwinkle focuses primarily on her conversations with a fatally wounded Virginia blacksmith, John.

Describe Nurse Periwinkle. What enables her to care both for and about the wounded and dying men? What accounts for her particular attention to John? Why is she, at first, so alarmed by the news that he must die? How is she moved by John’s account of his life and his reason for enlisting? What enables Nurse Periwinkle, finally, to speak so candidly with John? What do you think of the way she attends his dying? Why is she able to do so? In what sense is John also a caregiver?

Being fond of the night side of nature, I was soon promoted to the post of night nurse, with every facility for indulging in my favorite pastime of “owling.” My colleague, a black-eyed widow, relieved me at dawn, we two taking care of the ward, between us, like the immortal Sairy and Betsey, “turn and turn about.”³⁷ I usually found my boys in the jolliest state of mind their condition allowed; for it was a known fact that Nurse Periwinkle objected to blue devils, and entertained a belief that he who laughed most was surest of recovery. At the beginning of my reign, dumps and dismals prevailed; the nurses looked anxious and tired, the men gloomy or sad; and a general “Hark!-from-the-tombs-a-doleful-sound” style of conversation seemed to be the fashion: a state of things which caused one coming from a merry, social New England town, to feel as if she had got into an exhausted receiver; and the instinct of self-preservation, to say nothing of a philanthropic desire to serve the race, caused a speedy change in Ward No. 1.

More flattering than the most gracefully turned compliment, more grateful than the most admiring glance, was the sight of those rows of faces, all strange to me a little while ago, now lighting up, with smiles of welcome, as I came among them, enjoying that moment heartily, with a womanly pride in their regard, a motherly affection for them all. The evenings were spent in reading aloud, writing letters, waiting on and amusing the men, going the rounds with Dr. P., as he made his second daily survey, dressing my dozen wounds afresh, giving last doses, and making them cozy for the long hours to

³⁷ Sarah “Sairey” Gamp and Betsey Prig, characters in Charles Dickens’ novel *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844). The two women nurse together, “turn and turn about, one off, one on.”

come, till the nine o'clock bell rang, the gas was turned down, the day nurses went off duty, the night watch came on, and my nocturnal adventure began.

My ward was now divided into three rooms; and, under favor of the matron, I had managed to sort out the patients in such a way that I had what I called, "my duty room," my "pleasure room," and my "pathetic room," and worked for each in a different way. One, I visited, armed with a dressing tray, full of rollers, plasters, and pins; another, with books, flowers, games, and gossip; a third, with teapots, lullabies, consolation, and sometimes, a shroud.

Wherever the sickest or most helpless man chanced to be, there I held my watch, often visiting the other rooms, to see that the general watchman of the ward did his duty by the fires and the wounds, the latter needing constant wetting. Not only on this account did I meander, but also to get fresher air than the close rooms afforded; for, owing to the stupidity of that mysterious "somebody" who does all the damage in the world, the windows had been carefully nailed down above, and the lower sashes could only be raised in the mildest weather, for the men lay just below. I had suggested a summary smashing of a few panes here and there, when frequent appeals to headquarters had proved unavailing, and daily orders to lazy attendants had come to nothing. No one seconded the motion, however, and the nails were far beyond my reach; for, though belonging to the sisterhood of "ministering angels," I had no wings, and might as well have asked for Jacob's ladder,³⁸ as a pair of steps, in that charitable chaos.

One of the harmless ghosts who bore me company during the haunted hours, was Dan, the watchman, whom I regarded with a certain awe; for, though so much together, I never fairly saw his face, and, but for his legs, should never have recognized him, as we seldom met by day. These legs were remarkable, as was his whole figure, for his body was short, rotund, and done up in a big jacket, and muffler; his beard hid the lower part of his face, his hat-brim the upper; and all I ever discovered was a pair of sleepy eyes, and a very mild voice. But the legs!—very long, very thin, very crooked and feeble, looking like grey sausages in their tight coverings, without a ray of pegtopishness about them, and finished off with a pair of expansive, green cloth shoes, very like Chinese junks, with the sails down. This figure, gliding noiselessly about the dimly lighted rooms, was strongly suggestive of the spirit of a beer barrel mounted on cork-screws, haunting the old hotel in search of its lost mates, emptied and staved in long ago.

Another goblin who frequently appeared to me, was the attendant of the pathetic room, who, being a faithful soul, was often up to tend two or three men, weak and wandering as babies, after the fever had gone. The amiable creature beguiled the watches of the night by brewing jorums [bowls] of a fearful beverage, which he called coffee, and insisted on sharing with me; coming in with a great bowl of something like mud soup, scalding hot, guiltless of cream, rich in an all-pervading flavor of molasses, scorch and tin pot. Such an amount of good will and neighborly kindness also went into the mess, that I never could find the heart to refuse, but always received it with thanks, sipped it

³⁸ *A ladder to heaven that the biblical Patriarch Jacob dreams about during his flight from his brother Esau. It is described in the Book of Genesis.*

with hypocritical relish while he remained, and whipped it into the slop-jar the instant he departed, thereby gratifying him, securing one rousing laugh in the doziest hour of the night, and no one was the worse for the transaction but the pigs. Whether they were "cut off untimely in their sins," or not, I carefully abstained from inquiring.

It was a strange life—asleep half the day, exploring Washington the other half, and all night hovering, like a massive cherubim, in a red rigolette,³⁹ over the slumbering sons of man. I liked it, and found many things to amuse, instruct, and interest me. The snores alone were quite a study, varying from the mild sniff to the stentorian snort, which startled the echoes and hoisted the performer erect to accuse his neighbor of the deed, magnanimously forgive him, and wrapping the drapery of his couch about him, lie down to vocal slumber. After listening for a week to this band of wind instruments, I indulged in the belief that I could recognize each by the snore alone, and was tempted to join the chorus by breaking out with John Brown's favorite hymn:

"Blow ye the trumpet, blow!"

I would have given much to have possessed the art of sketching, for many of the faces became wonderfully interesting when unconscious. Some grew stern and grim, the men evidently dreaming of war, as they gave orders, groaned over their wounds, or damned the rebels vigorously; some grew sad and infinitely pathetic, as if the pain borne silently all day, revenged itself by now betraying what the man's pride had concealed so well. Often the roughest grew young and pleasant when sleep smoothed the hard lines away, letting the real nature assert itself; many almost seemed to speak, and I learned to know these men better by night than through any intercourse by day. Sometimes they disappointed me, for faces that looked merry and good in the light, grew bad and sly when the shadows came; and though they made no confidences in words, I read their lives, leaving them to wonder at the change of manner this midnight magic wrought in their nurse. A few talked busily; one drummer boy sang sweetly, though no persuasions could win a note from him by day; and several depended on being told what they had talked of in the morning. Even my constitutionals in the chilly halls, possessed a certain charm, for the house was never still. Sentinels tramped round it all night long, their muskets glittering in the wintry moonlight as they walked, or stood before the doors, straight and silent, as figures of stone, causing one to conjure up romantic visions of guarded forts, sudden surprises, and daring deeds; for in these war times the hum drum life of Yankeedom had vanished, and the most prosaic feel some thrill of that excitement which stirs the nation's heart, and makes its capital a camp of hospitals. Wandering up and down these lower halls, I often heard cries from above, steps hurrying to and fro, saw surgeons passing up, or men coming down carrying a stretcher, where lay a long white figure, whose face was shrouded and whose fight was done. Sometimes I stopped to watch the passers in the street, the moonlight shining on the spire opposite, or the gleam of some vessel floating, like a white-winged sea-gull, down the broad Potomac, whose fullest flow can never wash away the red stain of the land.

³⁹ *A woman's light scarf-like head covering, usually knit or crocheted of wool.*

The night whose events I have a fancy to record, opened with a little comedy, and closed with a great tragedy; for a virtuous and useful life untimely ended is always tragical to those who see not as God sees. My headquarters were beside the bed of a New Jersey boy, crazed by the horrors of that dreadful Saturday. A slight wound in the knee brought him there; but his mind had suffered more than his body; some string of that delicate machine was over strained, and, for days, he had been reliving in imagination, the scenes he could not forget, till his distress broke out in incoherent ravings, pitiful to hear. As I sat by him, endeavoring to soothe his poor distracted brain by the constant touch of wet hands over his hot forehead, he lay cheering his comrades on, hurrying them back, then counting them as they fell around him, often clutching my arm, to drag me from the vicinity of a bursting shell, or covering up his head to screen himself from a shower of shot; his face brilliant with fever; his eyes restless; his head never still; every muscle strained and rigid; while an incessant stream of defiant shouts, whispered warnings, and broken laments, poured from his lips with that forceful bewilderment which makes such wanderings so hard to overhear.

It was past eleven, and my patient was slowly wearying himself into fitful intervals of quietude, when, in one of these pauses, a curious sound arrested my attention. Looking over my shoulder, I saw a one-legged phantom hopping nimbly down the room; and, going to meet it, recognized a certain Pennsylvania gentleman, whose wound-fever had taken a turn for the worse, and, depriving him of the few wits a drunken campaign had left him, set him literally tripping on the light, fantastic toe "toward home," as he blandly informed me, touching the military cap which formed a striking contrast to the severe simplicity of the rest of his decidedly *undress* uniform.⁴⁰ When sane, the least movement produced a roar of pain or a volley of oaths; but the departure of reason seemed to have wrought an agreeable change, both in the man and his manners; for, balancing himself on one leg, like a meditative stork, he plunged into an animated discussion of the war, the President, lager beer, and Enfield rifles, regardless of any suggestions of mine as to the propriety of returning to bed, lest he be court-martialed for desertion.

Any thing more supremely ridiculous can hardly be imagined than this figure, scantily draped in white, its one foot covered with a big blue sock, a dingy cap set rakingly askew on its shaven head, and placid satisfaction beaming in its broad red face, as it flourished a mug in one hand, an old boot in the other, calling them canteen and knapsack, while it skipped and fluttered in the most unearthly fashion. What to do with the creature I didn't know; Dan was absent, and if I went to find him, the perambulator might festoon himself out of the window, set his toga on fire, or do some of his neighbors a mischief. The attendant of the room was sleeping like a near relative of the celebrated Seven,⁴¹ and nothing short of pins would rouse him; for he had been out that day, and whiskey asserted its supremacy in balmy whiffs. Still declaiming, in a fine flow of eloquence, the demented gentleman hopped on, blind and deaf to my graspings and entreaties; and I was about to slam the door in his face, and run for help, when a second

⁴⁰ *Military uniform worn on informal occasions.*

⁴¹ *The "Seven Sleepers of Ephesus," a group of third-century Christians who hid inside a cave outside the city of Ephesus around 250 AD to escape persecution. After falling asleep in the cave, they awoke nearly two centuries later.*

and saner phantom, "all in white," came to the rescue, in the likeness of a big Prussian, who spoke no English, but divined the crisis, and put an end to it, by bundling the lively monoped into his bed, like a baby, with an authoritative command to "stay put," which received added weight from being delivered in an odd conglomeration of French and German, accompanied by warning wags of a head decorated with a yellow cotton night cap, rendered most imposing by a tassel like a bell-pull. Rather exhausted by his excursion, the member from Pennsylvania subsided; and, after an irrepressible laugh together, my Prussian ally and myself were returning to our places, when the echo of a sob caused us to glance along the beds. It came from one in the corner—such a little bed!—and such a tearful little face looked up at us, as we stopped beside it! The twelve years old drummer boy was not singing now, but sobbing, with a manly effort all the while to stifle the distressful sounds that would break out.

"What is it, Billy?" I asked, as he rubbed the tears away, and checked himself in the middle of a great sob to answer plaintively:

"I've got a chill, ma'am, but I aint cryin' for that, 'cause I'm used to it. I dreamed Kit was here, and when I waked up he wasn't, and I couldn't help it, then."

The boy came in with the rest, and the man who was taken dead from the ambulance was the Kit he mourned. Well he might; for, when the wounded were brought from Fredericksburg, the child lay in one of the camps thereabout, and this good friend, though sorely hurt himself, would not leave him to the exposure and neglect of such a time and place; but, wrapping him in his own blanket, carried him in his arms to the transport, tended him during the passage, and only yielded up his charge when Death met him at the door of the hospital which promised care and comfort for the boy. For ten days, Billy had shivered or burned with fever and ague, pining the while for Kit, and refusing to be comforted, because he had not been able to thank him for the generous protection, which, perhaps, had cost the giver's life. The vivid dream had wrung the childish heart with a fresh pang, and when I tried the solace fitted for his years, the remorseful fear that haunted him found vent in a fresh burst of tears, as he looked at the wasted hands I was endeavoring to warm:

"Oh! if I'd only been as thin when Kit carried me as I am now, maybe he wouldn't have died; but I was heavy, he was hurt worsen than we knew, and so it killed him; and I didn't see him, to say good bye."

This thought had troubled him in secret; and my assurances that his friend would probably have died at all events, hardly assuaged the bitterness of his regretful grief.

At this juncture, the delirious man began to shout; the one-legged rose up in his bed, as if preparing for another dart, Billy bewailed himself more piteously than before: and if ever a woman was at her wit's end, that distracted female was Nurse Periwinkle, during the space of two or three minutes, as she vibrated between the three beds, like an agitated pendulum. Like a most opportune reinforcement, Dan, the bandy, appeared, and devoted himself to the lively party, leaving me free to return to my post; for the Prussian, with a

nod and a smile, took the lad away to his own bed, and lulled him to sleep with a soothing murmur, like a mammoth bumble bee. I liked that in Fritz, and if he ever wondered afterward at the dainties which sometimes found their way into his rations, or the extra comforts of his bed, he might have found a solution of the mystery in sundry persons' knowledge of the fatherly action of that night.

Hardly was I settled again, when the inevitable bowl appeared, and its bearer delivered a message I had expected, yet dreaded to receive:

“John is going, ma'am, and wants to see you, if you can come.”

“The moment this boy is asleep; tell him so, and let me know if I am in danger of being too late.”

My Ganymede⁴² departed, and while I quieted poor Shaw, I thought of John. He came in a day or two after the others; and, one evening, when I entered my “pathetic room,” I found a lately emptied bed occupied by a large, fair man, with a fine face, and the serenest eyes I ever met. One of the earlier comers had often spoken of a friend, who had remained behind, that those apparently worse wounded than himself might reach a shelter first. It seemed a David and Jonathan sort of friendship.⁴³ The man fretted for his mate, and was never tired of praising John—his courage, sobriety, self-denial, and unflinching kindness of heart; always winding up with: “He's an out an' out fine feller, ma'am; you see if he ain't.”

I had some curiosity to behold this piece of excellence, and when he came, watched him for a night or two, before I made friends with him; for, to tell the truth, I was a little afraid of the stately looking man, whose bed had to be lengthened to accommodate his commanding stature; who seldom spoke, uttered no complaint, asked no sympathy, but tranquilly observed what went on about him; and, as he lay high upon his pillows, no picture of dying statesman or warrior was ever fuller of real dignity than this Virginia blacksmith. A most attractive face he had, framed in brown hair and beard, comely featured and full of vigor, as yet unsubdued by pain; thoughtful and often beautifully mild while watching the afflictions of others, as if entirely forgetful of his own. His mouth was grave and firm, with plenty of will and courage in its lines, but a smile could make it as sweet as any woman's; and his eyes were child's eyes, looking one fairly in the face, with a clear, straightforward glance, which promised well for such as placed their faith in him. He seemed to cling to life, as if it were rich in duties and delights, and he had learned the secret of content. The only time I saw his composure disturbed, was when my surgeon brought another to examine John, who scrutinized their faces with an anxious look, asking of the elder: “Do you think I shall pull through, sir?” “I hope so, my man.” And, as the two passed on, John's eye still followed them, with an intentness which would have won a clearer answer from them, had they seen it. A momentary

⁴² *In Greek mythology, cupbearer to the gods.*

⁴³ *Heroic figures of the Kingdom of Israel, whose covenant was recorded in the books of Samuel. Jonathan was the son of Saul, king of Israel, and David was Jonathan's rival for the crown. David became king, and the two men formed a covenant.*

shadow flitted over his face; then came the usual serenity, as if, in that brief eclipse, he had acknowledged the existence of some hard possibility, and, asking nothing yet hoping all things, left the issue in God's hands, with that submission which is true piety.

The next night, as I went my rounds with Dr. P., I happened to ask which man in the room probably suffered most; and, to my great surprise, he glanced at John:

"Every breath he draws is like a stab; for the ball pierced the left lung, broke a rib, and did no end of damage here and there; so the poor lad can find neither forgetfulness nor ease, because he must lie on his wounded back or suffocate. It will be a hard struggle, and a long one, for he possesses great vitality; but even his temperate life can't save him; I wish it could."

"You don't mean he must die, Doctor?"

"Bless you there's not the slightest hope for him; and you'd better tell him so before long; women have a way of doing such things comfortably, so I leave it to you. He won't last more than a day or two, at furthest."

I could have sat down on the spot and cried heartily, if I had not learned the wisdom of bottling up one's tears for leisure moments. Such an end seemed very hard for such a man, when half a dozen worn out, worthless bodies round him, were gathering up the remnants of wasted lives, to linger on for years perhaps, burdens to others, daily reproaches to themselves. The army needed men like John, earnest, brave, and faithful; fighting for liberty and justice with both heart and hand, true soldiers of the Lord. I could not give him up so soon, or think with any patience of so excellent a nature robbed of its fulfillment, and blundered into eternity by the rashness or stupidity of those at whose hands so many lives may be required. It was an easy thing for Dr. P. to say: "Tell him he must die," but a cruelly hard thing to do, and by no means as "comfortable" as he politely suggested. I had not the heart to do it then, and privately indulged the hope that some change for the better might take place, in spite of gloomy prophesies; so, rendering my task unnecessary.

A few minutes later, as I came in again, with fresh rollers, I saw John sitting erect, with no one to support him, while the surgeon dressed his back. I had never hitherto seen it done; for, having simpler wounds to attend to, and knowing the fidelity of the attendant, I had left John to him, thinking it might be more agreeable and safe; for both strength and experience were needed in his case. I had forgotten that the strong man might long for the gentle tendance of a woman's hands, the sympathetic magnetism of a woman's presence, as well as the feeblers souls about him. The Doctor's words caused me to reproach myself with neglect, not of any real duty perhaps, but of those little cares and kindnesses that solace homesick spirits, and make the heavy hours pass easier. John looked lonely and forsaken just then, as he sat with bent head, hands folded on his knee, and no outward sign of suffering, till, looking nearer, I saw great tears roll down and drop upon the floor. It was a new sight there; for, though I had seen many suffer, some swore, some groaned, most endured silently, but none wept. Yet it did not seem weak, only very

touching, and straightway my fear vanished, my heart opened wide and took him in, as, gathering the bent head in my arms, as freely as if he had been a little child, I said, "Let me help you bear it, John."

Never, on any human countenance, have I seen so swift and beautiful a look of gratitude, surprise and comfort, as that which answered me more eloquently than the whispered—

"Thank you, ma'am, this is right good! this is what I wanted!"

"Then why not ask for it before?"

"I didn't like to be a trouble; you seemed so busy, and I could manage to get on alone."

"You shall not want it any more, John."

Nor did he; for now I understood the wistful look that sometimes followed me, as I went out, after a brief pause beside his bed, or merely a passing nod, while busied with those who seemed to need me more than he, because more urgent in their demands; now I knew that to him, as to so many, I was the poor substitute for mother, wife, or sister, and in his eyes no stranger, but a friend who hitherto had seemed neglectful; for, in his modesty, he had never guessed the truth. This was changed now; and, through the tedious operation of probing, bathing, and dressing his wounds, he leaned against me, holding my hand fast, and, if pain wrung further tears from him, no one saw them fall but me. When he was laid down again, I hovered about him, in a remorseful state of mind that would not let me rest, till I had bathed his face, brushed his bonny brown hair, set all things smooth about him, and laid a knot of heath and heliotrope on his clean pillow.⁴⁴ While doing this, he watched me with the satisfied expression I so liked to see; and when I offered the little nosegay, held it carefully in his great hand, smoothed a ruffled leaf or two, surveyed and smelt it with an air of genuine delight, and lay contentedly regarding the glimmer of the sunshine on the green. Although the manliest man among my forty, he said, "Yes, ma'am," like a little boy; received suggestions for his comfort with the quick smile that brightened his whole face; and now and then, as I stood tidying the table by his bed, I felt him softly touch my gown, as if to assure himself that I was there. Anything more natural and frank I never saw, and found this brave John as bashful as brave, yet full of excellencies and fine aspirations, which, having no power to express themselves in words, seemed to have bloomed into his character and made him what he was.

After that night, an hour of each evening that remained to him was devoted to his ease or pleasure. He could not talk much, for breath was precious, and he spoke in whispers; but from occasional conversations, I gleaned scraps of private history which only added to the affection and respect I felt for him. Once he asked me to write a letter, and as I settled pen and paper, I said, with an irrepressible glimmer of feminine curiosity, "Shall it be addressed to wife, or mother, John?"

⁴⁴ *A bouquet used to perfume sick beds.*

"Neither, ma'am; I've got no wife, and will write to mother myself when I get better. Did you think I was married because of this?" he asked, touching a plain ring he wore, and often turned thoughtfully on his finger when he lay alone.

"Partly that, but more from a settled sort of look you have; a look which young men seldom get until they marry."

"I didn't know that; but I'm not so very young, ma'am, thirty in May, and have been what you might call settled this ten years; for Mother's a widow, I'm the oldest child she has, and it wouldn't do for me to marry until Lizzy has a home of her own, and Jack's learned his trade; for we're not rich, and I must be father to the children and husband to the dear old woman, if I can."

"No doubt but you are both, John; yet how came you to go to war, if you felt so? Wasn't enlisting as bad as marrying?"

"No, ma'am, not as I see it, for one is helping my neighbor, the other pleasing myself. I went because I couldn't help it. I didn't want the glory or the pay; I wanted the right thing done, and people kept saying the men who were in earnest ought to fight. I was in earnest, the Lord knows! but I held off as long as I could, not knowing which was my duty; Mother saw the case, gave me her ring to keep me steady, and said 'Go:' so I went."

A short story and a simple one, but the man and the mother were portrayed better than pages of fine writing could have done it.

"Do you ever regret that you came, when you lie here suffering so much?"

"Never, ma'am; I haven't helped a great deal, but I've shown I was willing to give my life, and perhaps I've got to; but I don't blame anybody, and if it was to do over again, I'd do it. I'm a little sorry I wasn't wounded in front; it looks cowardly to be hit in the back, but I obeyed orders, and it don't matter in the end, I know."

Poor John! it did not matter now, except that a shot in the front might have spared the long agony in store for him. He seemed to read the thought that troubled me, as he spoke so hopefully when there was no hope, for he suddenly added:

"This is my first battle; do they think it's going to be my last?"

"I'm afraid they do, John."

It was the hardest question I had ever been called upon to answer; doubly hard with those clear eyes fixed on mine, forcing a truthful answer by their own truth. He seemed a little startled at first, pondered over the fateful fact a moment, then shook his head, with a glance at the broad chest and muscular limbs stretched out before him:

“I’m not afraid, but it’s difficult to believe all at once. I’m so strong it don’t seem possible for such a little wound to kill me.”

Merry Mercutio’s dying words glanced through my memory as he spoke: “’Tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door, but ’tis enough.”⁴⁵ And John would have said the same could he have seen the ominous black holes between his shoulders; he never had; and, seeing the ghastly sights about him, could not believe his own wound more fatal than these, for all the suffering it caused him.

“Shall I write to your mother, now?” I asked, thinking that these sudden tidings might change all plans and purposes; but they did not; for the man received the order of the Divine Commander to march with the same unquestioning obedience with which the soldier had received that of the human one; doubtless remembering that the first led him to life, and the last to death.

“No, ma’am; to Jack just the same; he’ll break it to her best, and I’ll add a line to her myself when you get done.”

So I wrote the letter which he dictated, finding it better than any I had sent; for, though here and there a little ungrammatical or inelegant, each sentence came to me briefly worded, but most expressive; full of excellent counsel to the boy, tenderly bequeathing “mother and Lizzie” to his care, and bidding him good bye in words the sadder for their simplicity. He added a few lines, with steady hand, and, as I sealed it, said, with a patient sort of sigh, “I hope the answer will come in time for me to see it;” then, turning away his face, laid the flowers against his lips, as if to hide some quiver of emotion at the thought of such a sudden sundering of all the dear home ties.

These things had happened two days before; now John was dying, and the letter had not come. I had been summoned to many death beds in my life, but to none that made my heart ache as it did then, since my mother called me to watch the departure of a spirit akin to this in its gentleness and patient strength. As I went in, John stretched out both hands:

“I knew you’d come! I guess I’m moving on, ma’am.”

He was; and so rapidly that, even while he spoke, over his face I saw the grey veil falling that no human hand can lift. I sat down by him, wiped the drops from his forehead, stirred the air about him with the slow wave of a fan, and waited to help him die. He stood in sore need of help—and I could do so little; for, as the doctor had foretold, the strong body rebelled against death, and fought every inch of the way, forcing him to draw each breath with a spasm, and clench his hands with an imploring look, as if he asked, “How long must I endure this, and be still!” For hours he suffered dumbly, without a moment’s respite, or a moment’s murmuring; his limbs grew cold, his face damp, his lips white, and, again and again, he tore the covering off his breast, as if the lightest weight added to his agony; yet through it all, his eyes never lost their perfect

⁴⁵ *Romeo and Juliet, Act 3, Scene 1.*

serenity, and the man's soul seemed to sit therein, undaunted by the ills that vexed his flesh.

One by one, the men woke, and round the room appeared a circle of pale faces and watchful eyes, full of awe and pity; for, though a stranger, John was beloved by all. Each man there had wondered at his patience, respected his piety, admired his fortitude, and now lamented his hard death; for the influence of an upright nature had made itself deeply felt, even in one little week. Presently, the Jonathan who so loved this comely David, came creeping from his bed for a last look and word. The kind soul was full of trouble, as the choke in his voice, the grasp of his hand, betrayed; but there were no tears, and the farewell of the friends was the more touching for its brevity.

"Old boy, how are you?" faltered the one.

"Most through, thank heaven!" whispered the other.

"Can I say or do anything for you anywheres?"

"Take my things home, and tell them that I did my best."

"I will! I will!"

"Good bye, Ned."

"Good bye, John, good bye!"

They kissed each other, tenderly as women, and so parted, for poor Ned could not stay to see his comrade die. For a little while, there was no sound in the room but the drip of water, from a stump or two, and John's distressful gasps, as he slowly breathed his life away. I thought him nearly gone, and had just laid down the fan, believing its help to be no longer needed, when suddenly he rose up in his bed, and cried out with a bitter cry that broke the silence, sharply startling every one with its agonized appeal:

"For God's sake, give me air!"

It was the only cry pain or death had wrung from him, the only boon he had asked; and none of us could grant it, for all the airs that blew were useless now. Dan flung up the window. The first red streak of dawn was warming the grey east, a herald of the coming sun; John saw it, and with the love of light which lingers in us to the end, seemed to read in it a sign of hope of help, for, over his whole face there broke that mysterious expression, brighter than any smile, which often comes to eyes that look their last. He laid himself gently down; and, stretching out his strong right arm, as if to grasp and bring the blessed air to his lips in a fuller flow, lapsed into a merciful unconsciousness, which assured us that for him suffering was forever past. He died then; for, though the heavy breaths still tore their way up for a little longer, they were but the waves of an ebbing tide that beat unfelt against the wreck, which an immortal voyager had deserted with a smile.

He never spoke again, but to the end held my hand close, so close that when he was asleep at last, I could not draw it away. Dan helped me, warning me as he did so that it was unsafe for dead and living flesh to lie so long together; but though my hand was strangely cold and stiff, and four white marks remained across its back, even when warmth and color had returned elsewhere, I could not but be glad that, through its touch, the presence of human sympathy, perhaps, had lightened that hard hour.

When they had made him ready for the grave, John lay in state for half an hour, a thing which seldom happened in that busy place; but a universal sentiment of reverence and affection seemed to fill the hearts of all who had known or heard of him; and when the rumor of his death went through the house, always astir, many came to see him, and I felt a tender sort of pride in my lost patient; for he looked a most heroic figure, lying there stately and still as the statue of some young knight asleep upon his tomb. The lovely expression which so often beautifies dead faces, soon replaced the marks of pain, and I longed for those who loved him best to see him when half an hour's acquaintance with Death had made them friends. As we stood looking at him, the ward master handed me a letter, saying it had been forgotten the night before. It was John's letter, come just an hour too late to gladden the eyes that had longed and looked for it so eagerly! but he had it; for, after I had cut some brown locks for his mother, and taken off the ring to send her, telling how well the talisman had done its work, I kissed this good son for her sake, and laid the letter in his hand, still folded as when I drew my own away, feeling that its place was there, and making myself happy with the thought, that, even in his solitary grave in the "Government Lot," he would not be without some token of the love which makes life beautiful and outlives death. Then I left him, glad to have known so genuine a man, and carrying with me an enduring memory of the brave Virginia blacksmith, as he lay serenely waiting for the dawn of that long day which knows no night.

Letter to Mrs. Bixby

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

This letter has gone down in Lincoln lore, yet its origins remain cloudy. To start, it appears that the Mrs. Bixby in question did not actually lose all five of her sons in battle. It was first printed in the Boston Transcript, but no legitimate copy of it survives in Lincoln's handwriting. Nevertheless, its attempts to console a bereft mother were widely celebrated as a succinct summary of the debt owed to the loved ones of the men who fought and died on behalf of their country, and the grievous honor that fell to them.

How does Lincoln, imagining the grief of Mrs. Bixby, choose to speak about her loss? Do you find his words and tone to be fitting? Going sentence by sentence through his remarks, examine each aspect of his attempt at consolation. Next imagine yourself as Mrs. Bixby. Would the letter have any effect, long term, on your feelings of loss? Would the fact that the letter came from the President of the United States make a difference? To what extent can parents who lose children in military service—as opposed, say, to losing them to disease, accident, or gang violence—take comfort, going forward, from the cause for which they gave their lives?

Executive Mansion, Washington, November 21, 1864.

Mrs. Bixby, Boston, Massachusetts:

Dear Madam: I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant-General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very sincerely and respectfully,

Abraham Lincoln

Letter to Fanny McCullough

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Less well known than his letter to Mrs. Bixby, a grieving mother, is this painfully beautiful letter of condolence that President Abraham Lincoln (1809–65) wrote to a teenage girl, Fanny McCullough, the daughter of an old friend from Illinois who had been killed in action. The letter, written in his own hand, was composed a week before Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation for which he was still struggling to gain political support, and ten days after the disastrous battle of Fredericksburg. The letter thus speaks volumes about the heart of its author, as well about the heart of its intended recipient.

Why is death of a father (or mother) especially difficult for a young person? Has Lincoln spoken well to Fanny's grief? How exactly does he try to console her? What does he mean by saying that "the memory of your dear Father . . . will yet be a sad sweet feeling in your heart, of a purer and holier sort than you have known before"? Imagining yourself in Fanny's place, how would you have reacted to this letter and this prophecy?

Executive Mansion, Washington, December 23, 1862.

Dear Fanny

It is with deep grief that I learn of the death of your kind and brave Father; and, especially, that it is affecting your young heart beyond what is common in such cases. In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all; and, to the young, it comes with bitterest agony, because it takes them unawares. The older have learned to ever expect it. I am anxious to afford some alleviation of your present distress. Perfect relief is not possible, except with time. You can not now realize that you will ever feel better. Is not this so? And yet it is a mistake. You are sure to be happy again. To know this, which is certainly true, will make you some less miserable now. I have had experience enough to know what I say; and you need only to believe it, to feel better at once. The memory of your dear Father, instead of an agony, will yet be a sad sweet feeling in your heart, of a purer and holier sort than you have known before.

Please present my kind regards to your afflicted mother.

Your sincere friend

A. Lincoln

Memorial Rain: For Kenneth MacLeish

ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

Archibald MacLeish (1892–1982), Pulitzer Prize–winning poet, lawyer, and (later) ninth Librarian of Congress (1939–44), wrote “Memorial Rain” (1926) after attending the dedication of the cemetery in Belgium where his younger brother Kenneth, killed in 1918 during World War I, was buried. Embittered by the war, especially because of the loss of his brother, MacLeish expresses his own discontent by contrasting what he heard from the politicians at the service and what he actually experienced.

Why do Ambassador Puser’s words—about the “country’s gratitude,” the “deep repose” and “peace” of the fallen men who “rest” there, and the “earth their bones have hallowed,” etc.—fall so flat? What does MacLeish hear instead? Why might what he hears instead bring his brother closer? Why does he call the rain—and the poem—“memorial rain”?

*Ambassador Puser the ambassador
Reminds himself in French, felicitous tongue,
What these (young men no longer) lie here for
In rows that once, and somewhere else, were young . . .*

All night in Brussels the wind had tugged at my door:
I had heard the wind at my door and the trees strung
Taut, and to me who had never been before
In that country it was a strange wind, blowing
Steadily, stiffening the walls, the floor,
The roof of my room. I had not slept for knowing
He too, dead, was a stranger in that land
And felt beneath the earth in the wind’s flowing
A tightening of roots and would not understand,
Remembering lake winds in Illinois,
That strange wind. I had felt his bones in the sand
Listening.

*. . . Reflects that these enjoy
Their country’s gratitude, that deep repose,
That peace no pain can break, no hurt destroy,
That rest, that sleep . . .*

At Ghent the wind rose.
There was a smell of rain and a heavy drag
Of wind in the hedges but not as the wind blows
Over fresh water when the waves lag

Foaming and the willows huddle and it will rain:
I felt him waiting.

*. . . Indicates the flag
Which (may he say) enisles⁴⁶ in Flanders plain
This little field these happy, happy dead
Have made America . . .*

In the ripe grain
The wind coiled glistening, darted, fled,
Dragging its heavy body: at Waereghem
The wind coiled in the grass above his head:
Waiting—listening . . .

*. . . Dedicates to them
This earth their bones have hallowed, this last gift
A grateful country . . .*

Under the dry grass stem
The words are blurred, are thickened, the words sift
Confused by the rasp of the wind, by the thin grating
Of ants under the grass, the minute shift
And tumble of dusty sand separating
From dusty sand. The roots of the grass strain,
Tighten, the earth is rigid, waits—he is waiting—

And suddenly, and all at once, the rain!

⁴⁶ *To set apart from others; isolate.*

A Box Comes Home

JOHN CIARDI

John Ciardi (1916–86), American poet and translator, was a gunner in the US Army Air Forces, serving aboard B-29 bombers in the Pacific theater of World War II. Following the war, Ciardi taught at the University of Kansas, Harvard University, and Rutgers University. This poem (1955) recalls the flag-draped coffin of an otherwise unidentified man named Arthur, and reflects on the relation between the man, the box, the flag, and the republic for which it stands.

What does Ciardi mean, in verse 4, when he says “Once I saw Arthur dressed as the United States / of America. Now I see the Unites States / of America as Arthur in flag-sealed domino”? And what is the meaning of his prayer, regarding Arthur and regarding the United States? How does he think the life lived by Arthur should affect the way in which Arthur’s countrymen live? How is Ciardi suggesting that we remember the fallen?

I remember the United States of America
As a flag-draped box with Arthur in it
And six marines to bear it on their shoulders.

Read the rest of the poem in *The Collected Poems of John Ciardi*:
<http://books.google.com/books?id=qkcmAjKXJn0C&lpg=PR13&dq>.

Roy's Decoration Day

NINETTE M. LOWATER

In this selection, first published by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction as a resource for its public schools in 1904, the poetess Ninette Maine Lowater (1844–1932) delicately addresses how the living care for and “keep alive” their dead. What is the mood of the poem? How—and why—do Roy and his Grandma care for Grandpa as they do? What is the meaning of the last two lines? Why is the poem called “Roy’s Decoration Day”?

I brought blue violets from the dell
For Grandpa’s grave today,
For Grandma says he loved them well
Before he marched away.

The other Grandpas all are old,
With thin hair almost gray,
But he has curls that shine like gold,
And blue eyes full of play.

Grandma showed me his picture, hung
Upon a chain of gold;
How strange that he should be so young,
And she should be so old.

4



Honoring the Fallen Dead



The Dead



A Marine's Journey Home

MICHAEL R. STROBL

This selection, written during the recent Iraq War, addresses the crucial question of how we should treat the mortal remains of those who die in our nation's service. Private First Class Chance Phelps of the United States Marine Corps was killed in action on April 9, 2004, in Baghdad. Marine Lieutenant Colonel Michael R. Strobl (b. 1965) served as the officer who escorted Phelps' remains to his home and family in Dubois, Wyoming, where he was then buried. Strobl kept a diary during the trip, recording his experiences and feelings; with the permission of Phelps' father, he published this essay in the San Francisco Chronicle on May 2, 2004. A longer version, titled Taking Chance, was the basis of a fine made-for-television movie of the same title.

What do we owe the mortal remains of our fallen soldiers? Why is it so important that they—their bodies—“come home”? Why is it fitting that a military comrade accompanies the body on its journey? Attending to all the rituals and gestures that were used in handling the coffin, can you understand the reasons for them? How was Lt. Col. Strobl affected by his journey, and what did he learn about himself and his fellow Americans? What was the reaction of Phelps' family to the return of his body and personal effects? What about the importance of the flag and the crucifix? Can you understand why Strobl says at the end, of a man he never knew, “I miss him”?

The Nation mourns.

Chance Phelps was wearing his Saint Christopher medal when he was killed on Good Friday. Eight days later I handed the medallion to his mother. I didn't know Chance before he died. Today, I miss him.

Read the rest of the essay at the National Endowment for the Arts:
www.nea.gov/national/homecoming/submissions/strobl.html.

The Dead Comrade

RICHARD WATSON GILDER

Like the last selection, this poem by American poet and editor Richard Watson Gilder (1844–1909) speaks to the special duty of military comrades to bury their fellow soldiers. During the Civil War, Gilder had enlisted in Pennsylvania’s Emergency Volunteer Militia, serving until after the battle of Gettysburg. After the war, he became the editor of Scribner’s Monthly (later Century Magazine), but resumed his role as a Union soldier when he composed this poem, read at the 1885 burial of General (and later President) Ulysses S. Grant.

Why should comrades in arms also be comrades in death, with the obligation of burial? What, according to the poem, are the specific duties of veterans to “another [who] has gone,” and in what spirit are they to fulfill them? What is the connection, if any, between the call to fellow soldiers to “bring him home” and to fold over his breast “the flag of his love,” and the call to God to make free his spirit? What is the meaning of the last two lines?

Come, soldiers, arouse ye!
Another has gone;
Let us bury our comrade,
His battles are done.
His sun it is set;
He was true, he was brave,
He feared not the grave,
There is naught to regret.

Bring music and banners
And wreaths for his bier—
No fault of the fighter
That Death conquered here.
Bring him home ne’er to rove,
Bear him home to his rest,
And over his breast
Fold the flag of his love.

Great Captain of battles,
We leave him with Thee!
What was wrong, O forgive it;
His spirit make free.
Sound taps, and away!
Out light, and to bed!
Farwell, soldier dead!
Farewell—for a day.

Bivouac of the Dead

THEODORE O'HARA

Kentucky-born journalist and poet Theodore O'Hara (1820–67) was an officer in the United States Army during the Mexican-American War. After the Battle of Buena Vista (1847), he wrote this famous poem as a memorial tribute to the dead of this battle. Although O'Hara later fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War, his poem became deeply connected with the mourning of Union dead. During the Civil War, as Arlington National Cemetery was being established (1864), Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs ordered lines from the poem inscribed on the cemetery's gate, although without attributing them to the Southerner O'Hara.⁴⁷ These lines soon graced the markers of many battlefields and cemeteries across the country. We include this moving poem especially because it invites reflection on the importance of military cemeteries as places of national memory and honor.

What is the meaning of the title of the poem? Explain how the image of the camp of the dead functions and resonates throughout the poem. Why does O'Hara personify Fame and Glory (first stanza)? Why, according to this poem, is being buried at home—and with other soldiers—so important for the dead? Can one properly memorialize those who gave their lives in battle without speaking of the cause for which they died? Follow the movement of thought and feeling through the poem. What, according to the last two stanzas, are our duties to the dead? How realistic is the ultimate promise that their glory will not fade? Can this promise be kept? If so, how?

The muffled drum's sad roll has beat
The soldier's last tattoo;⁴⁸
No more on life's parade shall meet
That brave and fallen few.
On Fame's eternal camping-ground
Their silent tents are spread,
But Glory guards, with solemn round
The bivouac of the dead.

No rumor of the foe's advance
Now swells upon the wind;
Nor troubled thought at midnight haunts
Of loved ones left behind;
No vision of the morrow's strife
The warrior's dream alarms;
No braying horn nor screaming fife
At dawn shall call to arms.

⁴⁷ The last four lines of the first stanza are inscribed on the east face of the arch at the McClellan Gate into Arlington National Cemetery. Inscribed on the west face are the first four lines of the second last stanza.

⁴⁸ An evening drum or bugle signal recalling soldiers to their quarters.

Their shivered⁴⁹ swords are red with rust,
Their plumed heads are bowed,
Their haughty banner, trailed in dust,
Is now their martial shroud.
And plenteous funeral tears have washed
The red stains from each brow,
And the proud forms, by battle gashed
Are free from anguish now.

The neighing troop, the flashing blade,
The bugle's stirring blast,
The charge, the dreadful cannonade,
The din and shout are past;
Nor war's wild note, nor glory's peal,
Shall thrill with fierce delight
Those breasts that never more may feel
The rapture of the fight.

Like the fierce northern hurricane
That sweeps the great plateau,
Flushed with the triumph yet to gain,
Came down the serried foe,
Who heard the thunder of the fray
Break o'er the field beneath,
Knew well the watchword of that day
Was "Victory or death."

Long has the doubtful conflict raged
O'er all that stricken plain,
For never fiercer fight had waged
The vengeful blood of Spain;
And still the storm of battle blew,
Still swelled the gory tide;
Not long our stout old chieftain knew,
Such odds his strength could bide.

'Twas in that hour his stern command
Called to a martyr's grave
The flower of his beloved land,
The nation's flag to save.
By rivers of their fathers' gore
His first-born laurels grew,
And well he deemed the sons would pour
Their lives for glory too.

⁴⁹ *Broken, splintered, or fragmented.*

For many a norther's breath has swept
O'er Angostura's plain—
And long the pitying sky has wept
Above the molding slain.
The raven's scream, or eagle's flight,
Or shepherd's pensive lay,
Alone awakes each sullen height
That frowned o'er that dread fray.

Sons of the Dark and Bloody Ground,
Ye must not slumber there,
Where stranger steps and tongues resound
Along the heedless air.
Your own proud land's heroic soil
Shall be your fitter grave;
She claims from War his richest spoil—
The ashes of her brave.

Thus 'neath their parent turf they rest,
Far from the gory field,
Borne to a Spartan mother's breast
On many a bloody shield;
The sunshine of their native sky
Smiles sadly on them here,
And kindred eyes and hearts watch by
The heroes' sepulcher.

Rest on embalmed and sainted dead!
Dear as the blood ye gave,
No impious footstep shall here tread
The herbage of your grave;
Nor shall your glory be forgot
While Fame her records keeps,
Or Honor points the hallowed spot
Where Valor proudly sleeps.

Yon marble minstrel's voiceless stone
In deathless song shall tell,
When many a vanquished age has flown,
The story how ye fell;
Nor wreck, nor change, nor winter's blight,
Nor Time's remorseless doom,
Shall dim one ray of glory's light
That gilds your deathless tomb.

Soldier's Memorial Day

MARY B. C. SLADE

This poem/song is the first of two selections that speak explicitly about decorating the graves of the warrior dead. It was written in 1870, just two years after, and in response to, General Logan's order (see above) to establish an annual Decoration Day in honor of the memory of the fallen Union soldiers. Mary B. C. Slade (1826–82), poet and author of numerous Protestant hymns, wrote the words; composer and musician William Oscar Perkins (1831–1902) supplied the music.⁵⁰

What is the mood and tone of this song? What, according to the song, is the purpose of Decoration Day for the dead? What is the point of bringing “bright flow’r to deck our soldier’s tomb”? In what sense can flowers be the “best offering” of “our grateful land”? According to the last two verses, “changeless love” is more important than the floral gifts. Why? Can we make a duty of “changeless love”? Can we make good on a pledge of “changeless love”? Does it really matter to the dead?

When flow’ry Summer is at hand,
And Spring has gemm’d the earth with bloom,
We hither bring, with loving hand,
Bright flow’rs to deck our soldier’s tomb.

(Chorus)

Gentle birds above are sweetly singing
O’er the graves of heroes brave and true;
While the sweetest flow’rs we are bringing,
Wreath’d in garlands of red, white and blue.

They died our country to redeem,
And from the loving earth we bring
The wealth of hill, and vale, and stream,
Our grateful land’s best offering

(Chorus)

With snowy hawthorn, clusters white,
Fair violets of heav’nly blue,
And early roses, fresh and bright,
We wreath the red, and white, and blue.

(Chorus)

⁵⁰ Although we could not find a recording of the song, the sheet music is available here:
<http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/scriptorium/sheetmusic/a/a22/a2221/a2221-1-72dpi.html>.

But purer than the fairest flowers,
We strew above the honored dead,
The tender changeless love of ours,
That decks the soldier's lowly bed.

(Chorus)

We bend and kiss the precious sod,
Swift fall our tears the graves above
Oh! Brothers! from the hills of God,
Look down and see our changeless love.

Decoration Day

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

This poem by America's Maine-born and favorite "Fireside Poet," Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1805–82), was one of his last, appearing first in the Atlantic in June 1882, several weeks after his death. Like the previous selection, it speaks of decorating the graves of fallen soldiers. But it does so less floridly, and to different effect.

What is the mood and tone of this poem? Why according to this poem is Decoration Day important to the dead? What is the danger to which the rest of the dead is still subject? How well can the thoughts of men—expressed in poems like this—keep them from this danger? In the previous selection, the song invokes the brothers "looking down from the hills of God" to see our "changeless love." Is there any reference to an afterlife in this poem? Is there a kind of afterlife in memory?

Sleep, comrades, sleep and rest
On this Field of the Grounded Arms,
Where foes no more molest,
Nor sentry's shot alarms!

Ye have slept on the ground before,
And started to your feet
At the cannon's sudden roar,
Or the drum's redoubling beat.

But in this camp of Death
No sound your slumber breaks;
Here is no fevered breath,
No wound that bleeds and aches.

All is repose and peace,
Untrampled lies the sod;
The shouts of battle cease,
It is the Truce of God!

Rest, comrades, rest and sleep!
The thoughts of men shall be
As sentinels to keep
Your rest from danger free.

Your silent tents of green
We deck with fragrant flowers;
Yours has the suffering been,
The memory shall be ours.

Rouge Bouquet

JOYCE KILMER

Joyce Kilmer (1896–1918) was an American poet whose poems, before World War I, had focused on natural themes and his Catholic faith. But after entering Army service, he turned many of his thoughts to the scenes of war. He composed “Rouge Bouquet” sometime in 1917 or 1918, to memorialize some of his fellow soldiers killed in battle. In March 1918, it was read over the graves of 21 of his fallen infantry comrades. Eerily, a few months later, the poem was read over Kilmer’s own grave.

What is the mood of the first stanza, and how does it make you feel about the youthful dead at Rouge Bouquet? How is death personified? How does the poet interpret the meaning of the bugling (probably of “Taps”)? What is the mood of the second stanza, and how does it make you feel about the buried “bodies of the brave”? What is the meaning of replacing, in this stanza, the figure of Death by that of St. Michael? What meaning does the poet, in the second stanza, ascribe to the bugling? What does the poem tell us about how Kilmer wants his comrades in arms—and presumably also himself—to be remembered?

In a wood they call the Rouge Bouquet
There is a new-made grave to-day,
Built by never a spade nor pick
Yet covered with earth ten metres thick.
There lie many fighting men,
Dead in their youthful prime,
Never to laugh nor love again
Nor taste the Summertime.
For Death came flying through the air
And stopped his flight at the dugout stair,
Touched his prey and left them there,
Clay to clay.
He hid their bodies stealthily
In the soil of the land they fought to free
And fled away.
Now over the grave abrupt and clear
Three volleys ring;
And perhaps their brave young spirits hear
The bugle sing:
“Go to sleep!
Go to sleep!
Slumber well where the shell screamed and fell.
Let your rifles rest on the muddy floor,
You will not need them any more.
Danger’s past;

Now at last,
Go to sleep!”

There is on earth no worthier grave
To hold the bodies of the brave
Than this place of pain and pride
Where they nobly fought and nobly died.
Never fear but in the skies
Saints and angels stand
Smiling with their holy eyes
On this new-come band.
St. Michael’s sword darts through the air
And touches the aureole⁵¹ on his hair
As he sees them stand saluting there,
His stalwart sons;
And Patrick, Brigid, Columkill
Rejoice that in veins of warriors still
The Gael’s blood runs.
And up to Heaven’s doorway floats,
From the wood called Rouge Bouquet,
A delicate cloud of buglenotes
That softly say:
“Farewell!
Farewell!
Comrades true, born anew, peace to you!
Your souls shall be where the heroes are
And your memory shine like the morning-star.
Brave and dear,
Shield us here.
Farewell!”

⁵¹ *A radiant light near the head or body of a sacred or holy person.*

In Flanders Fields

JOHN MCCRAE

Like the previous selection and the next, this famous poem grew out of World War I, with its unprecedented magnitude and scale of loss. Fallen soldiers by the tens of thousands were, and remain, buried in graves and fields far from home. Also, the ideological character of the battle raised new questions about how to properly honor the dead. John McCrae (1872–1918), a Canadian physician, poet, and soldier serving with the Allied Powers in Belgium, was called upon to perform burial rites for a close friend who was killed at the battle of Ypres. The next day, May 3, 1915, McCrae, deeply moved by the sight of poppies growing around the graves of fallen soldiers, composed this poem while riding in the back of an ambulance. It is written from the perspective of the dead. McCrae himself died during the war of pneumonia, contracted while commanding a Canadian military hospital that he had set up in Boulogne (northern France). He was buried nearby with full military honors.

What is the mood and tone of the poem, and how does it change as the poem progresses? Can you picture the scene, as given by the first stanza? How are you moved by the declaration of the Dead in the second stanza? What is it that the dead want from the living? What, then, is the primary duty that the living owe to the honored dead? If we fail to continue their “quarrel with the foe” or drop “the torch,” are we today betraying our military men and women who have died in our recent wars? How long can—and should—we be obliged to “keep faith” with the cause for which our soldiers die?

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

We Shall Keep the Faith

MOINA BELLE MICHAEL

John McCrae's "In Flanders Fields" resonated deeply with the public, even in the then-neutral United States. Three years later, when the United States had entered the conflict, Moina Michael (1869–1944), an educator and volunteer trainer of nurses, wrote "We Shall Keep the Faith," as a response of the living to the call of the dead in McCrae's poem. Soon afterwards, she launched the tradition of selling and wearing red poppies to aid and honor wounded war veterans. Michael's autobiography, The Miracle Flower: The Story of the Flanders Fields Memorial Poppy, published in 1941, is dedicated to the late Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae.

Compare the mood, tone, and content of this poem with "In Flanders Fields." Who is speaking in Michael's poem, and how is it an answer to the summons from McCrae's poem? How exactly do "we keep the Faith / with All who died"? The central verse concerns the red poppy. How does Michael reinterpret its meaning? What does it mean to say that "We'll teach the lesson that ye wrought / In Flanders Fields"? What was that lesson, and how can it be taught? If we fail to teach it, will those who fell have died for naught?

Oh! You who sleep in "Flanders Fields,"
Sleep sweet—to rise anew!
We caught the Torch you threw
And, holding high, we keep the Faith
With All who died.

We cherish, too, the poppy red
That grows on fields where valor led;
It seems to signal to the skies
That blood of heroes never dies,
But lends a lustre to the red
Of the flower that blooms above the dead
In Flanders Fields.

And now the Torch and Poppy Red
We wear in honor of our dead.
Fear not that ye have died for naught;
We'll teach the lesson that ye wrought
In Flanders Fields.

The Story of a Year

HENRY JAMES

This story by the prolific novelist and storywriter Henry James (1843–1916) raises deep questions about what loved ones left behind owe to their lovers who go off to war, and especially about how they—we—should honor the love and explicit wishes of those who do not make it back alive. When the Civil War began, James (age 18) attempted to enlist, but his father overruled his inclination. Instead, the young man turned to writing, and in March 1865, “The Story of a Year,” his second published short story, appeared in the Atlantic. The story is in five parts, each part tracking the moods and behavior of Miss Elizabeth Crowe (“Lizzie”) in relation to her (secret) betrothed, Lieutenant John Ford (“Jack”) who is in the Union Army in Virginia, as well as to John’s mother (and her guardian) and to Mr. Bruce, an eager suitor who (unknowingly) takes advantage, in John’s absence, of Lizzie’s wavering heart.

Why does John insist that their engagement be kept a secret? Would Lizzie have behaved differently had her engagement been publicly announced? Why does not the memory of, and promise to, John keep her affections true to him? Does she deserve blame or scorn for her behavior with Mr. Bruce? Why, and for what? What happens to Lizzie after she learns of John’s wound? Why does she first accept, and then reject, Mr. Bruce’s proposal of marriage? Why, after the dying John gives her his blessings to marry Mr. Bruce, does she decide instead to reject him forever? What does she mean by saying that she does so in order to “do justice to her old love”? Is that what loyalty to her old love and his expressed wishes require? Why, at the end of the story, does Mr. Bruce, despite her vigorous protestation, follow Lizzie into the house? What do you think will finally happen? What does Lizzie—or any other survivor—in fact owe John (or any other fallen beloved or lover)?

My story begins as a great many stories have begun within the last three years, and indeed as a great many have ended; for, when the hero is despatched, does not the romance come to a stop?

In early May, two years ago, a young couple I wot [know] of strolled homeward from an evening walk, a long ramble among the peaceful hills which inclosed their rustic home. Into these peaceful hills the young man had brought, not the rumor, (which was an old inhabitant,) but some of the reality of war,—a little whiff of gunpowder, the clanking of a sword; for, although Mr. John Ford had his campaign still before him, he wore a certain comely air of camp-life which stamped him a very Hector to the steady-going villagers, and a very pretty fellow to Miss Elizabeth Crowe, his companion in this sentimental stroll. And was he not attired in the great brightness of blue and gold which befits a freshly made lieutenant? This was a strange sight for these happy Northern glades; for, although the first Revolution had boomed awhile in their midst, the honest yeomen who defended them were clad in sober homespun, and it is well known that His Majesty’s troops wore red.

These young people, I say, had been roaming. It was plain that they had wandered into spots where the brambles were thick and the dews heavy,—nay, into swamps and puddles where the April rains were still undried. Ford’s boots and trousers had imbibed a deep foretaste of the Virginia mud; his companion’s skirts were fearfully bedraggled. What great enthusiasm had made our friends so unmindful of their steps? What blinding ardor had kindled these strange phenomena: a young lieutenant scornful of his first uniform, a well-bred young lady reckless of her stockings?

Good reader, this narrative is averse to retrospect.

Elizabeth (as I shall not scruple to call her outright) was leaning upon her companion’s arm, half moving in concert with him, and half allowing herself to be led, with that instinctive acknowledgment of dependence natural to a young girl who has just received the assurance of lifelong protection. Ford was lounging, along with that calm, swinging stride which bespeaks, when you can read it aright, the answering consciousness of a sudden rush of manhood. A spectator might have thought him at this moment profoundly conceited. The young girl’s blue veil was dangling from his pocket; he had shouldered her sun-umbrella after the fashion of a musket on a march: he might carry these trifles. Was there not a vague longing expressed in the strong expansion of his stalwart shoulders, in the fond accommodation of his pace to hers,—her pace so submissive and slow, that, when he tried to match it, they almost came to a delightful standstill,—a silent desire for the whole fair burden?

They made their way up a long swelling mound, whose top commanded the sunset. The dim landscape which had been brightening all day to the green of spring was now darkening to the gray of evening. The lesser hills, the farms, the brooks, the fields, orchards, and woods, made a dusky gulf before the great splendor of the west. As Ford looked at the clouds, it seemed to him that their imagery was all of war, their great uneven masses were marshaled into the semblance of a battle. There were columns charging and columns flying and standards floating,—tatters of the reflected purple; and great captains on colossal horses, and a rolling canopy of cannon-smoke and fire and blood. The background of the clouds, indeed, was like a land on fire, or a battle-ground illumined by another sunset, a country of blackened villages and crimsoned pastures. The tumult of the clouds increased; it was hard to believe them inanimate. You might have fancied them an army of gigantic souls playing at football with the sun. They seemed to sway in confused splendor; the opposing squadrons bore each other down; and then suddenly they scattered, bowling with equal velocity towards north and south, and gradually fading into the pale evening sky. The purple pennons⁵² sailed away and sank out of sight, caught, doubtless, upon the brambles of the intervening plain. Day contracted itself into a fiery ball and vanished.

Ford and Elizabeth had quietly watched this great mystery of the heavens.

“That is an allegory,” said the young man, as the sun went under, looking into his companion’s face, where a pink flush seemed still to linger: “it means the end of the war.

⁵² *Long streamers, usually triangular or swallow-tailed in shape.*

The forces on both sides are withdrawn. The blood that has been shed gathers itself into a vast globule and drops into the ocean."

"I'm afraid it means a shabby compromise," said Elizabeth. "Light disappears, too, and the land is in darkness."

"Only for a season," answered the other. "We mourn our dead. Then light comes again, stronger and brighter than ever. Perhaps you'll be crying for me, Lizzie, at that distant day."

"Oh, Jack, didn't you promise not to talk about that?" says Lizzie, threatening to anticipate the performance in question.

Jack took this rebuke in silence, gazing soberly at the empty sky. Soon the young girl's eyes stole up to his face. If he had been looking at anything in particular, I think she would have followed the direction of his glance; but as it seemed to be a very vacant one, she let her eyes rest.

"Jack," said she, after a pause, "I wonder how you'll look when you get back."

Ford's soberness gave way to a laugh.

"Uglier than ever. I shall be all incrustated with mud and gore. And then I shall be magnificently sun-burnt, and I shall have a beard."

"Oh, you dreadful!" and Lizzie gave a little shout. "Really, Jack, if you have a beard, you'll not look like a gentleman."

"Shall I look like a lady, pray?" says Jack.

"Are you serious?" asked Lizzie.

"To be sure. I mean to alter my face as you do your misfitting garments,—take in on one side and let out on the other. Isn't that the process? I shall crop my head and cultivate my chin."

"You've a very nice chin, my dear, and I think it's a shame to hide it."

"Yes, I know my chin's handsome; but wait till you see my beard."

"Oh, the vanity!" cried Lizzie, "the vanity of men in their faces! Talk of women!" and the silly creature looked up at her lover with most inconsistent satisfaction.

"Oh, the pride of women in their husbands!" said Jack, who of course knew what she was about.

“You’re not my husband, Sir. There’s many a slip”—But the young girl stopped short.

“Twixt the cup and the lip,” said Jack. “Go on. I can match your proverb with another. ‘There’s many a true word,’ and so forth. No, my darling: I’m not your husband. Perhaps I never shall be. But if anything happens to me, you’ll take comfort, won’t you?”

“Never!” said Lizzie, tremulously.

“Oh, but you must; otherwise, Lizzie, I should think our engagement inexcusable. Stuff! who am I that you should cry for me?”

“You are the best and wisest of men. I don’t care; you *are*.”

“Thank you for your great love, my dear. That’s a delightful illusion. But I hope Time will kill it, in his own good way, before it hurts any one. I know so many men who are worth infinitely more than I—men wise, generous, and brave—that I shall not feel as if I were leaving you in an empty world.”

“Oh, my dear friend!” said Lizzie, after a pause, “I wish you could advise me all my life.”

“Take care, take care,” laughed Jack; “you don’t know what you are bargaining for. But will you let me say a word now? If by chance I’m taken out of the world, I want you to beware of that tawdry sentiment which enjoins you to be ‘constant to my memory.’ My memory be hanged! Remember me at my best,—that is, fullest of the desire of humility. Don’t inflict me on people. There are some widows and bereaved sweethearts who remind me of the peddler in that horrible murder-story, who carried a corpse in his pack. Really, it’s their stock in trade. The only justification of a man’s personality is his rights. What rights has a dead man?—Let’s go down.”

They turned southward and went jolting down the hill.

“Do you mind this talk, Lizzie?” asked Ford.

“No,” said Lizzie, swallowing a sob, unnoticed by her companion in the sublime egotism of protection; “I like it.”

“Very well,” said the young man, “I want my memory to help you. When I am down in Virginia, I expect to get a vast deal of good from thinking of you,—to do my work better, and to keep straighter altogether. Like all lovers, I’m horribly selfish. I expect to see a vast deal of shabbiness and baseness and turmoil, and in the midst of it all I’m sure the inspiration of patriotism will sometimes fail. Then I’ll think of you. I love you a thousand times better than my country, Liz.—Wicked? So much the worse. It’s the truth. But if I find your memory makes a milksop of me, I shall thrust you out of the way,

without ceremony,—I shall clap you into my box or between the leaves of my Bible, and only look at you on Sunday."

"I shall be very glad, Sir, if that makes you open your Bible frequently," says Elizabeth, rather demurely.

"I shall put one of your photographs against every page," cried Ford; "and then I think I shall not lack a text for my meditations. Don't you know how Catholics keep little pictures of their adored Lady in their prayer-books?"

"Yes, indeed," said Lizzie; "I should think it would be a very soul-stirring picture, when you are marching to the front the night before a battle,—a poor, stupid girl, knitting stupid socks, in a stupid Yankee village."

Oh, the craft of artless tongues! Jack strode along in silence a few moments, splashing straight through a puddle; then, ere he was quite clear of it, he stretched out his arm and gave his companion a long embrace.

"And pray what am I to do," resumed Lizzie, wondering, rather proudly perhaps, at Jack's averted face, "while you are marching and countermarching in Virginia?"

"Your duty, of course," said Jack, in a steady voice, which belied a certain little conjecture of Lizzie's. "I think you will find the sun will rise in the east, my dear, just as it did before you were engaged."

"I'm sure I didn't suppose it wouldn't," says Lizzie.

"By duty I don't mean anything disagreeable, Liz," pursued the young man. "I hope you'll take your pleasure, too. I wish you might go to Boston, or even to Leatherborough, for a month or two."

"What for, pray?"

"What for? Why, for the fun of it: to 'go out,' as they say."

"Jack, do you think me capable of going to parties while you are in danger?"

"Why not? Why should I have all the fun?"

"Fun? I'm sure you're welcome to it all. As for me, I mean to make a new beginning."

"Of what?"

"Oh, of everything. In the first place, I shall begin to improve my mind. But don't you think it's horrid for women to be reasonable?"

“Hard, say you?”

“Horrid,—yes, and hard too. But I mean to become so. Oh, girls are such fools, Jack! I mean to learn to like boiled mutton and history and plain sewing, and all that. Yet, when a girl’s engaged, she’s not expected to do anything in particular.”

Jack laughed, and said nothing; and Lizzie went on.

“I wonder what your mother will say to the news. I think I know.”

“What?”

“She’ll say you’ve been very unwise. No, she won’t: she never speaks so to you. She’ll say I’ve been very dishonest or indelicate, or something of that kind. No, she won’t either: she doesn’t say such things, though I’m sure she thinks them. I don’t know what she’ll say.”

“No, I think not, Lizzie, if you indulge in such conjectures. My mother never speaks without thinking. Let us hope that she may think favorably of our plan. Even if she doesn’t”—

Jack did not finish his sentence, nor did Lizzie urge him. She had a great respect for his hesitations. But in a moment he began again.

“I was going to say this, Lizzie: I think for the present our engagement had better be kept quiet.”

Lizzie’s heart sank with a sudden disappointment. Imagine the feelings of the damsel in the fairy-tale, whom the disguised enchantress had just empowered to utter diamonds and pearls, should the old beldame⁵³ have straightway added that for the present mademoiselle had better hold her tongue. Yet the disappointment was brief. I think this enviable young lady would have tripped home talking very hard to herself, and have been not ill pleased to find her little mouth turning into a tightly clasped jewel-casket. Nay, would she not on this occasion have been thankful for a large mouth,—a mouth huge and unnatural,—stretching from ear to ear? Who wish to cast their pearls before swine? The young lady of the pearls was, after all, but a barnyard miss. Lizzie was too proud of Jack to be vain. It’s well enough to wear our own hearts upon our sleeves; but for those of others, when intrusted to our keeping, I think we had better find a more secluded lodging.

“You see, I think secrecy would leave us much freer,” said Jack,—“leave *you* much freer.”

“Oh, Jack, how can you?” cried Lizzie. “Yes, of course; I shall be falling in love with some one else. Freer! Thank you, Sir!”

⁵³ *An old woman.*

"Nay, Lizzie, what I'm saying is really kinder than it sounds. Perhaps you *will* thank me one of these days."

"Doubtless! I've already taken a great fancy to George Mackenzie."

"Will you let me enlarge on my suggestion?"

"Oh, certainly! You seem to have your mind quite made up."

"I confess I like to take account of possibilities. Don't you know mathematics are my hobby? Did you ever study algebra? I always have an eye on the unknown quantity."

"No, I never studied algebra. I agree with you, that we had better not speak of our engagement."

"That's right, my dear. You're always right. But mind, I don't want to bind you to secrecy. Hang it, do as you please! Do what comes easiest to you, and you'll do the best thing. What made me speak is my dread of the horrible publicity which clings to all this lousiness. Nowadays, when a girl's engaged, it's no longer, 'Ask mamma,' simply; but, 'Ask Mrs. Brown, and Mrs. Jones, and any large circle of acquaintance,—Mrs. Grundy, in short.' I say nowadays, but I suppose it's always been so."

"Very well, we'll keep it all nice and quiet," said Lizzie, who would have been ready to celebrate her nuptials according to the rites of the Esquimaux⁵⁴, had Jack seen fit to suggest it.

"I know it doesn't look well for a lover to be so cautious," pursued Jack; "but you understand me, Lizzie, don't you?"

"I don't entirely understand you, but I quite trust you."

"God bless you! My prudence, you see, is my best strength. Now, if ever, I need my strength. When a man's a-wooing, Lizzie, he is all feeling, or he ought to be; when he's accepted, then he begins to think."

"And to repent, I suppose you mean."

"Nay, to devise means to keep his sweetheart from repenting. Let me be frank. Is it the greatest fools only that are the best lovers? There's no telling what may happen, Lizzie. I want you to marry me with your eyes open. I don't want you to feel tied down or taken in. You're very young, you know. You're responsible to yourself of a year hence. You're at an age when no girl can count safely from year's end to year's end."

"And you, Sir!" cries Lizzie; "one would think you were a grandfather."

⁵⁴ *Eskimo.*

“Well, I’m on the way to it. I’m a pretty old boy. I mean what I say. I may not be entirely frank, but I think I’m sincere. It seems to me as if I’d been fibbing all my life before I told you that your affection was necessary to my happiness. I mean it out and out. I never loved any one before, and I never will again. If you had refused me half an hour ago, I should have died a bachelor. I have no fear for myself. But I have for you. You said a few minutes ago that you wanted me to be your adviser. Now you know the function of an adviser is to perfect his victim in the art of walking with his eyes shut. I sha’n’t be so cruel.”—

Lizzie saw fit to view these remarks in a humorous light. “How disinterested!” Quoth she: “how very self-sacrificing! Bachelor indeed! For my part, I think I shall become a Mormon!”—I verily believe the poor misinformed creature fancied that in Utah it is the ladies who are guilty of polygamy.

Before many minutes they drew near home. There stood Mrs. Ford at the garden-gate, looking up and down the road, with a letter in her hand.

“Something for you, John,” said his mother, as they approached. “It looks as if it came from camp. —Why, Elizabeth, look at your skirts!”

“I know it,” says Lizzie, giving the articles in question a shake. “What is it, Jack?”

“Marching orders!” cried the young man. “The regiment leaves day after to-morrow. I must leave by the early train in the morning. Hurray!” And he diverted a sudden gleeful kiss into a filial salute.

They went in. The two women were silent, after the manner of women who suffer. But Jack did little else than laugh and talk and circumnavigate the parlor, sitting first here and then there,—close beside Lizzie and on the opposite side of the room. After a while Miss Crowe joined in his laughter, but I think her mirth might have been resolved into articulate heart-beats. After tea she went to bed, to give Jack opportunity for his last filial *épanchements*.⁵⁵

How generous a man’s intervention makes women! But Lizzie promised to see her lover off in the morning.

“Nonsense!” said Mrs. Ford. “You’ll not be up. John will want to breakfast quietly.”

“I shall see you off, Jack,” repeated the young lady, from the threshold.

Elizabeth went up stairs buoyant with her young love. It had dawned upon her like a new life,—a life positively worth the living. Hereby she would subsist and cost nobody anything. In it she was boundlessly rich. She would make it the hidden spring of a hundred praiseworthy deeds. She would begin the career of duty: she would enjoy boundless equanimity: she would raise her whole being to the level of her sublime

⁵⁵ *Outpouring or effusion.*

passion. She would practice charity, humility, piety,—in fine, all the virtues: together with certain *morceaux*⁵⁶ of Beethoven and Chopin. She would walk the earth like one glorified. She would do homage to the best of men by inviolate secrecy. Here, by I know not what gentle transition, as she lay in the quiet darkness, Elizabeth covered her pillow with a flood of tears.

Meanwhile Ford, down-stairs, began in this fashion. He was lounging at his manly length on the sofa, in his slippers.

"May I light a pipe, mother?"

"Yes, my love. But please be careful of your ashes. There's a newspaper."

"Pipes don't make ashes.—Mother, what do you think?" he continued, between the puffs of his smoking; "I've got a piece of news."

"Ah?" said Mrs. Ford, fumbling for her scissors; "I hope it's good news."

"I hope you'll think it so. I've been engaging myself"—puff,—puff—"to Lizzie Crowe." A cloud of puffs between his mother's face and his own.

When they cleared away, Jack felt his mother's eyes. Her work was in her lap. "To be married, you know," he added.

In Mrs. Ford's view, like the king in that of the British Constitution, her only son could do no wrong. Prejudice is a stout bulwark against surprise. Moreover, Mrs. Ford's motherly instinct had not been entirely at fault. Still, it had by no means kept pace with fact. She had been silent, partly from doubt, partly out of respect for her son. As long as John did not doubt of himself, he was right. Should he come to do so, she was sure he would speak. And now, when he told her the matter was settled, she persuaded herself that he was asking her advice.

"I've been expecting it," she said, at last.

"You have? why didn't you speak?"

"Well, John, I can't say I've been hoping it."

"Why not?"

"I am not sure of Lizzie's heart," said Mrs. Ford, who, it may be well to add, was very sure of her own.

Jack began to laugh. "What's the matter with her heart?"

⁵⁶ A short composition, in this case musical.

“I think Lizzie’s shallow,” said Mrs. Ford; and there was that in her tone which betokened some satisfaction with this adjective.

“Hang it! she is shallow,” said Jack. “But when a thing’s shallow, you can see to the bottom. Lizzie doesn’t pretend to be deep. I want a wife, mother, that I can understand. That’s the only wife I can love. Lizzie’s the only girl I ever understood, and the first I ever loved. I love her very much,—more than I can explain to you.”

“Yes, I confess it’s inexplicable. It seems to me,” she added, with a bad smile, “like infatuation.”

Jack did not like the smile; he liked it even less than the remark. He smoked steadily for a few moments, and then he said,—

“Well, mother, love is notoriously obstinate, you know. We shall not be able to take the same view of this subject: suppose we drop it.”

“Remember that this is your last evening at home, my son,” said Mrs. Ford.

“I do remember. Therefore I wish to avoid disagreement.”

There was a pause. The young man smoked, and his mother sewed, in silence.

“I think my position, as Lizzie’s guardian,” resumed Mrs. Ford, “entitles me to an interest in the matter.”

“Certainly, I acknowledged your interest by telling you of our engagement.”

Further pause.

“Will you allow me to say,” said Mrs. Ford, after a while, “that I think this a little selfish?”

“Allow you? Certainly, if you particularly desire it. Though I confess it isn’t very pleasant for a man to sit and hear his future wife pitched into,—by his own mother, too.”

“John, I am surprised at your language.”

“I beg your pardon,” and John spoke more gently. “You mustn’t be surprised at anything from an accepted lover—I’m sure you misconceive her. In fact, mother, I don’t believe you know her.”

Mrs. Ford nodded, with an infinite depth of meaning; and from the grimness with which she bit off the end of her thread it might have seemed that she fancied herself to be executing a human vengeance.

"Ah, I know her only too well!"

"And you don't like her?"

Mrs. Ford performed another decapitation of her thread.

"Well, I'm glad Lizzie has one friend in the world," said Jack.

"Her best friend," said Mrs. Ford, "is the one who flatters her least. I see it all, John. Her pretty face has done the lousiness."

The young man flushed impatiently.

"Mother," said he, "you are very much mistaken. I'm not a boy nor a fool. You trust me in a great many things; why not trust me in this?"

"My dear son, you are throwing yourself away. You deserve for your companion in life a higher character than that girl."

I think Mrs. Ford, who had been an excellent mother, would have liked to give her son a wife fashioned on her own model.

"Oh, come, mother," said he, "that's twaddle. I should be thankful, if I were half as good as Lizzie."

"It's the truth, John, and your conduct—not only the step you've taken, but your talk about it—is a great disappointment to me. If I have cherished any wish of late, it is that my darling boy should get a wife worthy of him. The household governed by Elizabeth Crowe is not the home I should desire for any one I love."

"It's one to which you should always be welcome, ma'am," said Jack.

"It's not a place I should feel at home in," replied his mother.

"I'm sorry," said Jack. And he got up and began to walk about the room. "Well, well, mother," he said at last, stopping in front of Mrs. Ford, "we don't understand each other. One of these days we shall. For the present let us have done with discussion. I'm half sorry I told you."

"I'm glad of such a proof of your confidence. But if you hadn't, of course Elizabeth would have done so."

"No, Ma'am, I think not."

"Then she is even more reckless of her obligations than I thought her."

"I advised her to say nothing about it."

Mrs. Ford made no answer. She began slowly to fold up her work.

“I think we had better let the matter stand,” continued her son. “I’m not afraid of time. But I wish to make a request of you: you won’t mention this conversation to Lizzie, will you? nor allow her to suppose that you know of our engagement? I have a particular reason.”

Mrs. Ford went on smoothing out her work. Then she suddenly looked up.

“No, my dear, I’ll keep your secret. Give me a kiss.”

II.

I have no intention of following Lieutenant Ford to the seat of war. The exploits of his campaign are recorded in the public journals of the day, where the curious may still peruse them. My own taste has always been for unwritten history, and my present business is with the reverse of the picture.

After Jack went off, the two ladies resumed their old homely life. But the homeliest life had now ceased to be repulsive to Elizabeth. Her common duties were no longer wearisome: for the first time, she experienced the delicious companionship of thought. Her chief task was still to sit by the window knitting soldiers’ socks; but even Mrs. Ford could not help owning that she worked with a much greater diligence, yawned, rubbed her eyes, gazed up and down the road less, and indeed produced a much more comely article. Ah, me! if half the lovesome fancies that flitted through Lizzie’s spirit in those busy hours could have found their way into the texture of the dingy yarn, as it was slowly wrought into shape, the eventual wearer of the socks would have been as light-footed as Mercury. I am afraid I should make the reader sneer, were I to rehearse some of this little fool’s diversions. She passed several hours daily in Jack’s old chamber: it was in this sanctuary, indeed, at the sunny south window, overlooking the long road, the wood-crowned heights, the gleaming river, that she worked with most pleasure and profit. Here she was removed from the untiring glance of the elder lady, from her jarring questions and commonplaces; here she was alone with her love,—that greatest commonplace in life. Lizzie felt in Jack’s room a certain impress of his personality. The idle fancies of her mood were bodied forth in a dozen sacred relics. Some of these articles Elizabeth carefully cherished. It was rather late in the day for her to assert a literary taste,—her reading having begun and ended (naturally enough) with the ancient fiction of the “Scottish Chiefs.” So she could hardly help smiling, herself, sometimes, at her interest in Jack’s old college tomes. She carried several of them to her own apartment, and placed them at the foot of her little bed, on a book-shelf adorned, besides, with a pot of spring violets, a portrait of General McClellan, and a likeness of Lieutenant Ford. She had a vague belief that a loving study of their well-thumbed verses would remedy, in some degree, her sad intellectual deficiencies. She was sorry she knew so little: as sorry, that is, as she might be, for we know that she was shallow. Jack’s omniscience was one of his most awful attributes. And yet she comforted herself with the thought, that, as he had

forgiven her ignorance, she herself might surely forget it. Happy Lizzie, I envy you this easy path to knowledge! The volume she most frequently consulted was an old German "Faust," over which she used to fumble with a battered lexicon. The secret of this preference was in certain marginal notes in pencil, signed "J." I hope they were really of Jack's making.

Lizzie was always a small walker. Until she knew Jack, this had been quite an unsuspected pleasure. She was afraid, too, of the cows, geese, and sheep,—all the agricultural *spectra* of the feminine imagination. But now her terrors were over. Might she not play the soldier, too, in her own humble way? Often with a beating heart, I fear, but still with resolute, elastic steps, she revisited Jack's old haunts; she tried to love Nature as he had seemed to love it; she gazed at his old sunsets; she fathomed his old pools with blight plummet glances, as if seeking some lingering trace of his features in their brown depths, stamped there as on a fond human heart; she sought out his dear name, scratched on the rocks and trees,—and when night came on, she studied, in her simple way, the great starlit canopy, under which, perhaps, her warrior lay sleeping; she wandered through the green glades, singing snatches of his old ballads in a clear voice, made tuneful with love,—and as she sang, there mingled with the everlasting murmur of the trees the faint sound of a muffled bass, borne upon the south wind like a distant drumbeat, responsive to a bugle. So she led for some months a very pleasant idyllic life, face to face with vivid memory, which gave everything and asked nothing. These were doubtless to be (and she half knew it) the happiest days of her life. Has life any bliss so great as this pensive ecstasy? To know that the golden sands are dropping one by one makes servitude freedom, and poverty riches.

In spite of a certain sense of loss, Lizzie passed a very blissful summer. She enjoyed the deep repose which, it is to be hoped, sanctifies all honest betrothals. Possible calamity weighed lightly upon her. We know that when the columns of battle-smoke leave the field, they journey through the heavy air to a thousand quiet homes, and play about the crackling blaze of as many firesides. But Lizzie's vision was never clouded. Mrs. Ford might gaze into the thickening summer dusk and wipe her spectacles; but her companion hummed her old ballad-ends with an unbroken voice. She no more ceased to smile under evil tidings than the brooklet ceases to ripple beneath the projected shadow of the roadside willow. The self-given promises of that tearful night of parting were forgotten. Vigilance had no place in Lizzie's scheme of heavenly idleness. The idea of moralizing in Elysium!

It must not be supposed that Mrs. Ford was indifferent to Lizzie's mood. She studied it watchfully, and kept note of all its variations. And among the things she learned was, that her companion knew of her scrutiny, and was, on the whole, indifferent to it. Of the full extent of Mrs. Ford's observation, however, I think Lizzie was hardly aware. She was like a reveller in a brilliantly lighted room, with a curtainless window, conscious, and yet heedless, of passers-by. And Mrs. Ford may not inaptly be compared to the chilly spectator on the dark side of the pane. Very few words passed on the topic of their common thoughts. From the first, as we have seen, Lizzie guessed at her guardian's probable view of her engagement: an abasement incurred by John. Lizzie lacked what is

called a sense of duty; and, unlike the majority of such temperaments, which contrive to be buoyant on the glistening bubble of Dignity, she had likewise a modest estimate of her dues. Alack, my poor heroine had no pride! Mrs. Ford's silent censure awakened no resentment. It sounded in her ears like a dull, soporific hum. Lizzie was deeply enamored of what a French book terms her *aíses intellectuelles*.⁵⁷ Her mental comfort lay in the ignoring of problems. She possessed a certain native insight which revealed many of the horrent⁵⁸ inequalities of her pathway; but she found it so cruel and disenchanting a faculty, that blindness was infinitely preferable. She preferred repose to order, and mercy to justice. She was speculative, without being critical. She was continually wondering, but she never inquired. This world was the riddle; the next alone would be the answer.

So she never felt any desire to have an "understanding" with Mrs. Ford. Did the old lady misconceive her? it was her own business. Mrs. Ford apparently felt no desire to set herself right. You see, Lizzie was ignorant of her friend's promise. There were moments when Mrs. Ford's tongue itched to speak. There were others, it is true, when she dreaded any explanation which would compel her to forfeit her displeasure. Lizzie's happy self-sufficiency was most irritating. She grudged the young girl the dignity of her secret; her own actual knowledge of it rather increased her jealousy, by showing her the importance of the scheme from which she was excluded. Lizzie, being in perfect good-humor with the world and with herself, abated no jot of her personal deference to Mrs. Ford. Of Jack, as a good friend and her guardian's son, she spoke very freely. But Mrs. Ford was mistrustful of this semi-confidence. She would not, she often said to herself, be wheedled against her principles. Her principles! Oh for some shining blade of purpose to hew down such stubborn stakes! Lizzie had no thought of flattering her companion. She never deceived any one but herself. She could not bring herself to value Mrs. Ford's goodwill. She knew that Jack often suffered from his mother's obstinacy. So her unbroken humility shielded no unavowed purpose. She was patient and kindly from nature, from habit. Yet I think, that, if Mrs. Ford could have measured her benignity, she would have preferred, on the whole, the most open defiance. "Of all things," she would sometimes mutter, "to be patronized by that little piece!" It was very disagreeable, for instance, to have to listen to *portions* of her own son's letters.

These letters came week by week, flying out of the South like white-winged carrier-doves. Many and many a time, for very pride, Lizzie would have liked a larger audience. Portions of them certainly deserved publicity. They were far too good for her. Were they not better than that stupid war-correspondence in the "Times," which she so often tried in vain to read? They contained long details of movements, plans of campaigns, military opinions and conjectures, expressed with the emphasis habitual to young sub-lieutenants. I doubt whether General Halleck's despatches laid down the law more absolutely than Lieutenant Ford's. Lizzie answered in her own fashion. It must be owned that hers was a dull pen. She told her dearest, dearest Jack how much she loved and honored him, and how much she missed him, and how delightful his last letter was, (with those beautifully drawn diagrams,) and the village gossip, and how stout and strong his mother continued to be,—and again, how she loved, etc., etc., and that she remained his loving L. Jack read

⁵⁷ *Intellectual ease.*

⁵⁸ *Bristly or bristling.*

these effusions as became one so beloved. I should not wonder if he thought them very brilliant.

The summer waned to its close, and through myriad silent stages began to darken into autumn. Who can tell the story of those red months? I have to chronicle another silent transition. But as I can find no words delicate and fine enough to describe the multifold changes of Nature, so, too, I must be content to give you the spiritual facts in gross.

John Ford became a veteran down by the Potomac. And, to tell the truth, Lizzie became a veteran at home. That is, her love and hope grew to be an old story. She gave way, as the strongest must, as the wisest will, to time. The passion which, in her simple, shallow way, she had confided to the woods and waters reflected their outward variations; she thought of her lover less, and with less positive pleasure. The golden sands had run out. Perfect rest was over. Mrs. Ford's tacit protest began to be annoying. In a rather resentful spirit, Lizzie forbore to read any more letters aloud. These were as regular as ever. One of them contained a rough camp-photograph of Jack's newly bearded visage. Lizzie declared it was "too ugly for anything," and thrust it out of sight. She found herself skipping his military dissertations, which were still as long and written in as handsome a hand as ever. The "too good," which used to be uttered rather proudly, was now rather a wearisome truth. When Lizzie in certain critical moods tried to qualify Jack's temperament, she said to herself that he was too literal. Once he gave her a little scolding for not writing oftener. "Jack can make no allowances," murmured Lizzie. "He can understand no feelings but his own. I remember he used to say that moods were diseases. His mind is too healthy for such things; his heart is too stout for ache or pain. The night before he went off he told me that Reason, as he calls it, was the rule of life. I suppose he thinks it the rule of love, too. But his heart is younger than mine,—younger and better. He has lived through awful scenes of danger and bloodshed and cruelty, yet his heart is purer." Lizzie had a horrible feeling of being *blasé* of this one affection. "Oh, God bless him!" she cried. She felt much better for the tears in which this soliloquy ended. I fear she had begun to doubt her ability to cry about Jack.

III.

Christmas came. The Army of the Potomac had stacked its muskets and gone into winter-quarters. Miss Crowe received an invitation to pass the second fortnight in February at the great manufacturing town of Leatherborough. Leatherborough is on the railroad, two hours south of Glenham, at the mouth of the great river Tan, where this noble stream expands into its broadest smile, or gapes in too huge a fashion to be disguised by a bridge.

"Mrs. Littlefield kindly invites you for the last of the month," said Mrs. Ford, reading a letter behind the tea-urn.

It suited Mrs. Ford's purpose—a purpose which I have not space to elaborate—that her young charge should now go forth into society and pick up acquaintances.

Two sparks of pleasure gleamed in Elizabeth's eyes. But, as she had taught herself to do of late with her protectress, she mused before answering.

"It is my desire that you should go," said Mrs. Ford, taking silence for dissent.

The sparks went out.

"I intend to go," said Lizzie, rather grimly. "I am much obliged to Mrs. Littlefield."

Her companion looked up.

"I intend you shall. You will please to write this morning."

For the rest of the week the two stitched together over muslins and silks, and were very good friends. Lizzie could scarcely help wondering at Mrs. Ford's zeal on her behalf. Might she not have referred it to her guardian's principles? Her wardrobe, hitherto fashioned on the Glenham notion of elegance, was gradually raised to the Leatherborough standard of fitness. As she took up her bedroom candle the night before she left home, she said,—

"I thank you very much, Mrs. Ford, for having worked so hard for me,—for having taken so much interest in my outfit. If they ask me at Leatherborough who made my things, I shall certainly say it was you."

Mrs. Littlefield treated her young friend with great kindness. She was a good-natured, childless matron. She found Lizzie very ignorant and very pretty. She was glad to have so great a beauty and so many lions to show.

One evening Lizzie went to her room with one of the maids, carrying half a dozen candles between them. Heaven forbid that I should cross that virgin threshold—for the present! But we will wait. We will allow them two hours. At the end of that time, having gently knocked, we will enter the sanctuary. Glory of glories! The faithful attendant has done her work. Our lady is robed, crowned, ready for worshippers.

I trust I shall not be held to a minute description of our dear Lizzie's person and costume. Who is so great a recluse as never to have beheld young ladyhood in full dress? Many of us have sisters and daughters. Not a few of us, I hope, have female connections of another degree, yet no less dear. Others have looking-glasses. I give you my word for it that Elizabeth made as pretty a show as it is possible to see. She was of course well-dressed. Her skirt was of voluminous white, puffed and trimmed in wondrous sort. Her hair was profusely ornamented with curls and braids of its own rich substance. From her waist depended a ribbon, broad and blue. White with coral ornaments, as she wrote to Jack in the course of the week. Coral ornaments, forsooth! And pray, miss, what of the other jewels with which your person was decorated,—the rubies, pearls, and sapphires? One by one Lizzie assumes her modest gimcracks: her bracelet, her gloves, her handkerchief, her fan, and then—her smile. All, that strange crowning smile!

An hour later, in Mrs. Littlefield's pretty drawing-room, amid music, lights, and talk, Miss Crowe was sweeping a grand curtsy before a tall, sallow man, whose name she caught from her hostess's redundant murmur as Bruce. Five minutes later, when the honest matron gave a glance at her newly started enterprise from the other side of the room, she said to herself that really, for a plain country-girl, Miss Crowe did this kind of thing very well. Her next glimpse of the couple showed them whirling round the room to the crashing thrum of the piano. At eleven o'clock she beheld them linked by their fingertips in the dazzling mazes of the reel. At half-past eleven she discerned them charging shoulder to shoulder in the serried columns of the Lancers. At midnight she tapped her young friend gently with her fan.

"Your sash is unpinned, my dear.—I think you have danced often enough with Mr. Bruce. If he asks you again, you had better refuse. It's not quite the thing.—Yes, my dear, I know.—Mr. Simpson, will you be so good as to take Miss Crowe down to supper?"

I'm afraid young Simpson had rather a snappish partner.

After the proper interval, Mr. Bruce called to pay his respects to Mrs. Littlefield. He found Miss Crowe also in the drawing-room. Lizzie and he met like old friends. Mrs. Littlefield was a willing listener; but it seemed to her that she had come in at the second act of the play. Bruce went off with Miss Crowe's promise to drive with him in the afternoon. In the afternoon he swept up to the door in a prancing, tinkling sleigh. After some minutes of hoarse jesting and silvery laughter in the keen wintry air, he swept away again with Lizzie curled up in the buffalo-robe beside him, like a kitten in a rug. It was dark when they returned. When Lizzie came in to the sitting-room fire, she was congratulated by her hostess upon having made a "conquest."

"I think he's a most gentlemanly man," says Lizzie.

"So he is, my dear," said Mrs. Littlefield; "Mr. Bruce is a perfect gentleman. He's one of the finest young men I know. He's not so young either. He's a little too yellow for my taste; but he's beautifully educated. I wish you could hear his French accent. He has been abroad I don't know how many years. The firm of Bruce and Robertson does an immense business."

"And I'm so glad," cries Lizzie, "he's coming to Glenham in March! He's going to take his sister to the water-cure. "

"Really?—poor thing! She has very good manners."

"What do you think of his looks?" asked Lizzie, smoothing her feather.

"I was speaking of Jane Bruce. I think Mr. Bruce has fine eyes."

"I must say I like tall men," says Miss Crowe.

“Then Robert Bruce is your man,” laughs Mr. Littlefield. “He’s as tall as a bell-tower. And he’s got a bellclapper in his head, too.”

“I believe I will go and take off my things,” remarks Miss Crowe, flinging up her curls.

Of course it behooved Mr. Bruce to call the next day and see how Miss Crowe had stood her drive. He set a veto upon her intended departure, and presented an invitation from his sister for the following week. At Mrs. Littlefield’s instance, Lizzie accepted the invitation, despatched a laconic note to Mrs. Ford, and stayed over for Miss Bruce’s party. It was a grand affair. Miss Bruce was a very great lady: she treated Miss Crowe with every attention. Lizzie was thought by some persons to look prettier than ever. The vaporous gauze, the sunny hair, the coral, the sapphires, the smile, were displayed with renewed success. The master of the house was unable to dance; he was summoned to sterner duties. Nor could Miss Crowe be induced to perform, having hurt her foot on the ice. This was of course a disappointment; let us hope that her entertainers made it up to her.

On the second day after the party, Lizzie returned to Glenham. Good Mr. Littlefield took her to the station, stealing a moment from his precious business-hours.

“There are your checks,” said he; “be sure you don’t lose them. Put them in your glove.”

Lizzie gave a little scream of merriment.

“Mr. Littlefield, how can you? I’ve a reticule, Sir. But I really don’t want you to stay.”

“Well, I confess,” said her companion.—“Hullo! there’s your Scottish chief! I’ll get him to stay with you till the train leaves. He may be going. Bruce!”

“Oh, Mr. Littlefield, don’t!” cries Lizzie. “Perhaps Mr. Bruce is engaged.”

Bruce’s tall figure came striding towards them. He was astounded to find that Miss Crowe was going by this train. Delightful! He had come to meet a friend who had not arrived.

“Littlefield,” said he, “you can’t be spared from your business. I will see Miss Crowe off.”

When the elder gentleman had departed, Mr. Bruce conducted his companion into the car, and found her a comfortable seat, equidistant from the torrid stove and the frigid door. Then he stowed away her shawls, umbrella, and reticule. She would keep her muff? She did well. What a pretty fur!

"It's just like your collar," said Lizzie. "I wish I had a muff for my feet," she pursued, tapping on the floor.

"Why not use some of those shawls?" said Bruce; "let's see what we can make of them."

And he stooped down and arranged them as a rug, very neatly and kindly. And then he called himself a fool for not having used the next seat, which was empty; and the wrapping was done over again.

"I'm so afraid you'll be carried off!" said Lizzie. "What would you do?"

"I think I should make the best of it. And you?"

"I would tell you to sit down *there*"; and she indicated the seat facing her. He took it. "Now you'll be sure to," said Elizabeth.

"I'm afraid I shall, unless I put the newspaper between us." And he took it out of his pocket. "Have you seen the news?"

"No," says Lizzie, elongating her bonnet-ribbons. "What is it? Just look at that party."

"There's not much news. There's been a scrimmage on the Rappahannock. Two of our regiments engaged—the Fifteenth and the Twenty-Eighth. Didn't you tell me you had a cousin or something in the Fifteenth?"

"Not a cousin, no relation, but an intimate friend,—my guardian's son. What does the paper say, please?" inquires Lizzie, very pale.

Bruce cast his eye over the report. "It doesn't seem to have amounted to much; we drove back the enemy, and recrossed the river at our ease. Our loss only fifty. There are no names," he added, catching a glimpse of Lizzie's pallor,—“none in this paper at least.”

In a few moments appeared a newsboy crying the New York journals.

"Do you think the New York papers should have any names?" asked Lizzie.

"We can try," said Bruce. And he bought a "Herald," and unfolded it. "Yes, there *is* a list," he continued, some time after he had opened out the sheet. "What's your friend's name?" he asked, from behind the paper.

"Ford,—John Ford, second lieutenant," said Lizzie.

There was a long pause.

At last Bruce lowered the sheet, and showed a face in which Lizzie's pallor seemed faintly reflected.

"There *is* such a name among the wounded," he said; and, folding the paper down, he held it out, and gently crossed to the seat beside her.

Lizzie took the paper, and held it close to her eyes. But Bruce could not help seeing that her temples had turned from white to crimson.

"Do you see it?" he asked; "I sincerely hope it's nothing very bad."

"*Severely*," whispered Lizzie.

"Yes, but that proves nothing. Those things are most unreliable. *Do* hope for the best."

Lizzie made no answer. Meanwhile passengers had been brushing in, and the car was full. The engine began to puff, and the conductor to shout. The train gave a jog.

"You'd better go, Sir, or you'll be carried off," said Lizzie, holding out her hand, with her face still hidden.

"May I go on to the next station with you?" said Bruce.

Lizzie gave him a rapid look, with a deepened flush. He had fancied that she was shedding tears. But those eyes were dry; they held fire rather than water.

"No, no, Sir; you must not. I insist. Good bye."

Bruce's offer had cost him a blush, too. He had been prepared to back it with the assurance that he had business ahead, and, indeed, to make a little business in order to satisfy his conscience. But Lizzie's answer was final.

"Very well," said he, "*good* bye. You have my real sympathy, Miss Crowe. Don't despair. We shall meet again."

The train rattled away. Lizzie caught a glimpse of a tall figure with lifted hat on the platform. But she sat motionless, with her head against the window-frame, her veil down, and her hands idle.

She had enough to do to think, or rather to feel. It is fortunate that the utmost shock of evil tidings often comes first. After that everything is for the better. Jack's name stood printed in that fatal column like a stern signal for despair. Lizzie felt conscious of a crisis which almost arrested her breath. Night had fallen at midday: what was the hour? A tragedy had stepped into her life: was she spectator or actor? She found herself face to face with death: was it not her own soul masquerading in a shroud? She sat in a half-

stupor. She had been aroused from a dream into a waking nightmare. It was like hearing a murder-shriek while you turn the page of your novel. But I cannot describe these things. In time the crushing sense of calamity loosened its grasp. Feeling lashed her pinions. Thought struggled to rise. Passion was still, stunned, floored. She had recoiled like a receding wave for stronger onset. A hundred ghastly fears and fancies strutted a moment, pecking at the young girl's naked heart, like sandpipers on the weltering beach. Then, as with a great murmurous rush, came the meaning of her grief. The flood-gates of emotion were opened.

At last passion exhausted itself, and Lizzie thought. Bruce's parting words rang in her ears. She did her best to hope. She reflected that wounds, even severe wounds, did not necessarily mean death. Death might easily be warded off. She would go to Jack; she would nurse him; she would watch by him; she would cure him. Even if Death had already beckoned, she would strike down his hand: if Life had already obeyed, she would issue the stronger mandate of Love. She would stanch his wounds; she would unseal his eyes with her kisses; she would call till he answered her.

Lizzie reached home and walked up the garden path. Mrs. Ford stood in the parlor as she entered, upright, pale, and rigid. Each read the other's countenance. Lizzie went towards her slowly and giddily. She must of course kiss her patroness. She took her listless hand and bent towards her stern lips. Habitually Mrs. Ford was the most undemonstrative of women. But as Lizzie looked closer into her face, she read the signs of a grief infinitely more potent than her own. The formal kiss gave way: the young girl leaned her head on the old woman's shoulder and burst into sobs. Mrs. Ford acknowledged those tears with a slow inclination of the head, full of a certain grim pathos: she put out her arms and pressed them closer to her heart.

At last Lizzie disengaged herself and sat down.

"I am going to him," said Mrs. Ford.

Lizzie's dizziness returned. Mrs. Ford was going,—and she, she?

"I am going to nurse him, and with God's help to save him."

"How did you hear?"

"I have a telegram from the surgeon of the regiment"; and Mrs. Ford held out a paper.

Lizzie took it and read: "Lieutenant Ford dangerously wounded in the action of yesterday. You had better come on."

"I should like to go myself," said Lizzie: "I think Jack would like to have me."

"Nonsense! A pretty place for a young girl! I am not going for sentiment; I am going for use."

Lizzie leaned her head back in her chair, and closed her eyes. From the moment they had fallen upon Mrs. Ford, she had felt a certain quiescence. And now it was a relief to have responsibility denied her. Like most weak persons, she was glad to step out of the current of life, now that it had begun to quicken into action. In emergencies, such persons are tacitly counted out; and they as tacitly consent to the arrangement. Even to the sensitive spirit there is a certain meditative rapture in standing on the quiet shore, (beside the ruminating cattle,) and watching the hurrying, eddying flood, which makes up for the loss of dignity. Lizzie's heart resumed its peaceful throbs. She sat, almost dreamily, with her eyes shut.

"I leave in an hour," said Mrs. Ford. "I am going to get ready.—Do you hear?"

The young girl's silence was a deeper consent than her companion supposed.

IV.

It was a week before Lizzie heard from Mrs. Ford. The letter, when it came, was very brief. Jack still lived. The wounds were three in number, and very serious; he was unconscious; he had not recognized her; but still the chances either way were thought equal. They would be much greater for his recovery nearer home; but it was impossible to move him. "I write from the midst of horrible scenes," said the poor lady. Subjoined was a list of necessary medicines, comforts, and delicacies, to be boxed up and sent.

For a while Lizzie found occupation in writing a letter to Jack, to be read in his first lucid moment, as she told Mrs. Ford. This lady's man-of-business came up from the village to superintend the packing of the boxes. Her directions were strictly followed; and in no point were they found wanting. Mr. Mackenzie bespoke Lizzie's admiration for their friend's wonderful clearness of memory and judgment. "I wish we had that woman at the head of affairs," said he. "Gad, I'd apply for a Brigadier-Generalship."—"I'd apply to be sent South," thought Lizzie. When the boxes and letter were despatched, she sat down to await more news. Sat down, say I? Sat down, and rose, and wondered, and sat down again. These were lonely, weary days. Very different are the idleness of love and the idleness of grief. Very different is it to be alone with your hope and alone with your despair. Lizzie failed to rally her musings. I do not mean to say that her sorrow was very poignant, although she fancied it was. Habit was a great force in her simple nature; and her chief trouble now was that habit refused to work. Lizzie had to grapple with the stern tribulation of a decision to make, a problem to solve. She felt that there was some spiritual barrier between herself and repose. So she began in her usual fashion to build up a false repose on the hither side of belief. She might as well have tried to float on the Dead Sea. Peace eluding her, she tried to resign herself to tumult. She drank deep at the well of self-pity, but found its waters brackish. People are apt to think that they may temper the penalties of misconduct by self-commiseration, just as they season the long aftertaste of beneficence by a little spice of self-applause. But the Power of Good is a more grateful master than the Devil. What bliss to gaze into the smooth gurgling wake of a good deed, while the comely bark sails on with floating pennon! What horror to look

into the muddy sediment which floats round the piratic keel! Go, sinner, and dissolve it with your tears! And you, scoffing friend, there is the way out! Or would you prefer the window? I'm an honest man forevermore.

One night Lizzie had a dream,—a rather disagreeable one,—which haunted her during many waking hours. It seemed to her that she was walking in a lonely place, with a tall, dark-eyed man who called her wife. Suddenly, in the shadow of a tree, they came upon an unburied corpse. Lizzie proposed to dig him a grave. They dug a great hole and took hold of the corpse to lift him in; when suddenly he opened his eyes. Then they saw that he was covered with wounds. He looked at them intently for some time, turning his eyes from one to the other. At last he solemnly said, "Amen!" and closed his eyes. Then she and her companion placed him in the grave, and shovelled the earth over him, and stamped it down with their feet.

He of the dark eyes and he of the wounds were the two constantly recurring figures of Lizzie's reveries. She could never think of John without thinking of the courteous Leatherborough gentleman, too. These were the *data* of her problem. These two figures stood like opposing knights, (the black and the white,) foremost on the great chess-board of fate. Lizzie was the wearied, puzzled player. She would idly finger the other pieces, and shift them carelessly hither and thither; but it was of no avail: the game lay between the two knights. She would shut her eyes and long for some kind hand to come and tamper with the board; she would open them and see the two knights standing immovable, face to face. It was nothing new. A fancy had come in and offered defiance to a fact; they must fight it out. Lizzie generously inclined to the fancy, the unknown champion, with a reputation to make. Call her *blasé*, if you like, this little girl, whose record told of a couple of dances and a single lover, heartless, old before her time. Perhaps she deserves your scorn. I confess she thought herself ill-used. By Whom? by what? wherein? These were questions Miss Crowe was not prepared to answer. Her intellect was unequal to the stern logic of human events. She expected two and two to make five: as why should they not for the nonce? She was like an actor who finds himself on the stage with a half-learned part and without sufficient wit to extemporize. Pray, where is the prompter? Alas, Elizabeth, that you had no mother! Young girls are prone to fancy that when once they have a lover, they have everything they need: a conclusion inconsistent with the belief entertained by many persons, that life begins with love. Lizzie's fortunes became old stories to her before she had half read them through. Jack's wounds and danger were an old story. Do not suppose that she had exhausted the lessons, the suggestions of these awful events, their inspirations, exhortations,—that she had wept as became the horror of the tragedy. No: the curtain had not yet fallen, yet our young lady had begun to yawn. To yawn? Ay, and to long for the afterpiece. Since the tragedy dragged, might she not divert herself with that well-bred man beside her?

Elizabeth was far from owning to herself that she had fallen away from her love. For my own part, I need no better proof of the fact than the dull persistency with which she denied it. What accusing voice broke out of the stillness? Jack's nobleness and magnanimity were the hourly theme of her clogged fancy. Again and again she declared to herself that she was unworthy of them, but that, if he would only recover and come

home, she would be his eternal bond-slave. So she passed a very miserable month. Let us hope that her childish spirit was being tempered to some useful purpose. Let us hope so.

She roamed about the empty house with her footsteps tracked by an unlaid ghost. She cried aloud and said that she was very unhappy; she groaned and called herself wicked. Then, sometimes, appalled at her moral perplexities, she declared that she was neither wicked nor unhappy; she was contented, patient, and wise. Other girls had lost their lovers: it was the present way of life. Was she weaker than most women? Nay, but Jack was the best of men. If he would only come back directly, without delay, as he was, senseless, crying even, that she might look at him, touch him, speak to him! Then she would say that she could no longer answer for herself, and wonder (or pretend to wonder) whether she were not going mad. Suppose Mrs. Ford should come back and find her in an unswept room, pallid and insane? or suppose she should die of her troubles? What if she should kill herself?—dismiss the servants, and close the house, and lock herself up with a knife? Then she would cut her arm to escape from dismay at what she had already done; and then her courage would ebb away with her blood, and, having so far pledged herself to despair, her life would ebb away with her courage; and then, alone, in darkness, with none to help her, she would vainly scream, and thrust the knife into her temple, and swoon to death. And Jack would come back, and burst into the house, and wander through the empty rooms, calling her name, and for all answer get a death-scent! These imaginings were the more creditable or discreditable to Lizzie, that she had never read “Romeo and Juliet.” At any rate, they served to dissipate time,—heavy, weary time,—the more heavy and weary as it bore dark foreshadowings of some momentous event. If that event would only come, whatever it was, and sever this Gordian knot of doubt!

The days passed slowly: the leaden sands dropped one by one. The roads were too bad for walking; so Lizzie was obliged to confine her restlessness to the narrow bounds of the empty house, or to an occasional journey to the village, where people sickened her by their dull indifference to her spiritual agony. Still they could not fail to remark how poorly Miss Crowe was looking. This was true, and Lizzie knew it. I think she even took a certain comfort in her pallor and in her failing interest in her dress. There was some satisfaction in displaying her white roses amid the apple-checked prosperity of Main Street. At last Miss Cooper, the Doctor’s sister, spoke to her:—

“How is it, Elizabeth, you look so pale, and thin, and worn out? What you been doing with yourself? Falling in love, eh? It isn’t right to be so much alone. Come down and stay with us awhile,—till Mrs. Ford and John come back,” added Miss Cooper, who wished to put a cheerful face on the matter.

For Miss Cooper, indeed, any other face would have been difficult. Lizzie agreed to come. Her hostess was a busy, unbeautiful old maid, sister and housekeeper of the village physician. Her occupation here below was to perform the forgotten tasks of her fellowmen,—to pick up their dropped stitches, as she herself declared. She was never idle, for her general cleverness was commensurate with mortal needs. Her own story was that she kept moving, so that folks couldn’t see how ugly she was. And, in fact, her existence was manifest through her long train of good deeds,—just as the presence of a

comet is shown by its tail. It was doubtless on the above principle that her visage was agitated by a perpetual laugh.

Meanwhile more news had been coming from Virginia. "What an absurdly long letter you sent John," wrote Mrs. Ford, in acknowledging the receipt of the boxes. "His first lucid moment would be very short, if he were to take upon himself to read your effusions. Pray keep your long stories till he gets well." For a fortnight the young soldier remained the same,—feverish, conscious only at intervals. Then came a change for the worse, which, for many weary days, however, resulted in nothing decisive. "If he could only be moved to Glenham, home, and old sights," said his mother, "I should have hope. But think of the journey!" By this time Lizzie had stayed out ten days of her visit.

One day Miss Cooper came in from a walk, radiant with tidings. Her face, as I have observed, wore a continual smile, being dimpled and punctured all over with merriment,—so that, when an unusual cheerfulness was super-diffused, it resembled a tempestuous little pool into which a great stone has been cast.

"Guess who's come," said she, going up to the piano, which Lizzie was carelessly fingering, and putting her hands on the young girl's shoulders. "Just guess!" Lizzie looked up.

"Jack," she half gasped.

"Oh, dear, no, not that! How stupid of me! I mean Mr. Bruce, your Leatherborough admirer."

"Mr. Bruce! Mr. Bruce!" said Lizzie. "Really?"

"True as I live. He's come to bring his sister to the Water-Cure. I met them at the post-office."

Lizzie felt a strange sensation of good news. Her finger-tips were on fire. She was deaf to her companion's rattling chronicle. She broke into the midst of it with a fragment of some triumphant, jubilant melody. The keys rang beneath her flashing hands. And then she suddenly stopped, and Miss Cooper, who was taking off her bonnet at the mirror, saw that her face was covered with a burning flush.

That evening, Mr. Bruce presented himself at Doctor Cooper's, with whom he had a slight acquaintance. To Lizzie he was infinitely courteous and tender. He assured her, in very pretty terms, of his profound sympathy with her in her cousin's danger;—her cousin he still called him,—and it seemed to Lizzie that until that moment no one had begun to be kind. And then he began to rebuke her, playfully and in excellent taste, for her pale cheeks.

"Isn't it dreadful?" said Miss Cooper. "She looks like a ghost. I guess she's in love."

“He must be a good-for-nothing lover to make his mistress look so sad. If I were you, I’d give him up, Miss Crowe.”

“I didn’t know I looked sad,” said Lizzie.

“You don’t now,” said Miss Cooper. “You’re smiling and blushing. Ain’t she blushing, Mr. Bruce?”

“I think Miss Crowe has no more than her natural color,” said Bruce, dropping his eye-glass. “What have you been doing all this while since we parted?”

“All this while? it’s only six weeks. I don’t know. Nothing. What have you?”

“I’ve been doing nothing, too. It’s hard work.”

“Have you been to any more parties?”

“Not one.”

“Any more sleigh-rides?”

“Yes. I took one more dreary drive all alone,—over that same road, you know. And I stopped at the farm-house again, and saw the old woman we had the talk with. She remembered us, and asked me what had become of the young lady who was with me before. I told her you were gone home, but that I hoped soon to go and see you. So she sent you her love.”

“Oh, how nice!” exclaimed Lizzie.

“Wasn’t it? And then she made a certain little speech; I won’t repeat it, or we shall have Miss Cooper talking about your blushes again.”

“I know,” cried the lady in question: “she said she was very”—

“Very what?” said Lizzie.

“Very h-a-n-d—what every one says.”

“Very handy?” asked Lizzie. “I’m sure no one ever said that.”

“Of course,” said Bruce; “and I answered what every one answers.”

“Have you seen Mrs. Littlefield lately?”

“Several times. I called on her the day before I left town, to see if she had any messages for you.”

"Oh, thank you! I hope she's well."

"Oh, she's as jolly as ever. She sent you her love, and hoped you would come back to Leatherborough very soon again. I told her, that, however it might be with the first message, the second should be a joint one from both of us."

"You're very kind. I should like very much to go again.—Do you like Mrs. Littlefield?"

"Like her? Yes. Don't you? She's thought a very pleasing woman."

"Oh, she's very nice.—I don't think she has much conversation."

"Ah, I'm afraid you mean she doesn't backbite. We've always found plenty to talk about."

"That's a very significant tone. What, for instance?"

"Well, we *have* talked about Miss Crowe."

"Oh, you have? Do you call that having plenty to talk about?"

"We *have* talked about Mr. Bruce,—haven't we, Elizabeth?" said Miss Cooper, who had her own notion of being agreeable.

It was not an altogether bad notion, perhaps; but Bruce found her interruptions rather annoying, and insensibly allowed them to shorten his visit. Yet, as it was, he sat till eleven o'clock,—a stay quite unprecedented at Glenham.

When he left the house, he went splashing down the road with a very elastic tread, springing over the starlit puddles, and trolling out some sentimental ditty. He reached the inn, and went up to his sister's sitting-room.

"Why, Robert, where have you been all this while?" said Miss Bruce.

"At Dr. Cooper's."

"Dr. Cooper's? I should think you had! Who's Dr. Cooper?"

"Where Miss Crowe's staying."

"Miss Crowe? Ah, Mrs. Littlefield's friend! Is she as pretty as ever?"

"Prettier,—prettier,—prettier. *Ta-ra-ta! Ta-ra-ta!*"

"Oh, Robert, do stop that singing! You'll rouse the whole house."

V.

Late one afternoon, at dusk, about three weeks after Mr. Bruce's arrival, Lizzie was sitting alone by the fire, in Miss Cooper's parlor, musing, as became the place and hour. The Doctor and his sister came in, dressed for a lecture.

"I'm sorry you won't go, my dear," said Miss Cooper. "It's a most interesting subject: 'A Year of the War.' All the battles and things described, you know."

"I'm tired of war," said Lizzie.

"Well, well, if you're tired of the war, we'll leave you in peace. Kiss me good-bye. What's the matter? You look sick. You are homesick, a'n't you?"

"No, no,—I'm very well."

"Would you like me to stay at home with you?"

"Oh, no! pray, don't!"

"Well, we'll tell you all about it. Will they have programmes, James? I'll bring her a programme. But you really feel as if you were going to be ill. Feel of her skin, James."

"No, you needn't, Sir," said Lizzie. "How queer of you, Miss Cooper! I'm perfectly well."

And at last her friends departed. Before long the servant came with the lamp, ushering Mr. Mackenzie.

"Good evening, Miss," said he. "Bad news from Mrs. Ford."

"Bad news?"

"Yes, Miss. I've just got a letter stating that Mr. John is growing worse and worse, and that they look for his death from hour to hour.—It's very sad," he added, as Elizabeth was silent.

"Yes, it's very sad," said Lizzie.

"I thought you'd like to hear it."

"Thank you."

"He was a very noble young fellow," pursued Mr. Mackenzie.

Lizzie made no response.

"There's the letter," said Mr. Mackenzie, handing it over to her.

Lizzie opened it.

"How long she is reading it!" thought her visitor. "You can't see so far from the light, can you, Miss?"

"Yes," said Lizzie.—"His poor mother! Poor woman!"

"Ay, indeed, Miss, —she's the one to be pitied."

"Yes, she's the one to be pitied," said Lizzie. "Well!" and she gave him back the letter.

"I thought you'd like to see it," said Mackenzie, drawing on his gloves; and then, after a pause,—"I'll call again, Miss, if I hear anything more. Good night!"

Lizzie got up and lowered the light, and then went back to her sofa by the fire.

Half an hour passed; it went slowly; but it passed. Still lying there in the dark room on the sofa, Lizzie heard a ring at the door-bell, a man's voice and a man's tread in the hall. She rose and went to the lamp. As she turned it up, the parlor-door opened. Bruce came in.

"I was sitting in the dark," said Lizzie; "but when I heard you coming, I raised the light."

"Are you afraid of me?" said Bruce.

"Oh, no! I'll put it down again. Sit down."

"I saw your friends going out," pursued Bruce; "so I knew I should find you alone.—What are you doing here in the dark?"

"I've just received very bad news from Mrs. Ford about her son. He's much worse, and will probably not live."

"Is it possible?"

"I was thinking about that."

"Dear me! Well that's a sad subject. I'm told he was a very fine young man."

"He was,—very," said Lizzie.

Bruce was silent awhile. He was a stranger to the young officer, and felt that he had nothing to offer beyond the commonplace expressions of sympathy and surprise. Nor had he exactly the measure of his companion's interest in him.

"If he dies," said Lizzie, "it will be under great injustice."

"Ah! what do you mean?"

"There wasn't a braver man in the army."

"I suppose not."

"And, oh, Mr. Bruce," continued Lizzie, "he was so clever and good and generous! I wish you had known him."

"I wish I had. But what do you mean by injustice? Were these qualities denied him?"

"No indeed! Every one that looked at him could see that he was perfect."

"Where's the injustice, then? It ought to be enough for him that you should think so highly of him."

"Oh, he knew that," said Lizzie.

Bruce was a little puzzled by his companion's manner. He watched her, as she sat with her cheek on her hand, looking at the fire. There was a long pause. Either they were too friendly or too thoughtful for the silence to be embarrassing. Bruce broke it at last.

"Miss Crowe," said he, "on a certain occasion, some time ago, when you first heard of Mr. Ford's wounds, I offered you my company, with the wish to console you as far as I might for what seemed a considerable shock. It was, perhaps, a bold offer for so new a friend; but, nevertheless, in it even then my heart spoke. You turned me off. Will you let me repeat it? Now, with a better right, will you let me speak out all my heart?"

Lizzie heard this speech, which was delivered in a slow and hesitating tone, without looking up or moving her head, except, perhaps, at the words "turned me off." After Bruce had ceased, she still kept her position.

"You'll not turn me off now?" added her companion.

She dropped her hand, raised her head, and looked at him a moment: he thought he saw the glow of tears in her eyes. Then she sank back upon the sofa with her face in the shadow of the mantel-piece.

"I don't understand you, Mr. Bruce," said she.

"Ah, Elizabeth! am I such a poor speaker. How shall I make it plain? When I saw your friends leave home half an hour ago, and reflected that you would probably be alone, I determined to go right in and have a talk with you that I've long been wanting to have. But first I walked half a mile up the road, thinking hard,—thinking how I should say what I had to say. I made up my mind to nothing, but that somehow or other I should say it. I would trust,—I *do* trust to your frankness, kindness, and sympathy, to a feeling corresponding to my own. Do you understand that feeling? Do you know that I love you? I do, I do, I do! You *must* know it. If you don't, I solemnly swear it. I solemnly ask you, Elizabeth, to take me for your husband."

While Bruce said these words, he rose, with their rising passion, and came and stood before Lizzie. Again she was motionless.

"Does it take you so long to think?" said he, trying to read her indistinct features; and he sat down on the sofa beside her and took her hand.

At last Lizzie spoke.

"Are you sure," said she, "that you love me?"

"As sure as that I breathe. Now, Elizabeth, make me as sure that I am loved in return."

"It seems very strange, Mr. Bruce," said Lizzie.

"What seems strange? Why should it? For a month I've been trying, in a hundred dumb ways, to make it plain; and now, when I swear it, it only seems strange!"

"What do you love me for?"

"For? For yourself, Elizabeth."

"Myself? I am nothing."

"I love you for what you are,—for your deep, kind heart,—for being so perfectly a woman."

Lizzie drew away her hand, and her lover rose and stood before her again. But now she looked up into his face, questioning when she should have answered, drinking strength from his entreaties for her replies. There he stood before her, in the glow of the firelight, in all his gentlemanhood, for her to accept or reject. She slowly rose and gave him the hand she had withdrawn.

"Mr. Bruce, I shall be very proud to love you," she said.

And then, as if this effort was beyond her strength, she half staggered back to the sofa again. And still holding her hand, he sat down beside her. And there they were still sitting when they heard the Doctor and his sister come in.

For three days Elizabeth saw nothing of Mr. Mackenzie. At last, on the fourth day, passing his office in the village, she went in and asked for him. He came out of his little back parlor with his mouth full and a beaming face.

“Good-day, Miss Crowe, and good news!”

“*Good news?*” cried Lizzie.

“Capital!” said he, looking hard at her, while he put on his spectacles. “She writes that Mr. John—won’t you take a seat?—has taken a sudden and unexpected turn for the better. Now’s the moment to save him; it’s an equal risk. They were to start for the North the second day after date. The surgeon comes with them. So they’ll be home—of course they’ll travel slowly—in four or five days. Yes, Miss, it’s a remarkable Providence. And that noble young man will be spared to the country, and to those who love him, as I do.”

“I had better go back to the house and have it got ready,” said Lizzie, for an answer.

“Yes, Miss, I think you had. In fact, Mrs. Ford made that request.”

The request was obeyed. That same day Lizzie went home. For two days she found it her interest to overlook, assiduously, a general sweeping, scrubbing, and provisioning. She allowed herself no idle moment until bed-time. Then—But I would rather not be the chamberlain of her agony. It was the easier to work, as Mr. Bruce had gone to Leatherborough on business.

On the fourth evening, at twilight, John Ford was borne up to the door on his stretcher, with his mother stalking beside him in rigid grief, and kind, silent friends pressing about with helping hands.

“Home they brought her warrior dead, She nor swooned nor uttered cry.”⁵⁹

It was, indeed, almost a question, whether Jack was not dead. Death is not thinner, paler, stiller. Lizzie moved about like one in a dream. Of course, when there are so many sympathetic friends, a man’s family has nothing to do,—except exercise a little self-control. The women huddled Mrs. Ford to bed; rest was imperative; she was killing herself. And it was significant of her weakness that she did not resent this advice. In greeting her, Lizzie felt as if she were embracing the stone image on the top of a sepulchre. She, too, had her cares anticipated. Good Doctor Cooper and his sister stationed themselves at the young man’s couch.

⁵⁹ *Alfred, Lord Tennyson, The Princess, 1850.*

The Doctor prophesied wondrous things of the change of climate; he was certain of a recovery. Lizzie found herself very shortly dealt with as an obstacle to this consummation. Access to John was prohibited. "Perfect stillness, you know, my dear," whispered Miss Cooper, opening his chamber-door on a crack, in a pair of very creaking shoes. So for the first evening that her old friend was at home Lizzie caught but a glimpse of his pale, senseless face, as she hovered outside the long train of his attendants. If we may suppose any of these kind people to have had eyes for aught but the sufferer, we may be sure that they saw another visage equally sad and white. The sufferer? It was hardly Jack, after all.

When Lizzie was turned from Jack's door, she took a covering from a heap of draperies that had been hurriedly tossed down in the hall: it was an old army-blanket. She wrapped it round her, and went out on the verandah. It was nine o'clock; but the darkness was filled with light. A great wanton wind—the ghost of the raw blast which travels by day—had arisen, bearing long, soft gusts of inland spring. Scattered clouds were hurrying across the white sky. The bright moon, careering in their midst, seemed to have wandered forth in frantic quest of the hidden stars.

Lizzie nestled her head in the blanket, and sat down on the steps. A strange earthy smell lingered in that faded old rug, and with it a faint perfume of tobacco. Instantly the young girl's senses were transported as they had never been before to those far-off Southern battle-fields. She saw men lying in swamps, puffing their kindly pipes, drawing their blankets closer, canopied with the same luminous dusk that shone down upon her comfortable weakness. Her mind wandered amid these scenes till recalled to the present by the swinging of the garden-gate. She heard a firm, well-known tread crunching the gravel. Mr. Bruce came up the path. As he drew near the steps, Lizzie arose. The blanket fell back from her head, and Bruce started at recognizing her.

"Hullo! You, Elizabeth? What's the matter?"

Lizzie made no answer.

"Are you one of Mr. Ford's watchers?" he continued, coming up the steps; "how is he?"

Still she was silent. Bruce put out his hands to take hers, and bent forward as if to kiss her. She half shook him off, and retreated toward the door.

"Good heavens!" cried Bruce; "what's the matter? Are you moonstruck? Can't you speak?"

"No,—no,—not tonight," said Lizzie, in a choking voice. "Go away,—go away!"

She stood holding the door-handle, and motioning him off. He hesitated a moment, and then advanced. She opened the door rapidly, and went in. He heard her lock it. He

stood looking at it stupidly for some time, and then slowly turned round and walked down the steps.

The next morning Lizzie arose with the early dawn, and came down stairs. She went into the room where Jack lay, and gently opened the door. Miss Cooper was dozing in her chair. Lizzie crossed the threshold, and stole up to the bed. Poor Ford lay peacefully sleeping. There was his old face, after all,—his strong, honest features refined, but not weakened, by pain. Lizzie softly drew up a low chair, and sat down beside him. She gazed into his face,—the dear and honored face into which she had so often gazed in health. It was strangely handsomer: body stood for less. It seemed to Lizzie, that, as the fabric of her lover's soul was more clearly revealed,—the veil of the temple rent well-nigh in twain,—she could read the justification of all her old worship. One of Jack's hands lay outside the sheets,—those strong, supple fingers, once so cunning in workmanship, so frank in friendship, now thinner and whiter than her own. After looking at it for some time, Lizzie gently grasped it. Jack slowly opened his eyes. Lizzie's heart began to throb; it was as if the stillness of the sanctuary had given a sign. At first there was no recognition in the young man's gaze. Then the dull pupils began visibly to brighten. There came to his lips the commencement of that strange moribund smile which seems so ineffably satirical of the things of this world. O imposing spectacle of death! O blessed soul, marked for promotion! What earthly favor is like thine? Lizzie sank down on her knees, and, still clasping John's hand, bent closer over him.

“Jack,—dear, dear Jack,” she whispered, “do you know me?”

The smile grew more intense. The poor fellow drew out his other hand, and slowly, feebly placed it on Lizzie's head, stroking down her hair with his fingers.

“Yes, yes,” she murmured; “you know me, don't you? I am Lizzie, Jack. Don't you remember Lizzie?”

Ford moved his lips inaudibly, and went on patting her head.

“This is home, you know,” said Lizzie; “this is Glenham. You haven't forgotten Glenham? You are with your mother and me and your friends. Dear, darling Jack!”

Still he went on, stroking her head; and his feeble lips tried to emit some sound. Lizzie laid her head down on the pillow beside his own, and still his hand lingered caressingly on her hair.

“Yes, you know me,” she pursued; “you are with your friends now forever,—with those who will love and take care of you, oh, forever!”

“I'm very badly wounded,” murmured Jack, close to her ear.

“Yes, yes, my dear boy, but your wounds are healing. I will love you and nurse you forever.”

"Yes, Lizzie, our old promise," said Jack: and his hand fell upon her neck, and with its feeble pressure he drew her closer, and she wet his face with her tears.

Then Miss Cooper, awakening, rose and drew Lizzie away.

"I am sure you excite him, my dear. It is best he should have none of his family near him,—persons with whom he has associations, you know."

Here the Doctor was heard gently tapping on the window, and Lizzie went round to the door to admit him.

She did not see Jack again all day. Two or three times she ventured into the room, but she was banished by a frown, or a finger raised to the lips. She waylaid the Doctor frequently. He was blithe and cheerful, certain of Jack's recovery. This good man used to exhibit as much moral elation at the prospect of a cure as an orthodox believer at that of a new convert: it was one more body gained from the Devil. He assured Lizzie that the change of scene and climate had already begun to tell: the fever was lessening, the worst symptoms disappearing. He answered Lizzie's reiterated desire to do something by directions to keep the house quiet and the sick-room empty.

Soon after breakfast, Miss Dawes, a neighbor, came in to relieve Miss Cooper, and this indefatigable lady transferred her attention to Mrs. Ford. Action was forbidden her. Miss Cooper was delighted for once to be able to lay down the law to her vigorous neighbor, of whose fine judgment she had always stood in awe. Having bullied Mrs. Ford into taking her breakfast in the little sitting-room, she closed the doors, and prepared for "a good long talk." Lizzie was careful not to break in upon this interview. She had bidden her patroness good morning, asked after her health, and received one of her temperate osculations. As she passed the invalid's door, Doctor Cooper came out and asked her to go and look for a certain roll of bandages, in Mr. John's trunk, which had been carried into another room. Lizzie hastened to perform this task. In fumbling through the contents of the trunk, she came across a packet of letters in a well-known feminine hand-writing. She pocketed it, and, after disposing of the bandages, went to her own room, locked the door, and sat down to examine the letters. Between reading and thinking and sighing and (in spite of herself) smiling, this process took the whole morning. As she came down to dinner, she encountered Mrs. Ford and Miss Cooper, emerging from the sitting-room, the good long talk being only just concluded.

"How do you feel, Ma'am?" she asked of the elder lady,—“rested?”

For all answer Mrs. Ford gave a look—I had almost said a scowl—so hard, so cold, so reproachful, that Lizzie was transfixed. But suddenly its sickening meaning was revealed to her. She turned to Miss Cooper, who stood pale and fluttering beside the mistress, her everlasting smile glazed over with a piteous, deprecating glance; and I fear her eyes flashed out the same message of angry scorn they had just received. These telegraphic operations are very rapid. The ladies hardly halted: the next moment found

them seated at the dinner-table with Miss Cooper scrutinizing her napkin-mark and Mrs. Ford saying grace.

Dinner was eaten in silence. When it was over, Lizzie returned to her own room. Miss Cooper went home and Mrs. Ford went to her son. Lizzie heard the firm low click of the lock as she closed the door. Why did she lock it? There was something fatal in the silence that followed. The plot of her little tragedy thickened. Be it so: she would act her part with the rest. For the second time in her experience, her mind was lightened by the intervention of Mrs. Ford. Before the scorn of her own conscience, (which never came,) before Jack's deepest reproach, she was ready to bow down,—but not before that long-faced Nemesis in black silk. The leaven of resentment began to work. She leaned back in her chair, and folded her arms, brave to await results. But before long she fell asleep. She was aroused by a knock at her chamber-door. The afternoon was far gone. Miss Dawes stood without.

“Elizabeth, Mr. John wants very much to see you, with his love. Come down very gently: his mother is lying down. Will you sit with him while I take my dinner?—Better? Yes, ever so much.”

Lizzie betook herself with trembling haste to Jack's bedside.

He was propped up with pillows. His pale cheeks were slightly flushed. His eyes were bright. He raised himself, and, for such feeble arms, gave Lizzie a long, strong embrace.

“I've not seen you all day, Lizzie,” said he. “Where have you been?”

“Dear Jack, they wouldn't let me come near you. I begged and prayed. And I wanted so to go to you in the army; but I couldn't. I wish, I wish I had!”

“You wouldn't have liked it, Lizzie. I'm glad you didn't. It's a bad, bad place.”

He lay quietly, holding her hands and gazing at her.

“Can I do anything for you, dear?” asked the young girl. “I would work my life out. I'm so glad you're better!”

It was some time before Jack answered,—

“Lizzie,” said he, at last, “I sent for you to look at you.—You are more wondrously beautiful than ever. Your hair is brown,—like—like nothing; your eyes are blue; your neck is white. Well, well!”

He lay perfectly motionless, but for his eyes. They wandered over her with a kind of peaceful glee, like sunbeams playing on a statue. Poor Ford lay, indeed, not unlike an old wounded Greek, who at falling dusk has crawled into a temple to die, steeping the last dull interval in idle admiration of sculptured Artemis.

"Ah, Lizzie, this is already heaven!" he murmured.

"It will be heaven when you get well," whispered Lizzie.

He smiled into her eyes:—

"You say more than you mean. There should be perfect truth between us. Dear Lizzie, I am not going to get well. They are all very much mistaken. I am going to die. I've done my work. Death makes up for everything. My great pain is in leaving you. But you, too, will die one of these days; remember that. In all pain and sorrow, remember that."

Lizzie was able to reply only by the tightening grasp of her hands.

"But there is something more," pursued Jack. "Life *is* as good as death. Your heart has found its true keeper; so we shall all three be happy. Tell him I bless him and honor him. Tell him God, too, blesses him. Shake hands with him for me," said Jack, feebly moving his pale fingers. "My mother," he went on,— "be very kind to her. She will have great grief, but she will not die of it. She'll live to great age. Now, Lizzie, I can't talk any more; I wanted to say farewell. You'll keep me farewell—you'll stay with me awhile,—won't you? I'll look at you till the last. For a little while you'll be mine, holding my hands—so—until death parts us."

Jack kept his promise. His eyes were fixed in a firm gaze long after the sense had left them.

In the early dawn of the next day, Elizabeth left her sleepless bed, opened the window, and looked out on the wide prospect, still cool and dim with departing night. It offered freshness and peace to her hot head and restless heart. She dressed herself hastily, crept down stairs, passed the death-chamber, and stole out of the quiet house. She turned away from the still sleeping village and walked towards the open country. She went a long way without knowing it. The sun had risen high when she bethought herself to turn. As she came back along the brightening highway, and drew near home, she saw a tall figure standing beneath the budding trees of the garden, hesitating, apparently, whether to open the gate. Lizzie came upon him almost before he had seen her. Bruce's first movement was to put out his hands, as any lover might; but as Lizzie raised her veil, he dropped them.

"Yes, Mr. Bruce," said Lizzie, "I'll give you my hand once more,—in farewell."

"Elizabeth!" cried Bruce, half stupefied, "in God's name, what do you mean by these crazy speeches?"

"I mean well. I mean kindly and humanely to you. And I mean justice to my old—old love."

She went to him, took his listless hand, without looking into his wild, smitten face, shook it passionately, and then, wrenching her own from his grasp, opened the gate and let it swing behind her.

“No! no! no!” she almost shrieked, turning about in the path. “I forbid you to follow me!”

But for all that, he went in.



The Cause



Voluntaries

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82), essayist, poet, and leader of the Transcendentalist movement, was a staunch abolitionist and a vigorous supporter of the Union during the Civil War. In 1861, at the beginning of the conflict, many young men, both Northerners and Southerners, quickly enlisted, most of whom were eager for adventure or in search of honor and glory. But as the war continued and the casualties mounted, many of the initial recruits became war-weary, and recruiting new soldiers became much more difficult. Seeking to inspire more volunteers to join the Union cause, Emerson wrote this poem, published in the Atlantic in 1863. The famous last quatrain of Part III has been inscribed on veterans' memorials throughout the United States.

Emerson begins with slavery. How does he present the plight of the slaves? How does he account for its presence in the United States? What do the last four lines, with Destiny personified, imply about the meaning of the current war? Freedom, also personified, is the subject of Part II. What is the poet's account of freedom's progress? What is the meaning of the last four lines of this part?

Part III deals with the critical issue, how to inspire youths who love frolic and ease to go to war in the cause of freedom. What is the meaning of the poem's answer, given in the closing quatrain of this part? Who or what summons them, and why do they respond? Is Emerson describing the way things are, or is he inviting his listeners to hearken to the way things should be? What picture does he paint, in Part IV, of the different fates of those who serve Justice (or God) and those who do not? How might such an account affect the conduct of his preferred audience? The poem finishes by viewing the victory of "Eternal Rights." What does Emerson mean by saying "these are gods, / All are ghosts beside"? What is the meaning of the poem's title?

How are you moved by the poem? Were you a young reader in 1863, would it have moved you to enlist? Which words or images would you have found most compelling?

I.

Low and mournful be the strain,
Haughty thought be far from me;
Tones of penitence and pain,
Moanings of the Tropic sea;
Low and tender in the cell
Where a captive sits in chains,
Crooning ditties treasured well
From his Afric's torrid plains.
Sole estate his sire bequeathed—
Hapless sire to hapless son—

Was the wailing song he breathed,
And his chain when life was done.

What his fault, or what his crime?
Or what ill planet crossed his prime?
Heart too soft and will too weak
To front the fate that fetches near,—
Dove beneath the vulture's beak;—
Will song dissuade the thirsty spear?
Dragged from his mother's arms and breast,
Displaced, disfurnished here,
His wistful toil to do his best
Chilled by a ribald jeer.
Great men in the Senate sate,
Sage and hero, side by side,
Building for their sons the State
Which they shall rule with pride.
They forebore to break the chain
Which bound the dusky tribe,
Checked by the owners' fierce disdain,
Lured by "Union" as the bribe.
Destiny sat by, and said,
"Pang for pang your seed shall pay,
Hide in false peace your coward head,
I bring round the harvest-day."

II.

Freedom all winged expands,
Nor perches in a narrow place,
Her broad van⁶⁰ seeks unplanted lands,
She loves a poor and virtuous race.
Clinging to the colder zone
Whose dark sky sheds the snow-flake down,
The snow-flake is her banner's star,
Her stripes the boreal streamers are.
Long she loved the Northman well;
Now the iron age is done,
She will not refuse to dwell
With the offspring of the Sun
Foundling of the desert far,
Where palms plume and siroccos⁶¹ blaze,
He roves unhurt the burning ways
In climates of the summer star.

⁶⁰ *The forefront of a movement or army.*

⁶¹ *A warm wind, usually blowing from the Libyan deserts to the coast of Italy.*

He has avenues to God
Hid from men of northern brain,
Far beholding, without cloud,
What these with slowest steps attain.
If once the generous chief arrive
To lead him willing to be led,
For freedom he will strike and strive,
And drain his heart till he be dead.

III.

In an age of fops and toys,
Wanting wisdom, void of right,
Who shall nerve heroic boys
To hazard all in Freedom's fight,—
Break sharply off their jolly games,
Forsake their comrades gay,
And quit proud homes and youthful dames,
For famine, toil, and fray?
Yet on the nimble air benign
Speed nimbler messages,
That waft the breath of grace divine
To hearts in sloth and ease.
So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man,
When duty whispers low, *Thou must*,
The youth replies, *I can*.

IV.

Oh, well for the fortunate soul
Which Music's wings infold,
Stealing away the memory
Of sorrows new and old!
Yet happier he whose inward sight,
Stayed on his subtle⁶² thought,
Shuts his sense on toys of time,
To vacant bosoms brought.
But best befriended of the God
He who, in evil times,
Warned by an inward voice,
Heeds not the darkness and the dread,
Biding by his rule and choice,
Feeling only the fiery thread
Leading over heroic ground,

⁶² *Subtle—thin or delicate.*

Walled with mortal terror round,
To the aim which him allures,
And the sweet heaven his deed secures.
Stainless soldier on the walls,
Knowing this,—and knows no more,—
Whoever fights, whoever falls,
Justice conquers evermore,
Justice after as before,—
And he who battles on her side,
—God— though he were ten times slain—
Crowns him victor glorified,
Victor over death and pain;
Forever: but his erring foe,
Self-assured that he prevails,
Looks from his victim lying low,
And sees aloft the red right arm
Redress the eternal scales.
He, the poor foe, whom angels foil,
Blind with pride, and fooled by hate,
Writhes within the dragon coil,
Reserved to a speechless fate.

V.

Blooms the laurel which belongs
To the valiant chief who fights;
I see the wreath, I hear the songs
Lauding the Eternal Rights,
Victors over daily wrongs:
Awful victors, they misguide
Whom they will destroy,
And their coming triumph hide
In our downfall, or our joy:
Speak it firmly,—these are gods,
All are ghosts beside.

Second Inaugural Address

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Abraham Lincoln (1809–65), who presided over the successful prosecution of the Civil War, also gave deep thought to the war's cause, meaning, and purpose, and also to what would be required to heal the nation after the war was over. In the Gettysburg Address (November 19, 1863), Lincoln had summoned Americans to rededicate themselves to the cause of freedom and equality (see selection in Chapter Two, above). Here, in his Second Inaugural Address (March 4, 1865), invoking theological speculation and quoting Scripture, Lincoln offers an interpretation of the meaning of the war, which enables him to summon all Americans to a new and more difficult public purpose.

How does Lincoln invite us to understand the Civil War? In what sense does he regard both North and South as guilty of the offense of American slavery? Why does Lincoln move beyond the discussion of slavery, which he calls the cause of the war, to the theological reflections of paragraphs four and five? What is the point of citing the passage from the Gospel of Matthew (“Woe unto the world because of offenses! . . .”)? How do those theological reflections lead him to the thoughts and mood of the stirring final paragraph? In the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln had claimed that the Civil War is a test of whether our nation, or any nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to equality, can long endure. Here, with the end of the war in sight, he suggests that the test of our nation will henceforth be its absence of malice and its capacity for charity, “firmness in the right,” and the pursuit of a just and lasting peace. What does Lincoln mean by charity? What do we owe the newly freed slaves? What do we owe our defeated, but perhaps unreconciled, Southern brethren? What do we owe our soldiers, their widows and their orphans? What do we owe to God, and how do we “pay” it?

After you have read the Second Inaugural, and pondered these questions, you may want to read the remarkable analysis of the speech (“A Very Peculiar God”) by Caitrin Nicol (b. 1985), managing editor of the New Atlantis, which appears below, as an Appendix.

Fellow Countrymen:

At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued, seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention, and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil-war. All dreaded it—all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to *saving* the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to *destroy* it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would *make* war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would *accept* war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the *cause* of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether."

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.

The Blue and the Gray

FRANCIS MILES FINCH

Francis Miles Finch (1827–1907), a judge, law professor, and poet, was deeply moved by the story of the women of Columbus, Mississippi, who in 1866—only a year after the end of the Civil War—decorated the graves of both Union and Confederate dead. Seeing the moment as a symbol of reconciliation, Finch composed “The Blue and the Gray” as a commemoration.

What are the mood and tone of the poem? What is the effect of the recurring four-line refrain, “Under the sod and the dew. . . .”? What evidence does Finch offer to demonstrate the equal worth of the Blue and the Gray dead? How does this poem’s approach to reconciliation compare with that taken by Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address (above)? Can one properly remember and honor the dead—not just in the Civil War, but in any war—if one ignores or rejects the cause for which they fought and died? Might not genuine reconciliation require an affirmation of the principles over which the battle was fought—and which only one side won?

By the flow of the inland river,
Whence the fleets of iron have fled,
Where the blades of the grave-grass quiver,
Asleep are the ranks of the dead:—
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the Judgment Day:—
Under the one, the Blue;
Under the other, the Gray.

These in the robings of glory,
Those in the gloom of defeat,
All with the battle-blood gory,
In the dusk of eternity meet:—
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the Judgment Day:—
Under the laurel, the Blue;
Under the willow, the Gray.

From the silence of sorrowful hours,
The desolate mourners go,
Lovingly laden with flowers,
Alike for the friend and the foe:—
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the Judgment Day:—
Under the roses, the Blue;
Under the lilies, the Gray.

So, with an equal splendor,
The morning sun-rays fall,
With a touch impartially tender,
On the blossoms blooming for all:—
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the Judgment Day
Brodered with gold, the Blue;
Mellowed with gold, the Gray.

So, when the summer calleth,
On forest and field of grain,
With an equal murmur falleth
The cooling drip of the rain:—
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the Judgment Day:—
Wet with the rain, the Blue;
Wet with the rain, the Gray.

Sadly, but not with upbraiding,
The generous deed was done.
In the storm of the years that are fading
No braver battle was won:—
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the Judgment Day:—
Under the blossoms, the Blue;
Under the garlands, the Gray.

No more shall the war-cry sever,
Or the winding rivers be red:
They banish our anger forever
When they laurel the graves of our dead!
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the Judgment Day:—
Love and tears for the Blue,
Tears and love for the Gray.

Address at the Monument of the Unknown Dead

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Not everyone after the Civil War was a patron of reconciliation, especially if it meant forgetting or overlooking what the war was all about. Frederick Douglass (circa 1818–95), who rose from slavery to become one of America’s great orators, writers, reformers, and statesmen, was by both sorrowful experience and firm principle committed to celebrating the superior moral position of the Union. In this short speech, given at Arlington National Cemetery, on Decoration Day, May 30, 1871, Douglass rejects the claim that it is the zeal, courage, and personal nobility of the wartime dead that most deserve our honor and respect. (See, for example, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.’s “In Our Youth Our Hearts Were Touched with Fire,” above.) Borrowing directly from Scripture (Psalm 137) Douglass says: “I would not repel the repentant; but may my ‘right hand forget her cunning and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth’ if I forget the difference between the parties to that terrible, protracted, and bloody conflict.”

What, according to Douglass, is the purpose and significance of Decoration Day? What are the “lessons” being “whisper[ed]” by the resting ground of the unknown dead? Two paragraphs of the speech end with the sentence “They died for their country.” How, in each case, do the preceding materials color the meaning of that summary phrase and praise? Can there be true nobility in war if the cause is not noble? Can we properly honor the dead if we do not properly honor their cause?

Arlington National Cemetery, Virginia, on Decoration Day, May 30, 1871

Friends and Fellow Citizens:

Tarry here for a moment. My words shall be few and simple. The solemn rites of this hour and place call for no lengthened speech. There is, in the very air of this resting-ground of the unknown dead a silent, subtle, and an all-pervading eloquence, far more touching, impressive, and thrilling than living lips have ever uttered. Into the measureless depths of every loyal soul it is now whispering lessons of all that is precious, priceless, holiest, and most enduring in human existence.

Dark and sad will be the hour to this nation when it forgets to pay grateful homage to its greatest benefactors. The offering we bring to-day is due alike to the patriot soldiers dead and their noble comrades who still live; for, whether living or dead, whether in time or eternity, the loyal soldiers who imperiled all for country and freedom are one and inseparable.

Those unknown heroes whose whitened bones have been piously gathered here, and whose green graves we now strew with sweet and beautiful flowers, choice emblems alike of pure hearts and brave spirits, reached, in their glorious career that last highest point of nobleness beyond which human power cannot go. They died for their country.

No loftier tribute can be paid to the most illustrious of all the benefactors of mankind than we pay to these unrecognized soldiers when we write above their graves this shining epitaph.

When the dark and vengeful spirit of slavery, always ambitious, preferring to rule in hell than to serve in heaven, fired the Southern heart and stirred all the malign elements of discord, when our great Republic, the hope of freedom and self-government throughout the world, had reached the point of supreme peril, when the Union of these states was torn and rent asunder at the center, and the armies of a gigantic rebellion came forth with broad blades and bloody hands to destroy the very foundations of American society, the unknown braves who flung themselves into the yawning chasm, where cannon roared and bullets whistled, fought and fell. They died for their country.

We are sometimes asked, in the name of patriotism, to forget the merits of this fearful struggle, and to remember with equal admiration those who struck at the nation's life and those who struck to save it, those who fought for slavery and those who fought for liberty and justice.

I am no minister of malice. I would not strike the fallen. I would not repel the repentant; but may my "right hand forget her cunning and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth," if I forget the difference between the parties to that terrible, protracted, and bloody conflict.

If we ought to forget a war which has filled our land with widows and orphans; which has made stumps of men of the very flower of our youth; which has sent them on the journey of life armless, legless, maimed, and mutilated; which has piled up a debt heavier than a mountain of gold, swept uncounted thousands of men into bloody graves and planted agony at a million hearthstones—I say, if this war is to be forgotten, I ask, in the name of all things sacred, what shall men remember?

The essence and significance of our devotions here to-day are not to be found in the fact that the men whose remains fill these graves were brave in battle. If we met simply to show our sense of bravery, we should find enough to kindle admiration on both sides. In the raging storm of fire and blood, in the fierce torrent of shot and shell, of sword and bayonet, whether on foot or on horse, unflinching courage marked the rebel not less than the loyal soldier.

But we are not here to applaud manly courage, save as it has been displayed in a noble cause. We must never forget that victory to the rebellion meant death to the republic. We must never forget that the loyal soldiers who rest beneath this sod flung themselves between the nation and the nation's destroyers. If to-day we have a country not boiling in an agony of blood, like France, if now we have a united country, no longer cursed by the hell-black system of human bondage, if the American name is no longer a by-word and a hissing to a mocking earth, if the star-spangled banner floats only over free American citizens in every quarter of the land, and our country has before it a long

HONORING THE FALLEN DEAD

and glorious career of justice, liberty, and civilization, we are indebted to the unselfish devotion of the noble army who rest in these honored graves all around us.



Monuments and Memorials



Memorials: On the Slain at Chickamauga

HERMAN MELVILLE

Herman Melville (1819–91), American writer par excellence, wrote this poem to commemorate those killed at a Civil War battle that took place along Chickamauga Creek in Georgia on September 19–20, 1863. The Confederate Army, under General Braxton Bragg (1817–76) defeated the Union Army, under General William Starke Rosecrans (1819–98). The casualties and losses of those two days of fighting—over 34,000—were higher than any battle of the war, save Gettysburg.

Identify and compare the subjects of the two stanzas. What distinguishes them, and what do they have in common? Who are the “brothers who victorious died,” and why will musing on them be an ever-pleasing memory? What does Melville mean by saying, “mischance is honorable too”? Why are those who died in “seeming defeat,” not knowing the conflict’s outcome, also worthy of memory?

Happy are they and charmed in life
Who through long wars arrive unscarred
At peace. To such the wreath be given,
If they unfalteringly have striven—
In honor, as in limb, unmarred.
Let cheerful praise be rife,
And let them live their years at ease,
Musing on brothers who victorious died—
Loved mates whose memory shall ever please.

And yet mischance is honorable too—
Seeming defeat in conflict justified
Whose end to closing eyes is hid from view.
The will, that never can relent—
The aim, survivor of the bafflement,
Make this memorial due.

Address at the Unveiling of the Soldiers' Monument

RUTHERFORD B. HAYES

The National Soldiers' Home in Dayton, Ohio provided a place to care for disabled Civil War veterans. Several such homes were built across the country, but the Dayton site became the largest, and was the first to admit black veterans of the war. It was here, on September 12, 1877, the Country's Defenders Soldiers' Monument was unveiled and dedicated, to honor not the great generals but the common American soldier.⁶³ In attendance was President Rutherford B. Hayes (1822–93). Called upon by the crowd to speak, Hayes reflected on his own experiences as an officer in the Union Army, where he rose to the rank of major general and was wounded at the Battle of South Mountain.

Why is President Hayes impressed by the “glorious” change in the durability of our monuments? How does he connect the change in monuments with changes in understanding the meaning of the battle? Why does the “American private soldier” deserve a monument? What, according to Hayes, is the purpose of monuments? Is Hayes right in saying that “the debt to the dead American soldier can be best paid by the kindness and regard to the living American soldier”? Can monuments make us remember both that debt and what Hayes regards as its “best” payment?

My friends: A few unpremeditated sentences, a little plain soldier's talk, is all that you will expect. This monument reminds me, and, as I mention it, will remind very many in this great audience, of the first soldier's monument that was erected in 1861. You all remember what they were. All who took part in those first battles of the great conflict, you remember and can never forget the feelings of sadness with which we saw the remains of our dead comrades gathered up and placed in their last resting place. They were gathered up, you know, by the parties detailed to bury the dead carefully, respectfully and tenderly, and when the shallow grave had been dug, and in their uniforms they had been laid away and covered over, their comrades looked about to see what memento they could leave, and they left frail fragments of cracker boxes, marking with a pencil the name of the regiment and company of the dead comrade, hoping that they would in some way be useful, little perhaps dreaming at the time that to the private soldier should be erected with granite and marble and brass such a structure as we now behold and behold the change. Instead of that little fragment, perishable and fragile, we have these enduring monuments forever to gaze upon. How glorious the change. Does it not remind us of the growth in the sentiment of all mankind of the appreciation of the worth that these men did?

Then we hardly knew what was to be the result of it all, but now we know that these men were fighting the battle of freedom for all mankind; now we know that they have secured to liberty and peace the best part of the best continent on the globe. As this work compares with the frail cracker-box memorials, so does the work which they have done

⁶³ *To view and learn more about this monument, see www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFFCC_National_Soldiers_Monument_Dayton_Ohio.*

compare with any conception of it which we then could have had. Forever hereafter we shall remember the American private soldier as having established a free nation where every man has an equal chance and fair start in the race of life. This is the work of the American private soldier, and as that monument teaches many lessons let us not forget this one. It is a monument to remind us that many are still living of that great army, who are the victims of that war. Some have lost limbs, some have lost habits and characteristics which enable men to succeed in life. Wherever they are, let us remember always the debt to the dead American soldier can be best paid by the kindness and regard to the living American soldier.

A Monument for the Soldiers

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

The father of James Whitcomb Riley (1849–1916) wanted him to become a lawyer, but his studies never amounted to anything. Instead, Riley discovered his talents lay in entertainment, especially poetry. As his fame grew, Riley toured the country, where he became noted for his ability at reciting his own verses. Often, he would recite his Civil War-themed poetry to veterans' groups like the Grand Army of the Republic. He gained two nicknames: "The Hoosier Poet," because his work often centered around his Indiana upbringing and employed Hoosier dialect; and "The Children's Poet," because children were the intended audience of much of his work. This rather different poem (1892) was adopted in the campaign to build a Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Indianapolis.⁶⁴

This poem asks directly about the relation between the materials and form of a soldiers' monument and the once-living flesh-and-blood soldiers being memorialized. What do you think of the answers the poem gives (in verses 2 and 4) to the questions it asks (in verses 1 and 3)? What meaning can—and should—the monument lend to its subject and to the deeds of the men that it memorializes? What does the poem suggest is the most fitting image for conveying that meaning? What does it imply that any such monument should do, and for whom? What do you think a monument should do and for whom?

A monument for the Soldiers!
And what will ye build it of?
Can ye build it of marble, or brass, or bronze,
Outlasting the Soldiers' love?
Can ye glorify it with legends
As grand as their blood hath writ
From the inmost shrine of this land of thine
To the outermost verge of it?

And the answer came: We would build it
Out of our hopes made sure,
And out of our purest prayers and tears,
And out of our faith secure:
We would build it out of the great white truths
Their death hath sanctified,
And the sculptured forms of the men in arms,
And their faces ere they died.

And what heroic figures
Can the sculptor carve in stone?

⁶⁴ To view and learn more about this monument, see <http://thisisindiana.angelfire.com/soldiersandsailorsmonument.htm>.

Can the marble breast be made to bleed,
And the marble lips to moan?
Can the marble brow be fevered?
And the marble eyes be graved
To look their last, as the flag floats past,
On the country they have saved?

And the answer came: The figures
Shall all be fair and brave,
And, as befitting, as pure and white
As the stars above their grave!
The marble lips, and breast and brow
Whereon the laurel lies,
Bequeath us right to guard the flight
Of the old flag in the skies!

A monument for the Soldiers!
Built of a people's love,
And blazoned and decked and panoplied
With the hearts ye build it of!
And see that ye build it stately,
In pillar and niche and gate,
And high in pose as the souls of those
It would commemorate!

A Meaning for Monuments

WILLIAM HUBBARD

War memorials and monuments such as those discussed in the preceding selections pay homage to the fallen not only by recognizing their valor but also by celebrating the cause for which they gave their lives. This is more easily done when the cause is popular. But how do we remember the dead in an unpopular war? The Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC designed by then 21-year-old Maya Lin, may be said to be our nation's answer, and it has drawn and moved thousands of visitors from the day it was unveiled (November 13, 1982). At the same time, objections to the memorial from veterans and other critics prompt serious reflection about the purposes of our war memorials and how best to honor and remember the fallen. In this 1984 essay (excerpted), American architect William Hubbard (b. 1947) thoughtfully explores these questions, beginning with his reflections about the Vietnam Memorial.⁶⁵

What does Hubbard experience at the Vietnam Memorial? Why, then, given that he finds it moving, does he say that it “does not speak”? In what way does Hubbard believe that a monument should speak, and to what purposes? How are monuments supposed to represent our ideals? What if our ideals are contested? What sort of thinking should our monuments engender? Why, according to Hubbard, and for what purposes might monuments be superior to words?

Upon first seeing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., columnist James J. Kilpatrick reacted with these words:

We walked . . . and gradually the long walls of the monument came into view. Nothing I had heard of or written had prepared me for the moment. I could not speak. I wept. There are the names. The names! . . . For twenty years I have contended that these men died in a cause as noble as any cause for which a war was ever fought. Others have contended, and will always contend, that these dead were uselessly sacrificed in a no-win war that should never have been waged at all. Never mind. . . .

The experience of the names is an emotion that unites us all.

Indeed it is the impact of the names that overwhelms. The names of the dead and missing, nearly 58,000 of them, carved into a wall of mirror-polished black granite folded at the center to form a wide splay, one leg pointing at the Lincoln Memorial, the other toward the Washington Monument. The wall itself is set into the earth, its top edge exactly level with the flat ground behind, the earth in front scooped away in a gentle slope to reveal the names. The scooping, ten feet deep at the point of the splay, slopes gradually upward to rejoin the surrounding land at the ends of the wall, some two

⁶⁵ For a more recent and in part a competing assessment of the Vietnam Memorial, see “The Power of a Name: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial at 30,” by the distinguished architect, Allan Greenberg, here: www.city-journal.org/2012/22_3_urb-vietnam-veterans-memorial.html.

hundred feet away. The feeling, upon entering the precinct of the monument, is one of descending into a shallow bowl in the earth, the ground held back by this tapering dam of black granite.

Private grief and public monuments

On my first visit to the memorial, walking that slow descent into the earth along the face of the wall, I too wept. It was indeed the names, the names beyond counting. As I walked, and stood, and moved on again, I passed and was passed by the people who had come that day to find the names of friends or kin, or simply to see this memorial to the war that had touched us all in some way or another. Those of us who had come to see simply stood and ran our eyes over the length and height of the wall. But those who had come to find—they had a more pointed mission. They could be seen kneeling or standing before one particular spot in the wall, staring long at one name out of the thousands, their eyes welling with tears. We others allowed a circle of distance around each of these solitary mourners lost in their thoughts, keeping our own shared thoughts to a quiet murmur.

We talked, stranger to stranger, of the names—first of their number, but then of their arrangement—not alphabetical nor by hometown nor by military unit nor by any of those chance groupings by which we are arranged in life. Not by those, but by the final, personal ordering of the moment of death. The names begin on one side of the fold in the wall, with the first soldier lost in 1959. They continue in columns, moment by moment and year by year, out to the end of that wall, to resume at the far end of the other wall, continuing on until the last moment of the war in 1975, back at the fold where the sequence began, the last name joined to the first. We talked, in whispers, and pondered this, the way the names returned upon themselves, closing the circle they had formed in their progression outward and back.

And we realized, in that pondering, how the monument spoke to the memories of the private grievers. This wall of names arranged by date of death encompassed the private reality, and not the corporate enterprise, of war. That reality, for those kneeling in thought, must have been one of sequential loss, of one particular friend taken at one particular moment, over and again until the circle closed and all who had been sent away were gathered in again.

Even those of us who sought no particular death found ourselves reading individual names and, unbidden, imagining the places and the circumstances of their deaths. When we encountered, in the seeming randomness, a sequence of alphabetical arrangement, we knew that here were the men of a single platoon, wiped out together in a single engagement. . . .

After a long time, I walked away from the precinct of the monument and stood looking back at the milling crowd arrayed along its length, and I recalled the controversies that had surrounded its design. “A black ditch of shame,” it was called, its V-shape a reminder of the years of protest. As I weighed those objections against my own

deeply-touched emotions, the thought came to me, as it had to others, that surely this memorial, of such emotional power, had put those objections finally to rest.

But had it really? The objections to the monument were, in essence, that it did not glorify the war in ways that other monuments had—the Iwo Jima Monument being one frequently-cited example. Now clearly a monument equating Vietnam with World War II, implying that the Vietnam War had been conducted for the same noble purposes, had been supported with equal fervor, had had the same import for the people and the nation—such a monument would have been a sham, a lie. But behind that call for a glorification is the assumption that a monument—any monument—should make concrete some shared idea about the thing it commemorates, that a war memorial in particular should embody some resolved way of thinking about the war it commemorates. In short, a monument should *speak*. In that sense, the objections stand unaddressed: The Vietnam monument does not speak. Indeed the designer, Maya Ying Lin, has said that she intended a monument that “would not tell you how to think” about the Vietnam War.

To feel that a monument should speak seems a reasonable opinion to hold. But what follows from it? What is incumbent upon *us* to do if we are to have monuments—and, by extension, public buildings—that speak to us? . . .

The language of icons

. . . . Buildings can communicate in at least four ways, each way in its turn being a little more meaningful and thus requiring of us a little more work of the imagination.

On the simplest level, a building can merely denote the identity of the institution housed inside. This denotation is often done with a coat of arms or some similar iconographical device. . . .

A building can also go a little farther and attempt to say something about what this institution “does for a living.” . . .

A building can go one step farther and voice an ideology: It can propose to us what this institution means (or wants to mean) to society. . . .

The final step in this progression is the building that propounds to us an aspiration that exists apart from an institutional “owner.” In such a situation the building talks not only about the role an institution plays in society, but also about how society itself ought ideally to be organized, the ideas which ought ideally to govern society’s operation. . . .

Repaying the imagination

But buildings only rarely get the chance to speak about the whole of society. This propounding of cultural ideals is more often the province of monuments. Take, for example, the Virginia War Memorial to the dead of the World Wars, which stands on a

bluff above the James, the great river that traverses the length of the state.⁶⁶ The memorial has the form of a high, wide corridor, roofed and open at both ends. One flank of the corridor, on the side away from the river, is solid stone; the other is completely glass, upon which are etched the names of all those who died in the wars. Through this glass wall of names one sees a broad sweep of the James, and in the distance the state's capital city. Set in the floor at the base of this glass wall are relics from each of the battles: a canteen from Chateau-Thierry, a shell casing from Iwo Jima, a bayonet from Normandy—the common equipment of common soldiers. Looking up from that detritus of war through the screen of names at the great river of the state, one again realizes that these people went to faraway places so that we, standing here, might continue to have and enjoy this beautiful land.

The memorial thus tells us not just *that* these people died, or even how or where they died. It offers us a reason *why* they died. To each of us who either feels the loss of a loved one or contemplates such a loss, it offers a pattern into which that loss can be fit and so made sense of and more easily lived with. That pattern does not take the form of a recounting of the facts of the war: We know, intellectually, the real nature of wars, just as we know the real nature of life in a university or of reporting in a newspaper. The pattern is, rather, an ideal about wars and sacrifice—an ideal state of affairs which daily reality will always fall short of, but which can serve as a standard, a yardstick upon which each remembered occurrence, in its near or far distance from the ideal, can be arrayed and so be felt to have a place, contributing in large or small measure to the attainment of that ideal.

I cite this particular monument not because it is so distinguished (it is not) but because its message is so readily accessible to our ordinary understanding. It requires no esoteric knowledge, no difficult research for us to grasp and then to feel what is being symbolized here, only our common knowledge and our active imagination. But also required is that there be a graspable message there that *repays* imagination. When we think of recent monuments or memorials or public sculpture, the memory that most often comes to mind is not the experience of imaginative revelation but an opaque frustration. Recent public memorials and sculpture seem so often to take the form of abstract objects or minimalist shapes. We have all confronted such objects, and try as we might—staring long at them, walking slowly around or through them—our imagination draws a blank. We might notice an interesting pattern of shadows or a piquant play of shapes, but those impressions seem such meager fare, insufficient repayment for our efforts of imagination.

Take, for example, the monument erected in Dallas to commemorate the assassination of President Kennedy—a large hollow cube lifted off the ground and open to the sky, with a vertical slit cut out of the center of two opposite sides.⁶⁷ We enter in through those slits, feel the enclosure and the sky, see the narrowed views of the scene where the murder took place. But nothing re-tells us of the terrible feelings we all shared on that day. There is no offered pattern by which we might make sense of those feelings, or draw some

⁶⁶ To view and learn more about this monument, see www.vawarmemorial.org/VAWM/default.aspx.

⁶⁷ To view and learn more about this monument, see <http://www.jfk.org/go/about/history-of-the-john-f-kennedy-memorial-plaza>.

lesson or guidance or even solace from the events of that day. The monument, for all of its memorializing intentions, does not seem to be about the assassination of a President but about the feeling of enclosed space and the play of light on hard surfaces. The speaking it does is addressed not to our minds and hearts but to our bodies and eyes. . . .

The Meaning of Monuments

. . . . What monuments have traditionally done is embody an idea important to those who erected them. That is what Jefferson did with his idea of an ideal academic society, and what the builders of the Virginia War Memorial did for their ideas of war and sacrifice. But a monument endures beyond its time, holds that idea before us, in our time, and asks us to contemplate that idea—turn it over in our heads, stand it next to our own experiences and ask if it still applies. Do people and institutions act as they do out of allegiance to this idea? And if they do, do I want people and institutions to keep on doing those things? Do I want them to do those things out of allegiance to this idea, knowing what that might entail? And if people and institutions do not act in accord with this idea, would I wish them to? In short: Do I want this idea, and all it might entail, to be an operative force in our society?

Monuments confront us with that choice. They tell us that people like ourselves once chose to affirm a certain set of ideals, but in that telling, they remind us that we too must face the decision of which ideals to affirm. Monuments thus set before us the task of reassessing our values. And they do it by giving us both the means to criticize and the reason for doing so. By asking us to contemplate imaginatively the ideas they embody, monuments prod us to think through the implications of our social ideals. Through the free contemplation which they engender, we can know an idea more wholly—see more clearly and feel more deeply both the dangers and the glories to which it might lead. In that sensing of both danger and glory we have a surer means, a firmer basis for judging.

But in that sensing we also feel, if we are alive to it, the evanescence of an idea. For to sense the consequences of an idea is to realize that those consequences can only come to pass through our actions. And to realize *that* is to realize that, without our taking action, ideas engender nothing. Monuments tell us that the moment we become unwilling to do the actions that an idea entails, at that moment the idea dies: It becomes a "form," a thing to be paid lip service, or a target of cynicism.

In this call to contemplation and action, monuments put before us the task of keeping our values and aspirations aligned with our desires and needs. When such monuments stand among us, they act as a counter to the expedience that can so dominate our daily lives—not as a goad, but as a call to hold on only to those values and aspirations whose consequences we freely choose to bear. In this very real sense, then, monuments call us to keep ourselves free: free from the demagoguery of ideas whose consequences we could not support, free from the brutish life of sheer expedience.

That is a very real necessity for monuments. And that is an equally real necessity for building that bespeak the nature of the institutions they house. A public environment that

articulates ideas is an environment that lets us know which ideas we must support and, sometimes, which ideas we must contend against.

Living with our ideals

I did not quite finish my story of the Virginia War Memorial. A few years ago that memorial was extended, to include relics of the battles of Vietnam and the names of those Virginians who died there. Looking now, out through *those* names at the green banks of the James, a question arises: Did these soldiers really die that we might continue to have and enjoy this great land? And the answer, which we cannot avoid, is: No, they did not. But within that answer lies the true question to be asked: Is the defense of this land the *only* justification we will accept for sending young men and women to death in faraway places?

I am certain of the necessity for asking that question, continually and repeatedly throughout all our lives. But I am just as certain that I do not have the wisdom to frame an answer. Aided so far only by words, we have not been able to find an answer we can share. Perhaps if we could open ourselves to the kinds of thoughts that monuments can engender, our imaginations could supply an answer we could live with—and live by.

Appendix

A Very Peculiar God: Reading Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address

CAITRIN NICOL

On March 4, 1865—just a month before Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox—Abraham Lincoln delivered his Second Inaugural Address. Invoking theological speculation and quoting Scripture, he offered an interpretation of the meaning of the war, which enabled him to summon Americans to a new and more difficult public purpose. In this essay, Caitrin Nicol (b. 1985), managing editor of the New Atlantis (and a former student of the editors), reveals the depths of Lincoln's address.

In an April 1864 letter to Albert G. Hodges, editor of the *Commonwealth* of Frankfort, Kentucky, Abraham Lincoln wrote, "I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years struggle the nation's condition is not what either party, or any man devised, or expected. God alone can claim it."⁶⁸ President Lincoln's reelection that fall might be attributed to the same power—a deeply unpopular president overseeing an exhausting war with no end in sight, challenged by two former generals and doubted by members of his own administration, he was not expected by anyone, including himself, to win until a handful of eleventh-hour military victories turned fate in his favor.⁶⁹

The first words of Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, "At this second appearing," quietly acknowledge the unlikely event of his reelection (following, too, on the historical accident of his election in the first place).⁷⁰ The opening paragraph is constructed mostly in the passive tense—"public declarations have been constantly called forth," "little that is new could be presented," "the progress of our arms . . . is as well known to the public as to myself," "no prediction in regard to it is ventured"—mentioning Lincoln himself but little, and after this paragraph not at all. The unslakably ambitious man from the backwoods of Illinois implausibly (still) at the apex of power has acknowledged to himself and now admits to everyone that this power has been of precious little practical significance. He is not directing history. History is being directed in some other way.

⁶⁸ Abraham Lincoln to Albert G. Hodges, April 4, 1864, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), Volume VII, 282, available online at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/lincoln/lincoln7/1:617.1?rgn=div2;view=fulltext>.

⁶⁹ Major General John C. Frémont, who had commanded the Union's Mountain Department until June 1862, was selected as the presidential nominee of one faction of the Republican Party in 1864. Major General George B. McClellan, whose command of the Army of the Potomac was terminated by Lincoln in November 1862, was nominated as the Democratic Party's candidate in 1864. Frémont withdrew in September 1864. Following Union General Sherman's victorious Atlanta campaign, Lincoln defeated McClellan in the November election.

⁷⁰ Lincoln delivered his Second Inaugural Address on the East Front of the United States Capitol in Washington, DC on March 4, 1865. The text is available at www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/curriculum/the-american-calendar/second-inaugural-address-1865. All subsequent quotations from the Second Inaugural are taken from this text. All italics are in the original.

The next paragraph suggests large and shifting public forces. From the unity of the "all" who "dreaded [war]" and "sought to avert it," two opposing sides crystallized, one supplying rogue "agents" whose agenda forced the other into a response that "both parties deprecated." But in the last line of the paragraph, these antagonistic human forces are overtaken and subsumed by one single, inhuman actor, a conflict that is ascribed agency of its own: "And the war came."

The cause that called this power into being, Lincoln continues, was slavery. Throughout his political career, including his first campaign for the presidency and his First Inaugural Address,⁷¹ Lincoln assiduously denied that he would challenge slavery where it already existed, insisting that his administration sought above all to preserve the Union and did not pose a threat to the South. These declared intentions had no bearing on events. Even at the beginning of the war, when the North purported to be fighting not for the sake of abolition but only to reclaim the Union, everyone somehow knew, Lincoln says now, that slavery was at the heart of it. The "bloody and heaven-daring arrangement," as William Lloyd Garrison called it, of including the peculiar institution in the Constitution of the first nation founded on equality, an unhappy compromise to purchase the ratification of slaveholding states, finally exploded with a burning force.⁷²

Even the institution of slavery, however, is insufficient explanation for what has happened: The war, whose magnitude and duration were wholly unanticipated by everyone involved in it, and which was set in motion by a catalyst too deeply embedded in the nation's history to be touched by human power, had outlasted slavery. At the war's outset, neither the government nor the insurgents, Lincoln says, "anticipated that the *cause* of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease." But with the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln had formally ordered the freedom of the slaves in the Confederate states—a decision which, even though it would have no material effect until the Union won, amounted to a recognition of the subject that until then he had tried to write out of the conflict.⁷³ Yet even so, the war went on according to its own design. No one meant to go to war to free the slaves, but the slaves were freed. No one meant for the war to go on so long. No one meant for 600,000 soldiers to die. If no one meant for it to happen, and if the initial catalyst has been burned away, who or what is actually responsible for all those casualties?

As if peeling an onion, the next causal layer that Lincoln strips back is the idea of a provincial God, even one interested in the clear cause of justice. "It may seem strange," he says, "that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces"—but is it not even stranger that a just God would *not* have come to the assistance of those who oppose them? "Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. . . . The prayers of

⁷¹ Read Lincoln's First Inaugural Address at www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/curriculum/the-meaning-of-america/first-inaugural-address-1861.

⁷² William Lloyd Garrison, "The Great Crisis!," *The Liberator*, December 29, 1832, 207 (leftmost column).

⁷³ Abraham Lincoln, Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume VI, 28–30, available online at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/lincoln/lincoln6/1:53.1?rgn=div2:view=fulltext>.

both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully."

Buried in this paragraph is the first suggestion of what Lincoln's objective is for this address (which he had begun by announcing what it was *not*): "[L]et us judge not that we be not judged." This phrase may sound flip and noncommittal to our ears in this present age of tolerance, but in context it is an astonishing request. As Lincoln wrote in the letter to Hodges, "If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong."⁷⁴ Now he begins a sentence by indicting slavery but concludes it by saying that we must not judge. By March 1865, the North is on the cusp of victory. With the end finally in sight, the president could be expected to deliver a sonorous, triumphant ode to the Union Army's accomplishments and the righteousness of its cause, something to suggest that the price the North had paid for victory was being justly validated.⁷⁵ But why, Lincoln asked himself, if the North was being granted victory at the hand of a just God, had the war gone on so long and at such high cost to all? Looking at the question from the other side of the conflict, Confederate General Edward Porter Alexander put it thus: "It is customary to say that 'Providence did not intend that we should win,' but I do not subscribe in the least to that doctrine. Providence did not care a row of pins about it. If it did it was a very unintelligent Providence not to bring the business to a close—the close it wanted—in less than four years of most terrible & bloody war."⁷⁶

The answer that Lincoln finally offers, a comprehensive but harrowing theodicy of American history stretching back before the nation's founding, undermines the comforting assurances and vindication that the North would be expecting on the eve of victory:

The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "The judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether."⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Lincoln to Hodges, 281.

⁷⁵ Ronald C. White Jr., *Lincoln's Greatest Speech: The Second Inaugural* (Simon & Schuster, 2002).

⁷⁶ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 58–59.

⁷⁷ In this passage, Lincoln quotes from Matthew 18:7 and Psalms 19:9 (both King James Version).

The Union forces have been fighting to reestablish all the states as a single nation. As one nation, they have a common past, a common character, and a common destiny. There can be no such thing as sins committed solely by “the South,” accountable only to “the South,” for the South is only part of one great but guilty nation. No one whose life was lost in the ghastly national atonement of the Civil War was personally involved in the Atlantic slave trade (in which, before it ended in 1808, Northerners were heavily complicit), in the inclusion of slavery in the Constitution, or in the many other historical foundations for the South’s slave-based economy, but it is these historical foundations, Lincoln says, as much or more than any current and particular sin of slave-holding, for which everyone has now to pay. Just as liberty and self-government are the legacy of the “fathers” who “brought forth . . . a new nation” (in the words of the Gettysburg Address⁷⁸), their guilt is everyone’s inheritance as well—the sins of the fathers visited on the children to the third and fourth generation.⁷⁹ If there is anything more horrifying than the Civil War then playing out before them, it must be the two and a half centuries’ worth of slaves who went to their graves unavenged—could there be any justice in a nation that was *not* called to account for them in full measure?

But this theory of corporate guilt for the evil at the heart of the American experiment, humbling as it ought to be to a Northerner, cannot quite encompass the fatalism in this passage, in which the forces at work are still more abstract and incomprehensible than the traditional understanding of freely chosen human action: it *must needs be* that offenses come into the world, but woe is due to the unfortunates through whom they come. Is it actually the purpose of the Almighty, as Lincoln’s quoted verse from Matthew seems to say, that woes are preordained to come into the world where select men—or, in this case, a nation—are destined to pay for them? This is not a theodicy that justifies woe as the byproduct of a greater good, such as the free determination of the human conscience. This account of woe lays it directly at the feet of the Almighty, and concludes, claiming there is no other conclusion left to draw, that it, like all His other judgments, is “true and righteous altogether.” The Lincoln who three decades earlier looked to “cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason” as the bedrock of the future of America has long since disappeared.⁸⁰ The Lincoln of 1865 is prostrated by a great and tragic mystery whose scope he cannot explain, but whose source he yet refuses to attribute to malevolence. The literary critic Alfred Kazin put it wonderfully in his essay “The Almighty Has His Own Purposes”:

“Let us suppose,” [Lincoln] says in effect, that slavery is an offense that God inexplicably allowed into human history. Let us even suppose that he allowed just so much time for it. To suppose anything like this is actually to suppose a very peculiar God. But since it all happened as described, and believers hold God accountable for all things, one can only yield to the

⁷⁸ Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address, November 19, 1863, www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/curriculum/the-meaning-of-america/gettysburg-address.

⁷⁹ See, for instance, Exodus 20:5, Exodus 34:7, and Deuteronomy 5:9.

⁸⁰ Abraham Lincoln, Address Before the Young Men’s Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois, January 27, 1838, www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/curriculum/the-meaning-of-america/the-perpetuation-of-our-political-institutions.

enigma of having such a God at all. It is clear that the terrible war has overwhelmed the Lincoln who identified himself as the man of reason. It has brought him to his knees, so to speak, in heartbreaking awareness of the restrictions imposed by a mystery so encompassing it can only be called "God." Lincoln could find no other word for it.⁸¹

Lincoln's text goes further on this point than Kazin suggests—the Almighty of the Second Inaugural seems not only to have *allowed* slavery into human history for a predetermined length of time, but in fact played an active role in bringing and removing it. "Almighty" means "all powerful," after all—where is the power for such activity to come from, if not from Him?

A sometime aficionado of Thomas Paine and Voltaire, never a conventionally religious man or member of any church congregation, Lincoln the depressive agnostic had always had a streak of fatalism. But here, facing the worst evil and deepest tragedy of American history, he somehow turns from fatalism to Providence. All these offenses, he claims, came about through the *providence* of God—and who are we to say there is "therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him?" "To deny it," Lincoln wrote to Republican politician Thurlow Weed a few days after delivering the Second Inaugural, "is to deny that there is a God governing the world."⁸² But what are we to do when faced with such a woeful God and asked to believe that He is not malevolent?

Lincoln's answer is charity. It is not a reasonable answer, but it is a practical one. Reason has no more to say on this subject. And, indeed, in terms of the actual events, even the military players in this conflict will soon find their parts on the front lines of this drama coming to an end. There is no longer a question of whether the South will be won back by brute subjugation, but Lincoln, ever still the savior of the *union*, has looked through the mournful eyes of history and seen that this is not enough—"a just, and a lasting peace" will not be brought about except by humility and charity. Lincoln foresees the disastrous result of Reconstruction should it be carried out with a heavy, judgmental hand, instead of one made gentle by sorrow and mutual repentance. His final instructions, read now with our knowledge of his assassination, take on an undercurrent of eerie foreboding for the miserable Reconstruction that was actually to take place—but, in a deeper sense, they offer America a charge which it is never too late to heed:

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.

⁸¹ Alfred Kazin, "Lincoln: The Almighty Has His Own Purposes," *God and the American Writer* (New York: Knopf, 1997), 138.

⁸² Abraham Lincoln to Thurlow Weed, March 15, 1865, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume VIII, 356, available online at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/lincoln/lincoln8/1:764.1?rgn=div2:view=fulltext>.

The qualitative difference between fate and Providence is charity. The idea of Providence posits that charity directs our destiny even if it is in a way that we cannot comprehend. When we come to the edges of our understanding of it, we can only take it up and keep going—or not. Even if there is ultimately no such thing as Providence—it would be a fair assumption, in fact, to think that this was a strong possibility in Lincoln’s private mind—we can still act with charity; and for a nation that has just killed 600,000 of her own, there is no other way forward. Lincoln proposes a practical and transformative response to horror, a kind of active love that reaches past the limits of reason. We do not know the ways of the Almighty. We do not know the future, and we may not understand the past. But we know our obligations to each other, drawn from the character of the Christian Providence, whatever that ultimately means. *This* is the final objective of the president who was almost mysteriously appointed to lead America through her Civil War, a national apocalypse with the opportunity to be reborn on the other side.

Lincoln was shot just five weeks later—on Good Friday, of all days—and instantly became a sainted martyr, the holy savior of a nation venerated as such even to this day. The “truth which [he] thought needed to be told” thus became his final testament—but “whatever of humiliation there is in it,” he concluded his letter to Weed, “falls most directly on myself.” If there *is* a just God governing the world, perhaps Lincoln was sacrificed not because he was innocent, but, as he suggests, because he was guilty. A very peculiar God it is that would call us in such a way to the work of charity.

About the Cover



Ellen White
Planting 20,000 Flags on Memorial Day, 1976
US Army Center of Military History

As soon as the Civil War ended, a joint resolution by the US Congress ordered the War Department to create an official history of the army's actions during the war. Published between 1881 and 1901—and comprising 128 books organized into 70 volumes—the Official Records of the War of the Rebellion marked the unofficial beginning of the US Army Center of Military History (CMH), which was formally commissioned in 1943. Since then the Center has expanded its mission beyond the creation of official military histories and now provides support for military education and manages the army's museum system. Today, CMH oversees a system of 59 army museums and 176 other holdings, representing approximately 500,000 artifacts and more than 15,000 works of military art.

The origins of the US Army's art collection date back to World War I, when the Corps of Engineers commissioned eight artists to document the activities of the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe. At the end of the war, most of the team's artwork went to the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of American History in Washington, DC.

When World War II began, the Corps of Engineers revived the army art program, establishing the War Art Unit in late 1942. The War Art Advisory Committee, which included prominent artists such as George Biddle and writer John Steinbeck, commissioned 42 artists to serve in the unit: 23 artists already serving in the military and 19 civilians. Biddle described the unit's mission in a March 1943 memorandum:

Any subject is in order, if as artists you feel that it is part of War; battle scenes and the front line; battle landscapes; the wounded, the dying and the dead; prisoners of war; field hospitals and base hospitals; wrecked habitations and bombing scenes;

character sketches of our own troops, of prisoners, of the natives of the country you visit . . . the nobility, courage, cowardice, cruelty, boredom of war; all this should form part of a well-rounded picture. Try to omit nothing; duplicate to your heart's content. Express if you can—realistically or symbolically—the essence and spirit of war. . . . We believe that our Army Command is giving you an opportunity to bring back a record of great value to our country. Our committee wants to assist you to that end.⁸³

The artists were sent to the South Pacific and other theaters around the globe. These efforts contributed to the creation of over 2,000 works of art during World War II.

Since World War II, professional artists have been assigned to document the Korean and Vietnam Wars and Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield. In generating on-the-spot paintings or preliminary sketches, military artists have been exposed to the same challenging conditions and dangers faced by soldiers. Most recently, staff artists deployed with the army have documented the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Center of Military History currently holds nearly 16,000 works of art, which represent the efforts of more than 1,300 soldier-artists in the army's art program, as well as many other artists who have donated their works. Currently under construction in Fort Belvoir, Virginia, the new National Museum of the United States Army will include works of art from the collection in its exhibits. The museum, designed to “celebrate and honor the Army and its extensive part in the building of America,” is scheduled to open in 2015.⁸⁴

This 1976 painting by artist Ellen White belongs to the CMH's collection of images of Arlington National Cemetery. Two soldiers take part in a Memorial Day tradition, known as “flags in,” placing small American flags one foot in front and centered before each grave marker. This tradition has been conducted annually at the cemetery since 1948 when the Third US Infantry (“The Old Guard”) was designated as the army's official ceremonial unit.

What is the overall mood of the painting? Look carefully at the details of the soldiers, their deeds, and the positions of the flags: How do these details contribute to the overall effect? Why does White draw our attention to the trees among the grave markers? What does the yellow sky in the background add to the feeling? How well does this image capture the spirit and meaning of Memorial Day?

⁸³ See US Army Center of Military History, *Army History: The Professional Bulletin of Army History*, 55 (2002), 11, and “They Drew Fire: Combat Artists of World War II,” PBS, 2000, www.pbs.org/theydrewfire/resources/artists.html.

⁸⁴ National Museum of the United States Army, <http://thenmusa.org/museum.html>.

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