

LINCOLN MEMORIAL

Lincoln was the Commander in Chief, by virtue of his office, of the Army of Gettysburg. His name is inseparably linked with that Army and with that battle field. If I could have my own way, I would commemorate both together. I would build a highway to Gettysburg.

SPEECH

OF

HON. JOSEPH TAGGART

OF KANSAS

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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On Senate joint resolution (S. J. Res. 158) approving the plan, design, and location for a Lincoln memorial.

Mr. TAGGART. Mr. Speaker, nearly four years ago Congress appropriated \$2,000,000 to be expended for a memorial to Abraham Lincoln. A commission was appointed for the purpose of suggesting to Congress the form and character of the memorial. This commission was intrusted with the delicate task of suggesting to Congress what might properly express the emotions of the American people toward Abraham Lincoln, and in doing so they either had in mind, or should have had in mind, what might appropriately fit the character of Lincoln. A monument not only suggests to the beholder some characteristic of the great personage to whom it is erected, but it expresses the sentiment of the people in their appeal to posterity.

It seems that the disposition to build monuments is manifested about a half century after the death of illustrious men.

The Washington Monument was commenced in 1848, 49 years after the death of Washington, and here we are nearly half a century after the death of Lincoln trying to express our feelings toward that martyred President. Perhaps this semicentennial enthusiasm for monument building is due to the fact that the generation then living learned in childhood from those who knew the great men of their day the personal characteristics of those whose memory is venerated. That generation having reached the reflective period of their lives and recurring to their childhood memories are moved to erect memorials lest the idols of their childhood should be forgotten.

Surely nothing can be more generous than this expression of the American people that \$2,000,000 should be expended to commemorate Abraham Lincoln. This is the largest sum appropriated by any Government in the world for this purpose, at least in modern times, to commemorate any person.

The commission appointed has suggested a monument in the nature of a Greek temple, in which a replica of St. Gaudens's seated statue should be placed, and the site selected is the bank of the Potomac River at a point directly west of the Capitol and of the Washington Monument.

The people that I have the honor to represent, I am happy to say, are not without appreciation of the beautiful and are not without reverence for art. In the region of eastern Kansas, although it is located apart from the great cities where art treasures are being accumulated, the very fact of that distance simply adds to the appreciation of what has been done in the world to express the world's sense of beauty. In that district are hundreds of the old neighbors of Abraham Lincoln and thousands of men who served in the army of which he was the

commander in chief, and I will venture to say that not one person can be found within the limits of Kansas who would not be willing that we should do our utmost to convince future ages of our love and veneration of Lincoln.

But we have a right to ask seriously, Does a Greek temple represent our conception of anything connected with the life of Lincoln?

We know that there is such a thing as the beautiful in architecture. It is a fixed and unalterable thing, like harmony in music. It always was and always must be. It is as absolute as the principles of mathematics. Capable of the greatest variation of form and of many expressions, architecture must have its proportions. It represents a structure formed and decorated so as to please the eye, and it is scarcely possible that anything new can be suggested with reference to it, no more than something new might be suggested in geometry.

This commission has brought to us a complete illustration of a marble structure of bewildering beauty. Of course there is no new idea in it, possibly there could be no new idea suggested, and they have planned that it should be placed on the bank of the Potomac River, a mile beyond the Washington Monument. They wish the beholder of future centuries to say, "The American people loved Lincoln tenderly. They wished to express that love in bronze and marble, and to place their memorial in the Capital of the Nation. They believed that the ancient Greek architecture was the most beautiful in the world. They chose a site for it beside the river where formerly the tide rose over the ground and where there was a marsh."

Now, I am not here to criticize this beautiful idea. I am not a critic of architecture nor of art. Like many others, I appreciate both, according to the emotions they arouse in me, but I have studied Abraham Lincoln and followed his life as far as I was able in its details from the cradle to the grave. Of all the men who have ever lived he seems most like an old neighbor. He represents the inherent greatness of the mass of the people. In past ages the common people were considered not great, but simply useful. He, as well as his ancestors, as far as known, were poor. They had borne the injustices of the world until they had made a virtue of necessity, until they endured wrong with patience, hardship with virtue, and poverty with heroic Christian philosophy, until industry and Christianity working together wrought the miracle of the great and tender heart of Abraham Lincoln. He was born in the wilderness. As if searching for light he left and went out upon the prairie where the thoughts of men widened with the horizon.

He was chosen as a leader among men because those who worked to develop a new country believed him to be honest and faithful. He was chosen for the Presidency at the most critical period in the history of our country. It became his duty to exercise the executive authority throughout the United States, and by virtue of his office to direct the armies of the Nation to restore that authority. It was the greatest task that was ever thrust upon a mortal. And when the task was performed he was stricken down in the hour of victory. What stage of his life is expressed by fluted columns of marble and beautiful

capitals? What did he borrow from ancient Greece or Rome? He never knew the Greek alphabet. He never read Latin, except to have perhaps an understanding of the idiomatic phrases of the law books. He does not correspond to a single character in ancient Greece, and while some compare him to Marcus Aurelius, Emperor and philosopher of Rome, who was called the "schoolmaster," there is not the slightest resemblance between them. Lincoln stands alone. With the exception of Andrew Jackson, he was the first common man from the bosom of the common people ever elevated to a high place by popular vote. His monument, therefore, should be original and not conventional. It is unnecessary to appeal to future ages to remember him. He can not be forgotten. It is only the obscure that require their names to be written where the public may find them. A monument very often represents a rescue from obscurity rather than a compliment to the dead. Therefore I say that to go back twenty-five hundred years for a design to commemorate Abraham Lincoln is to confess that we do not have the originality fittingly to express our emotions toward the most beloved character that has ever appeared in our history.

The visitor would have the privilege of walking about this proposed monument and looking at it and enjoying it according to his disposition, his taste, or his capacity for appreciation. It would have a different message for each beholder. To one it might be the magnificence of the architecture; to another it might convey the language of our affection for Lincoln; but the message to the great mass of the people whom Lincoln knew and understood, and who would know and understand Lincoln, would be none other than there was a vast expenditure of money to erect something beautiful and utterly useless.

What has become of the nations that were distinguished for monuments? Architecture, as we know it, began in Egypt. In fact, it is the only thing we know of that the ancient Egyptians achieved that is worth mentioning, and now in the valley of the Nile is a race of slaves dominated by two empires. The Greeks learned architecture from the Egyptians and covered a hill called the Acropolis, overlooking Athens, with magnificent temples. It would be a vain show of pedantry to describe them or to name them. Suffice it to say that, with one or two exceptions, they are leveled to the ground, and what was once the world's shrine of beauty is a scene of pathetic desolation. The race of people that carved the Parian marble and wrought those wonderful designs in architecture scarcely lift their heads to look at the Acropolis; but, on the other hand, permitted, and under Turkish rule had to permit, Lord Elgin and other vandals to carry away the most beautiful relics that remained of the handiwork of their ancestors. With the exception of their achievements in literature and oratory, their works in marble were their most enduring monuments, but they have perished. The memory of Phidias inspires no attic sculptor now. The Greeks have gone down from a chisel to a shovel, from marble to concrete and the wonderful language of Demosthenes studied in our schools has even been vitiated until to-day the ancients would not understand their countrymen. Those of us who spent patient and laborious hours trying to master the Anabasis now see a caricature of what used to be the language of Xenophon on the signs of saloons and restaurants in the unsavory quar-

ters of great cities, unintelligible in all but the alphabet. After Greece came the Roman Empire, whose purpose it was to assemble in the City on the Seven Hills whatever was striking and beautiful in the world.

It is a melancholy fact that of all the ancient buildings erected in Rome not one is in use at this day except the Pantheon, and it has been appropriated as a tomb for the royal family of Italy.

This relic of heathen days and heathen thought was built to be the housing of the gods. Within it were installed the statues of the deities brought from all parts of the empire. It is a standing rebuke to the architects of this day who require us to spend the public money in putting unnecessary and useless ornamentation on Government structures. Lord Byron, whose sense of sublimity and beauty will not be questioned, described the ancient structure in a single line:

Simple, erect, austere, severe, sublime, the Pantheon.

And what has become of that empire? Certainly its architecture and its monuments did not even tend to preserve it. Those monuments did not express the emotions of the people. They were a part of the ornamentations and trappings of human pride. The real monument of ancient Rome as well as Greece is not anything that was built with hands, but the great thoughts that were recorded and are now the subjects of study in every seat of learning in the world. Henry D. Thoreau, the New England philosopher, who perhaps had the most independent mind of any man who ever lived, said he would like to read the history of some country that did not build monuments, but devoted itself to something more useful. He observed that many nations did nothing but erect monuments.

If this commission had suggested a memorial building where public exercises might be held, where the people might assemble, where the visitor might be sheltered or might meet his countryman, or the stranger within our gates might be entertained, where the people of the future might see real memorials of Abraham Lincoln that might lead them to understand his life as thoroughly as we do, and if it was placed in some convenient spot where the public might avail itself of its shelter and its beautiful interior, I would cheerfully vote for it. But we are simply giving a stone to the memory of one who described his history as belonging in "the short and simple annals of the poor." Instead of building what might seem an enduring monument to Lincoln, we are asked to construct the most fragile and destructible of all things. What is to prevent some maliciously disposed person from placing explosives in a beautiful structure of that kind and shattering it into fragments? If you say a man could not be found now, and no one will be found in future centuries, who would destroy these monuments, I answer you and I say that there was a man who spent the winter of 1864 and 1865 in idleness, who had become half crazed with fanaticism and liquor, and who while under the influence of liquor, as the evidence shows, walked into where the President of the United States was sitting and destroyed the temple in which dwelt the spirit of Abraham Lincoln. Twice again was this horrible crime committed on the person of a President of the United States, and who will say that some crazed seeker of notoriety would not do less? There was a

magnificent temple in Ephesus in ancient days, and you perhaps remember reading that a young man destroyed it for the purpose of acquiring fame and notoriety.

One of the British poets, writing of this, said that a man would live as long in history for doing evil as doing good, and—

The aspiring youth that fired the Ephesian dome
Outlives in fame the pious fool that raised it.

As against this expenditure of \$2,000,000 for a memorial, which may defy what Ingalls called "the corroding canker and the gnawing tooth of time," but which would remain at the mercy of those who may be so malicious as to wish to rebuke such an expenditure by destroying it, I would prefer an indestructible and useful memorial. It is 80 miles from here to the battle field of Gettysburg, and there is the most hallowed spot under this flag. It is indissolubly associated with the name of Abraham Lincoln. Fifty years ago this coming summer the greatest battle in the history of the New World was fought around that quiet little town in Adams County, Pa. It was the turning point in the greatest war of modern times. It was the only great battle of the Civil War that was fought completely in open ground. There were no surprises at Gettysburg. Every movement of each army was apparent to the opposing army. The third day at Gettysburg was the greatest day of the life of Abraham Lincoln, for I wish to say to you that if the Army of the Potomac that stood on Cemetery Ridge had been carried away in the stride of Pickett's division perhaps the place in history of Abraham Lincoln would be irretrievably lost.

Mr. Speaker, I would not forget Gettysburg even to remember Abraham Lincoln. Every soldier's grave, every mound that covers the heroic dust of every man who fell at Gettysburg, is a witness heap that this Union is one and inseparable. The men of Gettysburg did more than win a battle. They proclaimed the essential unity of the American people. Those who bore the battle were not of any one race or clan or kind, but whether their ancestors came from the Thames, the Rhine, or the Shannon, or from where the highland streams of Scotland plunge over the steep, they were as one at Gettysburg, and they shall be as one forever. They were kindred as the oaks that lift their heads in many a clime, as the rocks that defy the sea on many a shore, shoulder to shoulder in life and side by side in death they were brethren of the world's universal knighthood of courage and fidelity.

In November, after the battle, President Lincoln went to the spot and uttered the words that will live in the memory of men until the sea gives up its dead. Although he said that the world would not long remember what was said there, but never would forget what was done there, we know that among the treasures of the ages will not only be the memory of what was done there, but of what was said there. Lincoln was the Commander in Chief, by virtue of his office, of the Army of Gettysburg. His name is inseparably linked with that Army and with that battle field. If I could have my own way, I would commemorate both together. I would build a highway to Gettysburg.

To say that this road would serve only the rich who have motor cars is to argue that present conditions will never change. In France they are now running trolley coaches over

the public roads carrying passengers for a nominal fare. It is useless to argue with me that it might benefit the owners of land on both sides of the road. I answer and say to you that it would not benefit them any more than the \$2,000,000 worth of marble would benefit somebody else. There would be more labor furnished and the money distributed to more people in building a highway than a Greek temple. I would condemn a highway to Gettysburg and have the Government own it and control it. I would make it not less than 100 feet wide, and I would favor placing an arch to the memory of Lincoln here in Washington and an arch to the memory of Gettysburg on the battle field. Possibly all the people of the United States would not use this road any more than all the people could see a monument, but all of the people might avail themselves of some portions of this road should they choose to see the Nation's greatest battle field; and I will say, further, that the inspiration of Gettysburg to the generation of young men who might study it, and whose attention might be called to it, is worth 50,000 men for the defense of the United States.

Gentlemen have argued here that this would be a monument of war, instead of peace, but I answer and say that the cemetery where rest the 4,000 dead at Gettysburg is the scene of peace.

Gettysburg and a hundred other battles were the price of peace, and let the day perish in which we forget those who paid that price. If I would commemorate Lincoln as I would choose, it would not be in stone, but along this highway I would plant the longest lived and most enduring trees, and provide that they be replaced as they should perish, so that as the years rolled by nature would commemorate and keep green the memory of Lincoln.

There was a young man who spent his last dollar to go out of his way to stop at Springfield, Ill., to visit the tomb of Lincoln. He walked out to the cemetery, a mile from the city, and went to the iron-grated door of the sepulcher, inside of which was the sarcophagus that then contained the earthly remains of Lincoln.

The tomb is a huge structure of stone, with a tower rising from some part of it. He scarcely looked at it, and it made no impression on him whatever, but when his eyes fell on the marble case that contained the ashes of Lincoln and he read the words upon it, "With malice toward none and charity for all," he was not looking for beauty spots nor monuments nor epitaphs any longer; his eyes were filled with tears.

"In one sense we can not dedicate, we can not consecrate, we can not hallow" the memory of Lincoln. His memory will live while hearts are true and while hope will spread her wings.

We can only express our love and veneration for him and for those who preserved the integrity and the liberty of their country. They were together in life, and in behalf of those who survive the great struggle in which he was the leading figure I will refuse to vote for this form of a monument to Abraham Lincoln.

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