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THE TRIBUTES TO THE
BRITISH AND AMERICAN
UNKNOWN WARRIORS

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FROM THE
LONDON TIMES
OCT. 18, 1921

"I feel sure that if just what occurred, with all the sentiment and feeling that went with it, could be conveyed to the people of Great Britain all over the world and the people of America, it would go far toward uniting them in a common sympathy and in a common purpose."

GENERAL PERSHING

London

October 17, 1921

THE DECORATION BY GENERAL PERSHING
OF THE GRAVE OF
THE UNKNOWN BRITISH WARRIOR
IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY
—
AND THE AWARD OF
THE VICTORIA CROSS
TO THE
AMERICAN UNKNOWN
—

L O N D O N
OCTOBER 17, 1921.



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THE CEREMONY IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

as described by the London Times in its issue of October 18, 1921

Yesterday morning General Pershing laid the Congressional Medal of Honour on the grave of the Unknown British Warrior in Westminster Abbey. The simple and beautiful ceremony seemed full of the promise of new and happier times. And what we call Nature appeared to have laid her approval on the hopes that it aroused.

That the United States should confer on an unknown British Warrior the highest military honour that can be bestowed by its Government—that jealously guarded and rarely granted Medal of Honour, which can only be won “at the risk of life, above and beyond the call of duty”; that Congress should pass a special Act enabling this honour to be paid to one who was not a citizen of the United States; that by the request and in the presence of the American Ambassador the medal should be laid upon the tomb by the hand of the great soldier who is now the successor of Washington, Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan as General of the Armies of

the United States, and that the ceremony should take place while the eyes of all the world are turned to the coming Congress at Washington —



Here is great matter for pride and hope; and it seemed to be by something more than mere accident or the working of unalterable law that, just at the beginning of the ceremony, the sun should stream down, in its natural gold, through a window not yet painted, upon the Union Jack that was spread at the foot of the Unknown Warrior's grave.

The ancient mystery of the great Abbey is never wholly dispelled by the light of day. Yesterday, as ever, she preserved her immemorial secrets and her ever brooding silence; yet brightness, colour, confidence were the notes of the ceremony; and, contrasting the sunshine of yesterday with the tragic gloom remembered on other occasions since August, 1914, one could not but believe that the externals matched the inner truth of

the act, and that the modern history which, as the Dean of Westminster reminded us, began with the war in which the Unknown Warrior gave his life was about, through him and his like, to bring joy and peace to the world.

With the Union Jack at its foot and the wreaths bestowed about its edge, the stone that temporarily covers the Unknown Warrior's grave near the west end of the Abbey was bare, save for a little case full of rosaries and sacred emblems that lies at its head. The space about it was shut off from the rest of the Nave by a barrier, through which passed only those who had been specially invited to seats of honour round the grave.



The Nave was packed with people facing north and south, and lined with soldiers and sailors of the United States Army and Navy, among them some of General Pershing's picked battalion, strapping fellows in khaki or blue, who seemed to have all the smartness and the immobility to which we are accustomed in British troops on such occasions.

At 11 o'clock the band of H. M. Scots Guards, stationed at the south-east end of the Nave, began to play under the direction of Lieutenant F. W. Wood, a selection of classical and modern music; and the congregation,

while listening, took note of the eminent persons as they arrived. Mr. Winston Churchill came early and walked down the Nave. Earl Haig slipped in almost unnoticed by a door in the South Aisle. Colonel Sir Henry Streatfield, representing Queen Alexandra, took his place on one of two chairs that were set under the westernmost pillar on the south side. Then came the Duke of Connaught, representing the King, and he was ushered by Mr. E. F. Knapp-Fisher, chapter clerk, to the other chair, close to the grave.

The choir and the clergy, in their scarlet cassocks under white surplices, assembled about the grave; the Dean, Archdeacon Charles, Canons Barnes, Storr, and de Candole, the Rev. H. F. Westlake, custodian, and the Rev. Jocelyn Perkins, sacrist, the Precentor and the Organist of Westminster Abbey. Thence they went up the Nave to the north door, to await the arrival of General Pershing.



Very soon after half-past 11 those near the grave could hear from the far end of the Abbey the voices of the choir singing the processional hymn, "The Supreme Sacrifice," of which the author is Mr. John S. Arkwright. As the procession passed through the barrier to the graveside, behind the Dean came the American Ambassador,

General Pershing, Admirals Niblack and Twining, and Major Oscar N. Solbert, Military Attache of the American Embassy; then Mr. Lloyd George (attended by Lieutenant-Colonel Sir E. W. M. Grigg), Lord Lee of Fareham, First Lord of the Admiralty,

Sir L. Worthington-Evans, Secretary of State for War, and Captain F. E. Guest, Secretary of State for Air. Rising from his seat, the Duke of Connaught shook hands with the distinguished Americans; and then the ceremony proper began.

FROM THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR

Backed by a row of Abbey dignitaries were the Dean of Westminster, the American Ambassador, and General Pershing, standing at the gravehead, and facing up the great church. At the invitation of the Dean, the American Ambassador then spoke as follows:—

By an Act of the Congress of the United States, approved on March 4 of the present year, the President was authorized "to bestow, with appropriate ceremonies, military and civil, a Medal of Honour upon the unknown unidentified British soldier buried in Westminster Abbey." The purpose of Congress was declared by the Act itself, in these words:—

"Animated by the same spirit of comradeship in which we of the American forces fought alongside of our Allies, we desire to add whatever we can to the imperishable glory won by the deeds of our Allies and commemorated in part by this tribute to their unknown dead."

The Congressional Medal, as it is commonly termed because it is the only medal presented "in the name of Congress," symbolizes the highest military honour that can be bestowed by the Government of the United States. It corresponds to the Victoria Cross and can be awarded only to an American warrior who achieves distinction "at the risk of life, above and beyond the call of duty."

A special Act of Congress was required to permit the placing of it upon the tomb of a British soldier. The significance of this presentation, therefore, is twofold. It comprises, in addition to the highest military tribute, a message of fraternity direct

from the American people, through their chosen representatives in Congress, to the people of the British Empire.



There were two soldiers. One was British. The other was American. They fought under different flags, but upon the same vast battlefield. Their incentives and ideals were identical. They were patriot warriors sworn to the defence and preservation of the countries which they loved beyond their own lives. Each realized that the downfall of his own free land would presage the destruction of all liberty. Both were conscious of the blessings that had flowed from the English Magna Charta and the American Constitution.

Well they knew that the obliteration of either would involve the extinguishment of the other. So with consciences as clear as their eyes and with hearts as clean as their hands they could stand and did stand shoulder to shoulder in common battle for their common race and common cause. There was nothing singular, nothing peculiar, about them. They typified millions so like to themselves as to constitute a mighty host of undistinguishable fighting men of hardy stock. A tribute to either is a tribute to all.

Though different in rank, these two soldiers were as one in patriotism, in fidelity, in honour, and in courage. They were comrades in the roar of battle. They are comrades in the peace of this sacred place. One, the soldier of the Empire, made the supreme sacrifice, and, to the glory of the country whose faith he kept, he lies at rest in this hallowed ground enshrined in grateful memory. The other, equally noble and equally beloved, is by my side. Both live and will ever live in the hearts of their countrymen.



What more fitting than that this soldier of the great Republic should place this rare and precious token of appreciation and affection of a hundred millions of kinsmen upon the tomb of his comrade, the soldier of the mighty Empire!

Proudly and reverently, by authority of the Congress and the President, I call upon the General of the Armies of the United States, fifth only in line as the successor of Washington, Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan, to bestow the Medal of Honour upon this typical British soldier who, though, alas! in common with thousands of others, "unknown and unidentified," shall never be "unwept, unhonoured, and unsung."

FROM GENERAL PERSHING

Then General Pershing said:

One cannot enter here and not feel an overpowering emotion in recalling the important events in the history of Great Britain that have shaped the progress of the nations. Distinguished men and women are here enshrined who, through the centuries, have unselfishly given their services and their lives to make that record glorious. As they pass in memory before us there is none whose deeds are more worthy, and none whose devotion inspires our admiration more, than this Unknown Warrior.

He will always remain the symbol of the tremendous sacrifice by his people in the world's greatest conflict. It was he who, without hesitation, bared his breast against tyranny and injustice. It was he who suffered in the dark days of misfortune and disaster, but always with admirable loyalty and fortitude.

Gathering new strength from the very force of his determination, he felt the flush of success without unseemly arrogance. In the moment of his victory, alas! we saw him fall

in making the supreme gift to humanity. His was ever the courage of right, the confidence of justice. Mankind will continue to share his triumph, and with the passing years will come to strew fresh laurels over his grave.



As we solemnly gather about this sepulchre, the hearts of the American people join in this tribute to their English-speaking kinsman. Let us profit by the occasion, and under its inspiration pledge anew our trust in the God of our fathers, that He may guide and direct our faltering footsteps into paths of permanent peace.

Let us resolve together, in friendship and in confidence, to maintain toward all peoples that Christian spirit that underlies the character of both nations.

And now, in this holy sanctuary, in the name of the President and the people of the United States, I place upon his tomb the Medal of Honour conferred upon him by special Act of

the American Congress, in commemoration of the sacrifices of our British comrade and his fellow-countrymen, and as a slight token of our gratitude and affection toward this people.



On the conclusion of his speech the Congressional Medal of Honour was

handed by Admiral Niblack to General Pershing, who, stooping down, laid it on the grave, above the breast of the unknown hero beneath. Shining there, with its long ribbon of watered blue silk, it lay, a symbol of the past, a pledge for the future. And General Pershing stood at the salute to his fallen comrade.

FROM THE DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

The Dean of Westminster then returned thanks in the following words:

It is with feelings of profound and respectful gratitude that we of this ancient Abbey of Westminster receive the noble tribute of your great country's sympathy with the sufferings endured and the sacrifices made by Great Britain and her Dominions Overseas. We thank you for the gracious act which you have done and for the eloquent words with which you have accompanied it.

The Congressional Medal of Honour which General Pershing, whose presence with his men is to us an inspiration, has laid upon the grave of the Unknown Warrior is an added pledge of the brotherhood of our people in the days of peace, as in the

days of war. God willing, provision shall be made for the safe keeping of this medal in a spot where historic treasures are preserved, and where all people are free to come and gaze.

Saxon and Norman, Plantagenet and Tudor, are lying there at the east end of this building and are visited by thousands of your countrymen from year to year.

The history of those centuries is our common heritage; but a new era has opened. Modern history began with 1914, and the grave of the Unknown Warrior is now the object of pilgrimage for all English-speaking peoples. It is a symbol of our proud thanksgiving for historic sacrifice made by

men and by women, sacrifice which, thank God, was shared with Great Britain and France by your noble

people in a great and terrible conflict, which was waged for the liberty of nations and for the freedom of mankind.

FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

And then, at the Dean's request, Mr. Lloyd George came to the gravehead and spoke as follows:—

It is my especial privilege on behalf of the Government and of the people of this country to express their profound gratitude to the President and to the Congress of the United States of America for this striking act of homage to our valiant dead.

The action of the President and of Congress has deeply stirred British hearts. We know the value of this famous medal. We know how jealously its worth has been guarded. We know it represents, not merely in purpose but in fact, the highest distinction which the great Republic can confer on valour amongst its sons, and we also know that for two generations it has been consecrated by its association with deeds of conspicuous heroism amongst a conspicuously brave people.

We thank the American people for conferring this, the highest tribute of honour in their command, upon

the poor remains of a humble and obscure British warrior who gave his life for a noble cause. We thank them for conferring this Medal of Honour through the hands of the distinguished soldier who played such a notable part in the final triumph. We thank the Ambassador of the United States for his eloquent words.



This Empire, to its remotest corners will not miss the deep significance of this deed and of this day. We feel we are taking part in no idle pageant. The warrior who rests in this sacred tomb is but a representative of nearly 1,000,000 British dead, from many continents, who gave their young lives freely—not only for the honour of their native lands but for human freedom in all lands.

The cause for which they fell America espoused in a critical hour

and helped to carry to victory, so that the homage laid to-day on this grave will remain as an emblem of a common sacrifice, for a common purpose.



It will be a reminder, not only to this generation but for all generations

to come, that the fundamental aims of these two democracies are the same, and it will be interpreted as a solemn pledge given to the valiant dead that these two mighty peoples who were comrades in the Great War have resolved to remain comrades to guarantee a great peace.



When the speeches were over, the Precentor offered prayers, during which all the congregation stood: the Lord's Prayer, and three special Collects—one for eternal peace upon all our brothers who fell in the war, one "that the two great peoples of America and Great Britain may ever go forward charged with the high privilege of their stewardship for the liberties of mankind," and the third a thanksgiving for all who have fought the good fight.



Of the Collects the first two were written by the Dean of Westminster—the first adapted from one that he composed for a previous ceremony, the second specially written for this occasion. Then the choir and many

of the congregation broke into the famous "Battle Hymn of the Republic," during which the Duke of Connaught and General Pershing were seen to be sharing an Order of Service.



After the hymn the Dean, still standing at the gravehead, spoke the Blessing; then, from far away in the east end of the Abbey, rang out the "Last Post," which is now so intimately linked in our memories with honours paid to dead soldiers; and, finally, to the same familiar tune, English and Americans alike sang two verses—the first verse of "God Save the King," and the first verse of "My Country, 'tis of thee"—the British National Anthem and the American National Anthem.

“A WOMAN’S TRIBUTE”

The Message of the Double Line of Khaki

From the London Times, October 18, 1921

In Westminster Abbey, yesterday, General Pershing laid the American Medal of Honour upon the grave of the Unknown Soldier of Britain. The bright sunlight streamed through the high stained-glass windows in long shafts of light that fell warm upon the grey stone of the Gothic arches, upon the quiet people in the Nave, and around the flower-strewn tomb, and that lay in a cloth of scarlet on the flag above the body of the Unknown Dead.

A thousand years of great history stood silent within those old walls. Close by are the tombs of Norman, Plantagenet, Tudor, and Stuart Kings and Queens, of the priests, and soldiers and the sailors, of the poets and statesmen that have made England great.

As the organ filled the sunlit spaces of the ancient church with its deep volume of sound, there marched up the aisle, with bared heads, a detachment of British soldiers from the Guard’s regiments. As they

formed a line facing the centre, an equal number of American soldiers, bare-headed, marched up the other side, and turning, stood facing the British soldiers across the narrow aisle.



Both lines of khaki, both lines of straight and young and clear-eyed boys, both lines of men of Anglo-Saxon blood, of the same standards and of the same ideals—they stood there in the sunlight in that shrine of a thousand years of memory, looking straight into each other’s eyes.

Between them, up the aisle, marched the choir in their scarlet vestments with their bright cross on high, the generals, the admirals, and the Ministers of the Empire, and the Ambassador and the Commanding General of the Great Republic—but in all that they represented, and in all that was said in the ceremonies that followed, there was no such potent symbol as those two lines of khaki-clad boys, with the sun shining on

their bared heads, their brave young faces, and their strong young bodies, looking each other straight in the face.

Between them lay, not the narrow aisle, but a thousand leagues of sea, the building of a new world, the birth of a new destiny for man. But as they stood there—where they could have touched hands—in the old Abbey which was a shrine for their common ancestors, they were so amazingly alike in bearing and appearance that they ceased to be a detachment of soldiers from two different countries, and they became a symbol of the illimitable potentiality of a common heritage—that heritage

of which the ancient Abbey was a shrine—the heritage of the ideals of freedom, of order, of self-discipline, of self-respect.

If any words spoken in the Abbey could have conveyed a hundredth part of what that double line of clear-eyed boys said in utter silence the world would have been a happier place to-day. The old strength and the new force of a common heritage stood in khaki in the aisle of Westminster Abbey—bare-headed, to honour the symbol of supreme sacrifice to those ideals in the Cross of Christ and in the body of an Unknown Soldier.

THE VICTORIA CROSS

Awarded to America's Unknown Warrior

General Pershing was the guest of the Government at a banquet at the Carlton Hotel. Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, M.P., Secretary of State for War, presided over a distinguished gathering, and in the course of his speech announced that the King had conferred on the Unknown Warrior of the United States the highest decoration known to the British Empire—the decoration of the Victoria Cross.

In announcing the decoration the chairman said:

I propose this toast upon an occasion unique in the annals of British history, for to-day the people of the United States, represented by General Pershing, have bestowed the highest Order it is in their power to bestow—not upon a King or a Prince—but upon one whose name is known to no one but the Almighty. Solemn and unique though this occasion is, we can rightly say that here, indeed, “there is nothing for tears.”

We celebrate to-day as a day of triumph and fame; for our Unknown Warrior is more famous than even the greatest of those whose names ring out in the temple of British chivalry. I recall the words of Pericles:—

“The whole world is the sepulchre of famous men; not only are they commemorated in their own country by monuments and inscriptions, but in foreign lands there dwells an unwritten memorial of them graven, not upon stone, but upon the hearts of men.”

Truly the hearts of the American nation must have gone out to our Unknown Warrior when they were prompted to tender at the hands of General Pershing that unprecedented honour which their Congress has consecrated with the form and solemnity of a great act of State.

The gift of America to-day marks her intimate association with the ideal which the Unknown Warrior

symbolizes. He lies, a Briton in a British grave, wrapped about with the soil of France and honoured by the homage of America, to be revered and remembered as the embodiment of duty nobly done. He has done his duty, we have to complete his task.

A great step forward has been taken by the summoning of the Washington Conference. May the same spirit of mutual accommodation and fraternal affection as that with which we stood together in the Great War animate the representatives of our nations to carry out the high resolve that our dead shall not have died in vain.

This great act of American friendship which you, General Pershing,

have performed to-day, will find a response in thousands of British women's hearts, each one of whom claims our Unknown Warrior as her own. Every mother whose son was missing will look with gratitude and affection towards the people of America.

BRITISH EMPIRE'S TRIBUTE

As a further mark of gratitude and affection, and as a tribute from the people of the British Empire to the people of America, I have it in command from the King to read to you a telegram which he has to-day addressed to the President of the United States. [The Secretary for War here read the message from the King.]

FROM THE KING TO THE PRESIDENT

I wish to express to you and to the Congress and people of the United States the warm appreciation felt throughout this country of the tribute which you are paying to-day to our Unknown Warrior. The gift of your Medal of Honour to a British comrade in arms, whose tomb in Westminster Abbey stands for all our best endeavour and hardest sacrifice in the war, is a gesture of friendly sympathy and good will which we will not forget.

On Armistice Day the representatives of the British Empire in Washington will join with you in a ceremony held to honour the splendid record of your own troops. I greatly wish on that occasion to confer on your Unknown Warrior our highest decoration for valour, the Victoria Cross. It has never yet been bestowed upon a subject of another

State, but I trust that you and the American people will accept the gift in order that the British Empire may thus most fitly pay its tribute to a tomb which symbolizes every deed of conspicuous valour performed by men of your great fighting forces, whether by sea or land, upon the Western Front.

I also send my heartfelt good wishes to the great International Conference which opens by your wise initiative upon that day. My Ministers will, I know, strive as wholeheartedly as yours to make that Conference a sterling success. May they, in common with yours, do all that practical statesmanship can achieve to perpetuate the comradeship of war in the maintenance of peace.

GEORGE R.I.



