UNVEILING

OF

WARD'S EQUESTRIAN STATUE

OF

MAJOR-GENERAL GEORGE H. THOMAS,

WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 19, 1879.

ADDRESS

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STANLEY MATTHEWS.

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According to the Mythology of the Ancient Greeks, Memory was the Mother of the Muses; so that, as Plutarch tells, the completed Sisterhood of Nine was included under the common name of Remembrances.

The truth in the fiction is, that History is the parent of Art. And as Nature is the Art whereby God constitutes and governs the World, because it is the Revelation of the Invisible and Eternal, in forms of Sublimity and Beauty, to the mind of man; so Human Art, in all its varied forms—Poetry, Eloquence, Music, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture—is but the Interpreter and Expounder of the Divine Art, and fixes in its express and admirable forms whatsoever that is Divine, which it discovers in Nature or in Man. The Heroic in action and suffering must precede, because it inspires, the Heroic in representation. Man must become conscious of the noble and the good before he can express it; and he can become conscious of it only in his experience. Gods and heroes walked the earth, and wrought their wonders in action and suffering, before Phidias and Praxiteles could embody them.

Achilles, first; afterward, Homer. And Art is therefore, if a prophecy, nevertheless, only because it is a Memorial; for it is on the prepared and receptive background of the Past that it paints or carves visions of the glory it foretells. Lord Bacon said: "As statues

and pictures are dumb histories, so histories are speaking pictures."

The name of GEORGE HENRY THOMAS—Soldier and Patriot—has already been inscribed on that scroll of honorable fame which posterity will reverently guard in the archives of our National History. To-day, Art summoned to its proper work, lifts aloft the dignity and majesty of his person, as the Society of the Army of the Cumberland, by these public acts and solemn ceremonials, dedicates to the people of the United States the form and presence of its beloved commander.

Surely this was a noble subject for the modeler's plastic hand! What dignity and power, what firmness and self-possession, what immobility, and yet what quiet graciousness, what gravity and what benignity, were set together in the manly proportions of his physical frame! A presence to inspire respect, but winning confidence and trust! He was large, firm-planted, and paternal, like a sturdy oak, striking its roots deep in the earth, but with outspreading branches offering protection and shelter from fierce heats or fiercer storms. Large and weighty, his movements were easy and quiet; his postures and gestures unobtrusive, so that his port and mien suggested a reserve of strength not called into action. Thus his physical power seemed to be magnified, and yet there was nothing in him ponderous, overwhelming, or boisterous, and he breathed and spoke gently and in soft tones, like a woman or a child. In fine, he was

> "A combination and a form, indeed,
> Where every god did seem to set his seal
> To give the world assurance of a man."

The proportions of his physical frame were in harmony with those of the spiritual body which inhabited and animated it. The internal, as well as the external, man was statuesque, massive, monumental. Vigor and endurance were qualities alike of his material and his mental constitution. Strength was the base and pediment on which was grounded and built up the lofty structure of his character, capped and crowned with simplicity—"whole in himself"—a shaft and column of Doric style and beauty—

> "Rich in saving common-sense,
> And as the greatest only are,
> In his simplicity, sublime."

> "O good gray head, which all men knew,
> O iron nerve to true occasion true,
> O fall'n at length that tower of strength
> Which stood four-square to all the winds that blew!"

There was nothing in him fluctuating, mercurial, or eccentric. He was set, inflexible, undeviating, steering steadily by the stars, upon the arc of a great circle. He was resolute, unyielding, with a fortitude incapable of intimidation or dismay, and yet without pretention, boasting, self-assertion, or noisy demonstration. He was conspicuous for modesty and dignity, and was altogether free from affectation or envy.

He did not lack in proper self esteem; but did not think more highly of himself than he ought. Better than any other man could, he took the measure of his own dimensions, and never worried lest he might be overlooked or neglected, not doubting that sooner or later he

would gravitate by his own weight and power to his predestined place, over all opposition and contradiction.

But he was not coarse, vulgar, and impassive—careless of the good opinion of good men; rather, on the contrary, he was quick in his sensibilities, keen to detect the selfishness of others, and smarted under a sense of injustice, when inflicted upon himself. Yet no personal consideration ever warped his judgment or clouded his sense of duty. He was genial and frank in his communications, yet reticent and self contained as to all that related to himself, neither inviting nor volunteering confidences. As he had nothing to conceal, his whole character was so transparent that he never opened himself to misconstructions. He did not take refuge from suspicions of ignorance in an affectation of the mystery of silence; for he was as a living epistle, known and read of all men. No conspicuous man in our recent history is better known as to his inmost character, more thoroughly understood, or more correctly appreciated; so that there is no reason to believe that the judgment of posterity as to his place in history will be other than a record of contemporary opinion. There lies buried with him, in his grave, no mystery, to pluck the heart out of which will require that he should ever be disturbed in his resting-place.

It is not too much to say of General Thomas that he was a model soldier. Arms was his chosen profession. The whole period of his life, from youth to his untimely death, was spent in its study and practice. He had no ambition outside of it. His only ambition in it was to attain the rewards it held out to merit. He envied no

superior his rank. He was in no haste to rise upon the misfortunes of others. He recognized but one way to glory—the path of duty.

He perfected himself by patient painstaking in all its details. He carefully learned the duties of high command by a thorough practical experience of those of every inferior and subordinate responsibility. He became, thus, an adept in the knowledge and use of every arm of the service, and learned as an apprentice to handle and work every part of the great machinery and enginery of war.

At the age of twenty, in 1836, he entered the Military Academy. In 1840, having graduated, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, and rose, successively, through every intermediate grade, until, on December 15, 1864, the date of the first day's battle at Nashville, he was promoted to be a Major-General in the Army of the United States.

In each stage in his military history he saw active service, appropriate to his rank; receiving his first Brevet while a Second Lieutenant, for gallantry and good conduct, in 1841, in the war against the Florida Indians; in the war against Mexico, in 1846–48, at Fort Brown, Monterey, and Buena Vista; again, in Florida, in 1849-50, against the Seminoles; as an instructor of artillery and cavalry in the Military Academy, from 1851 to 1854; on frontier duty in California and in Texas; until the breaking out of the Civil War, in 1861, found him a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Second Cavalry, of which he then became Colonel.

These were the days and years of preparation—of the study and practice of military art—the formation of military habits—the education and training of the military character—the development and cultivation of the military instinct. And the seed sown during this season bore its ample fruits in due time.

At the beginning of the Rebellion, in 1861, he had attained the forty-fifth year of his age, the full age of a matured and ripened manhood. He was no longer in the flush and hey-day of impetuous youth. He had grown to his stature, gradually and slowly, as always grows timber, close-grained and of fine fiber. What he was capable of doing he had learned to do in the usual exercise and natural processes of his understanding. He was neither a genius, accomplishing results without apparent means, by lightning strokes of magic and mere will; nor was he a favorite child of fortune, winning success, by accident and chance, against odds, plucking the flower safety out of the nettle danger, when, by the common laws of human conduct, he ought to have suffered the penalty of rashness and improvidence. One of the valuable lessons of his military career is, that every success rests upon the rational basis of a thorough organization of the means necessary to insure it; that valor is nothing better than blind and bloody persistence, unless supported on either flank by knowledge and prudence.

This was the secret of one of the chief characteristics of his work—its thoroughness. He did nothing by halves. He wasted no material or time in experiments, the issue of which was indeterminate. He did not worry

and wear out his ranks in purposeless marches and counter-marches, to make them believe he was doing something, when he was not. He carefully nursed and provided for them, so as to bring his troops to the highest point in spirit and efficiency, and kept them well in hand. He determined what most important end was reasonably practicable; he matured the plan best adapted to secure its accomplishment, and carefully gathered and organized the means necessary for its execution. And then, when all things were ready, he launched the dread thunderbolt of power, and, with one stroke, dealt the destruction he had devised. Mill Spring and Nashville—his first and last battle in the West—are capital illustrations of this feature of his military character. In reference to this last memorable and decisive battle of Nashville, the importunity and impatience of his superiors, at a distance too great to appreciate the difficulties of his situation, provoked from him no complaint. He telegraphed to the then Lieutenant-General—"I can only say I have done all in my power to prepare, and if you should deem it necessary to relieve me I shall submit without a murmur." When the time arrived for the delivery of the meditated blow, and its complete and thorough success was known, he received ample compensation for this temporary distrust, in hearty and ungrudging congratulations, from President, Secretary of War, and Lieutenant-General, as creditable to them as they were gratifying and just to him, confirmed as they were, by the thanks of Congress, for the skill and dauntless courage by which the rebel army, under General Hood,

was signally defeated and driven from the State of Tennessee.

Speaking of the circumstances of that occasion, Gen. J. D. Cox, a most competent judge, himself a most honorable participant in its trials and its triumphs, in his oration at Chicago, in 1868, said:

"Fortunately our commander at Nashville was a man of Washingtonian character and will, and knowing that his country's cause depended upon his *being* right, and not upon his merely *seeming* so, he waited with immovable firmness for the right hour to come. It came, and with it a justification of both his military skill and his own self-forgetful patriotism, so complete and glorious, that it would be a mere waste of words for me to talk about it."

This episode finely illustrates, not only the temper of that crisis in our public affairs, but the best characteristics of its chief figure.

It was the dictate of a sound and prudent judgment, and became the habit of his life, to assume no important responsibility, which he did not feel well prepared to meet. We have seen that at Nashville, with the experience of more than three years of constant and active service, he was willing rather to be relieved from his command than to accept the responsibility of a movement he believed to be premature. In an earlier stage of his service, he resisted the temptation of ambition by declining what amounted to promotion, because he was able to prefer the public good to his personal advancement. In the fall of 1862, the circumstances, as related by General

Buell himself, in a private, unpublished note, were as follows:

"The army was to move on the 30th of September against Bragg, who occupied Bardstown, Frankfort, and in fact the whole of Central Kentucky. On the morning of the 29th an order was received from Washington, assigning General Thomas to the command in my stead. He very soon came to my room and stated his intention to ask the revocation of the order—that he was not prepared by information and study for the responsibility of the command. I tried to dissuade him, told him that I would give him all of my information and plans, and assured him of my confidence in his success. Finding him determined, I said that I could under no circumstances consent to his sending a dispatch which could imply that I had any wish or influence in the matter. He promised that much, went away, and after awhile returned with the the message which he had prepared for General Halleck. I thought that he was actuated in his course by a generous confidence in me and a modest distrust of himself with so little warning; and I considered that both motives did honor to his sterling character."

His language in the dispatch referred to was this:

"General Buell's preparations have been completed to move against the enemy, and I therefore respectfully ask that he may be retained in command. My position is very embarrassing, not being as well informed as I should be, as the commander of this army and on the assumption of such responsibility."

But the quality, which more than all others specifi-

cally and constitutionally distinguished General Thomas, was his invincibility—his heroic faculty for enduring, unwearied, and successful obstinacy in defense. It was not mere brute courage nor insensibility to danger. Neither was it mere resoluteness and stoutness of heart, nor a certain sullen defiance, which in some cases has seemed to await an expected adversity. It was cheerful and sweet tempered, although of supreme seriousness and intensity. But its chief faculty was its contagion, by which it propagated its fearlessness and hopefulness to the whole body of his support; so that every soldier in his company felt an assurance of security and success in his presence and authority. The latent heat of his passion grew into a glow under heavy hammering, and spread through all the particles that adhered and gathered to it, until the fused and molten mass, red hot with its combustion, consumed every thing that approached it. It was the sympathy of confidence and self-devotion that indissolubly bound together commander and men, and made them jointly invincible. It was a shield which quenched the fiery darts of the adversary—an armor of tempered steel, which none of his arrows could pierce.

A signal illustration of this power of resistance is furnished by the course of battle at Stone River, where he stayed the tide of rebel success with his immovable front. But its most conspicuous example is seen on the last day's fighting at Chickamauga. In his memorial oration at Cleveland in 1870, General Garfield—himself soldier, scholar, and statesman—has, in a tribute, of which the highest praise is to say that it is worthy both

of himself and of its theme, in most felicitous phrase, has drawn his picture as he appeared in that scene. He says:

"While men shall read the history of battles, they will never fail to study and admire the work of Thomas during that afternoon. With but twenty-five thousand men, formed in a semi-circle, of which he himself was the center and soul, he successfully resisted for more than five hours the repeated assaults of an army of sixty-five thousand men, flushed with victory and bent on his annihilation. . . . When night had closed over the combatants, the last sound of battle was the booming of Thomas' shells bursting among his baffled and retreating assailants. He was indeed the 'Rock of Chickamauga,' against which the wild waves of battle dashed in vain. It will stand written forever in the annals of his country that there he saved from destruction the Army of the Cumberland."

> A day of onsets of despair!
> Dash'd on every rocky square,
> Their surging charges foamed themselves away.

Speaking of him in the General Order announcing his death, the General of the Army, in terms both just and warm, recorded and published his estimate of the character and career of General Thomas. He said:

"The General has known General Thomas intimately since they sat, as boys, on the same bench, and the quality in him, which he holds up for the admiration and example of the young, is his complete and entire devotion to duty. Though sent to Florida, to Mexico, to Texas, to Arizona, when duty there was absolute ban-

ishment, he went cheerfully, and never asked a personal favor, exemption, or leave of absence. In battle he never wavered. Firm, and of full faith in his cause, he knew it would prevail, and he never sought advancement of rank or honor at the expense of any one. Whatever he earned of these was his own, and no one disputes his fame. The very impersonation of honesty, integrity, and honor, he will stand to us as the beau ideal of the soldier and gentleman."

General Thomas, in his simple and modest way, has left on record a statement concerning himself, which will be accepted now without question. In a letter of November 26, 1869, expressing his regret that he would not be able to attend the reunion of the Society of the Army of the Cumberland that year, at Indianapolis, he said:

"It was my hearty desire, from the beginning to the end of the late war, to accept with cheerfulness and perform with zeal and honesty, whatever duties devolved upon me. At the same time it was my constant endeavor to impress those who were with me and under my command with a sense of the importance of the services they had undertaken to perform."

These sentences show that George H. Thomas was something more and better than merely a soldier. He was a patriot. He had a country and a cause, and in their defense he drew his sword. The principles and interests for which he periled his life and staked his fame, more even than the gallant service he performed in their behalf, great and distinguished as it was, justify the celebration of this day. The occasion seems appropriate for

a statement and vindication of the grounds on which they are established and now securely rest.

The reason and religion of all ages and races have recognized the love of country as a nobler passion than the love of life. The pleasure-loving Greek identified piety with patriotism; and Pericles, when he pronounced the panegyric over the slain heroes of the Peloponesian war, knew not how to eulogize them better than to praise the institutions of their country, which was capable of producing citizens willing to die in their defense. The Latin poet framed a phrase of Roman devotedness for all times and lands when he sang, "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori." The Christian religion, although its founder is the Prince of Peace, and its advent was heralded by heavenly voices, proclaiming, "Peace on earth; good will to men," nevertheless has sanctioned and sanctified, by the example of its Divine author, that spirit of self sacrifice which is the essence of all disinterested service which man can render to mankind; and teaches that as the only true life is not the life of the body, but the life of God in the human soul, so the ends for which life was given are of more value than mere living. Reason and instinct combine to uphold the private law of self-defense; and the preservation of the State, at the expense of individual life, is but an extension and enlargement of the same principle in the domain of public law. For the maintenance of the social and political state is essential to the development of the individual destiny, and its life is part of the life of every citizen.

The law of all civil society, and under every form of

government, has classed treason and rebellion with capital crimes, worthy of death; too often when the sovereignty defied was embodied in the person of a monarch, perverting the presumptions of guilt and magnifying the unrealized imaginations and intentions of the accused into overt acts of crime. Our own Constitution, jealous of liberty and yet mindful of the obligations of a loyal citizenship to a form of government founded on popular assent and essential to the preservation of public and private rights, limited the offense to overt acts of war against its existence or authority, or adhering to its armed enemies, giving them aid and comfort.

The Mythology of the Ancients represented the enormity and hideousness of rebellion under the figure of the monster, Typhon. Lord Bacon, interpreting the fable, says:

"And now the disaffected, uniting their force, at length break out into open rebellion, which, producing infinite mischiefs, . . is represented by the horrid and multiplied deformity of Typhon, with his hundred heads, denoting the divided powers; his flaming mouths, denoting fire and devastation; his girdles of snakes, denoting seiges and destruction; his iron hands, slaughter and cruelty; his eagle's talons, rapine and plunder; his plumed body, perpetual rumors, contradictory accounts," etc., and able for a time to strip from the majesty of the state the sinews of its power.

As patriotism is then both a duty and a delight, and treason and rebellion condemned as equally sinful and shameful, by every system of religion and every system

of law, by the reason and instincts of mankind, whence are *civil wars*, and whence especially came *ours?*

Oftener, in governments where the sovereignty is hereditary in the line of family descent, disputed successions divide the allegiance of the people, and are settled by the arbitrament of arms. In despotisms, oppressed and burdened populations revolt against tyrannies, too severe and painful for longer endurance; and revolution becomes the last resort and remedy for men who love liberty better than life.

But the Rebellion of the Confederate States, in 1861, was of a different class. It was not a war of factions, supporting rival claimants to an official succession, both acknowledging the legitimacy of the institutions of government; nor was it an attempted revolution in behalf of right against power. It was, on the contrary, a determined and desperate struggle, not merely to overthrow a *government*, but to destroy the *nationality* represented by it.

The conspiracy which found in it its culmination was an old one, and at first unconscious of its true nature and direction. Its germ appeared in the opposition developed to the original adoption of National Institutions as formulated in the Federal Constitution. It appeared soon after in the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions of '98, imputed to Jefferson, but which were hardly consistent with that theory of National Sovereignty upon which he must have relied for a conviction of treason against Aaron Burr; it was revived in the doctrine of

Nullification, as defended by Calhoun and his school, leading logically to Secession and Civil War.

It was founded on a complete and fundamental misconception of the character of the political institutions of the country, and of the relation of the governments of the States, to that of the United States, and a failure to realize the truth, that behind and below both these instrumentalities of political action there was a constituency that was their originating and supporting cause, the unity of which made one *nation* of all the people. The false doctrine which embodied these misconceptions was styled the doctrine of State Rights; but erroneously, for there had been no denial that the States had indestructible rights. The only controversy had been to define what they were, and who were the judges of their limits. The real meaning and mischief of the false dogma was STATE SUPREMACY, for it taught that to the States, and not to the United States, was committed the right to decide the boundary of their respective jurisdictions. Each in respect to the powers delegated or reserved was, of course, independent of the other, and in that sense sovereign; but inasmuch as the Constitution and laws of the United States made in pursuance thereof, and all treaties made under their authority, it is declared, shall be the supreme law of the land, and the judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any thing in the Constitution or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding; and, inasmuch, as it is further declared, that the judicial power of the United States shall extend to all cases in law and equity, arising under the Constitution, the laws of the United States, and the

treaties made under their authority, it is apparent that by the very frame of the fundamental and organic structure of the National Authority, the Supreme Sovereignty, in all its relations to individuals, to domestic States and foreign nations, belongs to that Constituency which is rightly designated as the people of the United States, and is exercised by that government which represents and effectuates their collective and national will. It is this supremacy of jurisdiction and authority that constitutes our Nationality, and is essential to it. In this view, the unit of power and dignity is the Nation; the States are significant merely as its parts and fractions. The National government is the center and circumference that incloses and unites within its complete circle the entire aggregate of our political institutions, and integrates them into one harmonious, co-operating whole.

Abroad, it establishes our place as one in the world's family of independent, equal, and sovereign Nations. At home, within the sphere of its prescribed powers, and determining their limits and applications, without responsibility to any superior, it acts upon the individual people whose allegiance it commands, with the irresistible energy and limitless resources of the supreme and sovereign will of an indivisible people. It is the result and exponent—the consequence, rather than the cause—of those common features and characteristics which belong to us as one people living in one land, which, in the aggregate, constitute a National character, the development of which, in social and political action, represents in history our National life and spirit. It is the ideal of all patriotic

aspiration; the inspiration and object of our public hopes; the shield of our security; the guardian of our persons and rights; the defender of our interests; our present help in every time of earthly need. The sway of its law is the bond of our peace and the pledge of our prosperity; the supremacy of its authority, the condition and cause of order, harmony, and co-operation among all the possible conflicts and jealousies of subordinate political agencies; its flag—"the banner of beauty and glory"—the symbol of our power and pride, the emblem of our unity, the imperial standard of our loyal and reverent devotion.

It is not inconsistent with this spirit to value and cherish the local attachments which connect us with the States of our nativity and abode; but only in an inferior and subordinate degree. Our first duty and our chief love are due to the Nation, which alone constitutes our Country. For the principal value of our citizenship of the State is that it confers upon us the dignity and privilege of our Nationality.

In contempt of this view of our Constitutional organization as a Nation, the opposing theory was taught of the supremacy of the States, the subordination of the Union. According to this doctrine, the only sources and supports of political authority, known in our system, were the States, while the Federal Government, under its Constitution, was merely a mode of their agency. Of course, upon such a construction of our political relations, the only patriotism of which, as citizens, we were capable, consisted in allegiance to the State of our domicil; for

loyalty is the expression of fealty to a person, either natural or political; it can not be exacted or yielded to an inanimate parchment or compact. So that the obligations of the Federal Constitution ceased to bind individuals who were released from the duty of obedience by the sovereign authority of their States; and the States, themselves, could not be made responsible, for they had no political superiors. Hence it was thought, at the time, by some public men, that there was no Constitutional warrant to attempt the coercion of the States, and writers, in that interest, denominate the rebellion against the National Government as a war between States.

And founding upon this false interpretation of the Constitutional facts of our history, the National life was assailed in organized and bloody war.

It is not to be supposed, however, that the inspiring purpose and main motive of the Rebellion was to establish the abstract theory of the supremacy of the States. That theory was used as the legal excuse and justification of the asserted right to renounce the authority of the Federal Constitution; but the right was not exercised merely to assert its existence. There were ulterior objects and purposes which enlisted the sympathies and united the efforts, not merely of *States*, but of a *Section*, and that without regard to State lines, and even in disobedience of State authority. Such was notably the case of some distinguished public men, and thousands of others, in States which never by any act of secession sanctioned or justified their course, who broke their allegiance to both State and Nation to swell the ranks of the Rebel-

lion, to adhere to the Confederate government, or to give it aid and comfort.

Accordingly, we find powerful interests, partly pecuniary, partly political, pervading a section of the country, which organized and arrayed its public sentiment to eradicate every seed of dissent within it, and to defend itself against every hostility from without. These interests, it is needless to say, all grew out of the institution of Negro Slavery. They intrenched themselves early behind the ramparts of State sovereignty and supremacy. Upon this basis was founded the political power of the slaveholding interest, known in our history as the Slave Power.

One of its most signal struggles with the National spirit was upon the question of tariff duties, levied with a discrimination in favor of American manufactures. It was supposed that, as to all its principal products, except sugar, slave labor would be rendered more profitable to its owners, by free access to the markets of the world, in direct exchange for foreign manufactures, and that a discriminating duty against foreign fabrics was a tax levied on their produce for the benefit of the home manufacture. But instead of resting satisfied with an appeal to the general intelligence and the common sense of justice of the whole country, the cotton-producing interest threatened forcible resistance to the execution of the revenue laws, through State authority, and under the banner of Nullification, denied and defied the National authority.

This, however, was a mere episode. It was an incidental illustration of a more general fact, which soon began to become manifest, and which eventuated in civil

war. It was, that *the continued existence of slavery was incompatible with the permanence of National institutions.* The exigencies of the slaveholding interest demanded sacrifices which could only be made at the expense, and by the ultimate extinction of all the ideas which lay at the foundation of our existence as a Nation. Slavery was rapidly making of us two peoples, in place of one, and separating us so widely in thought, feeling, culture, and every constituent of character and motive of conduct, as to make any mere political bond of union a name without reality. It was more disintegrating than if it had succeeded in teaching the two sections different languages; because, with apparent continued use of but one, it had introduced such a confusion of thought as to make their communication incomprehensible. Their ideas were not capable of mutual translation. What to one was good, was to the other evil; and contradiction and mutual exclusion was substituted for the fellowship of sympathy and a community of aims and purposes. The immortal Declaration of our National Independence, which had been supposed to be founded upon eternal, unchangeable, and indestructible truths of reason, and to formulate the justification of human right for all mankind, had become the subject of derision as a series of sophisms and glittering generalities: while the National Constitution, with the glosses which had been imposed upon its practical construction, was denounced, on the other hand, as a "covenant with death, and a league with hell." The right freely to speak and write, and peaceably to assemble for the consideration and discussion of public questions, was

denied, wherever its exercise threatened the safety of slave-holding or disturbed the consciences of those who practiced it; while, on their part, their teachers and leaders sedulously inculcated the belief that it was the mission of their situation, laid upon them by a necessity both human and divine, to extend, strengthen, and perpetuate the system.

The sole condition on which it tolerated political association was the recognition of its right of domination. Its alternative was *rule* or *ruin*. So that when it was driven from the seat of national power by a political revolution, wrought by public sentiment and in strict accordance with law, without waiting for any overt act of hostility, with desperate foresight of its inevitable doom, it plunged into the dread abyss—

> "Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,
> With hideous ruin and combustion, down
> To bottomless perdition."

Under the mocking banner of State Rights, it opened its cannon upon the National Power, and when Sumter fell, it buried forever under its ruins the lost cause of a Confederacy, of which slavery was proclaimed to be the corner-stone.

It was a victory, not only for the Nation, but for mankind, and marks a step in the progress of the race that can not and will not be reversed. The evils of the war—and they are many that follow always in its train—will be forgotten and effaced; but the good will remain forever. Nationality restored upon the basis of universal freedom, and the political and civil equality of all the

citizens of the Commonwealth, is a result that vindicates itself, needing neither apology nor defense. Those who were overcome in the conflict, as well as those who overcame them, can unite, without bitterness or hypocrisy, in a triumph that divides the trophies of its good equally with both. And when those who were our brethren and became our enemies, but not more ours than their own, are able and willing, as they ought, to join with us in grateful and joyous thanksgiving to the gracious God who turned the scales of battle not against them, but against their cause, we, too, can, without humiliation or self-contempt, join with them in solemn celebrations and funeral rites over the graves of Confederate as well as Federal dead, as sacrifices and expiations not made in vain.

The sum of the whole matter is, that the life of the Nation is essential to the life of the people; that its authority and power are supreme, and not subordinate; that its integrity is vital to the growth and perfection of that rational and orderly, but impartial and benevolent liberty, which constitutes the sacred deposit intrusted to its keeping, and contained within the forms of its constitution; that neither sectional strife nor party contention must ever invade its sphere or draw in question its essential jurisdiction; that it shall be cherished as an ally and friend of all legitimate powers of the States, and not as an alien and enemy of the liberties of its people; that the sentiment of nationality shall be cherished as the spirit of patriotism, and our love of country made, in good faith, to embrace not the locality bounded by our

personal or party horizon, but the whole galaxy and constellation of fixed and immutable stars that fill the heaven of our hopes; and that no spirit of faction shall be allowed to confuse the boundaries that divide and separate the allotments of authority and jurisdiction which have been wisely made to embody and enforce the constitutional will of the people.

In this unnatural contest George H. Thomas adhered to the government to which he had sworn allegiance, and not to its enemies in arms. He was born, it is true, in Virginia, but his home and country was the United States of America. He had been educated at the expense of its government at a National Military Academy, upon the condition, if not express, at least honorably implied, that he should devote his military knowledge and skill in support of its authority and in obedience to its laws. He had chosen the military profession as the pursuit of his life, and had served for twenty-one years in its armies, receiving his reward in the honors and emoluments of its service. He had performed the duties of his successive ranks, at posts and stations to which he had from time to time been assigned, without regard to the boundaries of States. He had stood guard at the outposts and picketed the frontiers of the vast area of national domain, scarcely less than the continent, and thought he was defending the homes of his countrymen. He had followed the flag of the Nation into a foreign territory and participated in a war that extended our National border to the Pacific Ocean. He knew that it was the duty of the Army to uphold the civil power of the

Government, the President of which was, by the Constitution, its Commander-in-chief, and that that instrument made no distinction between foreign and domestic enemies. He knew that Washington had employed the National military force for the suppression of insurrection and the enforcement of the laws of Congress, and that Marshal lent no countenance to a doctrine that would seduce him from his military allegiance. His reason told him where his duty lay; his conscience bade him follow it. In the uniform of an officer of the army of the United States he followed its flag across the Potomac, at the head of its troops and in obedience to its lawful commands, upon the soil of his native State, sacred to him only as it was consecrated to the Constitution and the Union. And if his conduct and career was in contrast with that of others of her sons whom, on that account, she has preferred to honor, nevertheless, a generation in Virginia will yet arise who will learn and confess the truth, that George H. Thomas, when he lifted his sword to bar the pathway of her secession, loved her as well as these and served her better.

This monument, consecrated to-day to him whose fame we celebrate, is also sacred to the memory of that invisible host without whom he was nothing—the unrecorded dead, the untitled soldiers of the Union, the vanished and nameless Army of the Republic, who were not merely willing to die, but to be forgotten, so that the memory of the good their death should bring might live after them. As long as the love of country shall survive among the generations of this people, or liberty make its

home under the protection of our National institutions, the example of their patriotic devotion will not die for lack of honorable remembrance or worthy imitation. We stand with uncovered heads and hearts laid bare, to-day, in the presence of an innumerable company of these heroic spirits—witnesses, sympathizing with us in these solemn and patriotic ceremonials, honoring the memory of our great Soldier and Patriot. The listening ear of fancy catches their choral song, as it floats and dies away upon the air—

> "Yea, let all good things await
> Him who cares not to be great
> But as he saves or serves the State!"

To the President of the United States.

And now, Mr. President, it only remains for me, in the name and on behalf of the Society of the Army of the Cumberland, to present and deliver, through you, to the people of the United States, whose chosen representative you are, this statue of George H. Thomas. Protected and preserved by their care, in this seat and capital of their National power, may it long stand as a token of the honor which a grateful people bestow upon conspicuous and unselfish devotion to public duty. And when marble shall have crumbled to decay, and brass become corroded by the rust of time, may the liberties of the people which he defended still survive, illustrated and supported by successive generations, inspired to deeds of virtue and heroic duty by the memory of his example.