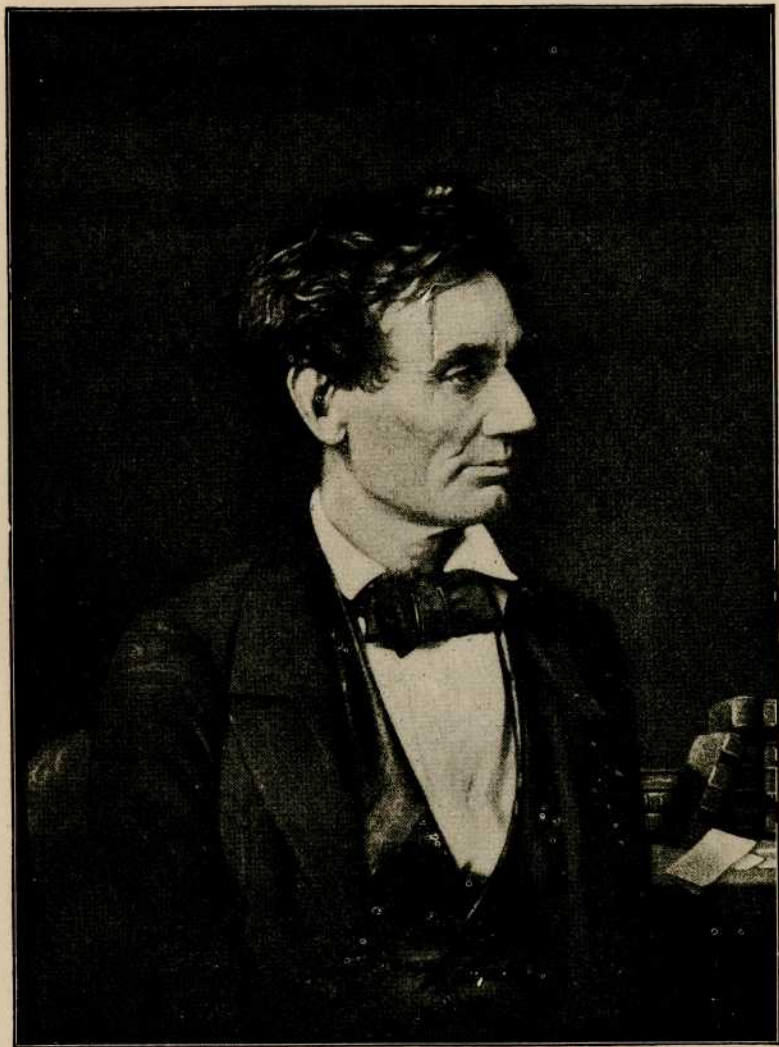




**Memorial Day
Address**



ABRAHAM LINCOLN



MEMORIAL DAY

ADDRESS

BY

H. H. EMMONS

MEMBER OF THE OHIO BAR

DELIVERED AT GILMORE, OHIO

MAY 30, 1907

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MEMORIAL DAY ADDRESS

Most Honorable Veterans, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today we meet here in solemn memory of the heroes who risked and who gave their lives to preserve our country a mighty nation, and who blotted out of our history forever a most infamous institution—a relic of barbarism and the dark ages—human slavery. These comrades who wear the blue or the button here today, when young men or rather boys, and who in the dark days of the early sixties left their dear old homes and firesides and friends and went to the front, are the Nation's Saviors. That's why we're here to pay homage to these heroes both living and dead. That's why we carry our flowers and our flags to the cemeteries all over this broad land, on this memorable day, to adorn the graves of our heroic dead. This patriotic custom originated, it is said, with Gen. Logan in May, 1868, when he issued that famous order asking for a united action in decorating the soldiers' graves. None but a noble heart like that of the Hero of Atlanta could have instituted a ceremony fraught with such sweet conceptions of the human soul. And, today, no doubt, the grave of him who penned that famous order is also covered with the floral treasures of Spring, placed there by hands of those whose hearts beat with true loyalty and patriotism.

We often hear it said that money is the root of all evil. I do not have much faith in this proverb, but I do believe that it was the root of the Great Civil War. "Great oaks from little acorns grow." Nearly three hundred years ago, some degenerate men whose cupidity for money outweighed their conscience to their God, and whose pecuniary ambitions blinded their reasons of right and wrong landed a cargo of human slaves on the then

fair shores of Virginia. This was, my friends, the identical acorn from which grew the great oak of slavery until it's dark leaves of four million slaves were so dense that is almost excluded from the Nation's garden God's wholesome sunshine of national hope, mercy and prosperity; it stagnated the circulation of the air of Liberty with its mighty branches and leaves until it was poisoning the breath of all honest and consistent Christians. The Journals of Congress from 1821, the time of the passage of the Missouri Compromise, down to 1861, form one constant record of heated dissensions, angry debates, and wars of bitter words, usually followed by threats of a dismemberment of the Union. When we think of those forty years of wandering in the Sinai of Doubt and when we remember the many battles of intellectual giants of those days it seems rather strange that some amicable conclusions could not have been reached. No question ever cost the lovers of the Union the anxiety that this question did. The North stood appalled at the apparently reckless utterances of the South. One conciliatory measure had followed another until further conciliation became impossible. Everything was yielded that could be yielded. Compromises signified nothing but concessions to the South. You remember the Fugitive Slave Law and the odious decision of Chief Justice Taney in the Dred Scott case. Persuasions were of no avail; and loyal statesmanship became a matter of scorn. What had become of the power of Congress, the power of the Laws, the power of the Constitution? Where was the former strength of the executive, and what had become of the pristine purity of our courts? Everything conservative was being broken to fetters. Secession was threatened. The Southern States had many millions of dollars—approximately twelve hundred millions—wrapped up in human beings as chattel prop-

erty. The signs of the times indicated that they were in danger of losing this great wealth through what they considered the fanaticism of abolition which was being more and more agitated every year throughout the North. Again the Devil of greed and money had to be considered with, regardless of right or wrong. The South interpreted their Bibles by the reason of money. Their preachers preached to please the ones who were paying their salaries. Their prayers were offered up to God imploring His aid to maintain what they called a divine institution. Their thoughts, their conversations, their newspapers, their lawyers and judges never lost sight of the money end of the problem. And hence I say again, that money was the root of this necessary evil of war. So the crisis came. The supreme moment arrived. Secession followed. The Star of the West was fired upon by enemies—by traitors! Old Fort Sumter was forced to haul down the glorious Stars and Stripes and surrender. Then what happened? Who came to the rescue of our great and glorious Nation which tottered on the verge of a political volcano? It was the loyal patriotic young men—and seventy-five per cent. of them were farmer boys. Forth they marched to Cleveland, to Cincinnati, to Baltimore and to Washington. In Washington we see them marching down by the White House with cheer upon cheer and singing, "We're coming, Father Abraham, a hundred thousand strong." Come forth, O Lincoln, come! Behold, he comes! great, grand and splendid, though as physically homely as he was intellectually great; a man of few frailties and many virtues; a man whose name the ages will know. Let the years roll, and roll, and roll around and the time come when the nations are at peace, "when the war drum throbs no longer and the battle flags are furled," and yet no man's name among the glittering stars of the past

will shine with a brighter luster than that of immortal Lincoln's. The first call for volunteers was answered by over three hundred thousand brave and true boys—the best blood of the nation—blood, pure, rich and virile—blood not tainted with the sins of disease and lust and shame—because it is a physiological fact that such sort of weaklings are never heroes. To such strong young men with health's life blood running in their veins and flushing their cheeks, life was very sweet, and more sweet perhaps than to the average person here today. True health in body and mind is always accompanied with a strong passion to live. However, at Duty's call they volunteered their services, practically tendered the sacrifice of their lives, if necessary, bade their friends adieu, kissed their parents and perhaps a sweetheart a fond good-bye, and were off to the war—and war is hell! A great, sublime and almost divine orator has majestically said: "The past, as it were, rises before me like a dream. Again we are in the great struggle for national life. We hear the sound of preparation—the music of the boisterous drums, the silver voices of heroic bugles. We see thousands of assemblages and hear the appeals of orators; we see the pale cheeks of women and the flushed faces of men; and in those assemblages we see all the dead whose dust we have covered with flowers. We lose sight of them no more. We are with them when they enlist in the great army of freedom. We see them part from those they love. Some are walking for the last time in quiet woody places with the maidens they adore. We hear the whisperings and the sweet vows of eternal love, as they lingeringly part forever. Others are bending over cradles kissing babes that are asleep. Some are receiving the blessings of old men. Some are parting with mothers who hold them and press them to their hearts again and again, and say

nothing; and some are talking with wives and endeavoring with brave words spoken in the old tones to drive away the awful fear. We see them part. We see the wife standing in the door with the babe in her arms—standing in the sunlight sobbing—at a turn of the road a hand waves, she answers by holding high in her loving arms the child. He is gone, and gone forever.

"We see them all as they march proudly away under the flaunting flags, keeping time to the wild, grand music of war—marching down the streets of the great cities—through the towns and across the prairies—down to the fields of glory to do and die for the eternal right.

"We go with them, one and all. We are by their side on all the gory fields, in all the hospitals of pain, on all the weary marches. We stand guard with them in the wild storm and under the quiet stars. We are with them in the ravines running red with blood, in the furrows of old fields. We are with them between contending hosts, unable to move, wild with thirst, the life blood ebbing slowly away among the withered leaves. We see them pierced by balls and torn with shells in the trenches of forts, and in the whirlwind of the charges where men become iron with nerves of steel.

"We are with them in the prisons of hatred and famine—but human speech can never tell what they endured.

"We are at home when the news comes that they are dead. We see the maiden in the shadow of her sorrow. We see the silvered head of the old man bowed with the last grief.

"Again the past rises before us and we see four millions of human beings governed by the lash—we see them bound hand and foot—we hear the strokes of the cruel whips—we see the hounds tracking women through tangled swamps. We see babes sold from the breasts of mothers. Cruelty unspeakable! Outrage infinite!

"Four million bodies in chains. Four million souls in fetters. All the sacred relations of wife, mother, father, and child trampled beneath the brutal feet of might, and all this was done under our own beautiful banner of the free.

"The past rises before us. We hear the roar and shriek of the bursting shell. The broken fetters fall. There heroes died. We look! Instead of slaves we see men, women and children. The wand of progress touches the auction-block, the slave-pen, and the whipping post, and we see homes and firesides and school-houses and books, and where all was want and crime, and cruelty and fear we see the faces of the free.

"These heroes are dead. They died for liberty; they died for us. They are at rest. They sleep in the land they made free, under the flag they rendered stainless, under the solemn pines, the sad hemlocks, the tearful willows, the embracing vines. They sleep beneath the shadow of the clouds, careless alike of sunshine or storm, each in the windowless palace of rest. Earth may run red with other wars—they are at peace. In the midst of battle, in the roar of conflict, they found the serenity of death. I have one sentiment for the soldiers living and dead—cheers for the living and tears for the dead."

Soldiers, no one can doubt the generous respect of the youths of our land toward you and the work you have done. It is the same sympathy, the same warm and generous impulse that moves their hearts to do honor unto you, the nation's preservers, that prompted you in your youth to honor and glorify the deeds of our illustrious forefathers. Love of country is as alive today as it ever has been, though it may be more subtle. "Still waters run deep." Patriotism is not dying out and respect for the grizzled old veterans is deeply rooted

in the hearts of our people. If I could not see this in any other way I would still know it by a little object lesson in my own personal experience. This past Spring I was guilty of the audacity of being a candidate for an office and my most venerable rival happened to be a worthy old soldier. You can guess the result. Very naturally, of course, he won, and I had to drink the bitter cup of defeat—a very good tonic oftentimes for the healthful invigoration of the mental equilibrium. Adversity often cools the warm blood of ambition, tempers the nerves and is a good anti-toxin for what is known lately in the scientific world as the "exaggerated ego" or "brain storms."

These spontaneous emotions of patriotism are continually bursting forth from the human heart in song and verse and oratory. Senator Thurston's tribute to old soldiers is the sublimest of the sublime. He says: "Sometimes in passing along the streets I meet a man who on the left lapel of his coat wears a little bronze button. The coat is often old and rusty, seamed and furrowed by the toil and suffering of years; perhaps above it hangs an empty sleeve and below it stumps a wooden peg, but when I meet a man who wears that button I doff my hat and stand uncovered in his presence—yea, to me the very dust his weary feet have passed over is holy ground, for I know that man in the dark hour of the nation's peril bared his breast to the hell of battle to keep the flag of our country in the Union sky.

"Maybe at Donnellson he reached the inner trench; at Shiloh held the broken line; at Chattanooga climbed the flame swept hill, or stormed the clouds on Lookout Heights. He was not born or bred to soldier life. His country's summons called him from the bench, the forge, the loom, the mine, the store, the office, the college, the sanctuary. He did not fight for greed of gold, to find

adventure, or to win renown. He loved the peace of quiet ways and yet he broke the clasp of clinging arms, turned from the witching glances of tender eyes, left good-bye kisses on tiny lips, to look death in the face on desperate fields. And when the war was over, he quietly took up the broken threads of love and life as best he could, a better citizen for having been so good a soldier."

Yes, my friends, such ecstatical prose-poetry—and it is poetry, because it comes from the heart and goes to the heart—shows the general attitude and feelings of the typical American of our age. We have not forgotten nor shall we forget the debt of gratitude we owe each and all and every soldier that enlisted in this Great Army of Freedom. In this fast commercial age of electricity and speed and greed, much, of course, there is to detract the average mind from the history of our country's military achievements and patriotic valor; yet, beneath the surface of this stoical commercialism there is a strong undercurrent of loyalty to country and zealous respect for veteran soldiers. We see a good exhibition of this current of thought in all our latest pension laws, the temperature of which is regulated to a moderate degree of leniency by the Great Gulf Stream of popular regard for those who have offered their lives a sacrifice for their country. In the book of Life and under the roster of the successful, there is written in large, bold-face type the names of all the heroes, living and dead, who helped to make America the land of the truly free; and though we may meet occasionally some unfortunate soldier who has never obtained the luxury of wealth or attained to other distinctions yet his life is still a success, because he has achieved success "who has filled his niche and accomplished his task; who has left the world better than he found it, whether by an improved poppy, a perfect poem or a rescued soul; who has never lacked ap-

preciation of earth's beauty or failed to express it; who has always looked for the best in others and given the best he had; whose life was an inspiration; whose memory a benediction."

Primarily speaking, war is an evil, although many times a necessary evil. "Between two evils we should choose the lesser." There are some conditions worse than war, and sometimes these conditions can only be remedied by the agonies of war. The ultimate ideal of civilization is Universal Peace, but before we can expect such Utopianism among fallible mortals we must first rid ourselves of the cancerous growths of social immoralities, superstitious inconsistencies and political infamies. And when we speak of such cancerous growths let us not forget that oftentimes they can only be eradicated by the painful surgery of war.

The recent international movement for universal peace is one of the greatest, most humane, most ideal that history records. Many celebrated men of the world today are giving impetus to this movement, and universal peace as a cherished object of the future has ceased to be regarded by the world in general as a dream of the moralists of fiction. And while the time may be centuries hence when war will be unheard of, the gradual working out of the destinies of this movement, the fostering of the peace sentiment and the furtherance of the objects of peace are among the greatest problems which generations of the near future are bound to solve. But whatever our theories and beliefs in this connection may be, of one thing you can be certain, and that is this: Study the history of the world, examine the causes of all past wars, reflect and ponder over the military ethics of any and all nations and peoples, and you will find no example where a war was more justifiable or its cause more holy than that of our own Great War of the Rebel-

lion. It was not only a war for the physical liberty of a race but it was a war to preserve the integrity of a great international power which in the future history of Mankind and human events would be called upon by God to wield a physical, political and spiritual influence for the uplifting of Humanity and the ultimate peace of the entire world. All glory be to them in the highest who helped to win this victory of progress, these battles for liberty. They have done their duty; they have fought a good fight; may their reward be the kingdom of eternal Honor and everlasting Fame.

A few months ago I was admitted to the Bar of the State of Ohio, taking my oath of office before that most august body the Supreme Court, the most highly dignified tribunal in this great Commonwealth. I walked out of the court room with my diploma in my hand, feeling proud of my achievement, and as it were, patting myself on the back, going directly into the relic room of the Capitol. I glanced around a few moments until my eyes fell on something very interesting, indeed. It was two old, worn-out, ragged flags of the First Ohio Volunteer Infantry, identically which my father had followed for over three long years through the Great Civil War. I stood there fully fifteen minutes and gazed and thought. My mind went back to the darkest days of the nation's history. I saw my father, a young man, following those old tattered rags up Lookout Mountain, at bloody Missionary Ridge, at Chickamauga and at Chattanooga. I saw him on the fields of battle fighting for honor, for home, for his country, and the freedom of four million people in the twenty-odd battles through which he passed. I saw his nearest comrades shot down and his dearest companions wasted by disease and removed by death. I saw him before and during battles, thinking of home, of friends, of his sweetheart—now my mother—and won-

dering with agonizing torture if he should ever see their faces again. I saw him return home at the end of that terrible Conflict, but only the shadow of the robust young man he was four years before, and with his future dark and uncertain. And then, with almost tears in my eyes, when I thought again of the noble work of soldiers, of their stout souls and strong hearts, of the patriotic courage it took in such ordeals of hell, of the freeing of the four million slaves, and thereby preventing the enslavement of hundreds of millions of unborn human beings, I said that as for me, my accomplishments are nothing; that a soldier in such a holy war is as great as any lawyer who ever lived, as any poet who ever wrote, as any king who ever reigned.