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HON. ORLANDO B. POTTER

ON THE

DEDICATION OF THE MONUMENT

ERECTED BY THE

NINTH REGIMENT, N. G. S. N. Y.,

EIGHTY-THIRD N. Y. VOLUNTEERS,

SUNDAY, JULY 1st, 1888,

AT GETTYSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA.



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BY TRANSFER.
JUN 3 1910

Veterans and Members of the Ninth Regiment of New York Militia, and of the Eighty-third New York Volunteers :

After what has now been done on this spot, surrounded by this scene, there is little need of speech by me. The spot upon which we are gathered, the scene which surrounds us, and the memories which they awaken and recall are more eloquent and more stirring than any words I might utter. You are on the spot where, twenty-five years ago this day, you met and turned back with others who participated with you in the struggle, perhaps the most determined and best organized assault ever made upon the flag and armies of your country. With the close of the work which this day commemorates, you and those who fought upon this field with you had established the fact that no power upon this continent, however concentrated, impassioned and well directed, could carry a war of invasion to the heart of the loyal States of this Union. The work accomplished upon this field must ever remain a prominent and important, if not a decisive, part of your country's history. Here sleep the dead who mingled their efforts and their blood with yours in the struggle for the preservation of your country's liberties; and these hillsides and plains, the whole landscape upon which you look again afresh, are but the "solemn decorations" of the tombs of those who fell upon this field. How impotent is speech or attempt at description to those who here took part as actors in the struggle you now commemorate! I shall attempt no such description. The

record of that struggle is made up; and these fields and plains and heights, which bore witness to its sacrifices, sufferings, efforts, and victory, have kept and will faithfully keep this record in the tombs of the heroic dead until they shall be given up at the last trump.

Nor is it important to this occasion that I attempt to enter at all into details of the sufferings and sacrifices of the regiment, of which you are the honored remnant, upon other fields than this. These survive in your own memories. They, too, are a part of the history of your country. You will live them over again and again while memory remains to you, and when you have passed away they will remain in that history, as the richest legacy to your children and children's children, as your contribution by example, to stimulate and encourage the patriotism of those who may be hereafter called to serve their country on the field.

It is sufficient to say here that this regiment volunteered its services to the country early in the Rebellion (April 19th, 1861), and *volunteered for the war*. Its members were sworn in and became part of the organized army June 8th, 1861. Between that date and the discharge of all that remained of them, June 8th, 1864, the regiment participated in eighteen battles, commencing with that at Harper's Ferry, July 4th, 1861, and ending with the battle of Cold Harbor, June 2d, 1864.

These battles were:

Harper's Ferry, Va.....	July 4, 1861.
Cedar Mountain, Va.....	Aug. 9, 1862.
Rappahannock, Va.....	Aug. 21, 1862.
Thoroughfare Gap, Va.....	Aug. 28, 1862.
Second Bull Run, Va.....	Aug. 30, 1862.
Chantilly, Va.....	Sept. 1, 1862.

South Mountain, Md.....	Sept. 14, 1862.
Antietam, Md.....	Sept. 17, 1862.
Fredericksburgh, Va.....	Dec. 13, 1862.
Fitzhugh Crossing, Va.....	Apl. 29 & 30, 1863.
Chancellorsville, Va.....	May 1 & 3, 1863.
Gettysburg, Pa.....	July 1, 1863.
Mine Run, Pa.....	Nov. 28, 1863.
Wilderness, Va.....	May 6, 1864.
Laurel Hill, Va.....	May 8, 1864.
Spottsylvania, Va.....	May 12, 1864.
North Anna River, Va.....	May 23, 1864.
Cold Harbor, Va.....	June 2, 1864.

The regiment suffered loss in killed and wounded in fourteen of these battles ; and lost in killed, wounded, and those who died of wounds, during its service, six hundred and eighty-four in all. Upon this field the regiment, which had been before largely reduced by its heavy losses, lost in killed seven, and in wounded eighteen. When the remnant of the regiment was discharged, the army of the Rebellion had ceased to be an army of invasion, and the beginning of the end of the Rebellion was at hand.

Such service as volunteers for your country in any cause needing your arms or your lives, would more than entitle you to the commemoration of to-day and to this monument, to transmit to posterity the remembrance of your patriotism and devotion to country. But your service was rendered in no ordinary war. War against foreign nations is easy as compared with war in which all is put at hazard for the cause of country, in a contest against one's own countrymen. The service for which you volunteered, was a service against American citizens, your own countrymen, and was the most arduous and trying for which freemen can draw the sword. But it was a service necessary to save American

liberty for yourselves and your children. Other forms of liberty had been known and enjoyed in other countries and by other people, but American liberty was the child of the American Constitution and the Union of these States, and had not before been known or enjoyed by man. It made the citizen a coequal sovereign with every other citizen both of the community and State in which he lives, and also of the Nation formed by the Union of all the States, and endowed with such, and only such, powers as were necessary to secure to the citizen the sacred right of self-government at home, and protection and security as a citizen of the Nation against and throughout the outside world. The American citizen, therefore, at the same time a sovereign and coequal member with every other citizen both of the State in which he lives, and of the Nation, rightfully regards and cherishes every foot of the National domain, in whatever State or Territory, as part of his own country, while the State in which he lives is the immediate spot and territory whose government and laws, in all matters not delegated to the Nation, he with other citizens thereof ordains and controls. While he relies for protection and enjoyment of his fireside rights, primarily upon the State government by which he is immediately surrounded, he finds those rights also doubly secured in the American Constitution; and, more important to the permanence of his liberties, the American citizen finds only in the Constitution and the Union of the States under it, the sufficient guarantee of the ability of the State to maintain and make good the security and permanency of these domestic rights and liberties—the only adequate guarantee for the maintenance of republican government by the State itself. But more and greater still the possessor of this double liberty of State and Nation finds and shall forever find in the American Constitution alone, freedom with the *rights of a citizen*

throughout every part of the National domain, freedom of the seas, freedom from disturbance by war except such as shall be waged by the consent of the whole country and for the welfare and security of the Nation, and freedom and all-sufficient protection of his liberties and rights as an American citizen under the flag of his country throughout the world. If the title of Roman citizen was valuable to *him* at home and abroad, what is the value of American citizenship,—what will it be when within the lifetime of those now living our sixty millions of to-day shall become two hundred millions, dwelling together as brothers in peace and love, holding the advance of human progress under the flag which on this spot you so gloriously and triumphantly defended in support of constitutional liberty and self-government?

But it was said in behalf of those who contended against our flag and nationality in the late war, that *they* contended for self-government. This was doubtless believed by the body of the army who waged that contest against that dear old flag, in whose stars and stripes are recorded the great achievements of the past and shall be recorded the achievements of the future—a record and inheritance of glory for them and for us forever. Never did greater delusion possess the human mind. There is and can never be but one adequate security for self-government upon this continent, and that is the American Constitution. That Constitution was rescued from destruction and burial, in the abyss of secession, by the valor of the Union arms on the battle-fields of the war we in part review to-day. Higher service for country and mankind has never been and can never be rendered than was rendered in that rescue.

It has been said that the battles and victories of the late war ought not to be celebrated, because they were battles

against and victories over our own countrymen. I cannot agree with this sentiment. They were battles for the supremacy and preservation of our Constitution and Government. They were the last argument, rendered necessary by the appeal from reason to force in the assault upon Fort Sumter, for the overthrow and annihilation of the fatal heresy of secession, which had its origin more than thirty years before in the false teachings of statesmen who failed to regard their own States as a necessary part of the National Union, and refused to accept and acknowledge the National Government as necessary or important to their own permanent liberty, progress and prosperity. This heresy, if acquiesced in, made our Union, after all it had cost of blood, treasure, and sacrifice, but a rope of sand, which might at any time be broken and destroyed at the will of a minority of the States forming it, or at the will of a single State. The appeal to force in support of this heresy left the Nation no alternative but to maintain by force the Government and Constitution created by our fathers and theirs. All that was won upon the battle-fields of the Revolution, and all thereafter achieved through the dreary experiences of the Confederacy, and all that was of value in our constitutional Government, under which the States and Nation had prospered and grown strong as few people have ever prospered, from the formation of the Constitution to this suicidal assault in 1861 upon the Government, was at stake upon the issue tried and decided upon the battle-fields of the war against Rebellion. If this Rebellion had succeeded, the Government established by our fathers would have been overthrown, and all the treasures and hopes for our own country and mankind with which that Government was freighted would have been lost. Fortunately for the Union, not less than its assailants, the Constitution and

Union were preserved and the heresy of secession was annihilated and buried, and I trust abandoned forever, in the surrender at Appomattox. The triumph of the Union arms upon this field and other fields of that war, were not triumphs over or against the rights of the South. They were triumphs as much for the South as for the North,—triumphs of the Constitution and the Union only, through which and under which all parts of the country, North or South, had achieved all that was valuable in their history, and in obedience and support of which they could only hope to achieve anything valuable to human liberty in the future for themselves or for mankind. No right of self-government was conquered from that section of the country which had unfortunately placed itself in arms against our Nation and flag, unless suicide by secession be counted such a right. On the contrary, all that was achieved upon this and other fields of this war, was achieved equally for the South as for the North, and the blessings already flowing and forever hereafter to flow from a preserved Union and Constitution shall flow equally for all States and sections of the Union, whatever their part in the work of such preservation. With the surrender at Appomattox the Constitution was restored and acknowledged throughout every foot of our National territory, and, if there are any events in our history which as patriots we are called upon to celebrate, surely we should celebrate the preservation of our Constitution not less than its creation, and the victories and battles by which it was preserved, not less than the victories and battles of the Revolution by which it was made possible. The men who fell on this and other fields of the late war in support of our Government and flag are entitled to no less grateful commemoration than those who fell at Bunker Hill, Saratoga and Yorktown; and

until love of country and gratitude fail among men we cannot cease to commemorate the heroes and celebrate the battles by which our Constitution and Union were preserved. From such commemoration and celebration patriots of this country will never cease till these graves shall give up their dead. Nor will such celebrations be participated in by the people of one section of our country alone. The day is not distant when universal gratitude, North and South, to those who upon these fields preserved our Constitution and perpetuated our Union, shall prevail everywhere throughout the country; and, if any men of this generation shall refuse to participate in or sympathize with such celebrations, their children and children's children, as they participate in the glorious progress and greatness of the Republic, and rejoice under it in the highest liberty of which civilized man is capable, will hereafter, as they visit this Thermopylæ of their country's history, drop tears of gratitude for the preservation of the Union, here achieved.

VETERANS OF THE NINTH REGIMENT: If those are to be accounted fortunate who through service to their country have been able to entitle themselves to the gratitude of their countrymen, you and those who fought with you for the preservation of the Union and who have survived to see this day are most fortunate. It is not likely that in this generation another equal opportunity will be afforded for service to the country on the field. A country reunited, prosperous, happy, progressive, and contented in the enjoyment of equal liberty is spread out before you, and the hum of its free, joyous and happy industry greets you from every quarter of our great domain. You have lived to see, rejoice and participate in the results of your work in the service of your country; and, if those who are

permitted to die for their country are to be accounted happy, surely they who have freely put life at hazard in their country's cause, and have lived to see, as you, the result of their efforts and sacrifices in its universal prosperity and happiness, cannot be accounted unhappy. You have done well to set up this monument,—a record of your youthful devotion to constitutional liberty. It will encourage those who shall come after you, to preserve and transmit by similar service, when called for, the blessings of liberty which you have aided in transmitting to them; and so it shall serve to convey the influence of your example to those who shall occupy the places which in the ordinary course of nature you must ere long leave vacant. You serve your country in thus perpetuating the record of your early sacrifices in her behalf. The admonition of this monument shall be to those who shall look upon it in all coming time: "If the liberties of your country are in danger, enlist as volunteers promptly, and enlist for the war."

But this shaft in enduring stone and others like it which decorate and shall increasingly decorate this field through coming time, are not the most lasting or most worthy monuments to the victory here achieved. Monuments of brass or marble will yield to the tooth of time and crumble to dust. The Government itself, which you here contributed to save and perpetuate, is the most fitting and most permanent monument to the services which you and such as you here rendered for your country. That Government realizes and embodies protection and security for the equal liberty and rights of man in the highest and best form yet wrought out in the experience of our race. It is the last best hope for the advancement of man through self-government. Under it every power of the Nation and every power of the State is directed and consecrated to the high-

est security and well-being of the individual citizen. The free and self-directed prosperity, happiness and advancement of every State is part of the strength and glory of the National Union, and that Union, which has its existence only in and through the States, is given and can have no object for the exercise of its great and National, though prescribed and delegated, powers, but the security of the citizens of every State in the enjoyment of self-government under their own laws, in obedience to the National Constitution, without interference from other States or from the outside world. Mark this more than human security for human liberty and progress. It was not wrought by man alone. The strength and power of the Nation thus become the strength and power of every State, small or great, and of every citizen of every State for its and his own protection and security, while every State is a free self-governing community, within and under the Constitution of the country, with the responsibility for the advancement and welfare of its own people by such laws as their own wishes and wisdom may determine. Each State is thus in competition with every other State in the advancement and perfection of its laws, and the prosperity and happiness of its own people. A mistake in one, by unwise legislation, affects no other State, except as a warning, and when proved a mistake is soon repealed; each real advance made and proved valuable in any State soon becomes the property of all by imitation or improvement. No system of government ever before existed equally capable of promoting and securing rapid and safe advancement in civilization for a great and free Nation, occupying a vast extent of territory, with varying wants and necessities arising from variety of climate, production and employment; and nothing in the experience of the world gives assurance or hope

that a better system of government for a great, free and progressive Nation can ever exist.

It may be safely said that since the adoption of the Federal Constitution, the people of the United States, through their local State governments, have made more rapid progress in perfection of laws affecting and securing just and equal rights than any other portion of the world. Nor will it be doubted that this system of government, born of the American Constitution, will be found adequate for any degree of advancement in law and liberty of which man shall be capable. It was the overthrow of such a government which you and those who fought with you on this field successfully resisted. This Government, then, I repeat, with all its vast possibilities for good to your own country, and to the world, in commending and assuring free self-government to mankind, shall be the fitting, undying monument of those whose valor and blood gave it triumph and perpetuity on this field.

But, fellow citizens, we may not tarry long upon this battle-field, great and glorious as were its achievements and as are its memories. The call to duty is to our own places as citizens of the Republic in the great march of peace. Commemorations of past events, however important, are chiefly valuable as incentives and motives giving purpose, courage and strength for present and future duty. It cannot be doubted that this Republic holds the advance of human progress in development of free self-government for mankind. Trustees of all achieved by our fathers in this cause, the weight of our responsibility is increased by all the blood and treasure poured out on this and other fields in the war we here recall. The declaration, "Government of the people, for the people, and by the people shall not perish from the earth," thundered from this field, has been heard round the world and will go down the ages. Until

the Government of this great Republic, born of the American Constitution, shall depart from its purpose and fail of the end for which it was created, self-government cannot fail, but is within reach of all mankind having virtue to appreciate and maintain it. All hail, then, the future with its problems of state. However many and difficult, these shall all be solved when reached as the highest good of this great people shall require, and this "Government of the people, for the people, and by the people," shall conduct this and future generations who are to occupy our places to as high development and achievement as shall be permitted to man under human government.