

disquieting comparisons; in the regrets at want of vigor; in the great idea and the puny execution,--behold Charles the Fifth's day; another, yet the same; behold Chatham's, Hampden's, Bayard's, Alfred's, Scipio's, Pericles's day,--day of all that are born of women. The difference of circumstance is merely costume. I am tasting the self-same life,--its sweetness, its greatness, its pain, which I so admire in other men. Do not foolishly ask of the inscrutable, obliterated past what it cannot tell,--the details of that nature, of that day, called Byron or Burke;--but ask it of the enveloping Now. . . . Be lord of a day, and you can put up your history books."

"The deep to-day which all men scorn," receives thus from Emerson superb revindication. "Other world! there is no other world." All God's life opens into the individual particular, and here and now, or nowhere, is reality. "The present hour is the decisive hour, and every day is doomsday."

Such a conviction that Divinity is everywhere may easily make of one an optimist of the sentimental type that refuses to speak ill of anything. Emerson's drastic perception of differences kept him at the opposite pole from this weakness. After you have seen men a few times, he could say, you find most of them as alike as their barns and pantries, and soon as musty and as dreary. Never was such a fastidious lover of significance and distinction, and never an eye so keen for their discovery. His optimism had nothing in common with that indiscriminate hurraing for the Universe with which Walt Whitman has made us familiar. For Emerson, the individual fact and moment were indeed suffused with absolute radiance, but it was upon a condition that saved the situation--they must be worthy specimens,--sincere, authentic, archetypal; they must have made connection with what he calls the Moral Sentiment, they must in some way act as symbolic mouthpieces of the Universe's meaning. To know just which thing does act in this way, and which thing fails to make the true connection, is the secret (somewhat incommunicable, it must be confessed) of seership, and doubtless we must not expect of the seer too rigorous a consistency. Emerson himself was a real seer. He could perceive the full squalor of the individual fact, but he could also see the transfiguration. He might easily have found himself saying of some present-day agitator against our Philippine conquest what he said of this or that reformer of his own time. He might have called him, as a private person, a tedious bore and canter. But he would infallibly have added what he then added: "It is strange and horrible to say this, for I feel that under him and his partiality and exclusiveness is the earth and the sea, and all that in them is, and the axis round which the Universe revolves passes through his body where he stands."

Be it how it may, then, this is Emerson's revelation:--The point of any pen can be an epitome of reality; the commonest person's act, if genuinely actuated, can lay hold on eternity. This vision is the head-spring of all his outpourings; and it is for this truth, given to no previous literary artist to express in such penetratingly persuasive tones, that posterity will reckon him a prophet, and, perhaps neglecting other pages, piously turn to those that convey this message. His life was one long conversation with the invisible divine, expressing itself through individuals and particulars:--"So nigh is grandeur to our dust, so near is God to man!"

I spoke of how shrunken the wraith, how thin the echo, of men is after they are departed? Emerson's wraith comes to me now as if it were but the very voice of this victorious argument. His words to this effect are certain to be quoted and extracted more and more as time goes on, and to take their place among the Scriptures of humanity. "'Gainst death and all oblivious enmity, shall you pace forth," beloved Master. As long as our English language lasts men's hearts will be cheered and their souls strengthened and liberated by the noble and musical pages with which you have enriched it.

[1] An Address delivered at the Centenary of the Birth of Ralph Waldo Emerson in Concord, May 25, 1903, and printed in the published proceedings of that meeting.

III

ROBERT GOULD SHAW[1]

Your Excellency, your Honor, Soldiers, and Friends: In these unveiling exercises the duty falls to me of expressing in simple words some of the feelings which have actuated the givers of St. Gaudens' noble work of bronze, and of briefly recalling the history of Robert Shaw and of his regiment to the memory of this possibly too forgetful generation.

The men who do brave deeds are usually unconscious of their picturesqueness. For two nights previous to the assault upon Fort Wagner, the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Regiment had been afoot, making forced marches in the rain; and on the day of the battle the men had had no food since early morning. As they lay there in the evening twilight, hungry and wet, against the cold sands of Morris Island, with the sea-fog drifting over them, their eyes fixed on the huge bulk of the fortress looming darkly three-quarters of a mile ahead against the sky, and their hearts beating in expectation of the word that was to bring them to their feet and launch them on their desperate charge, neither officers nor men could have been in any holiday mood of contemplation. Many and different must have been the thoughts that came and went in them during that hour of bodeful reverie; but however free the flights of fancy of some of them may have been, it is improbable that any one who lay there had so wild and whirling an imagination as to foresee in prophetic vision this morning of a future May, when we, the people of a richer and more splendid Boston, with mayor and governor, and troops from other States, and every circumstance of ceremony, should meet together to celebrate their conduct on that evening, and do their memory this conspicuous honor.

How, indeed, comes it that out of all the great engagements of the war, engagements in many of which the troops of Massachusetts had borne the most distinguished part, this officer, only a young colonel, this regiment of black men and its maiden battle,--a battle, moreover, which was lost,--should be picked out for such unusual commemoration?

The historic significance of an event is measured neither by its material magnitude, nor by its immediate success. Thermopylae was a defeat; but to the Greek imagination, Leonidas and his few Spartans stood for the whole worth of Grecian life. Bunker Hill was a defeat; but for our people, the fight over that breastwork has always seemed to show as well as any victory that our forefathers were men of a temper not to be finally overcome. And so here. The war for our Union, with all the constitutional questions which it settled, and all the military lessons which it gathered in, has throughout its dilatory length but one meaning in the eye of history. And nowhere was that meaning better symbolized and embodied than in the constitution of this first Northern negro regiment.

Look at the monument and read the story;--see the mingling of elements which the sculptor's genius has brought so vividly before the eye. There on foot go the dark outcasts, so true to nature that one can almost hear them breathing as they march. State after State by its laws had denied them to be human persons. The Southern leaders in congressional debates, insolent in their security, loved most to designate them by the contemptuous collective epithet of "this peculiar kind of property." There they march, warm-blooded champions of a better day for man. There on horseback, among them, in his very habit as he lived, sits the blue-eyed child of fortune, upon whose happy youth every divinity had smiled. Onward they move together, a single resolution kindled in their eyes, and animating their otherwise so different frames. The bronze that makes their memory eternal betrays the very soul and secret of those awful years.

Since the 'thirties the slavery question been the only question, and by the end of 'fifties our land lay sick and shaking with it like a traveller who has thrown himself down at night beside a pestilential swamp, and in the morning finds the fever through the marrow of his bones. "Only muzzle the Abolition fanatics," said the South, "and all will be well again!" But the Abolitionists would not be muzzled,--they were the voice of the world's conscience, they were a part of destiny. Weak as they were, they drove the South to madness. "Every step she takes in her blindness," said Wendell Phillips, "is one more step towards ruin." And when South Carolina took the final step in battering down Fort Sumter, it was the fanatics of slavery themselves who called upon their idolized institution ruin swift and complete. What law and reason were unable to accomplish, had now to be done by that uncertain and dreadful dispenser of God's judgments, War--War, with

its abominably casual, inaccurate methods, destroying good and bad together, but at last able to hew a way out of intolerable situations, when through man's delusion of perversity every better way is blocked.

Our great western republic had from its origin been a singular anomaly. A land of freedom, boastfully so-called, with human slavery enthroned at the heart of it, and at last dictating terms of unconditional surrender to every other organ of its life, what was it but a thing of falsehood and horrible self-contradiction? For three-quarters of a century it had nevertheless endured, kept together by policy, compromise, and concession. But at the last that republic was torn in two; and truth was to be possible under the flag. Truth, thank God, truth! even though for the moment it must be truth written in hell-fire.

And this, fellow-citizens, is why, after the great generals have had their monuments, and long after the abstract soldier's-monuments have been reared on every village green, we have chosen to take Robert Shaw and his regiment as the subjects of the first soldier's-monument to be raised to a particular set of comparatively undistinguished men. The very lack of external complication in the history of these soldiers is what makes them represent with such typical purity the profounder meaning of the Union cause.

Our nation had been founded in what we may call our American religion, baptized and reared in the faith that a man requires no master to take care of him, and that common people can work out their salvation well enough together if left free to try. But the founders had not dared to touch the great intractable exception; and slavery had wrought until at last the only alternative for the nation was to fight or die. What Shaw and his comrades stand for and show us is that in such an emergency Americans of all complexions and conditions can go forth like brothers, and meet death cheerfully if need be, in order that this religion of our native land shall not become a failure on earth.

We of this Commonwealth believe in that religion; and it is not at all because Robert Shaw was an exceptional genius, but simply because he was faithful to it as we all may hope to be faithful in our measure when the times demand, that we wish his beautiful image to stand here for all time, an inciter to similarly unselfish public deeds.

Shaw thought but little of himself, yet he had a personal charm which, as we look back on him, makes us repeat: "None knew thee but to love thee, none named thee but to praise." This grace of nature was united in him in the happiest way with a filial heart, a cheerful will, and a judgment that was true and fair. And when the war came, and great things were doing of the kind that he could help in, he went as a matter of course to the front. What country under heaven has not thousands of such youths to rejoice in, youths on whom the safety of the human race depends? Whether or not they leave memorials behind them, whether their names are writ in water or in marble, depends mostly on the opportunities which the accidents of history throw into their path. Shaw recognized the vital opportunity: he saw that the time had come when the colored people must put the country in their debt.

Colonel Lee has just told us something about the obstacles with which this idea had to contend. For a large party of us this was still exclusively a white man's war; and should colored troops be tried and not succeed, confusion would grow worse confounded. Shaw was a captain in the Massachusetts Second, when Governor Andrew invited him to take the lead in the experiment. He was very modest, and doubted, for a moment, his own capacity for so responsible a post. We may also imagine human motives whispering other doubts. Shaw loved the Second Regiment, illustrious already, and was sure of promotion where he stood. In this new negro-soldier venture, loneliness was certain, ridicule inevitable, failure possible; and Shaw was only twenty-five; and, although he had stood among the bullets at Cedar Mountain and Antietam, he had till then been walking socially on the sunny side of life. But whatever doubts may have beset him, they were over in a day, for he inclined naturally toward difficult resolves. He accepted the proffered command, and from that moment lived but for one object, to establish the honor of the Massachusetts Fifty-fourth.

I have had the privilege of reading his letters to his family from the day of April when, as a private in the New

York Seventh, he obeyed the President's first call. Some day they must be published, for they form a veritable poem for serenity and simplicity of tone. He took to camp life as if it were his native element, and (like so many of our young soldiers) he was at first all eagerness to make arms his permanent profession. Drilling and disciplining; interminable marching and counter-marching, and picket-duty on the Upper Potomac as lieutenant in our Second Regiment, to which post he had soon been promoted; pride at the discipline attained by the Second, and horror at the bad discipline of other regiments; these are the staple matter of earlier letters, and last for many months. These, and occasional more recreative incidents, visits to Virginian houses, the reading of books like Napier's "Peninsular War," or the "Idylls of the King," Thanksgiving feasts, and races among officers, that helped the weary weeks to glide away. Then the bloodier business opens, and the plot thickens till the end is reached. From first to last there is not a rancorous word against the enemy,--often quite the reverse,--and amid all the scenes of hardship, death, and devastation that his pen soon has to write of, there is unflinching cheerfulness and even a sort of innermost peace.

After he left it, Robert Shaw's heart still clung to the fortunes of the Second. Months later when, in South Carolina with the Fifty-fourth, he writes to his young wife: "I should have been major of the Second now if I had remained there and lived through the battles. As regards my own pleasure, I had rather have that place than any other in the army. It would have been fine to go home a field officer in that regiment! Poor fellows, how they have been slaughtered!"

Meanwhile he had well taught his new command how to do their duty; for only three days after he wrote this he led them up the parapet of Fort Wagner, where he and nearly half of them were left upon the ground.

Robert Shaw quickly inspired others with his own love of discipline. There was something almost pathetic in the earnestness with which both the officers and men of the Fifty-fourth embraced their mission of showing that a black regiment could excel in every virtue known to man. They had good success, and the Fifty-fourth became a model in all possible respects. Almost the only trace of bitterness in Shaw's whole correspondence is over an incident in which he thought his men had been morally disgraced. It had become their duty, immediately after their arrival at the seat of war, to participate, in obedience to fanatical orders from the head of the department, in the sack and burning of the inoffensive little town of Darien on the Georgia coast. "I fear," he writes to his wife, "that such actions will hurt the reputation of black troops and of those connected with them. For myself I have gone through the war so far without dishonor, and I do not like to degenerate into a plunderer and a robber,--and the same applies to every officer in my regiment. After going through the hard campaigning and the hard fighting in Virginia, this makes me very much ashamed. There are two courses only for me to pursue: to obey orders and say nothing; or to refuse to go upon any more such expeditions, and be put under arrest and probably court-martialled, which is a very serious thing." Fortunately for Shaw, the general in command of that department was almost immediately relieved.

Four weeks of camp life and discipline on the Sea Islands, and the regiment had its baptism of fire. A small affair, but it proved the men to be staunch. Shaw again writes to his wife: "You don't know what a fortunate day this has been for me and for us all, excepting some poor fellows who were killed and wounded. We have fought at last alongside of white troops. Two hundred of my men on picket this morning were attacked by five regiments of infantry, some cavalry, and a battery of artillery. The Tenth Connecticut were on their left, and say they would have had a bad time if the Fifty-fourth men had not stood so well. The whole division was under arms in fifteen minutes, and after coming up close in front of us, the enemy, finding us so strong, fell back. . . . General Terry sent me word he was highly gratified with the behavior of our men, and the officers and privates of other regiments praise us very much. All this is very gratifying to us personally, and a fine thing for the colored troops. I know this will give you pleasure for it wipes out the remembrance of the Darien affair, which you could not but grieve over, though we were innocent participators."

The adjutant of the Fifty-fourth, who made report of this skirmish to General Terry, well expresses the feelings of loneliness that still prevailed in that command:--

"The general's favorite regiment," writes the adjutant,[2] "the Twenty-fourth Massachusetts Infantry, one of the best that had so far faced the rebel foe, largely officered by Boston men, was surrounding his headquarters. It had been a living breathing suspicion with us--perhaps not altogether justly--that all white troops abhorred our presence in the army, and that the Twenty-fourth would rather hear of us in some remote corner of the Confederacy than tolerate us in advance of any battle in which they themselves were to act as reserves or lookers-on. Can you not then readily imagine the pleasure which I felt as I alighted from my horse before General Terry and his staff--I was going to say his unfriendly staff, but of this I am not sure--to report to him, with Colonel Shaw's compliments, that we had repulsed the enemy without the loss of a single inch of ground. General Terry bade me mount again and tell Colonel Shaw that he was proud of the conduct of his men, and that he must still hold the ground against any future sortie of the enemy. You can even now share with me the sensation of that moment of soldierly satisfaction."

The next night but one after this episode was spent by the Fifty-fourth in disembarking on Morris Island in the rain, and at noon Colonel Shaw was able to report their arrival to General Strong, to whose brigade he was assigned. A terrific bombardment was playing on Fort Wagner, then the most formidable earthwork ever built, and the general, knowing Shaw's desire to place his men beside white troops, said to him: "Colonel, Fort Wagner is to be stormed this evening, and you may lead the column, if you say Yes. Your men, I know, are worn out, but do as you choose." Shaw's face brightened. "Before answering the general, he instantly turned to me," writes the adjutant, who reports the interview, "and said, Tell Colonel Hallowell to bring up the Fifty-fourth immediately."

This was done, and just before nightfall the attack was made. Shaw was serious, for he knew the assault was desperate, and had a premonition of his end. Walking up and down in front of the regiment, he briefly exhorted them to prove that they were men. Then he gave the order: "Move in quick time till within a hundred yards, then double quick and charge. Forward!" and the Fifty-fourth advanced to the storming, its colonel and colors at its head.

On over the sand, through a narrow defile which broke up the formation, double quick over the chevaux de frise, into the ditch and over it, as best they could, and up the rampart with Fort Sumter, which had seen them, playing on them, and Fort Wagner, now one mighty mound of fire, tearing out their lives. Shaw led from first to last. Gaining successfully the parapet, he stood there for a moment with uplifted sword, shouting, "Forward, Fifty-fourth!" and then fell headlong, with a bullet through his heart. The battle raged for nigh two hours. Regiment after regiment, following upon the Fifty-fourth, hurled themselves upon its ramparts, but Fort Wagner was nobly defended, and for that night stood safe. The Fifty-fourth withdrew after two-thirds of its officers and five-twelfths or nearly half its men had been shot down or bayoneted within the fortress or before its walls. It was good behavior for a regiment, no one of whose soldiers had had a musket in his hands more than eighteen weeks, and which had seen the enemy for the first time only two days before.

"The negroes fought gallantly," wrote a Confederate officer, "and were headed by as brave a colonel as ever lived."

As for the colonel, not a drum was heard nor a funeral note, not a soldier discharged his farewell shot, when the Confederates buried him, the morning after the engagement. His body, half stripped of its clothing, and the corpses of his dauntless negroes were flung into one common trench together, and the sand was shovelled over them, without a stake or stone to signalize the spot. In death as in life, then, the Fifty-fourth bore witness to the brotherhood of man. The lover of heroic history could wish for no more fitting sepulchre for Shaw's magnanimous young heart. There let his body rest, united with the forms of his brave nameless comrades. There let the breezes of the Atlantic sigh, and its gales roar their requiem, while this bronze effigy and these inscriptions keep their fame alive long after you and I and all who meet here are forgotten.

How soon, indeed, are human things forgotten! As we meet here this morning, the Southern sun is shining on their place of burial, and the waves sparkling and the sea-gulls circling around Fort Wagner's ancient site. But

the great earthworks and their thundering cannon, the commanders and their followers, the wild assault and repulse that for a brief space made night hideous on that far-off evening, have all sunk into the blue gulf of the past, and for the majority of this generation are hardly more than an abstract name, a picture, a tale that is told. Only when some yellow-bleached photograph of a soldier of the 'sixties comes into our hands, with that odd and vivid look of individuality due to the moment when it was taken, do we realize the concreteness of that by-gone history, and feel how interminable to the actors in them were those leaden-footed hours and years. The photographs themselves ere long will fade utterly, and books of history and monuments like this alone will tell the tale. The great war for the Union will be like the siege of Troy; it will have taken its place amongst all other "old, unhappy, far-off things and battles long ago."

In all such events two things must be distinguished--the moral service of them from the fortitude which they display. War has been much praised and celebrated among us of late as a school of manly virtue; but it is easy to exaggerate upon this point. Ages ago, war was the gory cradle of mankind, the grim-featured nurse that alone could train our savage progenitors into some semblance of social virtue, teach them to be faithful one to another, and force them to sink their selfishness in wider tribal ends. War still excels in this prerogative; and whether it be paid in years of service, in treasure, or in life-blood, the war tax is still the only tax that men ungrudgingly will pay. How could it be otherwise, when the survivors of one successful massacre after another are the beings from whose loins we and all our contemporary races spring? Man is once for all a fighting animal; centuries of peaceful history could not breed the battle-instinct out of us; and our pugnacity is the virtue least in need of reinforcement by reflection, least in need of orator's or poet's help.

What we really need the poet's and orator's help to keep alive in us is not, then, the common and gregarious courage which Robert Shaw showed when he marched with you, men of the Seventh Regiment. It is that more lonely courage which he showed when he dropped his warm commission in the glorious Second to head your dubious fortunes, negroes of the Fifty-fourth. That lonely kind of courage (civic courage as we call it in times of peace) is the kind of valor to which the monuments of nations should most of all be reared, for the survival of the fittest has not bred it into the bone of human beings as it has bred military valor; and of five hundred of us who could storm a battery side by side with others, perhaps not one would be found ready to risk his worldly fortunes all alone in resisting an enthroned abuse. The deadliest enemies of nations are not their foreign foes; they always dwell within their borders. And from these internal enemies civilization is always in need of being saved. The nation blest above all nations is she in whom the civic genius of the people does the saving day by day, by acts without external picturesqueness; by speaking, writing, voting reasonably; by smiting corruption swiftly; by good temper between parties; by the people knowing true men when they see them, and preferring them as leaders to rabid partisans or empty quacks. Such nations have no need of wars to save them. Their accounts with righteousness are always even; and God's judgments do not have to overtake them fitfully in bloody spasms and convulsions of the race.

The lesson that our war ought most of all to teach us is the lesson that evils must be checked in time, before they grow so great. The Almighty cannot love such long-postponed accounts, or such tremendous settlements. And surely He hates all settlements that do such quantities of incidental devils' work. Our present situation, with its rancors and delusions, what is it but the direct outcome of the added powers of government, the corruptions and inflations of the war? Every war leaves such miserable legacies, fatal seeds of future war and revolution, unless the civic virtues of the people save the State in time.

Robert Shaw had both kinds of virtue. As he then led his regiment against Fort Wagner, so surely would he now be leading us against all lesser powers of darkness, had his sweet young life been spared. You think of many as I speak of one. For, North and South, how many lives as sweet, unmonumented for the most part, commemorated solely in the hearts of mourning mothers, widowed brides, or friends did the inexorable war mow down! Instead of the full years of natural service from so many of her children, our country counts but their poor memories, "the tender grace of a day that is dead," lingering like echoes of past music on the vacant air.

But so and so only was it written that she should grow sound again. From that fatal earlier unsoundness those lives have brought for North and South together permanent release. The warfare is accomplished; the iniquity is pardoned. No future problem can be like that problem. No task laid on our children can compare in difficulty with the task with which their fathers had to deal. Yet as we face the future, tasks enough await us. The republic to which Robert Shaw and a quarter of a million like him were faithful unto death is no republic that can live at ease hereafter on the interest of what they have won. Democracy is still upon its trial. The civic genius of our people is its only bulwark, and neither laws nor monuments, neither battleships nor public libraries, nor great newspapers nor booming stocks; neither mechanical invention nor political adroitness, nor churches nor universities nor civil service examinations can save us from degeneration if the inner mystery be lost. That mystery, as once the secret and the glory of our English-speaking race, consists in nothing but two common habits, two inveterate habits carried into public life,—habits so homely that they lend themselves to no rhetorical expression, yet habits more precious, perhaps, than any that the human race has gained. They can never be too often pointed out or praised. One of them is the habit of trained and disciplined good temper towards the opposite party when it fairly wins its innings. It was by breaking away from this habit that the Slave States nearly wrecked our Nation. The other is that of fierce and merciless resentment toward every man or set of men who break the public peace. By holding to this habit the free States saved her life.

O my countrymen, Southern and Northern, brothers hereafter, masters, slaves, and enemies no more, let us see to it that both of those heirlooms are preserved. So may our ransomed country, like the city of the promise, lie forever foursquare under Heaven, and the ways of all the nations be lit up by its light.

[1] Oration at the Exercises in the Boston Music Hall, May 31, 1897, upon the Unveiling of the Shaw Monument.

[2] G. W. James: "The Assault upon Fort Wagner," in *War Papers read before the Commandery of the State of Wisconsin, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States*. Milwaukee, 1891.

IV

FRANCIS BOOTT[1]

How often does it happen here in New England that we come away from a funeral with a feeling that the service has been insufficient. If it be purely ritual, the individuality of the departed friend seems to play too small a part in it. If the minister conducts it in his own fashion, it is apt to be too thin and monotonous, and if he were not an intimate friend, too remote and official. We miss direct discourse of simple human affection about the person, which we find so often in those lay speeches at the grave of which in France they set us nowadays so many good examples. In the case of the friend whose memory brings us together on the present occasion, it was easy to organize this supplementary service. Not everyone leaves musical compositions of his own to fill the hour with. And if we may believe that spirits can know aught of what transpires in the world which they have forsaken, it must please us all to think how dear old Francis Boott's shade must now be touched at seeing in the Chapel of this university to which his feelings clung so loyally, his music and his life at last become the subjects of cordial and admiring recognition and commemorated by so many of his neighbors. I can imagine nothing at any rate of which the foreknowledge could have given him deeper satisfaction. Shy and sensitive, craving praise as every normal human being craves it, yet getting little, he had, I think, a certain consciousness of living in the shadow. I greatly doubt whether his daydreams ever went so far as to let him imagine a service like this. Such a cordial and spontaneous outgoing towards him on our part would surprise as much as it would delight him.

His life was private in the strongest sense of the term. His contributions to literature were all anonymous, book-reviews chiefly, or letters and paragraphs in the *New York Nation* on musical or literary topics. Good as was their quality, and witty as was their form,—his only independent volume was an almost incredibly witty little book of charades in verse—they were too slight in bulk for commemoration; and it was only as a musical