

GENERAL SHERMAN'S LAST SPEECH. THE OLD ARMY.

DELIVERED AT THE PRESS CLUB DINNER TO H. M. STANLEY, AT DELMONICO'S, JANUARY 31, AND PRINTED FROM MANUSCRIPT DICTATED BY GENERAL SHERMAN.

General Sherman said :

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN :

"T WAS BURNS, I believe, who said,

A chiel's amang ye, takin' notes,
And, faith, he 'll prent it.

Here I find myself among a hundred such who will print their notes with variations, and silence would better become me. Von Moltke has the press reputation of being silent in seven languages, yet on a visit some years ago I found him not only communicative on professional topics, but fluent on the subject of his experience in the Turkish service on the Tigris and Euphrates. The same was true of General Grant, who could be most congenial and fluent with boon companions, but as dumb as an oyster when a news reporter was announced.

Therefore, Mr. President, I ask of you the special privilege to speak on this occasion from notes, giving my own version of what I intend to say to your official reporter, to be printed or not as you may order.¹

The toast assigned me is "The Old Army." Yes, that army is "old," older than the present government. It began to take form the moment the colonists made a lodgment on the coast of Massachusetts and Virginia; grew in proportion up to the French war of 1756, and still larger during the Revolutionary War, 1776-1783.

In 1783 the armies of the Revolution were all disbanded, except "eighty privates and a due proportion of officers, none to exceed the rank of captain," to garrison West Point and Fort Pitt.

In June, 1784, the Congress of the thirteen States provided for two companies of artillery and eight of infantry, not to exceed 37 officers and 700 enlisted men. In 1786 it increased the number to 46 officers and 840 men. At that date these troops garrisoned the frontier posts, viz. : Fort Harmar, now Marietta, Ohio, Vincennes, Indiana, and Venango, New York, in addition to West Point, Fort Pitt, and Springfield, Massachusetts. Then came 1789, with its new Constitution, and Washington be-

came its first chief executive. He was the father of this nation. No man ever better comprehended the meaning of the expression "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"; that government was meant to "govern," not to be governed; that *force* to compel the right was as necessary as patriotism, industry, thrift, and patience to the citizen, and one of his first acts was to organize an army as the right hand of his administration of law and justice in the face of clamoring theorists. His efforts resulted in the formation of the present army of the United States.

Its first commander was Josiah Harmar; and the army was composed of a battalion of artillery commanded by Major John Doughty, and one regiment of infantry, of which Harmar was lieutenant-colonel, the whole numbering 46 officers and 840 men.

Before Washington had concluded his eight years of administration in 1797, he had by his influence with Congress raised this force to one general officer (James Wilkinson), two of the general staff, one corps of artilleryists and engineers, two companies of light dragoons, and four regiments of infantry, aggregating 189 officers and 3158 men.

Were I to follow all the changes for a hundred years, I know that you gentlemen of the press would be more fatigued than when your mothers made you read the Book of Numbers. Let me, however, conclude this branch of my subject by stating that at the end of the last century the old army was composed of 2347 officers and men; that the pay of a lieutenant-colonel was \$50 a month; a major \$45; a captain \$35; a lieutenant \$26; and a cornet \$20; that a sergeant's pay was \$6 a month; a corporal's \$5; and a private's \$4.

Nevertheless, in proportion to the population and wealth of our country, that small army exceeded in strength and cost the present regular army of to-day.

But it is not the numbers or pay which constitute an army, but the spirit which animates it. Every military expedition, great or small, demands many conditions—a clearly well-defined object or purpose to be accomplished, ample means, a leader with unbending will, confident of his strength and power, and followers obedient, loyal, and with intelligence

¹ The General did not, however, read the notes, but followed them from memory. The speech was not reported.

enough to understand the nature of the work to be done.

That little army possessed all these qualities, bequeathed to us lessons of inestimable value, and were in fact the pioneers of civilization on this continent. They fought the Shawnees and Ottawas in Ohio, Michigan, and Canada; the Cherokees and Creeks in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi; the Comanches in Texas; the Sioux, Cheyennes, and Arapahoes on the plains; the Utes and Apaches in New Mexico and Arizona, and the Nez Percés in Oregon, without expectation of honor, reward, or profit; and I am sure Stanley learned here from personal experience and from reports much that was of great use to him in his three several expeditions into the heart of the dark continent of Africa. He now reports that in his recent expedition from the mouth of the Congo to Zanzibar he traveled from west to east, by river and land, 6032 miles to rescue the governor of Equatoria, who found himself cut off from his base (Egypt) by the death of Gordon and the reconquest of the Soudan by the fanatic Mahdi. Thirty thousand pounds sterling had been subscribed for his use in England, and Stanley had volunteered to go and rescue Emin Pasha, which he did at terrible sacrifice of life and money. He has recorded the tale well and truthfully, and I think that the man he went to save, who could not rescue his followers from the tight place in which he found himself, was not worth the cost. Stanley, however, did his part heroically; therefore all honor to him and his faithful associates; and I repeat that I am sure he had received in America inspiration from the examples of our old army during its history of the past hundred years. One or two of these, of which he must have known, I will briefly trace.

In 1803 Mr. Jefferson bought of Napoleon for fifteen millions of dollars the Upper and Lower Provinces of Louisiana, as little known then as are Unyoro and Uganda to-day. You young men of the press think you are smart and original, but if you will search the journals of that period you will find that for personal abuse and wit your predecessors were your equals if not your superiors. They poured on President Jefferson their choicest vocabulary, and said that he had bought "the great American Desert, fit only for Indians, buffalo, and rattlesnakes." 'T is true these did then abound, but behold the result! The territory then acquired by purchase now comprises twelve States of our Union, with unlimited minerals, pastoral and agricultural resources, in fact is one of the great granaries of the world. But in 1804 it was a wilderness, and the French village of St. Louis was like a seaport where trappers, traders, and explorers fitted out for voyages to last three,

four, or five years, often covering eight or ten thousand miles of travel. Mr. Jefferson desired to explore these regions to see what he had bought, and naturally turned to the little army of which he was the constitutional commander-in-chief. The first expedition fitted out was in 1804, that of Captain Meriwether Lewis and Lieutenant William Clark, of the old army, with a detachment of soldiers, boatmen, and trappers with orders to ascend the Missouri River to its source, thence cross to the Columbia River, descend it to the Pacific Ocean, and return to St. Louis. There were no steamboats then, and for 1800 miles they had to pole, cordelle, and drag with towlines their bateaux against a current which steamboats now can hardly stem; then march afoot across the mountains, build new boats, and paddle down the Columbia. All was accomplished, and their report of what they saw and encountered is as true to-day as when it was written.

The next noted expedition was in 1805 by Lieutenant Zebulon Montgomery Pike, who ascended in like manner to the source of the Mississippi. On his return to St. Louis he was ordered up the Osage River to restore some fugitive Indians, and then go on to explore the Red River, which was the boundary line between Spanish territory and our new purchase. Mistaking the Arkansas for the Red River he followed it to its source, became bewildered among the snow-clad mountains, got back to the plains for game, then went south to the Sangre de Cristo Pass which he crossed to the head of the Rio Grande del Norte, called the "Colorado" or Red; built a fort when he found himself on the wrong Red River, was captured by Spanish troops, taken to Santa Fé, and afterward sent on to Chihuahua. His journals were taken from him, and he and his small party were sent back to Natchitoches, Louisiana, by way of Texas. His experiences were recorded and printed in 1810, and are most interesting, especially to us who can now travel the same route in palace cars where he suffered such privations. In the war of 1812, he was killed by the explosion of a magazine at Little York, now Toronto, Canada.

I might go on with similar tales, but must refer the curious to Washington Irving's "Astoria" and "Bonneville." It was not until 1842 that Captain Frémont, of the Topographical Engineers, began his systematic explorations of the transcontinental routes with adequate means and proper equipment, and since that day the government has caused every nook and crevice of that vast region, nearly a thousand miles north and south and two thousand east and west, to be explored. Four great railways have been built with numerous branches, so that you can buy a ticket here in

New York which will carry you to Puget's Sound, San Francisco, or Los Angeles in one week—a trip which took us a whole year in 1846. In all this development, more like a dream of Aladdin than of reality, the little regular army has gone ahead, pointing out the way and encouraging the pioneers. I know of my own knowledge that the builders of the Union Pacific Railroad, the pioneer of them all, would have abandoned the enterprise in 1867-68, had it not been for the protection of the army of the United States.

Indeed the history of the old army is the history of the United States; and the spirit which animated it is illustrated by the example of Colonel James Miller of the 21st Infantry at the battle of Lundy's Lane, who when asked by General Scott if he would capture a certain battery answered, "I'll try, sir"; afterward when the desperate nature of the undertaking was pointed out to him, he answered, "It must be done, I've got the order in my pocket"—and it was done.

The hardships and privations from the revolutionary war down to that with Mexico lay the foundation for the heroic virtues which prepared us for the herculean struggle of the civil war, and brought down to the memories of officers yet living, personal triumphs, one of which I will endeavor to paint.

During the years 1842-46, just before the Mexican war, Fort Moultrie, South Carolina, was garrisoned by four companies of the 3d Artillery, commanded by its colonel (Gates). I was one of the lieutenants, and Brevet Major Martin Burke was the senior captain who habitually commanded us on drill and parade. He had entered the service in 1820; had imbibed all the habits, prejudices, and thoughts of the olden time, resisted all innovations, and could not learn new inventions such as Scott's Tactics, or the percussion musket, but always contended there could be no better weapon than the old revolutionary firelock with flint and steel, and in spite of regulations clung to his old Steuben's Tactics. The Mexican war of 1846 came, which scattered us—Burke to Mexico, and me to California "around the Horn."

Early in 1850 I came back to New York bearing despatches to General Scott at his office in Tenth street; delivered them into his hands and received orders to report to his office daily till he was ready to send me on to Washington. Taylor and Scott were the heroes of the Mexican war; the former was already president, and Scott was the ideal of the soldier and gentleman, six feet five inches high, about sixty years old, fond of admiration and conscious of his fame. I on the contrary remained a lieutenant, feeling oppressed by the thought

that I had lived through a great war without having heard a hostile shot in anger. I reported daily and was ordered to dine with General Scott, and listened to his special grievances and to his estimates of the men who had composed the army which conquered peace with Mexico. On one occasion I ventured the expression, "Of all your great feats in war, General, the one that arrests my attention is, that you made a hero of Martin Burke." "Yes," he replied, "Martin Burke! Martin Burke! Every army should have one Martin Burke, but only one, sir. I recall me," he continued; "it was at Contreras that the enemy occupied the crest of a plateau to our left. I detached Riley with one brigade to march that night to the left rear of the enemy by a circuit, and Persifer Smith with another brigade to the right by another circuit to fall upon and dislodge this force: and then Major Burke was ordered to move straight forward with his battalion of artillery through a *cornfield*, as a feint. Everything resulted as planned. The enemy was driven by the rear attacks down the face of the declivity to a road leading towards Churubusco, along which all the army followed, the result the next day being the battle of Churubusco—a victory to our arms. When at night the rolls were called all were present or accounted for except the artillery battalion of Martin Burke; and where was Martin Burke? Why, sir, he was back in *that cornfield*, and would be there to-day had I not sent orders for him to come forward."

During the great civil war this same Martin Burke was a colonel, commanding the island Fort Lafayette in the Narrows of New York harbor, a safe place for political prisoners, and there for years he fought gallantly against writs of habeas corpus and of contempt. No sheriff's officers were allowed to land, and he defied the powers of the great State of New York to rescue civil prisoners committed to his custody by Secretaries Stanton and Seward. To his last day he regarded the great writ of habeas corpus as a monster, and for years after the civil war would not risk his person in New York City for fear of writs of contempt which he believed were in pursuit of him. He died in this city on April 24, 1882. The last time I saw him was about 1878 at Fort Wool, on Bedloe's Island, where the majestic Statue of Liberty now stands, and where by permission he was quartered with a garrison of one old ordnance sergeant, to defy the minions of your State courts who dared to claim possession of any person committed to his safe keeping. I tried to persuade him that the civil war was over; that without fear of "habeas corpus" or "writ of contempt" he might land at the Battery, board at the Astor House or the Fifth Avenue Hotel; go to the theaters, and live out

his short remainder of life without fear and in absolute comfort; but he preferred the isolation of that island fort and the security of that little flag of the Union which he and his old sergeant could hoist to the morning sun, and take in at its setting, to demonstrate to the active, busy world outside that he still lived. Times had changed, but Martin Burke could not change. He was reared in the old school: the soldier should obey his superiors; defend his post to extremity; be firm, yea, stubborn in

upholding his government, civil and military, as Caleb Balderstone did the master of Ravenswood.

He is gone, like nearly all of his type, but we realize that new boys are born as good as those in the past; they grow up into stout manhood and will take our places and be none the worse for the old traditions of courage, manhood, and fidelity passed down to them legitimately by the "old army" which you have so kindly remembered in this festive hour.

William Tecumseh Sherman.

[THE bust from which the accompanying portrait of General Sherman was taken was made by Augustus St. Gaudens during the winter of 1888-9 and was the last sculpture-portrait made. It was modeled entirely

from life in about eighteen sittings of two hours each. The sculptor avoided purposely the use of photographs in order to get a clear personal impression of his subject.—EDITOR.]



SHERMAN.

I.

GLORY and honor and fame and everlasting laudation
 For our captains who loved not war, but fought for the life of the nation;
 Who knew that, in all the land, one slave meant strife, not peace;
 Who fought for freedom, not glory,—made war that war might cease.

II.

Glory and honor and fame;—the beating of muffled drums;
 The wailing funeral dirge, as the flag-wrapped coffin comes.
 Fame and honor and glory, and joy for a noble soul;
 For a full and splendid life, and laureled rest at the goal.

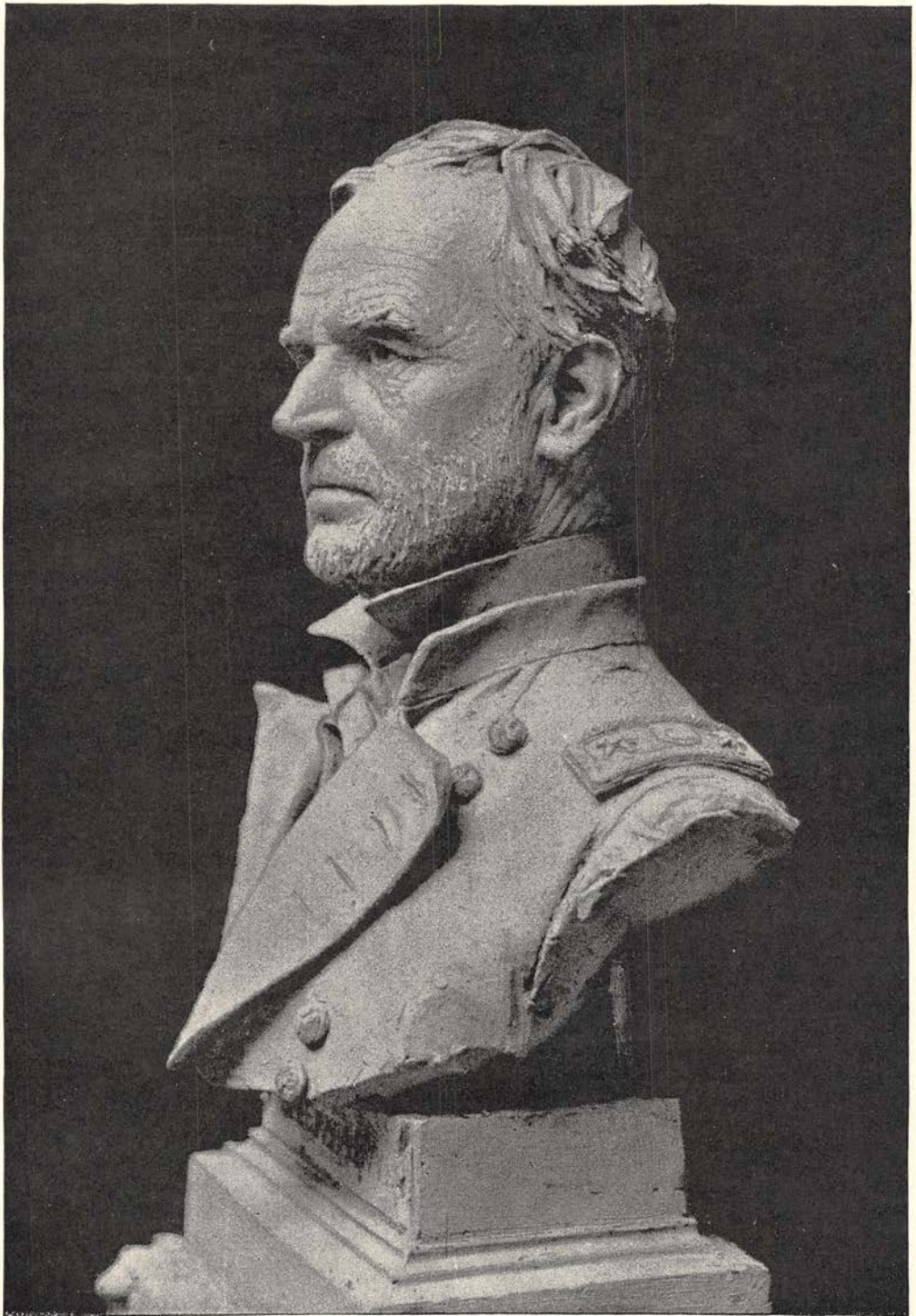
III.

Glory and honor and fame;—the pomp that a soldier prizes;
 The league-long waving line as the marching falls and rises;
 Rumbling of caissons and guns, the clatter of horses' feet,
 And a million awe-struck faces far down the waiting street.

IV.

But better than martial woe, and the pageant of civic sorrow;
 Better than praise of to-day, or the statue we build to-morrow;
 Better than honor and glory, and history's iron pen,
 Is the thought of duty done and the love of his fellow-men.

R. W. Gilder.



AFTER THE BUST BY AUGUSTUS ST. GAUDENS, MODELED FROM LIFE IN 1888-9.

W. F. Sherman