

**ADDRESS OF HENRY C.
ROBINSON: AT THE DEDICATION,
BY THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OF GEN. PUTNAM'S STATUE, AT
BROOKLYN, JUNE 14, 1888**

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Address of Henry C. Robinson: At the Dedication, by the State of Connecticut of Gen. Putnam's statue, at Brooklyn, June 14, 1888 by Henry Cornelius Robinson

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HENRY CORNELIUS ROBINSON

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OF
HENRY C. ^{Cornell} ROBINSON,
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STATE OF CONNECTICUT,
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Brooklyn, June 14, 1888.

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Ninety-eight years ago the wasted form of an old soldier, scarred by tomahawk and bullet, was laid to rest in yonder graveyard. The sacred acres were filled with mourners. He was consigned to sleep in the echoes of artillery and of musketry, and under the glories of the flag, the fibres of whose folds his own brave hands had so conspicuously helped to weave. His epitaph was written by the foremost scholar of our State. The fret of time, the frost of winter, and the selfish hand of the relic-hunter wasted the stone slab on which it was written. And here, above a handful of ashes, all that remains of that stalwart frame, which, in life, was the inspiration of Colonists, the hate of Frenchmen, the fear of Englishmen, and the awe of Indians, to-day, late, but not too late, a grateful State has built a seemly and enduring pedestal, has placed upon it his war-horse, and called again to his saddle, with his bronzed features saluting the morning, the Connecticut hero of the revolution.

Blessed is a state which has a history. Its present is the natural evolution of its past. Out of struggles it has grown; from storms and sunlight of other years it has made strength. Its greatness of other centuries is its renewed and transfigured greatness of to-day, its traditions are its inspirations, its buried heroes are its living prophets. It is the blessedness of continued personality, the manliness of the mature man; its brain has developed with its muscles, its heart with its bones. Reverence and pride for the past, the kindling warmth of tender associations, and the hallowed flames of love are its attributes. The

scholar reads about it, the poet sings of it, the philosopher studies it. The banks of its streams are sacred for the foot-prints upon them; its mountains are dear for the brave steps that climbed them; its groves are instinct with the meditations of its patriot fathers; its churches pure with the purity of its saints; its graveyards are peopled with the presences of its ancestry. Thermopylæ was a perpetual legacy to the sons of Sparta, the atmosphere of the Academy was an everlasting inheritance to the men of Athens. The children of Israel sing the songs of Miriam and David, study the philosophy of Moses, and Ezra, and Hillel, fight over the battles of Saul and the Maccabees, and rightly say, they are all ours. The wars are over, the wisdom is written, the lyrics are sung, the laws are written on papyrus, are cut in stone, are printed on paper, but the lesson in them all is as fresh as a bubbling spring. We stand almost aghast before the grandeur of a new state, as Dakota, but we find no leaves of history to turn over and study and ponder. *But when we examine the record of the last two and a half centuries of human progress, the filial love of the people of Connecticut finds a catalogue of statesmen, and warriors, and orators, and philanthropists, a story of patriotism, and self-government, and education, and discipline, and virtue, and piety, better than all the traditions, gathered from three thousand years, which haunt the waters of the Ganges, or are assembled on the banks of the Nile. And the result of those early frictions and fights with rough nature and rougher man are written in the culture, and courage, and refinement, and sentiment of our

little Commonwealth of to-day. There was choice seed dropped in the scant soil of the wilderness by the pilgrims and by the colonial rebels, but lo, the wilderness has become a garden and blossoms like the rose.

A nation's character may be read in its heroes. It has been often said that no nation is better than its gods. Nor can it be unlike its demi-gods. Tell us what were the shrines in the Pantheon and whose ashes lie in Westminster Abbey, and we can more than guess what was Rome and what is England. And if the gates of the abbeys have opened chiefly at the bidding of kings, the people have found the graves of their heroes in the churchyard, have followed their ashes to the rivers where spite and malice flung them, have chanted their stories in song and set up their memorials in marble and bronze. If men of blood and ambition are the ideals of a nation, we find a nation of warriors; if patriots are the heroes, be they on the battle-field or in the council chamber, we find a nation proud of its nationality. Nor are our heroes only the leaders. A personal friend of Mr. Lincoln tells how he rode with him in a carriage through the city of Washington when its squares were dotted with camps, and its streets were full of boys in blue. When generals and field-officers saluted him, he returned the compliment by the customary and formal wave of the hand, but when a private soldier presented arms, he rose in his carriage and took off his hat. He did not undervalue leadership, but he appreciated that patriotic, unheralded support of the flag which was found in the lines. And so our people, in memorializing the

critical struggle at Antietam, chose for a symbol, not a portrait of one of the many general officers who made great names on that historic ground, but the figure of an American soldier, with no state or regimental distinction, only a type of the hundreds of thousands who fought and fell, and whose names do not appear in the histories, but whose blood won the victory.

If it is true that the admiration of a community is significant of its character, it is equally true of its contempt. It is not military greatness that we honor to-day, it is loyalty to manhood and to truth and to country. When the aggressions of the mother country became insufferable, and the cry was "to arms," there were two men upon the soil of our little Connecticut, who were especially conspicuous for their military accomplishments. Both incarnated personal bravery; neither had learned an alphabet out of which the word "fear" could be made; both were leaders. One gathered the sons of New Haven upon the Green and drilled them for war,—the other left his oxen in the field and rode to Boston. Both had achieved success and glory in the earlier wars. The eyes not only of Connecticut and New England, but of Virginia and the Carolinas turned to both of them. Both were offered high places by the enemy. One went through the struggle with an unclouded story, and to-day his name, the name of Putnam, is written upon nine counties in nine states, and we are bending in reverence before his statue. The other fled his country, died in ignominy, and an American community would as soon adopt the name of Judas as the name of Arnold.

Nations are not created by acts of parliament, nor by acts of congress, nor are they made by treaties. Statutes and treaties imply states behind them. Nations grow—grow from the people. The United States are the result of no sovereignty but the sovereignty of this great people—a people made and being made of the manifold strength of the older folk. Time has winnowed away the chaff and sifted out the grain from many peoples, and many races, and has brought many good “remnants” together, to work out in wholesome friction the best methods of self-government and constitutional law. Hither have come, each with a gift, first of all and best of all, the Puritan to New England, and the sturdy Scotchman, the honest Briton, the quick-witted Irishman, the Huguenot, son of a martyr and father of heroes, the Dutchman, full of honesty and trade, the German—happy combination of much goodness and few faults, the Scandinavian, the Italian, the Mongolian, and the African, by the grace of God and the will of the people and the terrible tribulation of war, transformed from chatteldom to manhood.

In studying the history of our country, we may and must study its biographies. Its own biography, so to say, is made up of the stories of its individual lives. It was once taught, with more or less truth, that the genius of a whole nation is the creation of a single life, as Alexander's and Solomon's and Julius Cæsar's. It is only a partial truth. The individual of mark represents, just as truly as he creates, a community. Marcus Aurelius and Christopher Columbus were not prodigies, springing from the air