

**ORATION ON THE LIFE
AND CHARACTER OF
HENRY WINTER DAVIS**

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Oration on the life and character of Henry Winter Davis by John A. J. Creswell

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JOHN A. J. CRESWELL

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ON THE
LIFE AND CHARACTER
OF
HENRY WINTER DAVIS,
BY
HON. JOHN A. J. CRESWELL.

Delivered in the Hall of the House of Representatives,
February 22, 1866.

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PREFACE.

The death of Hon. HENRY WINTER DAVIS, for many years a distinguished Representative of one of the Baltimore congressional districts, created a deep sensation among those who had been associated with him in national legislation, and they deemed it fitting to pay to his memory unusual honors. They adopted resolutions expressive of their grief, and invited Hon. JOHN A. J. CRESWELL, a Senator of the United States from the State of Maryland, to deliver an oration on his life and character, in the hall of the House of Representatives, on the 22d of February, a day the recurrence of which ever gives increased warmth to patriotic emotions.

The hall of the House was filled by a distinguished audience to listen to the oration. Before eleven o'clock the galleries were crowded in every part. The flags above the Speaker's desk were draped in black, and other insignia of mourning were exhibited. An excellent portrait of the late Hon. HENRY WINTER DAVIS was visible through the folds of the national banner above the Speaker's chair. As on the occasion of the oration on President LINCOLN by Hon. GEORGE BANCROFT, the Marine band occupied the ante-room of the reporters' gallery, and discoursed appropriate music.

At twelve o'clock the senators entered, and the judges of the Supreme Court, preceded by Chief Justice Chase. Of the Cabinet Secretary Stanton and Secretary McCulloch were present. After prayer by the chaplain, the Declaration of Independence was read by Hon. EDWARD McPHERSON, Clerk of the House. After the reading of the Declaration, followed by the playing of a dirge by the band, Hon. SCHUYLER COLFAX, Speaker of the House of Representatives, introduced the orator of the day, Hon. J. A. J. CRESWELL.

REMARKS
OF
HON. SCHUYLER COLFAX,
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

Hon. SCHUYLER COLFAX, Speaker of the House of Representatives, said:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: The duty has been devolved upon me of introducing to you the friend and fellow-member, here, of HENRY WINTER DAVIS, and I shall detain you but a moment from his address, to which you will listen with saddened interest.

The world always appreciates and honors courage: the courage of Christianity, which sustained martyrs in the amphitheatre, at the stake, and on the rack; the courage of Patriotism, which inspired millions in our own land to realize the historic fable of Curtius, and to fill up with their own bodies, if need be, the yawning chasm which imperiled the republic; the courage of Humanity, which is witnessed in the pest-house and the hospital, at the death-bed of the homeless and the prison-cell of the convict. But there is a courage of Statesmen, besides; and nobly was it illustrated by the statesman whose national services we commemorate to-day. Inflexibly hostile to oppression, whether of slaves on American soil or of republicans struggling in Mexico against monarchical invasion, faithful always to principle and liberty, championing always the cause of the down-trodden, fearless as he was eloquent in his avowals, he was mourned throughout a continent; and from the Patuxent to the Gulf the blessings of those who had been ready to perish followed him to his tomb. It is fitting, therefore, though dying a private citizen, that the nation should render him such marked and unusual honors in this hall, the scene of so many of his intellectual triumphs; and I have great pleasure in introducing to you, as the orator of the day, Hon. J. A. J. CRESWELL, his colleague in the thirty-eighth Congress, and now Senator from the State of Maryland.

ORATION
or
HON. JOHN A. J. CRESWELL.

MY COUNTRYMEN: On the 22d day of February, 1732, God gave to the world the highest type of humanity, in the person of George Washington. Combining within himself the better qualities of the soldier, sage, statesman, and patriot, alike brave, wise, discreet, and incorruptible, the common consent of mankind has awarded him the incomparable title of Father of his Country. Among all nations and in every clime the richest treasures of language have been exhausted in the effort to transmit to posterity a faithful record of his deeds. For him unfading laurels are secure, so long as letters shall survive and history shall continue to be the guide and teacher of civilized men. The whole human race has become the self-appointed guardian of his fame, and the name of Washington will be ever held, over all the earth, to be synonymous with the highest perfection attainable in public or private life, and coeternal with that immortal love to which reason and revelation have together toiled to elevate human aspirations—the love of liberty, restrained and guarded by law.

But in the presence of the Omnipotent how insignificant is the proudest and the noblest of men! Even Washington, who alone of his kind could fill that comprehensive epitome of General Henry Lee, so often on our lips, "First in war, first in peace, and first in the