

SPEECHES

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Speeches by Oliver Wendell Holmes

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OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

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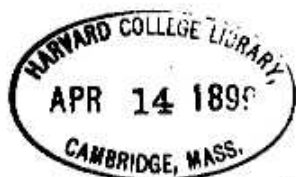
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The Author

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THESE chance utterances of faith and doubt
are printed for a few friends who will care to
keep them.



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MEMORIAL DAY.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED MAY 30, 1884, AT KEENE,
N. H., BEFORE JOHN SEDGWICK POST No. 4,
GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC.

Not long ago I heard a young man ask why people still kept up Memorial Day, and it set me thinking of the answer. Not the answer that you and I should give to each other, — not the expression of those feelings that, so long as you and I live, will make this day sacred to memories of love and grief and heroic youth, — but an answer which should command the assent of those who do not share our memories, and in which we of the North and our brethren of the South could join in perfect accord.

So far as this last is concerned, to be sure, there is no trouble. The soldiers who were doing their best to kill one another felt less of personal hostility, I am very certain, than some who were not imperilled by their mutual endeavors. I have heard more than one of those who had been gallant and distinguished officers on the Confederate side say that they had had no such feeling. I know that I and those whom I knew best had not. We believed that it was most desirable that the North should win; we believed in the principle that the Union is indissoluble; we, or many of us at least, also believed that the conflict was inevitable, and that slavery had lasted long enough. But