

## THE VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS.

COL. ROBERT G. INGERSOLL'S SPEECH BEFORE  
THE SOCIETY OF THE ARMY OF THE  
TENNESSEE.

Following is the response of Col. Robert G. Ingersoll at the dinner of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, in Chicago, on Thursday last, in response to the toast: "The Volunteer Soldiers of the Union Army, whose valor and patriotism saved to the world a 'Government of the people, by the people, and for the people:'"

"When slavery, in the savagery of the lash, and the barbarism of the chain, and the insanity of secession, [applause,] confronted the civilization of our country, the question, 'Will the great Republic defend itself?' trembled upon the lips of every lover of mankind. The grand North, filled with intelligence and wealth, the products of labor, marshaled her hosts and asked only for a leader. From the people a man, silent, thoughtfully poised, and calm, stepped forward, and, with the lips of victory, voiced the Nation's first and last demand—unconditional and immediate surrender. [Applause.] From that moment the end was known. That utterance was the first real declaration of real war, and in accordance with the dramatic writers of mighty events, the soldier who made it received the final sword of rebellion. [Loud applause.]

"The soldiers of the Republic were not seekers for vulgar glory, neither were they animated by the hope of plunder or love of cruel conquest. No, no, never. They fought to defend the homestead of liberty, and that their children might have peace. [Applause.] They were the defenders of humanity, the destroyers of prejudice, the breakers of chains, and, in the name of the future, slew the monster of their time. They finished what the soldiers of the Revolution commenced. They have relit the torch that fell from their august hands, and filled the world again with light. They blotted out from our statute-books the laws passed by hypocrites at the instigation of robbers, [loud applause,] and tore with brave and indignant hands from the Constitution of the United States that infamous clause that made men the catchers of their fellow-men. [Applause.] They made it possible for Judges to be just, for statesmen to be humane, and for politicians to be honest. They broke the shackles from the limbs of slaves, from the souls of masters, and from the Northern brain. They kept our country on the map of the world and our flag in heaven. They rolled the stone from the sepulchre of progress and found therein two angels clad in shining garments—nationality and liberty. [Loud applause.]

"The soldiers were the saviors of the Republic; they were the liberators of men. In writing the Proclamation of Emancipation, Lincoln, greatest of our mighty dead, [applause,] whose memory is as gentle as a Summer air when reapers sing amid gathered sheaves, copied with the pen what the grand hands of brave comrades had written with their swords. Grandeur than the Greek, nobler than the Roman, the soldiers of the Republic, with patriotism as careless as the air, fought for the rights of others, for the nobility of labor, and battled that a mother might own her child, [loud and prolonged applause,] that arrogant idleness should not scar the back of patient toil, [cheers,] and that our country should not be a many-headed monster, made of warring States, but a nation, sovereign, grand, and free. Blood was water, money was leaves, and life was only common air, until one flag floated over one Republic, without a master and without a slave. [Prolonged applause and ringing cheers.] And then was asked the question, Will a free people voluntarily tax themselves to pay a nation's debt? The soldiers went home to their waiting wives, to their glad children, and to the girls they loved. They went back to the fields, the shops, the mines. They had not been demoralized. They had been ennobled. Mocking at reverses, laughing at poverty, they made a friend of toil. They said: 'We saved the nation's life, and what is life without honor?' [Loud applause.] They worked and wrought with all of labor's royal sons, that every pledge the nation made might be redeemed. [Cheers.] And their great leader, having put a shining band of friendship, a girdle of clasped and loving hands, around the globe, came home to find, and finds, that every promise made in war has now the ring and gleam of gold. [Enthusiastic cheers.]

"There is another question still. Will all the wounds of war be healed? I answer, yes. [A voice, 'Good.'] The Southern people must submit. [A voice, 'Thank God.'] Not to the dictation of the North, but to a nation's will and the verdict of mankind. [Great applause.] They were wrong, and the time will come when they will say that the people are the victors who have been vanquished by the right. Freedom conquered them, and freedom will cultivate their fields, will educate their children, will weave robes of wealth, will execute the laws, and fill their land with happy homes. [Frantic applause.] The soldiers of the Union saved the South as well as the North. [More applause.] They gave us a nation. [A voice, 'With a big N.'] They gave us liberty here, and their grand victories have made tyranny the world over as insecure as snow upon the lips of volcanoes.

"And now let us drink to the Volunteers, to those who sleep in unknown and sunken graves, whose names are known only to the hearts they loved and left, of those who oft in happy dreams can see the footsteps of return. Let us drink to those who died where lifeless famines mocked at want. Let us drink to the maimed, whose scars give modesty a tongue. Let us drink to those who dared and gave to chance the care and keeping of their lives. Let us drink to all the living and to all the dead—to Sherman, and to Sheridan, and to Grant, the laureled soldiers of this world, [ringing and lasting applause,] and last to Lincoln, whose loving life, like a bow of peace, spans and arches all the clouds of war."

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