

ARMISTICE DAY

War Memorial, November 11, 1939

Baltimore

AMERICA honors itself in commemoration of Armistice Day by the tribute which is deservedly paid to those patriots who made this anniversary possible twenty-one years ago today. Armistice Day did not come until after thousands of our young men had paid with their lives for the preservation of liberty; nor did it come until many other tens of thousands of our young men had been wounded or otherwise crippled for life; nor until millions of homes had paid the penalty of sacrifice.

It has come about, therefore, very naturally and properly that this National holiday, in addition to being considered as a day celebrating the Armistice, is also considered as a day of commemoration and homage. On this day we commemorate the heroism of our dead, and pay homage to the countless number of our Veterans, living testimony of the sacrifice made for and on our behalf. It is for that additional reason that throughout the length and breadth of our great Land there are at this moment being held tens of thousands of meetings similar to the meeting we are holding here. At each such place, on this day, hundreds of thousands of our Countrymen by their voice and presence, while other millions in their minds and hearts, are paying tribute to the memory of our hallowed dead—and giving deserved recognition to the number of service men who survived.

In so doing, as a people, we not only pay our respect and our homage but we render ourselves and our Country a lasting benefit. Ideals are the most valuable asset of a man or a nation. Ideals are the soul of a people. It is from deathless transactions such as we now commemorate, and unselfish sacrifices for which we here try to express our appreciation, that the ideals that are to guide our future are nurtured and born. When, therefore, we pay this tribute, we are creating and sustaining ideals for those who shall come after us. It has by this and similar commemorative meetings and exercises that the American people have undertaken to make it known that those who bared their breasts for their Country in that crisis at that time, are entitled to hold the first place in the front line of our esteem.

However, while we thus meet to celebrate and commemorate our chivalry and our sacrifice, events of world-wide importance, and the snarl of angry nations force additional and other considerations upon us. While meeting to acknowledge the sacrifice and extol the heroism of those who participated in the World War, we are compelled to realize that the victory which obtained has been prostituted to unworthy ends. America entered the World War under conditions of idealism probably without parallel in the history of nations. We made our contribution and retired to peaceful pursuits without ever having expected, demanded, or received any material gain.

On Armistice Day, 1918, our people verily believed that the era of imperialistic war was forever at an end. The mothers of our dead, the returning cripples, and the millions of other Veterans joined with those at home in the conviction that the great end fought for had been reached. We celebrated and were proud that America had done its part. The end which we thought had been achieved we felt to be sufficient reward.