

Lanier already has earned his place in the Hall of Fame. By his creative genius, by his diligent scholarship, by his high courage and splendid achievement, he already has builded a shrine of which marble corridors and bronze statuary are only the physical symbol.

There are some things, even in a democratic society, not subject to popular referendum. We cannot proclaim the greatness of an artist (only his own works can do that for him), but we can affirm that greatness. We cannot immortalize poetry and music—they have a way of doing that for themselves. But we can and do recognize their qualities of everlastingness. Let us say then that we are here on Sidney Lanier Day to affirm our belief in his greatness and to celebrate his memory—in expectation of the honor which we know he deserves, and which we feel he soon will receive. In saying “we” that plural form is used advisedly. I would not be here as Governor unless I intended my voice to speak the sentiments of many Maryland people—both the quick and the dead.

The quick and the dead—yes, because the people who knew Sidney Lanier in person would be the first to wish him honor. I like to feel that this institution contains the spirits of men and women who loved him, and whose good wishes for his memory this Governor of Maryland has the right, and the duty, to express.

Sidney Lanier is a Marylander by a particularly binding tie. You have heard the old saying that one difference between our relatives and our friends is that we have a choice in regard to the latter. Well, Lanier does not belong to us by birth or blood; but he very strongly does become a Marylander by affection and adoption.

You will remember that he passed through Baltimore, a sick and unsuccessful man, intending to make a fresh start somewhere farther north. But he stopped off here and visited an official of the Peabody—who refused to let him get away. Some of you in this audience may have reason to know what the first recognition of his talent can mean to a man of neglected genius. Lanier became a member of the Peabody Orchestra, playing the flute; his contribution to music, both as a composer and performer, was made largely to, for, and by the Peabody Institute.

You will remember also his connection with that other Baltimore institution for arts and learning—the Johns Hopkins University. This City was then—in the 1870’s—enjoying her greatest renaissance of culture and the sciences. Daniel Coit Gilman, President of the new University, assembled a faculty which became the wonder of the educational world—some of their names you know—Gildersleeve, Osler, Rowland, Remsen, Welch. Lanier became a member of this staff, but not until he had completed his education, interrupted by the Civil War, with two years of intensive study.

Practically all of that work was done right here at the Peabody. By that time, a few years after his arrival, Lanier had become a true Baltimorean. It is hard to conceive how any native son could have been loved more in life or mourned more in death than this adopted son. His courtliness and courage won him as much affection as his talents won him admiration. He came to be called the “Sir Galahad of American Letters.” When he died, a Baltimorean said of him that Sidney Lanier’s greatest and finest poem was his own life.

As another indication of the ties which bind Lanier and his memory to Maryland, it may be noted that it was here that his two sons, Charles and