

MEMORIAL DAY EXERCISES

May 30, 1941

Taneytown

MEMORIAL Day, 1941, finds us standing, with mixed emotions, beside the resting places of our heroic dead. Even while we pay them respectful tribute, our minds cannot dismiss the thought of new wars now raging, of other Memorial Days now in the making.

We have come today to the graveside of patriots with a deep sense of reverence and a devout feeling of gratitude. We come with a full realization of the inescapable truth that all the blessings we now enjoy, the blessings of freedom and individual initiative, exist only because men have gone to war to procure and protect them for us. We come with a thorough understanding of the fact that we would be neither independent nor a united Nation, nor the most favored Democracy under the sun, unless there had been men who died in battle.

Today flags wave anew in all our cemeteries; flowers brighten the narrow plots wherein sleep the heroes of past wars; band play and remembrance brings reminiscent tears to the eyes of those gathered to honor our veterans of by-gone campaigns.

Wars and memories of wars, honors to the heroes of those wars, form that long line of history that reaches back so far with its repetitious pattern!

Down through the corridor of memories, each one here today could wander and read traced on the cold hard walls, the stories, and the causes, of these deaths which we memorialize now. No doubt, many of you remember the first Memorial Day after the Armistice. In every community citizens watched the long lines of khaki-clad soldiers march along, and there was a catch in many a throat for the gallantly-smiling disabled veterans, who rode with their crutches beside them or with empty sleeves pinned to their coats.

There were Gold Star Mothers in the watching throng, trying in vain to conceal the tears that blurred their eyes. And the cheer that went up for the few bent, old veterans of wars long past who insisted on marching with their grandsons! There was sorrow in the occasion, but there was glory as well.

The story of today's wars is not new. National prides, nationalistic ambitions will always be a source of conflict. Man must at all times be ready to defend his home. The soldier who dies in battle lives forever in the memory of his fellow-citizens. Our heroes' names carry on with escutcheon burnished bright by song and story.

So, again this year, the bands play, and guns and swords gleam and flash in the sunlight as the veterans march by. American youths newly in the service of their Country, thrill in martial airs, while their loved ones gaze with pride and hearts filled with anxiety.