

FLAG DAY EXERCISES BENEVOLENT AND PROTECTIVE ORDER OF ELKS

June 15, 1941

Baltimore

THIS day is an occasion for dedication of our spirit and of our might to national patriotism and national unity. We are in an hour of peril to the peace of the world and potential danger to the security and safety of our people.

The standards and the flags here assembled are physical symbols of nobler and loftier things. They are far more than mere articles of grace and beauty. In their folds are written the history of a great people; in their rustling may be heard the footsteps of patriot bands, at Lexington and at the bridge of Concord, immortalized in Emerson's phrase:

"By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard 'round the world."

These standards reflect the radiance that glowed at Yorktown where Washington's ragged legions overwhelmed the armies of a king and lifted in triumph the banners of a free people. They waved on land and sea in 1812. They carry in their bright stars and glorious stripes the triumph of our armies from Vera Cruz through mountain passes and spreading plains to the heights of victory. They represent a Country and people reunited after four bloody and tragic years in which sections and brothers uselessly but gallantly poured out upon a hundred fields the finest blood of the North and the South. A part of their fabric stretches from the battlefields of Cuba to the distant jungles of the Philippines. They recall the vivid and stirring recollections of 1917 and 1918, when Americans carried the colors of the Republic to glorious triumph and helped restore peace to a warring world.

These colors and standards represent something more than armies and navies, and wars and victories. They represent a mighty and yet peaceful people. They are the ensigns of a great freedom-loving Republic—a land of free men, which nurses no dream of aggression or conquest.

Whenever these colors are lifted they signify a concept of nationality, and an ideal of democracy and self-government that are distinctly American. These colors are emblematic of the making of America—of the moving, thrilling, and enthralling story of struggle and hardship and suffering in humble beginnings—of youthful and healthful growth, and, now, of mature and hardened strength. They represent the industry and enterprise of pioneers who mastered the wilderness and conquerer the plains and deserts. They represent the inventive genius, the toiling labor and business leadership which have developed an industrial structure that commands the admiration of the modern world. They represent the educational and cultural and spiritual forces that have ennobled and uplifted the life of this mighty people.