

Memorial Address Delivered by William Hayward at Elks Memorial Sunday, Dec. 1

The Tribune is indeed fortunate in being able to give our readers the beautiful oration delivered by William Hayward of Nebraska City at the memorial services of the Elks lodge held in Falls City Sunday, Dec. 1. The beautifully expressed thoughts contained in the following address are well worthy the time and consideration of our people. We were in hopes of being able to publish the address of C. F. Reavis delivered at Omaha the same day but inasmuch as Mr. Reavis has no manuscript of his speech we are denied the privilege.

We are gathered here in a Session of Sorrow on this first Sunday in December to observe a memorial for our absent brothers, to carve deeper and fresher upon the tablets of love and memory their virtues. Their faults, so faintly we wrote them upon the sands, long since were washed away with our tear drops.

Not alone in this city, nor alone on the prairies of Nebraska is gentle tribute of loving memory granted by prayer and thought and speech on this Sabbath day to our brothers who have gone before. But North, East, South, West, in the wheat lands of Minnesota and the Dakotas, on the shores of the lakes, down the mighty rivers, on the "dark and bloody ground," along the rippling shores of sunny Tennessee, up and down New England's rock bound coast, throughout the whole Dixie land, in pleasant valley, on mountain slope and stretch of plain hearts are sad today for those of our order who have lain them down in peace to await us on "that beautiful shore."

From the palm clad Antilles along the Spanish Main, in the South, to the winter silences where "the sun stands, at midnight, blood red on the mountains of the North" in Alaska; from Mother Lodge number one of Imperial New York to that Lunetta by Manila's distant bay in a fair Pacific Isle where "the sacred Lamp of Day now dips in Western clouds her parting ray," all Elksdom is gathered to softly breathe a prayer for the honored dead, or simply and unostentatiously utter sacred sentiments of Charity, Justice and Brotherly Love for the sake of "Auld Lang Syne."

The custom of memorializing the dead by public function is not peculiar to our order nor did it originate with any generation or nation now in being. It has been observed since a time when the memory of man runneth not to the contrary.

Come back with me a moment to ancient Greece, to Athens, her fairest city. A great concourse of citizens has gathered to celebrate a memorial day for those who fell in the first year of the Peloponnesian war. Let us stand with the hushed throng whose proud pathetic bravery struggles with the "more prevailing sadness." After a moment of expectant silence, from the public sepulchre advances pericles, whose eloquence is described as God-like, and the intent auditors hear the Olympian thunder of that wonderful voice uttering those sentiments of loyalty and fidelity which have rung down through all the ages.

From the heroic days of that dim and distant past down to the present, those Nations, whether Pagan or Christian, attaining the highest degree of civilization have felt the need and propriety of similar exercises or ceremonies.

These sentiments oft times find expression in the strewing of flowers on the graves of the departed. While we also observe this beautiful custom our Memorial day is rather a day set apart for adorning with the green wreaths of ritualistic and prayerful tribute the memory of our well beloved who have gone before into the distant land from whose bourne no traveler returneth.

Our meeting today is as sacred, as tender, as dignified as a funeral rite but its sadness is not as acute. But few of our brothers, graves are new made. Our bereavement is not a recent one nor our sepulchres fresh. The smart of the wound has been somewhat healed by the passage of weeks, or months, or years, by the smile of Nature's sunshine and the rain drops of her falling tears. O'er the sacred mounds from East to West flowers have sprung up, grasses have grown and blossoms have fallen.

In the sea coast towns of the Fatherland I have seen the sad parting between peasants and their relatives, sweethearts or friends about to set sail upon the bosom of Mother Ocean for the distant America, the promised land. Though their mouths spoke with a strange and foreign tongue, their caressing gestures and tear dimmed eyes told a tale of grief, of doubt, of fear, of anticipated hours of loneliness, that all might comprehend. The last "on shore" signal given and the gang-plank hoisted up, there they stand on the pier gazing silently and wistfully at the huge ship ploughing her way through wind and tide, until the last white flutter is no longer discernible, until the hull and spars sink neath the Western horizon and naught remains but the trace of black clouds her funnels belched forth. And then these lonely, heart sick, waiting ones turn wearily away to take up their heavy burdens of daily toil or the irritating round of petty duties.

The same sentiments of grief and doubt and fear we feel, only magnified a thousand fold, as we gather about the flower draped bier where lies our friend awaiting the last tender ministrations of the funeral rite, for our loved one is starting on a long journey to an unknown land. True it may be fair in promise and grand in imagery but it is a land we have never seen. The thought uppermost in our mind is that our well beloved is gone, has found one of the thousand doors through which Death lets life out, and soon will land on a silent shore.

As his form reposes, cold in death with sightless eyes, gray lips that may not speak, awaiting conveyance to the "narrow house beneath" our grief seems greater than we can bear.

Perhaps it is a masterful man in the prime of life, crowned with the laurels of distinguished success, who has fallen like some mighty oak hurling to unsupported earth the tender and clinging vines whose support he was perchance a pure and innocent child whose sweet, mirthful voice still lingers in our ears or whose soft, sincere caress we still may feel upon our cheeks, for "Leaves have their time to fall

And flowers to winter at the North wind's breath.

And stars to set-but all Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death."

The grim destroyer may have come like a lightning flash from clear sky of blue or after long weeks of suffering when "Our very hopes belied our fears, our hopes belied."

But he is gone-Forever as it seems. All the world is dark. The night that knows no morn feel has come. We wonder if God is still in his Kingdom. It is the hour of our Gethsemane and Golgotha, and we say with Byron

"Oh God it is a fearful thing To see the human soul take wing."

It seems so bitter, so cruel, so useless a thing this Death, our anguished hearts cry out in the exquisite pain of our perplexity "Why-why-why?"

And then it is that our faith in immortality is needed most.

"Tis immortality, 'tis that alone,

Amidst lifes pains, abasements, emptiness,

The soul, can comfort, elevate and fill."

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Holiday Greetings 1907

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Preston, Nebraska

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