

## President Grant's Des Moines Address

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## PRESIDENT GRANT'S DES MOINES ADDRESS.

The following address by President U. S. Grant was delivered in Des Moines on the evening of Wednesday, September 29, 1875, at the meeting of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee. It created much comment at that time, as well as subsequently, and copies have occasionally been in request. As it was delivered in our capital city, and thus became historically connected with our State, it is deemed fitting to present it in these pages, where it will always be accessible. It has been compared with a photographic copy of President Grant's original manuscript, and so far as we can judge is correct.

COMRADES:—It always affords me much gratification to meet my old comrades in arms of ten to fourteen years ago, and to live over again the trials and hardships of those days, hardships imposed for the preservation and perpetuation of our free institutions. We believed then, and believe now that we had a government worth fighting for, and if need be dying for. How many of our comrades of those days paid the latter price for our preserved Union! Let their heroism and sacrifice be ever green in our memory. Let not the results of their sacrifices be destroyed. The Union and free institutions for which they fell should be held more dear for these sacrifices. We will not deny to any of those who fought against us any privilege under the government which we claim for ourselves. On the contrary we welcome all such of them who come forward in good faith to help build up the waste places, and perpetuate our institutions against all enemies as brothers in full interest with us in a common heritage. But we are not prepared to apologize for the part we took in the great struggle. It is to be hoped that like trials will never befall our country. In this sentiment no class of people can more heartily join than the soldier who submitted to the dangers, trials and hardships of the camp and the battle-field, on which ever side he may have fought. No class of people are more interested in guarding against a recurrence of those days. Let us then begin by guarding against every enemy threatening the perpetuity of free republican institutions. I do not bring into this assemblage politics, certainly not partizan politics, but it is a fair subject

for the deliberation of soldiers to consider what may be necessary to secure the prize for which they battled. In a republic like ours, where the citizen is the sovereign and the official the servant, where no power is exercised except by the will of the people, it is important that the sovereign—the people—should possess intelligence. The free school is the promoter of that intelligence which is to preserve us as a free nation. If we are to have another contest in the near future of our national existence I predict that the dividing line will not be Mason and Dixon's, but between patriotism and intelligence on the one side and superstition, ambition and ignorance on the other. Now in this centennial year of our national existence, I believe it a good time to begin the work of strengthening the foundation of the house commenced by our patriotic forefathers one hundred years ago at Concord and Lexington. Let us all labor to add all needful guarantees for the more perfect security of Free Thought, Free Speech, a Free Press, Pure Morals, Unfettered Religious Sentiment and of Equal Right and Privileges to all men irrespective of Nationality, Color or Religion. Encourage free schools and resolve that not one dollar of money appropriated to their support no matter how raised, shall be appropriated to the support of any sectarian school. Resolve that either the state or Nation, or both combined shall support institutions of learning sufficient to afford to every child growing up in the land the opportunity of a good common school education, unmixed with sectarian, pagan or atheistical tenets. Leave the matter of religion to the family circle the church and the private school supported entirely by private contributions. Keep the church and state forever separate. With these safeguards I believe the battles which created us "the army of the Tennessee" will not have been fought in vain.

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