

Consecration of the National Sepulchre at Gettysburg.

Yesterday a portion of the battle field of Gettysburg was consecrated as a national cemetery for the interment of the gallant men who fell in battle there, and who had been buried, as is usual in such cases, nearly where they fell, over the whole extended scene of the fight. Disinterred and gathered into the consecrated place, their bones will, in themselves, be a monument of the consideration in which brave men are held by a free people, and will in future constitute one of the grand pilgrim shrines of our history.

Many distinguished men were present at the consecration, including the President and Secretary Seward, and the eulogy over the fallen heroes was spoken by Edward Everett. Not only is this the first time that such an event has taken place in our history, but ceremonies of this character over the bones of the fallen have not, we believe, taken place since they were one of the institutions of the republic of Greece; for the monument on the battle field of Waterloo is in no sense analogous to the monuments that were erected at Marathon and Thermopylae, nor to the one that will be placed over the bones of our own heroes. This revival, therefore, in the United States of one of the institutions of that great race of men that originated free government was in itself sufficient to give the occasion remarkable interest.

Mr. Everett's oration was on the classical model, and was a worthy one. Its recital of the events of the campaign, and especially of the battle, correct in the main, is liable to some exceptions. One of them is an important matter of fact. "It was not," says the orator, "until Sedgwick's arrival that the Union army attained an equality of numbers with that of the rebels." And in another place he repeats that "the two armies, after the first day, were numerically equal." He gives the numbers of the rebel army at one hundred and five thousand of all arms, or, to exclude cavalry and artillery, ninety thousand infantry. These numbers for the rebel force are the common estimate, and are, perhaps, very nearly correct. But to estimate the Army of the Potomac as equal to this in numbers is a great error. For two or three weeks after the battle was fought it was not safe to tell the real strength of the Army of the Potomac, and, had it been safe to publicly tell it, that victory, sufficiently great as it was, would have seemed doubly wonderful in the disparity of numbers between the hostile armies, since the real strength of the Army of the Potomac was at least thirty thousand less than Mr. Everett's estimate. Chancellorsville had reduced that army to considerably less than ninety thousand men. Not less, certainly, than ten thousand—perhaps nearer fifteen—had gone home between Chancellorsville and Gettysburg; by the expiration of their two years' time; and thousands fell out of the line on the terrible marches under Hooker and Meade. But the numbers are settled more definitely than this. Returns from corps commanders on the night of the second day fixed our force then at fifty-eight thousand men. Add for killed and wounded on the second day seven thousand; for killed, wounded and prisoners on the first day five thousand, and you have the real numbers of the Army of the Potomac before any one of the battles was fought—seventy thousand men. Oppose these to the numbers given for the rebel army, and the two armies will be very far from "numerically equal."

Mr. Everett dwells upon the Providential inaction of the rebel army in the early part of the second day. Good authority has made the discrimination between Providence and artillery, and if Mr. Everett had been more familiar with the necessities of battle he would have been better able to make it, and would more correctly, have attributed that inaction to the hard blow that General Reynolds gave the enemy on the first day.

Bunker Hill Monument has until now stood alone as a great national memento erected on the spot to commemorate a struggle for American freedom. But now there is another, different in character and with a deeper interest for us all. Bunker Hill reminds us how hard it is for a people to win their freedom, and Gettysburg how much harder it may be to keep it. But the two monuments are sisters; and, while Bunker Hill tells the proud story of New England's struggle, Gettysburg speaks for the whole North—and for Maryland, Delaware, and even Virginia—for all had sons there. Those, with nearly every one of the free States, have a representation of heroic mould in the grand national triumph, and our own Empire State, as she gave more of her sons on those days than any other State did, has the most room and the greatest honor.