

Address

delivered at -

Pioneer Hall

San Francisco Cal

to the

Veterans of the Mexican War

No 18

Subject

Take Care of the Army We Have

John
Received of
James
for
to the
between the

No 18

James
John

Veterans of the Mexican War,

Comrades:

*delivered by
General Howard
at Pioneer Hall
Sept 14 1888.*

As men grow older they dwell more and more in the past. The few Mexican Veterans who remain amongst us have the clearest cut recollections of the wonderful work done by our little Army and Navy from the first venture across the Rio Grande with Taylor to the grand consummation under Scott at the City of Mexico.

I sympathize with all this, and love to hear over again the thrice told tales of our youth. But somehow, in view of the present condition of our Army and Navy and of coming events in which they are to bear a part, my eye turns to the future. Your past record is certainly fruitful, grand and inspiring; but now the pressing question is, what can your children and your children's children do to secure, enhance and perpetuate the blessings which they inherit from you?

We learn from our President that there is in the U.S. Treasury a Surplus of more than \$ 130,000,000.

Now as the two great political parties are contending as to the best method of raising a permanent revenue for the country, which we, who live on salaries, hope indeed that they will do, it is nowhere said just what they propose to do with this \$ 130,000,000., or with any other such trifling sums that may again by some want of statesmanship get fixedly into the Treasury.

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Delivered for
General
of General
Hall
Jeff 14/1888

(Page 2.)

As every man, Mexican Veterans included, but Army and Navy excepted, has an interest in the exercise of his individual sovereignty, would not you Mr. Chairman be willing, speaking for the Army and Navy, to suggest that in future Messages to Congress, His Excellency the President of the United States do call upon our legislators to remember the Army and Navy in connection with this Surplus.

The Navy does not want wooden hulks, except for memorials of the several wars, the Revolutionary, the war of 1812, the Mexican and the War of the Rebellion. She must have the right sort of bottoms even if she is to cover them with iron or steel; and she must have the iron and the steel, and pay the architect and builder. Behold the honorable Naval structures, which Homer and Virgil, with all their wild imaginings, could not have conceived, carved out of that Surplus. Why, we might even restore our Merchant Marine under our own flag with Naval officers commanding first class ships of modern build! Which sailing to the ports of France, or into the Bosphorus would rival those of Great Britain- if by any chance the Surplus should continue itself from year to year.

My mind rests on the Navy. I am almost afraid, it is so personal, to speak of the Army; but you know Sir how the Army and Navy have worked together. They gave us our birth-right twice, which England threatened to withhold or destroy; they enlarged our heritage by whipping naughty Mexico and then holding her fast while our people bargained for her land. Hence we own today the fruits

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and flowers of California. So Mr. Chairman, do not forget the Army. We do not want tumble-down forts, old wooden shanties for barracks, obsolete ordnance, old guns always faced to the rear, -gun carriages that would fall to pieces on the first discharge. Oh, no; foreign officers are very polite; but they cannot help laughing at our poverty stricken condition. Just think what a relief might come through that Surplus and the additions sure to come to it, to the little Army which with the Navy has always been and must forever be the nucleus of our defense.

Veterans, see, in no distant epoch the borders of the lands which you conquered ^{peopled} with modest garrisons well housed! Why not? Why should Custom Houses, Mints, Post Offices and Sub-Treasury buildings, be constructed of the handsomest quarried rock? Oh, it honors the nation to have them. It gives to our people the idea of grandeur, of strength, of permanency to erect such noble structures made of the best material, like the Nation's Capitol and the New York Custom House. Then, pray, Mr. Chairman, why not do a similar favor for the Navy and the Army, if not for their own comfort and honor and efficiency, at least for the Nation's grandeur and strength?

Yes, yes, if I dared to be a statesman, I would advocate with all my heart such adjustment of our revenues as would enable large and suitable Appropriations - to put our Navy a little, just a little ahead of that of any nation in the world. I do not mean in the quality of its officers and men - for they are already abreast of the

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best, but in all its appointments, in all its structures, in everything necessary to its completeness, nay its superiority.

And further I would give to New York, San Francisco and other Coast cities such Naval and Army defenses as would be, not only intrinsically a source of safety, but in the eyes of other nations make then honorable and durable monuments of a nation's fore-sight, strong barriers against any selfish greed or sudden hostility on the part of any foreign people.

Yes Sir, Surplus or no Surplus in keeping with the possibilities of a free people, I would not stint the Army. The soldiers work just as hard and fight just as bravely, -aye, harder and better if they have good barracks and good equipments. Show the world that we respect them, and they will respect themselves. To be a Roman soldier was once to be the noblest man. To be an American sailor or an American soldier should always be honorable. As in the past, so in the present; so in the future. Is it not then Mr. Chairman, a prerequisite to this soldier-honor, to make all proper provisions for the Army and Navy?

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