

SPEECH.

At unveiling of Gen. McClellan Statue,
Washington, D.C., May 2, 1907.

No. 10, Vol. 10.

SUBJECT.

General Geo. B. McClellan.

SPEECH.

At unveiling of Gen. McCall's statue,
Washington, D.C., May 2, 1907.

No. 10, Vol. 10.

SUBJECT.

General Geo. A. McCall.

Speech by McClellan
at unveiling of Statue W. M. O. R.
May 2, 1907

ADDRESS OF GENERAL O. O. HOWARD.

The first time I saw George B. McClellan was after he had returned from the Mexican War with the brevet rank of Captain in the Engineers. It was in 1850. He was then in command of what was called the "Sapper and Miner Company," afterward named the "Engineer Company." That company had served through the Mexican campaign with great credit, and was, as its name implies, employed mainly in engineering work. Captain McClellan was in command of that company, whose barracks were below the plain and near the old sutler's store and near the river on the northwest side of the public reserve. He was walking with another officer along the path in front of our parade ground. A fellow cadet said to me: "That handsome young officer is Captain McClellan of the Engineers." I then took a good look at him, and saw a young man near me of medium height, military figure, having the manner of a kind and self-reliant man. The next time I met him was in our classroom, where he replaced for two or three days a special friend of his, Lieutenant Samuel Jones, of Virginia, who was the constant instructor of our class. McClellan's quiet dignity won the regard of my classmates, and his gentle voice and kind personality drew us strongly to him.

The next time I came near him was after he had assumed command of the armies of the United States, succeeding General Winfield Scott in 1861. He gave me a pleasant recognition when I was introduced to him, but after that I saw him at a distance. When I went to headquarters upon any errand, after I became a general officer, I always met his superb Adjutant General, Seth Williams, whom, coming from my native State, I had known well for many years; and also McClellan's Chief of Staff, General Marcy, with whom I had served in Florida when he was a Captain in the Fifth Infantry and I was upon the staff of General Harney as ordnance officer. These two officers could give me all the information that I was entitled to have.

McClellan, after he had changed the confusion which existed after Bull Run in and about Washington into a complete and thorough systematic order, greatly desired to prevent pronounced Confederates from crossing over from Virginia into Maryland, with a view to participate in the Fall elections of 1861. I was commanding a brigade at Bladensburg at the time, and by McClellan's direction was sent into the lower part of Maryland to distribute my forces and do what I could. Just before and during the time of the election, a terrible storm came on prior to this political campaign, and the officers at Washington hardly thought that the troops could be moved, but I managed to start in the storm, enlarged the railroad bridge so as to cross over the boiling creek then overrunning its banks, and made the march through deep mud, and so thoroughly accomplished the work given me to do—for I was very ambitious then to get credit at headquarters—that I succeeded in winning the special goodwill and high commendation of General McClellan. I believe after that whenever he mentioned my name, he spoke kindly of me. He was pleased at the reconnaissance I made as his rear guard to the Rappahannock just before going to the Peninsula in the Spring of 1862. He asked who was in command of Sumner's rear guard on the upper line toward Chain Bridge, after the second battle of Bull Run. Someone told him, "General Howard." He said: "All right, if Howard is in command."

I met him on reviews before and after Antietam, and spent some little time in his tent at Rectortown, Virginia, the day before he was unexpectedly relieved from his command by Burnside, and I turned out my division that he and his friends might pass it in review at Warrenton, just as he was leaving the Army of the Potomac after bidding us a final good-bye.

I was under his command at the battle of Fair Oaks, Virginia, and after being wounded, spent the next two months in Maine. The people of Maine were so exceedingly anxious concerning matters at the front that they would not leave me much rest. I began ten days after my arrival, at the earnest solicitation of Governor Washburn, to make addresses, and with my good wife went all over the State, helping the Governor to fill his quota of troops required from that State. Everywhere I

went I spoke as strongly as I could for McClellan, answering the objections the newspapers had made to him as a commander, and showing as well as I could how he had brought order out of confusion after Bull Run; how he had fortified Washington, and so secured the capital; how he had thoroughly systematized everything touching each division, and, in fact, had substantially created, equipped, and gotten ready for service the Army of the Potomac; and his subsequent successes in four battles on the Peninsula.

The last time I was with him at Rectortown, Virginia, he used these words: "Burnside is a pure man and a man of integrity of purpose, and such a man cannot go far astray." A little later he added: "I have been long enough in command of a large army to learn the real insignificance of any man unless he depend upon a Power above." Therefore, when I think of him to-day, independent of political considerations, I say to myself and my intimate friends: First, "McClellan was an able and good officer, much needed at the time of his selection for the great work that he inaugurated;" second, "that he was a thoroughly loyal man through and through, loyal to the cause of the Union, and remained so;" third, "that he was a very complete gentleman, sincere in his convictions of duty, and decidedly Christian in his religious impulses and conduct." Everybody knows that I was an ardent Republican from the beginning, and that I waited with a great deal of impatience for the time to come when slavery would be recognized as the bottom cause of the war; and I watched the course of Mr. Lincoln, whom I loved from the first time I met him in the White House, when I was Colonel of the Third Maine, until to-day, greatly hoping that he would hasten the emancipation of the slaves, and when he did so he made my heart glad and my convictions strong, but it was only the beginning of the end of our awful contest.

By this statement it will be evident that I did not follow my friend, General McClellan, politically; I never have repudiated any friendship on account of a difference in religious conviction or political consideration.

General Robert E. Lee remarked after Gettysburg, when some criticism was brought to bear upon him: "We cannot expect always to win battles." It would be wrong for us to condemn a man and heap ignominy upon him because he did not always succeed in battle.

In my judgment General George B. McClellan performed his part, and it was an essential one, in the preservation of the American Union, and I am very glad indeed to be able to be present at the unveiling of a monument to him as an expression of an honor due to his work, and I am proud to reiterate my affection for him. A gentleman he was, and indeed my beau ideal of that class of generals who win the love of their soldiers by earnestly and persistently caring for their interests, as a father cares for the interests of his children.

Statue

Unwriting