

What follows is a newspaper transcript of a speech William McKinley gave to survivors of his old Civil War regiment, the Twenty-third Ohio Volunteer Infantry. The veterans visited McKinley's home in Canton during his "front-porch" presidential campaign of 1896. Please note: We transcribed the text that follows as closely as possible from the newspaper article; we are unsure of the date the article appeared, but the newspaper was most likely the Canton Repository.*

TO HIS OLD COMRADES.

~~~~~

Mr. McKinley Responds in Words of  
Burning Eloquence to Survivors of  
the Twenty-third O. V. I.

~~~~~

HONOR OF THE NATION HELD SACRED

~~~~~

By All Patriotic Citizens—Glowing Compliment to the Mem-  
ory of Living and Dead Heroes of the Regiment in  
Which He Went Forth As a Youth in  
Answer to His Country's Call—  
Full Text of the Address.

~~~~~

“Captain Ellen and my comrades of the Twenty-third Ohio—This call of the surviving members of the old regiment with which I served for more than four years at my home is a most gracious act upon their part, and brings to me peculiar and special gratification.

“As I look upon this little body of men assembled about me, and remember that this is but the remnant of the old Twenty-third that thirty-five years ago had 1,010 sturdy young men on its roll ready for duty, and that it was twice recruited to the total number of nearly 2,200; that here is gathered possibly less than 100, and that is one-fourth of the surviving members of our glorious old regiment, I am vividly reminded how rapidly the years are passing, and with them are passing our old associates of the war. The survivors are from 24 states of the union. Some of our members are in the territories. One of them resides on the other side of the water. But wherever they are, and in whatever vocation they may be engaged, they all love the old regimental organization, which is the proudest thing to them on earth. *(Applause)*

We had a great regiment; great in its field officers; great in the character of the rank and file that constituted it. Our hearts go out with tenderness and love, I am sure, to the first colonel of our regiment, General William S. Rosecrans, to his distant home in California. *(Great applause)*

We all remember his splendid discipline and gentle qualities, and we remember with what pride we marched under his command in West Virginia in 1861; and we remember, too, that other regular army officer, that splendid soldier, General E. P. Scammon. *(Cheers)* Not the most popular man in the regiment in its earlier days, for we thought his discipline severe and his drill very hard, but after the battle of South Mountain General Scammon was the most popular man in the regiment. *(Great applause)*

We knew then for the first time what his discipline meant and what strength it gave to us on the battlefield. Nor can we assemble here as we have today without recalling the third colonel of the Twenty-third Ohio, who was longest with us, Rutherford B. Hayes. *(Great cheering)* He was beloved by every man of the regiment and no braver colonel ever led his soldiers to battle.

Nor Stanley Matthews, the first lieutenant colonel of the regiment—the great soldier and lawyer. (*Applause*) Nor can we forget Comley, glorious old Comley, (*cheers and cries of “Nor Mrs. Hayes”*) nor Mrs. Hayes, the faithful friend of the regiment; and we have with us today, and we are glad to see him, for I remember in 1864, after his dreadful wound, we did not suppose we would have him with us again—we have with us today that brave soldier comrade, Colonel Russell B. Hastings. (*Applause*)

I was glad to note in the eloquent speech of my comrade, Captain Ellen, that the old Twenty-third Ohio stands in 1896 as it stood in 1861, for the country and the country's flag. (*Great applause and cries for “McKinley, too”*) Nobody could have doubted that, knowing the metal from which this old regiment was made. My comrades, you are just as loyal to your country now as you were loyal to your country then, and, as you stood from '61 to '65 for preservation of the government of the United States, you stand today just as unitedly for the honor of the government and preservation of the credit and currency. (*Cheers*)

No government can get on without it preserves its honor. No government is great enough to get on without it. In the darkest days of the revolution, Robert Morris, its financier, went to one of his friends in Philadelphia, after he had involved himself as a debtor for a large sum of money on account of the government, and said to him, “I must have \$1,500,000 for the continental army.”

His friend said: “What security can thee give, Robert.”

He answered: “My name and my honor.”

Quick came the reply: “Robert, thou shalt have it.” (*Applause*) And from that honor until now the country's honor has been our ship's anchor in every storm. Lincoln pledged it when in time of war we issued paper money. He said: “Every dollar of that money shall be made as good as gold.”

I do not know what you think about it, but I believe that it is a good deal better to open up the mills of the United States to the labor of America than to open up the mints of the United

States to the silver of the world. (*Great cheers and cries of "You are right"*) Washington told us over and over again that there was nothing so important to preserve as the nation's honor. He said that the most important source of strength was the public credit, and that the best method of preserving it was to use it as sparingly as possible.

And it was left to Rutherford B. Hayes, your old colonel, as president of the United States, to execute that promise in the resumption of specie payments in 1879. (*Cheering and applause*)

When Robert Morris said that they had nothing to give but their honor, there were behind his word three millions of struggling patriots. Today behind the nation's honor are seventy millions of freemen, who mean to keep this government and its honor and integrity and credit unquestioned. (*Great applause*)

I thank you, my comrades, for this call. Nothing has given me greater pleasure. Nothing gives me greater pride than to have been a private soldier with you in the great civil war. (*Applause*) I bid you welcome to my home. You already have my heart; you have had it for more than 30 years. (*Great cheering*) It will give Mrs. McKinley and myself much pleasure, I assure you to have you come into our home. (*Applause and three cheers for McKinley*)

* *Used by permission of The McKinley Museum, Canton, Ohio.*