

## COLONEL R. G. INGERSOLL

**R**OBERT GREEN INGERSOLL, a noted American lawyer, orator, and lecturer, the son of a clergyman, was born at Dresden, N. Y., Aug. 11, 1833, and died at Dobbs Ferry, N. Y., July 21, 1899. He was educated in the common schools, studied law, and, after being admitted to the Bar, settled first at Shawneetown, Ill., but in 1857 removed to Peoria in the same State. In 1860, he was an unsuccessful Democratic candidate for Congress. He entered the Federal Army in 1862 as colonel of an Illinois regiment and was for some months captive in a Confederate prison. Resigning his commission in 1864, he resumed his law practice at Peoria, and, having now become a Republican, was in 1866 appointed attorney-general of Illinois. In a masterly speech, delivered by him before the Republican Convention of 1876, he proposed the name of Blaine as the Republican nominee, alluding to him as "the Plumed Knight of Maine." From that time Ingersoll was in frequent request as a campaign speaker. He was a vigorous rhetorician, and chiefly known as a free-thought or agnostic lecturer. He removed to Washington after a time, and later to New York city, where he practiced his profession with success. He had great gifts as an orator, and the keenest wit and the deepest pathos were generally at his command,—a man of broad sympathies, but of most destructive beliefs. His published works include "The Gods, and other Lectures" (1878); "Ghosts" (1879); "Some Mistakes of Moses" (1879); "Prose Poems" (1884); and "Great Speeches" (1887).

### BLAINE, THE PLUMED KNIGHT

NOMINATING SPEECH IN THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION  
AT CINCINNATI, JUNE 15, 1876<sup>1</sup>

**M**ASSACHUSETTS may be satisfied with the loyalty of Benjamin H. Bristow; so am I; but if any man nominated by this convention cannot carry the State of Massachusetts I am not satisfied with the loyalty of that State. If the nominee of this convention cannot carry the grand old Commonwealth of Massachusetts by seventy-five thousand majority, I would advise them to sell out Faneuil

<sup>1</sup>From the "New York Times," June 16, 1876.

Hall as a Democratic headquarters. I would advise them to take from Bunker Hill that old monument of glory.

The Republicans of the United States demand as their leader in the great contest of 1876 a man of intellect, a man of integrity, a man of well-known and approved political opinion. They demand a statesman. They demand a reformer after, as well as before, the election. They demand a politician in the highest and broadest and best sense of that word. They demand a man acquainted with public affairs—with the wants of the people—with not only the requirements of the hour, but with the demands of the future.

They demand a man broad enough to comprehend the relations of this government to the other nations of the earth. They demand a man well versed in the powers, duties, and prerogatives of each and every department of this government.

They demand a man who will sacredly preserve the financial honor of the United States—one who knows enough to know that the national debt must be paid through the prosperity of this people. One who knows enough to know that all the financial theories in the world cannot redeem a single dollar. One who knows enough to know that all the money must be made, not by law, but by labor. One who knows enough to know that the people of the United States have the industry to make the money and the honor to pay it over just as fast as they make it.

The Republicans of the United States demand a man who knows that prosperity and resumption, when they come, must come together. When they come they will come hand in hand through the golden harvest fields; hand in hand by the whirling spindle and the turning wheel; hand in hand past the open furnace doors; hand in hand by the flaming forges;

hand in hand by the chimneys filled with eager fire by the hands of the countless sons of toil.

This money has got to be dug out of the earth. You cannot make it by passing resolutions in a political meeting.

The Republicans of the United States want a man who knows that this government should protect every citizen at home and abroad; who knows that any government that will defend its defenders and will not protect its protectors is a disgrace to the map of the world. They demand a man who believes in the eternal separation and divorcement of church and school. They demand a man whose political reputation is spotless as a star; but they do not demand that their candidate shall have a certificate of moral character signed by a Confederate Congress. The man who has in full-heaped and rounded measure all of these splendid qualifications is the present grand and gallant leader of the Republican party—James G. Blaine.

Our country, crowned with the vast and marvellous achievements of its first century, asks for a man worthy of her past—prophetic of her future; asks for a man who has the audacity of genius; asks for a man who is the grandest combination of heart, conscience, and brains beneath the flag. That man is James G. Blaine.

For the Republican host led by that intrepid man there can be no such thing as defeat.

This is a grand year: a year filled with the recollections of the Revolution; filled with proud and tender memories of the sacred past; filled with the legends of liberty; a year in which the sons of freedom will drink from the fountain of enthusiasm; a year in which the people call for a man who has preserved in Congress what our soldiers won upon the field; a year in which we call for the man who has torn from

the throat of treason the tongue of slander—a man that has snatched the mask of Democracy from the hideous face of Rebellion—a man who, like an intellectual athlete, stood in the arena of debate, challenged all comers, and who, up to the present moment, is a total stranger to defeat.

Like an armed warrior, like a plumed knight, James G. Blaine marched down the halls of the American Congress and threw his shining lances full and fair against the brazen foreheads of every defamer of his country and maligner of its honor.

For the Republican party to desert a gallant man now is worse than if an army should desert their general upon the field of battle.

James G. Blaine is now, and has been for years, the bearer of the sacred standard of the Republic. I call it sacred because no human being can stand beneath its folds without becoming, and without remaining, free.

Gentlemen of the Convention, in the name of the great Republic, the only republic that ever existed upon this earth; in the name of all her defenders and of all her supporters; in the name of all her soldiers living; in the name of all her soldiers who died upon the field of battle; and in the name of those who perished in the skeleton clutch of famine at Andersonville and Libby, whose sufferings he so eloquently remembers, Illinois nominates for the next President of this country that prince of parliamentarians, that leader of leaders, James G. Blaine.

## ORATION AT HIS BROTHER'S GRAVE

DELIVERED AT THE FUNERAL OF EBON C. INGERSOLL, IN  
WASHINGTON, JUNE 3, 1879<sup>1</sup>

**M**Y FRIENDS,—I am going to do that which the dead  
oft promised he would do for me.

The loved and loving brother, husband, father,  
friend died where manhood's morning almost touches noon,  
and while the shadows still were falling toward the west.

He had not passed on life's highway the stone that marks  
the highest point, but, being weary for a moment, he lay  
down by the wayside, and, using his burden for a pillow, fell  
into that dreamless sleep that kisses down his eyelids still.  
While yet in love with life and raptured with the world he  
passed to silence and pathetic dust.

Yet, after all, it may be best, just in the happiest, sun-  
niest hour of all the voyage, while eager winds are kissing  
every sail, to dash against the unseen rock, and in an instant  
hear the billows roar above a sunken ship. For, whether in  
mid-sea or 'mong the breakers of the farther shore, a wreck  
at last must mark the end of each and all. And every life,  
no matter if its every hour is rich with love and every mo-  
ment jeweled with a joy, will, at its close, become a tragedy  
as sad and deep and dark as can be woven of the warp and  
woof of mystery and death.

This brave and tender man in every storm of life was oak  
and rock, but in the sunshine he was vine and flower. He  
was the friend of all heroic souls. He climbed the heights

<sup>1</sup> Copied from the New York "Tribune," June 4, 1879.

and left all superstitions far below, while on his forehead fell  
the golden dawning of the grander day.

He loved the beautiful, and was with color, form, and  
music touched to tears. He sided with the weak, and with a  
willing hand gave alms; with loyal heart and with purest  
hands he faithfully discharged all public trusts.

He was a worshipper of liberty, a friend of the oppressed.  
A thousand times I have heard him quote these words: "For  
justice all place a temple, and all seasons, summer." He  
believed that happiness was the only good, reason the only  
torch, justice the only worship, humanity the only religion,  
and love the only priest. He added to the sum of human joy;  
and were every one to whom he did some loving service to  
bring a blossom to his grave, he would sleep to-night beneath  
a wilderness of flowers.

Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of  
two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights.  
We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wail-  
ing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead there  
comes no word; but in the night of death hope sees a star,  
and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing.

He who sleeps here, when dying, mistaking the approach  
of death for the return of health, whispered with his latest  
breath: "I am better now." Let us believe, in spite of  
doubts and dogmas, and tears and fears, that these dear words  
are true of all the countless dead.

And now to you who have been chosen, from among the  
many men he loved, to do the last sad office for the dead, we  
give his sacred dust. Speech cannot contain our love. There  
was, there is, no greater, stronger, manlier man.

## ORATION ON HUMBOLDT

DELIVERED AT HOUSE'S HALL, PEORIA, ILL., AT THE UNVEILING OF A  
STATUE OF HUMBOLDT, SEPTEMBER 14, 1869

**G**REAT men seem to be a part of the infinite—brothers of the mountains, and the seas.

Humboldt was one of these. He was one of those serene men, in some respects like our own Franklin, whose names have all the lustre of a star. He was one of the few, great enough to rise above the superstition and prejudice of his time, and to know that experience, observation, and reason are the only basis of knowledge.

He became one of the greatest of men in spite of having been born rich and noble—in spite of position. I say in spite of these things, because wealth and position are generally the enemies of genius, and the destroyers of talent.

It is often said of this or that man, that he is a self-made man—that he was born of the poorest and humblest parents, and that with every obstacle to overcome he became great. This is a mistake. Poverty is generally an advantage. Most of the intellectual giants of the world have been nursed at the sad and loving breast of poverty. Most of those who have climbed highest on the shining ladder of fame commenced at the lowest round. They were reared in the straw thatched cottages of Europe; in the log-houses of America; in the factories of the great cities; in the midst of toil; in the smoke, and din of labor, and on the verge of want. They were rocked by the feet of mothers, whose hands, at the same time, were busy with the needle or the wheel.

It is hard for the rich to resist the thousand allurements of pleasure, and so I say, that Humboldt, in spite of having

been born to wealth and high social position, became truly and grandly great.

In the antiquated and romantic castle of Tegel, by the side of the pine forest, on the shore of the charming lake, near the beautiful city of Berlin, the great Humboldt, one hundred years ago to-day, was born, and there he was educated after the method suggested by Rousseau,—Campe the philologist and critic, and the intellectual Kunth being his tutors. There he received the impressions that determined his career; there the great idea that the universe is governed by law, took possession of his mind, and there he dedicated his life to the demonstration of this sublime truth.

He came to the conclusion that the source of man's unhappiness is his ignorance of nature.

After having received the most thorough education at that time possible, and having determined to what end he would devote the labors of his life, he turned his attention to the sciences of geology, mining, mineralogy, botany, the distribution of plants, the distribution of animals, and the effect of climate upon man. All grand physical phenomena were investigated and explained. From his youth he had felt a great desire for travel. He felt as he says, a violent passion for the sea, and longed to look upon nature in her wildest and most rugged forms. He longed to give a physical description of the universe; a grand picture of nature; to account for all phenomena; to discover the laws governing the world; to do away with that splendid delusion called special providence, and to establish the fact, that the universe is governed by law.

To establish this truth was, and is, of infinite importance to mankind. That fact is the death-knell of superstition; it gives liberty to every soul, annihilates fear, and ushers in the Age of Reason.

The object of this illustrious man was to comprehend the phenomena of physical objects in their general connection, and to represent nature as one great whole, moved and animated by internal forces.

For this purpose he turned his attention to descriptive botany, traversing distant lands and mountain ranges to ascertain with certainty the geographical distribution of plants. He investigated the laws regulating the differences of temperature and climate, and the changes of the atmosphere. He studied the formation of the earth's crust, explored the deepest mines, ascended the highest mountains, and wandered through the craters of extinct volcanoes.

He became thoroughly acquainted with chemistry, with astronomy, with terrestrial magnetism; and as the investigation of one subject leads to all others, for the reason that there is a mutual dependence and a necessary connection between all facts, so Humboldt became acquainted with all the known sciences.

His fame does not depend so much upon his discoveries (although he discovered enough to make hundreds of reputations) as upon his vast and splendid generalizations.

He was to science what Shakespeare was to the drama.

He found, so to speak, the world full of unconnected facts—all portions of a vast system—parts of a great machine; he discovered the connection that each bears to all; put them together, and demonstrated beyond all contradiction that the universe is governed by law.

He knew that to discover the connection of phenomena is the primary aim of all natural investigation. He was infinitely practical.

Origin and destiny were questions with which he had nothing to do.

His surroundings made him what he was.

In accordance with a law not fully comprehended, he was a production of his time.

Great men do not live alone; they are surrounded by the great; they are the instruments used to accomplish the tendencies of their generation; they fulfill the prophecies of their age.

Nearly all of the scientific men of the eighteenth century had the same idea entertained by Humboldt, but most of them in a dim and confused way. There was, however, a general belief among the intelligent that the world is governed by law, and that there really exists a connection between all facts, or that all facts are simply the different aspects of a general fact, and that the task of science was to discover this connection; to comprehend this general fact, or to announce the laws of things.

Germany was full of thought, and her universities swarmed with philosophers and grand thinkers in every department of knowledge.

Humboldt was the friend and companion of the greatest poets, historians, philologists, artists, statesmen, critics, and logicians of his time.

He was the companion of Schiller, who believed that man would be regenerated through the influence of the Beautiful; of Goethe, the grand patriarch of German literature; of Weiland, who has been called the Voltaire of Germany; of Herder who wrote the outlines of a philosophical history of man; of Kotzebue who lived in the world of romance; of Schleiermacher, the pantheist; of Schlegel who gave to his countrymen the enchanted realm of Shakespeare; of the sublime Kant, author of the first work published in Germany on Pure Reason; of Fichte, the infinite Idealist; of

Schopenhauer, the European Buddhist who followed the great Guatama to the painless and dreamless Nirwana, and of hundreds of others, whose names are familiar to, and honored by, the scientific world.

The German mind had been grandly roused from the long lethargy of the dark ages of ignorance, fear, and faith. Guided by the holy light of reason, every department of knowledge was investigated, enriched and illustrated.

Humboldt breathed the atmosphere of investigation; old ideas were abandoned; old creeds, hallowed by centuries, were thrown aside; thought became courageous; the athlete reason challenged to mortal combat the monsters of superstition.

No wonder that under these influences Humboldt formed the great purpose of presenting to the world a picture of nature, in order that men might for the first time, behold the face of their Mother.

Europe becoming too small for his genius, he visited the tropics of the new world, where in the most circumscribed limits he could find the greatest number of plants, of animals, and the greatest diversity of climate, that he might ascertain the laws governing the production, and distribution of plants, animals and men, and the effects of climate upon them all. He sailed along the gigantic Amazon—the mysterious Orinoco—traversed the Pampas—climbed the Andes until he stood upon the crags of Chimborazo, more than 18,000 feet above the level of the sea, and climbed on until blood flowed from his eyes and lips. For nearly five years he pursued his investigations in the new world, accompanied by the intrepid Bonpland. Nothing escaped his attention. He was the best intellectual organ of these new revelations of science. He was calm, reflective and eloquent; filled

with a sense of the beautiful and the love of truth. His collections were immense, and valuable, beyond calculation, to every science. He endured innumerable hardships, braved countless dangers in unknown and savage lands, and exhausted his fortune for the advancement of true learning.

Upon his return to Europe he was hailed as the second Columbus; as the scientific discoverer of America; as the revealer of a new world; as the great demonstrator of the sublime truth, that the universe is governed by law.

I have seen a picture of the old man, sitting upon a mountain side—above him the eternal snow—below the smiling valley of the tropics, filled with the vine and palm; his chin upon his breast, his eyes deep, thoughtful and calm; his forehead majestic—grander than the mountain upon which he sat—crowned with the snow of his whitened hair, he looked the intellectual autocrat of a world.

Not satisfied with his discoveries in America, he crossed the steppes of Asia, the wastes of Siberia, the great Ural range adding to the knowledge of mankind at every step. His energy acknowledged no obstacle, his life knew no leisure; every day was filled with labor and with thought.

He was one of the apostles of science, and he served his divine master with a self-sacrificing zeal that knew no abatement; with an ardor that constantly increased, and with a devotion unwavering and constant as the polar star.

In order that the people at large might have the benefit of his numerous discoveries, and his vast knowledge, he delivered at Berlin a course of lectures, consisting of sixty-one free addresses, upon the following subjects:

Five, upon the nature and limits of physical geography.

Three, were devoted to a history of science.

Two, to inducements to a study of natural science.