

Four Minute Essays

By

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THEODORE ROOSEVELT

THEODORE ROOSEVELT is dead. He has stepped from the midst of controversy and taken his place among the immortals, against whom no man can speak.

For the moment, the conflict ceases, friend and foe stand with bared heads to do homage to a great and valiant soul.

There is a sudden and loyal silence throughout all the hosts. For no man has ever been more a part of every man in the United States than Theodore Roosevelt.

His friends will rush no more quickly to speak his praise than his enemies.

For he was a man's man, and it was a joy to fight him, as well as to agree with him.

His spirit was a fierce and beautiful flame.

His opinions were simple, and always avowed with the wholeness and self-abandon of a true believer.

He would have made a wonderful knight in the days of Charlemagne, a fair and worthy companion to Roland.

He conceived of life, of duty, and even of love in terms of conflict. His make-up was militant. But his conceptions were always sincere.

His chief characteristic was courage. Whatever may have been charged against him in the extravagances of dispute, his bitterest foe must confess that he was to the last a warrior unafraid.

And that quality of fearlessness, that indomitable bravery, when lodged in this weak humanity, is always a thing of beauty,

a little spark of God. We love it. We respect it just for itself. It is the great worthwhile thing in an immortal soul.

So he was a friend, conceived of as a friend, in a passionate and personal way, as no other statesman of American history, except Lincoln.

He was very near to the American heart. And even in the stormy days of these vast issues that have swept beyond him, the tribute of respect that this people pays to him will be honest and profound.

He had a public mind and gave himself to the service of the people with a singleness of purpose that will be an inspiration to American youth.

He was thoroughly human. He was frank, overfrank sometimes, but we love the man whose heart outruns him.

Kings may pass and be followed to their

graves with "the boast of heraldry, the pomp of power." Presidents and premiers may die and their statues be set up in halls of fame; but none will go from the midst of the living and leave a sense of deeper personal loss than this splendid man, this impetuous companion, who has been snatched by death from the intimate affection of a great people.

The Bull Moose has made his last charge.

The Rough Rider has led his last assault.

Bwana Tumbo, the mighty hunter, is back from this perilous expedition we call Life, and is gone home.

Friends and opponents, with equal earnestness, cry out, "God rest his soul!"

Upon his tomb there can be inscribed an epitaph, than which there can be no nobler, no prouder, no truer tribute,

"Here lies a real American."