

1909 holiday message: 'The Debt We Owe'

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under way, since they did not arrive at the cemetery until 3 p.m. Under an inch-high stark headline in the June 1 *Telephone* was a startling "EX-TRA." "The speaker's stand at the grave yard collapsed this afternoon at 3 o'clock, just as the ceremonies started, but fortunately no one was hurt. On the stand at the time was Ira C. Batman, William F. Browning, William Bailey, master of ceremonies, and several others including the male quartet. When the stand fell, all the men on it were thrown in a heap and it is a wonder no one was injured."

Though it must have been a wholly unique experience for Batman and

the others, he delivered his oration as planned. For the most part it was printed in the June 1 edition of the *Telephone*.

The title of his speech was "The Debt We Owe," and Batman told his audience that the government is what we make it — no more, no less." . . . every one owes the government a debt of personal service in securing the adoption of the best principles and policies . . ."

Batman reminded the crowd assembled at Rose Hill that men of the Civil War period were led to see that the government was not a thing apart from themselves, and that they had not discharged their whole duty toward it when they had only paid their taxes and obeyed its laws. Said

the attorney, "No greater debt was ever charged to any generation of men and none was ever more cheerfully, faithfully or fully paid . . . Its payment was marked by the severance of the most sacred ties of life, by sad farewells, by the tears of women, by the sobs of broken hearts and by the suffering and death of brave men."

In conclusion, Batman said, "Let us repair to yonder hill, the city of our dead, where a few of the many thousands sleep, bearing in our hands the flowers which nature gives as emblems of our love, and in our hearts gratitude for a matchless country, made possible by their heroic services."