

Coming Stories by
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The Advocate

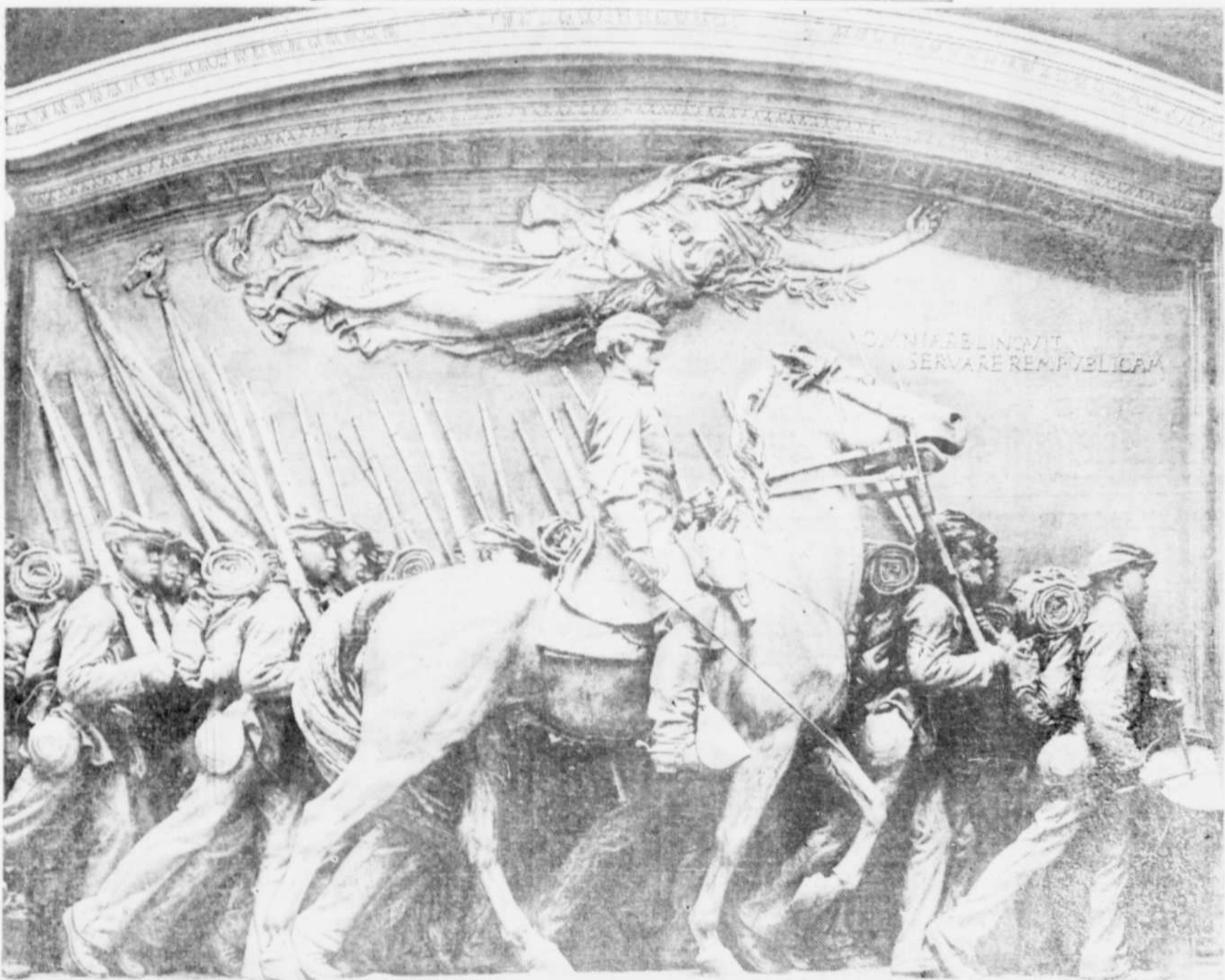
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ILLUSTRATED FEATURE SECTION—June 4, 1932

BLUE RIBBON FICTION IS FOUND EVERY WEEK IN
THE FEATURE SECTION

The World's Finest Work of Art



Robert Gould Shaw Monument on Boston Common is Masterpiece of Augustus St. Gaudens, the Greatest Sculptor America Has Produced, and for the Subject Portrayed—a Forward Moving Body of Troops—it is the Most Impressive in the World.

THE SHAW MEMORIAL, BOSTON,
BY AUGUSTUS SAINT-GAUDENS

From the book "Emancipation and the Freed in American Sculpture," by Freeman H. Murray.

Rodin, the French sculptor and greatest master of modern times, took off his hat before the Shaw monument. St. Gaudens worked on relief for twelve years. More than sixty men served as models

for the black soldiers on this panel.

EDITOR'S NOTE—This chapter was originally part of a paper read as a lecture by the author. The wording was reproduced from the book, unaltered.

On the artistic side, let it be said as a beginning, that this particular piece of sculpture is generally regarded as the finest work of art in America; and for the subject portrayed—a forward-moving body of troops—it is the most impressive in the world. I refer to the splendid and surpassingly sublime memorial to Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and his black regiment which stands on Boston

Common. It is the masterpiece of perhaps the greatest sculptor that America has yet produced, the late Augustus Saint Gaudens. It was dedicated on Decoration Day, 1897.

I need not tell you perhaps that the regiment represented is the 54th Massachusetts Volunteers, the first regiment of colored troops raised in the Free States during the Civil War.

This masterpiece is, at once, a memorial to a man, a race, and a cause. There is scarcely a limit to what properly may be said concerning this transcendent conception and its unsurpassed execution. If in American art there be any work which has an unquestioned right to be called inspired, surely this is it. One could easily spend an hour in repeating the words of description, of interpretation, and of praise which writers

and masters have bestowed upon it. William H. Drake, for example, in his book, "Twelve Great Artists," devotes about two dozen pages to it. And yet, as to the main facts and ideas, the Memorial needs no explanation; and while it permits, it does not really require, much in the way of interpretation. It largely speaks for itself if you study it in the proper spirit. Nevertheless, a few of the many words that have been written concerning it may be interesting and helpful.

Lorado Taft

Mr. Lorado Taft, in the comprehensive work from which I have quoted very liberally, gives the history of the man and the men, and of the special events which it was purposed that the memorial should commemo-

rate; and he also sets forth the largeness of the task which was set for the sculptor, and how, after years of devoted application, he rose grandly to the occasion. Mr. Taft seldom uses the superlative in his descriptions but he comes close to it in what I am about to quote, and later, when he comes to discuss the motif of this matchless work, he reaches both vividness and the superlative. He says:

It is one of the most impressive monuments of modern times—one of the masterpieces of the 19th century. There is nothing like it or suggestive of it in the annals of art.

The scene is evidently the departure of the colored troops; the leader a young man of noble mien who recognizes the significance of the fateful day (May 28, 1863), with head set square upon the broad shout-