

ADDRESS AT THE DEDICATION CEREMONIES OF THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE EXPOSITION

St. Louis, Missouri - April 30, 1903

At the outset of my address let me recall to the minds of my hearers that the soil upon which we stand, before it was ours, was successively the possession of two mighty empires, Spain and France, whose sons made a deathless record of heroism in the early annals of the New World. No history of the Western country can be written with out paying heed to the wonderful part played therein in the early days by the soldiers, missionaries, explorers, and traders, who did their work for the honor of the proud banners of France and Castile. While the settlers of English-speaking stock, and those of Dutch, German, and Scandinavian origin who were associated with them, were still clinging close to the Eastern seaboard, the pioneers of Spain and of France had penetrated deep into the hitherto unknown wilderness of the West, and had wandered far and wide within the boundaries of what is now our mighty country. The very cities themselves - St. Louis, New Orleans, Santa Fe - bear witness by their titles to the nationalities of their founders. It was not until the Revolution had begun that the English-speaking settlers pushed west across the Alleghanies, and not until a century ago that they entered in to possess the land upon which we now stand.

We have met here today to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the event which more than any other, after the foundation of the Government and always excepting its preservation, determined the character of our national life - determined that we should be a great expanding nation instead of relatively a small and stationary one.

Of course it was not with the Louisiana Purchase that our career of expansion began. In the middle of the Revolutionary War the Illinois region, including the present States of Illinois and Indiana, was added to our domain by force of arms, as a sequel to the adventurous expedition of George Rogers Clarke and his frontier riflemen. Later the treaties of Jay and Pinckney materially extended our real boundaries to the west. But none of these events was of so striking a character as to fix the popular imagination. The old thirteen colonies had always

claimed that their rights stretched westward to the Mississippi, and vague and unreal though these claims were until made good by conquest, settlement, and diplomacy, they still served to give the impression that the earliest westward movements of our people were little more than the filling in of already existing national boundaries.

But there could be no illusion about the acquisition of the vast territory beyond the Mississippi, stretching westward to the Pacific, which in that day was known as Louisiana. This immense region was admittedly the territory of a foreign power, of a European kingdom. None of our people had ever laid claim to a foot of it. Its acquisition could in no sense be treated as rounding out any existing claims. When we acquired it we made evident once for all that consciously and of set purpose we had embarked on a career of expansion, that we had taken our place among those daring and hardy nations who risk much with the hope and desire of winning high position among the great powers of the earth. As is so often the case in nature, the law of development of a living organism showed itself in its actual workings to be wiser than the wisdom of the wisest.

This work of expansion was by far the greatest work of our people during the years that intervened between the adoption of the Constitution and the outbreak of the Civil War. There were other questions of real moment and importance, and there were many which at the time seemed such to those engaged in answering them; but the greatest feat of our forefathers of those generations was the deed of the men who, with pack-train or wagon-train, on horseback, on foot, or by boat upon the waters, pushed the frontier ever westward across the continent. Never before had the world seen the kind of national expansion which gave our people all that part of the American continent lying west of the thirteen original States; the greatest landmark in which was the Louisiana Purchase. Our triumph in this process of expansion was indissolubly bound up with the success of our peculiar kind of federal government; and this success has been so complete that because of its very completeness we now sometimes fail to appreciate not only the all-importance but the tremendous difficulty of the problem with which our nation was originally faced.

When our forefathers joined to call into being this nation, they undertook a task for which there was but little encouraging precedent. The development of civilization from the earliest period seemed to show the truth of two propositions: In the first place, it had always proved exceedingly difficult to secure both

freedom and strength in any government; and in the second place, it had always proved well-nigh impossible for a nation to expand without either breaking up or becoming a centralized tyranny. With the success of our effort to combine a strong and efficient national union, able to put down disorder at home and to maintain our honor and interest abroad, I have not now to deal. This success was signal and all-important, but it was by no means unprecedented in the same sense that our type of expansion was unprecedented. The history of Rome and of Greece illustrates very well the two types of expansion which had taken place in ancient time and which had been universally accepted as the only possible types up to the period when as a nation we ourselves began to take possession of this continent. The Grecian states performed remarkable feats of colonization, but each colony as soon as created became entirely independent of the mother state, and in after years was almost as apt to prove its enemy as its friend. Local self-government, local independence, was secured, but only by the absolute sacrifice of anything resembling national unity. In consequence, the Greek world, for all its wonderful brilliancy and the extraordinary artistic, literary, and philosophical development which has made all mankind its debtors for the ages, was yet wholly unable to withstand a formidable foreign foe, save spasmodically. As soon as powerful, permanent empires arose on its outskirts, the Greek states in the neighborhood of such empires fell under their sway. National power and greatness were completely sacrificed to local liberty.

With Rome the exact opposite occurred. The imperial city rose to absolute dominion over all the peoples of Italy and then expanded her rule over the entire civilized world by a process which kept the nation strong and united, but gave no room whatever for local liberty and self-government. All other cities and countries were subject to Rome. In consequence this great and masterful race of warriors, rulers, road-builders, and administrators stamped their indelible impress upon all the after life of our race, and yet let an over-centralization eat out the vitals of their empire until it became an empty shell; so that when the barbarians came they destroyed only what had already become worthless to the world.

The underlying viciousness of each type of expansion was plain enough and the remedy now seems simple enough. But when the fathers of the Republic first formulated the Constitution under which we live this remedy was untried and no one could foretell how it would work. They themselves began the experiment almost immediately by adding new States to the original thirteen. Excellent people in the East viewed this initial expansion of the country with great alarm.

Exactly as during the colonial period many good people in the mother country thought it highly important that settlers should be kept out of the Ohio valley in the interest of the fur companies, so after we had become a nation many good people on the Atlantic coast felt grave apprehension lest they might somehow be hurt by the westward growth of the nation. These good people shook their heads over the formation of States in the fertile Ohio valley which now forms part of the heart of our nation; and they declared that the destruction of the Republic had been accomplished when through the Louisiana Purchase we acquired nearly half of what is now that same Republic's present territory. Nor was their feeling unnatural. Only the adventurous and the far-seeing can be expected heartily to welcome the process of expansion, for the nation that expands is a nation which is entering upon a great career, and with greatness there must of necessity come perils which daunt all save the most stout-hearted.

We expanded by carving the wilderness into Territories and out of these Territories building new States when once they had received as permanent settlers a sufficient number of our own people. Being a practical nation we have never tried to force on any section of our new territory an unsuitable form of government merely because it was suitable for another section under different conditions. Of the territory covered by the Louisiana Purchase a portion was given statehood within a few years. Another portion has not been admitted to statehood, although a century has elapsed - although doubtless it soon will be. In each case we showed the practical governmental genius of our race by devising methods suitable to meet the actual existing needs; not by insisting upon the application of some abstract shibboleth to all our new possessions alike, no matter how incongruous this application might sometimes be.

Over by far the major part of the territory, however, our people spread in such numbers during the course of the nineteenth century that we were able to build up State after State, each with exactly the same complete local independence in all matters affecting purely its own domestic interests as in any of the original thirteen States - each owing the same absolute fealty to the Union of all the States which each of the original thirteen States also owes, and finally each having the same proportional right to its share in shaping and directing the common policy of the Union which is possessed by any other State, whether of the original thirteen or not.

This process now seems to us part of the natural order of things, but it was wholly unknown until our own people devised it. It seems to us a mere matter of course, a matter of elementary right and justice, that in the deliberations of the national representative bodies the representatives of a State which came into the Union but yesterday stand on a footing of exact and entire equality with those of the Commonwealths whose sons once signed the Declaration of Independence. But this way of looking at the matter is purely modern, and in its origin purely American. When Washington during his Presidency saw new States come into the Union on a footing of complete equality with the old, every European nation which had colonies still administered them as dependencies, and every other mother country treated the colonist not as a self-governing equal but as a subject. The process which we began has since been followed by all the great peoples who were capable both of expansion and of self-government, and now the world accepts it as the natural process, as the rule; but a century and a quarter ago it was not merely exceptional, it was unknown.

This, then, is the great historic significance of the movement of continental expansion in which the Louisiana Purchase was the most striking single achievement. It stands out in marked relief even among the feats of a nation of pioneers, a nation whose people have from the beginning been picked out by a process of natural selection from among the most enterprising individuals of the nations of western Europe. The acquisition of the territory is a credit to the broad and far-sighted statesmanship of the great statesmen to whom it was immediately due, and above all to the aggressive and masterful character of the hardy pioneer folk to whose restless energy these statesmen gave expression and direction, whom they followed rather than led. The history of the land comprised within the limits of the Purchase is an epitome of the entire history of our people. Within these limits we have gradually built up State after State until now they many times over-surpass in wealth, in population, and in many-sided development the original thirteen States as they were when their delegates met in the Continental Congress. The people of these States have shown themselves mighty in war with their fellow-man, and mighty in strength to tame the rugged wilderness. They could not thus have conquered the forest and the prairie, the mountain and the desert, had they not possessed the great fighting virtues, the qualities which enable a people to overcome the forces of hostile men and hostile nature. On the other hand, they could not have used aright their conquest had they not in addition possessed the qualities of self-mastery and self-restraint, the power of acting in combination with their fellows, the power of yielding

obedience to the law and of building up an orderly civilization. Courage and hardihood are indispensable virtues in a people; but the people which possesses no others can never rise high in the scale either of power or of culture. Great peoples must have in addition the governmental capacity which comes only when individuals fully recognize their duties to one another and to the whole body politic, and are able to join together in feats of constructive statesmanship and of honest and effective administration.

The old pioneer days are gone, with their roughness and their hardship, their incredible toil and their wild half-savage romance. But the need for the pioneer virtues remains the same as ever. The peculiar frontier conditions have vanished; but the manliness and stalwart hardihood of the frontiersmen can be given even freer scope under the conditions surrounding the complex industrialism of the present day. In this great region acquired for our people under the Presidency of Jefferson, this region stretching from the Gulf to the Canadian border, from the Mississippi to the Rockies, the material and social progress has been so vast that alike for weal and for woe its people now share the opportunities and bear the burdens common to the entire civilized world. The problems before us are fundamentally the same east and west of the Mississippi, in the new States and in the old, and exactly the same qualities are required for their successful solution.

We meet here today to commemorate a great event, an event which marks an era in statesmanship no less than in pioneering. It is fitting that we should pay our homage in words; but we must in honor make our words good by deeds. We have every right to take a just pride in the great deeds of our forefathers; but we show ourselves unworthy to be their descendants if we make what they did an excuse for our lying supine instead of an incentive to the effort to show ourselves by our acts worthy of them. In the administration of City, State, and Nation, in the management of our home life and the conduct of our business and social relations, we are bound to show certain high and fine qualities of character under penalty of seeing the whole heart of our civilization eaten out while the body still lives.

We justly pride ourselves on our marvelous material prosperity, and such prosperity must exist in order to establish a foundation upon which a higher life can be built; but unless we do in very fact build this higher life thereon, the material prosperity itself will go for but very little. Now, in 1903, in the altered conditions, we must meet the changed and changing problems with the spirit

shown by the men who in 1803 and in the subsequent years gained, explored, conquered, and settled this vast territory, then a desert, now filled with thriving and populous States.

The old days were great because the men who lived in them had mighty qualities; and we must make the new days great by showing these same qualities. We must insist upon courage and resolution, upon hardihood, tenacity, and fertility in resource; we must insist upon the strong virile virtues; and we must insist no less upon the virtues of self-restraint, self mastery, regard for the rights of others; we must show our abhorrence of cruelty, brutality, and corruption, in public and in private life alike. If we come short in any of these qualities we shall measurably fail; and if, as I believe we surely shall, we develop these qualities in the future to an even greater degree than in the past, then in the century now beginning we shall make of this Republic the freest and most orderly, the most just and most mighty, nation which has ever come forth from the womb of time.