

## THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE.

*(Continued from last week.)*

The first consul, under the pressure of European hostilities, was contemplating an act of transcendent importance to our country. He had secretly held all of Louisiana at his disposal since October, 1800, although our ministers in France and Spain had been kept in ignorance of it. So late as in the spring of 1803 Talleyrand deceptively denied the French title in a conversation with Livingston. But now a renewal of the war with England was threatened. The British navy was dominant on the sea, and an English expedition might at any time seize New Orleans, and France would lose the colony without compensation. His thoughts were already bent on a sale to the United States by which he hoped not only to satisfy our large pecuniary claims which we were pressing against his government, but to obtain besides a large surplus to reinforce his treasury for the coming war. He directed Marbois, the minister of finance, to offer the entire province of Louisiana to the United States, and to demand in compensation 100,000,000 francs, together with the assumption by our government of the American claims against France for her outrages on our commerce. He said to his advisers, with some passion in his voice, that England coveted that colony and could easily make a descent there; but she should not have it. For France to retain it would be folly. He would cede the whole to the United States. This was the situation when Monroe arrived in Paris; for this startling proposal had been already communicated to Livingston, who could hardly credit the sincerity of the offer.

The prospect of this vast and complete acquisition which would for the second time eliminate French control from the American continent and settle the question of commercial depots forever, aroused intense interest in both the American envoys, but especially in the mind of Livingston. Communication with the United States by occasional sailing vessels was slow and uncertain. In that day neither telegraph nor steamship was available. A royal message to the English parliament had just announced the British preparation for renewing the war with France. If anything was to be done with Louisiana it must be done quickly. Our envoys could not wait for new instructions. With true American courage they resolved to take the responsibility upon themselves, and without authority win a new empire for the new republic. They protested against the extravagance of the sum demanded as beyond the resources of the American government, and succeeded in reducing the amount of purchase money to 60,000,000 francs, and in limiting the assumption of

American claims to 20,000,000 francs. They then concluded the three treaties with all haste. They were signed on the 30th of April, 1803. The war cloud hanging over the English channel burst eighteen days after the signature. When the names of the plenipotentiaries were appended to this unexpected convention of purchase, Livingston enthusiastically grasped the hands of Marbois and Monroe, saying: "We have lived long, but this is the noblest work of our lives." The praise for this magnificent accomplishment is more due to Robert R. Livingston than to any other American; and some city or county in every state formed out of this imperial purchase should bear his name in commemoration of his courageous statesmanship.

## Effects of the Expansion.

The purchase money was indeed a great sum to pay out of the limited treasury and unestablished national credit of the United States of that day. Bitter opposition was aroused in this country against the ratification of the treaty. The acquisition was derided as of little worth, wholly unnecessary, and tending to weaken the old states. It was declared to be an excessive extension of territory which would lead to a disruption of the union. The prophets of woe were as effusive then over the enlargement of our territory as they have been ever since over the successive expansions in our national history. The evil predictions of 1803 are now buried deep in the drift of time. The very names of the false prophets are in oblivion, while the many happy millions who inhabit the twelve states and two territories now lying within the limits of the Louisiana purchase have forever repudiated the old forecasts of evil. Instead of diminishing, the older states have greatly increased their population and prosperity with the settlement and development of the new. The newer states have also forged new bands for the strengthening of the union. The bravest blood offered to the nation in its struggle for the maintenance of the national power and glory abroad, has flowed from the veins of men who were nourished on this new soil of the republic. Patriotism, courage, energy, flow forth with every heartbeat of the child of the new west. He has subdued the savagery which dominated the prairies and plains and mountains of the Louisiana of 1803. He has covered the rolling prairies and plains with grazing herds and smiling harvests, with school-houses for happy children and churches for an untrammelled religion. He has uncovered the hidden caves of rich metals in the great mountains of northwestern Louisiana, and has enriched his whole country with the elements of a new and unbounded prosperity. Whenever and wherever his nation's flag has been thrown to the

breeze at home or abroad, in Mexico or Alaska, in Cuba or other Islands of the sea, under the great wall of China or in the mountain fastness of Luzon, wherever deeds of loyalty, of courage and of daring are required, there, in the front rank of volunteers, is heard the quick response of the loyal sons of the west. New strength has been acquired for the constitution and union, new hope for the country's prosperity is created, with every new breath born in the expanded territory of our republic.

It may be confidently affirmed that our national character has not deteriorated during the century in which we have followed the providential law of our national growth and development. We have seen in what manner this law was introduced and historically established. I call it providential because neither our statesmen nor our people proposed it, or foresaw it. The national representatives of that day, including Jefferson himself, when informed of the convention signed by our envoys in Paris doubted its constitutionality, or were astounded by the resulting increase of the public debt. They adopted it chiefly because of the evident perils to existing national interests which would follow its rejection.

The whole story of Louisiana involves much that is dramatic and unexpected. De Soto merely crossed its central river and died without discovering its mouth or exploring its course, although his decimated followers later escaped through its outlet without any act of possession. Consequently Spain acquired no title to the river valley. Then came France, whose explorers from Canada made discoveries from the sources downward, and later found its outlet by sea and took possession upward. Her right to the country was therefore beyond dispute. Had the French retained possession of all their discoveries they would have imprisoned the future American republic between the Alleghanies and the Atlantic. But this was not the divine purpose. England conquered Canada, and eastern Louisiana followed the fate of her sister province and became British colonial territory. As a consequence, the latter fell to the United States upon the recognition of their independence. So it happened that our people at the end of the revolutionary war found themselves in possession as far as the Mississippi, but they were barred from all other western progress so long as Spain held all the vast territory west of the river.

## What Might Have Been.

Had our boundary remained there for a hundred years no human mind can conceive the change it would have made in the destiny of this nation. Without the wheat fields and corn fields and the cattle ranges of the prairies and plains of the trans-Mississippi, without the lead and iron ores of Missouri, without