

the vast deposits of gold and silver and copper of the western mountain ranges, with no roads across the continent, with no harbors on the Pacific coast, without possession of the mouth of the Mississippi, without any access to the Gulf of Mexico, above all without the inspiration to our individual activities and national development that these sources of wealth have afforded—no human intellect, no poet's imagination, can portray what would have been our fate or our condition today, as influenced or controlled by the nations which might have possessed them. What wars might have ensued, what liberties might have perished, what miseries might have befallen!

But at the providential moment there appeared upon the European horizon a new and dominant personal force in the French republic which overawed Spain, and her king yielded to the demand of "Citizen" Bonaparte, and restored Louisiana to France. This again threatened to be a more serious obstacle to our growth than was the power of Spain; for the military force of France was far greater. But two years later France finds it impracticable to retain Louisiana owing to her naval inferiority to England, and Bonaparte suddenly, without the knowledge of the government at Washington, conveys the title finally and forever to the United States. Even then Spain, alarmed at the absolute and final disposal of the country by France, protests our title because of an alleged condition attached to her retrocession to France. This condition was officially notified to the United States, that Louisiana should never be conveyed by France to a third power. But Bonaparte imperatively insisted that delivery should be made to him under the cession of 1800, which was done; and he immediately thereafter, on the 20th of December, 1803, transferred the possession of New Orleans to the United States. The Lewis and Clark expedition, conceived without expectation of our possible ownership, was thus enabled to explore the territory of Louisiana under our own flag. But we had at that time no acknowledged title to the country westward of the mountains to the Pacific coast. Spain, Great Britain and Russia were on the coast before us. Equally in the order of providence, and just in time, the New England Capt. Gray, under the American flag, was the first to enter the mouth of the great river of Oregon in 1792, which under international law gave to the United States the claim of discovery; and this claim was strongly reinforced by the succeeding exploration of Lewis and Clark. With this inchoate right on the Pacific coast the United States was able by later treaties to permanently establish our title on that shore, with well defined limits between the Spanish ter-

ritory on the south and the British on the north.

Held by Force of Arms.

Our acquisition of Louisiana had been accomplished by the pacific methods of diplomacy. But the permanent possession of it by our union was only to be preserved at the cost of great treasure and by the sacrifice of many lives. In less than twelve years from the date of the cession by France, while we were at war with Great Britain, that power dispatched an expedition to seize the mouth of the river, accompanied by an army for the capture of New Orleans. The men of the lower valley rushed to arms, met the enemy, and drove him back to the sea. The dramatic feature of Louisiana's history again appears in the fact that this battle was fought after the signature of peace, of which the tidings had not yet reached the combatants. This battle, however, brilliant as it was on the part of the American volunteers, hardly rises to the dignity of tragedy in comparison with the prolonged struggle which followed a half century later.

This incomparable valley, dowered with inexhaustible wealth, and like Helen, of Troy, possessed of the fatal gift of beauty, was destined to become the scene of the greatest conflict known in the history of the American continent—a conflict, please God! never to be renewed. On the 30th day of May, devoted by the affection of the American people to the memory of the heroes of the war for the union, we cannot forget the splendid services of the men, who by their indomitable courage again saved the lower Mississippi to the United States, together with all the original Louisiana on both banks below the mouth of the Ohio.

In our great civil struggle Louisiana and its river once more became the mighty stake played for in the terrible game of war. Again the question was presented of the northern right of access to the sea by way of the river, and of the control of the delta at its mouth. Vaster commercial interests than ever before were in suspense. Once more, also, a Bonaparte appeared on the borders of the scene gazing eagerly from Mexico upon the still coveted territory which had been ceded by his great predecessor. The brave and stalwart men of the valley, in former contests united, were now unhappily divided into hostile camps. As never before, it was now a battle of giants, equally brave, equally resolved. The issue hung long in a balance, the opposing scales of which were filled with the blood of the brave. But the great hearted men of the upper valley clothed themselves in the panoply of the union, drew in a mighty inspiration from the sentiment of expanding human liberty, and fought four long years to regain the untrammelled freedom of the great river

from all its sources to the sea. The bones of our heroic dead who perished in that fearful struggle lie scattered along all the river shores from the Missouri to the gulf. But they did not die in vain. We owe it to their unfaltering courage that since the end of these years of battle, and we trust for all time to come, every rivulet that falls eastward down the rugged ranges of the Rocky Mountains, or that ripples southward from the far springs of the Canadian frontier, or that leaps westward down the slopes of the Alleghanies, dances along all its winding way through the old Louisiana to the southern sea under the folds of the star spangled banner, and to the music of the union. All hail to the memory of these heroic dead; and all hail to their comrades who live to salute the dawn of this day dedicated to the memory of their deeds!

Such is the outline of the story of Louisiana, first tossed to and fro between France and Spain, and then imperiously tossed by the French executive to the envoys of the United States. Later it was twice subjected to the wager of battle. Its acquisition is especially significant in our history, as it was the first enlargement of that original territory which our fathers thought sufficient for our children until the "hundredth generation." Based upon Louisiana, the republic continued its expansion across the middle of the continent from the great ocean of the sunrise to the greater ocean of the sunset. Our republic did not dream yet of the wider expansion which was still enfolded in the shadow of her future destiny. She awaited the reappearance of the index finger of Providence.

Conclusions.

But important events of history have taught us one great truth of our heredity as a people. Expansion is in the blood of our race. Organized liberty demands a broadening sphere of action. A single generation may pause to organize and utilize what a previous one has acquired. But a succeeding generation will reassert the inherent impulse of the race. Under christian auspices it is the providential law which from age to age opens up new regions to the influences of higher civilization and uplifts the inferior races by contact with the superior. The right to enforce the civilized usages among mankind is higher and holier than the right to maintain barbaric practices and inhuman laws. The better has an inherent moral right to expand over the worse. The justice and humanity of the motive will forever consecrate the onward movement with a divine sanction. Peace and order, liberty and prosperity, education and morality, have hitherto followed the advancing flag of the American republic. Wild beasts have