

had been reached, had been navigated with its current for a whole month ; its course was known, its value and importance were known, and now these two, crowned with success, were to bear back to civilization the knowledge acquired, and to tell astonished Europe that the canvas-winged ship could penetrate into the very heart of the American continent by one of the mightiest rivers of earth.

As they stood there on the 17th of July, 1673, they felt that their work was accomplished. Its importance they saw more clearly than most of their generation, but with all their gaze into futurity they would have been prophets, indeed, could they have dreamed of the Mississippi as we behold it, could they realize what I behold.

What a change from that solitary group of white men on the river's brink, with a handful of savages and a wretched Indian hamlet, to the millions in splendid cities and towns, in cultured farms and teeming plantations ; the home of science, literature, art, invention ; bearing the richest fruits of material, æsthetic, intellectual development.

We meet to share the joy of Marquette and Joliet on that memorable day, and to pay our tribute of honor to the two men whose studies led to the expedition, who so bravely undertook and so satisfactorily effected the exploration.

Joliet and Marquette are well worthy of a nation's reverence. The discovery of the Mississippi was not a mere chance encounter in an aimless roving. It was well considered, planned on information long and patiently acquired, and carried out with prudence, caution, and exact observation.

Spain knew of a great river traversing this land, but she took no steps to explore it or study its future bearing on the interests of mankind. The remnant of the expedition under Pamphilo de Narvaez may be pardoned for giving no great thought to the mighty river which formed such an obstacle in their fatal course from Florida of disaster to some outpost of their countrymen in Mexico. Soto, "the fourth and greatest tyrant," as Las Casas calls him, reached the river and ascended it, unconscious that it was to be his tomb. It is not impossible that he stood with his gaunt and half-naked band, red with Indian blood, and