

To this sacred spot then we have come this day to render duly our reverent expression of praise and thanksgiving.

It has been well said that God acts through His prepared agencies, and that He prepared Virginia to place the seal of His favor on and the Virginia colonists and their successors as His instruments to accomplish His mighty work.

On this sacred spot, chastened by the solemn associations which this holy ground evokes, we cannot but echo this thought; and when I speak of Virginia, it is not so much the present Virginia that I bear in mind as that "Old Virginia," whose eastern shores extended from her Floridian confines on the south to the forty-fifth degree of north latitude on the north, and whose border to the westward reached to "the furthest sea."

From her northeastern territory of "North Virginia," charted by and cleared of invaders by her Governors, came New England; and from her southern, her western and her northwestern territory, explored and conquered by her sons, have come all the States from the Carolinas to the "Furthest Sea."

In fact, this occasion belongs to all America. This spot belongs to the continent. The heart of it is Old Virginia; the core of the heart is this spot. But the body to which this heart and this heart's core belong is this Land—this People, whose representatives from all over the Union are assembled here today. Virginian as I am in every fibre of my being, I declare my belief before the High God that this spot belongs by indefeasible title to all the people of this country, and that there is no power under heaven to defeat their claim. To Massachusetts and Maine and New York and Michigan as to Kentucky and West Virginia, I say, it is yours—here our forefathers first planted the tree whose fruit was to be for the salvation of the nations. We hold it, but as a sacred trust for all. For here was the cradle not only of the Commonwealth of Virginia, but of the Republic.