

## THEODORE ROOSEVELT

AT THE DINNER TO CHAUNCEY M. DEPEW, MARCH 11, 1899

I AM glad to have the chance to be one of those who join in honoring Senator Depew to-night. It has seemed to me to speak well for our politics that we should send to the Senate, in his person, a man who has won his place fairly and squarely by years of long service in the political arena—service given disinterestedly, because the man deemed that he should give expression to the faith that was in him, should fight for the principles in which he believed.

I am glad that we shall have in the Senate a man whom we don't have to explain, of whom we don't have to say when asked who the man is, "Why, he is the senator from New York," instead of saying, "He is Chauncey Depew!" And we can all the more count upon the political service to which we are entitled from our representative at Washington because he is a man who has already won his spurs in the political arena; because, gentlemen, though he is a New-Yorker, he is even more, for he is an American.

Now, I am glad that you should have as guests at your table to-night with the newly elected senator of the State, representatives of one of the two branches of a service, the welfare of which should be closest to the hearts of all Americans, because no American has

any local or pecuniary interest in their welfare—the army and the navy.

As you know, I am an expansionist; and I am an expansionist because I believe that this people must play the part of a great people; because I believe it must do its share in the hard work of the world; because I don't think it is good for a nation, any more than for an individual, to spend all the time introspectively in the affairs of its own household merely. It will manage them all the better if it has outside interests. It must manage those interests from a double standpoint. It is bound to manage them from the standpoint of the honor of America and from the standpoint of the interests of the people governed.

Now, we can't do our duty, we can't do the task to which we have put our hands, if we don't set about it with a sober realization of what the task is. In other words, if we don't have in the national Legislature men who remember that greater than any debt that they owe to any locality is the debt they owe all America; that greater than any one interest is the interest of all the people. I have the utmost confidence in our people, but I regret to state that I believe that at times we slumber. And he is a poor patriot who fails to point out where we come short, in order that we may remedy the shortcoming.

Did you see a little item the other day to the effect that one of the towns in Alaska had expressed its desire to shift from under the flag of the United States, because it had never been worth while for the people of this country to try to give Alaska a really good government? I do not know whether the item was

true; but we have, as a people, been guilty in the past about Alaska. Not another session of Congress should go by without our giving to Alaska the kind of government to which any dependency, colony, territory—whatever you choose to call it—is entitled; until we have made it an object of pride to an Alaskan to be an American, not to wish to become something else.

Now, why has n't Alaska received the proper government? Because it is in nobody's district. If Alaska had been a public building, had been a post-office, there would have been fifty congressmen striving to build it up! I thank our good fortune that we have in Senator Depew a man who will be sensitive to the honor of the flag, will realize what the real interest of America is, and will do his part in making it impossible hereafter for such a thing to occur as that which has come to light concerning that Alaskan town.

Now, gentlemen, you listened to General Merritt tonight, and you heard what many of us knew, that there were times in the summer of 1898 when we were within measurable distance of a conflict with some foe far more formidable than Spain. I earnestly hope that we shall have peace for all time with every nation; but I know, as you know, that peace comes to the strong man armed, and not to the weakling. Should at any time peace be broken, should there be a war five or six years hence, every man in the Senate of the United States who two weeks ago refused, upon any plea whatsoever, to give us the ships to which we were entitled must bear his share of responsibility for the danger that may come upon us, for the disgrace to which we may be exposed. A year ago I was in the Navy Department

at the time of the outbreak of war with a power entirely inferior to us as regards its navy, and I saw then the panic into which our coast was thrown by the threat of war with Spain. I listened to the deputations from city after city all along the coast, who came to explain that some warship must be anchored off their particular town. I listened to the panic—for a panic it was—that found utterance in a nervous grasping after so much as the semblance of protection. It has all gone off now. People forget its existence. It did not have any cause to exist then, but there may be genuine cause for such a panic in the future if we get into war with some great nation, if we find ourselves face to face with an issue where we have either to court national disgrace by backing down or to stand up and try the wager of battle. It is the duty of every patriotic American to see that the United States is armed to meet such a crisis, to see that it has a navy fit for its work, and to see that it has an army fit for its work.

Last July it was my good fortune to listen to the thunder of General Randolph's guns at Santiago; and because General Randolph fought so well and because the men under him fought so well, these guns served their purpose. But how do you feel, as Americans, for having furnished General Randolph with guns that used black powder, which made every gun, immediately after its discharge, the target for every Spaniard within a mile and a quarter; which left us inferior to the most backward nation of Europe (the nation against which we were pitted) in the quality of the powder used in our guns? Was that creditable to

Americans as a patriotic and business people? I think not.

Furthermore, in times past we were economical about our gunners, and did n't let them have much target practice. We wanted to economize cartridges. This great wealthy people could not pay for cartridges to be used in training its men to shoot! Now, Americans do make splendid soldiers. They shoot well naturally. But they have got to be helped by training, or their natural capacity will count for nothing. Go out and try the experiment yourself—some of you use the rifle—try to reach the target by the light of original reason, without practice, and see how far you will get in the experiment. Although the regular army men are very good men, they are only men after all. You have got to give them the right tools, and you have got to give them a chance to practise with those tools. We must have our navy exercised in fleets, our army exercised in great field evolutions as an army.

We need an army, we need a navy, because we have got to work out a great destiny; and we have a right to demand that this country, when it meets its great destiny, shall be so fitted, so armed, so equipped that it can make a record which shall be a source of pride to each and every American within its borders. If we do not prepare thoroughly in advance we can never make such a record, and then shame will cover us, and we ourselves, who fail to prepare, will be responsible for the shame.

# SPEECHES AT THE LOTOS CLUB

ARRANGED BY

JOHN ELDERKIN

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