THANKSGIVING ADDRESS NOVEMBER 30, 1922.
HOTEL DE LONDRES

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

This is the sixth Thanksgiving Dinner of the American Colony at Antwerp. At our dinner last year, we reached perhaps the high water mark so far as numbers are concerned, one hundred and eighty-nine of us sat down to the feast. Those of the colony here present to-night who organized the first Thanksgiving Dinner at Antwerp and are so largely responsible for the transplanting of this American custom in this Old World city, little dreamed that in 1922, one hundred and fifty of us would gather about the Thanksgiving board.

Thanksgiving Day is a truly American holiday, both in its spirit and in the manner of its celebration. It is not the glorification of a national hero such as Washington's birthday, nor the celebration of a national achievement like the Fourth of July; it is not a day of processions and speeches, and ordinary merry-making. It preserves in this
this sophisticated generation much of
the primitive character of the first Thanks-
giving Day when the sturdy New England
Colonists gathered about the simple board
and offered thanks to Almighty God for
their deliverance from famine and pestilence
and the threat of extermination. Today, in
every village and town and city of our
great country, from Atlantic to Pacific,
and the Great Lakes to the Gulf, the
wheels of industry have stopped. The bells
of the churches have sent their clarion
calls thru that brisk November air and
reunited families in response to the call
have gathered in the churches to offer
thanks for the blessings we have received from the Almighty as a nation and as
individuals. I picture to myself as I
speak, the scene which is repeating itself
in so many churches in America today, and
I see most vividly the village street.
with its family groups returning from the service and looking with eager anticipation to the reunion about the Thanksgiving table. It requires no effort of memory for me to recall how eagerly we youngsters awaited the arrival at the table of the Thanksgiving turkey, bringing in its train the aroma of a whole multitude of delicious things. Long may our family Thanksgiving Dinner continue a feature of our national life. The scattered family reunited, the sons from the distant city or school and the daughters from their newly made homes. What memories that Thanksgiving reunion invokes in everyone of us. Somewhere today at home, in a great city or in a quiet village, a family circle has been incomplete because we are here, but loving hearts have thought of us and offered their silent prayer for us.
It is only a naive and simple people that can keep a feast like Thanksgiving Day and we who live abroad among the older civilisations of the world are sometimes a bit bewildered and wonder whether we have anything to be thankful for! It seems that it has become the fashion abroad today to decry America just as it was the fashion in 1917 to extol her. We are told that we are responsible for the Peace of Versailles and for its failure to bring peace. Germany's failure to pay or not to be able to pay is laid to our door. Our financiers are accused of being the cause of the deranged exchanges and of the high cost of living. We are told that the crisis in the Near East and the menace to the peace of Europe are due to us because we refuse to take certain mandates and settle a problem which is centuries old. We are thus criticized for what we are supposed to have done.
or failed to have done abroad; but, not content with that, we are abused and decried and ridiculed for what we have done at home - because we have prohibition, because we have a tariff, because we are making an honest effort to build up a merchant marine. It is enough to bewilder us. It is enough to arouse our just ire, but I am happy to say that we are more surprised than angry, and instead of being filled with resentment, we are profoundly regretful that some of our friends should so soon forget than in 1917 and 1918, we poured an army of over two million of the flower of our manhood into Europe and spent over twenty billions of dollars of our national wealth in aiding Europe to rid herself of a scourge that was threatening to destroy the best in her life and institutions; that they
should forget that this was done more on sentimental grounds than because we felt ourselves vitally threatened by that scourge.

In spite of the sloppy, unfounded and irresponsible statements of some Americans, who have poured forth their allegations abroad as to what we should or should not have done (they being actuated only by the thought of self-advertisement or by the desire to add a new ribbon to their collection), I am inclined to believe that what we did in 1917 and 1918 should be sufficient to convince our friends in Europe that we are not insensible to what goes on outside of our country, that we are certainly not responsible for the ills of the world, and that when real need arises, our blood and our treasure are poured forth without stint.
It is not necessary that I should for you, my fellow countrymen, undertake a defence of America, and nor is it necessary to explain to you, our guests, the real America, for the fact that you are here indicates that such explanation is not necessary for you. Sometimes, Americans abroad feel that our people should do more in the way of explaining our attitude, that we should undertake propaganda to make commonly known our political ideals and our social and economic institutions. That we have not done so is a credit to our self-control, and I may say to our wisdom. Propaganda is one of the ills from which the world suffers today, for the stress on conflicting national ideals today occupies the minds of peoples to such an extent that there is no room nor time for the considera-
consideration and the working out
of the social and economic reforms
that are necessary to restore product-
ive activity, to increase human com-
fort and create consequent new demands
and thus to increase the sum of human
happiness and national wealth.

Goethe says in a beautiful way,
where, I cannot remember at this time,
that the finest work a man can do, is to
keep the snow swept away from his own
front door. That is a big work for any
man to do. It is all the ordinary man is
able to do. I venture to suggest that it
is as much as a nation is really able to
do. When we brought our two million
and more men back to our shores as soon as the
menace to Europe was over and hastened to
apply their labor to the productive in-
dustries of peace, and diverted them from
from the destruction and ravages of war, when we proceeded to center our activities on reorganizing our disarranged social and economic life, we were like good householders sweeping the snow away from our own front door. I sometimes think that our friends, when they complain about our failure to reconstruct the world, not only pay us too great a compliment, but forget that we had also a house to set in order. For when we went into the World War, we went into it with the driving force of 110 million who bent every energy to helping to win the war, and the engine of war is not turned into the ploughshare of peace in a day.

If I have, without really setting out with the intention of doing so, allowed myself to make a few remarks
on the considerations which are so constantly thrust on Americans abroad, it is with the object of preparing the way to assuring you that in spite of it, all our country has not changed and that we too have much to be thankful for to-day, as a people and as individuals.

We have to be thankful that we have retained as a nation our enthusiasms and our youth. We have lost none of our ideals. Witness that when within the last few months hundreds of thousands of people had to abandon their homes in Thrace, the American Red Cross prepared itself to spend twenty millions of dollars in relieving the sufferings of the miserable refugees so far as it is possible to relieve it.

We have to be thankful for the continued and increased interest in
in public education among our people. The little red school house which was the foundation of our national strength is being rapidly replaced by the consolidated school to which the children are carried in comfortable motor-busses. Instead of a curriculum confined to the three R's, the child in the most remote and isolated section of the country has the opportunity to pass thru the twelve grades with specialized training along agricultural and vocational lines. Our high schools are no longer confined to the city or towns but in every village and even in the midst of the country, these magnificent structures are arising. Free tuition, free books, vocational training and unrestricted opportunity to every boy and girl in the country, are an achievement.
of which we may be proud and for which we should be profoundly thankful.

We have to be thankful that we are a homogeneous people, homogeneous in our customs, in our ideas, in our language. Have we ever stopped to think that we have at home, throughout the wide expanse of our territory a hundred million people speaking the same language, that there are no dialects, and that the only difference between North and South and East and West are a few idioms or peculiarities in intonation or pronunciation. We have to be thankful for this common medium of expression which is one of the safeguards of our unity and solidarity. And we have to be thankful that we are still a religious people. What a significance there is in the church
church bells which rang in America to-day! In the simple trust in the Deity! In the family worship! In the thanks to the Almighty for the material and spiritual blessings we have received!

We have to be thankful for the spirit of our rich and leisureed class. It is true that our spirit in America is to make, but it is also to give and give. Benefactions to hospitals, and schools and organized charities, to research in science and medicine and every conceivable form of altruistic effort grow space until the annual figures are astonishing. The healthy feature is that it not only the rich which give, but that the spirit of giving is general and that each gives of that which
which he has.
The bases of our national life
my friends, are secure. We may with
security look forward to the future.
As long as we keep the simple virtues
of those hardy Puritans who sat down
to the first Thanksgiving feast, as
long as we keep the snow swept away
from our own front door, as long as
we keep our eyes open and our hearts
responsive to human need and suffer-
ing wherever it may be, the fabric
which we have built up will be safe
and secure, and when the need arises,
we shall be prepared in the future,
as we have in the past, to struggle
with our blood and our treasures
for these ideals.