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ADDRESS OF GEORGE S. MESSERSMITH, AMERICAN
AMBASSADOR TO MEXICO, ON THE OPENING OF THE
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN LIBRARY IN MEXICO CITY, ON
THE EVENING OF April 13, 1942.

(Not for publication before 7 p.m.
Mexico City time, 9 p.m. New York
City time.)

I wish at the outset of my brief remarks to express the deep appreciation of my Government and of the people of my country as well as my personal gratitude to His Excellency the President of Mexico, General Manuel Avila Camacho, for his fine courtesy in consenting to be present and to take part in the ceremony of this evening. It is indeed an encouraging circumstance that the Executive of this great neighboring Republic should join with us in formally opening the Benjamin Franklin Library of Mexico City. I should also like to extend special greetings to the other high officials of the Mexican Government who have done us the honor of being present tonight, and to my distinguished colleagues of the diplomatic corps representing the sister Republics of the Hemisphere. The establishment of this Library represents, I believe, one of the important and significant forward steps in the long history of the relations between our two countries.

The Library is the result of cooperative and collaborative effort in which various agencies of our Government have worked together with the American Library Association to make this project possible. It is proper that we should express this evening particular appreciation to Messrs. Brown, Milam and Milezewski of the American Library Association for the contribution which they have made in connection with this undertaking. Particular appreciation is due to Dr. Harry M. Lydenberg, distinguished scholar and librarian, formerly Director of the New York Public Library, who has consented to organize this Library and to become its first Director.

It is our hope that this Library will make a positive and worthwhile contribution to the cause of better understanding between Mexico and the United States. The Library will endeavor as far as possible to make available the most significant works by writers and scholars of the United States. In addition, a representative collection of current periodicals published in the United States will be maintained. While it will obviously not be possible for a library of this size and of its modest resources to meet all the needs of both the specialists and the general readers, every effort has been made and will be made to consider the interests of both of these groups.

The Library is assembling a representative collection of Mexican works in order that persons coming here may

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have access to the most important thought of the leading writers and scholars of this country.

Over and above this mission of making available important books and publications issued in Mexico and the United States, the Library will make use of other cultural media such as educational motion pictures. Every effort will be made to obtain a steady stream of some of the leading educational motion pictures produced in the United States and these will be exhibited at periodical intervals in the Library. It is further hoped to provide facilities whereby microfilms and other photographic reproductions of important documents can be obtained and utilized, so that this important aid to present-day scholarly research can be available.

Further branches of the activity of the Library include making a room available for blind readers, to be provided with books in Braille through the generosity of the Junior League of Mexico City. I venture to believe that the room which has been set aside for children and stocked with books appropriate for them in both languages will prove of great value. This room will be under the special care of Señorita María Teresa Chávez, who has had long experience in this and other fields of library work.

It is also my hope that the Library will become in fact a genuine cultural center where citizens of Mexico may freely come and mingle with my fellow-citizens resident in this hospitable country. It has given me a great deal of gratification to know that there are plans through which a group of prominent Mexicans and some of my countrymen interested in intensifying cultural contacts between our countries will utilize the facilities of the Library to arrange lectures by Mexican and American authorities and in promoting conferences and meetings designed to further the objectives for which they are organized.

It is my conviction that despite the fact that much remains to be done to bring together our two peoples into that closer understanding and mutual knowledge which is so essential in the interest of both countries and of the Americas, and if I may say so, of the world, encouraging progress towards this goal is being made. I think all of us experience a deep sense of satisfaction that in these critical days of war and strife when we are struggling to maintain our very sovereignty, our very existence, and all the institutions which we cherish, we maintain our appreciation of cultural values and are taking the proper steps to intensify them among ourselves and among the peoples of the world, for these ties of understanding, together with mutual respect, form the firm cornerstone of peaceful, productive and constructive relationships between States.