

## XIV

## DEDICATION OF TOWN-HOUSE, WESTON

NOVEMBER 27, 1917

I WAS interested to come out here and take part in the dedication of this beautiful building in part because my ancestors had lived in this locality in times gone past, but more especially because I am interested in the town governments of Massachusetts. You have heard the town-meeting referred to this evening. It seemed to me that the towns in this Commonwealth correspond in part to what we might call the water-tight compartments of the ship of state, and while sometimes our State Government has wavered, sometimes it has been suspended, and it has been thought that the people could not care for themselves under those conditions. Whenever that has arisen the towns of the Commonwealth have come to the rescue and been able to furnish the foun-

dation and the strength on which might not only be carried on, but on which might again be erected the failing government of the Commonwealth or the failing government of the Nation. So that I know nothing to which we New Englanders owe more, and especially the people of Massachusetts, of our civil liberties than we do to our form of town government.

The history of Weston has been long and interesting, beginning, as your town seal designates, back in 1630, when Watertown was recognized as one of the three or four towns in the Commonwealth; set off by boundaries into the Farmers' Precinct in 1698, and becoming incorporated as a town in 1713. There begins a long and honorable history. Of course, the first part of it gathered to a large degree around the church. The first church was started here, I think, in 1695, and I believe that the land on which it was to be erected was purchased of a man who bore my name. Your first

clergyman seems to have been settled about 1702; and the long and even tenor of your ways here and your devotion to things which were established is perhaps shown and exemplified in the fact that during the next one hundred and seventy-four years, coming clear down to 1876, you had but six clergymen presiding over that church. You have an example here now, along the same line, in the long tenure of office that has come to your present town clerk, he having been first elected, I believe, in 1864 and having held office from that time to this, probably serving as long, if not longer, than any of the town clerks of Massachusetts, certainly, I believe, the longest of any present living town clerk.

There are many interesting things connected with the history of this town. It bore its part in the Indian Wars. Here was organized an Indian fighting expedition that went to the North, and, though some of the men in that expedition were lost and the

expedition was not altogether successful, it showed the spirit, the resolution, the bravery, and the courage which animated the men of those days.

Mr. Young has referred to that day in Massachusetts history that we are all so proud of, the Nineteenth of April, 1775. But you had an interesting event here in this town leading up to that great day. General Gage was in command of the British forces at Boston. There had been gathered supplies for carrying on a war out here through Middlesex County and out to the west in Worcester. History tells us that he sent out here Sergeant Howe and other spies, in order that he might find out what the conditions were and whether it would be easy for the British troops to come out here and seize those supplies and break what they thought was the idea on the part of the colonists of starting a rebellion. Sergeant Howe came out here, went to the hotel, where, of course, the landlord re-

ceived him hospitably, but informed him that probably it would n't be a healthy place for him to stay for a very long time, and sent him away in the dead of the night. He went back to Boston and made a report to the General in which he said that the people of this vicinity were generally resolved to be free or to die. That was the spirit of those times; and he advised the Britishers that if they wanted to go out to Worcester they would probably need an expedition of ten thousand men and a sufficient train of artillery, and he doubted whether, if such an expedition as that were sent out, any part of it would return alive. On account of the report that he brought back it was determined by the British authorities that it was more prudent to go up to Concord than it was to come out here on the way to Worcester. That was the reason that the expedition on that Nineteenth of April was started for Concord rather than through here for Worcester.

Of course, there are many other interesting events in the history of this town. You had here many men who have seen military service. You furnished a large number for the Revolutionary War and a large amount of money. You furnished as your quota one hundred and twenty-six soldiers that went into the army from 1861 to 1865. But you were doing here what they were doing all over the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. I doubt if the leading and prominent and decisive part that Massachusetts played in the great Revolutionary War is generally understood. It is interesting to recall that when General Washington came here he seems to have come with somewhat of a prejudice against New England men. I think there are extant letters which he wrote at that time rather reflecting upon what the New England men were doing and the character of Massachusetts men of those days. But that was not his idea at the end of the war. Then, although he had been brought

up far to the south, he had a different idea. Then he said, and said very generously, that he thought well of New England men and had it not been for their support, had it not been for the men, the materials and munitions that they supplied to the Revolutionary forces, the war would not have been a success. His name is interestingly connected with your town of Weston.

You have had here not only an interesting population but an interesting location. It was through this town that the great arteries of travel ran to the west and south and to the north. When Burgoyne surrendered, some of his troops were brought through this town on their way to the sea-coast. When Washington came up to visit New England after he had been President, he came through the town of Weston, and I do not know whether this is any reflection on the cooking of those days in the towns to the west, but it says in the history of the town of Weston that at one time

when Washington stopped at the hotel in Wayland, although the hostess had provided what she thought was a very fine banquet, he left his staff to eat that and went out into the kitchen to help himself to a bowl of bread and milk. I suppose he would not be thought to have done that because he was a candidate for office and wanted to appear as one of the plain people, because that was after he had served in the office of President. But he stopped here in the town of Weston and was entertained here at the hotel. And many other great men passed through here and were entertained here from the time when we were colonies clear up to the time when the railroads were established along in the middle of the last century.

So this town has had a long and interesting history, and has done its part in building up Massachusetts and giving her strength to take her part in the history of this great Nation. And it is pleasant to see

how the work that the fathers have done before us is bearing fruit in these times of ours. It is interesting to see this beautiful building. It is interesting to know that you have a town planning committee who are placing this building in a situation where it will contribute to the physical beauty of this historic town. We have not given the time and the attention and the thought that we should have given to things of that kind in Massachusetts. We have been too utilitarian. We have thought that if a building was located in some place where we could have access to it, where it could be used, where it could transact the business of the town, that was enough. We are coming to see in these modern days that that is not enough; that we need not only utilitarian motives, but that we need to give some time, some thought and attention to the artistic in life; that we need to concern ourselves not only with the material but give some thought to the spiritual; that we need

to pay some attention to the beautiful as well as to that which is merely useful.

These things are appreciated. Weston is doing something along these lines and building her public buildings and laying out her public square or her common (as it was known in the old days) so they will be things of beauty as well as things of use. Let us dedicate this building to these new purposes. Let us dedicate it to the glorious history of the past. Let us dedicate it to the sacrifice that is required in these present days. Let us dedicate it to the hope of the future. Let us dedicate it to New England ideals — those ideals that have made Massachusetts one of the strong States of the Nation; strong enough so that in Revolutionary days we contributed far in excess of our portion of men and money to that great struggle; strong enough so that the whole Nation has looked to Massachusetts in days of stress for comfort and support.

We are very proud of our democracy. We are very proud of our form of government. We believe that there is no other nation on earth that gives to the individual the privileges and the rights that he has in America. The time has come now when we are going to defend those rights. The time has come when the world is looking to America, as the Nation has looked to Massachusetts in the past, to stand up and defend the rights of the individual. Sovereignty, it is our belief, is vested in the individual; and we are going to protect the rights of the individual. It is an auspicious moment to dedicate here in New England one of our town halls, an auspicious moment in which to dedicate it to the supremacy of those ideals for which the whole world is fighting at the present time; that the rights of the individual as they were established here in the past may be maintained by us now and carried to a yet greater development in the future.