



# The Winning of the West Volume I (Roosevelt Library)

*Theodore Roosevelt*

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## **The Winning of the West Volume I (Roosevelt Library)** Theodore Roosevelt

In the year 1898 the United States finished the work begun over a century before by the backwoodsman, and drove the Spaniard outright from the western world. During the march of our people from the crests of the Alleghanies to the Pacific, the Spaniard was for a long period our chief white opponent; and after an interval his place among our antagonists was taken by his Spanish-American heir. Although during the Revolution the Spaniard at one time became America's friend in the sense that he was England's foe, he almost from the outset hated and dreaded his new ally more than his old enemy. In the peace negotiations at the close of the contest he was jealously eager to restrict our boundaries to the line of the Alleghanies; while even during the concluding years of the war the Spanish soldiers on the upper Mississippi were regarded by the Americans in Illinois as a menace no less serious than the British troops at Detroit. In the opening years of our national life the Western backwoodsman found the Spanish ownership of the mouth of the Mississippi even more hurtful and irksome than the retention by the British king of the posts on the Great Lakes. After years of tedious public negotiations, under and through which ran a dark woof of private intrigue, the sinewy western hands so loosened the Spanish grip that in despair Spain surrendered to France the mouth of the river and the vast territories stretching thence into the dim Northwest. She hoped thereby to establish a strong barrier between her remaining provinces and her most dreaded foe. But France in her turn grew to understand that America's position as regards Louisiana, thanks to the steady westward movement of the backwoodsman, was such as to render it on the one hand certain that the retention of the province by France would mean an armed clash with the United States, and on the other hand no less certain that in the long run such a conflict would result to France's disadvantage. Louisiana thus passed from the hands of Spain, after a brief interval, into those of the young Republic. There remained to Spain, Mexico and Florida; and forthwith the pressure of the stark forest riflemen began to be felt on the outskirts of these two provinces. Florida was the first to fall. After a portion of it had been forcibly annexed, after Andrew Jackson had marched at will through part of the remainder, and after the increasing difficulty of repressing the American filibustering efforts had shown the imminence of some serious catastrophe, Spain ceded the peninsula to the United States. Texas, New Mexico, and California did not fall into American hands until they had passed from the Spaniard to his half-Indian sons.

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