

(October 14th, 1912.)

## The Brock Centenary

By COL. GEORGE T. DENISON AND VISCOUNT MILNER.\*

AT a special meeting of the Canadian Club, held on the 14th October, 1912, Col. Denison said:

*Mr. Chairman, My Lord, and brother members of the Club,*—It is with great pleasure that I take advantage of this opportunity of saying a few words on behalf of our great national hero. I do not propose giving you any account in detail of the battle of Queenston Heights; it has been done carefully and well in all the press through the past few days. But I would like to take up a point which I think of the very greatest importance to the Canadian people, and which I think should be understood clearly and well by all our people; and that is, the exact condition of affairs in this country on the opening of that war. No one can form any proper or correct impression of the greatness of Brock's character, unless he understands fully the conditions under which he lived, the difficulties he faced, the apathy that blocked his path. I want to let you understand exactly what those conditions were in this country.

General Simcoe came here in 1792. He had with him a number of the United Empire Loyalists, loyal fighting men of the Revolution, who had abandoned their homes in the United States, and had settled in different spots along the frontier, in Glengarry, a few around Kingston, a good many around the Bay of Quinte and around Toronto, a good many on the Niagara frontier, and a few in the county of Norfolk, and westerly. One of the most distinguished families of those who settled in Norfolk is represented here with us to-day, I am glad to see, in my friend Col. Ryerson.

When these Loyalists had been here ten, or twelve years, and had got homes for themselves in the wilderness, Governor Simcoe was anxious to get more population in this province,

\* Colonel George Taylor Denison needed no introduction to his fellow members of the Canadian Club. Joseph Chamberlain excepted, he has done more than any other man living for the Imperial cause now so dear to the hearts of Canadians. This was the opinion expressed by Lord Milner two or three years ago, and thinking men echo it. Viscount Milner himself is an old friend of the Canadian Club as was indicated by the exceptionally warm welcome extended to him on this occasion.

ering very favorable land regula-  
to had not already left the States  
would get first class advantages  
opportunity brought many to this  
while there were a great many  
nder monarchial conditions, there  
ferent character, and only wanted  
portunity of getting land on the  
ferred in Upper Canada, because  
of Indian troubles such as had  
e United States. As a result, a  
e here who were really not sym-  
l cause, but came here simply to  
would understand the condition  
ound himself must remember this  
the very first start of his govern-  
Law passed. It was amended in  
yone between the ages of fifteen  
drill; under the amended provision  
xty. Every man was obliged to  
every year for parade; and he  
der and compel him to drill for  
curious condition of all was that  
o be enrolled within six months  
had to present himself on parade  
gun, something as a weapon, and  
st six rounds of ball ammunition  
onsider that every boy of sixteen  
r with it on parade or be heavily  
f his company, if satisfied the boy  
ford it, could give him a certificate  
ined—this seems a very stringent  
in a sense fair, for it served as a  
counts; because every man had to  
se of a tax; there was no reason  
t, because every one had to do it.  
gentlemen, that Act was passed by  
this country, who fought in the  
ad put this burden upon themselves  
think that that Act, on the statute  
nds as a great monument to the  
s.  
dition of affairs as relates to the  
Upper Canada in 1812 was esti-  
to eighty thousand—I have seen

the number stated as seventy-seven thousand. Of those of the  
ages from sixteen to sixty there were really about eleven  
thousand able-bodied men capable of bearing arms, but in the  
districts I have mentioned, the forces able to fight, according  
to Dr. Canniff, numbered some nine thousand. General  
Brock had a force of fifteen hundred regular troops, and  
there were about three thousand in Lower Canada. But he  
was short of arms; he lacked munitions of war; these were  
all distributed; he lacked money; there was no specie in the  
country; and the English Government was hardly able to do  
anything to help him. These are things that people do not  
usually remember. We talk of the great victories of Wellin-  
ton in the Peninsula: certainly we did have victories, and came  
out on top; but the English for many years were engaged  
in a life and death struggle against the greatest soldier and  
strategist, I suppose, the world has ever seen; and the armies  
of Europe were practically under his control. Look at the  
early part of the Peninsular War: you remember, that in 1809  
the French drove Sir John Moore to Corunna; he had to  
embark his army and go back to England; in 1810 Wellington  
had to fall back on his lines at Torres Vedras, where he was  
protected by his fortresses and by his fleet alongside; in 1811  
he was obliged to retreat to the Portuguese frontier; in 1812,  
even after the battle of Salamanca, he was obliged to retreat  
from Burgos; the English were struggling; everything was  
going hard, and all was uncertain, unsettled. Even the battle  
of Salamanca could not have encouraged Brock, for he could  
hardly have heard of it in his lifetime; it was fought in  
August, and it would have taken six weeks or two months  
for him to get news of it, as in those days it took so long  
to send communications.

That was the state of affairs in Europe at the time. The  
English population was double then what we have in Canada  
to-day, about sixteen million. In the fight with Napoleon they  
increased their National Debt from £250,000,000 to £750,000,-  
000—they increased it by £500,000,000! And that with a small  
country of sixteen million people! They placed that burden  
upon themselves and upon their posterity, to preserve the free-  
dom of the British Empire for themselves and for us! That  
is a great thing to think about. When you have a people  
that will undertake a burden of £750,000,000—and that is  
between \$3,000,000,000 and \$4,000,000,000,—it will give you  
some idea what our fathers and statesmen were willing to  
do for the freedom of Great Britain.

ne statesmen must have thought, the Peninsula, their debt accumulated, the impossibility of sending soldiers; he knew the condition of his scattered settlements along the coast; then turn out, as you know, a village yesterday, for its whole population eight hundred inhabitants. It was Brock with his Parliament in this little village. Along the small settlement, and, as I have heard of Norfolk. But behind that there was the illimitable wilderness

of affairs in this country that stood in front of him was a nation that did actually put under arms and militia, and over 30,000 in their ranks. That was what he had to face

more difficulties than that. These men, under the arrangements of the day, they were not all true, some were loyal. Brock. He called his Parliament together to get the Habeas Corpus Act repealed; deal with traitors; but the vote was against him. Then he tried to get an Act passed which he could not manage that. And nothing done. But when war broke out on the 18th of June—and you know that on the 1st of June Napoleon crossed the Channel with his troops on his march to Moscow. Brock was of his strength. The Austrian, British, and armies were under his control, as far as that was concerned. But on the 12th of July crossed into the province inviting the Canadians to join the militia of this Western division to him. Many Canadians do not think we do not like to dwell on, but at these men were not loyal, and in many places, there were some people, some loyal, some who were quite disloyal, and some officers. All that news was coming in before him, under those conditions,

here in this little village. He heard about the emissaries and traitors who were going through the country trying to spread doubt and hesitation among his people.

He called his Parliament together to help him. They met in this city on the 27th July, 1812, and he spoke to them. He asked them for legislation to help him, the repeal of the Habeas Corpus Act, the Oath of Abjuration Bill, and one or two other things. What happened? Under the leadership of Willcocks and Marle, and some others, the House was timid, and Brock was unable to get anything done. But in one or two days—on the second day after his speech to the House—I cannot tell you this as fact, one must judge from the circumstances—but probably finding out the feeling of the House, he ordered on the 29th of July, two days after the House met, a parade of the volunteers of this district, the County of York, about four hundred in number. He made them a speech. He said he wanted to know how many were willing to follow him, in this province or out of it, and asked such to step to the front. The whole four hundred of the York men stepped to the front! And gentlemen, you will excuse me when I say it, I am proud to say that every able-bodied man of my family in those days was in that force. That was one of the most important little incidents that happened. For that decisive, loyal backing up that these men gave to Brock counted for much, he found the men of this little village and outskirts on his side. He waited day after day for his Parliament to help him, but they were doing nothing, they were wasting time, talking, in fact, eight days about the repealing of a clause in the School Bill. To a man of Brock's wonderful energy and impetuosity that was most trying. I can imagine how he must have felt. He waited until the 3rd of August, then he prepared a minute to be read to his Council—a little council of five or six men, United Empire Loyalists. That record, I may perhaps read to you, for I do not think you will find it in any book of history. It was discovered by Col. Cruikshank in the Archives twenty years ago, and it is casually referred to in Tupper's history. This minute, which he laid before his Council, gives a vivid picture of his difficulties.

He says:

That the House of Assembly, instead of prompt exertions to strengthen his hands for the government of the militia, providing for security from internal treason by the partial suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, authorizing a partial exercise of martial law con-

ordinary course of justice, and the funds not actually applied for, had consumed eight days in the name of party, the repeal of the Act for the public dispractices before the magistrates to commit without bail. (They were in prison till they had told all about the matter might know!) That under the title could be expected from a man the enemy had invaded and taken the district, was multiplying daily his losses in others. That the militia in subordination, had withdrawn from service, had refused to march when ordered to reinforce a detachment of the relief of Amherstburg, had refused, and some not immediately engaged in many instances a treasonable disaffection. That the Indians engaged with by disaffected whites, had volunteered services, and declared for a course equally inadmissible as with the others. That in the Western District several persons had negotiated with the enemy, hailing his arrival and pledging that the King's forces consisted of a part of the Royal Newfoundland, a Regiment of Royal Artillery and several companies of coast and distance and would divide that force to support and defend the militia. That the conduct of the militia exposed the regulars at Amherstburg to a large detachment of the 41st and the Home and Niagara districts. That the Regiment at St. Joseph's had taken the fight to Amherstburg and refused to retreat, with the aid of the militia, the march to Longue Point; but could be expected unless he had the militia and general population adhere to the enemy, or neutrality, was asked—whether it would be the House of Assembly and pro-

The council adjourned until the next day for consideration, and then decided to prorogue the House and declare martial law. He held he had power to do that under his commission from his King. On the 5th of August that was done. But before it was done there was a splendid ringing appeal to the people of Canada, appealing to their loyalty, issued by the House—because, fortunately, the traitors must have disappeared, knowing this thing was going to be done. Willcocks, Mallroy and Marcle, and many disloyal men, deserted to the enemy's forces. Willcocks was killed in the battle of Fort Erie in 1814, commanding a regiment in the Yankee army. Marcle became a major in the same regiment as Willcocks. But when Brock had power, had martial law, and was in command, he was able to stop that kind of thing; those who were loyal came over to him, and those that had wanted to be neutral were won over to be adherents, while those who were hostile and did not want to become adherents were put into prison. And I want to say this, which is known as a fact, that on that day, when Brock died, one hundred years ago, at the head of 190 men at Queenston Heights, he had left in the jail and the court house in Niagara, three hundred traitors and aliens in prison, under the guard of sixty old men and invalids who were able to keep them in subjection while the others went to the battle of Queenston Heights.

Can anybody, knowing that, and understanding the position Brock was in, have any other feeling but be lost in admiration at the bravery, the pluck, the determination shown by him, in taking into his own hands the control of affairs, and doing exactly the right thing at the right time? It was announced that any people wishing to leave Canada might do so, but if they stayed here after the 1st of January, 1813, and were not serving in the militia, they would be tried as spies and put to death. Seven of those men were hanged at Ancaster.

On the 6th of August, Brock started for Detroit, taking with him about one hundred of the York Volunteers, of the Flank Companies. During the whole spring Brock had done a great deal to strengthen his forces by means of those companies. He directed that two of these Flank Companies were to be formed for every regiment, and they were to drill six days in each month, for which they got no pay, and no uniforms. They were ordered to provide themselves with some sort of short jacket or coat, and a round hat; that was all their uniform. Nearly one-fourth of their time was given up to drill, for nothing. They knew it, they volunteered for it, and they did it! Brock writing to Gen. Prevost said there was

a; while some were not loyal, yet the country were as staunch as by these Flank Companies, who and doing it voluntarily.

n. Hull, and made him surrender, arms, which enabled him when many of his men. But unfortunately made an armistice, or Brock, led up the country along the rewards went up to Queenston and won that battle. But it is not not the fact of the victory our made that event have such a deep ple. When I was a young man, ly were all veterans of the war, us in those days as the Fenian men felt that it was Brock's the House and declaring martial fighting men to defend this country, fathers conquered. And I hope, future any time when this coun- e shall have as good a man as something peculiar about the Bri- comes, you generally see some man, or some Irishman, stepping at the right time. Such a man life in the Mutiny at Delhi. And er great Proconsul of Britain is person of Lord Milner. You all e was the right man in the right ll go on. I hope if ever in the ight man will be at the head, and l a man as Brock.

h in his speech to the House on July, 1812, carries a great lesson

n an awful and eventful contest. spatch in our Councils, and by ns we may teach the enemy this r defended by free men, enthus- he cause of their King and Con- conquered.

d by the president to propose a

*Mr. Chairman, Col. Denison, and Gentlemen:*

I did not come here intending to make a speech, and I know I shall get into trouble for making, not a speech, but the few remarks which I propose to address to you; because I have been invited to speak to Canadian Clubs in other places, but have uniformly refused, saying that this is a private visit I am on, and I am not intending to make any addresses. However, I think the most cantankerous critic will admit that I have been put to-day in a position in which it would not have been possible for me to decline to make these few remarks.

I esteem it a very great privilege to have happened by accident to be in Toronto just the very day, or rather the day before Col. Denison was about to address you on the subject of Brock. The moment I heard of the proposed address, I felt that I could not lose the opportunity of listening to it, because not only is Brock one of the great heroes of English history, but one of the least generally appreciated. Certainly he is very well known in Canada, but not half as well through Great Britain or other parts of the British Empire as he ought to be.

I should be glad any time to join in any tribute to the memory of so great a man, but I was specially attracted by the thought that I should have the privilege of hearing his praises from the mouth of a man who is perhaps more than any other man living qualified to speak his praises and appreciate his struggles. I am sure that there was not one of those three or four hundred men who stepped forward, among whom his ancestors were known, who was not animated by the same kind of patriotic spirit, which we have learned to admire in the speaker of to-day. I do not know any man in the British Empire better qualified to give us an account of what Brock really did, and to analyze the merit of his great achievement, which was not merely a military victory, for he was not only a great commander—he was more than that, a great patriot and a great statesman.

And, gentlemen, in voting a unanimous measure of thanks to Col. Denison, you will all most gladly accord him the warmest possible vote of thanks for the interesting address he has made us to-day, all the more interesting because he has not followed the beaten track of laudation of Brock's victory, but because he has given us an insight into some of the very peculiar conditions with which he was confronted, conditions such, I think, as none of us have paid attention to, and certainly were never realized by myself until just now.

He has given us interesting and instructive details of that great career, and made some very illuminating references to the conditions of the Empire at the time when that great struggle took place. I think it has been said by every competent historian that the war in which Brock fell was in the first place unnecessary, and in the second place unfortunate, and one in which the result was disappointing to both parties, Great Britain and the United States, and that we have not loved to dwell upon these details. I think in the main that is true. But one compensating feature about that war was what it did for the national spirit of Canada. It was in a sense the beginning of Canadian history, as we think of Canadian history nowadays, and it was certainly a grand beginning, a great memory and a great tradition, that a people so small as Canada's population was at that time, a people so untrained, taken by surprise as they were, were able to give such an account of themselves against the forces of a great country. Both branches of the people, those of English and those of French origin, contributed to the common defence of their country. Therefore they have a common memory to look back upon.

It is a great tradition in another way, because the triumphs of that war were British Canadian triumphs, and though it occupies a far greater place necessarily in Canadian than in British history, after all the leader in that war, and many of those who contributed to that victory, were Britons from the home land. And it was therefore a good beginning in a way, because it represented a struggle in which Canadian-British and Canadian-French, also British from the home country, stood shoulder to shoulder to face the common enemy. It has been my good fortune to witness a similar combination of forces in another great crisis of the Empire, in which Canada was not immediately interested, but in which Canada came to the aid of the mother country. There were many things in Col. Denison's speech which reminded me of some conditions existing in South Africa and the events of the great struggle there.

But we won't linger on these by-points to-day. I have already dwelt too long upon them, and I call upon you to give a very hearty vote of thanks to the speaker of the day, who has illustrated a great period of your history, done honor to the memory of a great man, and recalled certain lessons of permanent value to British people, whether they live in this country or in any other portion of the Empire.