

(February 5th, 1917.)

The War

BY DR. MICHAEL CLARK, M.P., OF RED DEER, ALTA.*

AT a regular meeting of the Club held on the 5th February, Dr. Clark said:

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—Permit me to thank you very sincerely for the kindness of your invitation, and the far too generous warmth of your welcome. When I at last found I was able to respond to what was not the first invitation I received to address the Canadian Club of Toronto, I thought I simply would deal with some economic problems of a purely Canadian description; however, as the time approached when I had to fulfil my engagement, the feeling which has animated me entirely for the last two and a half years retained possession of my soul, the feeling that there is only one problem before Canada to-day, or rather that this one problem is so big that it precedes and swallows all others. It is not only ours, but the problem of our Empire and our Allies. The problem is the War—why it should have been, how it is going on, how it is going to finish, and what is coming out of the finish of it.

The problem, I need not say, was not of our making: it confronted us. You know how it arose: how in a crush at a railway station a student shot down the Crown Prince of Austria and his consort. But that was in the town of Sarajevo, the capital of the Province of Herzegovina. Most of you remember—it is elementary now—the Crown Prince and his consort were visiting that portion of their dominions, which at that time for exactly five years had been a portion of the Austrian dominions. You know the way it was annexed—we should say, it was stolen if we were talking of cattle in Western Canada, where I come from. This fact, that in the year 1909 Austria stole Bosnia-Herzegovina,—annexed it, that's what statesmen do when they steal, gives another lurid light on the chequered history of Austria.

I wonder how many remember the words in which one of the greatest men I ever saw described what the Austrian Government was. Mr. Gladstone, forty years ago, said: "Aus-

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tria trod Italy under foot; Austria never lifted a finger for the regeneration of Greece; Austria opposed the original constitution of Belgium; Austria opposed the consolidation of Germany. It is impossible to put your finger upon any spot on the map of Europe and say, "Here Austria did good." That is the kind of characters we are fighting in this war. It is the kind of character we are going to restrain very much in the process of the war, if I am not much mistaken.

Serbia was at once blamed by the Central Governments as having instigated the murder of the Crown Prince of Austria and his consort. An ultimatum was sent, in the name of Austria, but really by Germany. None of us believes that Serbia instigated the murder really.

It has been very well said as to this war, that while great wars, in the majority of cases, might be termed political wars, this war, so far at least as one side is concerned, is one in which moral issues are paramount. Germany thought to get quickly to France across Belgium, to race with swiftness over France, and to get back before Russia could attack on the east.

Now this is the problem that confronted us. It is a problem that goes to the very roots of civilization, the moral consideration of the sacredness of international law, the rights of small nations, the equality of opportunity of development according to their size and possibilities with the greatest empire that is on the face of the earth.

Germany, nerved by an untrue philosophy, misled by false teachers, was led to believe that the greatest thing in the world was power. Power could be exercised only by restricting the freedom of other people. Germany, as described by one writer, sought to exercise the Will to Power by the Path of Frightfulness.

Germany equally with Britain guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium, but she trod Belgium under foot; in her mad strike for power she regarded a solemn treaty as a scrap of paper. The British Empire's rôle was the nobler one, of standing in the gap and saying, "You can't do this thing! Ours shall be the nobler task of lifting up the people you tread under foot; our ideal is the Path to Justice by the Path of Freedom."

Now that was the issue, described at as great length as I can describe it in the limited time which your business interests impose upon speakers. If I talked ever so long I don't know but that I might spoil the good quality of what I might say.

History will record that never a finer spectacle struck the eyes of man than when the "indomitable little island," as

Israel Zangwill has called it at the beginning of the war, in a marvelously fine testimony by that most cultured of living Jews—than when that "indomitable little island" stood in the gap for freedom, and she was joined at one bound by her daughters beyond the seas. And how nobly she has performed her task! Yes, and how nobly we have performed our task!—for I am one of those who believe that this country has done well in this war.

You know how we used to hear that Germany was famous for organization, while poor Britain was a totally unorganized country. Being a Britisher with a taste for controversy, I have never been free to admit that without a struggle. What is the test of an organization? The way it fulfils its purpose. Germany's organization is a huge military machine constructed for offence. When she marched through Belgium, trod it under foot, subjected it to all those processes of conquest which could not conquer it, she invaded Northern France, she had a time table. Very good! So has the C.P.R., but the C.P.R. doesn't always keep it. Germany planned to be in Paris six weeks after starting; but she isn't there yet, and this is two years after! What would you think of an organization which planned when a train started that it should reach its destination in six weeks, and two and a half years after it had not reached it, and wasn't going to get there to all eternity!

Then, if not Paris, Calais, at all costs!—But they did not have the costs, in men, the millions of men, they needed. And then the Canadians at Ypres—the little thin line of British troops held the line with the Canadians at Ypres. He didn't have the costs, and he has not now! Then he aimed to reach Moscow, and Petrograd, but in the Pripet swamps I think his train got stuck. I don't know that these are the marks of a great organization! I don't want to depreciate a foe who is rapidly failing, but if the German organization is good, it should get results; all it has done, as a matter of fact, is to lay low, bleeding, trampled, and crushed one small country; when it comes to the big fellows it has failed.

Britain's organization was formed for defence. That is significant. She didn't have an army—she was forced to fight in four realms—one was on the sea, for defensive purposes.

How did she get on there? You know what silent guard is kept by the Grand Fleet. We don't know much of what it does. They keep it silent. They don't publish every time they catch a German sub, and where. Mr. Balfour said the peculiar feature about the great German victory claimed by the enemy was that the faster they sank British ships the

faster they ran away. There never was a greater piece of pretence than this, that Germany won a victory over the British fleet. Britain's organization stood the test, and the boys in blue still command the ocean wave.

The next realm that Britain had to fight in pretty early was the realm of business. That was a pretty grave hardship. I don't see how other countries, with more enlightened fiscal policies, could have looked for much help from a country—but I won't pursue that line—I see you get my point. I hope it will stick well into you. You know what she has done in finance. Britain stood the test in financing.

And then she took to the air, and I think to-day it is stated on reliable authority that for every one German aeroplane that comes over our lines ten British machines cross the German lines. Three-fourths of the whole occupancy up there is with Britain and France on the western side, which in the east, Russia is establishing the mastery quickly. This gives us the guarantee for final victory.

Compare this organization with what Germany has done for the organization of Britain and the British Empire. Canada, let me repeat, was a magnificent daughter of the old Mother, and has done well. Some people think they see some little signs of failing. I don't think so. I don't see it in this audience. True, we heard an echo—only an echo, but it has died away as all echoes should. The question was asked—and I am sorry that it should have been asked by a young Canadian anywhere, whether we are going to bankrupt ourselves for England. I know I am on dangerous ground, but I can't help it, I have a habit of saying what I think. That question did not raise in me a feeling so much of indignation as of pity,—pity that any young Canadian anywhere should fail to grasp the magnitude of the issues for which we are fighting; and pity, in the second place, that any young Canadian anywhere should fail to have gone over the history of Britain in this war and found out that the real truth is just the other way, that Britain is going very near the verge of bankruptcy for the world's freedom!

That seems to be a piece of political truth which commends itself to your mind. Bankrupt ourselves for England? One of my boys has written me that in my native city of Newcastle-on-Tyne thirty thousand women are going out every day on the suburban railways of that city to work in the munition factories. There are six hundred thousand of them doing that altogether; about one in fifty of the women in Great Britain are munition workers. I need not take time to tell Canadian people what the people of Britain are doing along

this line. You know what they have done. I submit I have put this question which in justice and fairness ought to be put and in accordance with the truth; how has the British Empire done what she has? I will tell you in a sentence: it is because though from time to time she has changed the external form of her government she has maintained absolute national unity.

Now the lesson is obvious. If there be any faltering, any indifference arising, we have got to get rid of it, and I see the power in this audience to go out through the whole country and say it shall be got rid of. I don't think the grumblers are numerous. I don't think they are. Personally, since I came here fifteen years ago, I have formed the very highest opinion of the average type of native Canadian statesmanship. But I never went on the platform anywhere to say what I didn't believe. Canadian statesmen have, I believe, as a rule, exalted patriotism, a high sense of duty, lofty ideals. There are grouchers and grumblers; yes, and there are profiteers and political partisans, and I would send the whole four groups to—some place where they wouldn't be so likely to be run over by steam engines!

Do you grasp the principle I want to impress upon you from a brief history of the war? If you grasp it and are in accordance with it, my mission to-day will have been fulfilled. I have tried to increase your attachment to it by a brief reference to the greatness of the cause for which we are fighting, and further, by giving the salient facts about the great example our Mother Country is giving to us concerning this great conflict.

May I appeal to you along the lines of your business instincts?—You have these pretty well developed in Toronto, Canada cannot attend to her own business until she has cleared this war off the slate,—that is our first business. Win the war, then reconstruct Canada afterwards, if you like, with all the political differences within our own borders; but win the war first!

May I appeal to you on the ground of national honor? Canada has in this war done well.—Her sons are in it. Eighteen thousand of them have died, they will never return, but are lying in heroes' graves in France and Flanders. They didn't do much calculating about bankrupting themselves; they were not restrained by the extra stamp on letters; but animated with the spirit of our men in the Old Land they emptied themselves of everything but suprême self-sacrifice; and they carried that sacrifice to the last supreme point. We have got to imitate them. That is the kind of spirit—the spirit of the men who have died for it; and that is the kind of spirit that will win the war.

The course of events will in all probability be modified by the course of events in the past few days. But it does not matter very much to John Bull who comes in or who stays out, but we are glad to invite decent fellows into the best of company, and to receive them properly.

I cannot but think, Sir, that it will be an enormous gain if the United States does not receive the necessary provocation to take her in farther. It is a great advantage, nevertheless, that the great Republic to the south of us has definitely aligned herself on the side of civilization against barbarism. The President writes as if he had got a surprise, and spoke in his speech to the Senate as if Germany had been drawn on to a sudden withdrawal of the solemn assurances. Well, he did not know anything up to that about German ways. That was just the trouble with Great Britain until the war broke out two and a half years ago. When told by Germany that she would break the treaty and strike at Belgium, Britain said, "You won't do that, so long as John Bull has a drop of blood in his body." So we are not surprised, as the President seems to be, at the sudden breaking of other solemn assurances. You could not expect to prevent Germany withdrawing her assurances if it seemed to her advantage.

But when the terms of the Allies were stated the world never saw anything brighter than the spirit in which the terms of settlement were expressed; brighter for this reason, that when we demanded reparation for Belgium, and Serbia, and Montenegro, and France, restitution of territory, and demanded the right for the small countries in the various portions of Europe to live and develop, we demanded nothing for ourselves; that is an Empire worth living in and worth living for!

I would like to add to the terms, if I might, and then leave you. Forty years ago Mr. Gladstone, in a famous phrase—excuse me for quoting him again, but there is no politics in Toronto just now—said that they should "turn the Turks, pashas and Bashi-bazouks, bag and baggage out of Europe"; I stand on the Allies' note, but I would love if I might conclude in such words this address to this most distinguished audience of the Canadian Club of Toronto, with the suggestion that when the Turk goes out of Europe, as go he will, the Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs should go with him!