

(September 30th, 1912.)

Canada and Imperial Burdens

By THE RIGHT HON. WALTER LONG.*

AT a special meeting of the Canadian Club held on the 30th Sept., 1912, Mr. Long said:

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—Your chairman in his opening remarks reminded you that I am a Parliamentarian. I have been one, for more years than I care to remember. I suppose that always the lot of a Parliamentarian has been to make speeches, and I have had the opportunity of making a good many since I have been in the Dominion; and I am not surprised to find that here and there voices of criticisms have been raised at some things I may have said or left unsaid. I have no apology to offer for anything I have ever said in my public life either in the Old Land or in this great Dominion. I have only this to say: I have endeavored through all my life, and have followed the rule here in this country, to say earnestly what I think, to put my opinions honestly, fully, frankly, before those who have done me the honor to listen to me, to speak my mind honestly, and to avoid, if possible, giving offence to those who differ from me in the views I hold.

What is the task, what is the burden, that you and I have to face? What is the Empire to which you and I belong? This Empire, gentlemen, has been the creation of centuries; the marvellous fabric we contemplate with so much pride to-day has been built up by the tender care, the devoted labor, the splendid courage of our forefathers, who had to face a task far greater, far more difficult than the one that is presented to you and to me. The Empire which we own, of which we are thankful and proud to be citizens, has no equal; there is no precedent for it to be found in the world's history. It covers all parts of the globe, it comprises many millions of subjects; it is bound together by no chains of steel; it is held by no prisoners' fetters, it is bound by bonds of love for the Mother Land which was the origin of all our Overseas Dominions, and which has through all these ages, I think you will admit, given liberally both of her sons and of her money, in order

* The Right Honorable Walter Long was a member of the last Balfour Cabinet and will have a foremost place in the next Unionist Government. He is the leader of the old Conservative wing of his party.

that her Empire may grow and may be stronger and be better able to do its work in the future.

Gentlemen, I say it has no precedent. We who belong to the Home Land thankfully acknowledge to-day that the different parts of it are free, if they so desire, to make what decisions they like as to the future of that part of the Empire in which they live. I am thankful to be able to say, that whether I draw upon my experience of gatherings like this or similar, or from private conversations in the club, on the street, in the railway train, or on the tram cars, the result is the same. I find throughout Canada, from north to south, from east to west, prevailing in the whole land, a unanimous sentiment and it is one of deep and profound loyalty to the King and the Constitution and devotion to the Mother Land, the Empire, and that part in which you live here, accompanied by a steadfast determination to bear your share in the burdens which Imperial citizenship brings in its train.

What then are these burdens? The burden that falls upon us citizens of the Empire is to bear upon our shoulders the great Empire that others have created. I hope that it may in the Providence of God be never the fact that other countries will endeavor to wrest from us the possessions which we hold to-day; but it is true to-day, as it ever was, if you want peace you should be prepared for war; and it is true to-day, as it ever was, that if you mean to be successful in war, you must make your preparations in times of peace. Eyes of jealousy, possibly even of enmity, have been cast upon the British Empire. Her free peoples, her glorious lands, her splendid unrivalled possessions, have not failed to make the people of other lands look with a longing to have some share in these vast possessions. What is our answer going to be? Are we going to say we are strong enough to-day to bear this burden? Are we going to say to-day that a free people, of their own choice and will, answer they are determined to keep for themselves that which their fathers have won? I have no doubt as to the part which our people will play.

Our burden is to protect our Empire. Like the human body, it is most liable to assault and injury at its heart. We know there is a possibility—may it never be more than that!—that an assault might be made upon that heart of the Empire. Do not, I beg of you, be led to believe any of the more cowardly or more thoughtless among us who say that in the Mother Land there is any weakening of our determination to stand up and protect our own. If—as I hope will not be the case, if—as I am confident will not be the case,—if our Over-

seas Dominions should turn to the Mother Land and tell her they have chosen to work out their own destiny, that in days gone by she has not given enough thought, attention, sympathy and care to her growing Overseas Dominions, and now must face her burden alone,—if that evil day should come, the Mother Land will not shrink from her burden, heavy though it should be. But, gentlemen, that day has never come; it is never going to dawn! If any passing danger—I assume there could be nothing greater than that—should come up on the horizon, the lands Overseas would notice it, and would tell her she must wake up and do her duty, and they are determined to do theirs alongside of her.

The difficulty that presents itself at the moment is of a dual character: there is the immediate duty of the moment, and the duty of the future. For my part, I hope with all my heart that our Overseas Dominions will tell the Mother Country that they are prepared first of all to give her that immediate assistance which will be worth more, far more, than any gift, more far than the ships which will be the product of that gift,—for it will mean that to all the world will go out the cry, "If you believe the Empire of Great Britain is in danger, this is the answer her sons make: if you believe she is weaker, her sons will rally around her and will tell you she is not weaker, but is a thousand times stronger to-day, that she is able to rely not only on her own arm, but on her sons who are prepared to sacrifice themselves if need be in defence of the Empire of which they are citizens, and which they love as much as the oldest residents in the Old Mother Land.

But, gentlemen, it is not only our duty to protect what we have, to see that our navy is large enough and efficient enough for its work, to see that in addition to any momentary arrangements we lay our plans well and securely for the future regarding defence; it is also our duty to do something of the work of creation. These great Overseas Dominions have been brought into existence and to splendid maturity by the statesmanship, the wisdom, the self-denial of our predecessors; they could not do everything, we have our part to do. There are our products, the different articles, both raw and manufactured. It has always been to me, I won't say a dream, but a deep-seated desire, that the day should come, and rapidly, when we, the men of to-day, should form a working plan by which the Empire shall become self-supporting. Why should not we exchange on terms of friendly dealing the products of the lands over which the Union Jack flies? If we have

common share in defence, why not in supplying the common necessities of our people? An opportunity greater than any other empire in the world presents is offered to us; it rests upon us to take advantage of it. If I might be permitted to say so, the plan, I think, which should be adopted is that we should have with as little delay as possible, a real working conference with a view to exchange of products among the various portions of the Empire. I think you will forgive me when I say that I think when such a conference is held no door should be bolted, no door should be barred; I think it should be held with open doors on all sides, where there should be plans formed that we shall have a working arrangement not only to defend the Empire, but also to extend the opportunities within the Empire before it has to look outside of it for the necessities for its people, I hope the time is not far distant when we may approach this question with the determination to solve it. The task, I know, is a heavy one. I know there are many difficulties to be overcome. But I assume you remember what was the task at the Confederation of Canada; was not that a very heavy one? Were there not great difficulties to be overcome? Yet that task was faced, and magnificently was the work accomplished. Those difficulties you realized, and you disposed of them. Surely to-day we can begin by realizing that there are difficulties and differences of opinion, and then set ourselves, not to fight each other, but to unite when we may for the solution of these problems, the dispersion of these difficulties, so that the British Empire shall be united not only in defence but in trade. I believe then that these two great tasks are presented to us, and I believe that we shall find the solution for them.

I said earlier in my remarks to you that throughout my travels in Canada I had found everywhere a steadfast determination on the part of the British citizens living in this part of the British Empire to do their share and to bear their part of the Imperial burden. I do not mean to say that I found Canadians to be loyal. I had not to come to Canada to know that. Canadian loyalty is known all over the world; no visitor has to come here to find out that Canadians are loyal. But there is a great difference between what we call loyalty and what we call the Imperial sentiment. I suppose there is no country in the world where men are more absorbed in their own affairs, in making their living, in seeking to be successful. Every town is busy, and in the country districts those engaged in farming are every day absorbed in trying to solve the problems they are occupied with; yet it is an interesting and

remarkable fact, to find that notwithstanding the burdens that private business lays upon every man, they have had time, and I often wonder how they find it, to look at these Imperial problems for themselves. They have come to realize that the Empire is a solid reality, and that they must take their share in the meaning of it.

If I am right, the path is not so difficult as it would seem; if the men of Canada realize the work facing them to-day, if they are determined to do it with all their strength and energy, half the task is accomplished before it is begun. If I am right, then nobody need despair or doubt as to the future of our great Empire. If I am right, you may depend upon it, we will all say to the Mother Country that the citizens of to-day are going to prove themselves worthy sons of this great Empire. And surely we should be unworthy of our citizenship if we were not moved to the very depths of our heart when we stop to think of the Empire as to its possibilities; and if so, how can we refuse to do our share, which, if we don't do it, will be left undone? This Empire cannot become a great and powerful organization, united in one strong and reliant whole, on mere resources; for after all the Empire is like an army or a navy or a business organization, its real strength and power does not come into play unless it is thoroughly organized from top to bottom. We have power and influence, but we have to-day to organize ourselves for the business of Imperial defence. This task falls upon us, upon the shoulders of the men of to-day. Gentlemen, I am very hopeful; I have always been an optimist; I have never despaired of our country or of its future; but my visit to your Dominion has made me still more optimistic, more confident, more hopeful. You have given us a glorious lead; it is for us to follow, to take the hand you have held out, and join with you in the solution of this great problem of Imperial defence.

I believe before the British Empire there is a prospect which it almost makes one dizzy to think of. As we remember what our possibilities are, what the possibilities of Canada alone are, what room you have here in the one Province of Ontario, where you have land to which you can extend your development, and can offer a home and prospects of a happy future to—may I say without exaggeration?—millions of newcomers; and this is only one province of those that make up your great Dominion;—your visitor facing these facts for the first time with his own eyes, is made almost dizzy with the contemplation. It is for you and me to make the best of these opportunities.

I came by accident across some lines which I had never seen before, but which struck me as being wonderfully indicative of the spirit of Canada. They are very short, and in my last words let me read them to you:

Dear Canada, should occasion call
Thy sons to die in Freedom's strife;
Like thine own maple leaves they'd fall,
More glorious e'en in death than life.

That seems to me to preach the true spirit of Canadian patriotism and Imperialism, and to give what is the keynote of the character of the great part of the nation which is resident in Canada. And we of the other parts of the Empire are proud to realize that it is full of men such as are described there. We are willing and thankful to re-echo the words, relying as we do on men inspired by these high ideals, animated by this splendid Imperial enthusiasm, who will bear their burden, and do their share of the work. They and their children will find that the British Empire is to-day ten times stronger than it has ever been throughout all its glorious history.
