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Imperial Defence.

BY ADMIRAL LORD CHARLES BERESFORD, K.C.B., G.C.V.C.

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on the subject "Imperial Defence," Lord Charles Beresford said:

*Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Canadian Club of Toronto,*—Sir, it first becomes me to thank you, gentlemen, for the most genuine welcome you have given me here to-day. I am rather in a dilemma in one way. I have been preaching that the time for talking is over, but its your own fault if you make me speak. I understand that your custom is that whoever has the honor of addressing you as I have to-day is not supposed to speak more than twenty-five minutes; still I admire your temerity in putting an Irishman on his legs, because when once he gets on his legs he generally has to be pulled down by his hair, if he's got any.

Before I make any further remarks may I offer my sincere regret and my heartfelt sympathy in the loss you have sustained in the burning of the library of your representative House. The loss of a library is irreparable because there are in every library some volumes not to be found anywhere else,

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Admiral Lord Charles Beresford has had a brilliant naval career. He commanded the *Condor* at Alexandria in 1882, served under Lord Wolseley in the Nile Expedition of 1884-5, and was thanked by the House of Commons for his gallant operations in the Soudan. He was appointed Lord Commissioner of the Admiralty in 1886, and subsequently Admiral of the Mediterranean fleet, Commander of the Channel Squadron, and in 1905, Commander-in-Chief of the British Naval Forces. He was elected to the House of Commons for Portsmouth in January, 1910.

volumes which are of particular interest having been collected in, and referring to, the Dominion or country where they have been lost, and I am very sincerely sorry that you should have suffered the loss you did yesterday.

I understand that these institutions of Canadian clubs are based on the idea that anybody belonging to them should come and ventilate his opinion. I cannot imagine a better system for educational purposes, and for getting at the truth.

Most people who are very enthusiastic on any matter are called cranks. I think you call them cranks here—we call them "Loonies"—but we owe a great deal to cranks. The crank tells us about a lot of things that look impossible until they are explained, and when explained or brought forward they get that criticism and looking into that very often in the long run proves them to be correct. I would rather be described as a crank. I have been called one myself very often on this "Imperial Defence" question. A crank is a sort of mustard plaster on the back of humanity that draws humanity out, and makes humanity look around to see what's the matter, to enquire into what the mustard plaster is about and see if the crank is right or wrong, and often we find that he is right, and not wrong. Everybody here appears to want me to speak, but I don't want to speak. I want to find out what you think, and when I have found out what you think then I have a strong body of public opinion as to what is wanted and how you are going to get it, to take back to my own country.

Now, gentlemen, don't run away with the idea you see in the papers that the Old Country is degenerating. It is not degenerating. There are plenty of good men in the country, and good women, too, but we have possibly forced to the front some that are more pushful and more ignorant than others. But that is not very bad for a country as long as it does not last too long.

Now, gentlemen, don't run away with the wrong idea and think, because I am an Irishman, I am attacking the Government. I am not doing anything in that way. If I wanted to talk against my Government I should be in bad taste to do it here and not face to face on the platform at home. Over here I will follow whatever Government is in power.

Now, gentlemen, in the short time at my disposal I want to emphasize what is uppermost in all our thoughts, the Imperial question. Now how can we get together on this Imperial question? May I say, that in it there is nothing aggressive, there is no threat to any other nation. It is a family question

in which we want to get closer together, to hold what we have got, to help and improve it, to get closer together for mutual benefit, and for our mutual defence. The first point as to mutual benefit would be illustrated in the word "Trade." We want to get our trade someway together. As you know in the Old Country there is considerable agitation on the question of "Fair Trade," "Free Trade," or "Tariff Reform," whichever it is called. I must say that I believe the time has arrived in which we should look into this question of tariff. I believe that we should make some sort of arrangement by which we could help each other, some sort of reciprocity in tariff by which we could keep other people out when we wanted and let our own people come in. If you come to think that of the trade of the Old Country amounting to nine hundred and forty million dollars, only three hundred and forty million dollars come from the Dominions, I think you will agree that we could increase that. We get an immense lot of goods from other countries which benefit by it, and it would be much better if we could get them among ourselves.

What is the position of the British trade? I know that there are great arguments, on very sane business lines, that you must buy in the cheapest and—I won't say sell in the dearest—sell in the best market. but where is that argument when our own people cannot sell goods in many cases for the simple reason that foreigners can dump cheap articles. Take the boot and shoe business. Say in dollars that seventy millions are sold to his own people; he can make a tremendous over-production and put what is not required in his own country into ours, and our boot and shoe man cannot sell his goods because of the dumping of the foreigner and because there is no tariff to keep him out. I think that the Old Country had better look into this matter. We have had free trade for some years and now it seems to be failing, and we had better see whether there is anything in this question of tariff or not. There are so many instances historical and traditional that we can use. Take your own country. You know where it was before 1878. I understand you adopted a tariff in 1878. What happened to you? Did anything go wrong? Was your shopkeeper not able to sell? Were your manufacturers not able to sell? From that date you have gone forward with leaps and bounds. Well if it is true in your case why should it not be true in the Old Country. Take another case. I am not very conversant with it. but I imagine that if you were to look at that which tells of the progress of the country, which is your deposits in the banks, you will find that the bank

deposits have enormously increased in comparison to what they were before 1878. That is very good evidence of the way in which the country is getting on. My firm belief is that this question of tariff, which is Imperial, should be taken up at home and looked into. When we go into the question of party politics the present party in power has a great objection to tariff reform, but they passed the Patent Act which is pure protection and nothing else. Don't let us run away with the idea that sentiment rules the world. What we all do is something for our selfish selves, and what you do for yourselves is to improve yourselves. The point is, however, that in doing that you cannot benefit one part of the Empire without benefitting the whole. But it is no use us being progressive or being civilised, or entering into any questions like trade or even matters of social reform, unless we are properly defended; and there has arisen among our partners who are parts of the Empire great anxiety as to our defence.

Our ministers at home have made very grave speeches about the future. Some thought that one thing should be done and some another, but both agreed that there is a doubt as to our supremacy at sea, whether it is assailable or unassailable. That is at the bottom of it, and now having received from the Dominions their offer, our Government, very properly I think, asked them to send their most representative men to attend a conference in London to settle what share the Dominions should take, and what share the Old Country should take. I have been asked many times to give my opinion as to what Canada should do. I decline altogether to do anything of the sort. Canada knows her business best, and can look after her own affairs. It would be improper for any public man to come over here—no matter how sane his ideas may be—and put forward his views when the representatives of the Government are meeting to consider what is the best to be done. I may say that from what I see in the Press as to what is going to be done, the proposals, as far as I can gather, are all of a very sensible character, but for me to come here and make a campaign on the naval question in your country would be most immodest on my part and utterly frustrate the object I have in view.

I notice in your press there have been some kind and generous remarks about the Old Country having kept the peace and policed the seas for many years to the benefit of the Dominion. Well, we are all very grateful to them for having called attention to the fact, but we must remember that the Old Country could not well have done anything else, because

her prestige would have suffered and that might have been followed by very serious results as to the future of your existence and that of the Empire as a whole.

Another point I think we ought to remember in this Imperial question is whether we should regard the question, as I know most of you gentlemen will, from a business point of view, I think we should regard it from the point of view that each one of us is a shareholder in the largest concern in the world; that is "The British Empire Unlimited." We should do all we can to further the business of trade and commerce upon which depends the prosperity of each and all of us. We should also ensure that the trade and commerce—remember that it is water borne—should be adequately defended. We only claim to hold what we have got now, and to let the world know that we are going to hold it. That is not a threat, but we simply say that nothing shall alter our determination to hold what we have got. Don't let us go messing about with other people's affairs. Let's stick to our own affairs, and see that our own affairs are in such a state of security and safety that nobody will dare to attack us, not because we want war, not because if war comes we can say we shall win, because the loss of securities and in trade, would be so enormous that it would amount to defeat. In these days war is expensive especially to the British Empire. What the world is suffering from now is the loss of that two hundred and fifty millions, the cost of the South African war that affected trade, commerce and finance throughout the world. We don't want anything of that sort again. We want to be in the position to say "you dare not attack us." That is the view I hold.

Gentlemen, I am certainly grateful to you for, and deeply touched by, the genuine enthusiasm with which you have received me. I have to thank you very warmly.