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"The Thoughts of Men"

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Sir Gerald Campbell:—Mr. Chairman, distinguished guests, members of the Canadian Club of Toronto. Your chairman has put me right off balance by suggesting I should read that little poem. I had had no intention of doing it but as it seems I have to I had better do it now and get it over with. So:

Tell me not in mournful numbers
Life is but a Nazi threat,
While the rest of mankind slumbers
In a cold and troubled sweat.
Are our great men all behind us?
Have we no more heights to climb?
Telefotographs remind us
Goosesteps mark the march of time!
Let us walk with natural gaiting,
But for God's sake, let us walk,
While our souls keep watchful waiting,
Free to act and free to talk.

And now, gentlemen, to get on with my speech. I want to take this opportunity to thank you and some of the newspapers for the welcome you have given me on coming to Canada. Really it has been embarrassing. But it was nice, because it is wonderful to feel you are wanted. I have never felt that so much before, and I have had to pinch myself every so often to make sure that I was awake and that it was I about whom they were talking. There was one little thing in it that worried me. They talked about my pretty wit, and that is something that should not be talked about. I have not got a pretty wit, and even if I had it would be spoiled if it is talked about, for it would become strained, and a wit that is not spontaneous is not a pretty wit.

Well, gentlemen, I am not going to be very witty today. I have taken a very serious subject—"The Thoughts of Men"—and I have taken it from a book written by one who is now Governor-General of Canada, who said, "We now are in the midst of the retarded liquidation of the war. I don't mean debts and currencies and economic fabrics, but something much more vital, the thoughts of men."

Your Chairman has referred to the fact that I was going through a certain liquidation. In fact I sneezed so much on the way back from Toronto to Ottawa on Friday afternoon that I don't think the rest of the passengers enjoyed me at all, and when you are in that state your own thoughts are worse than the thoughts of any man you have met, so if I descend to using words of one or two syllables only today, you know it is because of that and not because I think you wouldn't understand anything else. If I had been in Britain my friends and relations would have not wanted me to come to Toronto because I ought to be in bed, because you don't, in Great Britain, do four nights journeys in five days. It simply isn't done. It is entirely too American to do a thing like that.

There is something about this Continent—I don't know what it is—it is vast in its exaggeration, its horizonlessness. (These are words of more than two syllables.) I remember when I first took leave from the United States, I played golf at home with a man whom I usually played with. He said, "What is the matter with your drive?" I said, "Is it worse than ever?" He said, "It is better, it is broader, it is more splendid, it is beautiful." Just at that moment I probably sliced into the woods, but I think this Continent did this to my drive at golf, and there is something big about it all here. You can't help it and you notice when you come to live here it brings something out of you that you never knew you had in you. It is all to the good and I am glad I have had that experience.

Talking about the vastness, there is an experience that Lord Stamford admits is true. A Texas man told him one day: "Texas is the most wonderful State in the Union. You get in a train at breakfast time, go all through the day, all through the night, and when you wake up in the morning you are still in Texas." Lord Stamford looked at

him benignly, "Yes, we have some trains like that in England, but we don't talk about them."

Well, gentlemen, talking about trains and journeys, I don't know whether you have lost the thrill yet, but I have already enjoyed travelling in Canada and I know I am going to enjoy it more after sitting and reading for a while in the train of what the old pioneers did, the trails they blazed, and how they blazed them, and looking out of the window on the very country in which they blazed those trails, seeing how things have changed and possibly changed for the better.

It reminds me sometimes of the days I spent in Tropical Africa, going through the pygmy forests, for instance, of the reading of Sir H. M. Stanley's books on the spot, of going along the trails that he actually cut through the pygmy forests, meeting his old guides around the camp-fire in the evening. That was thirty years ago. They are all dead now, I suppose. I am glad that I did it that way in those days, on foot and in canoe, paying my way in barter goods, in trade cloth or in salt. You could get a man to work for a whole day for a coffee cupful of rough salt, because they like salt. They haven't any in their State and they don't worry about any eight hour day. They will work any old time for salt. Also paying in mirrors—a trade mirror that costs practically nothing brings one chicken, if not two, and it is extraordinary watching the natives looking for the first time at themselves in a mirror. I have sometimes—No, I won't go into that. Marching through the forest, the great forest, at the head of a band of porters, singing in the early morning to keep in step was a fine experience, and in spite of the dangers, in spite of the beasties, the coolies and the long-leggedy things that might go 'bump' in the night, in spite of all that, I had peace of mind, and I am glad I did it that way.

Old men may still dream dreams and young men may still see visions, and as we sit in the train and go on our way, we can think how happy it is that we have progressed, how happy it is that the world is all set now to be socially secure, to be collectively secure, to be, perhaps even financially secure. But I think financiers are almost as bad as farmers—they never will agree they are secure. Those things are wonderful to think about when suddenly a boy comes in with the evening or morning paper, and your eye falls on the headlines, big headlines, we say "cynical headlines". They may be cynical headlines but the news underneath is probably pretty well correct, and as we read that news our visions scuttle into the nearest tunnel, and our dreams hurt. "We haven't progressed!", we cry. "We want to progress and we haven't. We are going backwards. We are going back again to barter trade. We are going back again to cave-man tactics. We are going back to the worship of the sun and the moon, and of wood and of stone, and what is coming next?" We have lost our peace of mind.

Ramsay MacDonald, when he was alive, said once, "We must change the furniture of our minds." I am not sure that the furniture isn't becoming almost too rickety to change. We have got times that are out of joint. Our mental state, too, is out of joint—even more so perhaps than the times—and it looks as though we have got to have a major operation. We are fearful that the major operation may not be successful because we know our blood is so infected with fear and hatred that gangrene might set in and the patient might perish.

What are the reasons for this? All of you would have fifty reasons to offer. You probably do offer them to your family at breakfast—that is why you always have breakfast alone. But I would like to offer you two reasons. One is the intoxication of speed. Our forefathers blazed these trails and went casually along them. Now, we go along at express speed and have meals served so we shan't get hungry and shan't get bored, and if anybody found the slightest cinder in his soup he would call the Superintendent and suggest he should be reported to the Company. The country I covered on a six months trek on foot and in canoe can now be covered by air or by automobile in just a few hours.

That is to the good, I think. That development is speed but on the other hand the deaths and injuries caused by automobiles in the United Kingdom is more than the casualties in a major battle in a war, and our nerves are all strung up. We are living on our nerves and we don't

have time to think properly. We don't have time to act properly, and I don't think we sleep properly.

Am I being too bitter about this world of ours? Am I being too old-fashioned? I don't know.

I was reading Hugh Walpole again not very long ago, and I got these words from him: "The world can't quite make up its mind—shall it believe in those old words, honour, service, discipline, restraint, unselfishness, duty, or shall it see them as tricks and shams, and fling them all away and be a nice, new nasty world, full of selfishness and cynicism and each for himself?"

Well, I imagine that most parsons could preach a course of Lenten sermons on those words. I would only take off one word to give you my other reason for the thoughts of men being what they are and that is the word 'restraint'. Isn't that a serious reason why our peace of mind is disturbed, why our thoughts are all like marionettes on wires which have no controlling hand, why at luncheons like this you can get people from the same place and the same country, giving you utterly divergent thoughts on exactly the same thing, and you don't quite know which to believe? Where are the old restraints? Christianity, international law, standards of behaviour? Could we exist domestically, or internally, in such disorder as we are trying to exist internationally, without order and without any sanctity any more for the spoken or the written word? We couldn't do it. So it is incumbent on any statesmen there are in the world, and there are mighty few nowadays—so many of them are the "near-beer" variety—it is incumbent on any statesman, or any man who wants to be a stateman to see that there should be a re-establishment of law and order, because without it the world cannot continue.

Then there is that phrase I used—"standards of behaviour". I know a lot of people think we of the Anglo-Saxon race are very smug and think we have a standard of behaviour. But there is one—there was one—there are some things you do do and some things you just don't do. A school-boy who goes into class with the wrong button undone remembers it for the rest of his life because of what the boys told him about not coming to school looking like that, and in the old days I think their was a restraint. If somebody said, "Why not?", Echo would answer, "Why not?" in rather a weak manner, but now Echo not only answers, "Why not?" in just as strong a voice, but as it shouldn't do because it isn't orthodox, Echo actually adds something, "Let's have a try." We have lost those old restraints and we want the old restraint back, so if we do things that are not done we shall be ostracized from the community, or ostracized from the world and nobody will have anything more to do with us.

That is what is happening now with the new type of war. I don't know whether it is war—we are not allowed to mention war. The last war abolished war. We are not supposed to go to war. If you don't like anybody you drop a bomb on them. This new type of war is being brought to us. We no longer go to war, it is brought to us. I would like to know if the children being brought up will gather around their father and make a hero of him as he tells how he has just gone over some town in a bomber and seen a lot of women and children dying as he dropped his bomb. I wonder if there are such children growing up?

O, dear, I am becoming so sad about this, and it is too bad. I think we are coming to realize it. The world is getting better. It should be getting better.

The problem of the world today is not necessarily relations between governments. It has now to be relations between peoples, between the man in the street or a city or a country, and a man in another street or another city or another country, and with the speed of life, with our nerves as they are, the thoughts of men are just in need of repair. The thoughts of men should be a little bit uplifted for fear they fall too low. That is not so bad. I don't think men fall too low. Barrie said once, "The most gladsome thing in the world is few of us fall too low; the saddest is, with such capabilities, seldom we rise high."

I wonder whether I might think aloud a little bit without looking too much at notes or anything of that sort. The Chairman told you I had travelled around the world a good deal. I am glad he didn't mention all the countries. They were mentioned once in a company in New York. I had an Irish Judge sitting next to me and he said, "At last I know you. You are a fugitive from justice."

As I have travelled around the world in different parts I have formed a philosophy of my own. I think that the good people in the world are probably not quite as good as they think they are, and I am pretty sure some of the bad people are worse than anybody imagines them to be, but, on the whole, the majority of the people, the majority of the nations of the world are just honest, God-fearing, hard-working people, like you and I want to be. They are not anxious to fight anybody, especially. They want to live and let live. They are just thinking about their own security, the security of themselves, of their children, and of their possessions, and they haven't the slighest ambition to be sent three thousand miles to kill somebody they never have been introduced to, and possibly be killed in the process. It is a dreadful thing for an Englishman to kill anybody he has never been introduced to.

Those people do want peace. Prime Minister Chamberlain on Saturday said, as a result of his recent travels he has found that the peoples of Europe are yearning for peace, are wanting peace, and yet they have got all this fear and this hatred in their system, and they are inculcating their children with fear and hatred as they talk in their homes at meal-time or after meal-time. Why should the children suffer so? They didn't ask to be born. Why should they have a fear and hatred put in their systems? Just because they can't help it. We have got to talk in that way.

There are two kinds of fear, as far as I have seen them —a sodden fear, and a rather inspiring, inspiriting fear. Could I just give you an example of each.

Part of my time I served in Abyssinia. When I went there I had to look up an encyclopedia to see where it was and what it was good for. It is good for the black man— I think that is all it said. Our youngest child was born there and when she had been to school in the United States, and the school mistress asked where she was born, she would say in an ordinary tone of voice, "In Addis Ababa", and the school mistress would go behind the screen and come back and say, "Spell 'Addis Ababa' ". While we were in Addis Ababa at the close of the war the influenza epidemic came to the world. We thought if the school teacher didn't know where Addis Ababa was then the influenza bug shouldn't know. All the same it came and within a week three out of five doctors had died. One doctor was trying to do the work of all of them. The fifth went to bed—he said he had a temperature and wouldn't get up. When I went to take it there wasn't one, but he wouldn't let me know about it. I had to go out too and try to doctor everybody—Greeks and Armenians and Arabs and Abyssinians. I used to stick eucalyptus leaves up my nostrils when I had been in a room with a lot of Arabs, coughing and spitting and sneezing, and then I would go out in the market-place and gargle with an unholy concotion my wife made for me.

I looked at that market-place. It was an enormous market-place and in normal times it was full of Abyssinians in clean clothes, in dirty clothes, selling food, fuel, hides, skins, money-changing, and so on. In those days it was absolutely empty. Perhaps just at the top there would be a little procession of men running along, carrying a corpse, and I knew they were going to bury it under some stones in the cemetery and in the night the hyenas would come and eat him anyway—why cover him?

I got a dreadful fealing of fear. I thought everything was coming to an end and I would get on a horse and ride somewhere else, or ride back home, feeling desperate.

The other occasion was in Brazil. I went down the St. John Delrey, a gold mine that in those days was the deepest in the world. The mine captain asked if I would like to go to the lowest level. He said, "It isn't prepared, it is all rocks and probably you will hurt yourself, but come down if you like. I went down with him and followed him along. He had a light. He had been pulling my leg and telling me, "This rock might fall on top of you, and it will hurt," and I laughed. I laughed like that. When we were down to the lowest level somebody rushed up and said, "There has been an accident. Some rocks had fallen on a man." The mine captain went off with the light as fast as he could and I followed. I did hit my head, I did hit my shins, I did hurt myself, horribly, and in the end we came to where the poor man was buried under some rock. I was afraid, I expect. I didn't know I was afraid. He went on and I followed that light. I had somebody to follow, somebody to keep up with, and I knew as long as I kept up with that I would be all right. That is the other kind of fear.

Now, we have got this fear in the world today, and I think a great many people have the first and the worst kind of fear—sodden fear. But we want them, we want everybody and ourselves to have the second kind. We can't help being apprehensive. If there is only some light, somebody to hold on to, somewhere to steer!

Now, is this going to be very condescending? I don't want to be condescending. I want it to be real. The people of the world want someone to show the way. They want someone to hold on to like a child. When a child is lost it goes to the first person it sees and the first person who holds out its arm. The last person to say that to me was Haile Selassie, many, many years ago. They want somebody and everywhere, touching every part of the world is this Empire of ours. How often, in the United States, when there has been some question come up, and they have asked, "Why are you taking part in this?", have I said, "Because our Empire touches almost every part of the world and it is bound to come into every question that arises in the world."

There is this Empire of ours, that is, you and me. Are we in fear of falling too low? Dare we fall too low? Dare we betray or squander our heritage, the heritage our forefathers bequeathed to us? Don't let us squander it like men who have handed on heritages to their sons and grandsons and are bringing them up in such a way that in two generations that is squandered and gone. No, this heritage is handed down by our forefathers who believed in something greater than themselves and they now belong to the ages.

Where do we belong? Are we worthy of that heritage? Are we maintaining traditions and keeping up the high standards that were set us or are we just throwing them away? I don't mind if we are throwing away the things that don't count. That is all right. That is change. Change isn't weakness. It is often strength, especially if it makes us more elastic to help build our building so it sways with the quake, as they do in San Francisco and other places where they are afraid of earthquakes, and they build their buildings so they will swing plumb with the quake. That is all right but there are too many quakes in the world and we have to be ready for that. It is all right to change. To change is life, not what we are, but what we hope is best." That is

change, but what are we and what do we hope? Aren't we just a conglomeration of different flesh, different blood, different colours, different creeds, different languages, different methods of eating, different methods of creating, but all bubbling over with that one thing called human nature? It is a terrific thing, that human nature, and I hope we all do bubble over, because we are no good if we don't. What do we hope? We hope to maintain law and order in the world, to maintain fair play, to be a bulwark for peace and decent behaviour once more. When we say decent behaviour, don't let us be smug about it, and adopt a holier-than-thou attitude, but just a decent behaviour that comes with and from responsibility.

Not very long ago in Ottawa I was saying to a lady of another nationality, "I get a little fed up with all the nations of the world thinking Great Britain should be the only policeman in the world." She said, "What can you expect?" You like to think you own the world, and you are all over the world. You must accept your responsibility and why shouldn't we regard you as the only policeman in the world?" If this is the way they look at us I suppose that is all right, but we have more responsibility than that. We have the responsibility I am talking about and we have got it because we have a heritage and we have a heritage which we can lend to a needy world and it won't suffer from being lent. A great many things improve with lending. (I am afraid this sounds rather like a sermon, but I can't help it.) We have a heritage and it is a heritage which has survived the great shock of the greatest war the world has ever known. It has come through the fire, scorched and scarred but it has come through, and it has been humanized—humanized by the adversity which it has suffered and the distress and turmoil which has been its lot during the last quarter of a century. That Commonwealth, that Empire has stood firm, and that Commonwealth and that Empire must stand firm today as a force for good in the world, as a force for peace among the peoples, for it is through that she will attain her true glory and achieve what we, her children, believe to be her destiny. To her we cry today in the words that the Lord spake unto Joshua, "Only be thou strong and very courageous".