(April 27, 1914.)

The Canadian Club Movement and Its Future.

By Mr. George Wilkie, B.A.*

AT the annual meeting of the Club, held on the 27th April, after the conclusion of the business, Mr. George Wilkie, B.A., one of the early Presidents, introduced a discussion on the subject, "The Canadian Club Movement and Its Future." Mr. Wilkie said:

Mr. President and Gentlemen,—On all important occasions of this kind, it is usual for the speaker to thank you for the honor which you do him in giving him the opportunity of expressing his views upon the question on which he addresses you. And so I thank you, Sir, for your kindness in allowing me to reminisce a few minutes, and to tell you how much better they used to do in the early days of this Club than you and your coadjutors have been doing this past year. (Laughter.) In those good old days when I was President of the Club, it was the usual practice of the retiring President to give an account not merely of his stewardship but of the events in the world at large which had had an effect upon Canada and Canadians. For a great many years now, I believe, that subject has been neglected. Of thirteen or fourteen Presidents, none has taken over that duty, none has performed it. It was the custom to take an hour for that, and so I propose now to take up seriatim the matters which should have been treated by those Presidents, and to deal with each at such length as each of them should have done. (Laughter.)

The first thing I propose dealing with is the Canadian Club. I will read you a portion of the Constitution, the most important portion, that is, its objects. The President has very kindly turned up the volume here, so I shall be able to read it, although I should not be able to remember it. It is more necessary, perhaps, to read it, because this Club is so well fitted with a Constitution that it does not even feel

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its presence. "The purpose of the Canadian Club shall be to foster patriotism, and to encourage the study of the history, literature, arts, and resources of Canada." That was the object with which a gathering of young men some seventeen years ago undertook the business of forming a Canadian Club in Toronto. There had been one in Hamilton for a few years previous, the solitary instance in which Hamilton had got ahead of Toronto. (Laughter.) The objects of the Club, if I recollect aright, received a good deal of careful attention. Reading it now again after a considerable lapse of years one is struck once more with the wisdom of the draughtsmen of this Constitution, in setting forth the purpose of the Club as being "to foster patriotism"—notice the astuteness, they did not say patriotism towards what, because we live in a Canada that is not undivided, because in Canada some people are patriotic towards one set of institutions, and some to another, and perhaps the draughtsman foresaw what Lord Milner was to say some fourteen years later, that he could no more understand Canadians being patriotic to England than he could understand Englishmen being patriotic to Canada.

For a short time we attempted to live up to the Constitution. For the first two or three years we did encourage the study of the institutions of Canada, at any rate we encouraged the discussion of them, among ourselves—we only incidentally or occasionally introduced a stranger to tell us what we ought to do. We studied the history of Canada, and we gave heed to the study of the arts. It was an event in those days for the Canadian Club each year to attend the exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists, and we made provision that on the night the Toronto Canadian Club attended that gathering no strangers were to be admitted, the whole exhibition was sacred only to the members of the Toronto Canadian Club, none others. I don't know to what extent that encouraged the art of Canada, but that was the only art exhibition at the time in Toronto, and we did our best by attending that one.

As for the literature of Canada, I think in some ways we did better in that regard than now. We had Canadian poets speak to us from time to time, and gave them a luncheon or a dinner, just as we thought they most stood in need of. (Laughter.) We had Dr. Drummond on several occasions. He was a most excellent man, a most charming man to meet, and I hope many of you are encouraging Canadian literature by reading Dr. Drummond's poems. On one occasion,

or more, we gave a dinner to Sir Gilbert Parker. And so we entertained literary men who were Canadians, some Englishmen, and I hope some of them were Irishmen. (Laughter.)

With regard to studying the resources of Canada, perhaps we then did no more than you are doing now, perhaps not so good work, but we had some idea in the early days of the Club of endeavoring to fulfil its function. Whether as a result of those efforts or not, I do not know, but certainly after them, and therefore according to popular logic because of them, the years following were years of great importance to Canada. Those of you who are not so old as Mr. Cooper and myself can get an idea of the position of Canadian affairs in 1896 and 1897—only with considerable difficulty. If you have great difficulty in imagining it, and Sir Richard Cartwright says you will—get his "Reminiscences." You will find there an account of the position of our trade. For many years it had grown at a very slow rate, something like 3 per cent. per annum; population was stagnant, not even retaining our own natural increase—according to the census of the United States there were 1,200,000 Canadian-born persons living in the United States. Those were trying times in many ways. Just a few years before the question of annexation occupied a considerable space in the newspapers and on the public platform. Three or four years before a member of the Legislature called a meeting at Windsor, in which annexation was advocated and a resolution in favor of it carried. A similar meeting was called for Woodstock, but Sir Oliver Mowat arranged matters so that when the vote was taken there the resolution in favor of annexation was voted down by a majority of something like twelve to one. The Dominion Government had recently changed, the defeated government had gone out under a cloud. The new government was new, and untried, new men, at any rate, in whom the populace had not yet learned to have confidence.

In order to understand the objects of the Canadian Club, it is necessary to have some idea of the problems which were presenting themselves to the Canadian people at the time. At that time the position of Canada in the Empire and in the world, was very different from what it is now. If you will read books of the day, you will find some indication of the progress Canada made in those few years. I think in 1895 the Ministers of the Cabinet of Great Britain and the Dominion of Canada and other colonies—everybody called them colonies then, nobody thought of them as anything else

—the making of treaties was the exercise of a sovereign power which the colonies did not have; for colonies to have the making of their own treaties was nothing more or less than colonial independence! To-day, and for years, we have made our own treaties in trade matters, without a thought of doing anything more than exercising the proper functions of Canadian government. We made a treaty with France, and Mr. Asquith knew nothing of it, and he said it was quite proper and right. Since then we have made treaties with Germany, one with Italy, two with the United States—I am not now referring to 1911. (Laughter.) At any rate we have gone thus far in the few years since the birth of the Canadian Club, we have advanced to a point unthinkable when it originated. So far have we gone that we call ourselves a nation, and are called a nation by thinking men in Great Britain, and by thinking men everywhere. The term is one, however, that requires a little consideration, because while in common practice we make our own laws and treaties, and administer our own laws, with the single exception that there is an appeal to the King in his Privy Council, perhaps even it might be said that having theoretically one set of rights we are exercising in actuality another set—so far as we are concerned, in practice we make our own laws and treaties, and to all intents and purposes are our own governors, yet in theory we are as much to-day as ever we were dependent upon the British Crown; our Constitution is an Imperial Statute which the Imperial Parliament may amend or repeal, but in practice this is like the veto of the King, which no one, he himself least of all, thinks of exercising. So far as the growth of self-government is concerned, we have advanced greatly beyond the point where we stood fourteen or fifteen years ago. The problems of the right to govern ourselves and deal with our own affairs are practically wiped off the slate of practical affairs with which we need concern ourselves.

We have added during the past fourteen or fifteen years a very valuable chapter to the history of the world; we have, partly by our own efforts, partly by the good offices of the Imperial authorities, and partly by the force of circumstances, changed the condition of Canada so that it is practically working out its own affairs, still retaining its British connection unworn and unstrained. (Applause.)

The course of our literature is perhaps not less interesting than that of our history; while our resources are growing more interesting every day.

In the year 1896-7 we were divided by one of the most bitter sectarian strifes that ever cursed a people. We got rid of that, and for the sake of cold, bald, bare justice, I want to tell you how we got rid of it. It has been my misfortune, in this Orange city of Toronto—I have no objections to its being Orange, but it is Conservative, and I have objections to that—(Laughter)—to listen to attacks made upon my fellow Canadians of Quebec. I have let them go unchallenged when I thought they should not be unchallenged. To-day I am going to say something about them. I need not dwell upon the origin of the topic,—I refer, as you all know, to the Remedial Bill. Under the Constitution, when the Roman Catholics of Manitoba came into Confederation, they preserved their rights to their schools.

The Privy Council said there was a right under the British North America Act to remedy the difficulty. The Remedial Bill was brought in and a Dominion election held upon the issue. I do want to tell you to-night, that throughout the Province of Quebec, which we are disposed to-day to call Roman Catholic, priest-ridden and bigoted, the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church made the fight in favor of the Remedial Bill their own and went so far that one Archbishop said it would be a mortal sin for a Catholic to vote for the Remedial Bill. There was an election practically on that question, and if I had not the figures I would not venture to give you the result, but Manitoba, whose rights were invaded by the Remedial Bill, voted in favor of having the Dominion Parliament force that Remedial Bill down its own throat. Ontario, which then as now, was unsectarian, unbigoted, and free to pass upon the question, sent a majority in favor of the Bill. That is perhaps just a little doubtful, because the parties were not divided definitely, and there were the Patrons of Industry, whose allegiance was perhaps not easily defined. But of the opponents of the Bill only forty-four went to Parliament from Ontario. The other Provinces divided in such wise that if the Province of Quebec was left out there would have been Remedial legislation, and Manitoba would have had Remedial schools, if it had not been for Quebec's vote. Now I have done saying my own words about this, and I will now read you the words of a member of your own party—no matter which party you belong to,—in the Life of Sir Wilfrid Laurier by Sir John Willison (Laughter):

"To the Liberals of Quebec, maligned, misrepresented and misunderstood from the very birth of Confederation,

faithful through long years of adversity to the essential principles of civil and religious liberties, we owe the delivery of Manitoba from the policy of federal coercion, and the pacific settlement of a quarrel which threatened the integrity of Confederation and menaced the self-governing rights of all the Western communities."

On the political aspect of that I wish to have nothing to say to-day, but on the Canadian aspect of it I have something to say. I should like every man here to have something to say about it. It was not the first nor the second nor the last time that the French-Canadian has demonstrated that he does not deserve that we should say that he is either priest-ridden or bigoted.

What do I think should be the business of the Canadian Club? I think the great work of the Canadian Club in the future will be wholly different from what it was, and perhaps rightly, in the past. The problems of material success we have measurably solved, at any rate we have demonstrated our capacity to produce sufficient for our people. The problems of distribution of wealth we have perhaps yet to solve. But it seems to me, if we are to work out our great destiny in this last and best piece of land fit for the habitation of white men, we can do so only on great principles, principles of fairness and justice to the East and to the West, of fairness and justice to the English-speaking man and of fairness and justice to the French-speaking man. (Applause.)

I wanted to present to you the most striking fact in showing that we were not always fair, not always just, perhaps not always honest, in dealing with those who speak another language, but who are nevertheless just as good Canadians as we, notwithstanding that they speak a different tongue than we do, who were Canadians indeed before we were, for their history stretches back to the earliest history of this continent. If I were a Frenchman, if French were my mother tongue, I should glory in that history just as they do; and if my native tongue was the French tongue, with all its glory of literature, drama and history, I should glory in that tongue as they do. And I sympathize with them to the full when they want to preserve, as much as they can, all these things which they have inherited from their glorious ancestry. (Applause.)

Then another people to whom we in Ontario should extend great consideration are those who form that advanced guard of civilization who are furnishing the labor and the

hardship in making the new country in our Canadian Northwest. There always has been on the North American continent a struggle between the East and the West. There was in the United States years ago, but bitter as it was, as those of us who were grown up then remember, it is pretty well past. I am afraid we have that struggle with us now, have had for some time, and shall have it for some time longer; and our position is a more dangerous one than theirs, because their territory stretched unbrokenly from east to west, while between the fertile East of Canada and the fertile West there stretches eight hundred miles of uninhabitable rock and water. West of that is an inhabitable tract of rich country, in which at some time in the not distant future there will be a population probably greater, potentially many times greater, than the population of the East. To the south lies another people, of the same race, speaking the same language, carrying on the same class of business, manufacturing goods that these people want to buy, and buying goods these people want to sell. And yet, if we are to have such a Canada as we ought to have, we must have that West knit to this East, if we are to have unity we must have understanding; and we must have more, we must have plain, simple, fair, even-handed justice and fair dealing.

What do I see ahead of the Canadian Club? I see this as its greatest practical work, to broaden the minds of the people of Ontario, of the people of the other Provinces, so that the people of Ontario will understand and appreciate the good qualities of the people of the other Provinces. What are the words of the poet:

> "Be to their faults a little blind;
> Be to their virtues always kind."

One hears something of the bad qualities of this Province and of its people; one hears it said that Quebec is slow; and the same man, perhaps, will tell you that the Provinces of the West are too fast, too ambitious, too proud, too hopeful. But that is just what you ought to have in the West. And I would look for, in Quebec, something different—we have there what we need, a steady population, clinging close to the soil, working out their way along that slow and toilsome road that leads to an honorable but not highly ornamented grave. But the more active, hurly-burly life of the West preserves the nervous hard crust of life. That being so, now, we find that our greatest literary men are Quebeckers; our greatest sculptor is from that Province; many of our

greatest painters, too. On the other hand, the West is hopeful,—if you like to try it, see how long you would stay there if you have not hope in abundance—it is a necessary condition of life upon the prairies; to every pioneer it is needful to bear the labor and struggles of life. The chief business of the Canadian Club, indeed, is to see to it that every Canadian is making this Canada of ours what it should be, and will yet be, the best place under the sun for a man to live in." (Applause.)