(*September 16, 1919.*)

Canada and the Empire

By Lord Finlay.*

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—I can assure you that I am profoundly touched by the warmth of your welcome. It has been to me a great delight to be in Canada, of which I had heard so much but where I had never before been, physically at least. I have seen enough of Canada to realize how true was the saying which Thackeray uttered concerning the acquisition of Canada by the first Pitt, "Fortune presented him with the splendid gift of Canada." How splendid a gift that was which he received at the hands of fortune I have, during the last few weeks, had some opportunity of realizing.

It is true that I have not seen the whole of Canada. I think it would take a lifetime, almost, even to scratch the surface of Canada in the way of sight-seeing. I have not got further west than Winnipeg. I have not seen those magnificent corn fields which stretch from Winnipeg far westward. I have not seen those Rockies, which, I am told by those who are familiar with mountaineering, beat Switzerland. I have not seen the coast, the margin of the Pacific of which we hear so much, and which always goes by the name of "the coast," par excellence, I understand, in North America.

But I have seen quite enough; and I think anyone who has seen the Province of Ontario, even by itself, must realize what a future this country has before it. You seem to me to have everything. You have got the capacity for unlimited agricultural production of corn and everything you desire. You have got Nature in her widest aspect; which, owing to the hospitality of my friend Mr. Nesbitt, I have just had the opportunity of realizing. You have got scenery which cannot be surpassed in the world; and, I believe, with her great resources, Canada should develope more and more. Therefore, what a stroke of

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fortune it was which gave such a heritage to the British Empire.

Gentlemen, in looking over the history of Canada, everyone must be struck by the devoted loyalty which it has always shown to the British Crown and the British Empire. The very beginnings of Upper Canada as a settlement of any great extent were due to that great attachment to the Crown which has characterized and, I believe, always will characterize, Canadians. And, in 1812, we all know how that attachment was proved on many a well-fought battle field. We are living, as far as wars near at home are concerned, in quieter times; but in Canada itself a magnificent manifestation of loyalty has been called forth by the visit of the Prince, to which your chairman has alluded. I do not believe that anywhere within the limitations of the Empire would the heir to the Crown have received a warmer welcome than that which he received in Canada. And such a Prince draws the bonds of Empire even closer than they were before.

Gentlemen, the whole Empire has been drawn closer of late years, closer together, more firmly welded together, under the discipline of war. It is a stern discipline, but good comes out of evil. It has come out of evil in the present case. And out of the furnace of war there emerged a more closely compacted Empire, an Empire more sensible in every part that it is one Empire and that every portion of the Dominions of the King are members one of another. It is impossible not to say that when Germany so lightly embarked upon the war now happily concluded, she thought the British Empire would not stand the strain of a great war. She expected that the British Empire, not being based on military autocracy, being based merely on the ties of race and mutual affection, would fall to pieces under the strain of self-interest—which game Germany thought she could play. Sorely were the Germans disappointed.

I believe that great feeling of irritation which fell to Germany at seeing your troops in Europe was due to the fact that they found those whom they hoped would shrink away from the Mother Country, but who crossed the 2,000 miles of sea to have the pleasure of fighting the Germans. You can perfectly understand the feelings of disappointment and irritation. Instead of the joints of the Empire being loosened, they became firmer, more flexible but stronger. And you had in the field a body of Canadian troops who, I believe, have never been surpassed in the history of the world for discipline or

for courage. You can quite understand the irritation of the Germans, and one has to remember with regret that that irritation sometimes urged them on to deeds which even the Germans must know to be a shame. They thought to terrorize the Canadians. Little did they know their men; and for every cruelty that was inflicted upon Canadian prisoners or Canadian wounded a hundred Canadians flocked to the field of battle to avenge the wrongs that had been done.

Gentlemen, the soldiers of the Empire have fought magnificently; and it is to them that we owe the decisive result in the way of victory which has attended the efforts of the Empire as a whole. But we can never forget what we owe to the Navy. Except on rare occasions, the work of the navy is less spectacular than that of the army. But we know how, during the Napoleonic wars, it was to the silent pressure of the Navy of England that ultimate victory was to a great extent due. And we have witnessed the very same phenomenon during the war which is just over. The Navy; by its work in guarding the shores of every part of the British Empire; by its work in cutting off German trade, direct or indirect; by the heroic courage during those rare opportunities of bringing the foe to battle; and by that magnificent discipline which triumphed over every danger; surmounted the long years of waiting until the end should come.

I think we may be more than proud of our Navy—more proud than ever we were. And I think that we are all beginning to realize that the real base of the British Empire is upon the sea. We have often read in history of Empires which had a basis of a different kind. The Norsemen of old had an Empire whose base was so entirely on the sea that they commanded but a fringe of land on the shores of countries which joined the sea they dominated. Great Britain dominates the sea. It would never do to blind ones eyes to the fact that the Empire, in its mutual cohesion, in its prosperity, in its very existence, owes everything to the Navy which brought it into being and which guards it now.

Gentlemen, the community of race, common loyalty to the Crown, are the foundations of unity of the Empire. But the unity of the Empire brings corresponding conditions to every party. The response made in the supply of men to take part in the field of battle from every part of the Empire has been magnificent; but I think that we all realize that, to a very great extent, the Dominions, and more particularly the distant Dominions, enjoy the proud position they occupy because of

the Navy. What would be the future of, say, Australia, if Australia were not linked to that Mother Country which with the rest of the Empire dominates the sea. We must always remember that it is the unity of the Empire, it is to that predominance on the sea which springs from the unity of the Empire, which gives the British Empire its proud position in the world; and which gives safety to every part of it, and more particularly to the more distant parts of it.

Gentlemen, I think you all realize what sacrifices the Mother Country has made. No one can hear without emotion of what has been done by Canada. It is an inspiration to hear, as I have heard since I came to Canada, of a father and five sons all serving in the armies of the Crown against the Germans. I think that in Canada you realize that the Mother Country has not been behind in the race. For the first time in her history, England has become, not merely the greatest of all naval powers, but one of the greatest of all military powers. She has put millions of men in the field, and you will hardly find a home in England which has not sustained losses that never can be repaired in doing its duty by the country and by the Empire. The Mother Country has astonished the world by her sacrifices. She has proved herself worthy of her splendid children across the seas, and they have proved themselves worthy of her. I think our motto may well be that which is so familiar to all of us, "United we stand, divided we fall."

And, if there is one lesson which has impressed itself on the minds of all of us as a result of this war, it is the absolute necessity of retaining the Empire one and indissoluble. You hear a great deal of talk sometimes about the freedom of the seas. That is a phrase which has been a good deal in the mouths of those who are not over friendly either to the great Dominions, such as Canada, or to the Mother Country, England. The freedom of the seas does not mean taking any steps, such as the Germans would have liked to have taken, which would cripple the efficiency of England as Mistress of the Seas.

The true freedom of the seas consists in rendering impossible such outrages upon the seas as the Germans committed. The submarine campaign was, I think,—I am certain,—the most horrible ever undertaken in the history of the world. You had systematic and cold-blooded attempts to starve Great Britain into submission, and to starve it how? Not by any weapon known to international law, but by the systematic

destruction of merchantmen even with their crews, and without warning. It was executed with great risk to the lives of those on board the merchant vessels; and with the certainty of untold suffering, more particularly to the women and children on board. Such things were an outrage upon humanity and an outrage upon international law.

These things were done in the hope of reducing England to submission, but the attempt failed. And why did it fail? It failed very largely because the Germans had entirely miscalculated the courage and the endurance of our merchant marine. They thought that they would create panic, that ships would not put to sea, that men would refuse to face those dangers to which they were exposed by the torpedo in passage through waters which ought to have been safe from everything except the well-recognized means which international law recognizes as between one belligerent and another in the case of merchantmen using the sea upon lawful occasions. Gentlemen, the Germans were baffled because our sailors refused to be frightened. They went on doing their duty; and the whole calculation, on the strength of which Germany embarked on her career of crime by this submarine campaign, was utterly baffled and defeated. While we appreciate the services of the Royal Navy let us never forget what we owe, almost as great a debt, to the sailors of our merchant vessels, who faced in the discharge of duty dangers as great as those which were faced by the blue jackets of the Royal Navy; and who faced them without the excitement and exhilaration of battle, and without the same results that might be expected in the way of glory to the company. All honor to them. Let us never forget what we owe to our merchant marine as well as to the Royal Navy.

To-day, it is plain that the submarine campaign of Germany was not only a great crime but a great blunder. It laid Germany open to retaliation; to retaliation justified by the law of nations; retaliation for what Germany was doing by way of murders and outrage upon the seas; retaliation in quite a different form from those outrages, which were such as no man of our race would ever stoop to; retaliation against the trade with Germany or from Germany, which was very effective in the process of bringing Germany to her knees.

We have all heard of the blockade. Blockade, in the ordinary sense of the term, was impossible in the case of Germany; because the Germans' sea bases were really inaccessible to our vessels of war. Some of them were in the Baltic, protected by

mines; and Germany drew her supplies from other and neutral countries; and the reprisals, which the submarine campaign justified and rendered necessary, were directed against that indirect supply to Germany from vessels through neutral countries. Gentlemen, a great deal of criticism was bestowed, in the earlier stages of the war, upon the way in which the blockade of the Navy was used for the purpose of blockading Germany. A great many of those criticisms were, to my mind, characterized by more zeal than discretion or knowledge. If a great deal of the advice which was tendered to the Admiralty and Foreign Office had been followed in the earlier stages of the war it might have had the effect of embroiling us with every neutral nation in the world.

The Foreign Office and the Admiralty knew their business. They bided their time; and when the outrages committed by Germany at sea rendered those reprisals to which I have referred justifiable according to the law of nations, England struck, and struck home. It was due to the conduct of our affairs by the blockade committee,—and I venture to add the name of the Minister of Blockade, Lord Robert Cecil, that worthy son of a great father,—it was due to the way in which the blockade was carried out, with caution and yet with efficiency, in a great measure that we were able to bring Germany to her knees. We, of course, beat the Germans at their own game. We beat them on land. They thought they were the supreme military nation and that no other force could stand up to them. We let them see their mistake. We also exercised pressure upon Germany which, every one who has followed the series of events knows, had a very great share in bringing Germany to her knees and attaining that triumphant conclusion of the war in which we have all rejoiced.

Gentlemen, I think we may look forward to the peace of the world, being assured by the close friendship which exists and which always will exist between Great Britain and America. And when I say America, I mean the great Dominion of Canada to which the Mother Country owes so much. I mean also the United States of America which, during the last eighteen months of the war, cast in their lot with us; and did most effective service in the field in France and in carrying out those naval operations of which I have already spoken. It would not be correct to say that the peace of the world depends entirely upon the English-speaking races in North America; there are a great many people who speak French; and we have the great country of France, which in this war

has shown the heroism of that race more than ever, which with your assistance and with ours, has repulsed a treacherous and embittered attack against her very existence; and which has come out of this great struggle in which she has lost so much with a still higher reputation than ever she bore in the history of the world for chivalry and for everything that makes a nation great.

Gentlemen, I think that we may be of good cheer with regard to the future of the world. Whatever may be the future of that League of Nations of which we hear so much, as long as the great countries to which I have been referring hold together I believe that the future of the world is safe; and what I have seen in Canada assures me that in the great future which lies before Canada, Canada will play a part worthy of her past history, worthy of the history of that Empire of which she is so great a part, and which is destined to be of untold advantage to the world; in the interests of which as well as in her own, as well as in the interests of the Empire to which she belongs, Canada has shown that her sons can fight so gallantly.

Gentlemen, I know that this is not the time for long speeches, and I am drawing to a close. But before I sit down I should like once again to tell you how overwhelmed I am by the kindness which I have received since I came to Canada. The welcome that you have given me here to-day goes to my heart. I shall carry back with me to the Mother Country the warmest recollections of your country and of your hospitality; and all I can say is that I look forward to a very bright future indeed for that country which is so indelibly printed on my memory, and which will never fade, in view of the many acts of kindness of which I have been the object while I have been in America. I thank you, gentlemen, with all my heart.