

(April 26, 1909).

Imperial Defence.

BY LIEUT.-COL. HUGH CLARK, M.P.P.

LIEUT.-Col. Hugh Clark, M.P.P., of Kincardine, was the guest of the Club, and delivered an address on Imperial Defence.

Mr. President, and Gentlemen, members of the Canadian Club: I am grateful to the Chairman for the kind words in which he has introduced me, but not for the flattering manner in which he described me as an orator. I never like to be introduced in that way, for I feel sensible of my inability to live up to the introduction, but I have always this satisfaction, that if you go away with a poor opinion of my oratory you likewise go away with a poor opinion of his veracity.

The fact that you gentlemen adopt the name Canadian indicates that you are tolerably well satisfied with Canada as a country, with Canada as a home, with Canada as a name. In this you show admirable judgment and excellent taste. It is not for me to sing paeans to the praise of our country. We have passed through several election campaigns lately and no doubt you have heard your political orators dilate upon Canada's magnificent distances; her unparalleled resources; her marvellous possibilities. The terms have become hackneyed, but it is a fact that one cannot accurately describe Canada without the use of superlatives. Dr. Samuel Johnson was a poor man, and so it gave him great delight to be able, as executor of the Thrale estate, to sign his name to very large cheques, and when the time came to sell the Thrale brewery he told the prospective bidders, in that grandiose and ponderous language for which he was so famous, that he was selling "not butts, and vats and valves, but the potentiality of wealth beyond the dreams of avarice." Well, sir, that is what we have in this country to-day, not only the wealth of golden grain; the cattle on a thousand hills, the trees in the virgin forests, the fishes in our mediterranean lakes, but we have also silent invisible assets, outcroppings of which may be seen in Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia, and even up as far north as Dawson City, vast mineral re-

sources, waiting for the pick of the prospector, waiting to be developed, "the potentiality of wealth beyond the dreams of avarice," and I venture to think that the richest spots in Canada may yet be found among the rejected and despised rocks and fastnesses of Algoma and Nipissing, in our own Province. A few years ago, we used to think that large areas of this country were bound to be inhabited, but to-day we have settlements in regions that ten or fifteen years ago we regarded as uninhabitable, and now no one need doubt that every part of Canada can be made a home of plenty and prosperity.

The question that arises now is, is this country worth defending, and the description is the best answer to the question. It is worth defending. Then arises the question, are our defences worth while? We have here representatives of every arm of the military service. We have regiments of infantry not quite so in demand as in modern days, when rapid mobilization and maneuvering are of such great moment; regiments of cavalry and mounted infantry, useful for this very reason; batteries of artillery (and I never yet have met the artillerist who fails to regard his as the arm pre-eminent); we have the Army Service Corps for the provisioning and feeding of the troops, necessary because it is as true to-day as it was when Wellington so bluntly stated it, that "an army marches on its belly;" we have corps of guides, doing very useful work; we have engineers, and signallers. But while we have every arm of the service, we have only in the neighborhood of forty thousand men in our Canadian Army. But the strength of the force which can be put in the field for national defence does not to-day appear on paper. One of the most significant features of the call to arms in South Africa was that a larger proportion of the men who responded to the call had never been at an annual training camp, and their names never until then appeared on the service rolls. In a democratic country like Canada the words of the poet are conspicuously true:

"Men are not born to the fighting; men are not born to the Sword;

Only for God and their country have men to the battle front poured.

Not in the clamor of bugles, not in the lilt of the drum,

But in the call of their country do men hear the terrible
'Come,'

Then rise the men of a nation, men of a purpose and will,
Then do they rise with a light in their eyes,
But not as men go to the kill."

Our strongest defence is in this latent energy, and I have no doubt that in the stress of war our Canadian forces would perform what Bonaparte used to call "prodigies of valour," but I am not foolish enough to think that we would enjoy the sense of security which we do were it not for the fact that we lean upon the arm of the greatest empire in the world. And it is pleasant to feel that when we rely upon the might and majesty of Britain we are leaning upon no slender reed. Only a few years ago, I was conversing with a much travelled man. I think it was Bayard Taylor, who said that Audobon had travelled more and seen less than any other man he had ever met. This man was different. He had not only travelled much, but had observed as well. We were discussing a flag episode during the exposition here in Toronto. He took exception to the critics who found fault with the profuse display of alien flags, and I was disposed to object to him when he said, "Look here, Colonel, if you had travelled as much as I have and had the opportunity of seeing the might and majesty of Britain displayed on every sea, you would not begrudge to the people of any other country on earth the petty privilege of waving their flags whenever and wherever they willed."

And this brings us, sir, to the present day and the juncture which some critics persist in calling a crisis. The annoying feature of the whole thing is that we have in Canada very wise men, mostly editors, who are having lots of fun these days in describing the 'panic?' into which they say Britain has been plunged by the 'German peril.' I shall accept these terms only because they use them, and not that I regard as panic the quiet, and dignified concern which patriots must feel in the present state of national defence. A ten-year-old boy can have heaps of fun at his father's timidity. He can enjoy it all the more, knowing as he does, that if there is any fighting to be done it is the old man who will have to do it. (Laughter.) What is the cause of this quiet but resolute concern for our national safety which these wise men call panic? Is there any cause for it? No one disputes that Germany is vastly increasing her navy and that Austria is offering her

substantial assistance. Is it with the object of attacking France, or Russia, or Holland, Belgium, Sweden or Norway? Certainly not. Germany's activity can have no objective if it be not Britain. In this connection I may quote an incident from Boswell's Johnson, which, if it is not apropos of the present situation, tends in that direction. As Boswell and Johnson were walking along the street they saw a fellow making grimaces at them. "What does the man mean?" asked Boswell. "Depend upon it, sir," replied the sage, "he means to be offensive." It is folly to rail against the Germans as a speaker in Canada has recently done. It is futile to deny their progress in military science. They are a great industrial people and not without high national ambitions and aspirations. But because we recognize these conditions and advocate means to meet them we are, forsooth, alarmists. Is Premier Asquith given to timidity? Is Reginald McKenna an alarmist? Whatever authoritative declaration has been made on this point has been made by members of a government pledged to a reduction of armaments, and certainly never accused of jingoism. And then as to our ability to meet these new conditions, is not Lord Roberts a good judge or our army, and Lord Beresford competent to speak as an expert on our navy? We have, therefore, high authority for our concern as to the grave situation that confronts our Empire, and we have, too, expert evidence as to the condition of our national defence. Is it not, therefore the plain duty of the empire to meet the situation boldly?

Now, as to the effect of this "crisis." It will put the British army and navy in a state of preparedness, and that is a good thing in such a time. I have said elsewhere, and I repeat here, that I should prefer to see Britain in a panic in the piping times of peace than to see her thrown into a panic when the "clouds darken to menace of war." You cannot persuade Tommy Atkins that Britain errs on the side of devoting too much attention to him in the time of peace. You recall Kipling's poem on this point. If Britain is at fault it is in allowing her patriotism to cool and her arms to rust in peace times, and I should regard as a godsend even a tenth-rate melodrama if it has the effect of keeping up Britain's preparedness for times of stress and struggle. But we have here, as elsewhere, men whose love of country is overshadowed by their hatred of militarism, and they demand that Britain's military position should remain on *statu quo*. That

is very good if other countries adopt the same rule. But the attitude of the anti-militarist is very illogical. I can understand a man advocating absolute disarmament which has the merit of cheapness. I can understand a man advocating an increase of armament to meet the situation adequately. But I cannot understand the attitude of the man who demands that things remain exactly as they are, although all military experts have decided that they are or will be inadequate. It is money wasted if it provide not adequate security. They appear to believe that increased efficiency tends to the provocation of war. The very opposite is the fact. The British navy has not had a general conflict of consequence since Trafalgar, nearly one hundred years ago. What does this mean? It means that British naval supremacy spells peace. If the British navy had been less strong, don't you suppose it would have ample opportunity to test the mettle of her sailors and the strength of her ships? Would the naval supremacy of Germany or any other country, except Britain, tend towards the preservation of peace? Never.

But we go on in a state of unpreparedness, and what is the result? In the end we have won, but it has been with a greater loss of blood and treasure. We have imbibed the almost fatalistic idea that we shall lose the initial battles in every war, and some of us, indeed, feel that because, and not in spite of this, we win in the final conflict. We heard the same thing in the Japanese-Russian war, and it came from Russians. They said "we always lose the first battles, but in the end we win." But in this case they lost at both ends, and who knows but that sometime we, too, may lose the final battles because we lost the first. Preparedness, I say, is not only a preventive of war, but when war does come it cuts down what Wellington used to call the "butcher's kill."

Another result of this "panic," will be that Canada must define her exact position within the empire. We boast that Canada is a nation, but I say that it is up to self-respecting Canadians all over the Dominion to say with one voice that if we are now a nation we do not propose to be a nation of dead-heads and deadbeats. (Applause.) I am not concerned with the exact manner in which we do it, but I do think our contribution should be prompt, cordial and ungrudging. I have no doubt that in some European countries the notion is current that British colonies are dependencies in all that implies, and a burden to the empire. It is our business to show that the name is a misfit if applied to Canada.

Now, sir, here we are, in a cool, complacent way, discussing war as if it were a commonplace affair. But in advocating preparation we are not blinking that fact that war is exactly as Sherman defined it. And he knew, for he devastated the country from Atlanta to the sea." Sheridan knew, who desolated a swath of country twenty miles in width in his famous cavalry raids. Old Marshal Vorwards recognized it when on his second entry into Paris with the allied army he offered a toast in which he prayed that what had been so hard won by the swords of the warriors should not be lightly given away by "the pens of the diplomats." And I sometimes think that war would be less frequent if the gentlemen who wield the pens of the diplomats had also to wield the swords of the warriors. But war will be, "so long as the world endures and man is man." It is a possibility so long as it is necessary to have police patrol the streets of Toronto, for the army is nothing more than national police and the navy is nothing but the police who guard our coasts and our commerce. War is possible just so long as it is man's first impulse to resent an insult; to hit back when hit; to stop the mouth of slander with a fist.

Let us make no mistake about this, but let us also see to it that we are thrice-armed in future by having our quarrel just. History is full of instances which prove that a numerically weaker army fighting in a just cause can triumph over a larger army. It was exemplified at Marathon and Thermopylae. The regiment that Hampden raised in his own county was described by Cromwell as "a rabble of tapsters and serving-men out of place," but it was unconquerable in the Puritan war. In many ways Napoleon was superior to Wellington as a leader, and Wellington described his motley forces at Waterloo as "the worst army he ever commanded." The evidence is convincing, that if Wellington had lost at Waterloo his name would have been execrated, for he was badly served by his aides, his dispositions were faulty, and the information he sent Blucher inaccurate. The Corporal Brewsters in this audience will not relish this reference to the Iron Duke, but if you object, blame Lord Wolseley, who is my authority. But the stars in their courses fought against Napoleon; the great God of Battles had decreed that the firebrand of Europe should no longer devastate the world. The comparison may be odious, but we should all prefer to have said of every war in which the empire may be engaged what

I say now of Waterloo, that Britain won not because she had superior forces and a superior general, but because she fought in the cause of mankind.

And now, sir, I must conclude without touching on many things that you have in your minds in this connection, but this is your business meeting and I must forego them. In conclusion let me say that Britain will survive this "crisis" as she survived many crises in the past. I can remember, so can you, when Russia was the bugbear of British diplomacy, we suspected her designs in the far east; she was the disturber in the Balkans. On the 1st January, seven or eight years ago, Alfred Austen published a poem in the *London Times* disclosing the national distrust of Russia. I recall his lines,

"And Muskovite legions tramping on, doing the will of the Czar."

But he then saw what few others of that day saw, the silver lining on the war cloud, for in the last stanza he says:

"But still the glory of light in heaven, and light that is still on its way,

Faint hearts who despond of to-morrow, look up and be done with despair and dismay.

For British sentinels stand erect at the fortress gates of the world,

And the British flag is on every sea with its splendid symbols unfurled,

And the Lord of Right still sits on His throne, still wields His scepter and rod,

And the winds, and the waves, and the years move on, doing the will of God!"

A few months more and it became evident that the Muskovite legions were doing anything but the will of the Czar; they were tramping on in the opposite direction. And it did not require the might of Britain to put the quietus upon this disturber of Britain's peace. It required only the might of Britain's little yellow ally.

This and other perils will pass away too, but only if we are prepared to meet them. To-day I am proud to say the empire occupies a position not only of "splendid isolation," but also undeniable supremacy and unparalleled prosperity. This position she has attained through years and centuries of strenuous but benevolent endeavor, and I am more concerned now than ever that it is the general advantage of Canada (you have heard that phrase before, Mr. Chairman), to the general advantage even of the German people, but also to the general advantage of the whole of the civilized world, that Britain shall live.