

(November 22, 1921.)

A Speech from a Singer

BY SIR HARRY LAUDER

Mr. President and Gentlemen.—If my voice can get through the dim distance I would like to say that it is a pleasure to be here again among my friends. I don't know but I was a wee bit puzzled when I found I had to come and speak with you to-day. Well, of course I am not the only one that is really puzzled about what I am puzzling myself about. I was puzzled myself about a start, and, of course, now that I am on my feet, I have started, so I will just have to go ahead the best way I can.

But in thinking the thing over I saw two subjects that I thought would interest you, and the first one of these is Work. I don't know whether you are much interested in it or not. I thought anyway that that might interest you, the word, "work." It is man's best friend, and the time is arrived when we must discover that work is man's best friend and not his enemy. Work and wages make a light heart. Pleasure is a pleasant garment to look on, but a very bad one to wear. The ruin of millions has been traced to having a good time.

I don't know, but I think we are getting along pretty well now, although I believe that there are a great many people on the wrong track for happiness. Lots of them think that happiness consists in, well, having, and getting, and being served by others. Happiness consists in serving, and giving, and being friendly. On the whole life appears to me to be far too short to be spent in nursing wrongs or nursing animosity. And I believe, men, that the words spoken in quietness and by way of appeal to men's common sense and reason can rarely fail to be in season.

Now I have been around a bit, in the world, and I never met a successful man in my life who ever limited his hours of labor. And if you ask the successful man how did he get there, he cannot tell you, because he is always thinking of and interested in his business. And the man that is working all the time and interested in his business is all right. But it is only the man who has leisure time on his hands

that has any time to speak about his fellow-man—and then he is wondering why he is not a success. And while he is puzzling his brains about why and how, he keeps falling back, and falling back.

I fail to see where the paring down policy in the matter of industry is going to help, because I believe that the man who puts more brains and more intelligence into his labor is entitled to a better reward for his wife and family and himself than the other fellow. At least that is my opinion, and I will say that I believe that the superior man must have his rights and will have his rights, and that can only be attained by levelling up the standard instead of boiling it down. That is, if we are to take our place amongst the nations of the world. The British Empire is all right, though we have had a pretty good hammering during the past seven years, but the metal is of the best British steel and so it cannot be broken.

You know I feel to-day that I am absolutely in the bosom of my friends. I am almost straight from the old country and I bring with me the breath of good will to you folks here in Canada. I feel that we are getting to know one another much better. I feel that we are getting to love one another better. Sympathy has gone a long, long way, during the past years, and I feel that our friendship is getting broader and deeper as the days go by. You know, men, I believe that life has hung some fine pictures on the walls of the human soul, and the worst service any man can do this generation is to turn any of these pictures with their faces to the wall. It was a kindly thought that prompted the organist to say, "When I play my organ I pray with my fingers." It will be a great day when the artisan will say, "I pray with my tools," or the agriculturist say, "I pray with my plough and my spade," or the man at his desk say, "I worship with my pen." The gruelling we have gone through should have taught us a lesson. Our every symbol, our every prospect, our every task in life should be held up in front of us and the magnitude of our duty towards one another should always be before us. And our responsibility, not only individually but collectively! There have been many channels opened up during the past years, one great channel I know which I have crossed many times now, between the shores of America and the old country, and I know that there are lots of folks on the other side, busy every day, wanting to shake hands all the

while. And I know also, that there are forces both evil and ignorant, striving to keep these friendly hands apart. Well, what we want to do is to try and get in between these evil forces and cancel their power. And we can do it, if we will come together in a kindly spirit.

The power of friendship is a wonderful thing. Never was there more need for unity between the English-speaking peoples than there is to-day. There are great things happening in Washington. I have asked the Americans to realize their great responsibility. I have said to them, men and women, "You have a chance here that will never come again. Don't throw it down. Take it in your arms and cuddle it as a mother would cuddle her wee bairny. You have the chance to leave a heritage behind you, of which there has never been the like in the world—to say that it was in our country, in Washington, where the hands of friendship were clasped for all time. Don't let it go by." I feel certain that these men who are there represent the best brains in the world, and so we are not going to get "no decision" for an answer. The best brains in the world are there, so let them stay in Washington until they have solved the problem.

They are talking about disarmament, about cutting down so many warships. What are they going to do with the warships that they will have after they have cut down? They are not going to go fishing with them. I hope the day will come when we will need no warships. We have an example of the integrity of the English-speaking people on your continent of North America. From the Atlantic to the Pacific there is not a rifle or a fort of any description between the United States and Canada, and in some respects I believe they scarcely know where the boundary runs.

I know there are many of you here who were "over there." And I know that you say with me that it was all wrong. War is all wrong, when a fellow has got to go and die in the mud like a dog to show the world that he is brave. By God, I want to stand straight with my head erect and button my coat around me and I don't want to die, I want to live for a principle—honesty and friendship with my fellow men, the brotherhood of man. And you can do the same. Well then, let us do it. I have just been at a school this morning, and I told all the boys and girls the war was all wrong. To die in the mud like a dog was all

wrong, and you know it is all wrong and the only way to right it is by friendship, "It's coming yet for a' that,

That man to man the world o'er,
Shall brithers be for a' that."

And I also told the boys and girls about the sacrifice that had been made by their big brothers, and how they were to-day reaping and enjoying the benefits of that great sacrifice, and I told them that their fathers and mothers were sacrificing to have them at the high school, and then they were going to sacrifice more to send them to college, aye, and then maybe, I said, you will be sent to the university to be better men and better girls, that you may grow up to be a credit to your country and a joy to your old father and mother. We lack enthusiasm, the love of something that is going to benefit somebody else. What do you get enthused about? Are you building some wall of defence that some mother will say, "My children are safer because that man lived." There is something good in this life, something to work for. The trouble at the present is that there are so many people interested in the little side shows of life—more interested in them than in the great realities—realities, not reality, but realities. God, work, home, and a kindly neighbor over the garden wall! Where you can pop in on a nicht, have a chat and a smoke, and then when the hour comes along for bed, you say with both hands, mind you, "Good nicht, friend. I'll see you in the morning." You know that is my religion—a pal. Many a time I have been afraid of my wife. Oh, and so have you! Oh, I have been gotten at many a time because I had a pal!

You know there is something really tragic in the whole situation when you come to analyze it—I mean after all the unspeakable bloodshed there has been in the years by just now—to find mankind still prepared to dedicate his intelligence, his genius, to contriving hellish devices of war. Have we not yet learned the lesson of war? If we have not, we are not, well, sane. And we will war again, and very shortly too, that is if we go on, because the brain capable of such splendid brilliant achievements in the realms of industry, in travel, in telegraphy, science, and all the things, can be debased to the contrivance of cunningly elaborate instruments of war, and it is all wrong.

At any rate we have not got the German Navy to consider, and that makes me think that we are going to join hands much quicker when we have got rid of the Kaiser.

I would like to say that we all want to make as determined an effort as possible to keep in touch with the simple Gospel of friendship.

I want to talk of friendship just for a moment. Friendship makes us happy and friendship makes us sing, and the man that sings at his work will do more and persevere longer and feel more contented with himself. I have a little song that I will be going to sing in a wee while. (Applause) I didn't say I was just going to sing it now. I was going to say that there is lots of friendship in a song. And I believe that music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and adds a charm to everything. It is the essence of order, and it leads to all that is good, just and beautiful. A kind word is the music of the world, and we can strike a kindly note every day, and do something that is worth while every day, simply by speaking and saying a kind word. The other day I ran across a little book, and while I was perusing it I discovered a few lines in it. It said, "Look up and not down; look forward and not back; look in and not out, lend a hand." A fine example, and, set to music, I tell you, they are very good. Well if singing and music is friendship I am going to spend my effort as fearlessly and as effectively as I possibly can, because if singing is going to get me a friend I am going to sing all the time. But I believe that the only way to keep a friend is to be a friend, and I would just say to you that the world is weary, weary, of all this warship stuff, but they who sail the ships of state shall surely learn soon or late that the ship that shall control our fate is friendship, sure enough.

Christmas is coming to the land, and I know you are saving up to buy the wife and bairns a present and stockings and the like of that, and you intend to say something kindly to everybody. Well, just take a note of this and sing this to your friend; "Seasons may come and seasons may go, everything weathers in due course we know; but there is one thing still blooms, fresh as the dew; and that is the love and affection I still have for you." (Sings.)

We have had a lot of trouble and we have had a lot of strife.
We have had our ups and downs as we have journeyed on through
life;
We have had our little quarrels, but they never lasted long;
Why? Because, just because we'd rather sing a song."

"Oh, it is a fine thing to sing; singing is the thing for it brightens
everything when dark and dreary;
It helps you on the road when you have a heavy load;
Singing is the thing to make you cheery;
Oh it is a fine thing to sing; singing is the thing for it brightens
everything when dark and dreary.
It helps you on the road, when you have a heavy load;
Singing is the thing to make you cheery."

(Hums)
"Whenever you are worried, and you don't know what to do;
You have got the humpty dumps, and you are feeling black and
blue.

Just do the same as I do, just simply jog along,
And I says to him, says I to him, it is time to sing a song;

Oh, it is a fine thing to sing; singing is the thing, for it brightens
everything, when dark and dreary.
It helps you on the road; when you have a heavy load.
Singing is the thing to make you cheery.
(Hums)

That is enough for nothing.