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Some Phases of the War Situation



Address by

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Some Phases of the War Situation

[The address which is here printed was delivered by Sir George Foster, Minister of Trade and Commerce, at a luncheon of the Canadian Club of Ottawa held at the Chateau Laurier on Saturday, February 13th, 1915. The chair was occupied by Mr. H. I. Thomas, Vice-President of the Club, and there was a large attendance of members, the Prime Minister being among those at the guests' table.]

I propose to ask two or three questions and endeavour to answer them as briefly as possible. The first question is this:

Are we convinced that Britain did everything she possibly could to avert this war? That is a question which appeals to our individual consciences. However enthusiastic we may be in a war because it is a war conducted by the country to which we owe allegiance, there is always behind this enthusiasm a desire to feel assured personally that, although our country is in the war and we must therefore see it through, the cause for which we are fighting is absolutely a worthy cause, and that the war is therefore thoroughly justifiable. But when we pass from the individual to the wide world area, the importance of being satisfied upon a question of that kind is all the greater. For many thousands of years humanity has been working up towards the formation of a public conscience, a wide world tribunal, before which the causes of war are reviewed and by which decisions are arrived at in accordance with the facts as ascertained. This public conscience, this world opinion, was never so strong as it is at the present day. Never have the facilities for gathering information with reference to such an issue been so ample, and consequently at no period in the world's history could the verdict which has been, or is being, or will be rendered by that tribunal have greater force as a deciding factor.

First, then, let me answer the question as to whether it is a fact or not that Britain has done everything she possibly could to avert this war.

In the first place let me remark that Great Britain, much as counter opinions may run in some portions of the world, is not and has not been for the last century or two an aggressive nation. She has been the opposite of an aggressive nation. For the last century, to go back no further, Britain has been engaged in only one first-

class war, or war with first-class powers, and that was the somewhat ill-starred Crimean War, waged sixty years ago. Outside of that, the century shows Great Britain neither aggressive nor engaged in aggressive warfare. It is true that Great Britain in that time has had many wars, but those wars have not been wars of aggression; they have been undertaken either for the liberation or for the protection of her colonies and of the wards who, having been liberated and having come under her trusteeship, have had to be protected on their outside borders. That kind of warfare, liberative and protective, has been present with England almost any year during this last century. Taking that into consideration, I think we have no hesitation in arriving at the conclusion that the British Empire has not been, and is not now, an aggressive, war-seeking, territory-seeking empire. In the last century, in fact, she has had territory thrust upon her, and it has been her great aim, and her absorbing care, in these later years to consolidate and to develop the great territories which have come under her sway; and it is not war that develops and consolidates these, but rather the arts and operations of peace.

In these later years, England's pacific attitude has been amply shown. She has been diligently and wisely making her peace on all the borders where disquieting questions have arisen, have promoted jealousy and have threatened menace and disruption and war. She has concluded an *entente cordiale* with France, with whom, going far back in history, she has had much warfare and many battles. In 1904 she came to the conclusion, as did France, that their outstanding difficulties had better be settled. They were settled, and, from that time until the present, Great Britain and France have worked in cordial harmony in promoting the world's development and the world's welfare. Under that *entente* the outstanding difficulties between Great Britain and France were all cleared up and done away with. In Newfoundland, in Morocco, in Egypt, in other parts of Africa, where these difficulties had been, and had long been, the cause of great disquietude, all differences were settled and a period of uninterrupted amity and co-operation in the world's work has resulted. The same thing has been done with reference to Russia, an old and hereditary enemy, whose march and progress, wonderful indeed, towards the Pacific impinged upon the boundaries and possessions of Great Britain, and for many years was the cause of tremendous military outlays and great anxiety. In 1907 the *entente* with Russia cleared all those difficulties out of the way, the troubles in Persia and Afghanistan and Tibet were eliminated, and the long range of co-terminous territories relieved from active disquiet and future menace.

Nor was the fund of friendship which promoted ententes with France and with Russia, and which carried them out in so successful

a way, entirely exhausted thereby. Great Britain made similar efforts, and showed the same spirit, with regard to Germany herself. There are many instances of this. If you will read the books, scan contemporary history, and study the march of political events, you will see that from 1889, to go back no further, Great Britain has been making continued and repeated efforts for understandings of amity and good-will and good-feeling with Germany. You remember the episode of Heligoland,—ceded by Lord Salisbury, yielding to the representations that were made by Germany that the holding by England of an island in the mouth of their great waterways and close to their own territory was a standing menace which caused unneighbourly feelings and contained the seeds of international troubles and perhaps of war. An adjustment was made by which Great Britain got certain territories, not of very great worth, in South Africa and gave up Heligoland to the German Empire. And the German Emperor, in taking possession of Heligoland in 1890, paid tribute to the "gracious concession" which had been made by Great Britain. If to-day Heligoland, fortified as it is now and as it could have been by Great Britain, were in the possession of Great Britain, it would provide a factor of very great importance to the present issue. From that time up to the opening of the war the same pacific disposition has been shown by Great Britain in endeavour after endeavour to reach an entente with the German people and the German Government.

In 1898 the Czar of Russia proposed a conference of European powers for the reduction of war armaments, the burden of which was lying heavy on all the nations. Britain favored the conference, Germany refused to enter it if the question of a reduction of armaments was to be discussed. The conference was thus rendered abortive.

In 1906 the Russian Emperor again proposed a conference for the same purpose. Britain welcomed it, and informed the various naval powers of her earnest wish to consider a reduction, and in that same year, as earnest of her desire, she took the forward step of reducing the naval building programme for that year of 25 per cent. of her battleships, 60 per cent. of her destroyers, and 33 per cent. of her submarines. Germany again refused to enter the conference if the subject of disarmament were to be raised, and forthwith added six large cruisers to her building programme.

Again and again thereafter, and up to the very breaking out of the war, Great Britain made advances to Germany, with the same purpose in view. In no case were those advances met. Always the German Government interposed a *non possumus*. Their ideal was so fixed, and its realization was so determined upon, that outside of some specious promises and some half-way advances, nothing could be done with reference to real disarmament or real retardation in

the great struggle to surpass in naval armaments. Britain's friendly advances were met with cold repulse.

I have mentioned those things as precedent to what took place just previous to the time of the breaking out of the war. Let us see how it lies there. The Austro-Servian difficulty came to a head after the Archduke had been assassinated in Bosnia on June 28th, and on the 23rd of July the Austrian ultimatum was issued to Servia. This ultimatum was unequalled in the history of diplomatic communications between nations. It demanded unconditional acceptance within 48 hours of twelve demands, compliance with all of which would have de-nationalized Servia. The German Chancellor himself declared it to be unusually severe, and he did not see how it was possible for Servia to comply with it and maintain her status as a country. Mr. Asquith said that he had never before seen one State address to another independent State a document of so formidable a character. When that ultimatum was presented, with a forty-eight hour limit, if Britain had been inclined for war and wishful for it, there was the opportunity. It was certain that if Austria interfered with Servia in the terms of that ultimatum, Russia must interfere as against Austria; upon which, automatically, France must interfere on behalf of her ally; upon which Germany would have to follow suit on behalf of her ally, Austria, and the Armageddon would have been on. All Britain had to do was to remain inactive. Instead of that Asquith immediately put himself in communication with Germany and with Russia; with Germany, to use influence with Austria, to extend the time limit of the ultimatum, and with Russia to moderate Servia's reply. How could Europe get her thinking cap on in forty-eight hours? Germany refused to interfere with Austria and Austria refused to extend the time limit. Then the Prime Minister of Great Britain set all his power at work. To do what? To impress upon Servia and upon Russia that they should, Russia using her influence and Servia her common sense in the situation, make her reply as full as possible in the way of meeting the demands of the ultimatum. She also asked Germany to use her influence with Austria in order to moderate the terms of the ultimatum. Russia set to work at once. Italy set to work at once. Great Britain was already at work, and had proposed a conference of Germany, France, Italy and herself to compose the differences and seek an escape from war. To this France and Italy agreed. Germany did not agree, and did nothing except to say that she did not propose to interfere with her ally; Austria-Hungary should have a free hand in the matter.

I wish to read just one item from the German White Book, in corroboration of this statement. The White Book says: "We were perfectly aware that a possible warlike attitude of Austria-Hungary against Servia might bring Russia upon the field, and that it there-

fore might involve us in a war. In accordance with our duty as allies, we permitted Austria a completely free hand in her action towards Servia. Sir Edward Grey had made the proposal to submit the differences between Austria-Hungary and Servia to a conference of the ambassadors of Germany, France and Italy, under his chairmanship. We declared that we could not participate in such a conference."

This is pretty conclusive evidence, first, that Germany knew just what would be likely to happen if Austria pushed her claims upon Servia,—that Russia would interfere, and that, if she did, Germany would have to interfere in behalf of Austria-Hungary; and yet when, upon the request, the urgent request of Great Britain, she was asked to use her influence to have the dispute referred to the four powers to arbitrate upon, or to their ambassadors under the chairmanship of Great Britain, she says herself that, knowing what might eventuate, she would have none of it, she gave Austria a free hand, and she did this knowing the consequences that might take place.

Although that ultimatum was answered, and Servia conceded every one of the demands made by Austria with the exception of two—which were fundamental to the preservation of her national existence, and even these two she offered to submit to arbitration—Germany took no action with her ally to persuade her to take a moderate course, and absolutely refused to be one of the four powers that would join in an effort to calm the situation and prevent a terrible war. Can there be any doubt who were in favour of war and who were in favour of peace?

But Sir Edward Grey did not therefore relax his efforts for peace. The next move of Great Britain was to support Russia's proposal to refer the matter to conversations and negotiations between Austria and Russia as the principals concerned, and Germany was pressed to persuade Austria to this course. There is no record that Germany used her influence in that direction, and on the 28th of July Austria blankly refused to permit her ambassador at St. Petersburg to enter into communications with the Russian Minister at St. Petersburg with a view to arrangement of disputed points,—absolutely refused to do it. But on the 31st of July, evidently sobered by indications that Russia was not to be bluffed and that war was impending between Russia and herself,—on the 31st of July Austria consented, and authorized her ambassador at St. Petersburg to enter into conversations with the Russian Foreign Minister with a view to settling the matter between Austria and Russia. In that hour of crisis the British Government pleaded with Germany to persuade Austria to modify her demands with a view to having a settlement made, and counselled Russia to moderation as well. An agreement was in sight. War was receding from view. What then

did Germany do? She did absolutely nothing towards promoting settlement. If she had rested satisfied with this it would not have been so bad, but on that same 31st day of July, when Austria and Russia were willing to sit down at a common table and discuss their differences with a view to making an arrangement, Germany took up the quarrel and sent an ultimatum to Russia demanding demobilization within 12 hours, and to France as well. Her ultimatum was in itself equivalent to a declaration of war, and war followed at once.

Now, we need to think of those things. We need to think of those things not only for ourselves, so as to make ourselves more secure in our view that we are engaged in a just war, after having done everything that possibly could be done to avoid it, but in the light of this great world public opinion of which I spoke, these facts are of the utmost importance. As a final effort to prevent war, Sir Edward Grey, on the 30th of July, sent to the German Chancellor the following despatch:

"The only way of maintaining the good relations between England and Germany is that they should continue to work together to preserve the peace of Europe; if we succeed in this object, the mutual relations of Germany and England will, I believe, be *ipso facto* improved and strengthened. For that object His Majesty's Government will work in that way with all sincerity and good-will. And I will say this: If the peace of Europe can be preserved and the present crisis safely passed, my own endeavour will be to promote some arrangement to which Germany could be a party, by which she could be assured that no aggressive or hostile policy would be pursued against her or her allies by France, Russia and ourselves, jointly or separately."

This appeal went to the German Chancellor just about the time that he was preparing the ultimatum which was issued to Russia and France. And the following day, in a last supreme effort, Sir Edward Grey went still further, and addressed to the German Ambassador for transmission to his Government the following message:

"I said to the German Ambassador this morning that if Germany could get any reasonable proposal put forward which made it clear that Germany and Austria were striving to preserve European peace, and that Russia and France would be unreasonable if they rejected it, I would support it at St. Petersburg and Paris and go the length of saying that if Russia and France would not accept it His Majesty's Government would have nothing more to do with the consequences."

That, I think, is absolutely conclusive (applause) that Great Britain to the very last moment exercised all her power and her

influence to avoid war. To that message there was no reply. War had been determined upon—how long before, we do not know—and all the efforts of the peace-makers, put forth in these various ways and at these various times, were unavailing to alter what I believe to have been the fixed determination of Germany and Austria-Hungary that the war should go on. (Applause.)

Do we wonder that in the light of these facts the verdict of the world, the verdict of the neutral world to-day, barring dissidents here and there, and in small proportions, is overwhelmingly in favour of the allies' contention and the allies' position? It is such evidence, as it permeates the minds and sinks into the hearts of the neutral world, in that great tribunal which is actively measuring and determining the issues and causes of this war, which has so far made opinion so unanimous and which in the record of the future will make it practically unanimous that the consistent and earnest peace-maker in this respect was Britain, and the designing and determined war-maker was Germany, and that the present dread arbitrament of war with all its unspeakable train of horrors is due to the fact that the Kaiser has had his will. (Applause.)

There is another question, and I have heard it asked, and discussed in hotels and on trains: After all, could not Britain have kept out of this war? They were continental parties, those. Britain has no foot of earth on the continent of Europe. She has no territorial interests on the continent of Europe. Her home is in her islands in the North Sea. She had her fleet, ringing round those islands with a barrier that would have compelled the world to stand aloof till the mad fury of war had passed. Why, then, did she not quietly withdraw from the conferences and from the conflict and say to them: "Very well. If you wish to dye your soil with blood, then take the responsibility and do it. As for me and my house, we will retire to our own borders and we will defend ourselves if any attacks come upon ourselves." Now, that appeals to a man. Why could not we to-day have been in the full fruition and enjoyment of peace while these others were fighting out their contest in Europe and elsewhere?

Well, let us answer that question in three particulars, and first on the grounds of friendships. It would have been possible for Great Britain to have come to that conclusion and to have stood outside of this particular war. It is possible for a man to do almost anything if he makes up his mind to do it, but it is also possible for a man in doing so to do a thing which will write him down as a coward and an ingrate and send him to Coventry for the rest of his mortal existence. (Applause.) It would have been possible for Great Britain to have withdrawn to her island home and kept out of the war. But what would have happened to her? In all these years that have passed she has been cementing her

friendships with France and Russia and with Japan and with other nations of the world. She has stood in with them. They have her friendship; she has their friendship; and as friends, with all their interrelated and correlated interests, Britain might have stood aside and with folded arms watched her two great friends in Europe hewed and hacked to pieces by the might and power of Germany and of Austria-Hungary. She might have done it, but where would Great Britain have gone, in all the years to come, for a friend amongst the nations of the world if she had taken that stand and allowed her friends to be sacrificed to the war lust of Germany and of Austria? That is the point to be considered. No man can live without friends. No nation in this world of ours, as it is at present constituted, is safe or can live well without friends. To have friends in others, you must be friends with them, and I do not think there is an Englishman, or a Briton, or a subject of Britain in the wide world who would have given his vote for England to have stood by and watched the demolition of her best friends and the only friends in Europe that had power to give her solace and comfort when her trying times might come again. (Applause.) So much, then;—friendship forbade it.

But honour forbade it as well, and that is even more than friendship. I hope that in these modern times, however we may develop, and whatever course we may take, we never will leave this path, trodden by our ancestors, trodden by the great and good men in every age and every nation of the world, where honour counts more than gain. (Applause.)

The distinguishing difference to-day between the German national ideal and the British national ideal is that in the German ideal honour counts nothing if by renouncing honour you can add power to your state, and with Great Britain this stands to-day as her motto, as it has stood for all the years of her multiplied existence: Honour has been and must be the distinguishing characteristic of the British nation. Good faith must be kept, and when Britain pledges her honour, with all the long tradition of her history behind her, it would be a sad day not only for England—that is the smaller part of it—but it would be a sad day for the world and all future history if the lesson were taught that honour can be subordinated to selfish gain, to gain security on the one hand or power on the other. (Applause.)

In all Britain's history she has stood for the inviolability and the self-respect of the weaker nations of the world. Take England's history on the continent. How often has she spent her blood in currents deep as the sea! How often has she spent her money in currents equally large, warring and battling for the weaker and the oppressed in Europe—yes, and in every quarter of the wide world! That is one fine golden thread that runs through the whole

warp of English history and English tradition. And so, when England's honour was bound up in the pledge she gave to Belgium that her territory should be inviolate, and when the cold-blooded proposition was made to her on the 29th day of July, by Germany, that if she would stand aside and let Germany deal with Belgium and with France, she could have Germany's good-will and co-operation on that basis,—when that proposition was made, it attacked the centuries of English honour and of English tradition, and Sir Edward Grey hurled it back, as it deserved to be. Honour forbade Great Britain to keep out of that struggle, under the circumstances. (Applause.)

What more? Self-interest in its widest and largest sense forbade that course of action. Great Britain is not only the Government of the forty-five millions of people in the islands in the North Sea; Great Britain is the mother, and protector, and trustee for hundreds of millions of diverse humanity all through this wide world, that live under her flag and depend upon her protection. Standing there on the islands of her own sea home, she had to look not only at what was the interest of the forty-five millions there, but she had to ask herself as to the interests of her colonies, her dependencies, her great national wards in the other parts of this world; she had to ask herself, "What should I do in this juncture of circumstances as the trustee for British civilization throughout the world?" There was only one answer to that. Accede to Germany's demand! Stand aside with folded arms! Let the German army hew and hack its way through Belgium, if under those circumstances it would even have had to do that! For this thought strikes me. The Belgian Government, the Belgian nation, if it had no guarantees from Britain or any other European nation, would have looked with different eyes upon the proposition put to it when Germany came and said, "Now, let me have peaceful passage through your territories and I will promise that when this war is over your territorial rights shall be fully restored to you." If Belgium had had that question put to her, with the knowledge that England would not have backed her up in maintaining her independence and the inviolability of her territory, it would have been a different proposition by far. I don't say that the Belgian spirit would have been daunted. I don't say that that splendid Belgian spirit which has so demonstrated itself would not have faced the contest against Germany even if she had no hope of future resurrection; but it is easier for a man to face death feeling that some time he shall live again than it is to face death feeling that there is no chance of a resurrection. (Applause.) Britain was behind the Belgian power, and Belgium knew, and had faith to believe, that if she stood in the gateway and claimed her own and stood for her own, and that if over trampled bodies and ruined homes and dese-

crated hearths the German army hewed and hacked its way into France, the time would come when Great Britain and the nations that stood with her would see that those ruined homes were rebuilt, and the hearth fires lighted anew, would see that that nation was restored to its pristine place, and that a resurrection morn should usher in a long and splendid day of peace and prosperity. (Applause.) So in that respect Great Britain had to do what she did. But suppose, as I was going on to say, that she had sacrificed Belgium and her honour, that she had sacrificed France, her friend, and Russia, her friend, and that she had stood back, what would have been the consequence? The German fleet would have been as free as the corsairs of old. The German fleet would have ravaged every port and entrance on the French coasts from the Mediterranean up to the limit of her territory in the North Sea. The German fleet would have vanquished the French fleet however gallantly it might have fought. It could not have made way against the combined fleets of Germany and of Austria. So that you would have had this position: Germany would have been able to launch her force on the land side, and launch it quickly, against France unaided, and with her fleet she would have blockaded the ports of France and she would have been able, if she had conquered France, which she might have done, to advance her frontier beyond the Rhine, beyond the confines of Belgium and Holland, right up to the North Sea, with ports and river mouths and submarine bases, and bases for war equipment of every kind, almost upon the threshold of Britain itself,—within an hour's call, within almost speaking distance. Would that have inured to the strength of Britain and to the permanence of British civilization and to the security of British possessions the wide world over?

What else would have happened? The German fleet would have ravaged every dependency of France in every portion of the world; and instead of having French and allies, Great Britain would have had substituted Germans and enemies on every frontier line of her possessions in every part of the world. (Hear, hear.) What would have happened on the seas, which are vital to Britain? E-m-p-i-r-e spells the very same wherever the letters are put, but Empire as applied to Germany and Empire as applied to Great Britain are as diverse as can be well considered: one a compact land power, invulnerable by land; the other with its possessions wide-spaced by distant seas, parts of it in every quarter of the world, to be patrolled and protected. No. Britain dies and British civilization goes to the wall when Britain's great roads, the highways of the sea, are blocked, or liable to be blocked, by any hostile power on earth, as far as naval strength is concerned. And so it is that her food, her supplies, her communications, her own existence and the existence of the Empire depended absolutely upon her com-

mand of the seas. How fatuous, how foolish, how utterly suicidal would have been the policy which would have said to England, "Stand there until every friend you have in the world has been hacked to pieces. Stand there until their possessions are taken by your great enemy in every portion of the world and fortified. Stand there until the German fleet gets its bases in every water and fortifies itself there. Then face the contest, and on unequal grounds, and on unequal terms." It would have been tempting Fate. It would have been playing false with humanity and with God for any decision like that to have been taken by the British Empire under these circumstances. (Applause.)

The next question is this: Can Germany win? I am not going to follow that out in all its detail, but will ask your attention to a very few thoughts on that score. Can Germany win?

Before we can answer that question we must firmly fix in our minds what Germany set out to do. If Germany cannot accomplish what she set out to do, then she cannot win. If she does not accomplish that, she does not win. Now, what did Germany set out to do? Not to defend herself at home, but to conquer abroad. Not to keep her own borders intact, but to invade the borders and conquer the possessions of other nations. First, her aim has been to Prussianize Germany, then to Germanize Europe, and after that to Germanize the world and take paramount control of the world's destinies. She was to smash France, hurl Russia back to her central plains, and cripple Britain. That is what she set out to do. That, for forty years, is what she has been preparing to do. Unless she does it, she cannot win.

Well, has she won so far? Let us total it up for a moment. Has she won so far? "Yes," you say, "she has conquered Belgium." Granted. There, in the conquest of Belgium, as it was done and under the circumstances in which it was done, Germany's victory held the essential seed of her ultimate defeat. It was a costly conquest, the conquest of Belgium, as it was done. To-day, the pathos of Belgium fills every heart the wide world over. To-day, the picture of a murdered country is indelibly printed on the minds and hearts of three-quarters of the world's inhabitants, and as the tale of that inexpressibly sad but wonderful story, and as the presence and picture of that awful desolation, lightened and shot, as it is, here and there with the splendid spirit of Belgian heroism, sink into the mind of the world and travel to its widest confines, in every heart there is registered indignant condemnation of the power which has so murdered and despoiled an independent weaker nation and reduced a peace-loving and happy people to misery and exile. (Applause.) If there were nothing else, if there were nothing else, that and the mighty sympathy which it has evoked in the world—that and nothing else would have been sufficient to

ultimately defeat Germany and rob her of the goal to which she aspired.

Well, what has happened? She won Belgium, for the moment, and she is where she is to-day, but the German troops were not in Paris in September. (Applause.) They were not in Calais in December. They did not eat their Christmas dinner in Warsaw. Germany, if she was to conquer, must have done the most of the business in the first three months of the war (hear, hear), because she had all the advantages of the start. Germany was ready. No other power pitted against her was ready. Some of them were very much unready. Germany was fully equipped with armaments, all the newest and latest and most powerful munitions and accoutrements and equipments of war; her strategic railways were all built up to the borders of her neighbors; her armouries were all filled, and all that was necessary was for each German soldier to throw down the tools with which he was working, march to the nearest armoury, take off his old clothes, take the uniform and the arms which were hanging there for him, and everything from that to the battle front, far in the distance, was organized as a piece of clock-work, prepared for with untiring and wonderful ingenuity. Germany was ready. Her opponents were unready, more or less.

Another factor: Germany had all the advantage of initial prestige, and that is a powerful factor in war. In 1870 her armies had conquered, wonderfully, unexpectedly, emerging from that war with the glories and honours of victors. From that time on the German army has been looked upon as the model army, and it might well raise a doubt in any commander's mind, or in any soldier's heart, as to what would be the outcome when they went up in the shock of battle against the trained, long trained and wonderfully trained, unconquered German armies. Does that count for nothing on the battle-field? It counts for very, very much. But what has happened? Belgians, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Russians, have met the Germans in the shock of battle and have bested them over and over again. (Applause.) No soldier of the Allies goes into battle to-day, anywhere along those lines, with the fear of German prestige harrassing him or discounting his valour. He has proved himself as good a man and as good a soldier as the German. They are on equal ground now. Equal ground? No. I think that the Allies are on the ascending ground in that respect, and to-day they go into battle with the idea, "We have beaten you before, we can beat you again." That is much, very much. (Applause.) The German artillery was world-renowned. Those mighty guns! Those powerful though mysterious weapons of war which were to hurl small hells upon the trenches and forces of an enemy! They had their effect. To-day, Sir, what is the situation? The work of three months has given French and British artillery the ascendancy over

the best munitions and equipment of the German army. (Applause.) And to-day the infantryman in the trench, the man who is nerving himself to make his dash when the proper opportunity is made for him, feels that French and British artillery will make the way open and easy for him against even the vaunted artillery of the German army. All that has happened. In airmen, where are we to-day? Germany had an unseen, unestimated force, with a reputation which was vaunted everywhere, and the air was to become her great area of warfare. To-day, Sir, the aeroplanes and the aviating machines of the Allies play with the German, certainly on equal if not superior terms, and, it is stated by those who ought to know, have gained an ascendancy over the flights of aviators on the German side. In artillery effectiveness, in scouting, in dash and discipline, in generalship, in the trench, in the wild rush, in the bayonet charge where cold steel claims its toll, in cool, sheer courage, everywhere, the German, man for man, is equalled and over-matched.

And the fleet, what about that? Sometimes we feel that this trusted fleet of Britain has somehow lost itself to our view, and we ask ourselves the question, where is it? What is it doing? Is it effective? Is it doing what the British people thought it would do, and what it was framed to do? Invisible, lying somewhere in the North Sea, enveloped in fogs and mists, riding the boisterous waves, or snugly settling itself upon quiet waters, somewhere, that mighty fleet is there unseen by us and its movements unknown, but its influence is like the influence of the mighty sun, whose motions we do not see, but whose light and heat penetrate and vivify everywhere, and there is not a quarter of the sea or land which does not owe much of its present peace and happiness to the fact that the British fleet keeps the gateways to the Atlantic and that the German fleet lies on the other side of these gateways hiding from certain destruction. (Applause.)

Germany has lost the advantage of readiness, her prestige has been greatly lowered and is now steadily receding.

She began with two allies and a neutral world which, if it did not greatly love her, did not actually hate her. She has lost one ally who declined to come to her assistance, on the ground that the war proclaimed was an aggressive one; the other has proven in the main a broken reed. True, she has gained Turkey, the impotent Sick Man of Europe, on whom for a brief period she may lavish first her money, and later her maledictions, and then watch as he is buried out of the sight of Europe forever.

Her boasted culture has failed to stand the test of trial, and now shows the ugly lines of brutality and savage hate, and an utter disregard of human rights, of moral sanctions, of international obligations, and of world opinion. But the force of blood

and iron has encountered a stronger force, and must ultimately recoil before it, cowed and crumpled,—the love of liberty, the desire for freedom, the strength of honour, of good faith and moral sense, and the devotion to ideals of government which embody the high considerations of humanity and a quickened conscience.

Can Germany win? Take it on the line of man-power. There again she commenced with the advantage of trained and ready millions. That advantage is now more than equalized. That advantage will diminish steadily, certainly, from this time forward. Great Britain had but a mere skeleton of an army to throw into France six months ago. Thank God! she was able to throw it in. Events that have transpired since show that she was there at the critical time and to give the best possible aid to her French and Belgian allies, but where 70,000 went over for those first battles, to-day, Sir, Great Britain is drilling three millions of men—(applause)—every man of them as good, if not quite so well inured to battle, as the 70,000 that went at the very first. Germany's army is being diminished, drawn upon, exhausted, day by day. The allied armies, Britain's and Russia's particularly, are adding new strength every day. They are on the growing line and Germany is on the diminishing line. And count the man-power in the British Empire, for, thank God! we do not have to confine ourselves to the British Isles for men. From India, from Egypt, from South Africa, from Australia, from New Zealand, from every quarter of the world dominions of Great Britain, there come the steady response, the tramp of men marching, the songs of men singing, the hearts of men heaving, the spirit of men rising to the level of this mighty contest in which all the interests of the British Empire and its civilization are to-day centred. (Prolonged applause.) From what colony does Germany draw a single man? And Russia is there with her 175 millions of men almost undrawn on up to the present moment. Russia is slow. Her distances are vast and her transport is poor, but her millions are there and, from all that we can learn, her millions are to-day heart and hand with the allied cause. No. In man-power Germany cannot win.

Can she win on the line of economic mobility and freedom? Look at the situation. Who says to Britain that she shall not go where she likes, and that her ships may not sail where they please? Who says to France to-day that her mercantile navy shall not go where it pleases? It may have to pay a little more insurance, may have to take a little precaution, but the great seas of the world are open to both of them. And so it is with Russia as much as before, with the little exception of the Dardanelles Strait, which will be remedied in good time (laughter and applause), and in the not distant future. In all the Allies' portions of the world there is economic movement, there is mobility, there is freedom, and Ger-

man soldier, sailor or Kaiser is powerless to curtail it. They are doing their work. They are carrying on their trade. They are sailing the seas. They are ploughing the land. They are working the factories. They are getting in their supplies. How about Germany? Who guarantees that a German ship may leave a German port and sail for one single mile safe upon the seas of the world? Who does? No matter who, no ship does (laughter), and to-day the one time splendid mercantile marine of Germany, which circled the world with its great ships and wide service and thorough organization, shows not a rag of her flag floating anywhere outside of the little Bight of Heligoland and the Kiel Canal. (Laughter.) And what about financial conditions—economic and financial conditions? The supplies that are necessary to go into Germany cannot go in. The products that are necessary to go out, if she shall have trade, cannot get out, and to-day her vast industrial plant is held up, pinched, tightened, compressed, made silent, in an area after area of that once most busy industrial mart of the world.

Economic mobility, financial stability and man-power give the veto to the question, Can Germany win?

One thought more. True, she cannot win. The stars of civilization and progress, in their courses, fight against her. Her ideal is wrong. Her ideal is an unmoral ideal. It will never be accepted by the free men of the world, and to-day the free men of the world predominate. But she can yet defend herself, and she is powerful to defend herself. She yet occupies the most of Belgium and part of France, and some little of the border of Russian Poland. She has to be pushed back from those and the task is no light one. Then commences the long warfare to thrust her back still further, to beat down her arms, her defences, her fortifications, to keep the pressure on until the bonds of militarism are broken and what freedom still lives amongst the German people has chance for expansion and for development. But it is a long, long way, that. And every step of it will be spotted with blood, and human life will be the precious pressure power, and it will be sacrificed in thousands and in millions before that is done. There is where we come in, in Canada. Do we look on that fight as spectators? Do we? Too many of us do. Splendid spectacle it was at first, and horrible spectacle it is now, but to many of us it is still only a spectacle. Let us shake ourselves out of that way of thinking. Every Belgian who has died in that first gateway of this world contest has saved the life of a Canadian (applause), who but for him would soon be fighting for the liberties of Canada. (Applause.) Every French and Russian and British soldier who has gone down on those trench-scarred fields has been fighting where we should some time have had to fight, if it had not been for his fight, and where many of us will have to fight still. What I want to impress on myself and on everybody

in Canada is this, that it is our hearths, our homes, our liberties, our institutions which are being defended on those far-off lines. God's mercy it is that we were not those to have to do the first fighting and to suffer the ravaging of home and the destruction of property and the pouring out of human life as a sacrifice on the altar of liberty, for it is on the altar of liberty that those lives have been sacrificed there. And they have been sacrificed for us. Soon, nay even at this moment, our sons and brothers will be stepping into the vacant trenches and doing their part for liberty and freedom in the common cause. God grant them Victory—and us the spirit to sacrifice and endure! (Continued applause.)

