

## SIR WILFRID LAURIER AT MONTREAL.

Quotations from Speech Delivered before Montreal Reform Club, December 13, 1914.

## Canada at War.

DO not forget that the fact that Britain was at war constituted for Canada a new condition of things, which imposed new duties upon the Government, upon the Opposition and upon the whole Canadian people. The moment that Great Britain was at war, Canada was at war. This is a truth which while we were in office we had not only to proclaim, but for which we had to provide in a manner consonant with the new condition, a new situation created by the development of Canada, not as a colony, but as a nation within the British Empire.

"These truths were not accepted by all. It was the occasion of a great deal of misrepresentation; it contributed very much towards the defeat which we suffered in 1911, but for my part let me say here that I have no regrets. Better be it ten times over and more that we should stand here defeated for having had the courage of presenting to the Canadian people new duties which have had effects, rather than to still be in office by having shirked the duty which was incumbent upon the administration.

"But at that time, it was easy to appeal to prejudices, but the truth that when Britain is at war, Canada is at war also, came in only too concrete a manner, for after the declaration of war, right here in the city of Montreal you had your harbor full of ships loaded with the produce of the land ready to take to the sea, still remaining here owing to the war, because if they had taken to the sea they would have been liable to seizure by the enemy. They did not and could not take to the seas until the ocean had been swept by the British navy, and until the British navy was ready to escort them, until the duty was forthcoming by the British navy which in my conviction it behooved the Canadian people to do themselves.

## Canada Self-Reliant.

"Still more evidence had you that when Great Britain is at war, Canada is at war, when only within the last three weeks the German Ambassador at Washington, declared that Germany might and could invade Canada, and when the discussion was taken up as to the consequences of an invasion by Germany of Canada in view of the Monroe Doctrine. Whatever the Monroe Doctrine may mean, it is not a principle of international law. It is a matter of policy for the American Government and the American people. Whatever it may mean, according to the interpretation given to it by an eminent authority in the United States, it is only for the American people to dictate. I have always been an admirer of the American people. I have always desired that Canada should maintain with them the most friendly relations possible, and I take some pride in believing that when we left office in 1911 the relations between the United States and

Canada were far more cordial than when we went in office in 1896. But notwithstanding all this I say as a Canadian, that if ever Canada has to be saved, I don't want it to be saved by the Monroe Doctrine, but by the efforts of the Canadian people themselves, not that if we had to defend our country against a German invasion, that I would not be ready to accept the assistance of the American people, but I don't want to ask it. I want the Canadian people to rely upon themselves, and need I tell you, gentlemen, that no nation is worthy of being a nation unless it is ready at all times to defend its own independence and to fight for it if needs be.

## Freedom Breeds Liberty.

"We are a free people, absolutely free. The charter under which we live has put it in our power to say whether we should take part in such a war or not. It is for the Canadian people, the Canadian Parliament and the Canadian Government alone to decide. This freedom is at once the glory and honor of Britain, which granted it, and of Canada, which uses it to assist Britain. Freedom is the keynote of all British institutions. You find it from the lowest to the highest rung in the ladder. There is no conscription in Britain. There never was, there never shall be. We have heard it discussed by eminent authorities that Great Britain will be found to follow suit and have recourse to conscription like France, Germany and Italy. Conscription is repugnant to the British character. The British are never inclined to go to war, slow always to go to war, never preparing until they are in it, but generally they manage to get on top at the end of it. There is no compulsion upon those dependencies of Great Britain which have reached the stature of Dominions, such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and such crown dependencies as India. They are all free to take part or not as they think best. That is the British freedom, which much to the surprise of the world, and greatly to the dismay of the German Emperor, German professors and German diplomats, caused this rush from all parts of the British Empire to assist the mother country in this stupendous struggle. Freedom breeds loyalty. Coercion always was the mother of rebellion. But even in these circumstances when we see the magnificent results of the British system of government complete, not only in the United Kingdom, but complete throughout the British Empire, men there are in this country, men there are in England, who believe that the present mode of freedom should be replaced by a system of concentration and obligation and to make obligatory what up to date has been voluntary. While there are men who preach this doctrine, there are others who believe that the British Empire can be maintained only upon the lines upon which it has been founded, freedom and diversity. If we were not in a time of war, I would