

county of Montmagny by the right hon. leader of the Government, in calling on me to second the Address in answer to the Speech from the Throne, I do not propose to take up more than is necessary of the time of the House, so as to permit the prompt putting through of such urgent measures as are rendered imperative by developments of the most grievous and ominous character for every part of the British Empire.

I have the honour to represent in this House an essentially agricultural constituency, that is to say a peaceful, thrifty and hardworking community, deriving profit and happiness from the cultivation of the broad acres cleared by our ancestors, emigrants from la belle France, and for more than a century enjoying peace and liberty under the folds of the British flag. Indeed, it would have been for me a more pleasing task, Mr. Speaker, to have addressed the House under circumstances of a less painful character, when I might have been content with following in the footsteps of my forerunners, and after their example, though in less felicitous language, refer in general terms to the prosperity of our fine and immense country, extol its wealth, point out its inexhaustible resources, the development of which is barely started, then, taking a look into the future, forecast with reasonable certainty the great destiny in store for it. But Providence has not so willed it; the task which has fallen to me is unfortunately of a less agreeable and much more burdensome nature. It is for the purpose of defending the heritage of our fathers, of safeguarding our homes and our liberty in jeopardy, that we are assembled now.

There was never a more opportune time for every one of us to repeat, with some slight alteration, the appeal uttered by Nelson when giving the signal for that memorable battle which was to ensure to Great Britain the mastery of the seas: Canada expects every hon. gentleman in this House to do his duty. And should we need some encouragement from the example of others, we have under our eyes what has occurred in the French House of Representatives, where, in spite of the fierceness of the war waged between the various political groups, a free hand was granted, unambiguously and enthusiastically, to the Government of the Republic, so as to ensure the safety of the country in the hour of danger. In fact, it may be asserted with absolute certainty that France at this moment is

[Mr. L'Espérance.]

ready for the fray, as fully as she has ever been at any time. The French people are ready to make every sacrifice and to spill their last drop of blood to repel the German invader.

We have still in our minds what happened recently in the British House of Commons, when a great lesson in patriotism given by the Irish Nationalist leader, John Redmond, did more possibly to forward the great cause of Ireland's autonomy in the hearts of the English people, than all the fighting of bygone centuries. But why should we look abroad, when in this very country we still have sounding in our ears the noble words of the right hon. leader of the Opposition, stating at the very opening of hostilities, that he would concur in every measure which the Government might think fit to take, so as to enable the most important colony of the Empire to participate in the common defence. The patriotic stand taken by the Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, in the terrible emergency which the Canadian people and the Empire are confronted with, will be reckoned among the most admirable achievements of his long and fruitful political career. I shall not dilate at greater length on this subject. It appertains to history and not to me to record in golden letters the patriotic deeds of French, British and Canadian statesmen who, at the proper time, have had the wisdom of setting aside their quarrels, to better insure the salvation of the country. Such examples set by men in high positions will be followed, I am sure, by all Canadians whatever their origin, their creed or their party affiliations.

A thunderclap such as that which has just upset Europe and shaken in its very foundations the whole commercial, industrial and financial fabric of the old and the new world, such a thunderclap, I say, was needed to make us properly realize the solidarity of interests which binds every part of the British Empire in the matter of national defence.

Within a week of the opening of hostilities, the British Admiralty was in a position to announce to the whole world that the great commercial highway of the Atlantic ocean could be utilized safely by ships of the allied or neutral nations. That victory, which is of considerable bearing and of unspeakable advantage for the whole of North America, and especially for this country, was a silent victory, won unostentatiously, through the sheer superiority of the British fleet, and before Canada had even