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## THE FINANCE MINISTER'S CONFIDENCE.

The courageous and optimistic tone of the address of Hon. W. T. White, minister of finance, at the Montreal Canadian Club on Monday, should give renewed confidence to those who are disposed to pessimistic views regarding the Canadian outlook. Following the addresses given by Mr. H. V. Meredith and Sir Frederick Williams-Taylor at the Bank of Montreal's meeting last week, when a similar note of courage and optimism was struck, Mr. White's address comes as a strong fresh indication that those in high places in the Dominion, whose judgment can be trusted and who are in the best possible position to secure accurate and authoritative information upon which to base their judgment are entirely confident of Canada's future, not only the further future but also the immediate future—of the recovery from the tremendous blows which have been given to our trade and finance by the outbreak of the European war.

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Of the many points made by Mr. White, one of the most interesting is that regarding the admirable way in which our trade has stood up against the strain of war. A comparison of import and export figures for recent months with those of the corresponding months of 1913 shows that in August United States' imports declined 5 per cent.; Great Britain's imports, 24 per cent.; Canada's imports, 19 per cent. For September, the figures are for the United States, a decline of 18 per cent.; for Great Britain of 26 per cent.; and for Canada of 19 per cent. For October, the United States figures are not available, but Great Britain's imports declined 28 per cent., and Canada's 20 per cent. As regards exports, in August those of the United States decreased 40 per cent., and Great Britain's 45 per cent., while Canada's exports increased 17 per cent. In September Canada's exports held their own while those of the United States declined 28 per cent., and those of Great Britain 35 per cent. In October Canada's exports fell off 14 per cent., and Great Britain's 36 per cent.

Comparatively, even in relation to a neutral country, we occupy a favoured position in this matter. The immense trade both of Great Britain and the United States with parts of continental Europe has practically ceased altogether for the time being. Canada has, however, been in the fortunate position of having the most important part of her export trade with Great Britain, and that has been carried on almost uninterruptedly, the most serious drawbacks being a shortage of vessels, and high freight charges consequent upon war insurance and similar temporary inconveniences.

That this trade has been enabled to carry on in tranquil security across 3,000 miles of ocean is an amazing fact, which perhaps we are apt to take too much as a matter of course. Not this only, but, as Mr. White pointed out, the whole work of restoration of the trade and financial machinery of the world during the last four months has been made possible by the British command of the sea. Someone aptly put it the other day by saying that since the war began the British navy had every day won a silent victory. It requires little effort to imagine what things would have been like in Canada had British command of the sea been lost—even temporarily.

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Mr. White spoke most hopefully and confidently regarding the way in which Canada is recovering from the economic shock caused by the outbreak of war. "That we have been able to withstand the shock of this world-shaking catastrophe and recover so quickly is to me," he said, "nothing short of marvellous, a conclusive proof of the fundamental soundness of our country and its institutions, an unqualified tribute to the prudence and energy of our people and an unmistakable earnest and augury of our future progress and greatness." Among the elements which have enabled us to withstand the shock of the sudden cessation of the money-flow through which in the past we have taken care of an adverse trade balance, he enumerated instinctive caution counselling prudence in commitments, a higher range of prices

(Continued on p. 1673.)