

And Canada, like the United States and like Britain, has had her War of Independence. Britain's lasted some three hundred years, yours (if we measure it after the usual fashion) lasted five, and ours lasted fifty—from 1791, the date of the Constitutional Act, to 1841, the date of the granting of Responsible Government. Our war was fought in the main with the more or less peaceful weapons of political agitation; though some heads were broken, few lives were lost, and now we claim our share in the great heritage and the great tasks of twentieth century political freedom.

New World and Old Intimately Connected

The war of 1812-15 is another excellent illustration of the fact that the history of the new world and the history of the old world are intimately connected. It was really an off-shoot of the great struggle against Napoleon in which for a time Britain stood almost alone. That in this struggle Britain was the chief agency in rescuing Europe from a military despotism is now an incontestable fact. Then, as in the recent war, Britain's great weapon was her sea-power. With the memories of the last few years fresh in our minds we can understand that the exercise of that power was a serious inconvenience to non-combatants, and that both parties in the struggle, under the spur of a great necessity did things which were highly exasperating to the proud and sensitive American nation. Britain was probably the chief offender. At any rate she was the one whose interference, in view of memories of the Revolutionary War, was most bitterly resented. Further, she had one particularly vulnerable spot and that was the Colony of Canada. Canadians are apt to think that the force of American ill-will was directed towards them from the first and that the desire to acquire Canada was the chief cause of the war. Such was, of course, not the case. Possibly some Americans even thought they were doing us a good turn by rescuing us from the hateful tyranny of the British Crown.

I do not recall that in all my youthful study of the history of the War of 1812 this wider aspect of the question was at any time brought to my attention.

There is another aspect of the War of 1812 in which our Canadian histories have been largely silent, an aspect which is revealed in the fact that a large part of the American people did not believe in the necessity of war and gave at best only a half-hearted support. The war was begun and in fact the war was prosecuted by a party rather than by a people.

But enough of what we can now properly regard as Ancient History—the story of “old, unhappy far-off things and battles long ago.” The significant fact about Anglo-American relations is not that there were some four years of war at the beginning of last century, but that since that time **there have been over one hundred years of peace**—of peace and of growing good will.

Of 1917 I will say only this, that with all rightminded Canadians—and in using this term I am characterizing, I think, the overwhelming majority of the Canadian people—with all right-minded Canadians the one enduring memory is that of a nation in arms, and the one enduring sentiment is one of admiration of the high statesmanship which led America to throw aside absolutely for the time being, her century-old tradition of isolation, and to range herself whole-heartedly on the side of Britain and her Allies. And besides that memory of a nation in arms, there is that other memory of those who went and who did not return; your boys and our boys—Americans and Canadians

who gave “their last full measure of devotion” not only for the United States or for Canada, but also for that larger country which we call humanity. “They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old. Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn. When the sun goes down and in the morning we will remember them.”

“Who Won the War?”—A Score of Answers

There are still some small souls who distress themselves with the question—Who won the war? The question is both idle and mischievous. There is enough of glory to our respective nations to make us all proud; enough of selfishness and of graft to make us all humble; and enough of misery and want, and human wreckage and social bitterness—all the direct outcome of the war—to make us all serious.

Who won the war? The question can be answered in a score of ways, all in a measure true. Belgium won the war for had she not thrown herself before the wheels of the German juggernaut, France would have been crushed before any effective opposition could be established on the Western Front. Italy and Russia won the war, for they divided the forces of the Central Powers at the critical periods in the struggle. France won the war, through the valor of her troops, the genius of her generals, the fortitude of her civilian population. Never was the soul of a people more sorely tried, never was the soul of a people more gloriously triumphant. Britain won the war—Britain with her sea-power, with the age-old tradition of never knowing when she was beaten. Britain with the young nations of the British Commonwealth at her side, the lion and the lion's whelps. America won the war—through the bravery of the American expeditionary force—through the fresh courage which came to the war-worn Allies in the consciousness of her support—through the moral effect upon the Central Powers of her whole-hearted participation in the struggle. And so with the long list of allied nations, to each its special place, to each its special glory!

We will leave to the historians of a century hence, when national pride will not be so sharply engaged and when the lapse of time will have given the necessary perspective, we will leave to these men the problem of determining to the last decimal place what each nation did or left undone.

“Nisi Dominus Frustra”

But there will be many then, as there are many now, who will believe that the war was not won merely by soldiers and sailors and all the vast enginery of destruction which modern invention and industry had been able to furnish. They will believe that back of these, certain immeasurable and imponderable forces were at work, and the more devout of that day will speak, as did devout men of ancient times, of the hand of God.

“If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us,

Then they had swallowed us up alive when their wrath was kindled against us.

Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul,

Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.

Blessed be the Lord who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth,

Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers, the net is broken and we are escaped,

Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.”