

A SPEECH BEFORE THE PILGRIMS' SOCIETY, AT NEW
YORK CITY, DECEMBER 23, 1915.

I am grateful to the Pilgrims of New York for their reception and for many invitations in the past to be their guest, which hitherto I have been unable to accept.

A political leader in a country of vast area and scattered population must inevitably be somewhat of a pilgrim himself, and so I may claim to be your comrade. Moreover, the task of one occupying such a position embraces every possible and useful effort to create a clearer comprehension and a better understanding between communities separated by divergence of race, creed or ideal, and sometimes by real or apparent conflict of interest. Your own endeavour has the same inspiring purpose of truer insight and perfect understanding between our kindred nations. For all that you have done in this regard, for all that you may yet accomplish, the grateful thanks of both are due.

From ocean to ocean across this continent runs a boundary line of nearly four thousand miles entirely unguarded on either side. Upon the Great Lakes for more than a century the armed forces of each country have been reduced to a point which forbids the thought of aggression. The agreement which accomplished so great a result was made between Great Britain and the United States fifty years before the Canadian federation came into being. It is embodied in a few letters exchanged between their diplomatic representatives and it can be terminated upon six months' notice. But for a hundred years it has held good and I believe it will always hold good. Does it not mark an impressive epoch in the relations of the two countries?

During the past half century or more those relations have on the whole been intimate and friendly; during the past twenty-five years they have steadily improved and I believe they were never more firmly founded on true understanding and sincere good will than at present. At times situations have arisen which proved difficult and delicate if not dangerous; they demanded forbearance, restraint and the most attentive consideration of the other's viewpoint. All honour to the statesmen who so guided the affairs of either country as to prevent the awful calamity of war between two kindred people. Consider for a moment the course which has been taken. From 1870 up to the present time on how many occasions have differences important and sometimes acute been composed by resort to the peaceful arbitrament of an international tribunal.