

IMPERIALISM

The Consolidation of the British Empire

(By Fred. T. Thomson, Y.M.C.A. Representative at First Oratorical Contest)

(Editor's Note—In reproducing this stirring address as it was delivered we would not be held as necessarily endorsing the opinions expressed therein).

I have chosen this subject because I believe it to be the greatest political question of the day. The best interests of our country depend upon the realization of Imperial federation. Great Britain and her over-sea possessions now comprise almost one-quarter of the entire globe, and a like proportion of the world's population. This Empire enjoys all hours of time and periods of season and has all varieties of climate and temperature. It is, in brief a world in itself. But its strength is not found in the size or wealth of its vast territories, but in the defensive power of its citizens.

If this is deficient its wealth and size become a danger and a weakness. We have been accustomed so long to supremacy on sea and security on land that we are inclined to accept these as fixed conditions which nothing can disturb. Recent events however, prove that a new era has commenced and that our whole empire may again have to fight for its own. The question is, are we prepared? Fleets and effective armies cannot be improvised to meet the rapid movements of modern times.

Peace does not depend upon the utterance of amiable platitudes, or the convenience of agreeable assurances. Peace depends solely on our ability to cope with any disturbers of the peace.

The first time the British Dreadnoughts clear for action will determine the fate of Canada. Should Britannia fall Canada falls more surely and more completely. Great Britain may lose her Empire and not lose her national existence but Canada would lose her very identity, her freedom, autonomy and nationality. Therefore the question resolves itself into what are we going to do in order to help prevent that dire disaster?

Since Trafalgar Great Britain's sovereignty of the seas has never been seriously challenged. That determined effort to do so is now being made, must be obvious to the most careless observer. In Europe, Germany is a real menace today. To possess colonies in which to retain to the nation her surplus population, has long been the worthy ambition of German statesmen. It is estimated that over ten millions of her citizens have been lost to the Fatherland by going overseas. It will, therefore, be readily understood that the urgency for the acquisition of colonies by Germany is great. Concurrently with the rise of Germany as a world power in Europe we have the advance of Japan in the east. Her rapidly increasing millions have outgrown the narrow confines of her own geographical borders, and great numbers of her people are being lost to the nation. Thus we see that there are at least two first class sea powers languishing for the want of overseas possessions, and as both have similar aims yet in no way clashing as regards the colonies desired, it is but natural to suppose that the trouble will come simultaneously.

The statesmen of my native country, New Zealand, realize that their security, like that of every other part of the Empire, depends upon maintenance