

Peace Celebration Address

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Delivered in Trinity Methodist Church, Toronto.

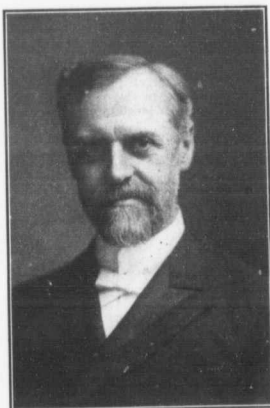
THIS North American Continent has a message which the civilization of the world would do well to study, ponder, and profit from. It is that between two of the greatest, if not the greatest, nations of the world, a peace for a century has been maintained. It is especially refreshing to think of it at a time such as the one through which we are now passing. The colossal and cruel war which Germany has forced upon us constitutes an awfully dark background to the picture, or rather to that part of the picture contributed by Great Britain and the United States in their relations to each other during the last one hundred years. For in the foreground of that historic presentation stands, in beautiful and bold relief, the Angel of Peace, whose reign for ten decades is the joy and admiration of millions.

To study that picture, to ponder that face, to listen to her voice, to mark the wisdom of her counsels, to come under the spell of her beneficent influence, and be rightly impressed with the majesty and glory of her reign; that is the privilege which our continent offers to the civilizations of the world to-day. For a hundred years she has been a welcome guest in the palace at Windsor and at the White House in Washington. She has sat with premiers, ambassadors, and state secretaries in their councils over international matters. She has influenced parliaments at Ottawa, at London, and at Washington, resulting in wisdom silencing the war-cry, in reason triumphing over passion, and in arbitration courts doing infinitely better work than sore and sickening battlefields could ever have accomplished.

Have we fully realized the facts that centre in and characterize that highway of nearly four thousand miles of boundary between the republic to the south, and our Dominion to the north. To the south a nation with vast resources of wealth, with a population reaching up to almost a hundred million, a people ambitious, aggressive, courageous, and keenly jealous of their rights, fancied or real; to the north a Dominion with wide areas of wealth-producing mines, of forests unlimited and priceless, of valleys almost boundless in extent, of rivers, and lakes, and ocean waters yielding food for the millions, and a people also alert, courageous and industrious.

And what are the facts peculiar to that boundary line extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific? Is the Kaiser awake to them? Do the war-lords of Germany know of them? Is it ever mentioned in the military schools of Prussia? Not a fortress is to be found along that entire historic highway. Not a frowning gun is mounted on either side. Not a single battalion of soldiers is stationed at any point. Not a stand of battle is seen playing the silvery waters of any of our lakes or rivers. An athletic people north and south, a people afraid of no storm, and who shrink not from any task however taxing of physical strength, or moral courage; a people, largely Anglo-Saxon, alert, aggressive, and prosperous, whose achievements in discovery, invention, learning, commerce, philanthropy, and national advancement none but a virile, strong-willed, brave and industrious nation could accomplish; a hundred million men and women south, not quite eight million souls north of the boundary line, with interests that now and then seriously clashed; and yet withal a hundred years of peace.

How shall we account for it? Europe has been torn, raked, bruised, devastated several times during the last century; but here as between the United States and Canada, perpetual peace! Can we get at the secret of it? I think we can. Negatively, certainly not by infusing the spirit of Prussian militarism into the soul of our national life; not by giving precedence to military colleges over art universities and agricultural institutions; not by establishing factories, and foundries for the building up of Zeppelins, torpedoes, and bombs for life-destraining purposes; and not by teaching and instilling into the mind of the people these non-Christian maxims and mottoes



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that "might is right," that "war is a necessity to national efficiency," and that "blood and iron of the field of carnage are indispensable to the making of national virility and supremacy in influence and power." Generally speaking we have had none of this, and I pray we never may.

The Pilgrim Fathers here loom up before me—a constellation of lights before whom such names as Bernhardt, and Nietzsche, and Treitschke quickly fade away. What a noble gospel those fathers brought to this continent! A gospel of love and liberty, of good-will and gladness, of generosity and true greatness, a gospel of industry and heroic endeavor, all of which when woven into the warp and woof of national life means unity, efficiency, virility, advancement, praise-worthy effort and splendid achievement.

We do not claim to have lived out the enduring, humanizing, and empire-building principles of those heroic pioneers and princely messengers as well as might have been done. We do not boast as nations of having adopted in our national life as we should the teachings of those who stood for fraternalism and civil liberty. We do not flatter ourselves as having nourished our national soul, and educated our national conscience as we should have done through and by the teachings and spirit of the one master-spirit in all literature. Indeed, to tell the plain truth, we have often sinned, and sinned grievously. Our transgressions

have been continually before us. Corruptions have marred our politics. Greed has cast its ugly shadow on our commerce. Guilty indulgences have left their stain on much of our social life, and too often our religious life has suffered through intolerance, indifference, and worldly-mindedness.

But with all our faults, mistakes, and misdoings, one thing, thank God, we have refused to do. We have refused to spend our sleeping hours dreaming of national world-power, and to pass our waking days imbibing the spirit and feeding on the maxims of Prussian militarism. We have never been guilty of drinking toasts "To the Day," when we would cause our streams to run red with the blood of our neighbors, when we would sow our lakes and rivers with deadly mines, or fly abroad baby-killing and mother-murdering Zeppelins over undefended and offending cities, and when we would turn this sunlit continent into a vast slaughter house and fill the lands with unspeakable suffering, sorrow and death.

No! no! No! Not thus have we dreamed or planned on either side of the line. A better task has been set before us. A better aim has been our heritage. Hence a hundred years of history of relations between the two great Anglo-Saxon peoples which stands as a rebuke to all war-lords of the Kaiseristic or Napoleonic type, wherever found.

It is a most interesting study, the study of the men, the methods, the motives, the forces, influences, considerations, commissions, arbitrations, and treaties entering into and making up the history of this century of peace. For, more than once; yes, several times, the ties that bind seemed strained to the utmost and ready to break. Boundary lines were vigorously disputed. Fishing rights were boldly challenged. Fur-sealing privileges were hotly contested. The Alabama trouble assumed proportions extremely serious. These, all together, with memories reaching back to 1812, were clouds that threatened to blot out the light, jagged rocks in the river that turned the waters into foam and endangered the vessels of state in their onward voyage down the century. But despite those perils, the Angel of Peace has remained, a living and a potential Presence.

Now, some one may ask for the contributory causes of this happy chapter of British-American history. If so, briefly I may indicate those causes. And first, is it not a fact that the language we speak being the same, and our ideals of life in its truest and best forms, individual or national, being much alike, misunderstandings are less likely to occur, and when occurring are the more easily adjusted or removed?

Then also there is the fact of a very free and friendly intermingling of the peoples of both nations. Canadians are everywhere sprinkled over the Republic, a million strong, and "making good" their place in the esteem and confidence of those among whom they dwell. The same is true here in Canada. Much American capital and many acceptable American citizens have helped to enlarge our borders, and increase our strength as a commercial force. Distinguished talent has moved to and fro, here and yonder, weaving silver strands of sympathy and good-will till coils that bind, which let us pray may never break, however great the strain at times.

But I must not omit to mention one of the main causes by which war has been averted, and peace perpetuated. I refer to the part taken by Peace Propaganda Societies, and by sagacious and eminent statesmen, men of the Salisbury, the Gladstonian, the Sir Edward Grey, and the Asquith type; men like Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir Wilfrid Laurier vision