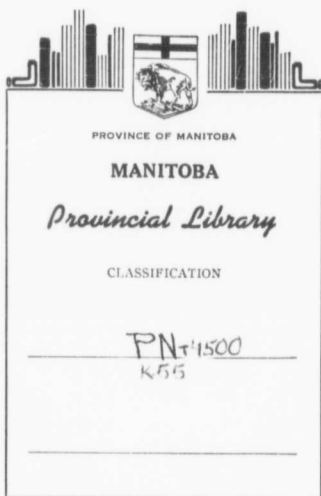




Kipling's

WINNIPEG SPEECH

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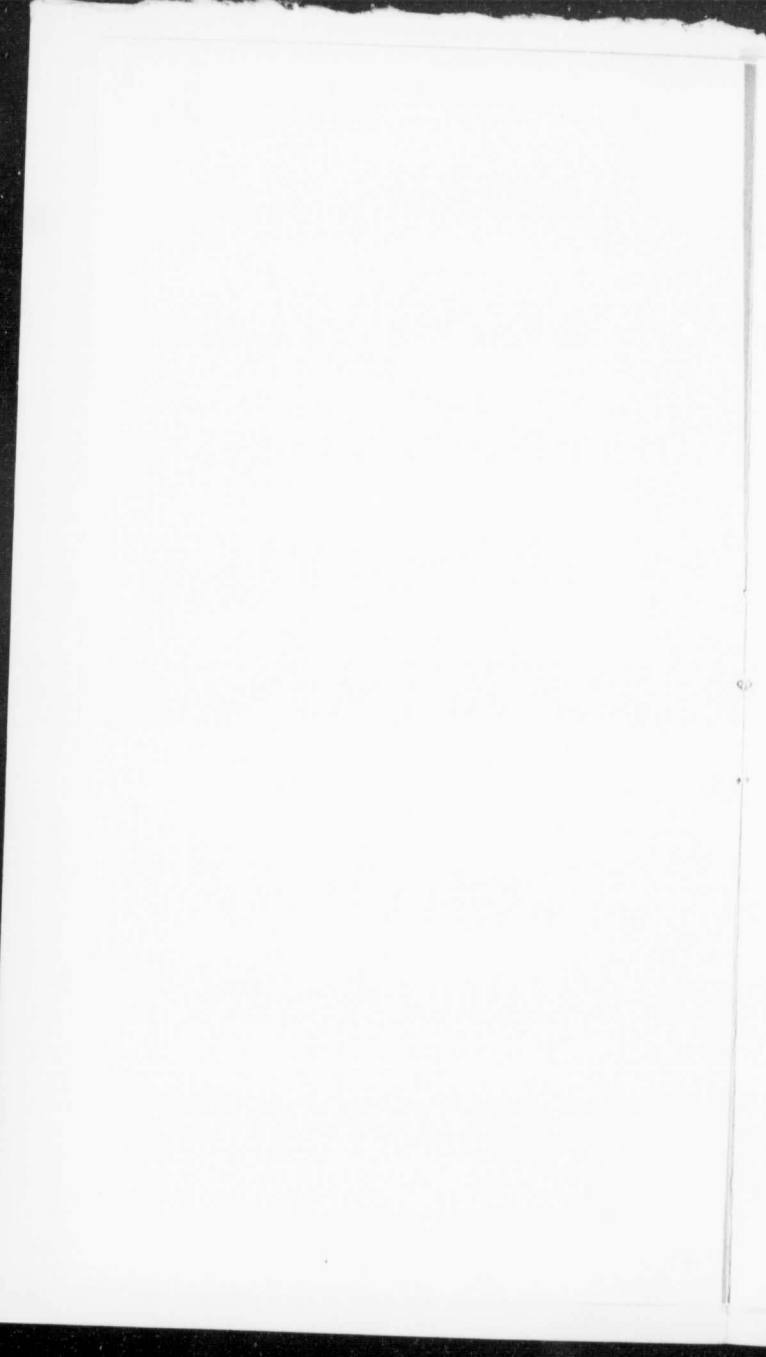
Address
BY
Rudyard Kipling

TO THE
Canadian Club

WINNIPEG
2ND OCTOBER, 1907



PRINTED BY
JACKSON ENGRAVING CO.
375 HARGRAVE ST.



Mr. President, gentlemen of the Canadian club, fellow subjects, I am only a dealer in words, and you can scarcely wonder that I cannot find any words—speaking from my heart—wherewith to thank you for the honor which you have done me. The thing to me—the experience to me—is most overwhelming. What Mr. Gordon has been good enough to say about such work as I have done, I can only hope that you will very kindly try to—believe. But if anyone of you in his life has ever been called good, he will perhaps recall the thoughts that went through his mind when he considered what he really was.

But to one portion of the indictment I plead guilty. I have, I confess it now, done my best for about twenty years to make all the men of the sister nations within the empire interested in each other. Because I know that at heart all our men are pretty much alike, in that they have the same problems, the same aspirations, and the same loves, and the same hates; and when all is said and done, we have only each other to depend upon. And if, through any good fortune, any work of mine has helped to make the boys all over the world understand each other a little bit—I won't say, understand—to keep them more interested in each other, then great is my reward.

I seem to have caught in the speech of Mr. Crowe a reference to snow. I assure you, gentlemen, I explained the moment I landed in Quebec, that all the lumber in this country was shifted on pneumatic tires in July. I pointed out that snow was unheard of. And that what they mistook for it was French chalk. I have done everything that I could.

Now I do not wish to survive your dark past, or rather our dark past, shall I say, but fifteen years ago, almost to the day, I was in Winnipeg. At that time the city was seriously considering wherewithal she should be paved. The street pavement question was very important and, as far as I could gather, from the inhabitants of the city—the men of that generation—it appeared that at that remote epoch snow used to fall within the city limits and, when it melted, the streets were what I have heard called "Muddy." I left the city of Winnipeg discussing that problem, chiefly in buggies that would not move in Main street; and I went away for fifteen years, which in the life of a nation is equivalent to about fifteen minutes in the life of a man. I come back, and I find the Winnipeg of to-day a metropolis. This morning I have been over, perhaps, more than sixteen or twenty-two miles of asphalt, looking at some small part of the principal portions

of your most marvellous city I have seen all the buildings that you have created for your convenience, for your trade, for your necessities, for your justifiable pride and luxury, and above all for the education of your children.

The visions that your old men saw fifteen years ago I saw translated to-day into stone and brick and concrete. The dreams that your young men dreamed I saw accepted as the ordinary facts of everyday life, and they will, in turn, give place to vaster and more farreaching imaginations. Gentlemen, this record of unsurpassed achievement, and my admiration for it, is as keen as my envy. I say my envy, because, as you know, I have spent some large portion of my life among men of my own blood and race in other lands less fortunate than this land—among men who are laboring with their brains and the sweat of their bodies to build up new cities, and to make firm the outworks of civilization.

These things are not accomplished except by the hardest of toil, high courage, eternal sacrifice, and very often bitter disappointment. The mere buildings and streets of a town do not tell that story to the outsider, but no man who has been present, as I have been present, at the building up of a new city, or foundation of a new community—no man who has



been at the birththroes of a nation, can fail to hear that story cried aloud, as it were, by every block, store or private residence that he passes. Therefore, my heart goes out to the city of your love and your pride, because I know what lies behind the mere houses in the streets that one sees. I know the passion and the sacrifice that went to the upbuilding of each, and that will continue to go to its existence, and to all that its existence implies.

But I find cause for a deeper appeal in other things than those which you were good enough to show me to-day. I have realized here the existence of an assured nationhood. The spirit of a people contented not to be another people or the imitators of any other people—contented to be themselves. This spirit, of course, existed fifteen years ago, but that spirit, as I remember—and I have not forgotten some of my walks and talks in the city—then doubted a little. It found it necessary to explain. It stated its position, and, perhaps, it waited a little to see what other people thought of its position. Thank God I find no echo of that mood here to-day. I can feel by the men on the streets, and see by a thousand signs, that here is a people in their own land, whose heart springs go down deep into the fabric, and who will be trustees for a

nation.

This is worth more than anything else, for there is no unliftable curse on any people, except the idea of a weak or a degraded nationhood. Neither commerce nor art, nor literature make up for the loss of that spirit. Without it the biggest city the world has ever seen is merely a pack of organized enterprise. With that national spirit the meanest collection of packing cases that was ever tackhammered on a prairie can uplift and dominate a continent.

Gentlemen, you are fortunate beyond most other communities. Your own labor, your own sacrifice have given you material prosperity in overwhelming abundance, and the Gods above have not denied you the light that shows the true use and the true significance of that material prosperity.

One is forced back to the old words that you stand on the threshold of an unbelievable future. There is no man, and here I must quote again 'that can foresee or set limits to your destiny.' But any man, gentlemen, even I, have the right to remind you, before I sit down, that to whom much has been given, from them much, much shall be required.