

ADDRESS

BY

Hon. T. Chase-Casgrain, K.C., M.P.,

POSTMASTER-GENERAL

**DELIVERED AT A LUNCHEON
GIVEN IN HIS HONOUR BY THE CANADIAN CLUB
OF VANCOUVER, B.C.,
ON THE 16TH AUGUST, 1915**

The EDITH *and* LORNE PIERCE
COLLECTION *of* CANADIANA




Queen's University at Kingston

ADDRESS

BY

Honble. T. CHASE-CASGRAIN, K.C., M.P.,
Postmaster General

Delivered at a Luncheon given in his honour
by the Canadian Club, Vancouver, B.C.,
on the 16th of August,
1915



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
Queen's University - University of Toronto Libraries

<http://archive.org/details/addressbyhonblet00chas>

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

Among the duties devolving upon a Member of the Canadian Cabinet is the duty of visiting the different parts of the vast country in respect of which he has to advise the Crown. Especially is this true in the case of the Post Office Department, the jurisdiction of which extends all over Canada, and which has ramifications in every inhabited centre. There are at present about 19,000 Post Offices in Canada, and there are questions connected with the administration of the Department, such as the extension of the rural mail service and the parcel post, which require a personal canvas of the situation; this is the only means by which the Minister can become conversant with the requirements of his office. But leaving aside this technical part of his duties, I can assure you that it is an advantage and a pleasure for a man from the East to come out to this wonderful country, passing through the fertile regions of the middle Provinces, into the rich and prosperous Province of British Columbia. It makes one proud of his country and increases his love for the heritage which has fallen to our lot. I find that nine years have made a remarkable change in the Western part

of Canada. We are at the present time living under the cloud of a terrible war, in which the Empire is engaged. I can see everywhere the indications that, notwithstanding the gravity of the situation and the retrenchment made necessary by circumstances, the country is simply waiting for the occasion when it will continue on its onward march. What has struck me most on my journey through the West is the inspiring spirit of loyalty which is everywhere to be found, and the determination that nothing should be spared in the great effort that Canada is putting forward in the cause for which our brave sons are fighting and dying on the other shores of the Atlantic Ocean.

I have to thank you gentlemen of the Canadian Club of Vancouver for having given me this opportunity of addressing you on the subject which is in the minds of everybody at the present time, and of expressing briefly and in imperfect language what I feel as a citizen of this country, and more particularly as an inhabitant of the oldest province of the Dominion. While I am speaking to you here to-day, 6,000 miles from London, my Chief, the Premier of Canada, called by duty to the heart of the Empire, is voicing your sentiments when he is telling the British people that Canada, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, is more and more impressed

with its obligation to do its utmost in the great struggle in which we are all engaged, and her determination, which grows stronger every day, that she will stop sending her citizen soldiers across the seas and spending her treasures only when the cause of civilization, free institutions, independence and liberty have secured a final triumph.

When I was honoured with your invitation and asked to name my subject, I could see nothing more appropriate, under the present circumstances, than to speak of the one thing which preoccupies the mind of every true Canadian. The war cloud hangs as a pall over the country. What Canada has done, what she can do, what she should do, are questions which are in the minds of everybody, and it seems to me that I would be diverting the attention of the public from the one all-absorbing topic were I to speak of anything else. I do not pretend to be able to say anything new upon the subject, but it has seemed to me that an interchange of views and opinions and an examination of the question from different angles can be conducive to a certain amount of good and advantage.

A year ago on the 4th of this month, Canada was preparing to celebrate one hundred years of peace with the great Nation south of us. We little thought that the murder of an Archduke in the distant Balkan

Provinces would be the spark which would kindle the greatest conflagration that history has ever witnessed.

Now that the storm has burst and the world realizes what a tremendous organization it has to face, we wonder how it was that the other nations did not see the gathering storm.

On my way out to the Coast, I was reading the biography of Max Schneckenburger, author of "Wacht am Rhein." This hymn, which is to-day sung in all the bivouacs and trenches within the German lines, was written between 1835 and 40. He also wrote several other songs and pieces of poetry. He and his contemporaries were then looking forward to the domination of the world by Germany, and their books are full of this one thought. Let me give you an instance; here is an excerpt from his diary:

"German Switzerland, Alsace, German Belgium, Holland, Denmark, the Baltic Provinces which speak German, will all be reincorporated in the Fatherland. Prussia will assume the direction of this new Germany. As for the old house of Hapsburg, it will no longer play any part, and Austria, whose frontiers will stretch to the mouth of the Danube, will be a slav empire, extending from Pest to the Black Sea and from Prussia to Greece."

Schneckenburger and the German poets, philosophers, essayists and publicists of the latter part of

the 19th Century and the present era, have constantly accustomed the peoples of the German Empire to look forward to the day when Berlin would be the centre of the Universe.

So it is in the history of the human race. At one time, Spain was mistress on land and sea. She too dreamed of subjugating England, but the ships of her vast Armada beat their hulls to pieces on the rocky shores of the British Isles.

Then England and France strove in a mighty contest for supremacy. England was victorious and the price of her victory was half a continent, with its boundless resources and riches.

The 19th Century was destined to see the rise of a new power, or rather the resurrection of an old factor in world-politics: the Empire of Charles V, Carlos Quintos, began to shake from its mantle the dust of centuries and the spirit of the great Emperor who sleeps in the Escorial descended upon the House of Hohenzollern. No sooner had the power of Bonaparte been crushed than the Prussians began to look forward to a might Empire which would seize the hegemony of Europe and control the world. With what patient determination the plans were laid and carried out. First the war upon Denmark and the annexation of the two Provinces of Holstein and Schleswig, which gave Prussia a

strategical roadway of the greatest value from the Baltic to the North Sea. Then the crushing of Austria, and lastly the sad chapter of the war of 1870 against France, in which Prussia interested all the German States. The Treaty of Versailles was not only the establishment of the Vosges as the eastern frontier of France, but the foundation of that mighty Empire which for forty-four years has been sharpening its sword with the firm resolve of sheathing it only, when reeking with the blood of the nations of Europe, it should rest in the breast of the last contestant for the domination of the world.

How was it that England in 1870 did not see that the day was fast approaching when her turn would come? Were her diplomats and statesmen asleep? Who knows whether if she had prevented the mutilation and humiliation of France at that time, she would not have spared herself untold expenditure of treasure and sacrifices in men and money so great that the powers of imagination can scarcely realize their vastness?

But the mistake, if mistake it were, has been committed and now the German Empire having firmly established itself and having had all the time necessary to make preparation, a preparation so thorough that it was beyond human conception, has

thrown down the gauntlet and set itself to crush the peoples of the earth and make them her vassals.

It has long been said that England has colonies and colonists; France has colonies but no colonists; Germany has colonists but no colonies. This may all be true, but Germany has, so to speak, colonized the world. She has sent out her sons to every hemisphere, to every clime, to every colony belonging to the other nations; she has her emissaries everywhere, even in our very midst, and has thus succeeded in building up a secret power which has proved and is proving every day a wonderful force against her enemies. When the time came, the time chosen by herself, she fired the first gun and marched her armies through Belgium, en route to London, via Paris and Calais.

Then a magnificent spectacle thrilled the world with admiration. The French people were torn by dissensions and political strife; it had been predicted that they could not withstand the invasion of their ancient foe any more than they did in 1870, but they rallied round the tri-colour; the cries of discord were drowned by the one cry of "Vive la France." Since then, what prodigies of valour the French Army have performed! Together with Sir John French's admirable troops they have held at bay an enemy who had been preparing for forty years,

whose resources seem to be illimitable and who is using every device, every invention, every means, fair and foul, to break through the line of heroes which extends from Holland to Switzerland. The whole spirit of the French Army seems to be typified in an incident which happened during the battle of the Marne. A French General, Castelnau, a descendant of one of the famous Vendéens, who fought until the last breath in defence of the white flag of the Bourbons, and who had four sons in the army, was dictating his orders to his staff, when one of his aides approached him and said: "Mon Général, news has just come that one of your sons has been killed." For one instant, the father's heart beat stronger than the heart of the soldier, but for an instant only. The soldier's spirit soon asserted itself and he said to his staff: "Gentlemen, let us continue," and he went on dictating his orders as if nothing had happened. Every father's heart bleeds for such a father, but every man is thankful and proud that the human race has produced such specimens.

What is the situation to-day? On the one side, we have Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey; on the other, Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy, Belgium, Serbia and Montenegro. Look on the map of Europe and see what is left. If the Balkan states join one side or the other, one's mind is

brought back to the prophesy that the end of all time will be preceded by the war in which all nations shall join.

The world has seen great wars: without dwelling upon the wars of Alexander the Great or following the conquering legions of Cæsar, let us bring back our minds to the Thirty-years' War, the One Hundred-years' War, the great wars of the Napoleonic era; but when was the world thrown into such a death struggle as the present gigantic Armageddon? In the West, a front extending from Holland to Switzerland, in the South an army of 500,000 men or more escalading the Alps; heroic deeds performed on the Hellespont not far from the Islands and Cities made famous by Homer, and which would require a new Homer to celebrate the valour of the Allied troops, unsurpassed in history, ancient and modern; on the East, a front extending 500 miles; millions of men grappling at each other's throats! The chronicles of old say that the legions of Pompey were so numerous that one would have thought that by striking the soil with his spear he made men rise from the entrails of the earth, but what a handful in comparison to the armies which now are fighting each other on all sides of Europe! A year has passed since the war began. Belgium is in the hands of the enemy. In Northern France,

all the valour of the French Army, directed by the consummate skill of General Joffre, has not yet succeeded in chasing the enemy across the border.

A few days ago, we heard that after a resistance which will be memorable in the history of this war, our Allies, the Russians, were obliged to evacuate Warsaw, the capital of Poland. There is no use minimizing the importance of this great event. It is well to look things in the face; there is no greater mistake than to despise one's enemy or the success which he may gain. It was a great disappointment to the Allies that the Germans were able to push back the Russian forces and to capture the ancient city which has had such a varied and checkered career, but let me ask you what must have been the feelings of Europe when Napoleon's great Army cut its way through to Moscow, the very heart of the Russian Empire? Everybody must have thought at that time when the victorious Imperial Eagles perched upon the cross of the Kremlin, that the Czar's power had at last succumbed to the victor's sway. But the march through Russia and the capture of Moscow were the beginning of the downfall of Napoleon. Who has not read of the retreat of "La Grande Armée" through the desolate plains of Russia? Who has not been thrilled with horror at the terrible tale of the crossing of the frozen Beresina, and of the

sufferings of the soldiers who up to then had known nothing but victory!

To-day everybody is aware that if peace had not been negotiated between Russia and Japan when it was, the Japanese would probably not have been able to hold out much longer.

Nobody truly knows what the resources in men and money Russia commands. It suffers from its very might. It takes a long while to gather its millions of men, to set them in motion, to bring them down to the fighting line, and to organize them into a fighting machine, but once the immense mass is put into motion it is irresistible.

The despatches have announced that it is the intention of Emperor William to create an independent Kingdom of Poland, and we may no doubt be apprised later on that, for the present at least, most liberal concessions will be made to the Polish people. Here again let us look at the events of to-day in the light of the history of the past. At one time, the great Napoleon, flushed with victory, having vanquished the armies of the world, set about to apportion to himself and to his family the Kingdoms of Europe. To the Netherlands he assigned his brother Louis, and those who visit Holland still see the great "N" carved in marble and wood on the walls of the palaces. Spain was allotted

to another of his brothers, Joseph; Westphalia still to another, Jerome; while he gave Naples to his brother-in-law, Murat; and on the throne of the Eternal City of Rome he placed his own son. How long did this vast power last? Seen at this distance, all these thrones seem to have crumbled in the twinkling of an eye, and to-day the last heir to this tremendous fortune can, with the greatest difficulty, find a country who will accept his sword in defence of the cause of independence and liberty, which his Grand Uncle trampled under foot. So, we can look with some equanimity on the capture of the capital of Poland, on the passing defeat of the Russian Army and on the establishment upon a tottering throne of one of the sons of the modern Napoleon.

What is the duty of Canada, under the circumstances? How has it been performed? On the 4th August last, the anniversary of the Declaration of War by Great Britain, I happened to be in Regina and was asked to address the patriotic meeting to be held that evening. Fully 20,000 people were assembled on the square. The meeting was opened by an eloquent speech from the Governor of the Province and closed by the Roman Catholic Bishop of the diocese. Church and State proclaimed at Regina, as it was proclaimed all over the British Empire the same day, the firm determination of the

country to see that the sword was not sheathed until peace, with honour and glory, was proclaimed throughout the world. The meeting at Regina was only the image of what had taken place throughout the whole dominions of His Majesty King George. I was pleased to be at the meeting and to contribute my mite to the proceedings, pleased as a Minister of the Crown and as a public man from the Province of Quebec. Looking back at what the Government has done, and when I speak of the Government, I am not speaking of it as a body made up of politicians, but simply as a body representing the people of Canada, I was proud to scan the record and to proclaim publicly that Canada, as a component part of the Empire, had done its duty. When war was declared we were found in a state of unpreparedness. Our Army was a militia force only established for the purposes of defence. We had lived in peace over 100 years, and very few, if any, had ever dreamt that Canada would be involved in such a terrific struggle as the one which is progressing at the present time. Still, within six weeks after the declaration of war, by reason of the splendid patriotism of the people of Canada, and I must say especially of the Western Provinces, we were able to enlist, to organize and fully equip, 33,000 men; when in the latter part of September, twenty-five transports carried this army

from the shores of Canada across the seas, we gave to the world a spectacle unrivalled and unsurpassed in history.

Since then, the martial spirit of the Canadian has become more intense. Regiments upon regiments have been formed, the greatest sacrifices have been made, men have torn themselves away from their business, from their families, from their homes, and freely, without any compulsion, without the least coercion, have offered up their lives in sacrifice for the cause of the Empire, which is the cause of humanity, of civilization and of liberty. Need I mention to you the splendid deeds of valour which were performed by our men at Langemarck, at St. Julien, at Festeubert? Among the heroes, who have fallen, are names of men well known in Vancouver; one of the first to give up his life was Colonel McHarg, and I esteem it an honour to have enjoyed his acquaintance and friendship. You have here in Vancouver a family the head of which is the only survivor of those who founded the nation and who are known as the Fathers of Confederation; as we say in French, *bon sang tient de race* and his descendants are fighting and spilling their blood for the preservation and maintenance of the edifice of which he was one of the chief architects.

Do you want once more to be reminded of the spirit which animates our citizen soldiers? Allow me to read to you an extract from a letter received on my arrival in Vancouver, from my brother Colonel Casgrain, who is in command of the 3rd Stationary Hospital, and who has since been sent to the Dardanelles:

“On Saturday last, the troops of this division to the number of 15,000, were inspected and reviewed by Sir Robert Borden and General Hughes. Both came over to me and shook hands. It was an inspiring sight to see 15,000 Canadians, the very flower of our manhood population, as, with smiling faces and elastic step, to the strain of martial music, they swung past the saluting point on their way, you might say, to the battlefields of France and Flanders, there to uphold the glory and prestige of British arms and to do their very best in the cause of human liberty and freedom. It was indeed a glorious sight, which made one feel proud of his Canadianism, but the spectacle was not without its sting or pang. The tear dimmed the eye and the lump sprang to the throat when we realized the sufferings, the miseries and perils that confronted our dear fellows, and one asked himself unconsciously the question: How many would return to home and fireside, to enjoy a well-earned repose and the thanks and plaudits of their fellows for the sacrifices and hardships undergone, or how many would leave their bones to bleach under the vineclad banks of the Rhine, or who would find a last resting place in the bosom of sunkissed

France, or, better still, a soldier's grave under the sod of heroic, plucky and valorous little Belgium. All were in the pink of perfection, hard as nails, as they passed the saluting point, with a grim look of determination on their sunburnt and weather-beaten faces, to do or die on the battlefield, in the cause of humanity, and to avenge the death of thousands of their comrades, whose blood has already steeped the soil of Europe's bloody Armageddon."

The Government has already sent over 70,000 men. We have in training in Canada to-day at least 75,000, who are ready and eager to go to the front, and I may assure you that supported as we believe we are by the will of the nation, we are determined as a Government to strain every muscle, even to the breaking point, in order that Canada should participate to the utmost of her resources in the final determination of the question as to whether or not German militarism will replace the benevolent and free institutions under which we live and prosper.

I am speaking to you here to-day as a Member of the Government of Canada, as a citizen of this great country, to which I am lovingly attached, because seven generations of my ancestors have lived and laboured and died here, and as a French Canadian, from the Province of Quebec, who understands the full nature of the struggle which is being waged on the plains of Europe.

My Province and my race, I am proud to say, have done their duty. In the first Contingent, there were 2,500 French Canadians, distributed amongst the various regiments. A short time after the first Contingent left, Colonel Gaudet organized the first French Canadian Regiment and the recruiting of this corps was followed by the recruiting of another regiment, under Colonel Archambault; a third, under Colonel Paquet, while a fourth is actually being organized in Montreal, under the command of Colonel Dansereau. Among the names of those who are fighting to-day, or who will fight to-morrow, are the historic names of French families who at one time defended Canada against the ancestors of those with whom they are now fighting side by side: the Duchesnays, de Salaberrys, de Beaujeus, Babys, de Lanaudières, Laviolettes, and I am proud to say that five men bearing the name which I bear, three officers and two privates, one of whom was killed in battle, have made the supreme sacrifice for the defence of the flag.

The son of a former Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Quebec, Sir Auguste Angers, was in the north of this Province, 250 miles away, when he heard the bugle call. All he possessed in the world were two horses. He rode them down to the city, sold them and with the price bought his transporta-

tion to Montreal and Valcartier. His father had not seen or heard of him for seven years. In passing through Montreal, one day in September last, he ran into his father's office, and almost in the same breath greeted him and said adieu. He is now fighting, as a private, in the trenches. The present Lieutenant Governor of the Province, the Honourable Mr. LeBlanc, has a son, who is a lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Dragoons, and he also is fighting with his regiment against the common foe.

I am not giving these different figures and instances in any vainglorious spirit, or because I believe that the loyalty of the French Canadians can be attacked or doubted, but coming through the other day on the train I was pained to read in one of the Western papers the following statement:

“Liberals believe that the anti-war feeling in Quebec will give them at least fifty seats in that province, and they seem to be determined to risk their political fortunes on this sentiment in that province.”

I hold no brief for the Liberal party, but I am forced to say, in the face of the statement contained in this newspaper, that there is no anti-war feeling in the Province of Quebec. At the very outset, in company with Sir Wilfrid Laurier, my predecessor, the Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux, Sir Lomer Gouin, Premier of the Province, and Mr. Maréchal, K.C.,

I addressed a tremendous patriotic gathering in Sohmer Park, in the City of Montreal, and all of us, laying aside our political differences, told the people that the sole preoccupation of everybody should be the proper means to be taken by Canada to fulfil its duty and take its share in the great war of aggression which is being waged against the Empire. The result of this meeting was the immediate recruiting of the 22nd French Canadian Regiment under Colonel Gaudet. Not only was the voice of French Canadian public men heard in this connection, but the voice of the Roman Catholic Bishops of the Province, who, in a collective pastoral letter, gave the proper direction to their flocks and impressed upon them their duties and their obligations.

In the Province of Quebec, as in the other parts of the Dominion, we realize profoundly what this war means. We turn our eyes towards the past, we read history and we are convinced that the aim of Germany is to supplant France and England at the head of the nations of the earth and to establish everywhere German ideals, German manners and German culture. What would become of Canada if Germany were victorious in the present war, if France were defeated, if England were humiliated? As I said before, Germany has no colonies, and if she emerged

from this great struggle with victory on her side and was able to dictate her conditions, what is there to prevent her from endeavouring to establish herself in one of the richest possessions belonging to the British Crown?

The war is far away; it is 6,000 miles from Vancouver, 3,000 miles away from Quebec, but we all realize now that this is not a war which is being waged in another planet; it is a war in which we are deeply interested. It is as much Canada's war as England's war. It is your fight, it is my fight, it is the fight of every free citizen of this country, and let me again repeat that, speaking to you as one of the Ministers of the Crown, I have this message to give to you: We will leave no effort untried, no resource untouched, no nerve unstrained, before we have done the very utmost in this struggle in which the life of the Empire and the liberty and free institutions of Canada are at stake.

Through all these trying times Canada has been fortunate in having as her Executive Head a man whose noble birth would entitle him anywhere to an exalted position and to the respect of those around him, but whose long experience as a soldier and whose sound and unflinching judgment have been of the greatest service. It has been said that the King reigns but does not govern. That may be so, but

any one who has seen His Royal Highness' devotion to duty, in these grave times, the keen interest he lends to every detail which pertains to the part we are taking in the war, the unwearied attention he pays to the exact fulfilment of his important duties, well know that he has done his share in the great and patriotic task which has devolved upon Canada. His great example has stimulated the zeal of his advisers, has increased, if possible, their desire to go to the fullest extent in the accomplishment of their duties and to prove to the world that they are, what he is himself, true and loyal servants of an Empire which they are bound to serve and to save at any cost.

