

Borden, R. L., & Hurd, P. (1917). *The war and the future. Being a narrative compiled from speeches delivered at various periods of the war in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain, with an introductory letter to the compiler, Percy Hurd.* London,; Hodder and Stoughton.

CHAPTER VI

SEA POWER : RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DOMINIONS

THOSE who are familiar with the religious services used at sea will remember that prayer goes up from the men of the Navy, in peace as in war, that they may be a safeguard to their Sovereign and his dominions and a security for such as pass upon the seas on their lawful occasions. The quaint words of that old prayer express as perfectly as may be that which is most essential for the security and integrity of this empire, a safe pathway across the seas. Surely that prayer has been fulfilled even in this appalling war, for already the silent victory on the sea has been won. (I)

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We (in Canada) realise not less than you (in England) that the pathways of the seas are the veins and arteries of this empire through which its life-blood must flow.

If these are once stopped or seriously obstructed the empire cannot continue to exist. We are conscious with you of that wonderful vigil in the North Sea, of the patience, endurance and fortitude of the officers and men of the British Navy. We are grateful as you are grateful, with the most intense appreciation of all that they have wrought. They have rid the seas of the marauders by which our commerce was troubled, and have safeguarded that intercourse which is so absolutely necessary for you and for us, both in peace and war. (8)

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The German Navy has not come forth from its fortress shelter to engage the British fleet in any large action. We cannot know what designs the future may reveal; but it is an open secret that by a process of attrition, of destroying here and there a dreadnought or a cruiser, Germany hopes to undertake the contest on more equal terms. Our commerce has nevertheless been to some extent disturbed, many ships have been captured, one important cable station in the Pacific has been destroyed, and in the South Pacific two ships went down after a most

gallant action against great odds. With them went down four young Canadians, three from my native province and one from the adjoining province of New Brunswick ; and I pause to pay a tribute to their memory. Consider what might have been the result if many such cruisers as the *Emden*, the *Königsberg* and the *Karlsruhe* had been let loose to prey upon our commerce ; and remember that Great Britain's ability to keep concentrated in the North Sea the enormous naval force now gathered there is owing to conditions which could not be anticipated with certainty. The powerful French fleet in the Mediterranean and the Japanese cruisers in the Pacific have enabled Great Britain to keep the "Grand Fleet," as it is called, concentrated in the North Sea to muzzle the German Navy. Mr. Churchill has spoken of the Navy's splendid work. Realising that all the ocean pathways throughout the world had to be protected and our commerce safeguarded in every sea, one cannot say too much in praise of the officers and men who have discharged this great duty. (3)

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Do you appreciate what it meant last

winter for those men to hold that wonderful, ceaseless vigil in the North Sea? I do not believe it could be adequately described. The submarine menace, too, upon which the Germans counted so much, has been met by a resourcefulness on the part of the Admiralty, on the part of the officers and men of the Navy, which I believe has proved much more effective than has yet been disclosed. Indeed, not only in connection with submarine, but also in respect of clearing the ocean of all the dangers that threatened our commerce, too much cannot be said in praise of the Navy's work. It has been splendid, it has been wonderful; and in these days when we sometimes are a little discouraged because of lack of success in this or that theatre of operations, believe me when I tell you that the task performed by the British and Allied Navies in keeping the seas cleared is an infinitely greater weight in the scale of victory than all that has been accomplished by our enemies upon land.

And Britain has made great sacrifices for it, not only in recent years, but for five centuries past—sacrifices adequate to the task which this war made necessary.

We have fed our sea for a thousand years,
 And she calls us, still unfed,
 Though there's never a wave of all her waves
 But marks our English dead.
 We have strawed our best to the weeds' unrest,
 To the shark and the sheering gull.
 If blood be the price of admiralty,
 Lord God! we ha' paid in full. (10)

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Many hundred thousand men will return after this war to their homes in the Oversea Dominions of the British Commonwealth. They will have thronged upon the stage of the world's theatre of action and taken a mighty part in settling world issues and determining the future destiny of civilisation and humanity. Upon our Atlantic and Pacific shores, by our inland waterways, in the northern hinterlands of Ontario and Quebec, on our vast western plains, and still further west within the shadow of majestic mountain ranges, these men will take up anew the task of developing and upbuilding our country. They will take up that work with a consciousness that Canada has played a worthy part in the fateful struggle which she entered at the call of duty and for the cause of freedom. Theirs will be an imperishable recollection of comradeship with

men of the Motherland and of all parts of the King's Dominions; theirs also a wider vision and deeper insight from service in a high cause. Hardly less profound will be the influence of the war upon all our people. They have learned that self-sacrifice in a just cause is at once a duty and a blessing, and this lesson has both inspired and ennobled the men and women of Canada. It was indeed worth a great sacrifice to know that beneath eagerness for wealth and apparent absorption in material development there still burned the flame of that spirit upon which alone a nation's permanence can be founded. One must move among our people to realise their overmastering conviction that the justice and greatness of our cause overpower all other considerations, and to comprehend the intensity of the spirit which permeates and quickens every Canadian community.

The overseas men will have learned another lesson and they will have learned it so thoroughly that it never can be forgotten. That lesson is two-fold: first, that the liberty, the security and the very existence of our empire are dependent upon the safety of the ocean pathways whether in peace or

war ; next, that while sea power cannot of itself be the instrument of world domination, it is nevertheless the most powerful instrument by which world domination can be effectually resisted. Three hundred years ago it for ever crushed arrogant pretensions then put forward to control western trade routes and to exclude therefrom the free nations of the world. Little more than a century ago it maintained freedom against world domination by a single military system. To-day it remains the shield of the same freedom and it will so continue. The burden of so tremendous a responsibility must not rest upon Britain alone but upon the greater Commonwealth which comprises all the King's Dominions. (15)

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The development of submarine warfare during the past three years has been so important and so serious as to cause the authorities of the Admiralty to reconsider more or less the whole position. But we do believe that after this war is over it will be necessary for the United Kingdom and the Overseas Dominions of the Empire to take up this question in co-operation and concert, and for that purpose the Admiralty should prepare,

with the least possible delay after the war is over, a scheme by which we could act together for this great common purpose.

It is obvious to all of us that if the communications of this Empire on the ocean are cut the Empire cannot hold together. It is a matter of congratulation to us that although there is a serious menace in the submarine campaign which Germany has carried on, this has been met with at least some success at the present time and I hope it will be met with more success in the future.

Outside of the submarine campaign, we all rejoice that the ocean had been swept practically clear of the German flag within a few months after this war broke out. That is a great achievement, and it means as much for us (Canadians) as it does for the people of the United Kingdom.

What is it that enables our producers, that has enabled our producers during the past three years, to send their products at greatly increased prices across the ocean for the sustenance and comfort of the people of the United Kingdom and for the purpose of carrying on this war? It is the organised power of the British Empire in the navy—that, and that alone.

What is it that keeps Quebec, Montreal, Halifax, St. John, Victoria and Vancouver from being raided by enemy cruisers, from seeing women and children murdered in the streets by German shells and saves them from all the horrors and barbarities that even some of the towns of the United Kingdom have suffered?

I say again it is the organised power of the Empire in our navy. Therefore, it is a matter of concern to us, as to the United Kingdom, that we should see to it that the united naval power of this Empire is kept and increased in such measure that the Overseas path shall not be closed to us either in peace or in war.

(21)