

notice. Indeed, there are those today who are ready to assert that symbols and symbolism and the art of heraldry are obsolete, medieval, and meaningless. Such is far from being the case. I stand here before you today displaying to full view more than a hundred symbols. They all mean something, or they would not be there. Anyone who understands can tell at a glance who I am and what I have been doing during the past thirty years. To those that do not understand they mean nothing. They mean much to me.

Misuse of a symbol may be very expensive. Observance or neglect of a symbol and what it means may be a matter of life and death. To illustrate: if anyone flies the white ensign at sea from a ship other than one of His Majesty's ships, he will be signalled to stop. His ship will be boarded by an officer of the Royal Navy, his name and address will be taken, he will be summoned to appear in court, and he will be fined £500. There is no redress. That will conclude the episode.

The Union Jack is a symbol. We know the principles for which it stands. It is the national flag of all the peoples who own allegiance to our King. On account of what it stands for, on account of what it has stood for in the past six years and the past three hundred years, it has acquired a prestige that is inviolable, a position that is unassailable.

Within our lifetime a million of our countrymen have gone overseas as crusaders in support of these principles. A hundred thousand have given their lives and have been buried under its folds. If symbolism meant nothing this practice would never have been instituted and would not now be followed. There is another very direct and personal contact. We recently read in the press of a man who was a traitor to this flag of ours. He was shot. Another, guilty of the same offence, was condemned to death last week.

Time and place alter the meaning of symbols. In England, five hundred years ago and today, a white rose almost certainly denotes someone or something related to York—a Royal Family, a Regiment. Seen on a signboard in Canada today it refers probably to gasoline. A red rose similarly, in England, would refer to Lancaster or Lancashire, while in a Canadian shop window today it probably refers to tea.

Of symbols on flags, the CROSS in one form or another, is by far the most popular both on national and personal flags. In heraldry it takes a dozen forms. It originated nearly two thousand years ago, but its preponderance in this field dates from the Crusades. Its significance has not altered with time or place. Its popularity, and its continued use on the flags of some nations which have not always adhered to its principles, may be measured by the fact that within the past twenty-five years it has held a place on the national flags of a dozen nations.

Of other symbols, stars are most popular, occurring on the flags of fourteen or more countries.

Many other symbols might be cited, one of which must be dealt with, the Beaver. When the early explorers pushed westwards across Canada or sought the North West Passage following the lure of The Golden Treasure of the Orient—Champlain had several professional miners with him on his expeditions through Ontario who did not find it—they found the beaver, which for centuries proved to be a gold mine of a different sort. It was a typical and appropriate symbol of Canada at that time. Canada was the Land of the Beaver and the Company of Gentlemen Adventurers trading into Hudson's Bay, which once held sway over much of what is now Canada, has four beavers on its coat of arms. The Canadian Pacific Railway, which was known all over Europe in the early years of this century, used it as a symbol on their timetables. A black beaver was displayed on the flag of New York State during the War of Independence. These facts, and the difficulty any painter or sculptor finds in making the beaver look unlike a rat, may have had something to do with the omission