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Mr. King's Great Address

There are at present very few great speakers among the public men of Canada; none with the pure eloquence of Laurier or the command of metaphor which distinguished Sir George Foster. Mr. Meighen is perhaps the keenest swordsman now. But among all Premier King's contemporaries, there is not one who, in a set speech, rises to such heights of noble thought, nobly expressed, as Mr. King himself achieves.

There are, of course, some people today who consider that such thought has no place in a parliamentary address; that it should consist, on the contrary, of plain facts plainly stated—or, better still, pungently stated—with no idealism, no recognition of the higher aspirations of mankind. The world would be the poorer if political leaders were to be subject to such a limitation. Certainly Mr. King is not. In his speech in parliament on Tuesday of this week he exhibited once more those fine qualities of mind and heart which have so often found expression in his addresses.

Great truths were nobly expressed by the premier when he dealt with the dependence of the dictators upon material power to achieve their ends. He said:

"Material power alone, however, is not an enduring power. Strip domination of its material trappings and there is nothing left. Freedom, truth and justice belong to a different realm. They are not material things capable of being consumed and destroyed; they are of the mind and of the spirit, they belong to the eternal realities. They are attributes of God Himself. In the end they are certain to triumph . . . Domination by a single dictator or group of dictators may last for a time. It may extend its sway and its sweep, but it cannot endure. Freedom, truth and justice crushed to earth will rise again. It is the breath of God which alone gives life to the bodies of men. Freedom, truth and justice, these will endure; for not only do they give life but they continue to give it more abundantly."

Nearly all the great speakers of Canada have drawn upon the wisdom and imagery of the Bible in their finest addresses. Mr. King did so on Tuesday. To win in the present conflict, he said, it is necessary to "put on the whole armor of God." And then:

"Let it never be forgotten that 'we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.' Let us make sure that the helmet is also one of salvation; the sword, one of the spirit; and the shield, one of faith; that our loins are girt about with truth and that our breastplate is one of righteousness, and that our feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

To slay the dragon of Nazi Germany is, said Mr. King, the first duty. But he concluded with the following paragraph, characteristic of one whose interest has always been in the common people:

"In equal measure, however, we must strive throughout the struggle itself, and more than ever when the evil dragon of Naziism is slain, to see that never again, in our own or in any other land, shall the gods of material power, of worldly possessions and of special privilege be permitted to exercise their sway. Never again must we allow any man or any group of men to subjugate by fear and to crush by the power of might the spirit and the lives of honest and humble men."

Thoughts such as these, the thoughts of one who has been consistently humanitarian in his outlook during his long public life, become, in their nobility of expression, part of Canada's rich heritage of parliamentary eloquence.