

*Tributes to Deceased Members*

who had been a member of the present administration since its formation in 1921, and who, for a period of over four years, after the retirement of Hon. Mr. Fielding from public life, held the portfolio of Minister of Finance. For the two years preceding, Mr. Robb had been acting Minister of Finance, owing to the illness of his distinguished predecessor.

When parliament prorogued in the month of June I doubt if any of us believed it would be the last time in which we should see Mr. Robb in his accustomed seat. It was generally recognized that, in his case, the years were beginning to exact their toll, and that his endurance, especially in the last two sessions, was far from what it had been in former years; yet, when on the 11th of November last the country learned of his death, there was almost as much surprise at the announcement that he had completed the three-score years and ten as there was general and genuine sorrow that one so universally trusted and esteemed had passed away.

It is of this universal trust and esteem that I should like to speak. It is that which constitutes the real and abiding tribute to Mr. Robb's memory. It has in it the highest of incentives to us all, and is in the nature of a priceless legacy to the youth of our land.

It is not of vast inheritances or possessions; nor of the favours of fortune by way of exceptional gifts and endowments; nor of great genius, that we think in recalling the circumstances of Mr. Robb's career, and of the place of highest honour in the nation's life to which he attained. Rather is it of the comparatively humble nature of his environment from earliest days, and of the great humility of the man himself.

Mr. Robb represented in this parliament the constituency of Chateauguay-Huntingdon in the Province of Quebec. It was with this constituency, first as Huntingdon, and after 1917, as Chateauguay-Huntingdon, that his entire life was identified. If you search in any biographical work for the details of his life, you will be struck by the simplicity of the narration. He was born on a farm near Huntingdon on August 10, 1859. He had an elementary education at the district school and later on at the little academy nearby. Though deservedly honoured in later life by the degree of Doctor of Laws from one of our leading universities, he was granted none of the advantages of a college or university training. His brief school days over, while still quite young, he went to learn the milling business in the mill of his uncle, at Valleyfield, and on the death of his uncle, carried on a business which flourished considerably in succeeding years. In 1906 he responded to a

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

public petition to become mayor of the city of Valleyfield, which position he held until 1910. During these years he succeeded in putting the finances of the corporation on a sound basis. In 1908 in the Liberal interests he successfully contested the constituency which formerly had had Conservative representation in this parliament. He was equally successful in the five following general elections, as well as in the by-elections of 1921 and 1926. At the time of his death, he had represented the constituency for more than twenty years. It was in the little cemetery at Valleyfield, three days after his death in Toronto on November 11th, that his remains were laid to rest, in the presence of those who had known him from his childhood days, or whom he had known from the days of their own childhood.

There is something very fine in all this. To be born, and after an active life of seventy years, to be buried in the community with which one's private and public interests have been continuously identified, and to be as greatly mourned at the close as one has been greatly trusted throughout, is a testimony to character than which there can be none more emphatic. This testimony is all the more impressive when it is remembered that Mr. Robb, himself of Scotch parentage and an elder of the Presbyterian church, and later of the United Church, was by race and religion, of the minority in the constituency and in the province which he represented in parliament.

That confidence, bred of character, was not confined to the community in which Mr. Robb lived, or to the province of which it is a part. It was to be found in every circle of activity in which he moved. It was strongest in those with whom he was brought into closest touch. It was the secret of his achievement in this parliament, and of the place he held in the regard of his fellow-countrymen. It was that which led to his being selected as the chief whip of his party during its last years in opposition, and to his becoming a minister of the crown. It was that which has given his name, in association with the portfolio of Finance, a place second to none in the roll of the very distinguished men who have held that high office in Canada. Those of us who were his associates in the cabinet knew perhaps better than any others how well-deserved was his reputation for industry, intelligence and integrity, and I perhaps, even more than all others, had reason to know how specially deserved was his reputation for loyalty. A more loyal colleague never breathed, nor a man with a higher sense of honour. James Robb was incapable,