

REVIEW

The Crown

Do we Canadians ever reflect, as we ought, upon the adaptable genius which makes the British Monarchy one of the most extraordinary institutions in the world? I think, not very generally, at least; so perhaps it would not be out of the way to suggest something apropos of this, which might be food for thought.

When we consider how many famous sovereignties have disappeared in our time, some in such a flame of tragedy that the mind is overpowered, we stop and ask, why have others, kingships old and new, passed out of existence—or are for the moment in the custody of self-made, overshadowing Dictators—while the Royal House of Britain and the Empire, more ancient in its derivations than any other Western dynasty, not only survives unshaken, but is rooted in the affections of the people?

Let us remember that this is a position far from that expected by the advanced thinkers of the last generation. Of course, most of us take it very much like Niagara Falls. It is a fact, but does not rouse our interest in physical geography—or whatever science has to do with waterfalls. It is then like other forms of association, Arthur and Lancelot, Bors and Gawain.

The British races, ever tenacious to reconcile the love of the past with the freshness of the future, have always wanted to be free; but at no moment have they desired enough to be republican. The majority of the Round-heads even wanted Oliver to take the crown, and, had he done so, his conciliatory and very English son might have reigned long as Richard the Fourth, and established a dynasty enduring to this day. The Stuarts, more egotistical than national, lost all because they tried to stamp their own impress on the realm. The first Hanoverians were imported for convenience and safety—but with sighs and mutterings. Germans kings were little loved in England.

George the Third was of English tongue, aspect, and manner. He was honest, diligent, virtuous, with no inconsiderable degree of obstinate ability and deluded pride; but none of his time had a more thoroughly German mentality. He discarded the greater Pitt, just as the Ex-

Kaiser dismissed Bismarck. He deserted Frederick, the Great, and started the hostile sentiment of the Prussians against Britain. He tried to buy the control of the House of Commons. He lost America. By refusing Catholic emancipation in Ireland he ruined the Unionist policy of the younger Pitt. He was not a bad man—he was a good man; yet no single person ever did more harm to England and the English race. In American, German, and Irish hostility the English have gone on paying to this day for the limitations and hallucinations of George the Third.

To foreign observers, up to the beginning of the decade before 1789, the abolition of the Monarchy might have on the whole seemed more probable in England than in France. The French Revolution strengthened the Monarchy as a defensive institution. There was a sympathy with the blind, old King and the Princess Charlotte. Yet the Royal Family as a whole was neither respected nor beloved. We are familiar with the contempt for the Royal Family found in the satire and eloquence of the post-Waterloo period.

Then came the Victorian phase. The early years of the Queen's reign did not restore the position nearly so firmly as is supposed. The great Chartist movement was ardently Republican. Men of letters and rising politicians were often theoretical adherents of the same idea, and expected to see it established in practice, long before the present date. The Queen's retirement after her Consort's death did nothing to help the situation, for the public and social offices of the sovereignty fell into chilling disuse. The Heir apparent was associated with scandal and folly, and it was widely whispered that if he ever came to be King, he would be the last King.

In the last twenty years of the 19th century all this very rapidly died out. The Jubilee phase of Victoria's came a legend and an idol. George the Third's granddaughter passed away with the dawn of the 20th century. The moment was a gloomy one for Britain,—embarrassed in South Africa, assailed by vituperative hatred on all sides; while the coming rivalry of Germany on sea and on land already loomed up as the most formidable peril since Napoleon, or, perhaps, Philip. With her passing a wave of doubt and depression swept the country.

But Edward the Seventh opened a new era. He was a great king in a period of national and imperial danger,

and he had the good fortune to be served by a succession of able ministers and servants. He was not an inspirer of foreign policy, as German and French writers for various reasons make out. He was often exacting and mistaken on minor things. But the sure instinct of his patriotism, foreboding the strife to come, caused him to strengthen the hands of Fisher and Haldane, and in his knowledge of foreign rulers, statesmen and diplomats, in the extent to which his Continental appearance dispelled Anglophobia—in his public mastery of the human touch—he was a tower of strength to his people. When he died, the poor of London mourned for him as they had not mourned even for Victoria. His work for better housing and hospitals was not forgotten.

The social Monarchy was now established, externally unchanged. George the Fifth—by far the best beloved of the Georges—came to the throne at a delicate moment: a great constitutional struggle was raging; civil war in Ireland was imminent; labor troubles were worse than before; suffragette outrages were a misery covering England with ridicule. The world said the British are a riven and decadent people. The Balkan war soon broke out. In swift sequence the Great War followed, and shook the earth for more than four years. Would Britain and the British Empire stand or fall under George the Fifth? We know the answer—the end was Victory.

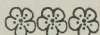
His Majesty has now reigned over us for seventeen all changing years. Since his accession other dynasties have fallen right and left, while still others have been reduced to a cipher. The spirit and working of the whole Empire has been transformed by a principle of increasing freedom. Britain is in sight of full economic recovery. For various reasons which cannot be explained here the Empire is stronger than it ever was. Only the absence of emergency conceals the truth; and our kingship is both the greatest and most popular reigning system in the world. It is so, because the new Social Monarchy is a kingship deliberately devoted to every kind of democratic service, outside and above controversy, because it is a more effectual, pervading, beneficent influence,—a more unchallenged institution than any other form of monarchy can be in a democratic age.

Within the living recollections, the range and status of hereditary sovereignty elsewhere, have narrowed and

shrunk in a manner of which the world knows no parallel. In the last generation there was an emperor in Brazil. A Chinese Republic seemed inconceivable. Till yesterday, the Hohenzollerns, the Hapsburgs and the Romanoffs were mighty dynasties, and held the world's fate in their hands. There is no longer a king in Portugal or Greece. In Italy and Spain, Mussolini and DeRivera have appeared as Mayors of the Palace. Contrast China and Japan—then think of India.

But no story compares with that of our own dynasty. It's story goes back a thousand years to the Guelfs. Centuries further back to the time before the Romans left Britain, the oldest traceable head springs of our Blood Royal were derived from those Celtic princes, leaders of those vigorous invaders from Ireland, who gave Scotland a name.

When we look back on it all and consider the vicissitudes of time, we may consider the position held by the Social Monarchy of Britain under George the Fifth as a miracle of historic vitality.



If instead of a gem or even a flower, we would cast the gift of a noble thought into the heart of a friend, that would be giving as God's angels must give.

—George MacDonald.

Beware of desperate steps; the darkest day,
Live till tomorrow, will have pass'd away.—Cowper.

I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.—Charles Dickens.

Flattery corrupts both the giver and the receiver; and adulation is not of more service to the people than to kings.—Burke.

Beware of flattery, 'tis a weed
Which oft offends the very idol—vice,
Whose shrine it would perfume.—Fenton.