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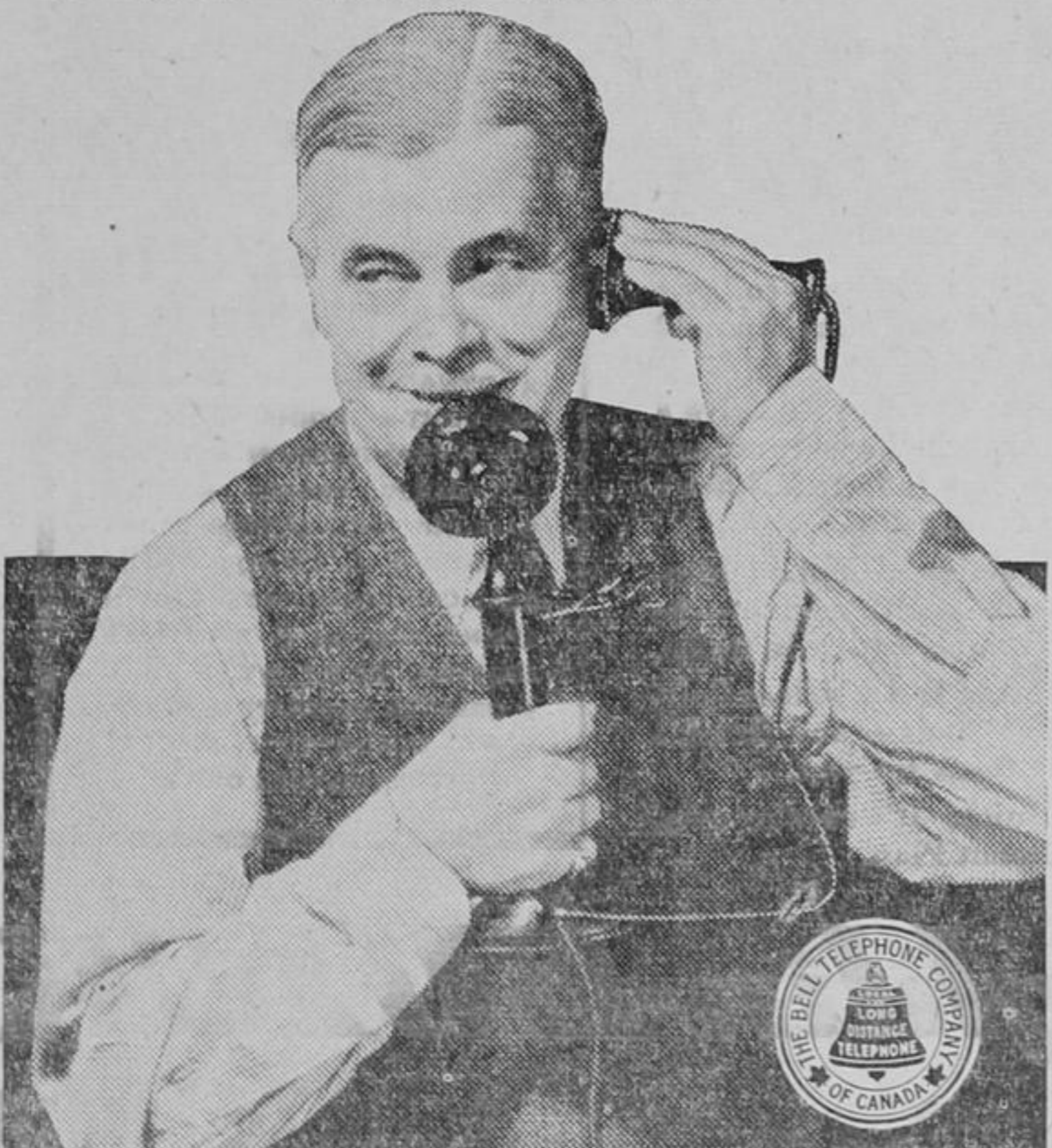
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The Making of a King

A Synoptic Sketch of the Life of King George VI. From The Cradle to The Throne

(By an Author Who Has Been Given Authentic Inside Knowledge)

King George VI is one of a large family. The three eldest children of King George V and Queen Mary were all born within three years, and the Royal nursery could never have been dull, with three such high-spirited children in it. It was on December 14th, 1895, that Prince Albert Frederick Arthur George was born at York Cottage, Sandringham.

Although his later training was strict and severe, his nursery days were happy hours, filled with play amongst little companions of his own age. Until the death of Queen Victoria, which was shortly followed by the departure of the Prince and Princess of Wales for the great Australian Trip, the young Prince spent most of his time in the nursery with his sister and brothers. When, however his parents returned, his education began in earnest. Lessons were taken seriously, but the physical side of training was by no means neglected. Military and other drill had been regular since nursery days—there was dancing class at Marlborough—they were taught swimming and thoroughly coached in all outdoor sports. Team games were not easy to master for the boy who is educated at home, but to meet this deficiency the young Prince was allowed to play football at Sandringham with the village boys, and the other national game, cricket, was played on the Royal Household grounds at Frogmore with teams from Eton and the St. George's, Windsor.

At thirteen years of age Prince Albert was used to life, hard and bracing, perhaps, but sheltered in the almost cloistered seclusion of a Royal home. Then at fourteen came the ordeal of facing the hard life of the Naval Training College at Osborne, and there he was to be an ordinary cadet, with no privileges and no rank other than the rank he earned. Most cadets had had at least the discipline of a preparatory school to prepare them for the ordeal of naval training, but during the next seven years of steady discipline, the Prince was to prove that a public school is not essential in the making of a man.

For two years at Osborne, and two at Dartmouth he studied hard. Into his day's work had to be crowded not only the essentials of a general education, but also physics, electricity, engineering, naval history, navigation, and the elements of Seamanship. He invariably put his back into the work, which he obviously liked, though he himself modestly declares that his name was generally to be found at the bottom of the lists. Nevertheless, the unassuming ways of the cadet made him universally liked and respected. Perhaps because he suffered from what seemed a natural impediment in his speech, which he had to fight strenuously when using certain words—he was quiet and a trifle shy. Yet although he did not speak much he was known for his strong sense of humour, and today his small daughters can testify that their strong, silent "Daddy" is always ready for fun.

In 1912, when just seventeen, he joined his cadet ship, Cumberland. Then after the completion of the Cumberland cruise he was gazetted midshipman and appointed to H.M.S. Collingwood. This was the fateful year of the opening of the war, and soon the young Prince was facing active service. The history of the war was to Prince Albert a history of continual private disappointments. It had only lasted a month when he was hurried home for an operation for appendicitis. Again he joined his ship, to be once more invalided home; then just before the Battle of Jutland he was pronounced fit for active service. It is rare for royalty to be mentioned in dispatches, but the Prince received this honour, and was commended for his coolness and courage during the weary hours under fire. Later the officer in charge of the gun-turret where the Prince was stationed was asked if he could remember anything of interest about the day, but apparently had no tale to tell. Everything had followed its normal course but he added: "I remember Prince Albert made cocoa as usual for me and the gun-crew."

Again ill-health interfered with active service and Prince Albert had to content himself with service at home. Finally he was drafted into the Air Service. Most men after the severe physical strain of his recurring illness, would have been content with an honourable retirement

till cessation of the war, but the Prince thought of no such thing. Instead, he worried the authorities until a suitable job was found for him. It was in July that he was able to obtain his training for a pilot's certificate, and he was appointed a Squadron Leader in August, 1919, in which month he retired from the active list of both the Royal Navy and the R.A.F.

This first year of peace was marked in his career as the beginning of national duties other than military ones. Several times he was called upon to relieve his father and elder brother when their social functions became too heavy for them personally to fulfil. At this time it was decided he should proceed to Cambridge for a short and intensive course of study. The course chosen was not the full regulation one, but rather a selection of special subjects that would be of exceptional value to him in his future career. Thus the Prince took an intensive course of history, economics and physics, subjects for which he had a natural affinity, and which were later to prove of great benefit when he faced the public work to which his life was to be devoted. No member of the Royal Family today has so comprehensive a knowledge of the economic problems of our time as has King George VI. But he has never been content with book-knowledge alone. His natural and healthy instinct is to see for himself the conditions of which he reads. Probably there are few men in England who have followed from start to finish so many processes of manufacture as he has done. Nor has he been content with looking on; he can drive a railway train or a tram-car as well as a professional, and there are few manual jobs that he would fear to undertake. Another problem which interests him is the housing question. He insists upon seeing conditions at first-hand—how the rank and file of his people live when not brushed up and prepared for company. Again, the King had made a serious study of engineering, electricity, and other sciences during his naval career, and now he likes to apply his knowledge to the matter-of-fact everyday affairs of life. Everyone in the Royal Household turns to him for assistance and advice when some problem of wireless crops up. He is a keen radio engineer and has personally constructed many reliable wireless sets, which have sometimes been given to his personal friends and sometimes sent to hospitals and institutions.

While Prince Albert was undergoing his college course, the Prince of Wales was in Canada and Australia for a good deal of the time, with the result that the younger brother had to act as understudy. This necessitated his frequently going up to town, and somewhat interrupted his studies. Nevertheless, he managed to become thoroughly grounded in the ideals of good citizenship, and made an intimate inquiry into such practical matters as housing, welfare of the industrial workers, the relations between capital and labour, and other kindred subjects.

The years that followed were busy ones. His Royal Wedding to Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon in 1923; Official Tours of Ireland, East Africa, Lancashire, South Wales, Yorkshire and the Opening of Parliament House at Canberra, Australia; followed by the serious illness of his father in 1928—his Silver Jubilee in 1935 and subsequent death in 1936. Then came the short reign of his brother, King Edward VIII with his abdication on December 10th of the same year.

Very few days passed without an engagement somewhere and, indeed, glancing over a list of activities during this period, one is astonished at his unflagging energy and widespread interests. Few of the official engagements were spectacular, but the years show a record of quiet service to the nation and the Empire, most of it performed at home. King George VI has not shown quite the same taste for continental travel as his elder brother, although he has covered many thousands of miles within the Empire. At this time too, he had two daughters who, quite apart from his personal feelings, required his presence at home as much as possible.

The enthusiasm with which the accession of King George VI with his Queen was greeted, after a critical and difficult time was proof that the Empire knew them to be worthy of the undertaking.

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