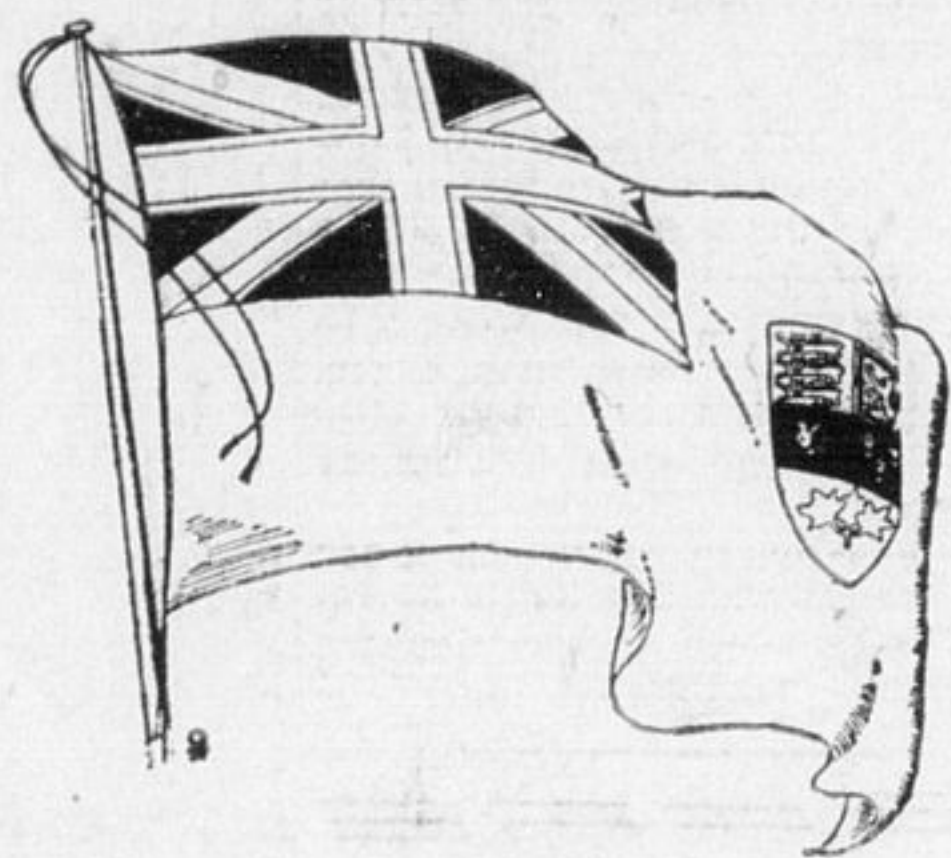


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Ladies and Gentlemen! "The King"

(By Osbert Lumley)

King George VI was born at York Cottage, Sandringham, on December 14, 1895. The long and glorious reign of Queen Victoria was still to last for another five years, but age and increasing infirmity made the Queen less than ever inclined for public appearances or to play her part in State functions. Yet the decade during which the King was born was the grand climax of the Victorian era—a period of unexampled prosperity and of social brilliance never since equalled.

With the Queen living in seclusion, as she had done since the death of the Prince Consort, almost all the social duties of the head of the State had been undertaken by the Prince of Wales and his beautiful Princess, who were afterwards to become King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra. They were surrounded by a brilliant Court circle, and both of them enjoyed to the full the round of gaiety which marked the London season and the princely entertaining in the great country houses, as yet unshorn of any of their splendour, which took place in the autumn.

The part which the parents of the infant Prince played in the life of the country was very different. To their lot fell many ceremonial duties, but their share in the purely social life of the Court was, by comparison, small. Both had simple tastes and both loved home life.

This preference was the outcome of the early life of both. Edward VII, bearing in mind his own rather unhappy childhood and youth, resolved that his children should not be hedged about with all the restrictions that had been imposed on him.

Prince George, his second son, was put into the Navy, and in the Senior Service he found a career dear to his heart. But the death of his elder brother, the Duke of Clarence, in January, 1892, put him second in succession to the throne, and brought to an end his active career in the Navy. But it did not, and could not, change those simple tastes, that love of home life, which are characteristic of the men of the sea.

Equally simple were the tastes of King George VI's mother, afterwards to be Queen Mary. As the daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Teck she was very remote from succession to the throne. Her childhood and youth were passed chiefly at White Lodge, Richmond Park, and her mother, the beloved Princess Mary of Cambridge, gave her an upbringing much the same as that of middle-class children.

King George realized that it was not to the advantage of the Royal Family or of the State that his children should live a life of seclusion. He preferred that they should be brought up much as other young boys and girls are.

Lessons in Youth

Yet, on the other hand, it was necessary that their education should be complete and thorough. There could be no dunces in the Royal Family. History and modern languages were an essential part of their equipment for the tasks that they had to undertake in life, for King George never envisaged for his family anything but a life of service to the State.

But if the Royal children worked hard they also played freely. Their physical development was carefully looked after, and at an early age they began a course of military drill under a sergeant-major of the Coldstream Guards. They learned to ride and to swim; they played football and cricket with the village boys at Sandringham, and King George, one of the best shots in the country and a keen fisherman, gave his sons every opportunity to follow his example.

The education of the Princes went on under the supervision of tutors until 1909, when Prince Albert went to Osborne in preparation for his career in the Navy. King George V insisted that there should be no distinction between his son and the other cadets—no relaxation of discipline; Prince Albert was to share in the rough-and-tumble life which is inevitable among a crowd of high-spirited lads.

After two years at Osborne the Prince went on to Dartmouth, and both at Osborne and Dartmouth he earned golden opinions from the officers and his fellow cadets. He was particularly proficient in boat sailing, and took a keen interest in that part of his work which was concerned with engineering. That interest has continued to this day.

Joining the Navy

Prince Albert passed out of Dartmouth in December, 1912, being then just 17 years old. It was still intended that he should follow a naval career, and early in the following year he joined the cadet training ship Cumberland, a cruiser of 9,000 tons commanded by Captain Aubrey Smith, to complete his course.

Sailing on January 18, 1913, the Cumberland made a cruise of six months' duration, first touching at various ports in the West Indies and then at Canadian ports. In August the Prince was gazetted as Midshipman to the Collingwood, the flagship of Vice-Admiral Sir Stanley Colville commanding the First Battle Squadron. When the war broke out Prince Albert was still serving in the same ship.

In the Air Force

During the war Prince Albert was stricken with appendicitis and though an emergency operation was successful he was a long time before he regained his strength. He refused to accept any preferential treatment in the Navy. Later in the war he transferred to the Air Force arm of the service where his promotion on merit was rapid. When the war ended there were hundreds of young men who hoped to find a career in that service, and with the generous self-sacrifice and consideration for others that has characterized his whole life, Prince Albert stood aside to let others have a chance.

Studied to Fit Himself

"Like so many young men whose

normal career had been interrupted by the Great War, he followed for a time a course of study which would better fit him for his future duties. In October, 1919, he, with his brother Prince Henry, went into residence at Trinity College, Cambridge. It was not the intention of either of them to go through the course that would eventually carry them to a degree, but they undertook an intensive study of those subjects which might be of most use to them. Prince Albert concentrated on history, economics and civics.

"Even then public affairs began to call upon his time. The Prince of Wales was away on an Empire tour, and on many occasions Prince Albert had to leave Cambridge to take part in some ceremonial function. As soon as his Cambridge course was finished Prince Albert came down from the University and took up the heavy duties of public service, which he has since carried out, with untiring devotion, and, fortunately for the Empire, with increasing good health.

"Just after he left the University, King George V created him Duke of York, the title which he had himself borne. On June 23, 1920, Prince Albert took his seat in the House of Lords.

Sympathy with the Workers

The Industrial Welfare Society was founded in April, 1918, and in March, 1919, the Duke of York became its first president. In this office, as in everything else he undertook, his motto was "thorough." As soon as he became president he began an intensive study of industrial conditions in factories and workshops throughout the kingdom. He had a strong human sympathy with the workpeople. He realized that science had done almost as much as legislation to alleviate the terrible conditions that existed for workpeople in the days of the Industrial Revolution; he saw that improved conditions in factories and workshops made not only for a happier and healthier life for the workpeople, but for increased productivity, which must result in greater wealth and prosperity of the nation.

Every movement that contributed to those ends had, therefore, his warm sympathy and practical support, and the provision of playing fields as a memorial to the late King appealed to him strongly. He keenly appreciated the importance of breaking down class barriers, and when he planned the Duke of York's Holiday Camp he arranged that the fortnight's holiday by the sea should be shared by 200 working boys and 200 public school boys. Every year the Duke made a point of spending one or two days at the camp, taking part in the games in the day time and joining in the sing-songs in the evening. The Duke of York's participation in all the fun of the camp was no perfunctory gesture; it was obvious to everyone that he entered into all that went on with whole-hearted enjoyment.

Crowning Happiness

The crowning happiness of the Duke of York's life was his marriage to Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon. She was the daughter of the Earl and Countess of Strathmore, and thus belonged to one of the oldest Scottish families; indeed, the pedigree of both the King and his Consort can be traced back to Robert II of Scotland. Lady Elizabeth had passed most of her childhood at Glamis Castle, the historic family seat in Angus. At the outbreak of war she was only fourteen years of age, but she did all that a girl of her age could to help her mother and sisters in their war work.

The Duke of York met Lady Elizabeth for the first time in 1920. She was an intimate friend of Princess Mary, at whose wedding in 1922 she was a bridesmaid, and thereafter the Duke and Lady Elizabeth met frequently.

On January 16, 1923, King George and Queen Mary announced "with the greatest possible pleasure" the betrothal of the Duke of York and Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, and on February 12 King

George formally declared his consent to the marriage.

Royal Love-Match

The marriage took place in Westminster Abbey on April 26, 1923.

At the end of the honeymoon their Royal Highnesses took up their residence at White Lodge, Richmond Park, but after a time the many duties they were called upon to perform made it essential that they should live in London.

The Duke and Duchess at once began to take their share in all the public duties that fall to the members of the Royal Family; they never spared themselves in any good cause. But soon they were to be called upon for even wider service.

It was always the desire of King George V that his sons should see as much as possible of the Empire, for he himself had visited nearly every part of his Dominions.

Accordingly, in 1924 a tour in East Africa was planned for the Duke and Duchess of York. It was not a state visit, but necessarily in the case of members of the Royal Family, and particularly of two so popular as the Duke and Duchess of York, there must be a round of functions which rob such a tour of much of its holiday character.

The Duke and Duchess of York embarked on the liner Mulbera at Marseilles on December 8, 1924, travelling as ordinary passengers. On December 21 they arrived at Mombasa. On the day of their arrival they were entertained at luncheon by the Governor of Kenya. From Kenya they went on to Uganda and the Sudan, the tour lasting until April 7, when the Royal party reached Khartoum.

This was their first experience of Empire travel, but a task of far greater importance was soon to be undertaken by their Royal Highnesses. When the states of Australia were united in a Commonwealth the building of a new capital to be the seat of the Federal Government was begun at Canberra, in New South Wales. When the new Parliament House was nearing completion the Australian Government expressed to King George V their hope that it would be possible for a member of the Royal Family to open the first Commonwealth Parliament to meet in the new capital, as the King himself had opened the first Parliament of the Commonwealth at Melbourne in 1901. This duty King George assigned to the Duke of York.

Great Empire Tour

On this occasion it was, of course, impossible for the Duke and Duchess of York to travel as ordinary passengers, and the battle-cruiser Renown, which had already taken the Prince of Wales on an Empire tour, was fitted out for the voyage.

The Renown sailed from Portsmouth on January 6, 1927. It had been arranged that the voyage should be made by way of the Panama Canal, and that the Duke and Duchess should visit New Zealand before Australia. The first call was at Las Palmas, where the Duke and Duchess of York made a brief visit ashore. The Renown then continued her voyage across the Atlantic to the West Indies, and a short call was made at Port Royal, Jamaica. A brief visit to Panama City followed before the Renown entered the Panama Canal, and the Duke and Duchess also made a short landing at Fai-o-hae on the Marquesas Islands. At Fiji the Duke and Duchess saw something of native life before the last lap of the voyage to New Zealand began.

Even the voyage had not been a time of complete relaxation for the Duke of York. There were many details of the tour still to be settled, and Lord Cavan was in constant wireless communication with London, New Zealand and Australia. But though even at sea the Duke of York had to devote many hours a day to routine work, he and the Duchess took a full share of the social life of the ship. On such a long voyage it is essential that everyone shall "pull together." The Duke and Duchess of



His Majesty King George VI.

York showed themselves to be perfect shipmates. The Renown reached Auckland on February 22, and came to her moorings in the harbour. The reception that the Duke and Duchess received was tumultuous. Even the heavy rainstorm in which the ship arrived could not quench the enthusiasm of the people.

Right Royal Welcome

Such was the press of steamers, yachts, and even rowing boats which swarmed round the Renown, loaded to their utmost capacity with loyal New Zealanders anxious to welcome their Royal visitors, that it proved impossible to carry through the ordinary procedure of the arrival of a battleship with a member of the Royal Family on board. At last a way was cleared through the thronged harbour for the launch which carried the Duke and Duchess ashore, but on shore their reception was not less tumultuous. Police cordons were broken; the people of Auckland wanted to see the Duke and Duchess; they saw them regardless of police restrictions. They demonstrated their loyalty; they were satisfied, and the Duke and Duchess of York appreciated to the full this great demonstration.

Big Programme

The royal party visited the Bay of Islands, Lake Taupo, and other places. During the visit to New Zealand they were received 53 times by different municipalities, as many addresses were offered and innumerable formal presentations were made. But the Duke and Duchess interspersed the formal with the informal. When they were, so to speak, off duty, they lost no opportunity of coming on contact with the people in their ordinary life.

They talked in the friendliest fashion with all sorts and conditions of men. In spite of the insistent claims on his time the Duke of York never forgot his interest in industrial welfare. What should have been his "off-time" was often devoted to visits to factories which might add something to his knowledge of industrial conditions.

Another exuberant welcome awaited the Duke and Duchess of York at Sydney, where they entered upon the main object of their mission. Some informality had marked their sojourn in New Zealand, but as soon as the Duke of York set foot on Australian soil he became the direct personal representative of the Sovereign and the proceedings became formal. Yet even so opportunities were found, greatly appreciated by the Duke, to show him something of Australian life.

The first really solemn and formal function in which their Royal Highnesses took part was the celebration of Anzac Day on April 25. The Duke and Duchess were then at Melbourne, and they witnessed the most impressive display that has ever taken place in Australia on what is, to the people of the Commonwealth, the most sacred of all war anniversaries. Thirty thousand ex-service men, some of whom had come from remote parts of Australia, filed past a cenotaph erected on the steps of the Parliament House. A short distance

away the Duke stood to take the salute.

From Melbourne the Duke and Duchess went to Adelaide for a brief visit before the culminating moment of their visit to Australia, the opening of the new Parliament House at Canberra. The ceremony was extraordinarily impressive. It was simple, but it was dignified, and the Duke of York in a naval uniform made a worthy representative of the King Emperor.

After the opening of Parliament the Duke and Duchess of York visited Perth before embarking on the Renown at Fremantle for the homeward voyage.

Back in England, the Duke and Duchess resumed that steady round of public service which had been their ever since their marriage. On April 21, 1926, their first daughter, Princess Elizabeth, was born, and on August 21, 1930, a second daughter, Princess Margaret Rose came to share the public affection which her elder sister had already won.

Initiation Into Rulership

It has been customary for the heir apparent to be initiated to some extent into matters of State during the lifetime of the Sovereign. During his reign King Edward VII gave the then Prince of Wales a close insight into politics, and King George V followed the same course with his eldest son, King George VI being the second son, and no such special training. Yet, most fortunately, his personal tastes led him to acquire exactly the sort of knowledge that would be valuable to him in the exalted position to which he was so unexpectedly to be called.

We have already seen that the three subjects in which he elected to specialize at Cambridge were history, economics and civics. He has studied Empire affairs and industrial conditions, and his knowledge of both is wide and deep. He has learned from men as well as from books, and those who have come in contact with him know that he is extraordinarily quick in mastering the essentials of every problem that interests him. His questions are always to the point, the knowledge he has acquired he retains, and he believes in going to the fountain-head—the experts—for information. These are invaluable qualifications for kingship, and in course of time it will be proved that, though King George's training has been different from that which is usual in the case of the heir to the throne, it has not been one whit less valuable. In following his natural bent he has moulded both his mind and character to be those of an ideal monarch.

On December 10, 1936, King Edward VIII abdicated and the Duke of York succeeded him as King George VI. The influences which have moulded the character of the new King-Emperor have already been set forth. Like his father King George V, he has already shown himself to be a sovereign to whom duty is the guiding principle and to whom the welfare of his peoples at home and overseas is the first care.

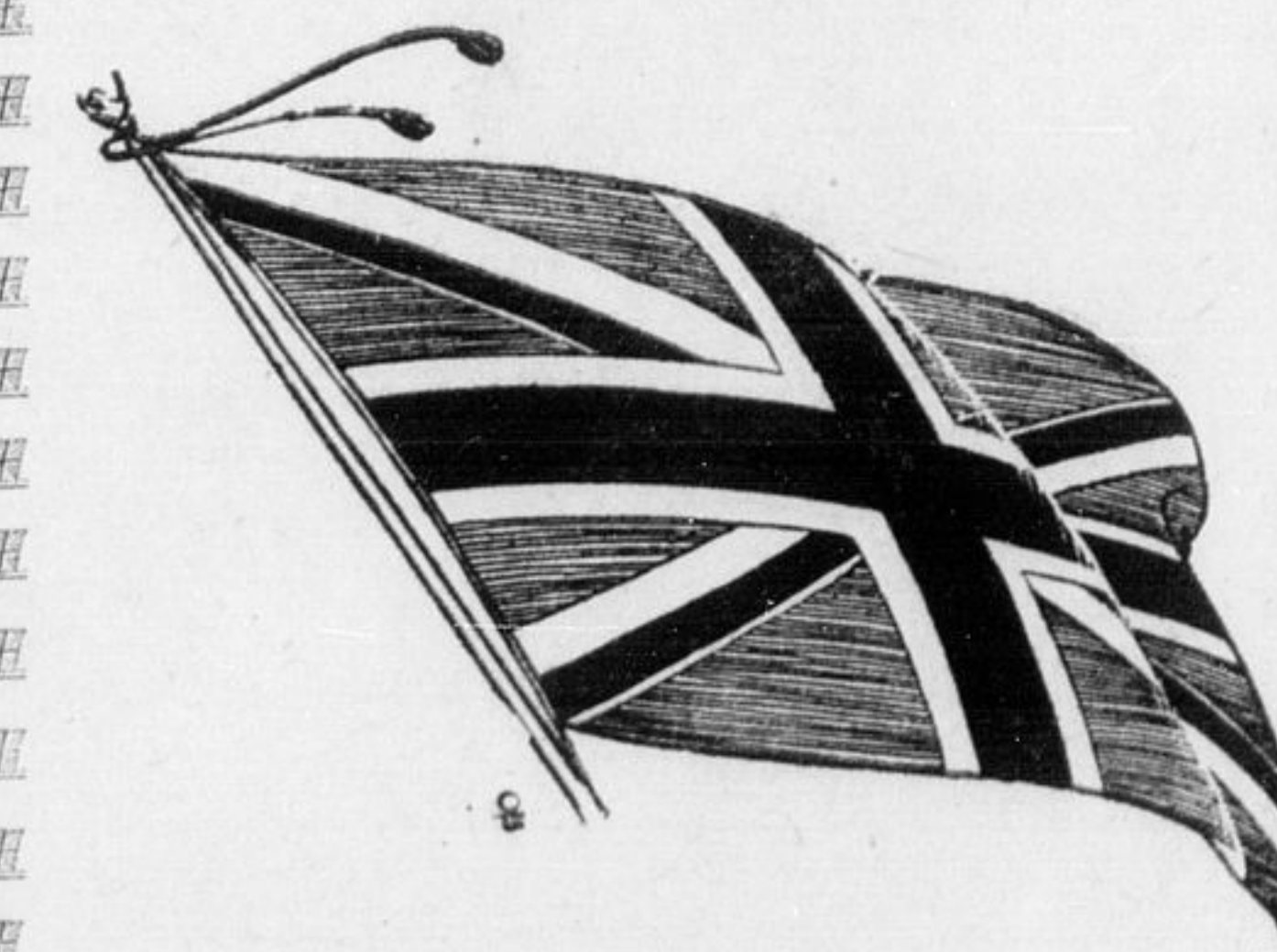


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