

The Biography of His Majesty—KING GEORGE V.—By Major C. F. L. Kipling

REVIVAL OF BRITISH MONARCHY IS ASCRIBED TO LOVE OF NATION FOR STABILITY AND ORDERLINESS
CHAPTER 25.

Empire is great democracy in truest sense, claims royal biographer in revealing study of monarchy versus republicanism - Constitutional government rooted in traditions.
- What Empire owes to its Royal Family.
(The English character demands permanence: for this and other interesting reasons, the official biographer of King George gives credit for the way the British Empire has weathered the gales of periodic republicanism all the while crown after crown throughout Europe has toppled into oblivion, - often the owner's head with it.)

By Major C. F. L. Kipling
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There is something in the English character which demands stability and orderliness in Government, which instinctively avoids extremes. It is one of those traits which are more national than personal, an undecaying setting steadily in a given direction and persisting in spite of tempests and tornadoes on the surface. And that undercurrent, trending so definitely towards monarchy, as the most comprehensive form of a constitutional government.

We have already seen that the English people, as soon as they could be called a people, began to choose their Kings, to put one man into a position of headship, of leadership, by election. This was the standing of the Saxon Kings and it survives, in its essence, in that part of our Coronation service always known as the "Recognition," when the new King is presented to his people as their leader and representative by choice and election, and acclaimed as such.

But then that element of orderliness in the English character went further, and fixed its choice upon a family, a dynasty, sustaining the hereditary principle, as against that which would pick and choose amongst many possible leaders of the State. The King, instead of a King, said the English in effect - and, contradictory as it may seem in face of certain events, they have kept to that principle, almost unflinchingly, throughout all history until now.

We can see that this essentially English trait of character was recognised and understood. If we

glance through the succession of those who have ruled England. Throughout the Saxon period, the plan of hereditary succession was preserved, down to the days of Edward the Confessor, with that brief interlude of the three Danish Kings. And even they claimed the throne as by right, through Thyra, granddaughter of Alfred the Great, who married a Danish King.

Harold, last of the Saxon Kings, was overthrown by William the Norman conqueror - but William was very careful to prove to his new subjects that he had a hereditary right to the crown, though Gisella, the Saxon Princess of the Royal House, who married his ancestor, Rollo, Duke of Normandy.

He declared that his claim was stronger than that of Harold, Earl Godwin's son, and supported that claim by force of arms. But it is significant that he did not attempt to rule only by force: it seemed to him necessary to prove that hereditary right - so as to satisfy that need in his people.

It was the same when Plantagenets succeeded to Normans and the House of Lancaster to that of Plantagenets: each King of the new dynasty took infinite pains to prove his rightful claim to the throne, to the satisfaction of his subjects. Not only that: in the successive wars against France, the English Kings knew better than to try to inspire their soldiers by the desire for conquest only; they took care to establish a definite claim to the throne of France, and to show pedigrees and documents to prove that claim.

Thread always there

Sometimes, it is true, as in the Yorkist and Tudor dynasties, the thread of hereditary succession wore rather thin, and depended upon the marriage only of some Princess of the former line. But the point is that the thread was always there, and that it was considered necessary to satisfy the nation upon that point - to show them that there was order and method in the succession to the throne.

Yet all through these successive dynasties that other English characteristic had definitely shown itself - the demand for a government that should be constitutional, as well as hereditary and monarchical. Kings were to govern, but they were to govern by the will of their people, even in the despotic days of the Middle Ages; the will of one man was not to be imposed on the English. John learnt that at Runnymede, when, scowling, he was forced to put hand and seal to the Great Charter; Edward II and Richard II learnt it, when they carried their wilful petty tyrannies too far and were deposed and murdered.

And the lesson was to be taught again, in a sterner form, when the House of Stuart, still through hereditary right, had succeeded that of Tudor, on the death of the childless Elizabeth.

The Tudors had reigned despotically enough, in a sense, yet they had plainly recognised the people's rights. Elizabeth, in particular, had been too wise and subtle a monarch to do otherwise. She was constant in

reference to the will of her people; she got her way, but she made her subjects feel that it was their way too, and it was a path glorious enough in those golden days.

But the Stuarts brought in a new element. James I flaunted his 'Divine Right' as a King; his son believed in it and acted upon it. But the undercurrent of English spirit was set against any such claim, whatever might appear on the surface. They believed in Kingship and in hereditary kingship, since it stabilised things, and made an orderly succession, without the constant dread of civil war. But to say that hereditary kingship was divine and could not be made void, to say that the English King was not answerable to human authority, and could not be called to account for his actions - all this went dead against the English spirit, when it was set forth in the words and the acts of Charles I - good man and bad King.

That English spirit stirred, showed itself first in the action of Hampden against 'Ship Money', then in the opposition raised against the action of the King when he attempted to arrest the five members of parliament who had resisted his will. King Charles blind to the set of the current, not understanding its trend, took up arms, and King and people were at war. That war ended in the downfall of the theory of Divine Right in that ultimate proof of the power of the people which sent a King to the scaffold at White-hall, and made Oliver Cromwell Protector of the Commonwealth of England.

But once this was accomplished, it is strange to see how the other English characteristics began to work once more. A Commonwealth - something which was virtually a Republic - did not satisfy them for long, in spite of the fact that England prospered in many ways. For a bare seven years it lasted - and then the Restoration, by the will not only of General Monk, but, undoubtedly, of the majority of the people. And it was a restoration of the Stuart dynasty - that is, of the hereditary principle against. There is little doubt that Cromwell would have been willing enough to exchange Protectorship for Kingship, but the English people would have none of it; they choose rather to recall Charles II, son of their King whom they had executed.

Not long afterwards came another test of these principles: when James II fled and was declared to have abdicated his throne, Parliament chose William and Mary to succeed him, to govern by the people's will, but also because Mary was the lawful heir of her father, the late King. In the same way when, on the death of Queen Anne, the final Hanoverian succession began, the English people were satisfied that it was by right - that George I, as great-grandson of James I, stood in the direct line of succession.

Tried and Tested

It is interesting and it is more than that. For it shows something so deeply engrained in the English character that it must needs make for permanence, must needs lead one to suppose that, as the English have

stood and trusts and sympathises with his people, because he has always insisted that they must not be hoodwinked, that they should be told the truth, good or bad; because he stands, and they know that he stands, for a wider comradeship, a stronger spirit of co-operation and helpfulness and the good will which makes such a spirit possible. High or low, in the presence of the King have witnessed to that indescribable feeling, not expressed in fluent words but in sheer personality, that here is a man one can trust - a man one could confide in, who would help one to his uttermost. And a man to

be trusted is a King to be trusted. When one sees a King working always for peace and a better understanding amongst his people, holding himself aloof from party politics, but striving to his uttermost to help and support the government chosen by his people, be the party of that government what it may; when one knows that there is no busier man in this whole Empire than that King, laboring at tasks that must often be irksome and ungenial, as the servant of the public, accomplishing solely for the good of his people what other men do for gain or to secure power or position; when one

realizes the vast number of public engagements which King George and his family fulfil voluntarily and with no apparent weariness - engagements which carry them from one end of the country to the other, which entail an endless repetition of addresses, speeches, handshakings and thanks which must needs become monotonous; when one thinks of all these things and those thousand deeper ties and bonds between the King and his people of shared joys and shared sorrows; it leaves one with a sense of security, a firm belief that the British throne has never been more firmly settled than

it is now, and that there is every reason to suppose that as it stands now, so it will stand, a century hence. (Tomorrow Major Kipling's brilliant biography of His Majesty King George V, which has been appearing exclusively in the (Guardian) will conclude. He writes first and only Life of the King published with permission of the Royal Household, with a searching analysis of what the British throne, mightiest in history, means to America - greatest of republics. It is a chapter no one should miss.)

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Industrial and political crises have shown no real trend towards Republicanism; on the contrary, they have been the means of displaying and consolidating the feeling of the Empire towards the King, in plain and unequivocal terms such as were used by the Dominion Premiers at the last Imperial Conference. More and more, as the post-war shouting and the inevitable turmoil dies down, there has re-emerged that spirit which Tennyson expressed in truthful, if perhaps rather uninspired words -

That sober freedom out of which there springs Our loyal passion for our temperate Kings.

But what must not be forgotten here is the immense extent to which King George and his family have contributed to the continuance of this spirit, how wisely they have understood the trend of the new age and broadened and widened and deepened the whole conception of monarchy in accordance with this new outlook.

A people's King

The British Empire has become a great democracy, with a democratic King at its head. In the truest and most real sense of an often mis-used word. He is a people's King, a people's ruler because he under-

EYES TESTED

AND GLASSES FITTED

E. W. TAYLOR

J. S. TAYLOR

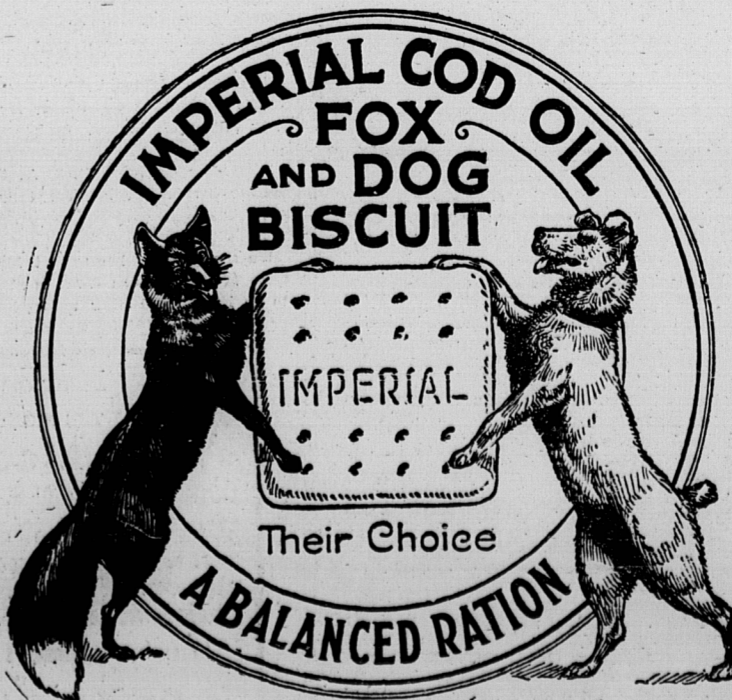
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