

Twenty-Five Years A King

The Story of a Splendid Era

1910 By The Hon. Mrs. Francis Lascelles 1935

(World Copyright) THE WAR YEARS

After four years of continuous strain and anxiety owing to home affairs, the outbreak of the World War in August, 1914, was indeed a severe blow to the King. The suddenness with which it came startled him as much as it did the country. From once the danger of the open situation was realized by the Government, no man in Europe worked more feverishly behind the scenes to avert the threatened calamity than the British Sovereign.

The prestige of King George V was now considerable as a result of his leadership and ability he had shown in his four years' reign. When the Cabinet decided that it was necessary to the King to leave the country, Mr. Asquith drove to Buckingham Palace at half-past one on the morning of the proposed text of the message to the Emperor. The King, absolutely worn out, had gone to bed an hour previously, but at the Premier's request, His Majesty was immediately aroused, and hastily donning a dressing-gown was with Mr. Asquith in a few minutes. It was indeed a dramatic meeting. King and Premier, the two men who were to be the main actors in the drama of the fact and himself received how strange he felt seated beside the grave and anxious-looking King in his informal garb.

Both men knew that the fate of civilization itself might well depend on the events of the next few hours. But true to British tradition, both King and Premier showed outward signs of agitation or excitement as they discussed the suggested telegram and the latest developments in the situation. The message to the Czar was duly sanctioned and dispatched, but by this time nothing could stop the inevitable conflict.

Messages from all parts of the country and the world were now pouring into Buckingham Palace. The King of the Belgians telegraphed personally to the King, pleading for the diplomatic intervention of Great Britain in Belgium, and the President of France while President Poincaré of France was bolder and begged outright for British aid and support without delay. To the latter appeal His Majesty answered that His Government was considering every aspect of the situation.

Some years afterwards the King confided to a friend in Paris that he was obliged to send this non-committal reply as the Government was divided at the time, but the King added, "I was always strongly in favor of indicating clearly that if Germany attacked France, we would unhesitatingly give armed support against the aggressor."

When the invasion of Belgium became an actual fact, Britain's intervention in the great struggle was no longer in doubt, and the 4th of August saw Britain at war. The long-anticipated European conflagration had begun at last. To King George the outbreak of the Great War depressed and distressed him terribly. There were many close ties between the Royal family and Germany, and the King had ascended the Throne in 1910 imbued with the peace-preserving principles of King Edward. "With God's help, there will be no war in my reign," he had remarked to an old friend of his father's after the coronation, and the blow of 1914 was therefore all the more severe.

During the first year of the War the King only slept on an average about six hours a night and sometimes not even that. Important news was conveyed or telephoned to him immediately on receipt and His Majesty made copious and voluminous notes. Life at home at first chafed the King. He wanted to take up the active command of the Fleet and it was with considerable difficulty that he was induced to believe that such a step was not advisable and that there were other important duties in war-time for a British monarch, besides a naval command.

A large volume could be easily filled by even a brief outline of the King's activities at home and at the Front from 1914 to 1918. His life in London was a crowded and frequently a very anxious one. The steadily growing disaffection with the Government's war-policy could not fail to be observed by the King, but the personal attacks on Mr. Asquith in public and private for his alleged "slowness and indecision" annoyed His Majesty, who knew the strong will and capacity for action when required, which was possessed by the Liberal statesman.

Of the intrigues which led to Mr. Asquith's fall from power in 1916, the King, of course, had little or no cognizance, but his letter to the fallen Premier on his resignation, was evidence of His Majesty's high and warm regard for his first Prime Minister. A few months previously on the occasion of the formation of the first Coalition Government, the King had written to Mr. Asquith: "During the last six years you and I have passed through some strenuous and critical times and once again, thank God, we have weathered the storm. . . I wish again to assure you of my complete confidence in my Prime Minister."

Nevertheless, true to his constitutional principles, the King gave the new Premier, Mr. Lloyd George, the fullest possible assistance in every way. Mr. Lloyd George was more of a "showman" if the term may be used, than the academic Asquith, and under the Georgian Premiership the King's public duties greatly increased.

Munition-making was now a vitally essential national industry but unfortunately thousands of workers, especially in the North and in Scotland, were always in a state of chronic unrest owing to grievances regarding their conditions. This unrest was being enthusiastically fanned by agitators and the tiny anti-war party. It was chiefly with a view to counteract this disturbing state of affairs that the King made his extensive tours of the munition areas. Efforts to stop him commencing them were made by one or two influential people who professed to fear danger to the King's life, but His Majesty was adamant.

"I shall see things for myself," declared the King before setting out on his first "munition tour" and he was never violently or blindly anti-German. The campaign indiscriminately carried on against all aliens did not commend itself to the King. "If they are going to ill-treat and lock up everyone with a German name," he said once to a Cabinet minister, "I'm in danger myself."

The official change announced in June 1917, that the British Royal House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha was in future to be designated as the House of Windsor, greatly pleased the country as did the abandonment of all German titles held by British subjects, Royal or otherwise. It was whispered at the time that one or two of the King's relatives with Victorian traditions, strongly opposed the change, but His Majesty has never regretted his decision.

The most English monarch since the Stuarts is a far happier man today with a British name than he ever was with his German one. "My grandmother, I am certain, would never have thought of doing it," the King remarked at the time of the change, "and my father would never have thought of it. I have long thought of it and have done it at last and I am well pleased."

The King's delight the plan proved very successful. Instead of staying at hotels or private residences, with the consequent ceremonies entailed, the King quietly proceeded to his meals or dinner, and after that with a group of his friends or secretaries, returned to his small and modest room. In the summer His Majesty often rose early in the morning and took a walk along the all-ways line or one of the country lanes. Frequently he went alone, and many a milk-rounderman or farm-laborer received a friendly "Good morning" from the solitary walker—but none of them guessed his identity.

The exact locale of the Royal train was naturally in these dangerous days, kept a close secret, and the novelty and the mystery element of the plan did a great deal to stimulate a frequently very tired and strained monarch. The wound, which always touched the sympathetic heart of the King, visits to the hospital at home and in France were experiences which while they never failed to sadden him, His Majesty never shrank. At some of the shattering cases which he saw, the King sometimes broke down completely. When a young lad of eighteen who was not expected to survive the day, saw the King approach his bedside he cried out: "At last, father, you have come!" His Majesty gripped the boy's hand and with a smile on his lips, the youth sunk into a coma from which he never recovered. The actual father arrived before the King left the hospital. At His Majesty's express wish, the bereaved parent was brought to him, and the King had a long talk with him. During these hospital visits, the King revealed as he had never done in public before, his sensitive and warmly human heart. Suffering of any kind never fails to move him and his intense hatred of war and ardent desire for world-peace chiefly springs from the haunting memories of these visits to war hospitals.

"If this is the last war, my boy who died in vain," said a heroic mother to the King, who was sympathizing with her on her loss. "If there is another War, Madam," the King answered, "we do not deserve to have children at all."

When the submarine menace began to alarm the Government, the King insisted on food-cards being issued to himself and each member of the Royal family. No household kept the food regulations so strictly as the Royal one. Waste of every kind was rigorously prevented and during the entire War the King and his family lived on very plain and frugal fare. Alcoholic drinks of any description were banned from the King's table and the only time His Majesty took a little stimulant was during his visits to the Front.

Never for one moment did the King waver in his belief in the food-rations which the Government put on his table. He was never violently or blindly anti-German. The campaign indiscriminately carried on against all aliens did not commend itself to the King. "If they are going to ill-treat and lock up everyone with a German name," he said once to a Cabinet minister, "I'm in danger myself."

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No account of the King's war-time activities would be complete without a reference to his many visits to the Front, and also to the fact that the King's natural desire to see his gallant men on active service was not looked upon with any favor by the authorities at first but the visits proved so successful in every way and had such a tonic effect on the Forces that they were never afterwards discouraged. Apart from the incident when the King was thrown by a rest-horse lent him by Sir Douglas Haig, His Majesty's visits to France were invariably memorable experiences to him. Whether dining or chatting with staff or Field Officers, or conversing with the rank-and-file, the King's presence and cheery personality made a deep and permanent impression everywhere.

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ing was-area tours. Once a shell landed not very far away from where the King was standing and a horse was killed. On another occasion the King saw a German aeroplane dropping a wreath as a tribute to a famous young British aviator who had been killed in the previous day. The King loves to relate the incident when he entered a hut and saw about a dozen "Tommyes" sitting down to a meal. Picking up a dish with its contents, he remarked that it looked very nice soup.

"Yes," said one bright private, "but the trouble is that they are trying to 'kid' us that it is tea!" Next day much better tea was forthcoming to the grateful men. With all due respect to the A.M.Y., it must be said that the King always looked forward more to visiting the Fleet. To step again aboard a battleship and to be among the men whom he understood more than any other class, is one of the King's few happy memories of the War. His Majesty paid several visits to both the Grand Fleet in the North of Scotland and to the second Fleet anchored in the ship dock of the Forth Bridge and they were no mere cursory visits. The King's keen interest in naval strategy and his great knowledge of gunnery astonished some of the younger naval officers, while his kindly concern for the crews was an object lesson to a few over-strict and aloof commanders and captains.

The King invariably looks his best in naval uniform and to see him walking up and down the deck of a ship is to realize that he has been well-named "the Sailor King." Once when he was stepping ashore at the Haves Pier near the Forth Bridge, his foot slipped and he was saved from falling into the water by the arm of a midshipman.

"That is the worst of getting old, my boy," remarked the King as he thanked the lad with a smile. His Majesty sometimes stayed in an Edinburgh hotel during his visits to the Forth and one evening both he and Admiral Beatty walked the length of the pier. The King's interest in the protection of the civilian population, His indifference to his own safety during the raid used to alarm his entourage and he would never take shelter unless he was first satisfied that everybody else was in comparative safety.

It would be interesting to know the exact number of visitors for the King received during the four War years. It would certainly reach a great figure, and only a man of tremendous vitality could have endured it. Colonel House, the well-known American in his diary says: "The more I see of King George the better I like him. He is a good fellow and deserves to be something other than a King," an American compliment which must have greatly pleased the King, if it has read it.

His Majesty's judgment during the War was never at fault. He believed firmly that from 1915 America would eventually enter the War on the side of the Allies and he also foretold that the German sinking of a passenger ship might be the cause of it.

To this day Colonel House remembers vividly a conversation he had with the King at Buckingham Palace during which His Majesty asked him what American would do if the Germans "sank" say, the "Lusitania." This was said one afternoon. In the evening of the same day the news came of the torpedoing of the great liner, off the Irish coast.

Stories of Prince Edward Island

A series of true stories contributed by Island writers in connection with the Story Contest sponsored by the Prince Edward Island Travel Bureau.

Mount Stewart Bear Story

(By Citizen)

Appropos of bear stories your correspondent will, with your consent, give you readers a bear yarn as told by one of our esteemed citizens who was himself one of the actors in the thrilling adventure. We are in a position to assure your readers that the story is substantially correct. We cannot do better than give it in the narrator's own peculiar and inimitable style as follows:

It was in the winter of 1887, I was engaged then setting rabbit snares. I remember I snared about 140 in a wood on the outskirts of the village and within 100 yards of the Episcopal Church. For several mornings I had heard scratching near a huge pine tree that had blown out at the root, and on one occasion I saw large tracks in the snow. I mentioned this to father who said it was only a dog's tracks but I had an idea, although but a boy of 14 years, that such large claw marks could not be made by an ordinary scratcher. Howsoever it was on a Sunday a neighbor boy of prodigious size, known by the sobriquet of "Big Sammer" offered to accompany me to where the snares were to show me some wonderful patient idea he had on rabbit snaring. He always thought in his own mind he knew more than other people. We strolled leisurely to where the snares were and after explaining his theory to me we began to pick gum. "Sammer" climbed up a young spruce tree to get a few choice blocks at the top, and I went out about 40 feet on this old pine tree, which I before mentioned, and having seated myself was taking in the surroundings when to my surprise I heard an ominous scratching at the other end of the log.

I at once crawled to where I heard the noise and I should say "Sammer" there was a nest of squirrels here. When the big fellow heard this he just let himself drop to the ground, moving limbs and bark of the tree from top to bottom as clear as if peeled with a knife.

"When 'Sammer' came and saw how the brush and limbs of trees were placed at the root of the huge pine he at once came to the conclusion it was a den of bears. In the meantime I had crept to a hole which afterwards proved to be for the purpose of leading a trap into the den and putting my ear to it was listening to a peculiar rustling inside. Judge my surprise when I felt the warm breath of the old bear on my cheek and heard the snapping of her jaws inside. "Sammer" who was close by heard the snapping and shouted, "What's that, Jim? Limbs crackin'." "No, by the way," I replied, "but fox traps."

After this it was a race for who would get home first. As I was umping from the tree I could hear the den which fairly made the earth tremble, coming from the old bear to fighting us off.

I have since learned they eat very much if disturbed like an infuriated ram before he charges his victim. At the start the big fellow was ahead striding and floundering in the deep snow and lifting on his mudscoos at every stride junks of snow the size of a gopher under way. I passed him, once I got under way, and going home asked father for my big horse pistol. He had locked it away a few days before on account of my sending a load of "herbtrimmers" whistling through the bottom of a valuable wash-tub rendering it unfit for use. He asked what I was going to do. "Going home and getting my gun," I said. "Sooner said than I was suddenly and unceremoniously taken by the back of the neck and with a dextrous movement of the right foot sent sprawling in the snow outside. Recovering from my surprise I hastened to join "Big Sammer" at the house of his brother who in his time was a famous hunter. We told him our experience but he laughed at the idea of its being bears. Howsoever to make a long story short he told us to take the guns and axe and go ahead and he would follow.

Hot Dog Peer Joins Foreign Legion

Last August Lord Edward Montagu changed his mind about joining the French foreign legion and opened a hot-dog stand instead. Now he has decided on joining the foreign legion, and in the ABOVE picture, his sister, Lady Louise, is bidding him good-bay at Dunkirk.

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MORSE'S BLUENOSE TEA is the great bargain in tea to-day. At 45 cents it has quality equal to that of many brands selling at 50cts.



RUSTICO CONVENT

Honor roll for February. Grade X—1 Edouard Blanchard, 1 Rita Pineau. Grade VIII—1 Evelyne Gallant, 2 Eileen Doucet, 3 Virginia O'Connor. Grade VII—1 Rita Doucet, 2 Rose Anne Dolron. Grade VI—1 Freda Doucet, 2 Hilda Doucet, Yvonne Buote. Grade V—1 Louise Dolron, 2 Corinna Gallant, 3 Norma Doucet. Grade IV—1 Edna Bouin, 2 Aylre Pineau. Grade III—1 Cecile Dulong, Frances Doucet. Grade II—1 Rita Doucet, 2 Gerald Pineau. Grade I—Theresa Doucet, 2 Armand Dulong.

FREDERICTON SCHOOL

Honor Roll for February. Grade X—Absent, 1 Helen Stevenson. Grade VIII—1 Milton Cutcliffe, 2 Euphemia Ross, Absent William Hill. Grade V—1 George Buchanan, 2 Adelmia Cutcliffe, 3 Irene Stevenson. Grade IV—Raymond Weeks, 2 Boyd Weeks and Ruth Ross (equal). Grade III—1 Edwoud Weeks, and Aubrey Buchanan (equal). Grade II Sr.—1 Milly Ross, 2 Stanley Buchanan. Grade II Jr.—1 Ralph Weeks, 2 Mary Buchanan. Grade I (a)—1 Violet Hill. Grade I (b)—1 Olga Weeks, and Grade I (c)—Absent, 1 Erma Stevenson. Perfect attendance. Raymond Weeks and Milton Cutcliffe. Phebe M. Blonden, Teacher.

WHOLE COURT ON FLIGHT

MELBOURNE—Taking Court officials and Crown Prosecutor with them, Judge Wells flew 1,105 miles from Port Darwin to Alice Springs to hold an Assize and try two murder cases.

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SLUM CLEARANCE ON SCHEDULE

SOUTHAMPTON, England — By June 1937, there will not be a slum dweller left here. So satisfactory has been the town's attack on its slum quarters that the five-year plan for rehousing started in 1932 is being carried out to schedule.

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