

The Empire at Home and Abroad

The Home of England's Monarch The Empire They Knew—

Expansion

By CHARLES PILGRIM

Man, if he wished, could make a man of nearly any place—even a well-kept palace. The hotel may afford the better material. In a chilly air of palatial magnificence, the warm intimacy of domestic comfort is likely to be an uneasy stranger.

There is certainly no lack of magnificence in Buckingham Palace, the London home of our Kings for close on a century has known a vast wealth of glittering pageantry. For nearly a hundred years has been the focussing point of every celebration and every historic event affecting Britain and the Empire, while through its gates have passed all the reigning monarchs of modern times and countless world celebrities.

The furniture, fittings, tapestries and pictures in the Palace have been estimated to be worth not a penny less than £4,000,000. There are housed superb specimens of Sevres porcelain, oriental furniture, as well as the three hundred clocks and barometers which comprise the finest collection in the world. Then, there are those individual pieces of furniture, carpets and pictures, which are, indeed, priceless.

When Palace Windows Were Dirty.

Yet, with such an enormous accumulation of treasure, Buckingham Palace has been by no means the most popular of homes with its Royal residents. The building was begun by George IV, on the site of Buckingham House, once the private residence of George III and Queen Charlotte. Queen Victoria was the first of its Royal occupants, as her Consort, Prince Albert, was the first of a succession of monarchs and consorts to tackle the difficult task of making the Palace a fitting home in which to live.

From the time the Prince Consort began the reorganization of his new home the story of Buckingham Palace may be said to be the story of the greatest possible orderliness brought out of chaos. There was an unhappy period, for instance, when domestic confusion was responsible for the fact that the Palace windows would be dirty on the inside but clean on the

outside. This state of things was caused by the lack of co-operation between the two departments delegated to the work of window cleaning. Unfortunately, they seldom agreed to work together. The same muddling way of dividing one household duty would often deprive Queen Victoria of a warm room when she needed it. A dispute between the Lord Chamberlain's and the Lord Steward's staff would result, perhaps, in a laid, but not lighted fire.

Such examples of waste as the order given in 1838 for 200 coloured candles to meet the requirements of one evening's palace entertainment, which was so misconstrued that for ten years afterwards 200 such candles were sent daily to the Palace, could not be found nowadays. Queen Elizabeth is as able a housekeeper as Queen Mary and to-day Buckingham Palace is the most efficiently run home in London, where nothing is wasted and no detail of expenditure overlooked.

Daily Inspection of Pictures

The amazing discretion of the Palace staff—there are several hundreds of men and women servants—is proverbial. The bulk of their work is carried out between the early hours of 4 a.m. and 6 a.m. with the aid of all the most-up-to-date electrical appliances. The same modern methods, many of them introduced by Queen Mary, are used in the huge kitchens, where King George V installed a famous French chef to superintend the daily menus. All orders from the Palace are treble checked to avoid any possible error. There is one man to look after the clocks and barometers and every picture is carefully inspected each day by the Surveyor of the King's Pictures.

The interior of the Palace is cleaned three times every year, when photographs are taken of each room before the furniture is removed. This is to ensure that each picture, rug, chair and whatever it may be shall be put back in exactly its right place.

Altogether the maintenance of the Palace costs about £100,000 a year, money which comes from the King's Privy Purse. To meet these and the expenses involved in any decorative or structural chan-

ges, King George VI, as other monarchs before him, will have to draw upon his personal income.

The Private Apartments

Each sovereign has chosen his private apartments and often in different parts of the Palace. The present King and Queen are occupying the same first floor rooms as were used by King George V and Queen Mary. The famous Chinese Room, originated by Queen Mary, with its green walls, gold chandelier and Chippendale furniture, is their dining room. The three rooms behind this form the King's business apartments.

Once again there are children in the nurseries of Buckingham Palace and on fine days the King can see Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret Rose in the gardens where he, his brothers and sister, played nearly thirty years ago.

In the one-time nursery adjoining, stands the large rocking-horse, dearly loved by the young Duke of Gloucester and the eight-year-old Duke of Kent. Its tail is still loose and legend has it that its hollow body held countless lost treasures.

The Queen has chosen for her boudoir a large, sunny room, overlooking the gardens at the back of the Palace. Two other rooms nearby are reserved for writing and needlework.

Once Scorned—Now Acclaimed

As orderliness and economic organisation within the Palace have arisen out of sheer muddle and waste, so an architecturally pleasing facade has taken the place of a Palace exterior the artistic merits of which were appreciated by few. In 1913, the last of several reconstruction schemes on the original building by John Nash was carried out and the result generally acclaimed a triumph.

Since that time the view of Buckingham Palace, with its most familiar East Front facing the Queen Victoria Memorial and the Mall, has become increasingly the object of popular approval. As a Palace it has now established its right to be admired. As the home of King George VI, his Queen Consort and forbears, it has the strongest claim on the people's affection.

By A Special Correspondent

When the King arrives on his first Empire visit since his accession his thoughts surely will return to the summer of 1913, to the time when as a shy, 17-year-old cadet on the Cumberland, he was the first son of George V to set foot on Canadian soil.

At those dances at Quebec and Montreal, and at the other festivities arranged in his honour, the young Prince Albert began a new phase in his education, the training that was to equip him for the role of Royal Ambassador. He was learning to know at first-hand the people of his father's overseas domains.

Since then, as Duke of York, in the company of the gracious lady who is now Queen Elizabeth, he has toured every part of the Empire. His life has been crowded with memorable incidents in Africa, New Zealand, Australia, in fact wherever the British flag flies, but he will never forget those early experiences in Canada.

Seeing For Himself

Before reaching Canada the Cumberland cruised through the West Indies. The old time flavour of these islands must have laid its spell on the Prince, for when 14 years later His Majesty revisited Jamaica (as the first port of call on his world tour) he slipped away quietly from the officials in order to savour by himself the ancient glories of Port Royal, where Nelson once paced the ramparts. The King has always liked to see and do things for himself.

Immediately after the Canadian visit the Prince was gazetted midshipman and posted to H.M.S. Collingwood, then flagship of the First Battle Squadron. For two months the Collingwood cruised through the Mediterranean, calling at Gibraltar and Malta before staying in Egyptian waters. It was here that the Prince met Lord Kitchener.

The War Intervenes

How little the grim old soldier and the zealous young sailor re-

alised on that peaceful, sunny day by the blue waters of the Nile, the eminence that Fate had in store for each of them! The War, that brought Kitchener home to raise his "contemptible little Army" and to his tragic doom, put an end for a few years to the Empire visits of the future King. Though dogged by ill-health he spent many months on active service with the Fleet and went through the memorable battle of Jutland.

Not until 1924 could His Majesty by this time, Duke of York, resume his series of personal contacts with the people of the Dominions. Appropriately enough, it was the year that witnessed the opening of the Empire Exhibition at Wembley.

Doing Things Together

Eleven eventful years had passed since the Canadian visit. The eager young cadet had become a man. But his enthusiasm to serve the Empire was undiminished. And henceforth the joys and thrills, also the rigours of his travels were to be shared. A year previously he had married Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, who was to accompany him on all his future tours.

The King and Queen believe in doing things together and both obviously enjoy travelling. Their first visit was to Ulster. Then came the big trek through East Africa. A favourite, much-thumbed "picture book" is constantly finding its way from the King's library to his little daughters' nursery. The book which the Princesses find so fascinating is the album containing all the photographs which their parents took during this visit to East Africa and the Sudan. The two little girls have already resolved to see these places for themselves one day.

The King and Queen, too, often spend a reminiscent evening over this album. There are two reasons why the African tour holds a very special place in their memories. Firstly, they both regarded it as their real honeymoon. Secondly, it was the only long holiday the King

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