

THE TRUE SOVEREIGNTY OF SERVICE.

"THOUGH GOD HAS RAISED ME HIGH, YET THIS I COUNT THE GLORY OF MY CROWN; THAT I HAVE REIGNED WITH YOUR LOVE."—

Queen Elizabeth.

"The King's life is moving peacefully to a close." In these words the Bulletin issued from Sandringham House on the evening of January 20th, conveyed to his anxious subjects that the end of the beneficent reign of their beloved King, George V, was near at hand.

Later came the brief official announcement to his grieving people:

"Death came peacefully to the King at 11.55 p.m., in the presence of the Queen, the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York, the Princess Royal and the Duke and Duchess of Kent."

Later the Archbishop of Canterbury described to the nation how King George's unswerving devotion to duty upheld him to the end.

Unswerving Devotion to Duty.

"Twelve hours before his death," the Archbishop said, "sitting very thin and frail in his chair, he held a meeting of his Privy Council. To the Order constituting a Council of State he gave in his old, clear voice the familiar 'Approved.' He was asked whether he wished to sign the Order with his own hand. 'Yes,' he said. 'I have always signed myself.' But his hands could not grasp the pen. For several minutes they moved to and fro across the paper, and then with a most moving act of his old courtesy he turned to his Council and said, 'I am very sorry to keep you waiting so long,' and added, after a pause, 'You see, I cannot concentrate.' For some minutes still the hands renewed their attempts, most gallant and most pathetic, to sign. At last he was content to make a mark, and then, with his old kindly, kingly smile, he bade his Council farewell. It was a scene which we who witnessed it can never forget. It showed that in his last conscious hour he was true to his lifelong fidelity to the claim of duty."

It was this invariable consideration, courtesy and kindness which won for King George the unswerving affection of his subjects from the highest to the humblest.

The Sovereignty of Service.

Preaching in Westminster Abbey on January 26th, the Archbishop of Canterbury said in relation to King George: "I cannot but remember at this moment that 24 years ago at his Coronation, speaking from this place, I tried in a few words to describe the true sovereignty of service. He lived to wield that sovereignty most fully. I am sure that it was in his deep sense of responsibility to God that he found the motive, the support, for his sense of responsibility to the nation, and for his unwearying service."

The Archbishop, in closing, asked of those present two things: The first to recover simplicity of life. "We have need," he said, "to recover those old, strong, sterling virtues to which our nation and every nation has given homage in the homage that was given to King George. In the midst of the whirl of amusements keep a steady rule of duty. In the midst of all temptations to selfishness to get for ourselves all that life may bring to us, keep a place for some disinterested service to others, especially to those to whom life

seems to bring so little; let service come before self. Prove in your own lives what King George proved in his: that simplicity is strength.

"The second thing I would ask of you for his sake is—recover remembrance of God. The haste and hurry and distraction of life infects the soul—we have no time to stop and think, and God is crowded out. Yet it is sternly true that without some inner hold on God within, neither man nor nation can be stable and strong.

Let the steadfast God-fearing King speak to us from the world of eternal truth to which he has passed. O my people, remember, remember the Lord God of your fathers! For us still the struggle wherein his example may quiet us, steady us, and keep us true; for him the eternal rest. As on Tuesday morning I looked for the last time upon the face of my King, my friend, and wondered at the light of beautiful serenity which lay upon it, it seemed to me as if a greeting had already come to him from beyond the veil; 'O man greatly beloved, peace be to thee.'

Love of his People.

Like his great predecessor, Queen Elizabeth, King George possessed in no ordinary degree the love of his people, and we know that he desired it. In the message which he broadcast to them on the Christmas Day before his Silver Jubilee year his Majesty said: "If I may be regarded as in some true sense the head of this great and widespread family, sharing its life and sustained by its affection, this will be a full reward for the long and sometimes anxious labours of my reign."

In the following year the nation and Empire conveyed to him unmistakably how he had won not only the respect and loyalty, but the affection of his great and widespread family. His broadcast message on May 6th, 1935, showed how King George appreciated the wonderful outburst of affection which had enveloped him that day. His Majesty said: "I can only say to you, my very dear people, that the Queen and I thank you from the depths of our hearts for all the loyalty and—may I say?—the love with which this day and always you have surrounded us. I dedicate myself anew to your service for the years that may still be given to me."

Love of his Country.

Another prominent aspect of King George's character was his love of his country.

"This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle . . .

This precious stone set in the silver sea . . .

This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England."

Preaching at St. Paul's the Dean, Dr. W. R. Matthews, said: King George's reign was a period when crisis succeeded crisis with bewildering rapidity. He was called to play a part of unexampled difficulty, where no precedents existed, and he played it greatly. He was never unequal to the task . . . He dedicated himself to the service of the people. He had grace and humility in an eminent degree. The simple pleasures of home and of country life were his. They felt he was the essential Englishman. He set a constant example of simplicity of life amid regal state, and of devotion to the public service. Without any of the arts of popularity or stooping to seek for it, he gained first their respect and then their affection, so that at the end he could speak in the language of a father to his people.

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