

Chapter L

The Reign of Edward the Seventh

IN the year 1900 the example of Canada was copied by Australia. The five states of the island continent together with Tasmania, decided to unite in a Commonwealth, with one united Parliament to deal with all those matters which concern Australia as a whole. Almost the last public service rendered by Queen Victoria was to sign the Commonwealth Act, which came into force on January 1, 1901. Her Majesty presented the first Premier of United Australia with the table, inkstand, and pen which she used on the occasion.

On January 18th the British people were deeply grieved to learn that the queen was ill. Four days later she died, to the great sorrow of all her subjects. The funeral ceremonies which took place on February 2nd were most impressive. In London hundreds of thousands of people in mourning lined the route, and on every face there was the strained, tense look that spoke of heartfelt grief.

The new king, Edward the Seventh, was already well known to his people. During the latter part of his mother's life he had taken her place on many occasions, and had thus prepared himself for the office of king. As Prince of Wales his sturdy British spirit, his love of our national sports, and his hearty good nature made him a favourite with all classes of his future subjects. As king he showed himself so thoroughly at one with his people, so deeply anxious for their welfare, so broad-minded and warm-hearted, that he became by far the most popular man in the land. In every way his beautiful