

A BAPTIST WREATH FOR THE GRAVE OF ENGLAND'S MONARCH

Rev. Mr. Townsend's Eloquent Sermon on the Death of King Edward—An Empire Review of Interest and Value, in Address in Main Street Church

"Because the Lord hath loved His people, He hath made them King over them." II. Chron. 2: 11.

As other religious bodies are today holding memorial services, it seems fitting that we, as Baptists, should have our distinct share in the general mourning. It is true that we have had few, if any, representatives at court; it is true that we have never sought to see ourselves in royal glances; it is true that we have never been given to flattery of the great ones of earth. But it is no less true that we have been among the most law-abiding subjects of the throne; it is no less true that we have been second to none in staunch and steadfast loyalty; it is no less true that we have never been slow to appreciate those blessings of a beneficent rule under which we have lived. We are devoutly grateful for the benefits of peace, of order, and of liberty which have so much promoted our progress as a Christian community.



Rev. C. W. Townsend

Moreover, when death has invaded the royal household there have always been those among us ready suitably to voice the sentiment of sorrow, and the sense of loss. One of the greatest sermons Robert Hall ever preached was on the death of Princess Charlotte—a sermon which takes rank among the classic masterpieces of British oratory.

In Other Bereavements

When the father of our late beloved King died, Charles Hudson Spurgeon, in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, spoke words concerning his character as beautiful as they were appropriate, and expressed in terms tender and delicate sympathy with the queen-in-lace crushing bereavement. And when that queen herself passed away our pulpits brought tributes as sincere, and many of them as eloquent, as any that were laid in her tomb.

We sincerely mourn the unexpected removal of our gracious king, and we desire to pay a mark of profound respect to his memory.

We shall consider him in five relations, and briefly upon each.

1.—In relation to that stage of national development which had been reached when he ascended the throne. The kings in by-gone generations had ruled over a little island kingdom. Only gradually were overseas colonies added, and they had not a very close connection with the seat of power at home. Not only is there a contrast with a distant past, but one still nearer. How different was the empire to which Edward VII succeeded from that nation over which his mother in 1837 was called to sway the sceptre. This is not the occasion to attempt any review of the Victorian era, which was so well done by many who the great queen died. We need only refer to the wonderful expansion of that period to show that her successor opened into a much greater and more glorious heritage than that which fell, as a young queen, to her portion. Within her long reign the advancement was altogether phenomenal. There was development commercial, territorial and imperial. And yet with this expansion a growing cohesion—so that all the scattered dependencies were welded into one vast empire. Conquest here the flag into new climates. Peace had been victorious than war. Exploration opened hitherto unknown lands. Commerce linked Great Britain with the uttermost parts of the world. Emigration carried the children of the old country into distant parts of the earth.

England's colonial domain became vastly extended. And those colonies grew into self-governing nations, standing as queenly daughters around the motherland. We think of India, which from being the half-barbarous scene of a trading company's operations, became the most wonderful and populous dependency of the British crown. We think of the growth and consolidation of Australia, which from being little more than a penal settlement became a greater and brighter Britain. We think of South Africa where British possessions increased from that of a seacoast town until they embraced a vast and varied region. We

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think of ancient Egypt—with all her sturdy spires—and other strange races coming under the protection of the British flag. We think of numerous islands of the sea—separated by watery leagues, yet united by a double bond of sentiment to the power which defends them. We think of this country in which our lot is cast, which from being a loose association of provinces with their little rivalries, attained to the position of a mighty dominion, whose progress has been simply marvellous, and where the threatened disruption has given place to local and imperial union. Thus was Edward called to rule over an Empire unequalled in extent, in power and in population. Very different, too, was the England over which he reigned from England as it appeared when his noble mother first grasped the sceptre. It was transformed during her reign from an almost pastoral country to the greatest manufacturing centre in the world. There was a marvelous growth of industrial power, wealth and population. This led to the springing up of new cities, alive with all the enterprise, energy, and independence which characterize such communities. Happily, too, for with this material advancement there was a gradual amelioration of the conditions of the people. Many abuses were swept away, many reforms effected—reforms material, mental, social and political. Knowledge grew from more to more; education spread. Liberty widened. There were splendid achievements in science, art, literature, philanthropy, and religion. King Edward grew up amid these changing conditions. He was both a witness and a partaker of them. During his progress he visited many of the scenes of such advancements. He presided at the opening of many useful institutions. He was present at the inauguration of many public works. He laid the foundation stones of many noble buildings. He also travelled extensively in new parts of the Empire. Thus he was fitted for the position of ruler over such a far-reaching dominion, and over such a progressive people. He may be said to have been the heir of all previous ages, and he proved himself worthy of his splendid heritage. He brought to it a mingling of dignity and bonhomie. He had a bluff heartiness of appearance, combined with a great courtliness of manner. He was equally at home amid the splendors of the court, and the simplicity of rural life. He was at once a great king and an unaffected country gentleman.

His mental endowments were good. He had not the highest powers of imagination or speculation; but what is far better and safer for a king, he was gifted with strong servicable intellect of the practical sort, which is typical of our race, and which has made it so prevailing and predominant. He had a marvelous memory, a keen faculty of observation, a shrewd judgment, and a ready adaptability. He seemed to do the right thing in the right way, at the right time. He had a kindly heart. He felt for and with his people. We do not think of him as some heroic figure far above ordinary mortals; but, what is more desirable, as one of his subjects: sharing in their joys and sorrows, and ever ready to aid them in their hours of need. We cannot forget his love of peace. Of the great powers that he engaged in, he was known as "Edward the Peacemaker." Probably such a designation will pass into history. His love of peace did arise from timidity or pusillanimity; for he had all the dogged courage of his house and race. But the horrors of war and the deadly and devastating strife with them. It is worthy of note that while, when he ascended the throne, the war clouds rolled blackly and heavily above the empire, when he laid down the sceptre the sky was clear, serene and beautiful, and on the far stretching horizon appeared no shape of terror or disaster.

It is well here to remember his spirit of tolerance. While of necessity a member of the state church, he was not a bigot. His subjects outside the pale of the communion. He was even broader and more liberal than many of his contemporaries can never forget that when our great Spurgeon lay sick with his fatal illness, he sent a message of sympathy to his brother-in-law, the Duke of Devonshire, and said that when her son, the Duke of Clarence, lay on his death bed he often spoke of Mr. Spurgeon. Early in his reign King Edward recognized the Salvation Army, gave an audience to its founder and contributed to its funds.

One of the last creations of his reign was the elevation to knighthood of the gifted and redoubtable non-conformist journalist, Robertson Nicol. Last—but not least—among his qualifications we place the wife he made so many years ago of a choice that spoke well both for his eye and heart—a choice that was ratified by his people, who rapturously received the beautiful Danish princess as an object of admiration and affection. The place she won in their hearts she never lost. She is more strongly entrenched there than ever in this hour of her great grief. How near she comes to us as she faces by the dying bed, with tear-stained face, and eyes hungry for a last look of love. And how near the great king comes to us, crossing himself from the stupor of approaching dissolution, he gazes once more, and but for a moment, at that fair

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by whom kings rule and princes decree justice. Both Victoria and Edward were gifts from God. He must be blind, indeed, who cannot see the hand of God in their reigns. Because the Lord loved His people—not only the British people, but His loving people. He made Edward king over them. We see the providence of God in preserving him so long in rearing his young life, and in enabling him to perform his high duties so perfectly. Physicians gave elaborate explanations of the cause of the fatal sickness, and others have intimated that worry over matters of government had much to do with what they regarded as the king's premature death. But lack of secondary causes is the first great cause. It was God's purpose, we cannot but believe that determined this, to us, most sad event. What can it be? He may have taken away our beloved king from the evil to come. He may have removed him to the political elements which were engaged in a conflict all too bitter, might be harmonized beneath the shadow of this national bereavement. It may be that He is teaching us to depend less upon human

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to have much of fitness for his august position. It is true that he bears a name which is not the most highly respected in the annals of British kings. But we hope and believe that he will redeem it from all untoward associations; that he will im-part to it fresh lustre; that he will ex-ert it with glory. We welcome with joyous acclaim his consort, our new queen. We know that she will follow in the beautiful footsteps of her immediate predecessors. She will bring to the court the influence of a strong, pure, sweet and domestic personal-ity. Not only will she have an ennobling effect upon those in high circles, where she moves, she will also set a lofty example to the womanhood of the empire. Honour to our king and queen. May their reign be long and prosperous; may they flourish gloriously; may heaven's richest benediction abide upon them. "The God of Abraham praise, Who reigns enthroned above, Ancient of everlasting days, And God of love Jehovah, great I am! By earth and heaven confessed, We low and bless the sacred name, Forever blest." Finally, we say that the best tribute we can pay our late beloved king is to avow our whole-hearted allegiance to his son and successor. We are thankful that our present king has arrived at a full maturity of years; that he brings a blameless character to the throne and that he seems