

*Death of King George V*

cussions with him of problems affecting the welfare of one-quarter of the world's population were unanimous in the view that he was a constitutional sovereign. By his wide experience, by his great knowledge of men, through the life of his contact with successive ministries, he had been able to achieve so detached a position and so sound a judgment, such great wisdom and sagacity, that his influence was at times decisive in matters of the gravest importance to every part of the world. That I think was exemplified particularly in the formation of what was known as the national government. The historian of even to-day has told us how great that influence was; but that sound constitutional sovereign was never unmindful of the fact that, although one-quarter of the world's population owed allegiance to his throne, there was a wider world than that over which he reigned, and the constant endeavour of King George was to maintain good relations between Great Britain and indeed the British empire and every part of the world, so that the influence of this commonwealth of nations might always be an agency for peace and for the happiness of mankind. That in itself was a great ideal. The accomplishment of it obviously is impossible for human minds or human men, but the effort to achieve it was never lacking.

There was a side of the late king which we must not overlook, and that was his influence on the national character and life, not only through his constant appearances with the queen before the public, but in the observations which from time to time he was pleased to make, not only in the Christmas day broadcasts but also by their example. And what finer example for the poorest or the most humble in the country could there be than that of the family life of King George V? He was a respecter of all the conventions of life, a religious man in the truest and best sense, tolerant of all, knowing that his subjects belonged to many races and professed many faiths. He kept the Sabbath holy. He maintained that regard for conventions that has made, as we all know it to be true, the home and family the keynote of our greatness; for the greatness of this empire, so far as it is reflected from its centre or from its overseas dominions, lies in the fact that its foundations are set in the homes of the people. No work was done on Sunday, the day of rest. Never was he lacking in religious observance wherever he might be, whether it was in the private chapel in a great palace or in the little church in the parish of Sandringham; whenever his health permitted he was there. The force of his example upon his

[Mr. Bennett.]

people and upon the world of good living, of high regard for home and family, I would place as the greatest possible influence that has been exercised by our late king upon the world at large.

There is one word I might say and perhaps I will be forgiven for saying it. The Prime Minister referred to a statement made by the Archbishop of Canterbury. I was privileged to represent this parliament last May, and during the course of conversation the late king used words almost similar to those used by the Archbishop of Canterbury. He said to me that he could not understand why there was manifested such evidences of affectionate regard on the part of the people. He added, "I am a very ordinary man, but I have done my best." Never shall I forget the way in which those words were spoken. Not, "I have done my duty," but "I have done my best." Could anything be finer? Could anything better than that be held up to the youth of this or any other country? Vicissitudes, sorrows, the death of mother, sister, son, illness nigh unto death—all these things had crowded into that busy life—but he had done his best. Perhaps that thought was in the minds of his people when they showed such affection, affection as has never been shown to a mortal king so far as we have record. It was not reverence, or respect, or admiration; it was real love and affection. It was the reward for virtue, courage, dignity, toil, self sacrifice; for, in the words of Kipling, never asking a man to do other than what he himself would do. Was prohibition to be enacted, was the use of spirits to be denied in the kingdom, the king would also follow that course. Were there restrictions upon food, the king must subject himself to them. No sacrifice did he shrink from that his subjects had to bear. With the life of toil and sacrifice he reached the reward that he spoke of in those beautiful words, not in his last Christmas message but in the Christmas message of 1934, when he 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 of well nigh five and twenty years.

Could anything be finer than that? Five and twenty years of toil and then his reward is sharing the life and being sustained by the affection of his subjects. There we might leave it, but something else was said that no man can forget. It was a great author who once said that of the four sweetest words in our language, "home" and "mother" were two. Of the king's devotion to his mother everyone is aware, but who can forget the words that he