

While he attaches less importance to the ceremonial side of royalty than his father used to do, he is adapting himself to the modern conditions of monarchy. He will conduct with elegance of manner a stately court, exchange visits with continental sovereigns, and magnify the importance of the monarchy as the full-jewelled link of a world-wide empire.

Instead of distrusting ministers and repelling eminent men, as the earlier Georges were in the habit of doing, he will welcome the co-operation of his greatest subjects. He may not succeed in rivalling his father as a diplomatist, but as the central figure of a system of social and political order he is not likely to impair the dignity and prestige of the crown.

Apart from the influences of heredity and training, the king has already revealed individuality and force of character. His recent visit to Ashershot, where parades and reviews were dispensed with, and the training of troops as witnessed in detail, was a timely innovation. His special knowledge is brought into use whenever the fleet is inspected. He converts a royal marine spectacle into an object-lesson of efficiency. He has his own ideas about royal functions, and does not hesitate to adopt some of the German Emperor's methods of supervising the fighting services.

The Popularity of the Crown.

This preliminary study of the character and training of the King opens the way for a survey of the political and social prospects of the reign. Monarchy was discredited during the era of the four Georges and William IV; but during the last two reigns there has been a revival of its power and influence, and throughout the Empire there has been a livelier feeling of attachment to the royal family. There is likely to be a gradual expansion of loyalty to the crown during the new Georgian period.

There can be no serious risk of popular reaction against monarchy, if the sovereign be free from prejudice and neutral in politics, and able to work as readily with one Prime Minister as with another. The present King has been suspected of being a Tory at heart, like George III. According to current gossip, he did not conceal his political preferences and antipathies when he was Prince of Wales. There are detailed accounts of his vehement condemnation of the Radical Budget, and his emphatic sympathies with the Lords in their conflict with the Commons. These reports respecting his extreme conservatism are probably swollen notions; but it cannot be denied that he has been an enthusiastic admirer of Mr Joseph Chamberlain, a convinced tariff reformer, and an Imperialist, who regards the strengthening of the bonds between the mother state and the self-governing colonies as the most important work of the future.

So well understood was this political bias that when there was a change of reigns, Radical politicians bluntly conceded that while the Prime Minister might have safely approached King Edward on the subject of guarantees for the creation of hundreds of peers, King George would be likely to refuse them outright.

While the King, as heir to the throne, may have talked like an unprogressive Tory in private houses, his partisanship has unquestionably cooled off since his acceptance of the responsibilities of power.

George V. and His Empire.

George V. seems destined to win unique distinction neither in diplomacy nor in peace-making, but as the first imperialistic sovereign. When he was proclaimed King, he was best known as a travelled prince, who had conducted important functions in nearly all sections of the empire. He now represents, as no other British sovereign has done with equal intelligence and sympathy, the combined loyalty of the allied nations and colonies linked together under the crown.

He has gone about the empire and learned how diverse are its racial and industrial interests, and he has been profoundly impressed with the urgent necessity for binding its members together in indissoluble community of feeling. Having himself commanded warships, he is naturally a "blue-water" champion of a powerful navy. Having visited all the important possessions of the crown, and caught the buoyant spirit of

the empire, he can hardly fail to become a great imperialist king.

The King wrote all the important speeches that he delivered during his travels. Apart from the electric phrase, "Wake up, England!" he has not been credited with any memorable utterance in the long list of functions that he has conducted at Home and abroad. He has laboured, however, as strenuously over his speeches and messages as Queen Victoria used to toil over the revision of diplomatic despatches and other state papers. Beginning with a voice less resonant and penetrating than his father's, and with a halting and timorous manner, he has steadily improved in clearness of enunciation and style of delivery. He might easily have avoided the drudgery, but it has helped him to make a missioner of empire.

The shrewd saying attributed to him that the American colonies might not have been lost if George III had held court in New York, is evidence of the thoughtfulness with which he has studied the problem of the evolution of an empire. It indicates the stress likely to be laid, during his reign, on colonial conferences, Imperial politics, and naval progress.

As the monarch's authority has been increasing with the recognition of the headship of the empire, so must his social prestige be enlarged as the self-governing states are drawn together in loyal confidence. When the widowed queen led a retired life for forty years, transacting business of state so far as possi-

ble without observation, she was out of touch with the social life of the nation. During the latter part of the period there was a garish set revolving about

the Prince of Wales, which was regarded with suspicion and coldness by the well-fashioned aristocracy of the Victorian era.



GEORGE V. INSPECTING THE MIDDLESEX REGIMENT AT LAST YEAR'S MEETING OF THE NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION AT BISLEY.

W. LITTLEJOHN & SON,

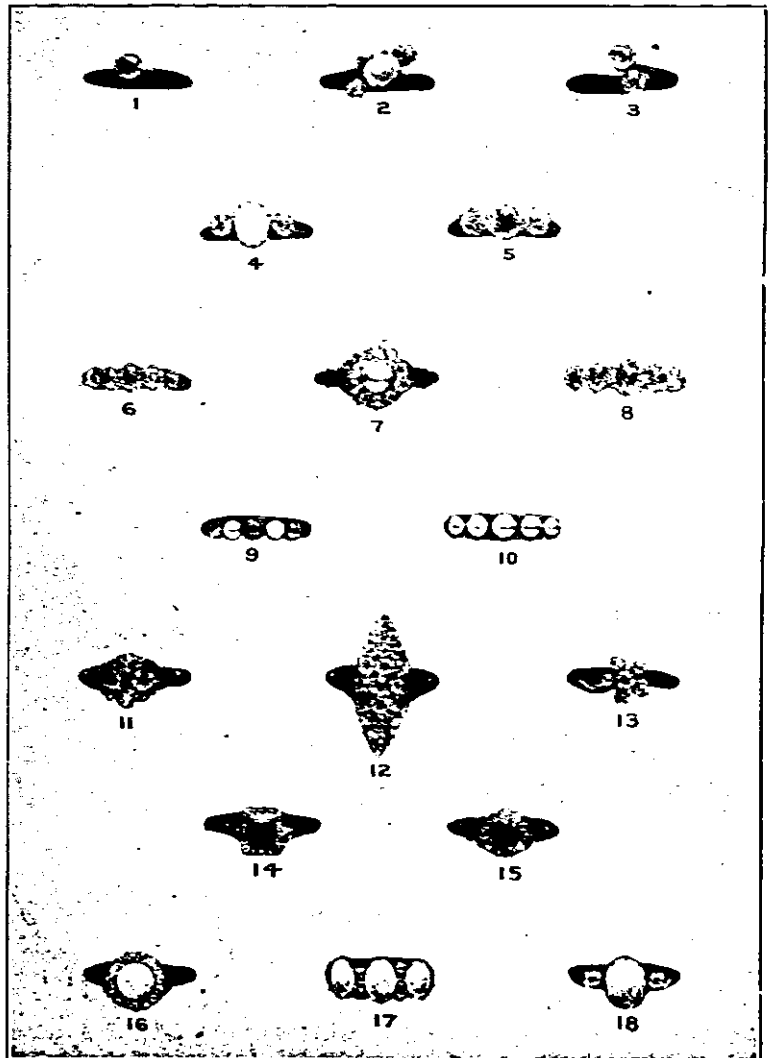
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