

ROYALTY AND COMMONALTY

WHEN the King, accompanied by the Queen and Princess Margaret, visits New Zealand next year it will be the first visit paid to the Dominion by a reigning Sovereign, yet the influence of the Crown is as strong here as it is at Westminster. That influence, and the place of the Monarchy in the political and social life of all British peoples, is discussed briefly in the accompanying article.

IN estimating the relationship between the British Crown and the British Dominions, a foreign observer might note the lapses of time between the foundation of certain colonies and the first visit of their Sovereign. There have been a number of Royal visits to Australia and New Zealand, from the Duke of Edinburgh's in the 'sixties, and these two peoples have seen three British Kings to be, and two Queens, but by 1949 they will have waited 161 and 109 years respectively to receive the Sovereign himself. Our foreign observer may think it a little strange that Australia and New Zealand, so much more British in origins than the other Dominions, and second to none in devotion to the Motherland, should have had to wait so long. He will note that loyalty to the Throne has not been diminished by this, or by distance which is one of its causes.

The Crash of Thrones

If he decides to investigate the whole question of monarchical government, as exercised in Britain and the Empire-Commonwealth, he will find himself picking his way through a maze of ponderables and imponderables. Monarchy is an ancient institution, but it is much less popular in the world than it was. In his famous book on the Constitution—written in 1869 and still the most readable on the subject—Bagehot said "the best reason why monarchy is a strong government is that it is an intel-

ligible government. The mass of mankind understand it, and they hardly anywhere else in the world understand any other." In view of the extent of republican government in the Americas, this was an exaggeration, but it contained a good deal of truth. To-day the position is very different. In seconding an address to King George the Fifth immediately after victory in 1918, Mr. Asquith said: "In the crash of Thrones—the Throne of this country stands unshaken, broad-based upon the people's will." There have been more such

crashes since, but the foundation and fabric of Britain's Throne are even stronger than in 1918.

Why is this? Why do we British at home and overseas prefer a monarchy and seldom if ever question this form of government? Briefly, because a monarchy suits us. It is an institution that traces its line far back into history. It stands for our past and leads us into the future. The King is at once the father and the servant of his people, and the foremost representative of their ideals. It is the same with the President of the United States. A King in America is unthinkable, because the nation was formed in fighting against a monarch, and the President is the embodiment of certain local ideals of political and social freedom. In each case freedom is an integral part of the structure. We say we prefer a King to a President, for various reasons. Some of these, lying in the realms of philosophy, religion, and mysticism, we should find it hard to put into words, but one thing we would say definitely: In our opinion, it works better. At any rate, we like it.

Saving the Monarchy

"We have rebelled against Kings," says John Buchan, "but never against kingship." One king was executed in Britain, and another driven from his throne. The British did not like their one experience without a king—the nearest approach to Fascism in three hundred years of history—and have never shown any widespread desire to repeat it. But people and wise sovereigns have realised that loyalty depends

ultimately on the way the system works. A succession of bad kings could wreck it.

Victoria was not a great woman. She suffered from severe limitations of intellect and sympathy. But she had certain qualities which, combined with circumstances, made her a Great Queen. She restored the Monarchy to its rightful position in the nation, and raised it higher than ever in popular respect and devotion. Britain was sick and tired of the Georges and the Royal Dukes. She may be said to have saved the Monarchy, for the alternative to her was a disreputable and detested prince. "Grave men, not the least given to exaggeration," told George Russell (*Collections and Recollections*) "their profound conviction that, had Ernest Duke of Cumberland succeeded to the Throne on the death of William the Fourth, no earthly power could have averted a revolution."

Even in Victoria's reign, largely as a result of the Queen's long seclusion after her husband's death, republicanism was openly discussed, and the baccarat scandal of the early 'nineties, in which the Prince of Wales was involved, caused Henry Labouchere to predict that there would be a republic in a few years. Victoria's wonderful Indian summer and the growth of interest in the Empire pushed republicanism aside, and "Labby" lived to see the Prince reign as a very popular King. Then came the two most perilous wars in British history. George the Fifth and Queen Mary, George the Sixth and Queen Elizabeth, shared the people's dangers.

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THE KING AND QUEEN, with the Princesses, photographed on the deck of H.M.S. Vanguard while on their way to South Africa. The Vanguard will again be used next year for the Royal tour to Australia and New Zealand.



JOHN BUCHAN

"The Crown's accumulated majesty . . ." " . . . broad based upon the people's will"



H. H. ASQUITH