

FOUR QUEENS HAVE REIGNED

OF the four queens who reigned in England before the Queen Elizabeth who now succeeds to the Crown, three came to the Throne amid uncertainty. Mary Tudor had to overcome a rebellion in favour of Lady Jane Grey. Elizabeth was surrounded by intrigue, and suspected that the report of Mary's death might be another plot against her. William III disliked his successor, Anne, and in the background were the Jacobites. Queen Victoria was the first Queen whose accession was unquestioned and untroubled. The new Queen Elizabeth becomes the head of an Empire-Commonwealth wider than the Empire of 1837, and does so amid universal loyalty and affection.

It may be noted that in 1837 the news was carried to Princess Victoria by horse. In 1834 Sir Robert Peel had hastened home from Italy because of a ministerial crisis, and it has been remarked that he took as long on the journey as did a governor going from Rome to the province of Britain under the Roman Empire. The New Queen Elizabeth received the news by radio telephone, and returned to England by aeroplane. We give below accounts of the accessions of the four previous reigning queens.

Queen Mary (1516)

The fact of Edward the VI's death was temporarily concealed, while a messenger rode in haste to bring Mary into Northumberland's power, on the plea that her dying brother was asking for her. She set out immediately, but the suspicions of a friend had been aroused and he posted to warn her. Mary turned her horse towards Suffolk, and rode, a fugitive princess, to ask hospitality at the house of a stranger. He gave it generously, although enemies were now hot on her trail. Next morning Mary saw the hall that had sheltered her go up in flames, when she looked back from the first rise. At last, the tired little group reached Framlingham, on the borders of Norfolk and Suffolk, where Mary flew her standard and took the title of Queen-Regnant. Lady Jane Grey's proclamation was issued the day after Mary had sent her first despatch to the Priory Council.

From all the countryside around little groups of loyalists came riding in—knights, squires, and their tenants. Presently Mary had a voluntary army, thirteen thousand strong. Six ships of war were seen making for Yarmouth Road, and it was known that they carried siege guns. Greatly daring, Sir Henry Jerningham went boldly out and demanded the surrender of the captains as "rebels to the lawful queen."

"If they are, we will throw them into the sea," came the prompt answer, and the ships surrendered. . .

Mary began her march (on London): erstwhile enemies, seeing the way the wind blew, hastened to meet her, turning the march into a royal progress. There were encounters here and there, and Northumberland lost heart. Queen Jane's nine days' reign was over. Elizabeth rode to meet her sister, and the two went on to the tower together, and Mary issued manifestos beseeching each side to cease reviling the other. . .

"When the Ladye Marye came to take up her residence in the tower, there was

such a discharge of ordnance that the like had not been heard these many years," wrote a citizen of London. (*Her Majesty: the Romance of the Queens of England*, by E. Thornton Cook).

Queen Elizabeth (1558)

QUEEN MARY grew rapidly worse. Elizabeth became more and more circumspect and apparently pliable. It was evident that the Queen was dying, and Hatfield, where Elizabeth was in residence, became crowded with courtiers, only paid attendants remaining with Mary. The girl never forgot this desertion of her sister. Years afterwards she said that the only safety for the Queen was to keep her successor in uncertainty.

At last they brought her word that Mary was dead (November 11, 1558). Elizabeth had lived in a bitter school, and now, so little faith had she in men, that she hesitated to believe, thinking it might be but another plot against her. She asked for proof, and sent Sir Nicholas Throgmorton riding back to London to bring her a certain little black enamel ring from her sister's finger; a ring that had been Philip's gift. (*Her Majesty: the Romance of the Queens of England*, by E. Thornton Cook.)

Queen Anne (1702)

TOWARDS the end of February, 1702, the King (William III) suddenly became really ill. While riding in Hampton Court Home Park he had been thrown from his horse which tripped over a molehill. . . Jacobites rejoiced and toasted "the little gentleman in black velvet" who had caused the fall. . . Anne asked permission to see her brother-in-law; the King answered simply: "No!" The Prince of Denmark (Anne's husband) attempted to enter the Royal Bed Chamber but was repulsed. There was nothing to do but wait. Throughout the



QUEEN VICTORIA

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night of March 7 Anne did wait while messages arrived hourly that the King was sinking. A crowd of people waited silently outside Saint James Palace and were the first to see, at eight o'clock, a coach drive furiously up to the Palace as the first sunny day of the year broke over the city. Lord Essex, the Lord of the Bed Chamber, descended and hurried in to the Queen. He had scarcely gone in when another coach drew up and Bishop Burnet, casting ecclesiastical dignity aside, jumped out and tore through the entrances after him. There was silence for a while, then came the toll of a single bell; a hundred bells followed on, taking up the slow, deep tone. There was murmuring and scuffling in the crowd. The King was dead. The Queen reigned. (*Anne Stuart, Queen of England*, by Beatrice Curtis Brown.)

Queen Victoria (1837)

ON Tuesday, June 20, 1837, at twelve minutes past two in the morning, King William the IV died at Windsor Castle. Hawley, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had performed the last religious rites at the bedside of the dying monarch, at once took leave of Queen

Adelaide, and with Lord Conyngham, the Lord Chamberlain, rode through the early morning to Kensington to break the news to the new sovereign. The distinguished messengers arrived there before 5 a.m. and found difficulty in obtaining admission. The porter refused to arouse the Princess Victoria. At length the Baroness Lehzen was sent for and she reluctantly agreed to warn the Princess of their presence. The girl came into the room with a shawl thrown over her dressing-gown, her feet in slippers and her hair falling down her back. Lord Conyngham dropped on his knee, saluted her as Queen, and kissed the hand she held towards him. The Archbishop did alike, addressing to her "a sort of pastoral charge." At the same time she was informed of the King's peaceful end. (*Queen Victoria*, by Sidney Lee.)

"I got out of bed and went into my sitting-room (only in my dressing-gown) and alone saw them, and they acquainted me that my poor uncle the King was no more . . . and consequently I am Queen . . . Since it has pleased Providence to place me in this estate I shall do my utmost to fulfil my duty towards my country . . ." (*Queen Victoria's Diary*)