

VII

THE FUTURE OF MONARCHY

From the very outset of this war it was manifest to the clear-headed observer that only the complete victory of German imperialism could save the dynastic system in Europe from the fate that it had challenged. That curious system had been the natural and unplanned development of the political complications of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Two systems of monarchies, the Bourbon system and the German, then ruled Europe between them. With the latter was associated the tradition of the European unity under the Roman empire; all the Germanic monarchs had an itch to be called Caesar. The Kaiser of the Austro-Hungarian empire and the Czar had, so to speak, the prior claim to the title. The Prussian king set up as a Caesar in 1871; Queen Victoria became the Caesar of India (Kaisir-i-Hind) under the auspices of Lord Beaconsfield, and last and not least, that most detestable of all Coburgers, Ferdinand of Bulgaria, gave Kaiserism a touch of quaint absurdity by setting up as Czar of Bulgaria. The weakening of the Bourbon system by the French revolution and the Napoleonic adventure cleared the way for the complete ascendancy of the Germanic monarchies in spite of the breaking away of the United States from that system.

After 1871, a constellation of quasi-divine Teutonic monarchs, of which the German Emperor, the German Queen Victoria, the German Czar, were the greatest stars, formed a caste apart, intermarried only among

themselves, dominated the world and was regarded with a mystical awe by the ignorant and foolish in most European countries. The marriages, the funerals, the coronations, the obsequies of this amazing breed of idols were matters of almost universal worship. The Czar and Queen Victoria professed also to be the heads of religion upon earth. The court-centered diplomacies of the more firmly rooted monarchies steered all the great liberating movements of the nineteenth century into monarchical channels. Italy was made a monarchy; Greece, the motherland of republics, was handed over to a needy scion of the Danish royal family; the sturdy peasants of Bulgaria suffered from a kindred imposition. Even Norway was saddled with as much of a king as it would stand, as a condition of its independence. At the dawn of the twentieth century republican freedom seemed a remote dream beyond the confines of Switzerland and France--and it had no very secure air in France. Reactionary scheming has been an intermittent fever in the French republic for six and forty years. The French foreign office is still undemocratic in tradition and temper. But for the restless disloyalty of the Hohenzollerns this German kingly caste might be dominating the world to this day.

Of course the stability of this Teutonic dynastic system in Europe--which will presently seem to the student of history so curious a halting-place upon the way to human unity--rested very largely upon the maintenance of peace. It was the failure to understand this on the part of the German and Bulgarian rulers in particular that has now brought all monarchy to the question. The implicit theory that supported the intermarrying German royal families in Europe was that their

inter-relationship and their aloofness from their subjects was a mitigation of national and racial animosities. In the days when Queen Victoria was the grandmother of Europe this was a plausible argument. King, Czar and Emperor, or Emperor and Emperor would meet, and it was understood that these meetings were the lubrication of European affairs. The monarchs married largely, conspicuously, and very expensively for our good. Royal funerals, marriages, christenings, coronations, and jubilees interrupted traffic and stimulated trade everywhere. They seemed to give a *raison d'être* for mankind. It is the Emperor William and the Czar Ferdinand who have betrayed not only humanity but their own strange caste by shattering all these pleasant illusions. The wisdom of Kant is justified, and we know now that kings cause wars. It needed the shock of the great war to bring home the wisdom of that old Scotchman of Königsberg to the mind of the ordinary man. Moreover in support of the dynastic system was the fact that it did exist as the system in possession, and all prosperous and intelligent people are chary of disturbing existing things. Life is full of vestigial structures, and it is a long way to logical perfection. Let us keep on, they would argue, with what we have. And another idea which, rightly or wrongly, made men patient with the emperors and kings was an exaggerated idea of the insecurity of republican institutions.

You can still hear very old dull men say gravely that "kings are better than pronunciamientos"; there was an article upon Greece to this effect quite recently in that uncertain paper *The New Statesman*. Then a kind of illustrative gesture would be made to the South American republics, although the internal disturbances of the South American republics have

diminished to very small dimensions in the last three decades and although pronunciamentos rarely disturb the traffic in Switzerland, the United States, or France. But there can be no doubt that the influence of the Germanic monarchy up to the death of Queen Victoria upon British thought was in the direction of estrangement from the two great modern republics and in the direction of assistance and propitiation to Germany. We surrendered Heligoland, we made great concessions to German colonial ambitions, we allowed ourselves to be jockeyed into a phase of dangerous hostility to France. A practice of sneering at things American has died only very recently out of English journalism and literature, as any one who cares to consult the bound magazines of the 'seventies and 'eighties may soon see for himself. It is well too in these days not to forget Colonel Marchand, if only to remember that such a clash must never recur. But in justice to our monarchy we must remember that after the death of Queen Victoria, the spirit, if not the forms, of British kingship was greatly modified by the exceptional character and ability of King Edward VII. He was curiously anti-German in spirit; he had essentially democratic instincts; in a few precious years he restored good will between France and Great Britain. It is no slight upon his successor to doubt whether any one could have handled the present opportunities and risks of monarchy in Great Britain as Edward could have handled them.

Because no doubt if monarchy is to survive in the British Empire it must speedily undergo the profoundest modification. The old state of affairs cannot continue. The European dynastic system, based upon the intermarriage of a group of mainly German royal families, is dead

to-day; it is freshly dead, but it is as dead as the rule of the Incas. It is idle to close our eyes to this fact. The revolution in Russia, the setting up of a republic in China, demonstrating the ripeness of the East for free institutions, the entry of the American republics into world politics--these things slam the door on any idea of working back to the old nineteenth-century system. People calls to people. "No peace with the Hohenzollerns" is a cry that carries with it the final repudiation of emperors and kings. The man in the street will assure you he wants no diplomatic peace. Beyond the unstable shapes of the present the political forms of the future rise now so clearly that they are the common talk of men. Kant's lucid thought told us long ago that the peace of the world demanded a world union of republics. That is a commonplace remark now in every civilized community.

The stars in their courses, the logic of circumstances, the everyday needs and everyday intelligence of men, all these things march irresistibly towards a permanent world peace based on democratic republicanism. The question of the future of monarchy is not whether it will be able to resist and overcome that trend; it has as little chance of doing that as the Lama of Thibet has of becoming Emperor of the Earth. It is whether it will resist openly, become the centre and symbol of a reactionary resistance, and have to be abolished and swept away altogether everywhere, as the Romanoffs have already been swept away in Russia, or whether it will be able in this country and that to adapt itself to the necessities of the great age that dawns upon mankind, to take a generous and helpful attitude towards its own modification, and so survive, for a time at any rate, in that larger air.

It is the fashion for the apologists of monarchy in the British Empire to speak of the British system as a crowned republic. That is an attractive phrase to people of republican sentiments. It is quite conceivable that the British Empire may be able to make that phrase a reality and that the royal line may continue, a line of hereditary presidents, with some of the ancient trappings and something of the picturesque prestige that, as the oldest monarchy in Europe, it has to-day. Two kings in Europe have already gone far towards realizing this conception of a life president; both the King of Italy and the King of Norway live as simply as if they were in the White House and are far more accessible. Along that line the British monarchy must go if it is not to go altogether. Will it go along those lines?

There are many reasons for hoping that it will do so. The Times has styled the crown the "golden link" of the empire. Australians and Canadians, it was argued, had little love for the motherland but the greatest devotion to the sovereign, and still truer was this of Indians, Egyptians, and the like. It might be easy to press this theory of devotion too far, but there can be little doubt that the British Crown does at present stand as a symbol of unity over diversity such as no other crown, unless it be that of Austria-Hungary, can be said to do. The British crown is not like other crowns; it may conceivably take a line of its own and emerge--possibly a little more like a hat and a little less like a crown--from trials that may destroy every other monarchial system in the world.

Now many things are going on behind the scenes, many little indications peep out upon the speculative watcher and vanish again; but there is very little that is definite to go upon at the present time to determine how far the monarchy will rise to the needs of this great occasion. Certain acts and changes, the initiative to which would come most gracefully from royalty itself, could be done at this present time. They may be done quite soon. Upon the doing of them wait great masses of public opinion. The first of these things is for the British monarchy to sever itself definitely from the German dynastic system, with which it is so fatally entangled by marriage and descent, and to make its intention of becoming henceforth more and more British in blood as well as spirit, unmistakably plain. This idea has been put forth quite prominently in the Times. The king has been asked to give his countenance to the sweeping away of all those restrictions first set up by George the Third, upon the marriage of the Royal Princes with British, French and American subjects. The British Empire is very near the limit of its endurance of a kingly caste of Germans. The choice of British royalty between its peoples and its cousins cannot be indefinitely delayed. Were it made now publicly and boldly, there can be no doubt that the decision would mean a renaissance of monarchy, a considerable outbreak of royalist enthusiasm in the Empire. There are times when a king or queen must need be dramatic and must a little anticipate occasions. It is not seemly to make concessions perforce; kings may not make obviously unwilling surrenders; it is the indecisive kings who lose their crowns.

No doubt the Anglicization of the royal family by national marriages

would gradually merge that family into the general body of the British peerage. Its consequent loss of distinction might be accompanied by an associated fading out of function, until the King became at last hardly more functional than was the late Duke of Norfolk as premier peer. Possibly that is the most desirable course from many points of view.

It must be admitted that the abandonment of marriages within the royal caste and a bold attempt to introduce a strain of British blood in the royal family does not in itself fulfil all that is needed if the British king is indeed to become the crowned president of his people and the nominal and accepted leader of the movement towards republican institutions. A thing that is productive of an enormous amount of republican talk in Great Britain is the suspicion--I believe an ill-founded suspicion--that there are influences at work at court antagonistic to republican institutions in friendly states and that there is a disposition even to sacrifice the interests of the liberal allies to dynastic sympathies. These things are not to be believed, but it would be a feat of vast impressiveness if there were something like a royal and public repudiation of the weaknesses of cousinship. The behaviour of the Allies towards that great Balkan statesman Venizelos, the sacrificing of the friendly Greek republicans in favour of the manifestly treacherous King of Greece, has produced the deepest shame and disgust in many quarters that are altogether friendly, that are even warmly "loyal" to the British monarchy.

And in a phase of tottering thrones it is very undesirable that the British habit of asylum should be abused. We have already in England the

dethroned monarch of a friendly republic; he is no doubt duly looked after. In the future there may be a shaking of the autumnal boughs and a shower of emperors and kings. We do not want Great Britain to become a hotbed of reactionary plotting and the starting-point of restoration raids into the territories of emancipated peoples. This is particularly desirable if presently, after the Kaiser's death--which by all the statistics of Hohenzollern mortality cannot be delayed now for many years--the present Crown Prince goes a-wandering. We do not want any German ex-monarchs; Sweden is always open to them and friendly, and to Sweden they ought to go; and particularly do British people dread an irruption of Hohenzollerns or Coburgers. Almost as undesirable would be the arrival of the Czar and Czarina. It is supremely important that no wind of suspicion should blow between us and the freedom of Russia. After the war even more than during the war will the enemy be anxious to sow discord between the great Russian-speaking and English-speaking democracies. Quite apart from the scandal of their inelegant domesticities, the establishment of the Czar and Czarina in England with frequent and easy access to our royal family may be extraordinarily unfortunate for the British monarchy. I will confess a certain sympathy for the Czar myself. He is not an evil figure, he is not a strong figure, but he has that sort of weakness, that failure in decision, which trails revolution in its wake. He has ended one dynasty already. The British royal family owes it to itself, that he bring not the infection of his misfortunes to Windsor.

The security of the British monarchy lies in such a courageous severance of its destinies from the Teutonic dynastic system. Will it make that

severance? There I share an almost universal ignorance. The loyalty of the British is not to what kings are too prone to call "my person," not to a chosen and admired family, but to a nascent mankind. We have fought in this war for Belgium, for France, for general freedom, for civilization and the whole future of mankind, far more than for ourselves. We have not fought for a king. We are discovering in that spirit of human unity that lies below the idea of a League of Free Nations the real invisible king of our heart and race. But we will very gladly go on with our task under a nominal king unless he hampers us in the task that grows ever more plainly before us. ... That, I think, is a fair statement of British public opinion on this question. But every day when I am in London I walk past Buckingham Palace to lunch at my club, and I look at that not very expressive façade and wonder--and we all wonder--what thoughts are going on behind it and what acts are being conceived there. Out of it there might yet come some gesture of acceptance magnificent enough to set beside President Wilson's magnificent declaration of war. ...

These are things in the scales of fate. I will not pretend to be able to guess even which way the scales will swing.