ALBERT THE BRAVE:

KING OF THE BELGIANS

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ALBERT KING OF THE BELGIANS

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"A FINE MAN, A GREAT KING, A NOBLE CITIZEN"
(The Prime Minister in the House of Commons).

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ALBERT THE BRAVE:

KING OF THE BELGIANS

Submitted to and read by the Adjutant to the Chief of the late King's Cabinet in Belgium, to which have been added two chapters giving a description of the King's tragic death

Revised Edition

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KING OF THE BELGIANS

CHAPTER I

A PEN-PORTRAIT OF KING ALBERT

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IN Brussels you may often have seen in one of the main thoroughfares a tall soldierly figure, with chestnut-brown hair tinged with grey at the temples, a face with the calmness that betokened quiet strength of character, and eyes that revealed human kindliness. If it were winter, this striking figure would be garbed in a long dark ulster ; in summer he wore the lightest of grey flannel suits and a panama hat. Weighted with half a dozen books, raising his hat in response to the respectful greetings of passers-by, stopping to talk to a ragged street vendor, or smiling at children playing in the gutter, the late King Albert of the Belgians walked through the streets of his capital. Just as the searchlight reveals many hidden though familiar objects with a new beauty, so in the Great War European Sovereigns and statesmen were subjected to a world-wide scrutiny that made or marred their reputations. Among them all it is fair to claim that the late King of the Belgians secured imperishable fame.

One of *Punch's* most impressive cartoons, issued in the early months of the conflict, depicted the Kaiser and King Albert standing together surveying the ruined cities of Belgium, lands laid waste, peaceful country-side desolate and shell-riddled, refugees fleeing from the destruction that threatened their very lives. Beneath the cartoon (which is now a prized possession of the King) were these words :

THE KAISER : "You see, you've lost everything."
KING ALBERT : "Not my soul !"

Behind all the dauntless determination with which he inspired his subjects in the awful days of trial, King Albert's faith shone with quiet confidence. And until the date of his tragic death he was equally sure of the renaissance of Belgium, and equally inspiring in his leadership.

What were his chief characteristics? First and foremost an eagerness for information as to new movements and ideas that were likely to benefit his nation. A black-and-white artist once drew his portrait with the title of "A Human Question Mark." When he was Crown Prince he visited the United States in 1898, and was not content to study railways from the comfortable position of a luxurious saloon. He insisted on driving a great locomotive from New York to St. Louis, clad in the overalls of an engine-driver. Speaking of the incident, he said:

"It was the greatest thrill of my life. If I was not destined to be a king I would, like the proverbial small boy, be an engine-driver!"

Americans forgot his Royal rank, as he meant them to forget, and recognized in him a "live wire," who was keen to learn all that he could of America's industries and recreations. The great Universities interested him no less than the vast factories, and he caught the infectious enthusiasm of baseball and lawn-tennis matches.

Ten years later he went to Ireland incognito as "Mr. Albert Coburg," so that he might see for himself the famous shipbuilding yards of Belfast and the linen factories. He had realized that while Belgium possessed a fine overseas trade and the second largest port in Europe, its merchandise was carried in British ships. Germans, too, were acquiring a portentous control over Antwerp and its trade. So there was a paramount necessity for Belgium to establish its own merchant marine service. Accordingly, the Prince obtained first-hand facts as to shipping while ostensibly acting as a reporter on the staff of a Belgian journal. He followed up this visit with incognito residence at Glasgow and Liverpool. It is possible that Peter the Great's similar inquisitiveness had its influence on the Prince.

When he was in London, he preferred to stay in a private hotel in the Adelphi rather than at the Belgian Embassy. That fact reveals another sidelight on his character. A true democrat, he always sought to mingle on even terms with his fellow-men at home and abroad. Impatience with the stately ceremonial of a Court, and a willingness to forget his Royal rank, had been features of the late King Leopold's career, as those who met him in unconventional attire strolling through London streets will testify. King Leopold never failed to bring home to his heir the

fact that Royal birth did not preclude him from observing the utmost democratic principles with his subjects. A story is told of how one of King Leopold's Ministers was reading a lengthy report to him in his study at the Royal Palace at Brussels, when Prince Albert crossed the room and opened one of the windows. At once, the wind blowing through the window swept all the papers from the King's writing-table. The attendant Minister stopped reading, and rushed to retrieve the scattered documents, when King Leopold held him back and, turning to his nephew, said :

"Pick those papers up."

The Minister protested.

"Let him do it," whispered the King, "a future Constitutional Monarch must learn to stoop."

As one who knew him from boyhood said : "The King has reduced the flummery of Courts to the minimum, and moves among his people with an easy, unpretentious friendliness qualified by a modesty that is almost bashful." When the Rotarian International Convention was opened in Ostend by the late King, he was addressed by the President, an American, as "Rotarian Albert." He addressed the Convention in faultless English, and was at once enjoying the lively sallies of the Rotarians drawn from all over the world. One of the members from Kansas threw a great sunflower to the King, who wore it proudly as a token of friendliness. Hundreds of Rotarians pressed around him at the close of the proceedings, and not even a President of the United States could have been more expert in rapid hand-shaking!

Mention has been made of the late King's thirst for knowledge. This applied especially to all mechanical inventions. He was an enthusiastic believer in broadcasting, not only as a method of circulating news and music to the remotest homes, but as an instrument for spreading international good-will. The King took pleasure in listening to a wireless message from Mr. Herbert Hoover, President of the United States, in January, 1929. He had known Mr. Hoover intimately since he organized relief in Belgium in the War. Aviation had a keen supporter in him from early days. In 1927 he offered two prizes for competition among University students in Belgium for the best essays on "What can be done to awaken and win over public opinion to aviation?" The first prize was a silver wrist-watch with the Royal monogram, and the second was a silver match-box.

Captain Lindbergh's wonderful solo flight gave the King intense pleasure, and the aviator was welcomed in Belgium by the King and Queen and received the Cross of Knighthood of the Order of Leopold. No one could have examined Captain

Lindbergh's "Spirit of St. Louis" monoplane with more expert attention than the King gave to the aviator's explanations. On many occasions the King made long flights, including one to Copenhagen, and he studied the literature of airmanship with the same thoroughness that he gave to developments in motoring and electrical engineering.

The Belgian miners saw their Sovereign sharing their underground life on several occasions. He bore frequent testimony to their courage amid the perils of mining. When the terrible disaster occurred at Mons in 1927, he and the Queen became godparents to a miner's child born a few hours after the explosion, and they gave 10,000 francs to the fund raised for the sufferers families.

He was swift to see the advantage of motoring, not only as a pleasant recreation, but also as a commercial asset in securing rapid transit of goods. Often he upheld worthily the chivalry of the road by coming to the aid of a fellow motorist. A car overturned in the neighbourhood of his Palace at Laeken brought the King and Queen quickly to the rescue. The King hurried off for medical assistance and the Queen rendered "first aid" to a woman who had been injured, and helped to carry her to a farmhouse. There are many stories told of the King as a motorist. One which he relates himself occurred at Ostend. Muffled up and wearing goggles he was racing back to the Palace to be in time for dinner when he heard a shout behind him, and, pulling up his car with a grinding of brakes, he looked back to see a very irate policeman bearing down on him. In no uncertain language, this officer, not recognizing the motorist, asked him why he had not pulled up when signalled to do so. Contritely, King Albert pleaded that the street lamps reflecting on his wet windscreen had made vision difficult.

"All right," replied the policeman, "I'll let you go this time." Then sarcastically he added: "I'll see the King, and have the street lamps rearranged before you come this way again."

Another story which showed King Albert's kindness of heart is worth telling. One night, missing his car in Brussels, he told his equerry to fetch a taxicab from the rank. This official, disregarding the first vehicle on account of its dilapidated condition, signalled to the second one. At once the King stopped him. "Why not take the first one?" he asked.

"Because, sir, it is very old and dirty."

"Never mind," replied King Albert, "as it is such a dilapidated conveyance, its driver must be doing bad business; we must try and help him."

Although there were great and important differences between

the methods of rulership employed by King Albert and his predecessor on the throne, both Monarchs resembled one another in their accessibility and in the frankness of their conversation with politicians.

Once, when in France, a Radical Deputy was being received in audience by King Leopold. Disarmed by the King's pleasant manner, he began to tread on dangerous ground.

"Sir," he said, "I am a Republican, and do not hold with Monarchies and Kings. Nevertheless, I recognize your great superiority, and I confess that you would make an admirable President of a Republic."

"Really," replied the King with a twinkle in his eye. "Really? Do you know, I think I shall pay a compliment to my physician, Dr. Thirier, who is coming to see me to-day. I shall say: 'Thirier, you are a great doctor, and I think you would make an excellent veterinary surgeon!'"

At receptions, King Albert made the acquaintance of men high in commerce as well as with politicians of all shades of opinion. He was ready to hear their views, and had often followed up the conversation by a private interview. Much might be written as to the King's own share in the reconstructive work which had, within so brief a period, repaired some of the grievous injuries inflicted on Belgium. Unlike many men of high station, he was a good listener, and had an open mind, free from bias, with which he welcomed new ideas. Trade movements in the United States, such as the amazing "sale by instalment" system, interested him greatly, and he had long talks with famous American "captains of industry" in these years of Belgium's recovery. The King had inherited his father's love of books, and had added greatly to the fine library which the Count of Flanders formed. "First editions" fascinated him as a collector, and once on a visit to London he inquired for the earliest issues of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Tanglewood Tales*. Economics was a subject which engrossed his attention ever since the days when M. Waxweiler, of the Solvay Institute, was his tutor. On one of the last occasions when he saw Marshal Foch it was when the latter came to present him with a sword on being elected a member of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences.

With the exception of King George V, there was no living Monarch who travelled more widely than King Albert. He visited the Congo to see the true state of affairs under the Belgian regime. That was the year in which later he succeeded his uncle on the throne, and his first-hand inspection enabled him to amend many of the methods which had brought criticism. From Southampton, on April 3rd, 1909, he sailed on the steamer

Bruxellesville for the Belgian Congo. He travelled all over the great Colony from Broken Hill to Boura, in eighty-two days—covering 2,720 miles—750 miles on land, 1,570 miles on rivers, and 400 miles by rail. He saw everything there was to be seen, and when he returned to Antwerp on August 16th, 1907, he was full of schemes for reorganization.

The late King visited nearly every country in Europe, and often said would like to make a voyage round the world. Winter sports in Switzerland brought him and his family to Murren and other centres, where he could enjoy ski-ing in the holiday fashion which was such a relief after official life. As for Great Britain, the King knew many parts of it as the results of his incognito visits. During the Great War his children spent some months with their aunt, the Duchess of Vendôme, at Wimbledon, and at the late Marquis Curzon's country seat near Basingstoke.

Naturally, the War focussed attention on the soldierly qualities of King Albert. From his youth he had been trained in the Army, passing through the National Military School. He made a thorough study of the military situation of Belgium when he came to the throne, realizing its peril in the event of a European War. The dignity with which the King and his Government confronted the threat to Belgium in August, 1914, is revealed in the telegram from the King to King George, which was read to the House of Commons by Sir Edward (now Viscount) Grey, on August 3rd :

"Remembering the numerous proofs of Your Majesty's friendship, and that of your predecessors, and the friendly attitude of England in 1870, and the proof of friendship she has just given us again, I make a supreme appeal to the diplomatic intervention of Your Majesty's Government to safeguard the integrity of Belgium."

At such a time historians recalled the words of Mr. Gladstone in Parliament on this question of Belgium's independence. He said : "We have an interest in the independence of Belgium which is wider than that which we may have in the literal operation of the guarantee. It is found in the answer to the question whether, under the circumstances of the case, this country, endowed as it is with influence and power, would quietly stand by and witness the perpetration of the direst crime that ever stained the pages of history, and thus become participators in the sin."

These noble words of Gladstone were well-known to King Albert and his subjects, and had assured them of the practical sympathy of Great Britain in the years that had followed their utterance. There is no doubt that Sir Edward Grey's quotation from his old leader's speech, made more than half a century

before, deepened the impression of King Albert's telegram in the solemn hour when the British Parliament confronted the crisis of 1914. The Foreign Secretary added his own opinion in the oft-quoted words: "If, in a crisis like this, we run away from those obligations of honour and interest as regards the Belgian treaty, I doubt whether, whatever material force we might have at the end, it would be of very much value in face of the respect we should have lost."

On the outbreak of war, the late King became a soldier on active service, living an arduous and haphazard life as the enemy overran Belgium. As the Belgian Ambassador said in 1928, the King "consecrated all his strength in defending his country through the period of great peril and protected it through the painful crisis of reconstruction." It was said that the King took an active share in defending Antwerp. Whether that be correct or not, he was by day and night an anxious director of his brave forces in that time of anguish. The great commanders of the Allied forces testified to the personal valour and alert energy displayed by King Albert, all the more notable because he saw daily the agony and ruin of his prosperous country. The Kaiser, in a despatch to the Emperor Francis Joseph, alluded to the King as "that haughty and foolish Monarch who might have shared with us the outcome of our victories." These words were in strange contrast to the fulsome speech which he had made at a State banquet less than five years previously. Then the Kaiser proposed the health of the King and Queen in these terms:

"May the reign of Your Majesty spread happiness and prosperity amongst your Royal home, and among your people. *This is the most profound wish of my heart*, with which I cry 'Long live Their Majesties the King and Queen of the Belgians.' *Hoch!*"

Of the two rulers, one is to-day in ignominious exile in Holland, while the other right up to his lamented death enjoyed the respect of the civilized world and the love of his loyal subjects. On his birthday in 1928 the King, mounted on a magnificent chestnut horse, reviewed his troops, and greeted his two sons who rode at the head of their men.

It would give only a partial picture of King Albert if one portrayed him only as a student of affairs, a well-informed traveller, and a valiant soldier. It was in his family life that the King found his greatest happiness. Marcus Aurelius said: "Even in a palace, life may be led well." And this the King and Queen of the Belgians proved. Their marriage was definitely a love match. At the age of fifteen the Prince had said to his uncle: "I shall marry a girl with small hands and small feet and fair hair."

"Is that all?" asked King Leopold.

"Well, no," replied the youthful Prince, adding: "I shall love her."

At the age of twenty-five, he met the girl with the "small hands and small feet" in the person of Her Royal Highness Princess Elizabeth, Duchess of Bavaria. The marriage was solemnized at Munich on October 2nd, 1900, in the presence of a Royal and distinguished gathering. Prince Albert, like King Alfonso XIII of Spain—one of his most loyal friends—had determined to marry for love, and this determination received the thorough approval and endorsement of his subjects.

Many pens have described the happy home life of Their Majesties. One witness, an unprejudiced one, may be cited: The ex-Kaiser during his State visit to Brussels in October 1910 summed up the devotion of this Royal couple in a remark made to his Chief of Staff, General von Moltke:

"They go through life together hand in hand; and their devotion for each other is so apparent that they think and move as one. The King is indeed fortunate in having such a loyal and devoted Queen."

And in a letter to the ex-Crown Prince, written at that time, the ex-Kaiser made the following comment on the Belgian Court:

"They lead the simple life here. Yesterday I came across Their Majesties personally discussing what I should eat, like the most charming of bourgeois hosts. They are most concerned for our comfort and the Belgian Queen apparently insisted on herself seeing to the decorations of your mother's apartments. It is so charmingly different here that I am almost loath to return home. . . ."

This love of the home and family had much to do with the King's popularity in Great Britain and the United States, and had undoubtedly been one of the causes of the complete sympathy with which Their Majesties were welcomed by all classes of the community. As a background to his incessant activities, the King always had the peace and affection of home life at its best, and this pen-portrait may well conclude with the pictures of King Albert as Husband, Father, and Friend.

CHAPTER II

THE ANCESTRY OF KING ALBERT

The ancestry of King Albert—His mother's early interest in Great Britain—Visits to England and Scotland—The history of the House of Coburg—The uncle of Queen Victoria—Princess Charlotte's marriage—King Leopold I—The Count of Flanders—Accession of King Albert I.

ALBERT Leopold Clement Marie Meinrad, King of the Belgians, was the second son of the Count and Countess of Flanders and was born at Brussels on April 8th, 1875. Owing to the death in 1869 of the only son of Leopold II, King of the Belgians, the Count of Flanders had become the direct heir to the throne of his brother Leopold. He had married on April 25th, 1867, in Berlin, Princess Marie of Hohenzollern, a lady noted alike for charity, piety, love of the fine arts, skill as an amateur artist, and talent for etching. She shared to a considerable degree her husband's passion for books. For the first period of their married life, the Count and Countess lived in a wing of the Royal Palace at Brussels, where their home life was as quietly and happily domestic as is that of the majority of their countrymen, whose love for their homes is one of their strongest characteristics. The Count was an enthusiastic bibliophile, and his library contained over 30,000 volumes. In this library he would pass much of his time, revelling in the study of literature.

In a smaller apartment leading from the library were housed the special treasures—the first editions and the rare folios in which the Count took so great a delight. The Countess had bound many of these volumes, and the bindings revealed alike her skill as a bookbinder and her taste as an artist.

Some time after their marriage, the Count and Countess of Flanders moved to a residence prepared for them in the Rue de la Regence, Brussels, and her in June, 1869, was born their first child, Prince Baudouin (Baldwin). A year later, twin daughters were born, but unfortunately one died, leaving as her survivor Princess Henriette, Duchess de Vendôme. In 1870 another daughter came to console the parents for their loss, and this child was given the name of Josephine, which had been the name of Princess Henriette's twin.

As a crowning joy, there was born to the Count and Countess a second son, who was His Majesty the late King Albert. A gentleman of the Count of Flanders' suite once ventured to remark on the fact that one of his sons would some day be King.

"I want them to serve their country," replied the Count. "Whether from the throne or elsewhere I do not mind, except that, for their own sakes, I had rather they were spared the immense responsibilities of kingship."

Possessing a father who held these views, it will be understood readily that the children were not brought up with the idea that their position involved privileges without their attendant responsibilities. It was inculcated into them that first and foremost their duty was to their country.

In view of the future relations of the two countries, it is interesting to recall that the Countess of Flanders was a great admirer of Britain and the British people, and there is no doubt that her influence did much to foster in her husband that feeling of friendship which in these dark years of the War was cemented in indissoluble bonds.

In her girlhood the Countess had visited London, and had fallen in love with the historic charm of the City. As her children grew up, she would tell them tales of her visits and the sights she had seen in the British capital. When quite a little lad, the young Count evinced a great interest in England and expressed an eager desire to see the places of which his mother had spoken.

The Countess of Flanders' pleasant remembrances of her stay in England are clearly shown in her own description of a visit:

"It was in 1856 that, with my mother and sister, I visited my aunt, the Duchess of Hamilton," she wrote. "This was a great event for me, an everlasting joy. The first day we went to Brussels, where we stopped at the Hotel de Flandres; the next day we went to London, and the crossing was very bad. A lady alongside me had herself placed in a sack, and closed it over her head. At Dover my uncle Hamilton and his sons, Angus and Carlo, received us. The train brought us all to London to my uncle's house near the Green Park. We spent twelve days there, during which we visited all the curiosities of London and its environs, Hampton Court, Sydenham, and the Palace of the first Exhibition. What interested me most in all that I saw in London were the skeletons of antediluvian animals. The Tower with its historic souvenirs impressed me greatly—above all, the chamber where they assassinated Edward's children. Also Westminster Abbey and its numerous tombs. I remember having visited the Houses of Parliament and St. Paul's Cathedral, where we mounted up to the gallery which surrounds the great cupola

and whence there is a wide view. Finally, I remember a dinner at Greenwich, where they served us with the celebrated whitebait, a little fish found only in the Thames.

"The great event of our sojourn in London was the return of the troops from the Crimea. The whole town was *en fête*, and Queen Victoria reviewed them. Everywhere where the army passed stands were erected. My uncle, my cousins, and I were in the crowd near Hyde Park, not far from Buckingham Palace, seated on very primitive benches. The Queen of England and Prince Consort were accompanied by all their children, and by their uncle, King of the Belgians, Leopold II, and his sons, the Duke of Brabant and the Count of Flanders, and his daughter Princess Charlotte. Who could have thought a day would come when I would marry the Count of Flanders—that I was seeing my future husband pass!"

When she wrote these words, the Countess could never have dreamt that a day would come when her son Albert would traverse much the same route and receive the enthusiastic cheers of vast crowds—cheers which were not only a welcome to a King but expressed grateful thanks to a man whose superb courage in stemming the tides of invasion had made victory possible.

The Countess had still more to record of her English impressions:

"On leaving London, we went to Hamilton, the superb residence of my uncle, where the park is so immense that every day after lunch, which followed a morning devoted to work, my cousins and I were able to make long promenades on horseback or on foot without ever arriving at the boundaries of the park. Games were also organized which amused me immensely, and we made excursions to Edinburgh and its environs."

The Countess was particularly attracted by the ancient Scottish capital, and very often described Edinburgh to her children. Had she lived through those terrible war years, it would doubtless have been a grateful pleasure to her to learn of the great kindness shown to Belgian refugees by the people of Edinburgh; when visiting England in July, 1918, the late King Albert recalled his mother's affection for the city, and made a gift to Sir Lorne Macleod, Lord Provost of Edinburgh, of 5,000 francs (£200) for distribution among the poor, with the following message:

"The King takes this opportunity to thank your Lordship and the citizens of Edinburgh for the many kindnesses shown to the Belgian refugees since August 1914."

The Countess of Flanders was equally impressed with other places of interest north of the Tweed. "Holyrood," she wrote,

"the residence of the Kings of Scotland, made a great impression upon me. They showed us the delightful excursions there, and we went everywhere on horseback over this beautiful and wild country. At the extremity of the Island there are great rocks which form many grottoes. It was in one of them that Robert Bruce, King of Scotland, hid himself after his defeat and cheered himself by watching the spider which continually recommenced to make its web destroyed by other insects."

It may have been the memory of this cave that induced the Countess to teach her children the little poem, familiar to most children, which comments on the lesson Bruce derived from the spider. From early childhood, the family of the Count of Flanders became almost as familiar with British history as with that of their own land. The Duchess of Vendôme made her home in the neighbourhood of Wimbledon, and the late King Albert paid visits frequently to England in his youth. The ties which had existed between the Royal Families of both countries have always been strong, and the War strengthened them immeasurably.

It is proper that reference, however brief and condensed, should here be made to the House of Coburg, the history of which is intertwined in the story of Belgium and Britain. In its earliest days the Coburgs became notable by their vigorous resistance to the ferocious Attila and his Huns. Conrad the Great, the most famous of the earlier Coburgs, was ambitious for his descendants, and so successful was he in his policy that the scions of his House filled many of the lesser thrones of his day. How well the family flourished may be deduced from the fact that within living memory Princes of the House of Coburg have filled the thrones of England, Belgium, Portugal, Bulgaria, and Coburg, not to mention certain smaller German principalities which had Coburgs for their rulers. Conrad the Great, besides being a mighty warrior, was also a staunch defender of his Church. One of his sons became a bishop, and after taking part in various Crusades, Conrad himself entered a monastery. His eldest son founded the Abbey of Celle and gave much land to the Benedictine monks of the neighbourhood who, after clearing the land, discovered vast silver mines. The products of these mines were used by Conrad's heir to increase the prosperity of his inheritance.

In 1346 Frederick the Severe married Catherine of Henneberg, and in due course their son became Elector of Saxony, from whom descended the Kings of Saxony. From thence onwards, the Coburgs increased both in wealth and power, always dividing the money and lands among the sons of the House, and seeming always to have more and more to divide. In the time of Napoleon

they were rich and powerful enough to attempt to defy "this French upstart," but the Corsican was too strong for them, and his soldiers seized their lands, and Napoleon helped himself to their treasuries. After the debacle at Waterloo, however, their fortunes favoured them once again and they regained their territories. The Palace at Gotha, standing on a hill and surrounded by magnificent grounds, was one of the largest in Germany. Its library was among the most valuable in Europe.

Writing of the state in which the Coburgs lived, a chronicler of the period says: "The arrangements of the palace here are on a scale of the most royal magnificence; the number of servants in splendid liveries, the corps of chasseurs in their brilliant uniforms, green and silver, the duke's private band, besides the numerous suite of gentlemen chamberlains, aides-de-camp, and the functionaries gave sufficient indication both of wealth and liberality. In culinary excellence neither Brillat-Savarin nor Sefton of glorious memory could have found fault—a blended cuisine of German and French, plenty of fine venison, and exquisite wines."

The first King of the Belgians was the third son of Francis Anthony Frederick, Duke of Saxe-Coburg, and his career was as romantic as it was gallant. Nature favoured him as highly as fortune had done, for he was of great personal beauty, a courtier, a diplomat, and a soldier. As brother to the future Duchess of Kent—and therefore, in due course, uncle to the late Queen Victoria—he was given a most cordial welcome on coming to England in 1815, and settled down to enjoy an enviable position.

The Prince Regent (afterwards George IV) had already betrothed his only daughter to the Prince of Orange, but the Princess Charlotte—whose heart had not been engaged, although, to please her father, she had agreed to the match—changed her mind at once when Prince Leopold was presented to her, and fell deeply in love with him at first sight. The attraction was mutual, but in those days it was no light matter for a girl, much less a Royal Princess, to disobey her parent and brave the wrath of her family. However, Princess Charlotte's love overcame her fear and, despite the anger of her Royal father, she broke her engagement and gave her promise to Prince Leopold.

As soon as he learned there was an actual engagement, the Prince Regent made himself so objectionable that the high-spirited Princess could not endure his wrath and fled in despair to her mother for refuge. Her father sent an uncle to fetch her back, and like the haughty parent of an early Victorian novel, shut her up in the hope that he would break her spirit and force her to marry the Prince of Orange. Love, however, triumphed.

Princess Charlotte's fidelity to her lover outwore the wrath of her father, and at last he consented to the engagement being made public. The happy pair were married on May 2nd, 1816.

As the husband of the Princess, then in direct succession to the English throne, the Prince was held in high esteem by the English people—an esteem he returned to the full. Prince Leopold was naturalized on his marriage, and made a Field-Marshal of the British Army—an honour of which he was always proud and to which he frequently referred during his reign. In later days, when Britain and Belgium were bound together by ties cemented by the best blood of both nations, it was pleasant to remember that on certain windows in Belgium Prince Leopold's arms are quartered with those of England, as indeed they are upon the ceiling of the Palace in Brussels.

The union proved ideally happy, and the Prince and Princess settled down to a devoted domesticity at Claremont in Surrey. But, alas, the union which gave promise of so much happiness lasted little more than a year, for in 1817 the Princess died in childbirth, leaving a heartbroken young widower to mourn her. The universal sorrow at this death of the Princess has been mentioned by all historians of the period.

The Prince continued to live at Claremont, and, after the death of the Duke of Kent, he gave his widowed sister his support and protection and helped her materially in guiding the education and upbringing of the little Princess Victoria, who was afterwards to rule England. As a proof of the high regard in which he was held by the British nation, the Prince was made a Privy Councillor.

In 1830 the revolution of Brussels lost the Belgian provinces to Holland. A provisional Government was formed, and the throne was offered to the Duke of Nemours, son of Louis Philippe, who declined it. It was then offered to Prince Leopold, who, on account of the position he held in England and his affection for the country of his adoption, at first declined the throne. But the invitation being renewed, he ascended the throne as Leopold I, King of the Belgians, in 1831. His religious convictions were strong, and with a courage and high principle not always found under similar circumstances, he refused to change his religion upon his accession. It says much for the religious toleration and broadmindedness of the Belgian people that they accepted unhesitatingly a Protestant King to rule over a Catholic country. In his opening speech to the Belgian Parliament, King Leopold promised to encourage industry and to rule according to the principles of civil and religious liberty—a promise he fulfilled most scrupulously. In 1832 he married, as his second wife,

Louise Marie Thêrèse, Princess of Orleans, daughter of Louis Philippe, by whom he had three children—two boys and a girl. Of these, the elder became in due course Leopold II, to whose forceful personality allusion will be made later on. The second son, the Count of Flanders, became the father of the late King Albert.

To gain a fair estimate of the character of the Count of Flanders, it may be said that the late King Albert resembled him in many ways. He was a man who loved his country devotedly and refused a crown rather than forsake it. He was a patron of the arts, yet was a keen soldier. He made a place for himself in the affections of the Belgian people and the nation welcomed a son of the Count as their King with rather more heartiness than they would have welcomed a direct heir to the throne. When the Count of Flanders died at Brussels on November 17th, 1905, there was widespread testimony to the dignity with which he had upheld a difficult position. Four years later, the death of Leopold II, King of the Belgians, on December 17th, 1909, brought Albert I to the throne.

CHAPTER III

CHILDHOOD'S JOYS AND SORROWS

Happy days of boyhood—Holidays in the Ardennes—The treasures of "Les Amerois" rifled in the War—Story of two Queens' dilemma—Early education—A rebuke from King Leopold—Life in Brussels—The death of his brother—Becomes Heir-Apparent—Learning his constitutional duties—Laeken and its charm—The Count of Flanders' salon—King Leopold and his nephew.

A FAMOUS writer has said: "One cannot step back into childhood. That paradise is guarded by the angel with the sword of fire, who led one out of it." Probably the happiest days of those who are called to the lonely splendour of a throne have been the days of early childhood, especially in the case of Princes who were not in their youth expected to become rulers. The late King Albert looked back on his childhood with great pleasure, tinged by the sorrowful memory of his elder brother's death, which brought him new and solemn responsibilities.

The story of his childhood is so little known that it may be interesting to recall it. On Thursday, April 8th, 1875, at 5.30 p.m., the sudden booming of signal guns and the joyous pealing of church bells proclaimed to the Belgian people that "Her Royal Highness the Countess of Flanders was safely delivered of a Prince who has received the names of Albert Leopold Marie Meinrad." One who knew him as a child says that Prince Albert was, between the ages of six and twelve, a "particularly naughty and wilful child."

For about four months of each year the family of the Count and Countess of Flanders lived at the beautiful Château of Amerois, which stands on the top of a hill overlooking the ancient town of Bouillon. "Les Amerois" is situated in the most delightful part of the Ardennes, near a favourite camping ground for artists. In its neighbourhood are the lovely castle of Walzin, the historic caves of Furfooz, and the Royal Ardenne domain which was held in such high esteem by Leopold I. From the quaint town of Bouillon the hill runs up to the gates of Amerois, from which the forest sweeps to right and left. The only buildings in sight are a customs house and a wayside inn, inhabited by an aged protégée of the Countess of Flanders, who never passed to

A PHOTOGRAPH OF KING ALBERT TAKEN JUST AFTER HIS MARRIAGE

A UNIQUE STUDY OF KING ALBERT
This photograph was taken for use on Belgian postage stamps.

the Château without exchanging greetings with the old man. "Les Amerois" commands magnificent views. From the terrace one may look over the fertile valley of the Semois, and beyond to pine-clad hills, with here and there a gap through which on clear days may be seen the boundaries of France.

While there were many works of art at the Château, it was interesting chiefly as a storehouse of family relics, of which there were an amazing number, a fine series of portraits existed of the Count and Countess of Flanders and their children, and of many descendants of the Royal House of Coburg. The Flemish chimney-piece in the Hall was particularly remarkable, as was also the chimney-piece by the brothers Lombardi, which was a striking feature of the dining-room, with its Cordova leather furniture. It was for "Les Amerois" that the Count of Flanders purchased a magnificent staircase at the Paris Exhibition in 1878.

During the occupation of the German Army, the Château was sacked from "cellar to garret" by the troops of the German Crown Prince, who spared nothing. Priceless tapestries were torn from the walls, statues were smashed, furniture was broken, and pictures stolen. Even an oil painting of the Kaiser, a present from him to the Countess of Flanders and autographed by the Imperial hand "To my dear Marie," was mutilated. Personal property of the Belgian Royal Family—even the Queen's own wardrobe—was rifled, and the Queen's private notepaper was stolen and used by the looters to write letters home. To-day the Château has been partly rebuilt, but there are still traces of the ravages of war.

The grounds are very beautiful, and were laid out with the view of preserving the natural loveliness of the Ardennes, rather than to display the art of the landscape gardener. The Royal children would spend hours of healthful recreation in the gardens each day, walking occasionally to the farm, where visitors would be shown the enamelled tiles, painted by the Queen and her daughters, with which one room is decorated.

The chapel in the park is of particular interest. In its stained-glass windows are pictured the patron saints of the family, after whom sons are usually named : St. Albert, St. Philip, St. Joseph, St. Henry, St. Baudouin, and St. Meinrad. On the floor is a carpet embroidered by all the ladies who stayed at "Les Amerois" during the time in which it was being woven. It contains the work of the Countess of Flanders, the Queen of the Belgians, the Royal Princesses, and many of the ladies attached to the Belgian Court. On the vestibule of the chapel hangs a parchment on which is inscribed the names and armorial bearings of the ladies whose

work is thus enshrined in the carpet. Here, too, is the silver palm presented by His Holiness the Pope to the King and Queen on the occasion of their wedding.

As "Les Amerois" was more or less a holiday resort, lessons were few, and the children of the Count and Countess of Flanders spent most of their time in the grounds or exploring the beautiful country around the Château. In the summer many Royalties gathered there, including some of the crowned heads of Europe. Among the most welcome guests were Queen Amelie of Portugal, and the Queen of Saxony, who spent pleasant days of relaxation in the Chateau, wandered in its spacious park, and joined in the pastimes of the children of their host. Occasionally, visiting ministers and officials would be amazed to see Queens, Princes, and Royal Dukes, and their own august Sovereign, Leopold II, playing hide-and-seek between the trees and in the glades of the spacious park.

A story is told that the two Queens, Amelie of Portugal and Carolina of Saxony, were both indulging in one of these romps with the younger children, and were hiding in a summer-house, when shrieks suddenly startled Prince Albert. Rushing to the scene, he found their Majesties standing on two chairs, while an equally startled bull-frog jumped about the floor and goggled at them. Convulsed with laughter, Prince Albert came to the rescue of the two Queens, putting the poor frog in his pocket. Later, he made use of it by putting it in King Leopold's bed!

Prince Albert had his own views as to his Royal play-fellows, and these he expressed sometimes with disconcerting frankness. Once, learning that a rather portly and pompous Prince was expected, he seemed so little interested that his mother administered a gentle rebuke, saying: "Are you not glad he is coming, Albert? He is a great man."

"A great man?" was the reply. "He can't play horses!"

The home life at "Les Amerois" was simple. The children were encouraged to be studious and physical culture was by no means neglected. In recent years, young Belgium has taken enthusiastically to sport of all kinds, and in the boyhood of Prince Albert, football, hockey, and running were becoming increasingly popular. The children of the Count and Countess of Flanders enjoyed much the same recreations as their English cousins of the same period. Both the Count and Countess took an active and unfailing interest in the upbringing of their family. As soon as they were old enough to leave the nursery, the arrangements of which the Countess superintended personally, the children were allowed to join their parents at the breakfast-table and, within suitable limits, encouraged to join in the conversation.

It was the custom of the parents to spend at least two hours each day with their children, and the first of these was that which followed the morning meal. During this time the children were encouraged to discuss their studies and their games. Into every detail of their daily lives the Count and Countess entered fully, and were ever ready to advise and sympathise.

While the late King Albert had to a minor degree inherited his father's passion for books, as a boy reading did not appeal particularly to him. The sight of the vast library of 30,000 volumes somewhat oppressed him. Quick enough at his studies, he did not make the progress in reading that his tutor expected of him.

"You can do better; it is time you read with fluency," the little boy was informed by his instructor.

"When I can read well, shall I have to read all the books of my father?" the Prince demanded.

On being assured that such a feat would not be required of him, the reading lesson progressed with speed!

The Count of Flanders' librarian, Mr. Schweisthal, a man of wide learning and deep culture, instructed Prince Albert in his first knowledge of literature—his brother Prince Baudouin being further advanced in these studies. The parish priests gave the young Princes the religious instruction necessary to their faith.

When Prince Albert attained fourteen, a very decided change was noted in his character. To the satisfaction of his parents, he changed from an unruly boy, rather difficult to manage, to the most studious of youths. One cause of this change is attributed to a stern rebuke administered to him by his uncle, Leopold II, who, finding Prince Albert playing truant from his lessons, said to him: "Albert, the most despicable thing on this earth is a man who shirks his duty. Your duty is now to be at your tasks —you are a deserter—get back to them!"

The children of the Count and Countess were early taught to think of the poor and do what they could for them. Despite the loneliness of the Château, many applicants for charity came to its gates. More than one biographer has spoken of the late King Albert's "hobby" of philanthropy. It was inculcated in his youth and became an integral part of his character. The Count and Countess refused aid to no genuine appeal. Each case was investigated, and every one of the shoals of begging letters with which they were beseiged received attention. At "Les Amerois" it was an understood thing that anyone in trouble or distress of any kind made application to the Château. Thus Belgium's future King was brought up in an atmosphere where philanthropy was practised as a matter of course, and the distribution of alms

and a personal interest in sick and needy folk were regarded not as one of the duties, but as one of the privileges, of exalted rank.

In these holidays in the Ardennes, Prince Albert shared his recreations with his brother Baudouin and his three sisters, and a happier quintet it would have been difficult to find. So that they might have no fear, the children were often sent in the evening by their mother to search for forgotten objects left in the grounds of the Château.

It was at Brussels that Prince Albert began his serious education, under carefully chosen tutors, at his father's fine Palace in the Rue de la Regence, which faces the wonderful Gallery of Old Masters known to all who visit the Belgian capital. Here, the family life was as simple and as unpretentious as was consistent with the rank of the Royal Family. On weekdays, most of the children's time was taken up with their studies, but on Sundays they spent the day with their parents, and would walk with them in the park, and occasionally on the Boulevards. Sometimes they took a short excursion to the surrounding country.

Frequent visits were, of course, paid to the Royal Palace, when King Leopold and Queen Marie Henriette were in residence. It was the custom of the Count and Countess of Flanders to take their children to dine there on Sundays, and sometimes they attended the musical receptions which the Queen gave at the Palace. The Queen was an excellent performer on the harp, and there would often be a fine musical programme, to which General Brunell contributed songs in his magnificent voice, his accompanist being the Count de Borchgrave d'Altena, then the head of the Cabinet.

In his boyhood, Prince Albert was inclined to be shy, but as he grew older, he made the task of his tutors much easier than they had anticipated by his close attention to their instruction. Mr. Godefroid, who afterwards became his Financial Secretary, was Prince Albert's first professor. He studied Law, Latin, and the rudiments of Political Economy with M. Bosmans, LL.D., who was the son of the President of the Court of Louvain. Monseigneur Lefébure, of Louvain, was chosen to conduct hm through a course of Philosophy, while M. Sigogne was responsible for French Literature and Rhetoric. The Prince studied also the literature of his own country and became acquainted with the masterpieces of both Walloon and Flemish authors, whose style differ widely both in aim and achievement. Captain (later Lieut.-General) Jungbluth gave him instruction in military history. With him he made many journeys at home and abroad.

Thus, until his sixteenth year, the Prince, whom, unknown to

himself or his parents, destiny had marked out for a King, led a life very similar to that of any Belgian boy of the upper classes. One of the memorable events of these early years was a visit to Constantinople which he paid with his father, followed by a tour in Greece and Dalmatia. He also accompanied his parents to France, Switzerland, Germany, and Italy, making the acquaintance of many Royal relatives in these lands.

Towards the end of 1890, Prince Albert caught a bad cold, which developed quickly into a species of influenza. From the Prince the illness spread to his sister Princess Josephine, and from her to Princess Henriette, whose condition grew gradually worse until it was considered necessary to publish bulletins. The life of the Princess was for some days in danger. The anxiety of the Count and Countess was lightened by the manifestations of popular sympathy with which they were overwhelmed. The Palace in the Rue de la Regence was besieged with streams of callers of all ranks and classes, who begged for the latest news or brought gifts that, in the case of the poorer donors, were indicative of the very deep sympathy felt by everyone.

The malady ran its course, but happily the constitution of the Princess, strengthened by the simple, wholesome life she had led, withstood the strain. Towards the middle of January, 1891, Princess Josephine was pronounced out of danger. But no sooner were her parents relieved of one anxiety than another arose. On January 17th, only a day after the hopeful report of the Princess had been published, Prince Baudouin was taken ill. He took the disease in a lighter form, and, though his condition gave rise to anxiety, he was not at first so ill as had been his sister, and no bulletins were issued. He was indeed well enough to take a walk. Unhappily, the illness increased suddenly, and despite every precaution, Prince Baudouin developed pleuro-pneumonia. He grew steadily worse, after less than a week's illness, he passed away on January 23rd, 1891.

Prince Baudouin was in his twenty-second year. It was stated that he would probably have married his cousin Princess Clementine. By a sad coincidence his death took place on the fiftieth anniversary of the death of King Leopold's only son. Queen Victoria and all the crowned heads of Europe hastened to express their condolence with the bereaved parents and King Leopold. Court mourning in Belgium was ordered for three months.

The funeral took place on January 29th, amid universal signs of sorrow. The service in St. Gudule was deeply pathetic. The coffin was followed by King Leopold who, said the representative of *The Times*, "was quite overcome by emotion and walked with

halting steps, supported on his left by the Count of Flanders, who was himself weeping bitterly. . . . The young Prince Albert, the sole surviving son of the Count of Flanders, who walked by his father's side, also betrayed profound grief."

The Times correspondent telegraphed the sad tidings, beginning his message with the words: "The whole of Belgium is in consternation. Two days ago Prince Baudouin's slight cold, from which he had suffered for the last fortnight, turned to pneumonia with other complications. Three eminent physicians attended the Prince and did all that science could do. Last midnight the Prince thanked them. Shortly afterwards, he became delirious, and died at two o'clock this morning. The last sacraments were administered to him yesterday evening in the presence of the Count and Countess of Flanders and their children. The King and Queen remained until eleven o'clock, when the physicians declared that all hope was not yet gone. The Minister of Justice, the Count and Countess of Flanders, and Prince Albert were present at the death."

Prince Baudouin's death was not only a profound grief to his parents and friends, but it was felt deeply by the nation at large. The Prince had possessed a singularly attractive personality, and had been popular with the people as heir to the throne. He had latterly worked daily with King Leopold, learning State duties. He was a captain in a regiment of Carabineers. His sudden death, on the very threshold of manhood, was regarded as a national calamity which plunged Belgium into mourning.

By his elder brother's death, Prince Albert became heir to the throne. Apart from his deep grief at the loss of his brother, to whom he had been devotedly attached, the prospect of succeeding some day to the throne held no great attraction for him, but a keen sense of duty made him determine to fulfil all the new responsibilities of heirship. In this determination he was assisted greatly by the affectionate encouragement of his parents. He was brought more closely into association with his uncle, King Leopold, but it cannot be said that he was ever entirely at his ease with the King. King Leopold was always inclined to be strict with the younger generation, and though his rather stern attitude may have played its due part in moulding the character of Prince Albert, it did not add to his happiness in the first years of his new position as direct heir to his uncle.

In judging this attitude of King Leopold, it is fair to make allowance for the fact that his only son's death in 1841 had left him a disappointed and embittered man. He was, in many respects, an excellent Monarch—ambitious for his country and

did much to make that country what it is to-day—and not unnaturally he had looked forward intensely to having a son of his own to follow him and carry on the work as he had planned it.

King Leopold never recovered from the effects of his son's death, and he may perhaps be forgiven if he felt some slight disappointment at seeing his nephew in the place that his son would have filled. Moreover, uncle and nephew were wholly unlike in their temperament and tastes, and this added to the constraint of the younger man when in the presence of King Leopold.

Henceforward, Prince Albert was seen more frequently at Court and became known personally to the leading politicians of the day. After their period of mourning, the Count and Countess of Flanders resumed their dispensation of hospitality, and their house-parties were a great feature of the social life of Brussels. In his parents' salon, the Prince met great personages of Europe, men and women renowned not only for their position but for their eminence in the arts and sciences, their contributions to literature, or their work for social progress. The Count of Flanders, himself a student and a bibliophile, was not content to surround himself by those whose high position entitled them to his acquaintance but delighted to entertain savants of his own and other countries. At these gatherings Prince Albert received an education which, for a future Monarch, was at least as important as that derived from his studies. Here, too, he met representatives of the great families of Belgium, those whose names figure in the Belgian Livre d'Or which contains no titles created since 1830. To the Palace came the Croys, the De Lignes, the Chimays, de Mérodes, de Lalaings, the d'Oultremonts, D'Assches, and bearers of many noble names which were to figure prominently during the years of his kingship.

His life was now divided between residence in the capital, holidays at " Les Amerois," and visits to Laeken, of which he had always been very fond.

In boyhood Prince Albert was much interested in the career of Napoleon. The old Château at Laeken was greatly favoured by the Emperor, who from thence gave his commands for the Russian campaign. The Château was ravaged by fire in 1889, but was rebuilt without delay and improved considerably by Leopold II from 1903 onwards. Laeken is a favourite summer excursion of the citizens of Brussels to whom the grounds and conservatories are opened for a certain time each season. Situated only four miles from the capital, Laeken is for the Belgian Royal Family something of a country residence in town.

The gardens are more remarkable than the Château itself. There is a fine orangery, and Leopold II added a pavilion and an unusually fine specimen of a Chinese pagoda. During his reign, it was the custom of the Queen to close the Brussels season by garden-parties held in the magnificent grounds of Laeken.

In the concluding years of his reign, King Leopold spent much of his time at Laeken, preferring the Château to the more stately Palace in Brussels. King Leopold did much to improve the Palace, and, when he died, his coffin passed out under scaffolding erected for the carrying out of work which he had ordered. The interior of the Palace is certainly more striking than the outside, for the State rooms are fine. In the Throne Room King Leopold was quite satisfied with a particularly comfortable chair as his throne, for the ceremonies of Court life had little attraction for him.

"I rule," he is reported to have said, "more firmly from my chair than many Monarchs from their silver thrones, so let it stand." And there the chair remained to the end of his reign.

In due course, Prince Albert entered the Army. A Belgian writer says of the Prince at this time: "The Prince did everything that a Prince should do. He had his military education at the National Military School, like all Princes. He had accomplished a term of service in the Army, like all Princes. At his majority he made the grand tour, like all Princes, but he did not, like all Princes, write a book!" He was training conscientiously for the important duties that had come so unexpectedly to him by his brother's death. That event, with its consequences, had made Prince Albert a serious and thoughtful young man. The days of childhood, with their freedom and merriment, had passed for ever.

CHAPTER IV

TRAINING FOR RULERSHIP

Enters the Military School—Democratic spirit of the Army—Reforms as to conscription methods—Belgian volunteers' visit to Wimbledon—Work of King Leopold I—A witticism at the King's expense—Prince Albert's instructors—Gaining facts at first hand—Travels abroad—The charm of Americans—Declines to write his memoirs.

ALL Princes of the Belgian Royal House enter the Army, and so in due course Prince Albert was introduced into the Belgian Military School at the age of sixteen by his uncle. King Leopold, presenting his nephew to his comrades, made a short speech suitable to the occasion. In accordance with his own and his parents' wishes, Prince Albert attended the school as an ordinary cadet, except for the fact that he did not live in the school and that he had a special tutor. In all other matters, he was similar to his fellow-students. He wore the same uniform, shared their meals, and had no preferential treatment in any way. He proved a popular cadet, winning favour with his comrades, who were of an age to judge for themselves the character of the young Prince. Despite his natural diffidence, which his military training did a very great deal to overcome, they recognized in him the sterling qualities that were afterwards revealed to a wider circle. Prince Albert shared alike in work and games, and he did not escape the "ragging" prevalent among all students. He received that undoubted mark of popularity by being given a nickname, which a few of his intimates used for many years.

All the cadets, including the Prince, ranked as privates, and were obliged to salute even non-commissioned officers of the regular Army. Prince Albert was punctilious in discharging this obligation, and doubtless it was due to the cordial relations which he developed with the rank and file of his future Army that they were ready to follow him with implicit faith during those years of the Great War when he led them in person. During his time of military training he learnt to know and understand young men of all classes, for in the Belgian Army at that time more officers were drawn from what may be termed the middle class

than from the narrower circle of the aristocracy. He formed decided opinions, upon which he acted when possessed of authority, as to reforms in the Army system which were long overdue. Demands for reform were being made continually; some War Ministers had actually resigned because they could not get these reforms passed. There was in particular an increasing outcry against the method of conscription which practically absolved the well-to-do from military service.

In the days of his cadetship Prince Albert saw and lived among the abuses consequent on this system, and when he grew older he did his utmost to get the system abolished. He used all his influence with his uncle, such as it was, to get the method amended. King Leopold was so far persuaded that almost his last act was to put his signature to a law which would have gone far towards abolishing the conscript substitute. It may be added here that one of the first things King Albert did was to carry this measure further and suppress entirely the unjust principle of pre-emption. He emphasized his aims in a speech he delivered in Brussels on January 7th, 1910, when he said:

"The year that has just closed witnessed the passing into law of a great measure of reform, one that we had called for with all our hearts. By suppressing the principle of pre-emption, all classes of society are now engaged equally in the performance of the same sacred duty, viz., the defence of our native land. For the future, a really national Army, both solid and numerous, will form for poor and rich alike a healthy school of patriotism. Belgium will be able to count on it for the preservation of her inviolable independence."

Although the story of these reforms belongs properly to a later chapter in the career of King Albert, it may be explained that when he was a young officer, the system in existence allowed conscripts who were sufficiently wealthy, by paying something between £60 or £70, to buy a substitute to serve in their place. Thus, as will readily be imagined, the Army came to be conscripted only from the poorest, and often least fit, of the youth of the nation—a system that did much to lower the morals of what had once been a magnificent fighting force. The injustice of this system also provoked an undercurrent of dissatisfaction in the community which found frequent expression in Parliament and at public meetings. Fortunately for Belgium the Army was reorganized after Prince Albert came to the throne.

Prince Albert became an officer in the Grenadiers, which was one of the first regiments to adopt a course of gymnastics after the Swedish method. The Prince did particularly well at the

fencing school, being alert and agile. He studied the military systems not only of his own country but of others. He was much interested to learn that in 1866, over 10,000 volunteers from England were invited to visit Belgium, where they took part in the Tir National, and received a most enthusiastic reception from all classes of the community. In the following year a party of Belgian volunteers, about 2,000 in number, returned this visit and were welcomed warmly by the people of London, and took part in shooting contests on Wimbledon Common, which was then the scene of the annual meetings that are now held at Bisley. In after years, when the English and Belgian soldiers were united in a life-and-death struggle against a common foe, this exchange of visits was recalled by the King as having served a valuable purpose.

To Leopold I the Belgian Army owed very much in the past. He had been in active command during the skirmishes with the Dutch soon after his accession to the throne, and considering all things, his troops did very well. It was his great ambition to have a hundred thousand well trained and equipped troops to put into the field at a moment's notice, and, by his incessant attention, Belgium possessed that force during his reign. It was King Leopold I who introduced into the Belgian Army the officers' mess. He made the reform partly because, as a Field-Marshal of the British Army, he had seen and admired the system during his residence in England. He considered it would heighten the dignity of the uniform by preventing officers dining in the different restaurants which they had patronized previously. The system worked well and increased the esprit de corps; it is now in force in all regiments of the Belgian Army.

After fighting with the Dutch, the Belgian troops engaged in no conflict on their own soil during the reign of Leopold I, who had done so much to maintain their efficiency. But contingents were sent to the expedition in Mexico and to the war in Portugal where they acquitted themselves well. The development of the Army was one of the few projects on which Leopold I did not grudge expense. He had the reputation of being thrifty to a degree with which his subjects, though they well understood, did not always sympathize. There is a story still current in Court circles that hits off rather neatly this Monarch's characteristics. He was presenting a flag to the President of the Grand Harmonie, a musical club composed of Brussels shopkeepers, and, handing it to the recipient, remarked: "I am afraid you will find it rather heavy."

"Your Majesty's gifts are always light," was the answer of the President, who, believing he had made a truly courtier-like

reply, was puzzled to receive a somewhat suspicious look from his Sovereign. Next day the Press read into his answer a *double entendre* which he had never meant to express.

The ardent enthusiasm for military efficiency possessed by King Leopold I was not inherited by his successor, Leopold II, whose interests lay rather in the direction of financial and commercial development of Belgium. It was indeed once said by a commercial magnate that if Leopold II had not been a Monarch he would have made a famous "captain of industry" and become a multi-millionaire. As it was, his kingly rank was used adroitly by him to promote certain enterprises which brought him great wealth. But there is no doubt that in the first thirty years of his reign the Army was given scanty attention and offered little or no prospects to ambitious young men desirous of serving their country.

During this period, General Wahis, then Colonel of the Grenadiers, did some excellent organization work, while Baron Dhanis and Commandant Chaltin distinguished themselves in Central African expeditions. It was certainly the numerical strength of the Army—for which the nation had to thank Leopold I—which prevented any encroachment on Belgian soil during the Franco-Prussian outbreak when, under the command of the Count of Flanders and General Chazel, troops numbering 50,000 were drawn up on the north of the River Semois. Juste quotes a Belgian orator as saying: "It was the Army that preserved us from foreign invasion, and has prevented our free and prosperous Belgium from being the theatre of sanguinary troubles. It then rendered a service which, if it was translated into francs and millions, would be superior to all the Army has cost for thirty years." This is a striking tribute to the foresight of King Leopold I and his advisers.

But it was not only by military training that Prince Albert was prepared for his future position. A modern Monarch must be a diplomat as well as a King, and to achieve this end the Prince went for instruction to Baron Lambermont, then Belgium's leading statesman. The Baron had helped in the freedom of the Scheldt and this contributed much to the prosperity of Antwerp. With consummate tact, fully equal to the difficult situation, he represented the Congo State at the Berlin Conference, and, when approaching the age of eighty, was asked to arbitrate between England and France in certain West-African disputes. Many years earlier he had received the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath for similar services. The late King Albert would be the first to admit that Baron Lambermont taught him much of the diplomacy and ability for handling State affairs which he

developed ultimately. On military affairs the Prince had the advantage of instruction from General Jungbluth, then Chief of the Belgian Army and afterwards chief military adviser. He directed the Prince's studies with a thoroughness and enthusiasm which he ever remembered and appreciated.

As has already been mentioned, the Prince studied also under M. Sigogne, whose somewhat liberal views had also their part in determining his future policy. It is an interesting fact that it was while actually acting as professor to the young Prince M. Sigogne published his well-known work on sociology, in which he expressed opinions that would be regarded as on the borderline of Socialism.

For his instructor in Political Economy the choice fell upon M. Waxweiller, Director of the Sociological Institute at Brussels, founded by M. Solvay. M. Waxweiller, whose knowledge of and interest in sociological questions made him so well fitted for the task, remained his adviser long after student days were over, and undoubtedly did much to familiarize the Prince with social welfare matters that were most important to the nation at large. The Prince in his early manhood did his best to understand questions concerning the social condition of the masses. With this end in view, he would (when it was possible for him to do so without being recognized) engage in conversation with people of all classes. Though he was inclined to be reserved, he considered it his duty to allow no opportunity of increasing his knowledge of his country and his people to escape him. This pursuit of knowledge led sometimes to amusing and occasionally to embarrassing incidents. On one occasion he got into conversation with the driver of a fiacre, and, as was his wont, tried to glean some knowledge of the man's way of life. But the man proved somewhat uncommunicative, and the Prince turned away disappointed.

"Ah," said the man to an acquaintance standing near, "I wasn't going to tell that fellow anything. I could see he wanted to become one of us, and there's too many of us already in this job!"

In a Catholic country, inclined to be conservative in its religious views, the choice of certain liberal-minded instructors on religion and sociology caused some comment. The Prince accordingly consulted M. Beernart, ex-Prime Minister, whose electoral reforms had shown him to have a steady finger on the pulse of the nation. He gave the Prince sound advice, namely to keep his present advisers, but add to them men of other shades of opinion so that his outlook might be broadened, and no one particular party might gain undue influence over him.

With the sound sense which always characterized him, Prince Albert took this advice and added to his list of professors two priests, Father Rutten and Father Veersmerch. Father Rutten was one of the most learned of the Dominicans, and with him the young Prince discussed sociology regularly. Father Veersmerch's writings on the Congo question are well known, but it was his exhaustive books on the condition of the working-classes of Belgium that made him so valuable an adviser to a young man who desired to know the real truth concerning the people over whom some day he might be called to govern.

Those who knew the Prince at this period bear testimony to his conscientious industry. He was not content to read text-books, but sought first-hand information from experts in different fields of activity. This inquisitiveness made him in later years able to converse intelligently with men who had made a life study of their particular subjects.

There is no more enlightening form of education than travel, and it is particularly important to young men called to responsible duties. King Leopold had made a tour of Europe, Asia Minor, and Egypt when he was twenty years of age. So his heir likewise visited most of the Courts of Europe, where he made an excellent impression by his modest bearing and willingness to learn from his elders. In all these tours he did not confine himself to Court circles, but did his best to gain some knowledge, however slight it might be, of the country and its people. Always interested in mechanical arts, he seized every opportunity of visiting docks, railway yards and engineering works in any country where he happened to be staying. From his youth he was interested in mining, and, on more than one occasion, descended various mines and worked for a brief space with pick and shovel. His thoroughness, and his passion for detail, was sometimes rather tiring to his staff, who were obliged to follow him into all kinds of unlikely places, and to endure a fatigue which he did not seem to notice. On one occasion he visited incognito some big works and was being shown round. He asked many questions, and at the moment the foreman of another department chanced to pass by. When the latter got back to his own shed, he warned the workers, saying: "There's another inspector coming through, and, my goodness, he sounds hot stuff!"

The Prince at no time in his life suffered from that crippling delusion, common to kings as well as to other people, that it is their nation alone which is perfect. He was always eager to study the ways of other countries, so that he might compare them with his own. Being very interested in railways, he visited America in 1898, largely for the purpose of studying their rail-

road problems and the way in which they had solved them. Belgium, it must be recalled with pride, was the first continental country to lay down railroads. It had been one of King Leopold's first tasks to appoint a commission to prepare plans, and it was chiefly owing to his insistence that the first train ran from Malines to Brussels in May, 1835. Prince Albert, following this example, realized the enormous importance of railways in the development of his country. On more than one occasion he has himself driven a train. It is said by his friends that once when his fiancée was travelling he insisted on driving the train to demonstrate to her his ability to take care of her under all circumstances.

During his visit to America his guide in his railroad investigations was Mr. James J. Hill, the railway magnate, in whom the late King Albert found not only an expert on railways but a man who shared with him his interest in the fine arts. Prince Albert watched several baseball matches, and saw in baseball a slight resemblance to the *jeu de bal* of his own land. The origin of the two games may have been similar, but the outcome is widely different! The frenzied enthusiasm shown by American crowds in baseball was a revelation to Prince Albert. On his tour the Prince made many American friends, some of whom during the War years renewed his acquaintance under very different conditions from those of earlier days.

There were, of course, the usual reports as to the Prince being smitten with the charms of various "Dollar Princesses," but these reports had not the slightest foundation outside of the reporters' fertile imagination. He derived much amusement from the picturesque titles given to the incidents of his American tour, and began that enjoyment of American magazines which continued to the end. Americans who conversed with the late King were surprised at his clear recollection of this visit undertaken in his early manhood. It was true that American women found him charming. His modesty, good looks, and manly bearing made an excellent impression in the States, and, as perhaps members of his suite remember, a very good-looking daughter of one of the most exclusive members of American Society seemed to lose her heart to the tall young man with courtly manners and the unusual habit of blushing!

Later on came Prince Albert's visit to Belfast, not as a Prince or even under one of his usual incognitos, but as a newspaper reporter travelling under the name of "Mr. Albert Coburg." An old-established Irish weekly newspaper still proudly claims that it once published articles by him. In addition, as was mentioned in an earlier chapter, to visiting Belfast, the Prince went to

Liverpool, Glasgow, and other chief ports of the United Kingdom, in order that he might see for himself the business of shipbuilding and make investigations in import and export trade. He also visited various fishing villages, for the fisherfolk of his own country have always been on the friendliest terms with him from boyhood.

Prince Albert in these years of heirship was too busy studying men and things to have either the desire or the time to write about them. It would have been very interesting to have had his own reflections on his travels abroad. It may be added that recently an enterprising American publishing firm offered him a blank cheque to write his memoirs, more particularly his reminiscences of the Great War. The offer was not accepted.

"But, sir," said the agent, "see how many have already given to the world their account of those immortal days."

The King smiled. "I see," he said. "Well, I prefer the distinction of being silent."

During his uncle's lifetime Prince Albert was not very much in the public eye. He had no wish for the limelight and in his modest attitude he was assisted by King Leopold's autocratic method. There is no doubt that the King kept him deliberately in the background as much as possible. While he remained King, he did not choose that anyone else should share his dignities. Perhaps, too, the sincerity of the young Prince, his conscientiousness, and steadfast determination to do his duty by his country, irritated the older man, who had by no means allowed his kingship to interfere with his pleasures. At any rate it is certain that the Belgian nation had little knowledge of the man who was to govern them. It is equally certain that Prince Albert served his country far better by his studies, travels, and investigations, than he would have done by a close attendance at Court and social functions, with which he might otherwise have filled his time.

There is hardly any position in the world so difficult to maintain with dignity as that of an Heir-Apparent, especially when the ruling Sovereign is jealous of any division of authority or duties. As in the case of Queen Victoria, who grudged her eldest son even the early information as to diplomatic events, so King Leopold II retained to the last all the threads of Government in his own hands. Fortunately, Prince Albert was no more impatient than was the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VII) to attain to the unceasing and often irksome duties of a ruler. Meanwhile, each year was moulding his character and preparing him for a reign which contained more crucial tests of kingship than had ever befallen King Leopold II.

CHAPTER V

A HAPPY MARRIAGE

Where Prince Albert met his bride—The " Oculist Duke " and his philanthropic work—Childhood of the Duchess Elizabeth—Betrothal received with national satisfaction—The Duchess as a pianist—The marriage festivities—A charming ceremony—Reception in Brussels—The Princess's tact—Busy in charitable work—Adorning a difficult position.

IT is the fate of Princes, especially of Heirs to the Throne, to have their possible matrimonial engagements much discussed by the public and the Press. Almost before Prince Albert was out of his teens, rumour began to engage him to various Royal Princesses—in one instance to the daughter of a Belgian noble family. But Prince Albert had his own ideas on this most personal matter, and refused to marry until he met the woman to whom he could in all sincerity offer his heart as well as his hand. This attitude annoyed his uncle, who had little patience with such scruples. Prince Albert remained firm, however, and nothing King Leopold could say or do would move him. Once a particularly tempting Royal alliance was proposed to him, one that from a national point of view would certainly have been held in high favour.

"I shall announce the betrothal," said the King.

"Then I shall deny it," answered the Prince. "I know the lady, I respect her, but I like her too much to condemn her to a loveless union."

For once the autocratic Leopold stormed in vain.

But in the summer of 1900, Prince Albert went mountaineering in the Bavarian Alps, and there he met the Duchess Elizabeth of Bavaria, and meeting her knew immediately that he had found his bride.

The wooing was idyllic. Not only did they develop swiftly a strong mutual attachment, but that attachment was based on the sure foundations of common tastes, common ideals, and common interests. One day, after the Prince had risked life and limb to pluck for the Duchess a particularly fine specimen of her favourite flower the edelweiss, he gathered his courage and begged her to be his wife. The result of her happy assent has

been a union which has been crowned with happiness, and a home life as felicitous as any to be found within the borders of Belgium.

The Duchess Elizabeth was the second daughter of Duke Carl Theodor, head of the ducal line of Bavaria. The Duke Carl Theodor was then sixty years of age, having been born at Possenhofen on August 9th, 1839. He had become head of the House of Wittelsbach in 1859, when his elder brother renounced his rights. He married, as his second wife, Princess Maria Josepha of Braganza, Infanta of Portugal, in 1874. His wife was the third of six beautiful sisters. The Duke and Duchess had five children: Princess Sophie, 25 years old; Princess Elizabeth, aged 24; Princess Marie, aged 22; Prince Ludwig Wilhelm, 16 years old; and Prince Francis Joseph, aged 12, who was the godson of the Austrian Emperor, after whom he was named.

The life led by the Duke and Duchess and their family was entirely different from that of Royalty generally. The Duke made a rule of operating early in the day, sometimes as early as 6.30 a.m. in the summer. The Duchess was frequently his assistant during operations, and was as deeply interested in securing success as the "Oculist Duke" as he was sometimes called. There were three hospitals founded by the Duke for treating eye troubles, the chief hospital being at the Royal Schloss, Tegernsee, and the others at Munich and Merau. The hospital at Tegernsee was in the old Schloss, and could accommodate sixty patients. Each ward had six beds. The Duke insisted on receiving no fees, but patients who could afford to pay were expected to contribute to collecting boxes at the hospital, the money being devoted to the poor. The Duchess had gone through a course of training as a nurse, so that she was able to render skilful aid to the patients.

Duke Carl Theodor had been devoted to the study of medicine from early manhood, and had it not been for his Royal rank it is certain that he would have gained high distinction in the profession. He entered the Army in 1853 and held the rank of General. He took part in the campaigns of 1866 and 1870, but a military career by no means satisfied him. So he insisted on studying at Munich University and in Vienna, and duly took his degree in medicine. The mere theory of medicine was, however, not enough for him. He wished to practise, but before he was permitted to do so he had to receive special permission from the Emperor. After much persistence on his part this was granted to him in 1880.

The scourge of blindness was rife among the peasants of

Bavaria, so the Duke, being a man of lofty ideals as well as of great skill, determined to devote himself to doing his utmost to alleviate it. He made a special study of the eye and became a most proficient operator. He spent his life going about among the poor, giving them the benefit of his skill and the consolation of his warm sympathy. He performed in all many thousands of operations, and gained not only the gratitude but the affection of his patients. Not only Bavarians, but sufferers from other parts of Europe sought the Duke Carl Theodor's services, and he led a most busy life.

Duke Carl Theodor was the nephew of the famous King Ludwig of Bavaria—the "Mad King," who discovered Wagner, and even, in his eccentricities, showed that interest in the arts and that care for the poor which have always distinguished the House of Bavaria. It may here be added that the Duke for nine years saw with growing satisfaction the happiness of his daughter in her adopted country. He passed away, after several weeks' illness, on November 30th, 1909.

The Duchess Elizabeth was educated privately under the direct supervision of her father, whose constant companion she was. She passed her early life in Munich, where she met many distinguished artists and musicians. She studied the pianoforte and violin, both of which instruments she plays with considerable skill.

In the summer months the Duke Carl Theodor and his family removed to Meran and Tergensee, where they lived with great simplicity, the Duke maintaining his daily interest in his patients. One of the Duke's sons took Holy Orders so that he might work as a curate in a poor parish. Amid such inspiring traditions the Duchess had grown up with a great love of her own land, a deep interest in music and art, and a passion for country life, and the simple homely things with which her girlhood had been surrounded. She often accompanied her father and brothers in their mountaineering expeditions in the Alps which lie between her own land and the Austrian Tyrol. As she grew older, she became her father's assistant in his visits to his peasant patients, in this way gaining not only the sympathy with suffering which is one of her strongest characteristics, but also a large amount of medical and surgical knowledge of which she made such excellent use during the Great War.

There was an outburst of national joy when at last the Belgian Press stated without fear of contradiction that Prince Albert had found his bride. In June, 1900, it was announced in the *Belgian Monitor* that "His Royal Highness Prince Albert of Belgium was affianced to Her Royal Highness Princess Elizabeth,

Duchess of Bavaria." The nation received the news with great satisfaction, and, throughout the four months of his engagement, the Prince received many tokens of affection and esteem from his future subjects. Belgians who were accustomed to marriages that were "arranged," were specially delighted to think that their Prince had pleased himself in the selection of a wife, and that it was a genuine "love match." Although Prince Albert did not appreciate the publicity given to his engagement, he was delighted to feel that his forthcoming marriage had the approval of the nation. He spent many quiet hours alone with the Princess, wooing his bride with the privacy accorded to other lovers but so seldom granted to himself.

King Leopold approved the match, but he made one characteristic comment. He had a curious dislike of music, particularly of the pianoforte, and speaking one day to his nephew of his forthcoming marriage, he asked if the Princess Elizabeth was a good musician.

Proudly, Prince Albert answered in the affirmative. "She is a wonderful player," he added.

Leopold looked down his nose—a habit of his at such moments. "Well," he remarked, "if she insists on playing to you, remember that you insisted on marrying her!"

Her Majesty plays often, and the late King Albert regarded it as his great good-fortune that he insisted on marrying her.

It was arranged that the marriage should take place in Munich, much to the delight of the Bavarian people, who are sentimental in the highest degree and were delighted to feel that their much-loved Princess was to contract a marriage giving promise of so much happiness. Their satisfaction was increased when on the day preceding the wedding, they beheld for the first time the man whom the Princess had chosen. They gave Prince Albert a right royal welcome. The marriage was fixed for October 2nd, 1900—a national feast day. On the preceding Sunday, the saint's day of the King of Bavaria, the streets of Munich were already fully decorated and Te Deums were sung in all the churches. The next day was kept more or less as a public holiday, with Court banquets and many of the popular feasts of which the Bavarians are so fond.

On the evening preceding the wedding there was celebrated an old national custom—the "Polterabend" or Betrothal Feast. This was held in front of the Palace of the Duke Carl Theodor, and gratified the people, who were delighted to find the Prince taking part in an old-time custom. After the populace had feasted and toasted the bride and bridegroom in national fashion, the crowd was held back from the Palace, where they had

gathered in their hundreds, by the soldiers who with great difficulty cleared a wide space for a surprise that had been prepared for the Prince.

When all was ready, the choral societies of Munich, of which there were between thirty and forty, accompanied by a military band—each man bearing a lighted torch—marched into the space cleared for them. It was a most striking spectacle—the singers with faces illumined by flaring torches, the silent crowd waiting with rapt attention for the music in which every true Bavarian delights, and all around the thick darkness of an autumn night. Grandly the music swelled into one of Beethoven's stirring marches, and, before the first bars had died away, lights flashed on the balcony of the Palace ; and Prince Albert appeared leading his lovely bride by the hand.

The Princess, slight and tender, looked less than her height by the side of her stalwart fiancé, who smiled tenderly down at her as the cheers of the crowd rose again and again. One chronicler described the Princess as being "small for a Queen," but true queenliness is an affair of spirit rather than of the body. Time has shown that, in the most trying circumstances, Queen Elizabeth has exhibited a truly regal dignity and a bearing that proclaims her Royal by more than birth. With delicate but regular features, her soft colour heightened by the emotions of the occasion, her chestnut hair surrounded by a diamond diadem, she presented a radiant figure in her ermine mantle which she later removed to reveal her flowered silk robe. She made a lovely picture, which none who saw her that night will ever forget.

Prince Albert was in the uniform he most favoured—that of his regiment, the Grenadiers—on which he wore the new honour which the Regent of Bavaria had bestowed upon him, the cordon of St. Hubert. He presented a striking and kingly figure as, with the Princess's hand held fast in his, he acknowledged repeatedly the cheers of the crowd.

Only those who have heard and appreciated the music of Munich will be able to understand how fine was the performance on this occasion. On its conclusion a chosen delegate of the choral societies delivered an address to the Royal couple, and, as he spoke, many of the guests assembled for the morrow's ceremony came out on the balcony and grouped themselves around the young couple. First there appeared the Count and Countess of Flanders, whose happy smiles left no doubt as to their feelings concerning the union. They were accompanied by Princess Josephine, whose affection for her brother was very deep. A notable figure was the Regent of Bavaria, the Princess's

father, Duke Carl Theodor, whose pleasure in the prospect of the marriage was dimmed slightly by the thought of losing the daughter who had been his close companion and assistant in many a work of mercy. The King of Roumania followed, and another ruler who was rendered noticeable by the fact that, alone in all the brilliant assembly, he was in ordinary evening dress—the Prince of Monaco.

In the speech of the delegate of the choral societies—which was remarkable as much for depth of feeling as for its eloquence—he spoke of the interest which the Princess had always taken in the Bavarian poor, and the real sympathy she had displayed for all forms of suffering and distress. He stressed the fact that Bavarians had ever been among the most loyal of people, with a devotion to their Royal House which was unquestioned. Amid shouts of enthusiasm from the listening people, he concluded his speech thus:

"May our dear princely child, who is quitting the place where her infancy has been passed, love her new country with unbounded affection; but may she not forget the leaves of our forests, the verdure of our mountains, our May days, and the fidelity of our hearts!"

Queen Elizabeth has indeed fulfilled this hope, for she has loved Belgium with an unbounded affection, manifesting it in countless ways. But she has not forgotten the forests and mountains of her childhood, and only she knows the deep bitterness, the unassuageable grief, caused to her when, during the terrible years of the War, she was forced to renounce her country, and turn for ever from the scenes she had known and loved so well in her youth. She could never forget her people, but it was anguish to know that some of them were actually in arms against her adopted country—it might even be, some of the simple, loyal peasants who gathered together that night to greet her, were among those Bavarian troops who, during a certain period of the War, occupied the garrison of Brussels.

On the day of the wedding the population of Munich turned out *en masse* to cheer the bride and bridegroom, and wish their dear Princess happiness in her new life. There was, of course, the usual mustering of troops, but what pleased the Bavarians more was the files of archers assembled before the Palace, recalling what had once been a favourite sport. They must have reminded Prince Albert of the earlier sports of Flanders, when the crossbowmen of that city were among the most celebrated in the world. So long did the old tradition survive that there was until recently a Guild of Crossbowmen at Bruges.

The first part of the marriage—the civil ceremony—took place in the Throne Room of the Palace. Prince Albert uttered his responses in clear firm tones, while the Princess, shy yet composed, answered with equal distinctness. At the conclusion of the ceremony, Baron Crailsheim, Chamberlain, Privy Councillor, and Minister for Foreign Affairs, made a speech which, dealing in large measure with the old associations between Belgium and Bavaria, has a melancholy interest for both peoples at the present day.

"This is not the first time," he said, "that personal relations have been established between the Houses of Bavaria and Belgium. The first lasted almost a hundred years in the Low Countries, which then included both Belgium and Holland. During the following century, there was a question of the cession of the Low Countries to the House of Wittelsbach. In the ballads of the Dutch people there is still recalled the memory of the gallant but unfortunate Jacquelin de Baviere, who could say with pride: 'It is innate in me to make provision for the good of my people and for the defence of my towns.' At Liège, in a hospital founded by the Duke Ernest of Bavaria, Bishop of that town, appears still the name of the House of Bavaria. The memories of the illustrious Max Emanuel who commanded as Governor-General of the Low Countries, are imperishable. He merited well of these countries which suffered such bitter trial. He came to their aid with all his resources and all his capacities. He devoted himself to the re-creation of their commerce, not hesitating at the greatest sacrifices. He used the resources of his native country to cause to disappear from Brussels the ravages which that unfortunate city had sustained in its war with France."

The religious ceremony took place in the Chapel of the Court. The choir sang the nuptial mass, and, after the Benediction, the Archbishop gave an address to the newly wedded pair, in which he also referred to the ties between Belgium and Bavaria. There was one sentence in the Archbishop's address that, during the opening months of the War, Queen Elizabeth repeated to one of her ladies-in-waiting with tears in her eyes.

"To-day," said the Archbishop, "the hearts of the Bavarian people beat in unison with those of the Belgian people."

"So far away—those happy days," said the Queen. "And now a curtain of steel has fallen between me and my people!"

Prince Albert and his bride arrived back in Brussels on October 5th to find the capital *en fête* to greet them. They left the train at the station in the Place Regier, and passed out to

find the streets hung with flags, festooned with bunting, and gay with masses of flowers. From avenues of Venetian masts there floated the flags of Belgium, Bavaria, France, and Germany, while every inch of space was packed tight with people determined to give the young couple a fitting welcome to the capital of the country over which they were some day to reign.

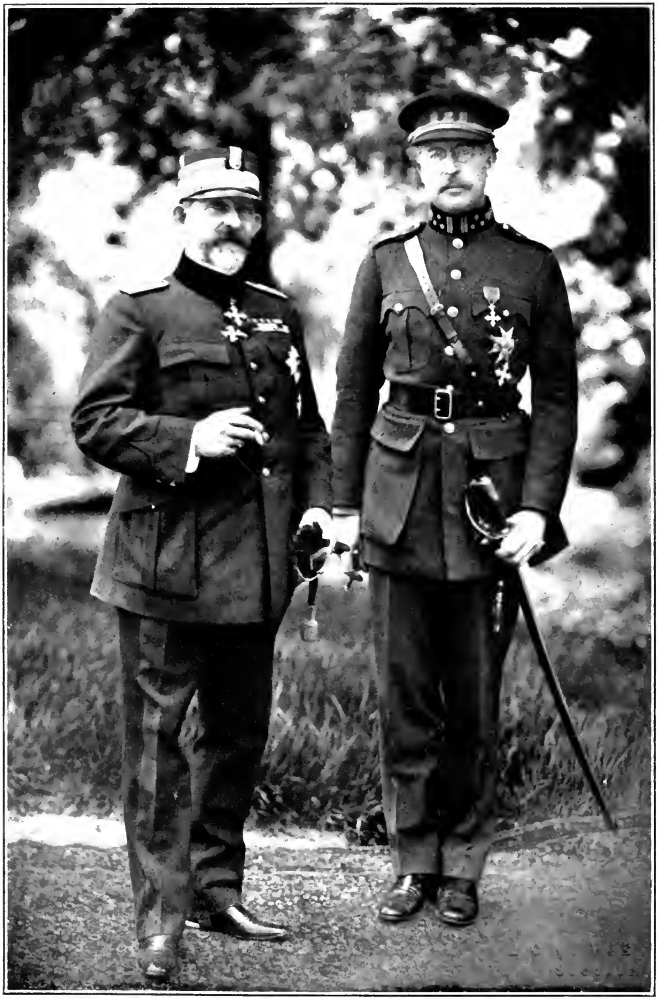
At the station King Leopold was waiting to greet them, accompanied by State officials and Court dignitaries. After greetings had been exchanged and presentations made, the Burgomaster of Brussels read an address, welcoming the Princess to the city and congratulating the Prince on his marriage. The drive through the streets to the Palace was taken between lines of cheering spectators who spared no effort to give the Royal party a welcome. The Princess was pelted with flowers, a greeting that seemed to please her, while the shouts of "*Vive le Prince! Vive la Princesse!*" were taken up along the route until the very echoes rang with the greeting.

The Princess made a most favourable impression. Her manner was a delightful mixture of shyness and gratified pleasure, and as she bowed again and again her acknowledgments, blushing and smiling, the crowd shouted itself hoarse. Before the end of the journey there occurred a slight incident which gave proof that the Princess knew how to bear herself under embarrassing circumstances with as becoming dignity as when receiving the homage of the people. At the time of the wedding, the Socialists, always a vociferous party, had been making themselves heard to an unusual extent, and it was expected that they might attempt a demonstration during the Royal procession. But all went well, until the moment when Prince Albert and his bride had alighted from the carriage and were about to enter the Palace. Then a group of men, many of them known to hold Socialistic views, were in the rear of the carriage. One of their number picked up a bouquet which, tossed to the Princess, had missed its mark and fallen at her feet. He handed it to her and the Princess took it with a graceful gesture. At this moment there arose a loud cry of "*Vive l'amnestie!*" and for a second there was a sudden hush. King Leopold stared haughtily, then in an instant Prince Albert saluted and the Princess gave a little bow and, quite unruffled, continued her way to the Palace, followed by still louder shouts of "*Vive la Princesse!*" This was the first, but by no means the last occasion upon which Prince Albert's bride early showed her ability to remain completely at her ease in trying conditions. She had learnt the lesson of controlling her nerves in public.

At the time of Prince Albert's wedding Great Britain was

E.N.A.

KING ALBERT



KING FERDINAND OF RUMANIA WITH KING ALBERT DURING THE FORMER'S VISIT TO BRUSSELS

passing through anxieties as to the war in South Africa, while at home there was a General Election. Consequently, the British newspapers were unable to give much space to an event which otherwise would have been "featured" in the Press. In Belgium, too, there was a certain spirit of unrest which found expression in Socialist demonstrations during the week of the wedding, although there was no personal hostility shown towards the Heir-Apparent and his bride.

It has been the custom to speak of all Royal marriages as "love matches," though events, often following with startling rapidity, have sometimes proved them to have been devoid of even the elements of affection. No one who was privileged to attend Prince Albert and his bride in the years succeeding their union could have been left in the slightest doubt as to their marriage having been a true union of hearts. The couple were suited admirably to each other, yet each was the complement of the other. They shared the habit of active benevolence. They realized fully the serious responsibilities of their positions, and for their recreations they each had a real interest in the fine arts, a love of music, and a taste for nature and the simple pursuits of a country life, whenever their State duties permitted them to enjoy such pleasures.

The Princess had a vivacity that the Prince found refreshing and delightful. She had, too, a sympathy and tact that smoothed the somewhat difficult pathway of life in the Court circles at that time, and she was not only a Princess but a true mate of the man she had chosen.

The honeymoon was hardly over before the Princess set herself to enter into her husband's life in every detail. Many of the problems of the day they studied together, and Prince Albert found in her not only a companion but an intellectual stimulus. In all charitable projects the Princess took an immediate interest, and was enrolled speedily as patroness of many philanthropic projects. It was not only on committees that she tried to serve the sick and suffering but, as in the days of her youth, she took a personal interest in cases that came under her notice. It was only Prince Albert's firm requests that prevented her from spending most of her days by the beds of sick and needy folk.

The position which the Princess occupied as wife of the Heir-Apparent was in many ways difficult and might have dismayed one less endowed with tact and graciousness. The Princess met the circumstances with a discretion which made her ultimately much admired in Court.

The prolonged absence of King Leopold from his country had

almost destroyed Court life in Brussels. The Royal Palace was more frequently closed than open. The Princess lived quietly and graciously, doing her utmost to amend the natural disappointments around her, and to restore something of the social life which the Belgian Court had once known.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONGO'S DISCOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT

Early interest in the Congo—King Leopold's drastic action—Equips an expedition—Henry Morton Stanley's romantic career—Enters King Leopold's service—Discovery of the Congo's splendid possibilities—The slavery controversy—Conference at Berlin—Criticism of Congo administration—King Leopold's peculiar position—Commission of Inquiry—The Congo State becomes a Belgian colony.

AT the time of Prince Albert's wedding there was considerable discussion of the state of affairs in the Congo and Belgium's relation to that vast territory. The story of the Congo is one of the romances of the nineteenth century. Its acquisition was due to the desire of the Belgian nation for a colony, and this desire found a response in King Leopold's own passion for the expansion of his country.

Over and over again, it has been stated that the Belgian people make bad colonists. This is not the case. The Belgians are certainly a home-loving people—no bad trait in any nation—but, once they reach foreign soil, "the Belgians, as proved by their past, know how to colonize." Anyone interested in this matter will do well to read a remarkable work published in 1898 by the son of a famous Belgian publicist, M. Alphonse de Haulleville, entitled *Les Aptitudes Colonisatrices des Belges et la Question Coloniale en Belgique.*

Before King Leopold ascended the throne he had, as Duke of Brabant, toured in the Far East. It was then that he formed a plan of colonizing, and, at one time, centred his hopes on the beautiful Island of Formosa. This project failed to materialize, and, as time went on, he began to consider Central Africa. The attention of the civilized world had been first drawn to the darkest part of the Dark Continent by stories of the unspeakable horrors of the slave trade; even the Pope took the matter up. Affected by the further revelations of Sir Samuel Baker, Sir Richard Burton, and David Livingstone, King Leopold decided to act.

At this time, the King's mental powers were at their height, and his life had not been darkened by domestic sorrows. Whatever

may have been his ultimate ambitions, posterity must give King Leopold credit for being moved at first by the best intentions. Had they so chosen, other nations might have co-operated with him in his remarkable enterprise, and that they did not so choose must be laid not to his account but to theirs.

After studying the conditions so far as they had been revealed, King Leopold summoned in 1876 a Geographical Conference at Brussels. Hither came the Presidents of the Geographical Societies of London, Paris, St. Petersburg, Rome, and Vienna, as well as some explorers and philanthropists who had made heroic efforts to suppress the slave trade. In words that were uttered at that time they were all deeply interested in the project "to abolish slavery in Africa, to pierce the darkness that still envelops that part of the world, and to pour into it the treasures of civilization." Although, at this Conference, King Leopold did not receive all the support of his project which it deserved, nevertheless there was formed the International Association for the Exploration and Civilization of Central Africa, of which the King became President.

During the next five years King Leopold equipped several expeditions for penetrating Africa, starting from Zanzibar. As a result, the stations of Karema and Mpala were established on Lake Tanganyika.

Then something occurred that altered the whole course of the expeditions. Henry Morton Stanley published his map of the Congo. He described the great inland waterway which he had discovered, and declared that "the Power which makes herself mistress of the Congo must absorb, despite the cataracts, all the commerce of the immense basin which expands itself behind the river." But no Power seemed to realize the importance of this statement, and it was left to King Leopold to consider its possibilities, and he determined to secure Stanley's services. The present generation has only vague ideas as to H. M. Stanley and his achievements, yet a study of his extraordinary career is full of interest. Born in a lowly Welsh home in 1841, he spent a wretched boyhood for nine years in St. Asaph workhouse. At the age of eighteen he went as a cabin-boy on an American boat bound for New Orleans. In that city he had the good fortune to attract the sympathy of a cotton-broker named Henry Stanley, who adopted him and gave him his name. At first the young man entered a business office, but, after the death of his friend, he fought in the Civil War and gained his first knowledge of military affairs. Fever laid him low and he was discharged from hospital in a condition, to quote his own words: "as low as it would be possible to reduce a human being to, outside of an

American prison." When he had recovered his health, he revisited his relatives in Denbigh, but was received with coldness and even hostility.

H. M. Stanley's love of travel next led him to enlist in the United States Navy, and by the age of twenty-four he had begun to write descriptions of his journeys in American newspapers. He secured from James Gordon Bennett, proprietor of the *New York Herald*, a commission to act as special correspondent in the expedition of British forces to Abyssinia. The news of Napier's entry into Magdala first reached England through the young correspondent's energy. The reputation thus gained opened Stanley's road to fame.

No news had been received for many months from Doctor David Livingstone, the missionary explorer, who was known to be somewhere in the vicinity of Lake Tanganyika. In the autumn of 1869, James Gordon Bennett gave him the terse instruction to "find Livingstone," at all costs. The search was long and dangerous, but ended successfully in November, 1871, when Stanley met the great missionary with the now historic greeting of "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"

H. M. Stanley's world-wide acclamation made his name and exploits of very deep interest to King Leopold, who read with avidity the book in which the story of *How I found Livingstone* was told. The next great task of Stanley occupied him for nearly four years, when, commissioned by the *New York Herald* and the *Daily Telegraph*, he made an expedition in 1874 to Equatorial Africa. His discoveries of the unlimited resources of the Congo were related in his volume *Through the Dark Continent*, published in 1878.

King Leopold's mind was now focussed on obtaining the services of Stanley, and when the explorer arrived in Europe he was met at Marseilles in August, 1878, by General Sanford and Baron Greindl, and invited to enter the service of the Belgian Monarch. Having received no encouragement from the British Government in further plans in the Congo, he had no hesitation in accepting the proposition. In November he was the guest of King Leopold in Brussels, discussing at great length the possibilities, which only awaited financial support, of developing the Congo profitably. The King and the explorer soon came to an understanding, and were mutually impressed by one another's entirely diverse characters. Eventually, King Leopold founded the "Comité d'Etudes du Haut Congo," of which he was not only the projector but also the financial backer to the amount of a million francs.

In 1879 another expedition set forth, equipped under the

personal guidance of Stanley, who had himself chosen the 140 natives who, with ten Europeans, formed the party. He reached the Congo in August and remained there for the next five years. To quote from Wauter's book *L'Etat Indépendant du Congo:* "Five years was sufficient to make the most brilliant explorations to the very centre of the continent; to visit peacefully a hundred new races; to obtain from native chiefs more than five hundred treaties of suzerainty; to establish forty stations; to launch five steamers above the cataracts on the river; to construct a road from the sea coast as far as Stanley Falls and to occupy the country from Bangala to Loulouabourg."

Truly a remarkable accomplishment, and one which redounds to the courage and skill of H. M. Stanley and his followers. The full narrative is to be found in his book *The Congo and the founding of its Free State*, which he published in 1885.

This then was the state of affairs, and it was highly satisfactory from King Leopold's point of view. Stanley had exceeded all the King's expectations, and if he could have continued his control many of the abuses that arose later on might have been avoided. Again and again he was urged to return to the Congo, but refused, in his own words: "to see mistakes consummated, to be tortured daily by seeing the effects of an ignorant and erring policy."

Up to this time, there was no international acknowledgment of King Leopold's rights in the Congo. Portugal began to make trouble by claiming large tracts of Africa for her own, supporting her claims by pointing to a column brought from her country and set up centuries before. There was an attempt to ratify an Anglo-Portuguese treaty, but as the other Powers raised objections this fell through. In 1884 Prince Bismarck, with Great Britain's assent, summoned an International Congress at Berlin. Before this was held, three Powers had recognized the Congo as a State.

The conference, over which Prince Bismarck presided, ended in a triumph for King Leopold, for his position was legalized, and his work and his motives were applauded. Sir Edward Malet, speaking for Great Britain, said the King had spared nothing—neither personal efforts nor pecuniary sacrifices—which could contribute to the realization of his object. "Nevertheless the world in general regarded these efforts with almost indifferent eyes," added Sir Edward. "Here and there, His Majesty aroused sympathy, but it was in some degree a sympathy rather of condolence than encouragement. It was thought that the undertaking was beyond his power, that it was too great to succeed. We see now that the King was right, and that the idea which he

pursued was not Utopian. He has brought it to a good end, not without difficulties. But these very difficulties have made success all the more brilliant."

This opinion, echoed more or less by representatives of the other Powers, had a great influence on the future of the Congo. Admiration for King Leopold was strengthened by his decrees against the sale of drink to the natives or the introduction, under any circumstances, of absinthe into the Congo State.

After this conference, King Leopold redoubled his efforts on behalf of his new territory and, now that his aims were clear, he had no difficulty in finding volunteers for every part of his schemes. Out of his own pocket he paid large sums to provide missionaries to follow in the wake of the soldiers and the pioneers. Much of the missionary work was done by British missionaries, and much by the White Fathers under the leadership of Cardinal Lavigerie. The latter had already done magnificent work on African soil and, under Belgian protection, now penetrated into Congo territory. From England the Baptist Missionary Society sent several able men, some of whom laid down their lives in the service of their cause. Mr. Baynes, of the Baptist Missionary Society, had frequent interviews with King Leopold as to the progress of the work in the Congo.

Unfortunately, slave trading, with its attendant horrors, remained unchecked and public indignation, roused by the unremitting efforts of Cardinal Lavigerie, demanded some drastic action to suppress it. Rightly or wrongly, the public looked to the Belgian ruler to take this step. The British Minister at Brussels addressed a speech on the subject to the Belgian Cabinet :

"The change which has occurred in the political condition on the African coast," he said, "calls to-day for common action on the part of the Powers responsible for the control of the coast. That action should tend to close all foreign slave-markets, and should result in putting down slave hunting in the interior. The great work undertaken by the King of the Belgians in the constitution of the Congo State, and the lively interest taken by His Majesty in all questions affecting the welfare of the African races, leads Her Majesty's Government to hope that Belgium will be disposed to take the initiative in inviting the Powers to meet in Conference at Brussels in order to consider the best means of obtaining the gradual suppression of the slave trade on the Continent of Africa, and the immediate closing of all the outside markets which the slave trade continues to supply."

Of the awful horrors of the slave trade, the present generation

can have little idea. Every year some 80,000 natives were carried off to wear out their lives under the most barbarous conditions, while many tribes were wiped completely out of existence by the methods of the slave-traders themselves.

A proof that at this time King Leopold was fully alive to the enormity of these evils is proved by the fact that his immediate reply to the British Minister's speech was to summon a Congress in Brussels in November, 1889, with a view to discussing the best and most effective means of protecting the African natives from the abominations of the slave-traders.

There seemed no other course but to use force and to use it strenuously. So King Leopold decided to make war on the marauders. The Belgian Government gave £1,000,000 towards the cost of the war, and a Belgian army advanced into the Congo.

The Arabs whom King Leopold's soldiers were out to attack were not merely lawless and scattered bands of slave-traders. Among the Mohammedans there was an ever-increasing desire to found an empire in the Congo, and they had overrun Africa with this end in view. The fighting that ensued was fierce, and the losses on either side very heavy. Hinds, in his *History of the Arab War*, puts the Arab losses at seventy thousand, and, though this may be somewhat exaggerated, it is certain that the casualties were heavy. This warfare lasted four years, from 1890 to 1894, and General Dhanis gained the final and decisive victory at Kabambary on January 25th, 1894.

Up to this time there is no denying the fact that the Congo State belonged practically to King Leopold. Though he had announced his intention of founding a Belgian colony there, arguments arose, not only in Belgium but in other countries, concerning his right to own this vast tract of land in a private capacity. To quell this controversy the King published his will in 1890, in which it was seen that he bequeathed the Congo State to his country after his demise. This unique announcement of a Sovereign's testamentary intentions certainly proves that at least King Leopold's motives were patriotic. There was a violent debate in the Belgian Parliament soon afterwards which resulted in a free zone for traders being established in the Congo. In the State zones the rubber was collected by natives who, in lieu of a tax, were compelled to work forty hours a month at the rubber plantations—a system which no doubt laid itself open to the abuses which followed.

The income from the Congo was enormous—various estimates ranging between £700,000 and £1,000,000 a year. It may be that there was some slight undercurrent of envy underlying the

agitation which arose against King Leopold and his Congo methods. The agitation increased daily. Societies were formed with the idea of drawing attention to Congo evils; newspapers were founded to expose them. The King was accused of having, through his agents, forced the natives to work in conditions little better than the slavery from which he had rescued them and of murdering and maiming them at will.

There is little doubt that there was a large element of truth in these charges, but it is equally true that, in the extraordinary ferment—almost the mania—stirred up in certain quarters by the "Congo question," statements were bound to be exaggerated. No report was too lurid or absurd to be believed.

Though Leopold himself had been the first to encourage missionaries to establish themselves in the Congo, they became his most violent denouncers. In the *Revue Generale* for 1885, there was an interview recorded between General Gordon and King Leopold in which the former said: "We have forgotten the principal things, it seems to me—the missionaries."

"Oh, no," King Leopold answered, "we have thought of that. The Association gives its aid and protection to all missionaries; moreover, it has given subsidies to the Bible Society and to the Baptists."

There was at this period a suggestion that General Gordon should become the Administrator of the Congo States, but in the end it was not Gordon but Sir Francis de Winton who went as Administrator-General of the Congo in 1884.

The agitation increased. Mr. Roger Casement made a journey in the Upper Congo in the summer of 1903, and issued an adverse report. One of his charges as to the conditions he found was afterwards discovered to be untrue. But at last King Leopold, autocrat that he was, who had hitherto ignored the criticisms levelled against him, decided to act. In 1904 he appointed a Commission of Inquiry into the alleged atrocities. Determined to maintain his rights, he added the clause that the inquiry was to be carried out under the directions of the Congo Secretary of State. Great Britain objected to this clause, and the Belgian Government withdrew it. The Commission started its inquiry, with power to judge impartially.

When the report of this Commission was published in November, 1905, its findings were by no means favourable to the administration of the Congo State, but it absolved King Leopold's agents from many of the viler charges made against them, and advocated the continued use of native labour. "Native labour is necessary for commerce in the Congo, and, since the natives of the Congo are unwilling and unaccustomed to labour, they must be

constrained to it. The only means of constraining them to work is the establishment of a labour tax or *corvée.*"

After the Commission of Inquiry, came a Committee to consider measures of reform. As soon as these were decided upon, the Congo officials were instructed to put them into practice.

Whatever his faults—and the world heard much about them from his persevering detractors—King Leopold was not a man to accept criticism meekly or fail to stand up to his critics. In 1906 he addressed a letter to his Congo Secretary of State, in which he said: "The whole responsibility, as all the burden, was left to me of founding a regular Government by private initiative, without a tie to any mother country, and in surroundings where it was considered impracticable. Now there can be no right more legitimate and more respectable than the right of an author to his own proper work, the fruit of his labour. My rights on the Congo are indivisible; they are the product of my labours and my expenditure; it is they, and they alone, which have made my legacy to Belgium possible and legitimate. It is my duty to proclaim these rights boldly, for Belgium has no rights in the Congo apart from those that come to her from me. The adversaries of the Congo push for an immediate annexation. These personages hope beyond doubt to capsize the work and thereby obtain rich wreckage. If you are interrogated as to my intentions, reply that I consider myself morally bound to inform the country when the moment comes to examine the question of annexation. I have nothing to say for the present."

There you have the man! Ajax defying the lightning could not be more determined. Since King Leopold's death, and in the light of reforms which were brought about, judgment concerning the Congo has become cooler, more carefully considered, and therefore more just. By those best fitted to judge, it is now recognized that at first King Leopold acted with good motives. He wanted to gain a colony for his country, and he did gain one, and with such consummate cleverness that he was the envy and surprise of Europe. The possession of unlimited power, however, caused him gradually to swerve from his course, and, from looking upon the Congo as a gift he had striven to gain for his country, he came to regard it as a means to contribute to his personal aggrandisement and as a splendid source of private income.

King Leopold's revenue from the Congo State was enormous, but he did not, as his detractors were so fond of saying, spend it all on his personal pleasures. He made vast and expensive improvements at Laeken; he built the Arc de Triomphe in

Brussels; and he rebuilt the Palace, engaging also in extensive building operations in various parts of Brussels. He reinvested in the Congo much of the money which he received.

To give some slight idea of the work carried out in the Congo State during its early years, these figures, taken from Government reports, may prove interesting: Boma, the capital of the Congo State, had in 1907 a Palace of Justice, a Red Cross Hospital where natives and white men were alike treated, Catholic and Protestant churches, a Government Palace, a school colony, seven administrative departments, nearly fifty European dwellings, tramways, a railway terminus, waterworks, and a telegraph service, besides a port at which Belgian, French, German, and British vessels called regularly. In the Congo there were 296 State posts and nearly 1,500 administrative agents; the telegraph lines covered 1,000 miles; there were over a 100 mission posts, and 328 chapels.

King Leopold's defenders—and he had these in all countries—maintained that the expenses of the Congo equalled its revenue. A Belgian Committee appointed to look into the matter said:

"It is the intention of the creator of the Foundation of the Crown to charge properties, conferred on the Sovereign in his private capacity for a purely disinterested and patriotic object, with the execution of works of national utility."

But in the end the King was forced to bow to public opinion, and Belgium annexed the Congo. It became formally a colony of Belgium in 1908.

While it may be that the King was influenced to a certain degree by the adverse criticism of other countries, it was actually the pressure of his own people that at length persuaded him to surrender the State he had hoped to control until the end of his life. Its annexation made Belgium for the first time a Colonial Power.

In the closing year of his reign, the King founded the School of Tropical Medicine in Brussels, the Colonial College, the Colonial Museum at Tervueren, and the World School—all of them having a link with the Congo. The Colonial Museum contains collections of the fauna and products of Central Africa. The building itself is a most imposing edifice in one of the best situations in Brussels. Baron de Hautville did magnificent work as its director, the *Annales* published under his direction being particularly helpful to all students interested in the development of Africa.

When first King Leopold financed exploration of the Congo, Belgium did not fully realize its worth. But when at last the King yielded to her, she had learnt to estimate her possession at

its true value, and to realize something of the enormous difficulties overcome by the man who had gained it for her. Succeeding generations will probably accord a high place to King Leopold as a far-sighted pioneer.

CHAPTER VII

EARLY YEARS OF MARRIED LIFE

The Prince and Princess's home in Brussels—Private entertainments and State functions—" Uncle Leopold's " favourite Laeken—Austrian Emperor's interest in the Princess—Playing the violin to an invalid—Interest in overcoming " sleeping sickness "—Birth of a son and heir—Careful control of the nursery—Educating the family—Young Prince's taste for mechanics—Prince Albert's literary preferences—Home joys.

AFTER their marriage, Prince Albert and his wife occupied as their town residence a mansion in the Rue de la Science, Brussels, where, in course of time, two of their children were born. As has already been stated, Princess Elizabeth came to a Court where its social life had been thrown more or less into confusion by the domestic disagreements, and her task was by no means easy. Indeed, the difficulties which she had to face were a source of considerable anxiety to Prince Albert, who wished naturally for his young bride, if not a pathway of roses, at least a road sprinkled much less plentifully with thorns.

During the years succeeding his marriage, a member of the Prince's suite wrote to a relative settled in England: "It is delightful, and even a little touching, to watch the Prince with his bride—he is so solicitous for her happiness, so unable to conceal his impatience, should there occur anything likely to cause her the slightest embarrassment. His affection not unnaturally makes him over-estimate the difficulties of the somewhat peculiar position in which the wife of the heir to King Leopold must find herself. But I can assure you his anxiety is groundless. The Princess, though charmingly simple and unaffected in manner, has great dignity and true queenliness. She is as great a success with what remains of Court Society, as she is with the poorest classes upon whom she seems inclined to spend most of her energy."

To Belgian people, home life is sacred, so sacred indeed that it is revealed only to intimates, with the result that the ordinary tourist is vouchsafed no glimpse into the intimate lives of the people. Prince Albert and his wife, from the commencement of their married life, shared this reticence. Their family life has

been unmarred in its happiness, and undimmed by even the most fleeting of those discords with which the Belgian Court had grown unhappily familiar.

The house in the Rue de la Science where the Royal couple set up housekeeping was one of the old palaces of Brussels. It was outwardly not a very striking residence, having been formerly the home of the Marquis d'Asche, much of whose furniture remained in it when the Prince brought his bride home. The Prince and Princess added much to its treasures, for both were lovers of art and had collected many choice specimens both of pictures, sculpture, and first editions of books. One of Prince Albert's early ambitions was to encourage the art of Belgium, a country which has produced many men of genius. So, in the fine salons of the house in the Rue de la Science, there were many notable gatherings of artists, musicians, and other men of note. Her constant companionship with her father, Duke Charles Theodor, had given the Princess a taste for the society of the learned men of her generation. While she did her full duty in the matter of State receptions and Court functions of that kind, it was in the more informal gatherings in their own home that the most gifted and cultured of her future subjects came to know and esteem the Princess.

There were still many State dinners each season, over which the Princess had to preside, as well as a lesser number of State balls of a most ceremonious character. Then there was the garden-party and Laeken with which the Brussels season always closed, and at all these functions Princess Elizabeth gave early proof of her fine qualities as a hostess.

The Prince and Princess have always been much attached to the Palace at Laeken. Prince Albert's liking for it was increased by the recollection of the love of Laeken shown by his grandfather, King Leopold I, whom he is said to have resembled in many ways, and whose wise and beneficent methods he studied closely. He recalled how Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort had relied on the wisdom and judgment of "Uncle Leopold," of whom there is such frequent mention in Queen Victoria's private letters. It is interesting to remember that it was while Queen Victoria was on a visit to "Uncle Leopold," at Laeken, that she gave her formal consent to the betrothal of the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VII) to Princess Alexandra of Denmark, after having discussed the matter with the Monarch in whom she had such confidence.

The Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria took a great interest in the marriage of Princess Elizabeth who, as was mentioned, was his niece, and he kept himself *au courant* with her life in her

new country. An Austrian envoy was present at one of the first State dinners over which the Princess presided, and, immediately upon his return to Austria, the Emperor sent for him and asked for an account of the banquet.

" Her Royal Highness has made the most favourable impression, Sire," he said. " Belgium is charmed with its future Queen."

The Emperor made that gesture of the hands which was peculiar to him. "Yes, yes," he answered. "I have already heard about Belgium, but it is my niece I wish to hear about. Does she appear happy?"

"Perfectly, Sire, and so does Prince Albert. No one seeing them could doubt it."

For a moment the Emperor, already old and bowed under the heavy blows of fate—of which the heaviest was the terrible tragedy at Meyerling, which also involved Leopold II since Prince Rudolf was married to his second daughter, Princess Stephanie—was silent. Then he muttered: "To reign over a peaceful country and in the heart of a good woman—such good fortune cannot last!"

From the very first, Princess Elizabeth took a deep interest in the poor of Brussels. Every morning, aided, when his duties permitted, by her husband, she would go through the mass of correspondence from charitable and philanthropic societies and from private persons seeking aid. Those who were at that time in her immediate circle can testify that no letter from a person in distress was allowed to remain unanswered, and often she would visit the applicant to see for herself the exact circumstances of the case.

The Princess did not only give money; she gave sympathy and that personal interest and understanding without which charity is cold indeed. One story of her gracious kindliness will reveal how she sought to bring relief and happiness to those in pain or sorrow.

During a visit to a blind woman, the Princess discovered that she was passionately fond of music but had no opportunity of hearing any. The Princess did not hesitate.

"Would you like me to play to you?" she asked.

Overcome with grateful surprise, the invalid could hardly answer. Next day the Princess brought her violin and, for the best part of an hour, filled the humble room with melody.

The Princess did much to help forward the cause of medical science in Brussels. During her visits amongst the poor she was impressed sorrowfully by the ravages of tuberculosis. At once she set to work to see what special steps could be taken to fight this dread malady. With the hearty co-operation of the Prince,

she succeeded in founding in Brussels a dispensary called the "Albert and Elizabeth Dispensary," and visited it constantly. Often she insisted on attending personally to the sufferers. She was so deeply interested in this medical work that once Prince Albert remarked to a lady-in-waiting, who had informed him that the Princess was visiting a hospital and would not return home till late: "I can see that my wife's attention will not be riveted firmly upon me until I break a limb or contract a fatal disease!"

The Prince and Princess followed with the closest attention the work of the Bacteriological Laboratory at Leopoldsville, where so much has been done to combat the scourge of sleeping sickness. On one occasion when the Princess was returning from Egypt where she had been staying to convalesce after an illness, she broke her journey on the return route at Liverpool specially so that she might visit that city's Tropical School of Medicine. She was eager to learn how the doctors there were progressing in their treatment of sleeping sickness. At the School she astonished everyone by the knowledge of the subject which her questions showed, and the keenness with which she listened to the details of any new discoveries in the fight against this disease.

When, in the summer of 1901, it became known that the birth of a child was expected in the Royal home, there was great rejoicing throughout the whole of Belgium. Prince Albert was the last of his line, and, failing the birth of an heir, the Belgian branch of the House of Coburg might have become extinct. Needless to say, there were earnest hopes and many prayers that the new arrival might prove a son. In November the excitement in Brussels was intense.

On the Sunday evening of November 3rd, 1901, the streets surrounding the Palace were thronged with citizens all anxious to be the first to hear the good news. Dense crowds waited cheerfully for hours until the booming of cannon announced the fact that a child had been born. When the number of reverberations revealed the glad tidings that it was a son and heir, the great crowd signified its approval in an unmistakable fashion.

As is the custom on the occasion of the birth of children in the Royal House of Belgium, the bulletin announcing the birth of the little Prince was posted on the door of his parents' house, and the register was opened in the hall for inquirers to sign their names. Callers came in one unending stream. Not only representatives of the princely houses of Belgium, Ministers of State, politicians, and great ladies hastened to write their names and express their congratulations, but also humble folk, among whom the Princess had visited, whose babies she had nursed, wished

to do what lay in their power to assure the Princess that they remembered her in that hour of mingled pain and pride.

To everyone of whatever rank who offered the Royal parents their congratulations, there was sent a letter of thanks. In many homes those letters are preserved until the present day, when that Royal baby has a son of his own. An Englishwoman who, during the invasion of Belgium, threw open her house to some of the unfortunate refugees, told the writer of a pathetic little incident connected with one of these letters. As was always the case, the poor woman had been forced to fly with what few possessions she could gather up at a minute's notice. Among the pathetic remnants of her home, she displayed proudly the letter thanking her for her congratulations on the birth of Prince Leopold.

"The Queen and I, we pray for one another in our hour," she said. "She for me with my Georges, and I for her with her young Prince, and always I keep this letter in memory of our prayers."

The Princess's first-born received the names of Leopold Philippe Charles Albert Meinrad Hubertus Marie Miguel. His title was Duke of Brabant, and his christening was attended by many Royal relatives.

On October 10th, 1903, two years later, another son, Prince Charles Theodore Henri Antoine Meinrad, was born. On August 4th, 1906, Princess Elizabeth, to her great joy, became the mother of a little daughter, who received the names of Marie José Charlotte Sophie Amélie Henriette Gabrielle.

Bavarian women have been noted for their maternal excellence, and the Princess proved herself a true daughter of her country. She and Prince Albert delighted in their parenthood, and the cares of State were never allowed to interfere with what they considered their duty towards their children. In this as in all things there was a happy partnership—both Prince and Princess being agreed that it requires the united efforts of father and mother to bring up a child properly.

It was, and no doubt still is, the ex-Kaiser's opinion that "children, the kitchen, and the church" were all that concerned a woman. Needless to say, Prince Albert held other views. Once a German princeling visiting Belgium had the bad taste to attempt to chaff him concerning his devotion to his children.

"In Germany," he said, "men have other matters to engage their attention."

"I noticed it—without envy," was Prince Albert's quiet retort.

The Princess superintended personally her nursery, and her nurses found her very strict in all matters of hygiene. She introduced the most scientific methods of child welfare. The

Princess did not cease her visits to the sick and the poor, but she was most careful never to enter the nursery, when returning from these errands of mercy, without first changing her gown and putting on a specially sterilized robe which she kept for the occasion. She saw that others exercised the same care, and her mother-in-law, the Countess of Flanders, would sometimes relate smilingly how, when once she went to visit her grandchildren in a brand-new fur coat, Princess Elizabeth forced her gently to remove it before she gathered the little Princess into her arms.

The house in the Rue de la Science not only had a good garden in the rear, but it faces a park, and in this the Royal children took a daily walk. Needless to say, the people of Brussels took the greatest interest in the little Prince and Princess, and it was a regular experience to see children with their parents and *bonnes* ranged in rows waiting until the Royal children came in sight.

Prince Albert's children were brought up very simply. Though they were given the education and instruction that could fit them in every way for the positions they were to hold, it was first and foremost the cultivation of "the sound mind in the sound body" at which both their parents wisely aimed.

Prince Albert always realized the duties of his position before its privileges, and he has done his best to see to it that his children have followed in his footsteps. With this end in view, as soon as they were old enough, the little Princes were taken upon all kinds of expeditions which their parents thought would help in their education. They visited schools and other types of educational establishments. The Prince would, to their great delight, often take his sons with him on his frequent visits of inspection to docks and engineering works. On these occasions the young Princes exhibited to the full the normal boy's passion for "seeing the wheels go round." Their father, who has always shown a decided bent for mechanics, had full sympathy with their boyish curiosity.

Prince Leopold was of a particularly adventurous turn of mind, and, on more than one occasion, managed to elude the vigilance of his guardian and slip away on some investigations of his own. Once his father, hurrying after him, found him perched precariously upon some machinery, much to the embarrassment of a workman who was begging the boy to come down.

"He would climb up, Sire," the man protested anxiously, "and I'm afraid he can't keep his seat."

"Leave him alone," said the Prince with his pleasant smile. "As a future Monarch, he must certainly learn to do that!"

The Prince had always encouraged his sons to make friends among all classes. For their intimate companions it was his wish that they should choose friends among the sons of men who lived lives of usefulness—men who, though they might not labour with their hands, yet served the State in some way or other.

For the sake of the children's health, and also that they might have the wonderful gardens for a playground, the Prince and Princess spent a very great deal of time in the summer at Laeken. When King Leopold II had stripped the Palace as bare as he could, in order that his daughters should not benefit, the Princess undertook the refurnishing and decorating of many of the salons and the Royal Family's private apartments, accomplishing the task with the taste and skill which are characteristic of her. In her schemes and plans for the beautifying of the Château, she had the co-operation of the Prince. Together they interviewed decorators, artists, and designers, all of whom found that, while in the matter of furnishing they had decided views of their own, only on one occasion did they fail to agree.

The matter under discussion was the decorating of the Princess's own private suite of apartments. Prince Albert was enthusiastic over a certain beautiful but very delicate colour scheme.

"It is the most perfect arrangement," he told the Princess. "You will choose this?"

"I think not," she answered. "You forget the children. If I chose this, I should always be saying 'Don't,' or the hangings would be spoiled."

While the Prince was not so ardent a book-lover as his father' the Count of Flanders, he was an interested student of literature' and was always proud of the great writers which his country has produced. He followed with attention the work of the Belgian Academy, and was acquainted with the activities of the Rue des Sables, the "Fleet Street" of Brussels. From their boyhood, his sons' reading was superintended by him, and thus he inculcated in them a taste for the best authors, not only of Belgium but of the world.

He amassed a wonderful collection of fine editions of the masterpieces of the Flemings and the Walloons, those two separate, and in many ways entirely distinct, races. He was a great admirer of Maurice Maeterlinck, once a professor at Ghent University, who wrote his first works in Flemish, and then abandoned that language for the greater freedom of French.

The works of Camille Lemonnier, whose word-pictures of various phases of Belgian life have never been equalled, were also much favoured by him, and he was greatly interested in the literary work of the Chevalier Edward Carton de Wiart,

who combined the career of a novelist with that of Minister of Justice.

Belgium has had her due share of poetic genius. Henri Conscience and Ledeganck, the Flemish poets who were often called the Scott and Byron of Flanders, and Van Beers, who resembles more closely Keats, are famous names of the past. The Prince accorded honour to the genius of the modern Emile Verhaeren, once complimenting him on some of his magnificent war poems.

"No doubt you are weary of these compliments," he said.

"It is true that many people have complimented me on my work, Sire," answered the poet, "but you seem to be amongst the few who have read it."

Both the Prince and the Princess were staunch patrons of Belgian art and Belgian music. The Belgians are essentially a musical nation, and the Princess never spared her efforts to aid the work of national composers. She took an enthusiastic interest in the work of the Brussels Conservatoire, spoke frequently of the remarkable musicians which it has produced. Of these, M. Ysaye, the famous violinist, is perhaps the best known to the British public. For many years M. Ysaye made an annual tour of England and was regarded as one of the greatest violinists of the day. He has often played before the Belgian Royal Family.

The Prince and Princess were fond of pictures, and the Prince often bought a specimen of modern art to add to his collection. He possessed some excellent examples of the work of the late Alma Tadema who, although of Dutch birth, received his early art training in Antwerp.

With parents of such wide culture, the Royal children received an education on the broadest and most comprehensive lines. Their bodies were never allowed to suffer at the expense of their minds, and a large part of their day was spent in the open air—walking and driving, or playing the games common to all healthy childhood, more often than not in the company of one or both of their parents.

Of the children's affection for their Royal parents there is little need to speak. Prince Albert tried to be friend and companion, as well as father, to his sons, and they have grown up to resemble him in many ways. Princess Marie-José was always her mother's constant companion, and is much beloved by the people of Belgium. Amid all the anxieties and labours that devolved on Prince Albert in these early years of his married life, he had that priceless possession—a home where love reigned supreme.

CHAPTER VIII

PRINCE ALBERT IN PUBLIC LIFE

Enters the Senate—His maiden speech—Importance of Belgian shipping and fishing industries—A call for Government aid—The example of rivals—Life at Ostend—Helping the fisherfolk—The Princess's visits to their homes—Prince Albert as a fisherman—Interest in Polar exploration.

LIKE all male members of the Royal House, Prince Albert became a member of the Senate at the age of eighteen, and, in common with the rest of the electorate, was given a vote at the age of twenty-five. He performed many public duties as Heir to the Throne, and delivered many speeches indicative of the lines on which he intended to govern, when he succeeded his uncle.

Prince Albert's rôle was not an easy one. No heir to a throne has ever found the position a grateful one. In Prince Albert's case it was rendered more difficult owing to being nephew instead of son of the reigning Monarch. Only a high sense of duty, coupled with strength of character, enabled him to pass through this trying period with conspicuous success. King Leopold II was fiercely jealous of his rights, and it needed tact and wisdom on the part of the Prince not to arouse that jealousy in any way, but to work for the good of the community. He employed methods as unobtrusive as they were sensible—methods by which he won the trust and affection of all classes long before he actually came to the throne.

"In the midst of commotions which have shaken so many Governments, Belgium has remained faithfully attached to her Prince and to the institutions bestowed upon her." These words, spoken in the Belgian Parliament in 1856, can be used truthfully respecting King Albert, who in all his public life did his best to deepen that attachment.

Prince Albert's maiden speech in the Senate was delivered in 1908. He had been in no hurry to address that assembly, preferring to listen to others on questions of the day. His speech was on the subject of Belgian shipping, and it is interesting as showing his wide grasp of the subject and the zeal he showed thus early in his career to promote the development of this

part of his country's industries. The Senate house was crowded by members of all parties, anxious to hear the Prince speak. All who listened were impressed by the earnestness of his words.

"I need not say that all that concerns the Marine merits, in the highest degree, the attention of our country. Belgium is dependent on her general commerce, and it is by her exports to a large extent that she gains her daily bread, and literally this is for us a question of life or death. In order to reach distant markets, we must have the power of disposing of transport, well-equipped and well-organized. From this point of view, the superiority of national Lines cannot be questioned. People are never better served than by themselves. A new industry is a real benefit, above all when it consists of an industry unlimited by its very nature, and one in which several countries find their principal resources. These are admitted truths. It is a long time since they were exposed here with singular firmness by the King, then Duke of Brabant. If I resume the same subject to-day, it is not only because I am myself animated by the vivid desire of seeing our maritime industries developed—it is because the object under discussion leads up to it. It pleases me to recall, in the first place, that our country has known how to participate in the elaboration of a new international law, following a rule which has not failed to gain for us unanimous homage in foreign countries. Although our Marine is actually of small importance—I would not like to quote the figures relating to it—Belgium, thanks to eminent jurists, has taken a considerable part in researches relative to the perfecting of the maritime law. These studies were the principal objects of two international congresses, assembled in 1885 and 1888—the first at Antwerp, the second in Brussels.

"At these congresses, at which there were present notabilities in the Maritime Law of Europe, there were adopted the outlines of a code to be submitted to all nations with a view to becoming on the ocean the world's law. . . . We know that progress is rarely accomplished by single efforts, and realization of the desires formulated at Antwerp and Brussels has been slow. Far from being discouraged, our compatriots formed an international committee, on which all countries having maritime interests were represented. I congratulated myself on seeing the headquarters of this committee established in our country. Substantial results have already been obtained. It was the Belgian Government which assembled in Brussels, in 1895, a diplomatic Conference, in which twenty-one States co-operated.

The plenipotentiaries signed a protocol, recommending unanimously to their Governments the adoption of the convention which was then drawn up.

"In the course of last summer the questions of maritime hypothecation and the privileges and responsibilities of armaments were studied and discussed at Venice. At that time again, despite the differences of the laws in force, unanimous accord was arrived at. This was a fact without precedent, and shows that there prevails all over the world a current of progressive and equitable ideas. In Belgium we see the Parliament occupying itself practically, and from various points of view, with the question of the Marine.

"For a long time there did not exist sufficient harmony between economics, realities, and legal prescriptions. The progress of navigation was impeded because antiquated laws regulated maritime transactions.

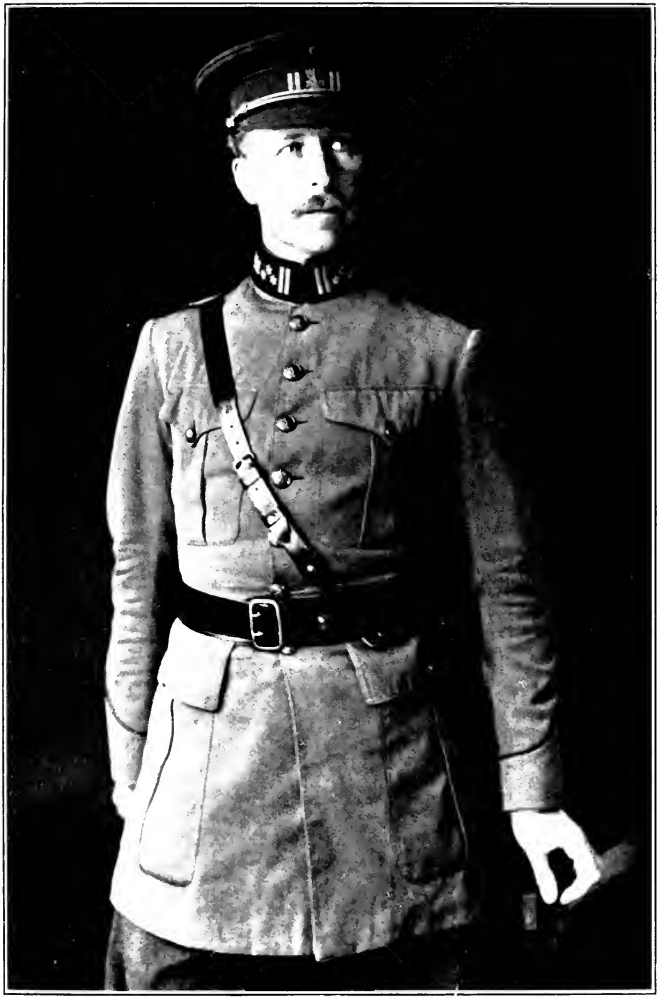
"To-day Parliament has before it a Bill on responsibilities and mortgage. It is brought before us with the deep advantage of thorough examination by experts under the patronage of the Belgian Association for the Unification of Maritime Law. That is to say, that the work in which the Senate is invited to co-operate and on which the exposé of our rapporteur throws a vivid light, is certain to receive the approbation of all those who have at heart the expansion of our Marine. This Bill, founded on pure principles, responds to the practical necessities of the greatest importance, and will exercise a great influence on the development of our Merchant Marine. In procuring for our shipowners the advantages of good legislation, which will encourage their initiative and so secure its success, mortgage is the real security of the credit necessary to all enterprises, indispensable to those which, like marine armaments, require considerable capital. We must congratulate ourselves, moreover, on the fact that the project contains provision for lighterage. Interior navigation plays a considerable rôle and has an important place alongside the railways, and contributes as much as these to ensure the transport industry.

"At the moment when our lighterage industry is passing through a transitional crisis, it would be opportune to offer to it the benefit of a good law on hypothecation and surrender. By appropriate legislation, the same benefits might be extended to constructions which are not commercial, such as those made for scientific purposes, as well as for pleasure boats. There must not be two laws for the same purpose. The affairs of the sea are of such importance in a country which has been endowed by nature with an extensive and accessible coast, that I may be

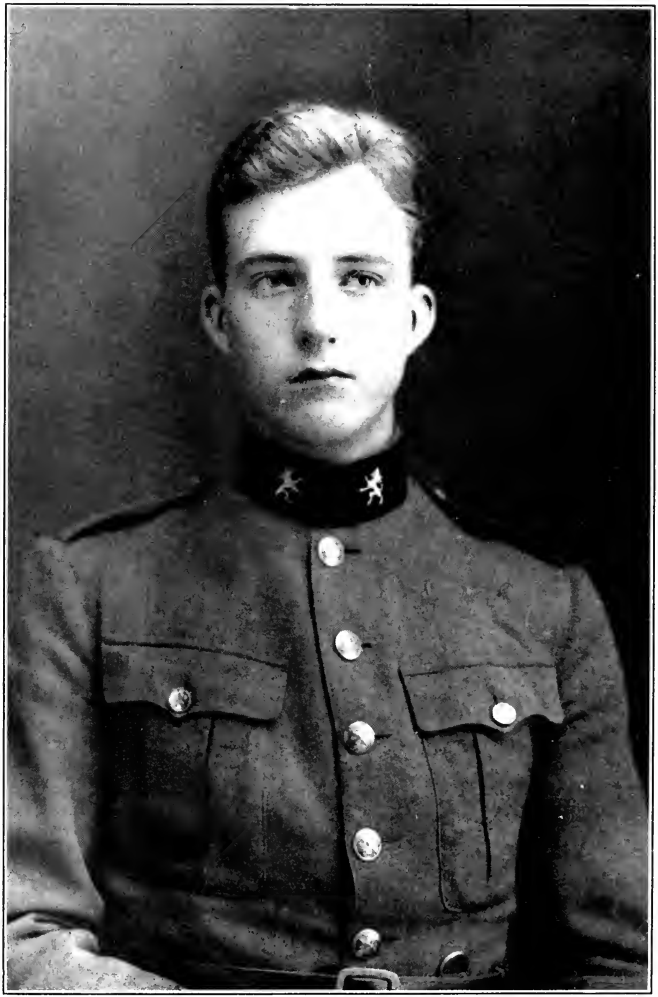
permitted to enlarge the debate a little and speak of other co-relative questions. The markets overseas belong to those who are best organized. It is necessary, then, that we should be superiorly equipped. Regular lines of maritime navigation are the necessary complements of railway lines and of interior navigation. They facilitate the establishment of national warehouses in foreign countries; they almost invariably create agencies. To whomever might doubt this, it is sufficient to point out that the armaments of England and Germany have been one of the principal factors of the industrial and commercial growth of these nations, and that in countries less populous than ours—such as Denmark and Norway—economic life is assured, thanks to a merchant flotilla which becomes unceasingly larger.

"To point out the way to available capital, too cautious up to the present, the Government has subscribed a large part of the capital of various navigation companies. That is an opportune intervention which I am happy to applaud; but the creation of large armaments is confronted by very serious difficulties. Competitors have preceded us on the ground of battle. They have experience, and the power which success gives. They have seized nearly all the positions, and they are even installed in our own country. It is only progressively, by stages, at the price of incessant labour, and perhaps at greater sacrifice, that we can arrive at capturing part of the international traffic which ought to be as large as our economic power.

"By reason of our fine ports, by our geographical situation alone, our armaments enter into the battle wherever it is hottest. They must commence in the middle of competition, where very powerful companies rival each other, and offer to the maritime movement facilities becoming daily greater. We can, therefore, only intervene with some chance of success by commencing with a personnel and material which can rival the best existing. Still, this is not enough. That which is essential is the special aptitude, value, and the practical sense of those who direct the affairs. I have had an opportunity of estimating personally these superior qualities among the men who are at Liverpool and at London at the head of powerful armaments. One of these, Mr. (later Sir) Norman Hill, one of the most competent experts of England, said in reply to me: 'It must never be forgotten that, more than in any other enterprise, maritime armaments have need of capable men.' There is, Gentlemen, a whole series of methods of experience to acquire, and that will demand much labour and sacrifice on the part of those who clear the way. But the Belgians have never allowed themselves to be rebuffed for want of effort. They have energy, and that essential



KING ALBERT IN SERVICE KIT



PRINCE LEOPOLD OF BELGIUM AS A CADET

quality—tenacity. Belgian industry can fight in all the markets of the world.

"We have engineers, men of commerce, and workmen of most superior quality. Cannot we also legitimately hope that an industry like that of maritime armaments will grow vigorously amongst us? If capitalists have held themselves apart up to the present, it is because, amongst other reasons, the legal system of credit left much to be desired. By the qualities which we have proved we possess in other domains, we could create for our working population remunerative labour in building up this industry not only those sailing under our flag alone, but those of foreigners who come in such large numbers to our ports and aliment them. Lighterage, so important to our own country, would not be, moreover, the least to furnish its contingent to the work of our shipbuilders. Alongside of these essential objects, the mercantile marine and its complementary industry, naval construction, it cannot be lost sight of that in maritime affairs professional education is of primary importance. At our epoch, knowledge, which is at the base of all industrial progress, has the character of a social necessity. In the great maritime countries, the technical education of future officers, even the recruitment of common sailors, has always been a preoccupation of the Government, shipowning companies, and also public opinion.

"A sensation has been created amongst us at the situation in which we find ourselves, from the point of view of the training of officers of the Marine. We have, it is true, two schools of navigation, one at Antwerp, the other at Ostend, but theoretical instruction, good though it may be, is not sufficient. Practical instruction is necessary, which obviously can only be given at sea. Men devoted to Belgian interests conceived the idea of creating a floating school. The idea was generous and courageous—we must render homage to it. If the results have not responded to our hopes it is not less true that the attention of the public has been drawn to a question of the greatest interest. The present situation cannot be worse—it must be remedied. In order not to weaken a good beginning, which drew a portion of your youth towards a maritime career, the work of the floating school should be broadly conceived, and become one to which the Government would give, moreover, a national character. But our task is not limited to the consideration only of the future of the personnel of the Marine. Belgium, which honours itself in having a social legislation protecting the working classes, has a duty to perform towards our sailors. Attention has been drawn to the dangers of excessive loading which has already caused certain accidents. Is not a reform necessary to protect the lives of the crew? In

England and in Germany there are rules fixing the limit of cargo. It would be a great advantage if, in the whole of the project we are discussing, there might be included an international understanding to establish common legislation. I permit myself also to draw the attention of the Government to the urgent reform of the Pension and Assistance Fund for Sailors. This excellent institution has need of being revised and completed.

"I would like to say another word regarding sea fishing. These interesting labourers must be encouraged, and the fishing industry must be supported. The example of most maritime countries shows that this activity is susceptible of great development. The figures are significant. While, at Ostend, the value of the products of the Minique rose in the period from 1895 to 1905 from Frs. 3,400,000 to Frs. 4,800,000—or an increase of 60 per cent. alone—at Geestemunde, in Germany, it was 180 per cent. At Ymuiden, in Holland, it was 230 per cent. We have valiant fishermen and a traditional industry, but we hardly make any advance, and we remain to a large extent tributaries to our neighbours in the consumption of fish. We must resume the work, perfect it, increase our equipment, ameliorate the instruction of the fishermen, increase our clientele, and strongly organize our commerce. We can never forget that fishing ports are a necessity consecrated by the example of all maritime countries. Those of Hull and Grimsby in England, those of Geestemunde and of Ymuiden serve as models. In Belgium there is no fishing port really well equipped. I regret that the fishing installations have been absolutely forgotten in the considerable works of the new port of Ostend. That industry is, notwithstanding, the principal element of commercial prosperity there.

"The project for a port of refuge at La Panne is the object of an examination on the part of the officials of Public Works. I hope that a favourable decision will be arrived at which will be acceptable to the Ministers. Besides—and this brings me back to the principal object of my discourse—in favouring an industry from which the best sailors will be recruited we are doing work which will be useful for the extension of navigation. It is thus, Gentlemen, that the problems relative to the prosperity of Belgium appear bound to each other, not only by the interdependence of their interests, but, above all, by a unity of view which should inspire the Government and the nation. In a small country it is desirable to raise questions above the contingencies of the moment, in order to prepare a future made by solid realizations appropriate to the possibilities of our people. Conscious of these responsibilities, we will thus accomplish, Gentlemen, at the same time, our duty as legislators and our duty as patriots."

As may be gathered from this striking speech, the maritime interests of the country had become of the deepest moment to the Prince, who, while he did not indulge in the grandiose hopes of King Leopold II regarding the future of Ostend, always was convinced that much could be done to aid its development. To his last day he studied questions relating to scientific dredging, and still hoped to see Ostend obtain a brilliant success that would outshine its historic past.

Each year Prince Albert, with his wife and family, spent several weeks at Ostend. Their genuine fondness for the simple life, and their deep interest in the fisherfolk, did not permit them to spend their days idling on the plage, attending the Casino, or even in visiting very often the Royal Chalet—the original of which was given by Queen Victoria to King Leopold. They would take long walks over the Dunes, explore the surrounding country, and pay kindly visits to the fisherfolk in the vicinity.

To most tourists Ostend is merely a fashionable watering-place, the largest and certainly the most popular of the sixteen on the Belgian coast. In pre-War days, fashionable Belgium flocked there in its thousands, while travellers from all parts of Europe made it the Mecca of their holiday pilgrimage. Of these visitors, perhaps half never even noticed the fishing quarters and were unconscious of the fact that, apart from the feverish social activity of the brief season, fishing is the main industry of the town.

A picturesque community is formed of these bronzed and hardy fisherfolk, in their little low houses, with the red roofs and diamond-paned windows, set in their gardens along the Dunes. A fine race are the fisherfolk themselves—the men lithe, sinewy, agile, with the remote gaze of those whose eyes are always fixed seawards ; with the tarry hands of the sailor, and with the firm wide-toed feet of those who are happier without footwear.

Often Princess Elizabeth would take the Royal children to watch these humble folk, who knew and loved her. They would sit in the sun and chat with the fishermen, as they mended the nets flung over the upturned boats to dry, or watch them set out on a fishing expedition—running their boats out to sea, their trousers tucked up to their knees, and their boots in one hand.

Sometimes, too, the Princess would talk with the wives, mothers, and sweethearts of these stalwart lads, whose long and dangerous labours brought them such poor recompense. She would speak to them of the things vital to all women, whether they be queens or cottagers, of their children and their men, of the daily difficulties of their lives ; and, almost always as she talked, a

brown baby would lie crowing on her knee or sprawl happily at her feet, clutching unrebuked at her gown.

The Princess would enter the little cottages, where the few poor treasures would be proudly displayed to one who was always ready to admire and understand; where the old folk dozing in the chimney corner, would rise to curtsey, only to be put gently back in their chairs by a kindly hand; or where, perhaps some invalid, temporarily laid aside from the rough life of the hardy community, would be cheered by a gift of fruit and kindly words spoken by one who had helped to soothe many beds of suffering.

To-day Queen Elizabeth still treasures many little gifts which her hunble subjects have made to her. There are lengths of coarse lace, knitted as its giver sat by her cottage door, watching for the returning of the fishers; odd treasures of the sea, and little homely offerings, rendered more valuable by the fact that they were given not so much as tribute to a Princess but as gifts to a friend.

The weather had to be rough indeed to keep Prince Albert away from the fishing villages. He knew most of the fishermen by name, and often while he was chatting with them he would take a turn at mending the nets, or even in repairing a boat.

There is one family who could, if they would—but they have ever loyally kept the strict injunctions to silence laid upon them—tell of one expedition in which the bread-winner, owing to a sprained ankle, could not take part. Funds were low—it is only a bare subsistence these folk wrest from the sea—and there were many mouths to feed. It seemed a cruel misfortune that Jules should not be able to go, and the catch was reported so promising.

But a friend, a tall stalwart friend who could row nearly as well as Jules himself, came striding over the Dunes, and bidding the protesting women say nothing, sailed out in Jules' boat to bring back a catch which Jules himself could not have bettered—a catch for which he would not even stay to be thanked.

In Victor Hugo's novel *Les Miserables*, the French monarch asks who was the good man awaiting an audience. The abbé replies: "If I am a good man, as your Majesty is a great man, each of us may be able to learn something from the other." Prince Albert was ever ready to learn something from humbler folk, and thus was able to help them. Personal aid and personal interest are much, but Prince Albert knew that if real aid was to be forthcoming for his fisher friends he must keep their needs before the country. It was he who did much to press home the

question of establishing an Orphanage for the children of fishermen who had lost their lives in pursuit of their calling.

One of the Prince's most cherished projects was realized when he saw established at Ostend the *Ibis*, a training ship for young seamen. To the *Ibis* Prince Albert often took his own sons, whom he always encouraged to take a deep interest in all things pertaining to the sea. They have spent many happy hours amongst the healthy merry lads of the *Ibis*.

Deep-sea fishing also engaged the attention of the Prince. He lost no opportunity of studying its problems, and, in 1906, took a long trip in the *Prince Charles*, so that he might gain a further insight into its intricacies.

As is natural with his great fondness for travel, Prince Albert was always much attracted by the idea of Polar exploration. He gave his patronage to an International Polar Congress held in Brussels in the autumn of 1906, a Congress attended by scientists and explorers of the front rank from all over the world. M. Beernaert presided over the meetings, and Prince Albert not only attended the Congress, but took the greatest interest in in its proceedings, which were largely concerned in arranging future explorations. He talked with many of the visitors on matters connected with the project.

One explorer, whose name will go down to history, suggested jokingly that he and Prince Albert should arrange an expedition to the South Pole together.

The Prince gave a wry smile. "I wish it were possible," he answered, "but an heir-presumptive gets little fun!"

That he could regard a Polar trip with its difficulties, its dangers and its hardships as "fun" gives some slight idea of his adventurous and hardy character.

CHAPTER IX.

VISITS THE CONGO

Eager to study Belgium's African colony—King Leopold's attitude towards criticism—M. Renkin's enlightened policy—The Prince starts his tour—His thorough investigations—Readiness to listen to native grievances—Great welcome at Antwerp on returning—The fine results of his tour—Sir Edward Grey's tribute—Improved conditions—Fighting sleeping sickness—A " Flower Day "—Action as to King Leopold's annuity.

PROBABLY the most notable event in the years following Prince Albert's becoming Heir-Apparent was his journey to the Congo in 1909. There is no doubt that the ceaseless agitations, and the unsparing criticisms of the administration of Congo affairs, had troubled Prince Albert considerably more than they had disturbed King Leopold. There was an entire contrast between their outlook on life, for whereas Prince Albert always recognized that his first duty was to his country, King Leopold seemed, in certain actions at all events, to consider his duty to himself paramount.

For several years previous to Belgium's annexation of the Congo, Prince Albert had studied with the closest attention all questions relating to the State. He was a frequent visitor to the Colonial Museum, reading everything of importance published on the subject of the Congo and its development. He lost no opportunity of meeting and conversing with all persons whose experience had put them in a position to enlighten him on any matter regarding affairs in the "Dark Continent," as it was called.

Being highly conscientious in his treatment of all men, the allegations regarding the treatment of Congo natives grieved and distressed him. He knew, of course, that many of the reports of wrong-doing were exaggerated, but he felt that any doubt at all as to the matter was a slur on the fair fame of Belgium, and something in the nature of a challenge to himself as its future ruler.

He had many conversations with King Leopold on the subject—one or two of them being of a very piquant nature. In these interviews the Prince spoke his mind with a freedom and courage

that his uncle by no means relished. King Leopold was always impatient of criticism in any form, and, to the day of his death, he never admitted that there had been any defects in his administration of the wonderful colony which he had gained for his people.

Prince Albert welcomed the appointment of M. Renkin as Colonial Minister, for the reason that he had always shown himself zealous in all manner of reforms on the Congo. M. Renkin and the Heir to the Throne held lengthy discussions as to the best means of putting these reforms into practice. M. Renkin's first Budget surprised the country, for, with great boldness and a supreme faith in the future of the Congo, he sanctioned an outlay far in excess of any sum hitherto assigned to the administration of the colony. In this Budget there was allowed for administration in Africa over 7,000,000 francs; for health, nearly 900,000 francs; and for justice nearly 2,000,000 francs. It may be added that M. Renkin had his reward in seeing the price of rubber rise by over fifty per cent, by which rise Belgium was saved the necessity of raising another Colonial loan. His foresight and courage were therefore rewarded financially as well as in improving the condition of the Congo.

During M. Renkin's tenure of office, Prince Albert achieved what had been for several years his great ambition—he toured the Congo. Over and over again he had expressed his wish to make this visit in order that he might see for himself what truth there was in the constant charges against King Leopold's administration, and that he might consider what could be done to put matters on a more satisfactory basis. In Court circles, it was well understood that the only thing that had prevented the Prince hitherto from carrying out his desire was the attitude of King Leopold himself.

Although Prince Albert was his direct heir, the King's grasp on the reins of government was tenacious to the very hour of his death. He knew and acknowledged—not only in public speeches made for the world's ears, but in private conversations not meant to pass beyond the walls of the room in which they were held—that his nephew had in him the makings of a successful ruler. He realized that the Prince was highly popular with his future subjects, and that he had qualities which would enable him to fill the throne with dignity, firmness, and courage At the same time King Leopold seemed determined that Prince Albert should have no added opportunities of demonstrating his fitness for the position he was destined to fill.

In the end, however, the Prince had his way; defeating his uncle's stubborn anger and mocking cynicism with unwearying

persistence, he held to a firm resolve to further the ends of justice, and do what he considered his duty to his future African subjects. In the spring of 1909 he set out for the Congo.

It was arranged that M. Jules Renkin should accompany him, but, in order that the survey might be thorough, it was decided that the Prince should traverse the country from east to west, while the Colonial Minister should start from the west. The Prince, accompanied by Baron de Moor, left Southampton on April 3rd, 1909, and spent the following four months travelling throughout the length and breadth of the Congo. He covered nearly 3,000 miles—partly by land, partly by river, and, in a lesser degree, by rail. Only the members of his suite can really appreciate the thoroughness of his investigations. He was not content with seeing things and asking questions. He had his staff supplied with notebooks, and saw that they used them, while he himself filled book after book with his own personal comments. These copious notes helped him greatly in the reforms which he inaugurated subsequently.

On foot, in a steamer, in a train, he passed day after day, seeing all that was to be seen. He inspected the hospital; he attended service in the churches; he visited the schools, and made friends with the scholars at once; and called at several of the mission posts.

Prince Albert talked with everyone with whom he came in contact. Often these conversations were of the most informal character. It was useless for officials to wait upon him with written reports, expecting him to accept them without further investigation. It was more than useless to attempt to put him off with ready-made information. Prince Albert had come to make his own discoveries in his own way, and he accomplished his task.

The European residents and officials were delighted with his visit for, tired though he might be, yet not so tired as certain members of his staff, he responded with characteristic courtesy to all their efforts to entertain him. Officials and their wives, many of them now retired and scattered in different parts of the country, still speak with pleasure of the tour when Prince Albert was among them, and made so gallant and gracious a figure at the receptions at which they were presented to him.

But it was to the natives that Prince Albert paid the greatest attention. When it was learned—and the news spread in the amazing way peculiar to native communities—that King Leopold's heir was coming among them, the chiefs of every tribe clamoured for an audience. They besieged him with the

story of wrongs which demanded to be redressed. With untiring patience, the Prince listened, questioned, investigated the truth or otherwise—with the native it is not infrequently "otherwise"—and promised to see that just grievances should be put right and each man have his due. These promises he redeemed with scrupulous care on his return.

His fine stature and kingly bearing impressed greatly the Congolese. They conferred upon him a native title meaning "Tall Man, Breaker of Stones," There is no doubt that Prince Albert's tour of the Congo State did much to reconcile the natives to the new regime and to give them confidence in the future.

The Prince who, as has been mentioned, had been greatly troubled by the reports of Congo atrocities, was determined that he would take not merely European statements on these, but would get the natives to talk freely. To the consternation of his staff, he would often disappear, and be found later in the native quarters, surrounded by a group of Congolese, all intent upon pouring their life histories into his attentive ears

On one occasion he was discovered squatting upon the ground before the hut of a native chief, *vis-a-vis* with his host, who, in somewhat peculiar English, was recounting his version of the history of the past decade. The Prince, with the unfailing notebook open on his knee, was endeavouring to translate the story into the kind of language that could be written down.

It was this eagerness to obtain first-hand information that deepened the respect which the natives had been prepared from the first to accord to one of Royal rank. They realized that he had a brotherly nature and was anxious to help them to the best of his ability.

The tour, interesting though it was, offered many discomforts and even hardships, not to mention the difficulties peculiar to tropical climates. M. Renkin's health suffered greatly from the trials of the tour, but Prince Albert faced it all unperturbed. His robust frame and excellent constitution enabled him to withstand the heat, to ward off the tropical fevers to which the white visitor succumbs so often, and to finish his tour in as good health as when he set out. Again and again he had to "rough it" when travelling in parts of the Congo that were still uncivilized.

The Belgian people and the Press had welcomed the prospect of Prince Albert's travels with enthusiasm. They had had no part in whatever malpractices had occurred in the Congo, but the world's criticism had been directed against Belgium, and they

felt that Prince Albert's visit would do much to remove any grounds for the campaign of bitter criticism which was being conducted not only against their Sovereign but against his people.

When the date of the Prince's return was announced, Antwerp prepared a wonderful welcome for the Prince, on the occasion of his *joyeuse entrée*, as one Antwerp paper called it. The Congo steamer, the *Bruxellesville*, was due on Monday, August 16th, 1909, and from the earliest hour Antwerp was packed with sightseers from the surrounding district, anxious to greet their Prince. They desired to express their gratitude publicly for the labours he had undertaken.

Antwerp was *en fête*; flags floated from every house; ships in the harbour were dressed, while banners bearing greetings sprang into view in every street. Almost from dawn, street sellers were doing a roaring trade in postcards of Prince Albert, his wife and family. Some of the portraits were nothing short of a libel—at one time Princess Elizabeth, who has a decided sense of humour, collected newspaper portraits of herself, because, she said, it overcame any vanity she might possess—but people bought the pictures in thousands out of loyalty to their esteemed Prince.

Princess Elizabeth, who had felt the separation keenly, had gone out to Teneriffe to meet her husband. When they met, not all her Royal training or the cultivated composure of Court circles could hide her delight at the reunion. From the port at Teneriffe she had set out in an electric launch for the *Bruxellesville*. By the side of the steamer a rope-ladder had been let down for the party to board her, and preparations were being made for Princess Elizabeth's ascent when, unable to restrain her impatience, she seized the ladder, ran nimbly up, and in a moment was in her husband's arms.

A large marquee had been erected on the Quay Jordana, and here were gathered the Countess of Flanders, who had brought her grandchildren, Prince Leopold, Prince Charles, and their three-year-old sister Princess Marie-José. All three children were very excited at the prospect of seeing their father again—in fact, the little Princess incurred more than one gentle rebuke from her grandmother on account of her inability to keep still. With the Countess were the Prince's sister, the Duchess of Vendôme, and her husband.

A little before two o'clock, a great burst of cheering announced the arrival of the Prince's ship. By two o'clock it had come to anchor, and on deck could be seen the Prince, wearing for the first time the uniform of a General. King Leopold had, less

than a week before, appointed him to that rank. By the Prince's side Princess Elizabeth stood proudly, and both acknowledged with evident gratification the prolonged plaudits of the crowd.

Fortunately, summer sunshine illuminated the animated scene, and made it all the more delightful for the onlookers. When the ship was moored at last, the Countess of Flanders and the Royal children at once went on board. The Prince lifted the children in his arms and embraced them repeatedly. Then, after some formal presentations, the party came on shore, where they were welcomed by the Burgomaster of Antwerp in the name of the city.

The Burgomaster, speaking in Flemish, the familiar language of his city, delivered a cordial address, to which the Prince, also speaking in Flemish, replied: "I am profoundly touched by the welcome you have accorded me. I thank you for the amiable words you have pronounced in the name of the town of Antwerp. My wife unites with me in expressing to you our thanks. Like me, she will sign with pleasure your Golden Book. Say to the population of Antwerp that this day will remain unforgettable for us; say how much I have been moved this morning in returning to the country by the magnificent spectacle of this vast port—the artery of our commerce and our industry—which unites Belgium with every corner of the globe. I feel a special pleasure in finding myself here again. Have not the people of Antwerp been among the first to understand that a colonial policy is necessary to Belgium? Have they not always seconded the King in the accomplishment of his daring and incomparable work? Twenty-two years ago, King Leopold II, sustained by an unyielding energy, tackled the problem of the colonization of Central Africa with remarkable perspicacity. History will never forget that the King, with his eyes fixed on the future of Belgium, has solved the problem by associating the Belgians with his patriotic efforts. I was full of hope for the future of the Congo, but what I saw there surpassed my hopes. I have traversed our colony from one end to the other. I am still under the influence of that marvellous country. From the high plateaux of the Katanga to the mouth of the Congo, Nature has given in that magnificent country inexhaustible resources to men of energy and initiative. My conviction is that the colony will contribute to the prosperity of Belgium. Without doubt, sacrifices will be necessary, but they will be fruitful. Besides, in the life of races, every step of progress is marked by new efforts and sacrifices. It is in pursuing the moral elevation of the natives, in ameliorating their material situation, in combating the evils from which they suffer, and multiplying

the ways of communication, that we will assure the future of the Congo."

The Prince's speech was received with loud cheers, and the ceremony concluded by the Burgomaster presenting each of the Royal party with an album containing views of Antwerp.

When the Prince entered Brussels he was received with remarkable enthusiasm. He took an early opportunity of reporting to King Leopold the impressions of his tour, the newspapers gave considerable space to the Prince's return, expressing great satisfaction at the thoroughness of his investigations. It may be stated, without fear of contradiction, that Prince Albert's tour of the Congo was the beginning of the end of the attacks on its administration, for the reforms that followed the tour were so far-reaching in their effects as to silence even the most bitter critics of Congo government.

On his return, M. Renkin drew up a lengthy report, in which he stated that there would be immediate suppression of forced labour, that taxes would be in money and not in kind, that the natives would be permitted to trade freely, and that free trade would be permitted in a large portion of the State. These promises were kept to the letter. Other countries were encouraged to invest capital in the Congo, and did so, while increased facilities were given to missionaries to labour in the Congo.

Great Britain was swift to recognize the reforms which Prince Albert had brought about, and in the House of Commons the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey (afterwards Viscount Grey of Fallodon) said: "I think every other Power has explicitly or practically recognized the Congo as a Belgian province, and, now that the state of affairs has so vastly improved, for us to continue to separate ourselves from all other Powers and withhold the recognition that others have given, would give Belgium justifiable grounds of complaint, and would impair those cordial relations which it is our earnest and sincere desire to maintain with the Belgian Government."

Mr. Bonar Law, then leader of the Conservative Party in the House of Commons, endorsed this view and said that it was in the highest degree expedient that Belgium should no longer have any possible sense of grievance against Great Britain on the ground that she had not sanctioned the annexation.

Unbiased testimony from a source from which stern criticism had emanated came from the Rev. J. H. Harris, Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society. Returning to England from the Congo in 1912, he said in his report that matters were immensely improved, and that there was every hope for the future. Mr.

Harris, it may be added, was intimately acquainted with the Congo, and his opinion was therefore of special importance. He entered Parliament as member for North Hackney and, by voice and pen, has continued to champion the cause of the natives of Africa.

In the same year Vice-Consul Castens declared: "It is difficult to realize that the Kasai can possibly have been the scene of atrocities in the past. These certainly do not exist to-day, and, though brutalities are brought to light from time to time, they are almost, if not entirely, confined to assaults amongst the natives themselves."

Here it may be added, though out of the actual sequence of events, that after Prince Albert had ascended the throne, further reforms were introduced. Officers of justice were recruited from men of varying nationalities, so that the Belgian bias might not be too marked. The Belgian judge would often sit with an Italian or Norwegian colleague, while salaries were raised with a view to attracting men of a better standard.

In former years a man had only to volunteer for work in the Congo to be sent off at once, and, as may readily be imagined, unsuitable men often volunteered for private and not always creditable reasons. But, with greater care being exercised, the Congo offered a career to honourable men, and not a means of escape from domestic or financial embarrassments! The result is that to-day the Congo official is as fine a type of man as can be found in the administrative services of Belgium herself.

Moreover, whereas at one time men were sent out without any previous training, now a doctor or veterinary surgeon is not allowed to set out for the Congo without having passed through a course of training suited to the special work he is going out to undertake. At Watermael there was established a hospital specially for invalids from the Congo, and here those doctors, who were going out to the State, studied the maladies peculiar to Africa, particularly the disease of sleeping sickness.

During his tour in the Congo, Prince Albert was shocked by the ravages made by this scourge of Central Africa. On his return, he did his utmost to arouse medical interest in its treatment. In a speech delivered at the Palace in Brussels, in January, 1911, in reply to the President of the Royal Academy, he said: "The sleeping sickness ravages whole districts in the Congo. I have convinced myself of this. It is from the medical faculties that we await discoveries that will put us in the way of progress in combating these evils. With regard thereto I make before

you here a pressing appeal to our doctors to second generously the efforts of their fellow-countrymen, so that, in increasing numbers, they may bring to the Belgian Congo the benefits of modern medical science. There is for our country a humanitarian object to be fulfilled, and I have every hope that the youth of our universities will be anxious to associate themselves therewith."

Princess Elizabeth, who has inherited her father's earnest interest in every effort to alleviate human suffering, was deeply touched by all that her husband told her of this distressing malady. She appealed to the ladies of Belgium to help her in a campaign to raise funds to aid the sufferers from this terrible disease, and help the research work towards its cure. It may be added that at the time of the International Rubber Exhibition, in London, in 1911, M. Roger Ehrhardt and M. Leon Léon Osterrieth, who were in charge of the Belgian section, organized a "Flower Day" upon which the edelweiss, the Princess's favourite flower, was sold in aid of funds for the campaign. The flower was on sale the whole time the exhibition was open, and its sale realized a substantial sum. On the Flower Day itself there was formed a committee of Belgian ladies, who were assisted by many British ladies glad to show their friendship for Belgium and help in the cause for which the day had been organized. *La Fleur de la Reine* had a tiny portrait attached by a white satin ribbon, and was sold in thousands.

Much more could be written concerning the continued efforts, inspired by the Sovereign's memories of his tour, for reform in the Congo. They have been, year by year, crowned increasingly with success. If the Belgian people, or the world at large, had any further need for proof of his deep interest in the welfare of his native subjects, or the sincerity of his intentions, they were given it in his action in the matter of King Leopold's annuity.

When Belgium annexed the Congo, there was granted to King Leopold from its revenue an annuity of 3,300,000 francs. But when Prince Albert ascended the throne, he refused to touch this annuity which came to him as his uncle's heir. He devoted its first payment into a Pension Fund for officials who had served on the Congo—a Pension Fund which has been of the highest benefit to them. The second payment of the annuity he caused to be applied to the purchase of steamers for use in the Congo State—a decision which, as may be imagined, increased the affectionate esteem in which his people held him.

On his return from the Congo, Prince Albert took much pleasure in unpacking and arranging the various souvenirs with which

he had been presented, and the curious objects used in native life which he had purchased on his travels. He held the attention of his children as he told them of some of the strange sights he had witnessed, and both his sons were eager to visit the Congo and emulate their father's adventures.

CHAPTER X

ACCESSION TO THE THRONE

Parliamentary compliments to the Prince—A charity for fishermen's sons—Princess Elizabeth's father dies—King Leopold's death—Prince Albert's Accession—State entry into Brussels—Takes the Oath—A notable speech—The Queen's greeting—King Albert's great reception—*The Times* on his Accession.

BEFORE dealing with the accession of Prince Albert to the Throne, not long after his return from his travels in the Congo, it will be fitting to recall certain circumstances which had gained for him the special approval of the nation.

In Belgium the Socialist Party has always been very strong, and at times distinctly aggressive. But its leaders always recognized that Prince Albert had, equally with themselves, the welfare of the masses at heart. After the death of the Count of Flanders, which occurred on November 17th, 1905, both the Chamber and the Senate debated the question of Prince Albert's allowance. The Government proposed a yearly sum of £8,000—a very modest amount for an heir to a throne. The Socialists and a few extreme Liberals opposed the grant on the grounds that the Prince's grandfather should have left him a sufficient private income from the allowances granted to him when he accepted the offer of the Belgian throne.

The debate on the question was acrimonious, but it revealed also a warm attachment to the Prince. It is the policy of Governments to praise members of the Royal House, but when it is realized that the following speeches were made by avowed opponents of the Monarchy, it will be seen how widespread was the appreciation of the Prince.

M. Daens, an extreme Radical, who delivered his speech in Flemish, said: "I oppose this vote because, by passing it, you will make the Prince hateful. In passing such a vote, which calls for fresh taxation, we, the men of the people, who know our poor classes and see what they have to deprive themselves of to pay the taxes, see our workmen suffering misery. We consider your act worthy of scoundrels. Prince Albert does not deserve to be made odious in the eyes of the people. He is

compassionate and generous-hearted. I have proof of it. Recently I visited at the hospital at Brussels an unfortunate workman of Gijseghen, father of seven children. On the advice of one of his neighbours, I wrote to Prince Albert, and received at once a bank-note from him. Some days later, I received from the Princess a letter asking me how the sick man was. I replied that he was cured, but that another workman—a brickmaker from Velsique—had taken his place in the hospital, and again I received a sum of money for the unfortunate man. Some days afterwards, the first of these two invalids came to me and asked me to give him money to buy a little cart and a dog to draw it. I wrote to the Prince again, and he sent me another bank-note for him."

M. Daens spoke at some length, and, before he resumed his seat, he had given many other instances of the generosity of the Prince and Princess—instances which had never been chronicled in the Press and were known only to those who had benefited by them.

A Socialist, while speaking against the vote, endorsed M. Daen's praise of the Prince. He said: "Prince Albert is a good youth. I admit that he occupies himself with political economy and with Socialism. He keeps himself *au courant* with the workers' movement, and tries to fit himself for the position he will one day occupy."

M. Feron, a Liberal, said much the same thing: "Our opposition has no character of opposition to Prince Albert; we know the good he does."

M. Hymans, the Liberal leader, speaking with his accustomed eloquence, said: "Prince Albert devotes himself to the labours which are necessary to an apprenticeship to Royalty most conscientiously. He fulfils his duties, neglecting none of the obligations which his situation imposes on him."

One of the Prince's philanthropies had been the foundation in 1905 of a system by which the sons of the fishermen, whom he had come to esteem for their energy and courage, were enabled to be trained for the sea. It was intended particularly to benefit lads who had lost their fathers, and many have had reason to be grateful for the advantages thus provided for them. On his visit to England in 1906 Prince Albert had made inquiries as to the work of training-ships, and had seen at Liverpool how valuable this education had proved in manning the Mercantile Service.

The winter of 1909 brought, first of all, bereavement to Princess Elizabeth by the death of her revered father, the Duke Karl Theodor. He had been spared to celebrate, not many weeks earlier, his seventieth birthday. His wife and family

had assembled for the occasion in the Château de Kreuth, and it was here that on November 30th he breathed his last. There were tributes paid to his self-sacrificing life and his scientific skill, as well as to his wise rule. Prince Albert accompanied his wife to the funeral, and they were deeply touched by the sympathy shown to them in public and private.

King Leopold had been failing in health for some months, and his physicians were unable, owing to his weak state, to attempt any operation that might have alleviated his condition. The King's last political act was performed under serious strain. The Senate had passed on December 14th the law relating to compulsory military service. When the President of the Chamber, M. Schollaert, arrived at the Palace with the documents for the King's signature, he found the Monarch so ill that it seemed impossible to urge his attention to State business. But the King insisted that he could carry out his duties and wrote his signature boldly and with great satisfaction, for he approved thoroughly of the legislation. It proved to be the climax of his work as a constitutional ruler, for, three days later, King Leopold passed away. The date on which he died was the forty-fourth anniversary of his accession to the throne.

Within a few minutes of the King's decease, Prince Albert (who had received the news by telephone) drove to Laeken. The many happy memories of his youth were now clouded by the high responsibilities that devolved upon him. To Laeken, shortly afterwards, there came Princess Elizabeth, Princess Clementine, and the Countess of Flanders.

King Leopold, in his will, had expressed the desire that his funeral should take place early in the day with an entire avoidance of display, and that only Prince Albert and his suite should be present. But it was felt right to disregard this expression, and accordingly, on December 21st, the final ceremony in the King's career was celebrated with the dignified splendour that is always accorded to the funeral of a Sovereign. Several Royal representatives of foreign Courts were present at the obsequies, including Queen Victoria's son, the Duke of Connaught.

On the following day King Albert and Queen Elizabeth made their formal entry into Brussels. The morning was wet, but the rain did nothing to prevent the gathering of huge crowds or to mar the unabated enthusiasm with which they cheered their new Sovereign. The whole route from the Château at Laeken to the Palace de la Nation was lined with spectators eager to shout "Vive le Roi!" or that other cry which showed that there was affection as well as loyalty in their hearts: "Vive Albert!"

The Royal Family had spent the night at Laeken and the

Queen's procession started from the Château as early as eight o'clock. Her Majesty made a regal though sombre figure, as in deep mourning she drove slowly out of the gates in the State coach with its six magnificent horses and outriders. Beside, her sat the Countess of Flanders, and opposite her two young sons, Prince Leopold and Prince Charles (who now received the titles of Duke of Brabant and Count of Flanders). Next came Princesses Stéphanie and Clementine and King Albert's sisters, the Duchess of Vendôme and Princess Josephine of Hohenzollern. Princess Louise had left Brussels that morning. When the Queen's carriage came into view, the crowd could not restrain their enthusiasm and shouted "Vive la Reine Elizabeth!" Along the route the Queen had to acknowledge continually the greetings of the public.

Hardly had Her Majesty's carriage passed when three officers, carrying the Royal Standard, left the Palace on foot, with the loyal exclamation of "Vive le Roi!" The National Anthem was now played by the bands, and the King on his charger received a splendid welcome from his subjects. King Albert was wearing the uniform of a Belgian General, as his uncle and his grandfather had done before him at their coronations. His Majesty was decorated with the Order of the Grand Cordon of Leopold.

At the entrance of the grounds of the Château, M. Bokstael, the Burgomaster of Laeken, had offered to Her Majesty the homage of the Communal Council and his wishes for her own and her children's happiness, to which the Queen had made a gracious reply. Afterwards, addressing King Albert, the Burgomaster said he was proud to offer his felicitations to His Majesty who, he was convinced, would continue to show the same interest in Laeken as had his uncle King Leopold. The King in his reply assured the Burgomaster that Laeken would always have his careful regard—a promise he has certainly kept. King Leopold's unremitting care for the lovely grounds of the Château was one of the traits of his baffling character. He had a genuine passion for flowers, and spent vast sums on the gardens, which he improved considerably.

At the boundary of Molenbeek the procession was met by the Duke of Vendôme and many prominent Court officials, and a halt was made while the Municipal Council offered a formal address of welcome.

In view of the later relations of Belgium and Great Britain it is interesting to recall that in this stately procession the Duke of Connaught rode on the right of the King, while on his left was Prince Francis Joseph, Queen Elizabeth's brother.

On reaching Brussels, yet another halt was made for the civic welcome, first to the Queen and then, a few minutes later, to the King. Burgomaster Max delivered an eloquent address to the Queen recalling the first day on which Brussels had greeted her as a bride. "One wins the heart of the people by grace—one retains it by goodness," said the Burgomaster. "The people of Brussels have been charmed by the sincere desire of the new Belgian Princess to mix in its civic life and its familiar traditions, to associate with its sorrows and joys, to solace its miseries and sufferings. Madame, we are united in our affection for the Queen, her children whom she has trained with lovely maternal care, and whose youth symbolizes the future of the country." A beautiful bouquet of orchids was presented to the Princess, who had been greeted with vociferous cheers along the entire route.

To the King the Burgomaster addressed an oration as felicitous as the words which he had uttered to the Queen. "He whom we acclaim to-day," said the Burgomaster, "is not only our King, but also a citizen enthroned in the sincere and profound affections of his fellow-citizens; who has conquered the hearts of our population by the simplicity, dignity, and nobility of his life, realizing all the hopes of our Belgian race. . . . Your Majesty will continue the traditions of a dynasty which has contributed to the foundation of our independence and has developed it in progress and peace. All who are attached to the future of Belgium are united to-day in the same sentiment, and that sentiment expresses itself in the cry which contains the hopes and the vows of all Belgium—'*Vive le Roi!*'"

There was no doubt that M. Max had interpreted correctly the popular feeling, for the air was filled with shouts of "Vive le Roi!" at the conclusion of his speech. His Majesty expressed his deep gratitude to the Burgomaster, and the procession passed on on its way to the National Palace.

An hour before the King's arrival, the House had presented a brilliant appearance. The Senators, the Ambassadors, the representatives of the Powers were already in their places, and every inch of available space was packed with an assembly of distinguished personages all anxious to do honour to the new King.

When the Queen entered it was noticed that the Duke of Connaught walked by her side. Then followed the young Princes slightly awed by the pomp and ceremony of the great occasion, and afterwards the Princesses Clementine and Stéphanie, who were followed by the Countess of Flanders, escorted by the Infante Don Carlos of Spain. There was a highly representative gathering of foreign princes, statesmen, and diplomats, including

Prince Johann George of Saxony, the Crown Prince of Roumania, the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein, M. Decrais (representing the French President), Prince Charles of Hohenzollern, General Goiran (representing the King of Italy), Baron Kurino (representing Japan), Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, Duke Francis Joseph of Bavaria, while Spain was represented by M. Merry del Val. The representative of the United States Mr. Page Bryan, was in evening dress.

Punctually at eleven o'clock King Albert entered the Throne Room to take the Oath. The ceremony was conducted in solemn and impressive silence. King Albert's strong voice rang out clearly as he took the Oath as Sovereign, first in French and then in Flemish. After the united shouts of "Vive le Roi!" which followed, King Albert addressed the assembly.

The King's speech had been eagerly awaited, for his country already knew enough of its new Monarch to be sure that what he would say would not be a mere formal statement prepared for him, but a speech in which he would make clear his own personal views and intentions.

As His Majesty rose to begin his speech, he appeared a truly kindly figure, and the earnestness of his manner and the sincerity of his utterance left no doubt in the minds of his hearers that here was a man who not only said what he meant, but would certainly meant what he said. King Albert was an eloquent speaker but his eloquence did not lie in his words alone—he felt the words he uttered; his expression changed with his text, and often, with a restrained gesture, he emphasized a passage concerning some project particularly dear to him.

In a voice that could be plainly heard all over the House, His Majesty said: "At the moment that I assume the mission which the Constitution confers on me, my thoughts are carried naturally to the founders of our independence, to the Congress which fixed in an immemorial charter the fundamental principles of our national life, and towards those eminent men who illumined the epoch of 1830 and who guided Belgium in the ways of political wisdom. My thoughts here turn naturally towards the chief of the dynasty—King Leopold I—the chosen of the free electors of the nation.

"Here I address to them a grateful and thankful homage. Respectful guardian of the institutions which the country gave to itself, Leopold I comprehended and realized the aspirations of the Belgian people. He consolidated Belgium at home; he made her honoured outside. In the great family of nations Belgium was esteemed as a country of order, of freedom, of

progress. The King whom, alas, we weep for to-day, undertook, the moment he ascended the throne, to make Belgium greater and more powerful—a noble ambition which he had the glory of realizing.

"It is scarcely thirty years since there was seen on the map of Africa an immense and impenetrable territory, desolated by slavery—it was a stain on the face of the globe. Now peace reigns in that country, widely open to civilization. Who realized this miracle? King Leopold II, by his foresight, his courage, his tenacity, valiantly seconded by the devotion of so many of our compatriots. The memory of this will rest engraved in the hearts of the people.

"Animated by the constant thought of enriching the nation, King Leopold wished to make the economic foundations of the country most solid. His designs, always vast, were seconded by his will, which never failed, and in many adverse or critical circumstances, was solemnly affirmed. The country was proud of its King.

"The expressions of gratitude which saluted the memory of King Leopold II testify to the most sincere gratitude of all the Belgians; and, in this homage, foreign potentates, moved by the mourning of the Belgian nation, and admirers of the intellectual qualities of Leopold II, have desired to associate themselves. In the name of Belgium, I address myself to the Princes, the Ambassadors, the Envoys Extraordinary, whose presence has been for us a precious pledge of friendship.

"Gentlemen, more and more the moment has come for Belgium to recognize her destiny and to look the facts of the future in the face. In the course of an existence of three-quarters of a century she has realized—surpassing the most optimistic previsions of her founders—that she is happy and that she is rich. But riches create responsibilities for countries, as for individuals. The intellectual and moral forces alone of a nation are the foundations of its prosperity.

"It behoves us to prolong a brilliant era by imbuing ourselves with the ideas and principles which are the tradition of the Belgians—the steadfast attachment to all our constitutional liberties, the love of our independence, wisdom, and reasonableness in public affairs—it is thus that the Belgian people will maintain intact their sacred patrimony, created by the labour of so many generations. They will march on towards the pacific conquests of labour and service, while the artists and writers of Flanders and Wallonia will strew the way with their masterpieces.

"The nation, of its free will, desirous of completing the work

of its King, has assumed the sovereignty of Congo territories. In the consciousness of its duty, also with firmness, it has traced the colonial policy it intends to follow. It is a policy of humanity and progress. To a justice-loving people, a colonizing mission can only be one of high civilization. By accepting it loyally, a small country shows itself great. Belgium governs herself by institutions the principles of which have been copied by other States. She has always held to her promises, and when she undertakes to apply to the Congo a programme worthy of herself, none have the right to doubt her word.

"Gentlemen, I have a very clear conception of my duty. The duty of Princes is dictated to their conscience by the spirit of the people, for if the Throne has its prerogatives, it has, above all, its responsibilities. It is necessary that the Sovereign should hold himself with entire loyalty above all parties. It is necessary that he should be watchful for the maintenance of the vital forces of the nation. It is necessary that he should be ceaselessly attentive to the voice of the country, and be watchful with solicitude over the welfare of the poor. The Sovereign should be the servant of the law and the upholder of social peace.

"May God help me to fulfil this mission! As for myself, I shall always be ready to second the efforts of those who work for the grandeur of the country and who, filled with the spirit of concord and social advancement, raise the intellectual and moral level of the nation, develop education and instruction, and assure to the masses greater well-being.

"I love my country; the Queen shares my sentiments of unalterable fidelity to Belgium; we imbue our children with them, and we awaken in them at the same time love of their native land, love of their family, love of labour, love of good. These are the qualities which render nations strong.

"Gentlemen, the reception which has been given to me has touched me profoundly. I see in it a proof of confidence which honours me as well as sustains me. I will exert myself to merit it. In taking the Constitution oath, I swear to myself and to the country, to fulfil scrupulously my duties and consecrate all my forces and all my life to the service of the Fatherland."

No speech delivered from any throne has been received with greater or more sincere acclamation. The reference to art and literature was cheered to the echo, while His Majesty's declaration that "No one has the right to doubt the word of the nation" evoked a deafening salvo of applause.

When the King referred to the Queen there was an outburst of cheering, at which Her Majesty rose and bowed, touched by

this spontaneous tribute, as she was also by the action of the Duke of Connaught who, at the conclusion of the King's speech, rose and kissed her hand.

There had been some apprehension that the extreme Socialists might take advantage of the day to make a scene or present some petition. Particularly it had been feared that Don Carlos of Spain might come in for a hostile demonstration, and certain representations were made to King Albert as to altering the formation of the Royal procession. His Majesty would not hear of it. "It is well for me to know the real attitude of all parties towards me," he said. "If the Socialists choose to-day to make their opinion clear to me, well, at least I shall not labour under those delusions which have before now proved fatal to men in my position."

His faith in the extremists' appreciation of his intention to do his duty was not misplaced and the day was marred by no unpleasant incident of any kind. Certainly a section of the Radical party protested to the King against the eulogy of King Leopold which was included in the address, but the protest was made without violence and, once made, nothing more was heard of the matter.

The crowd were not satisfied by the full opportunity they had had of greeting their Majesties, but gathered in full force before their private residence, and remained there cheering until the King and Queen appeared on the balcony to acknowledge their welcome.

Little Princess Marie-José was, much to her disappointment, held to be too young to take her place in the Royal procession, but she watched it from a window in the house of her grandmother, the Countess of Flanders, and she enjoyed it to the full. The troops, the crowd, the procession—the little Princess delighted in it all, and the crowd delighted in her! They cheered the golden-haired child again and again; and, in no way abashed, the Princess cheered back again, waving both tiny hands till in sheer weariness she had to let them fall.

In the afternoon their Majesties drove to the Royal Palace, where they received the Members of Parliament. Viscount Simonis read the address of the Senate, and M. Cooriman that of the Chamber of Deputies. Afterwards, in accordance with his intention of understanding the views of all parties, His Majesty had a long conference with M. Jansen, once the Radical leader.

On December 24th, the King and Queen attended a Te Deum at the Church of St. Gudule, which was crowded to its doors with people anxious to participate in the service. The King was in the General's uniform he had worn the previous day, but

A RECENT PORTRAIT

THE QUEEN OF SPAIN AND QUEEN ELIZABETH OF BELGIUM
A delightful picture of two Queens who are the closest of friends.

the Queen had, for the occasion, discarded deep mourning and appeared in a handsome toilette of pearl grey, while the little Princes, who accompanied her, were in white silk.

Their Majesties were met on the threshold of the Cathedral by Mgr. Mercier, Archbishop of Malines, who, surrounded by the Brussels clergy and the Bishops with their croziers, congratulated the Royal couple.

"Your Majesty," he said to King Albert, "comes to bow your sceptre before God, and to do reverence before all authority to the King of Kings."

In his reply the King said the prelate's welcome had touched him deeply, because it came from one who was not only an Archbishop but also a philosopher.

In a leading article *The Times* for December 24th, 1909, expressed the opinions of the English nation regarding His Majesty's accession:

"Yesterday the new King of the Belgians discharged the first duty imposed upon him by the Constitution by taking the oath of office before the Parliament. The hearty and general applause which hailed His Majesty and his Consort on the way from the Palace in the streets of the Capital and in the Chamber of Deputies is proof at once of the steady loyalty borne by the overwhelming majority of the Belgian people of all classes to their constitutional rulers, of the personal popularity of the Sovereign who has just succeeded to the throne, and of the high hopes with which his faithful subjects look forward to his reign. The admirable speech which His Majesty addressed to the assembled legislators from the throne is well calculated to confirm the expectations with which the opening of a new reign is hailed abroad as well as at home. The Belgians do well to cherish with jealous pride the liberties that have come down to them. By his declaration that love of those liberties must remain unshaken, their Sovereign, in his first public words to them, has shown how thoroughly he understands what in these days are the surest bulwarks of the State and the throne."

The whole of the leading British Press supported King Albert's policy regarding the Congo, and congratulated him upon his opinions.

The French Press echoed the sentiments expressed by British newspapers, and were unanimous in their praise of the King, especially of his firmness of character, his keenness of intellect, and his love of hard work, while they openly rejoiced that he was void of that propensity for speculative finance evinced by Leopold II. They prophesied that, under a ruler who possessed so genuine a sense of the requirements of the time, and who was,

in addition, inspired by the cultivated tastes and generous sympathies of Queen Elizabeth, Belgium might look forward to peace and prosperity.

Rarely has a ruler ascended a throne with a warmer welcome, not only from his subjects but from all the Powers of Europe. King Albert was certainly justified in looking forward to a reign in which he could not only consolidate the work of his uncle Leopold II, but could further the cause of art and literature, and stimulate education, as it was his ambition to do.

He had few, very few, years of peace before the European catastrophe, but in those few years he did much. The proof is found in the fact that he gained from his people an affectionate loyalty such as withstood the ultimate test put upon them by a war that not only plunged the country in strife but laid it under the iron heel of the invader. The King's unassuming methods during his years as Heir-Apparent and his lack of any desire for the limelight had, in certain quarters, led to a belief that he could be influenced easily by those who, for purposes of their own, desired to be a power behind the throne. After His Majesty's accession, certain tentative efforts were made at wire-pulling. These efforts met with complete failure. Wires imply a puppet at the end, and those who hoped to find in their new Sovereign anyone but a man resolute in his own purpose, with a policy clear-cut and unshakable, met with just disappointment. During the year after the King had come to the throne, more than one fondly hatched scheme had to be abandoned for ever.

When, however, it was a question of public policy, no one was more accessible than the King. To a politician of any party, to a professor of any science, or the representative of any art, he was always ready to grant an interview, if he thought they had any beneficial scheme to discuss or any useful proposal to put forward. But he had little patience with foolish or impractical persons, who endeavoured to thrust themselves into his presence with unworkable plans.

CHAPTER XI

LEOPOLD II: MONARCH AND MAN

An Empire builder—His marriage and family—Queen Marie's training of her daughters—Unhappy marriages—An ambitious man—The Curé's rebuke—A lover of flowers—His strength and weakness.

IF those Monarchs are greatest in whose reigns their realms have been extended, King Leopold II is entitled to rank among the great European rulers. Gifted with a quick imagination, allied with a certain daring courage, he secured for Belgium the vast colony of the Congo almost entirely "off his own bat." When other countries, which were usually alert where new territory might be acquired, refused to advance money for exploration, Belgium, through its King, seized the opportunity. King Leopold's own fortune was drawn upon heavily in order that the Congo might be investigated, and, daring all opposition and criticism, he persisted until success crowned his efforts. He ranks among the Empire-builders, and his memory was accorded rightly the tribute contained in King Albert's first speech from the throne.

King Leopold's character was like that of many strong men—an enigma to most people. A famous French writer, comparing him to King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, said: "They both had the same love of action, the same craving to make history. Men of that temper feel that they were born to change the course of events. Their brains vibrate solely for the collection of sensations and the exercise of their faculties of reasoning. They are not sentimentalists. Their ideas are ideas which produce will-power and are converted into action. They live to act and they are utterly absorbed in a scheme of action which deprives them of the sympathy of others and envelops them in a moral solitude which excites the surprise of their generation and the admiration of history."

King Leopold was quite ready to endure the surprise of his generation, feeling assured that his reign would receive "the admiration of history." In his last years his outlook was focussed on the distant Congo, and home affairs yielded only

a languid interest to him. As for the social side of Court life, he endured as little of it as possible. He preferred to talk by the hour to explorers like H. M. Stanley, or business magnates with big ideas, rather than hold a levée or preside at a banquet. This may explain partially, though it does not excuse, his unhappiness as a husband and father, which cannot be ignored in any consideration of his career.

King Leopold was 34 years old when he succeeded to the throne in December 1865. In the following year he paid a visit to England where his cousin, Queen Victoria, gave him a warm welcome. Her gratitude to King Leopold I is revealed in many of the letters of Queen Victoria which have been published in recent years.

The Archduchess Marie Henriette Anna of Austria was bethrothed to him at sixteen, and at seventeen was married to him by proxy at Schönbrunn, the second ceremony being performed at Brussels on August 22nd, 1853, with great pomp. A young girl of seventeen, who had been reared strictly and married out of the schoolroom, was hardly the wife for a man such as the Crown Prince of Belgium. From the first, the couple had little in common. As Leopold I, the reigning Sovereign, was a widower, the young Crown Princess was required to take her place at the head of Court society. Though she acquitted herself with charm and dignity, there is little doubt that her State duties proved distasteful to her. Her love for music was not a bond between her and her husband, but an actual matter for disputes. Leopold hated music with peculiar intensity, and, whenever his young wife approached the pianoforte, he made a point of leaving the room. Leopold carried his dislike of music to an extreme degree. "You'll make a good King," he once said abruptly to Prince Albert as they were attending some State function. Somewhat taken back, the Prince remarked that he hoped he would.

"Yes," continued his uncle, "you have endurance. You seem to like 'The Brabançonne.' Anyone who can stand that can stand anything!" This reference to the National Anthem of Belgium was probably more jocular than serious.

Prince Leopold's eldest daughter, Princess Louise Marie Amalie Johanna, was born on February 18th, 1858. Fifteen months later, his only son, the Duke of Brabant, was born. A second daughter, Princess Stephanie, was born at Laeken in 1864. The death of his son, at the age of ten, was a blow from which he never quite recovered. It effected a profound change in many of his views. Another child was born at Laeken on July 30th, 1872, two years after the lad's death, but, to the

disappointment of the parents, it proved to be a girl. Princess Clementine was for many years her father's favourite.

Queen Marie reared her daughters on the strictest lines, and King Leopold approved of her policy. The Princesses were allowed very little liberty; until their education was finished, they were not allowed to go to the theatre; their reading was supervised; even at Court balls they were not allowed to dance; and many of the normal pleasures of girlhood were denied them. The results of this system were unhappy. Unfitted for the part they were to play in the world, profoundly ignorant of life, yet with their father's energy, they were eager to experience the pleasures of which they had been deprived. The lives of two of the Princesses were clouded with tragedy.

At the age of sixteen, Princess Louise was betrothed to her cousin, Prince Philip of Saxe-Coburg, but the marriage proved unfortunate. Princess Louise never obtained happiness; twice she returned to her parents. The final rupture came at last, when a divorce was pronounced in 1906.

Princess Stéphanie also at sixteen was betrothed to the Crown Prince Rudolph of Austria, whom she married on May 10th, 1881. This marriage pleased King Leopold, who would have been gratified to see his daughter upon the throne of Austria. Of its tragic termination all the world is aware. Under mysterious circumstances that, as yet, have never been explained fully, the Crown Prince was found dead in a shooting-lodge on January 30th, 1889.

The youngest daughter, Princess Clementine, who had a marked resemblance to her father, was a great favourite with the Belgian people. During her mother's lifetime she was the Queen's constant companion, but at length she rebelled against the Queen's strict supervision and appealed to her father, who took her part and allowed her a separate establishment. Later, however, she displeased him by wishing to marry Prince Victor Napoleon. Prince Albert and Princess Elizabeth were on the friendliest terms with Princess Clementine. Report has it that had Prince Baudouin lived, he would have been betrothed to the Princess. Being themselves aware of the joys of a happy union, they upheld Princess Clementine in her determination—a determination she carried out eventually—marrying at Mon Calieri the man of her choice on November 14th, 1910, after her father's death. They had a son and daughter. Prince Victor Napoleon died in 1926.

This then was the position of the King towards his daughters at the time of his death: Princess Louise, by her recklessness, had lost his affection; Princess Stéphanie had infuriated him by

contracting in 1900 a second alliance with Prince Lonyay de Nagy-Lonyay—a man younger than herself; and Princess Clementine had chosen a husband of whom he disapproved. These antagonisms caused disputes which became common knowledge as they involved legal proceedings before and after King Leopold's death.

Queen Marie passed away at Spa on September 19th, 1902. In his later years King Leopold contracted a morganatic alliance with Baroness Vaughan. After the King's death, the Pope telegraphed to the Nuncio in Brussels that a religious ceremony was celebrated between King Leopold and Baroness Vaughan at San Remo. Morganatic marriages are unknown in Belgium but this union received the blessing of the Church without the civil rites common in such cases. The Baroness was present at his death-bed.

After King Leopold's death, the Baroness was pensioned and left Belgium. In this matter, distasteful though it was to him, King Albert behaved with a tact and generosity known only to those who witnessed it. It was by his direct intervention that threatened legal action was withdrawn, and he exerted his influence to the utmost to avoid any of that public scandal which is so repugnant to a man of his temperament.

The King had a brain that lent itself to grandiose schemes. Like his grandfather, Louis Philippe, he was attracted by the fascination of speculation on the Stock Exchange. He was a shareholder in several enterprises at home and abroad, many of which justified his forethought and shrewdness. As *The New York Times* said: "No other King has been a veritable captain of industry." One of his ambitions, that was hardly realized, was to take a hand in developing China. The Peking-Hankau Railway was practically a Belgian undertaking. He sent Belgian officials to "spy out the land" in Persia, and for some years they took charge of the Persian Customs.

King Leopold was an autocrat of the autocrats. "*L'état, c'est moi*" might well have been his motto. His nephew, though he could invest his Court with the true dignity of the Coburgs, and State functions with the splendid ceremony consistent with his Royal House, had democratic leanings which were a strong contrast to the methods of his predecessor.

To King Leopold men were pawns in his game—pawns to be moved or discarded at will. King Albert takes a human interest not only in the lives of those in his immediate vicinity, but in the lives of the people of all classes of the community. Socialist leaders, not given to flattery, have paid tribute to his interest in and sympathy with the working classes.

King Leopold had a caustic wit. On one occasion when he was at his chalet at Ostend at an evening reception, the curé of the parish approached the King and asked for a private word with him. When the two were alone, the curé bowed respectfully to Leopold II, and then began to read the Sovereign a long sermon. "Sir, I am profoundly grieved," he said. "There is a rumour, I am sorry to say, that Your Majesty's private life is not marked by the austerity suited to the lofty and difficult task which God has laid upon the Monarchs of this earth. Remember, Sir, that it behoves Kings to set an example to their subjects."

For twenty minutes the King listened patiently to the utterances of the good man, until the curé desisted from want of breath.

"What a funny thing, Monsieur le Curé," said the King, fixing him with a cold look and smiling slightly. "Do you know, people have told me exactly the same thing about you! . . . *only I refused to believe it!*"

King Leopold had a very real delight in flowers, and took the utmost pleasure in adding to his gardens any new specimens to which his attention had been drawn. Some of his happiest hours were spent strolling through his gardens. He was not a deep reader of books, although he could assimilate the contents of a report from the Congo with swift intelligence. Like King Edward VII, he "read men" more easily than books, and formed rapid judgments which were seldom wrong as to whether they could serve his purposes.

In *The Times*, on the day following his death, it was stated: "The growth in the population and in the wealth of the country during his reign has been marvellous. Within the forty-four years since he succeeded his father the number of his subjects has nearly doubled, and the value both of the exports and the imports of the kingdom has increased five-fold. It is only just to his memory to record that his deep and intelligent interest in economic and commercial questions, his diplomatic ability, and his unflagging zeal and labour for the material well-being of his subjects did much to bring this about. That is his real claim to the gratitude of his people. . . . He might have been a great man and have filled a noble part in history, had he possessed a better heart."

The last sentence may be said to summarize King Leopold's character with fairness.

CHAPTER XII

THE EARLY YEARS OF KING ALBERT'S REIGN

Belgium's two peoples and languages—King Albert's impartiality—"The People's King"—Brussels Exhibition—The King's intense interest in it—Speech at the opening—Mr. Roosevelt's lecture—First State visit to Berlin—Crown Prince's flattery—Kaiser's return visit to Brussels—Meets M. Max, the Burgomaster—The Kaiser's love of uniforms—Artful German propaganda —"We are the bailiffs of God."

PROBABLY no King ever mounted a throne with a better idea of the work awaiting him than King Albert. The governing of Belgium presents an unusual difficulty from the fact that the Walloons and the Flemings, of which two peoples it is composed, are widely different, each presenting their own particular problems. The Walloons are, of course, the French Belgians, while the Flemings are more closely allied to the Dutch.

Thus Belgium has two languages—French and Flemish. The Flemings inhabit Flanders, Antwerp being the chief Flemish city, while Liège, Namur, Limburg, and Luxemburg are largely Walloon. In the years before he came to the throne, King Albert had been at great pains to make himself familiar with the characteristics of both the Walloons and the Flemings. It was characteristic of his desire to unite still further the two races in their loyalty to the Constitution that, on his accession, he was the first Belgian Sovereign to take the oath in both Flemish and French.

From the first, King Albert let it be understood that to him all his subjects were of equal importance, and that, whether Walloon or Fleming, they were Belgian and therefore part of the State. To emphasize this, he has made speeches in Flemish where it was expected he would speak in French; he has granted full recognition to the Flemish genius which has given the country so many works of art; and has paid tribute to that Flemish loyalty which has made representatives of its oldest families supporters of the throne. In a word, he has shown every sympathy with the Flemish movement, being determined that, as the Flemish party begged in an address to his grandfather: "justice should be done to the well-founded demands of the Flemings."

King Albert was wise enough to recognize that "without vision the people perish," and one of his ambitions on ascending the throne was to do more for the art and culture of his country than his uncle had had the time or inclination to do. Financial and commercial enterprises had flourished under King Leopold, but the arts had been allowed to languish. Those who, like His Majesty, realized that this was bad for the life of the nation, rejoiced to hear King Albert's special reference to the matter in his speech from the throne.

One of the earliest acts of the new Monarch was to change the retinue his uncle had gathered about him. King Albert did this in no bitter spirit, but his views of a Sovereign's duties were widely different from those of King Leopold, and he looked upon it as of great importance to choose for his entourage men who had proved themselves competent advisers. He desired to have around him men who would tell him the truth as it was. He chose men from each party, and he selected them well. Though the King was not, and never had been, a man to be influenced by the opinions of others, he was always glad to hear the views of those who were competent to give them.

Occasionally, in the early years of his reign, the Socialist Party created scenes in the Chamber of Deputies, but these left the King unmoved. He treated the leaders of all parties with strict impartiality, and, when the German Emperor visited Brussels, he presented the leaders of the Liberal Party to him. He gave additional proof of his democratic tendencies when, opening the Parliament in 1911, he remained bareheaded when reading his speech from the throne. This was a departure from tradition which was approved by all.

Education is another matter which has always been uppermost in the mind of His Majesty, and in all measures touching upon this problem he took the keenest interest. He never hesitated to confer with the Ministers of any party if, by so doing, he thought he could help the cause of progress. Under the reign of King Leopold, Belgium was somewhat backward in the matter of education, but King Albert's unfailing efforts did much to remedy matters. He was particularly concerned with developing the technical schools and training-colleges, and any scheme for the establishment of such centres of education was always certain of his support. In the matter of education, as it is generally understood, the position of the Belgian Sovereign is somewhat delicate, owing to the fact that the State religion is that of the Church of Rome, to which the Sovereign belongs. Consequently, religious education must follow upon the lines of Catholic teaching. The Liberal Party has at times held and

expressed other views—on more than one occasion trying to implicate the King in their wrangles. In this they never succeeded. His Majesty manifested his strength of character in refusing to be influenced either by a Catholic Government or a Socialist Opposition.

When Prince Albert ascended the throne his pride in his title of "The People's King" caused amusement to the Crown Prince of Germany. Discussing it with his brothers he made the characteristic comment: "He likes being called 'The People's King.' It seems an odd fancy. 'The King's People' has a far better sound to me."

Had the Crown Prince's family preferred the first title, they might still be in a position to speak of the latter!

His Majesty's lack of personal vanity made him additionally difficult to influence, for he was not the least susceptible to flattery. He had the pride of a king as well as of a man, but of that vanity which contributed so greatly to the fall of the Hohenzollerns he had none. This was manifested in his personal attire. For State functions he wore usually his General's uniform —a plain and, in some ways, almost an old-fashioned dress. It was only on gala occasions that he could be persuaded to wear the decorations to which he was entitled. In mufti, he preferred the rough tweeds and the plain home-spuns of a country gentleman. He had always been secretly amused at the petty princelings who appear in a different uniform each day and stud their tunics with decorations like a breast-plate.

There is a good story told of this in connection with the coming-of-age of a minor German royalty who had inherited the family love of fine attire. Their Majesties were to send him a gift, and were discussing its nature.

"I think a hunting crop," suggested the Queen.

The King's eyes twinkled. "No, no," he said. "Let us choose something that will really please him. Send someone to the Opera House to inquire what costumes they have left over from their last production!"

One of the first important events of King Albert's reign was the Brussels Universal Exhibition, in which from its first inception he had shown deep interest. It was opened in the Bois de la Cambre on April 23rd, 1910, and all the plans for its success had his hearty approval. Like the nation at large, he hoped and believed that Belgian industries would benefit much from the Belgian section of the Exhibition.

The disastrous fire which destroyed a large number of the buildings and some valuable exhibits caused His Majesty deep regret, but despite the fire and the fact that, like all other

exhibitions planned on ambitious lines, much of it was not completed on the day of the opening, the Brussels Exhibition achieved much for Belgian trade.

The King opened the Exhibition, and by his express desire, the public were not, as is customary in such cases, excluded until after the ceremony, but were admitted throughout the whole of the day. The King, accompanied by Queen Elizabeth and members of his suite, arrived at 1-30 p.m. After the usual speeches had been delivered by prominent officials connected with the enterprise, the King declared the Exhibition open. In the course of his speech he said :

"The Exhibition which I congratulate myself on opening to-day proves to the eyes of the world the immense progress realized during three-quarters of a century by Belgium. We see a home of labour, where the co-operation of genius—daring in its creations—and intelligent industry have produced marvels in all the fields of human activity. I rejoice for more than one reason at the presence of so many foreign exhibitors and at the truly international character of the Exhibition. The foreign participation is a brilliant proof of the sentiment of esteem and friendship which Belgium, industrious and pacific, has won from all nations. By its international character, the Exhibition of 1910 has a humanitarian side, for it appears as an imposing manifestation of the pacific struggle in the fields of labour and progress where the nations tend more and more to compete with each other. It is a work of peace and fraternity in which free competition has replaced the armed conflicts of former times."

In the light of future events that closing sentence has a sadly ironic ring. Not far from where the King stood was the German section of the Exhibition—one of the few which had their exhibits ready displayed. It is not unlikely that even as he spoke there were among his hearers those who knew that an "armed conflict" of terrible proportions was already in the course of preparation.

After declaring the Exhibition open their Majesties made a tour of the buildings, but, owing to the unfinished state of many of the sections, that inspection was the most cursory of the many that they made subsequently. The King, usually accompanied by the Queen, paid several visits to the Exhibition, and these visits were marked by even more than his usual thoroughness. Section after section he visited, poring over exhibits, and asking innumerable questions of the exhibitors—questions which displayed not only his interest but also his technical knowledge.

It is the conventional custom for Royal visitors to appear

interested in such matters, but no one who saw or heard King Albert during these tours of the International Exhibition could have had the slightest doubt that his interest was not the outcome of mere expediency, but the result of a desire for information and an unfailing interest in anything which, however remotely, concerned his country and its people.

Certain of his suite did not share his enthusiasm, and, condemned to walk after him mile after mile, for the Exhbiition was vast and, like all such concerns, could be extremely fatiguing, they found themselves nourishing a deep-seated hatred of all exhibitions. On one occasion, as, much to his suite's relief, the King was about to leave the Exhibition, he turned back to speak to an official.

"Where is His Majesty?" asked an attaché anxiously.

"Oh, he's gone back; he's overlooked a bead in one of the exhibits!" was the weary answer.

The death of King Edward VII, who was cousin to King Albert, prevented several British Royalties from attending the Exhibition as they had intended, but there were representatives from every other State. Among them came Mr. Roosevelt. The ex-President of the United States was given a special audience by the King, who had a long conversation with him concerning the relations between the two countries. Mr. Roosevelt was a great admirer of King Albert, and the relations between them were always of the most cordial character. The ex-President was delighted when King Albert announced his intention of coming to hear the lecture he was to deliver at the Exhibition.

Mr. Roosevelt had been announced to speak on "Time is Money," but, finding that he could not spare more than a quarter of an hour, he changed the title—thinking perhaps that it was a trifle pointed—to "The Duties of a Citizen." His lecture was pointed and pithy, but it was not the lecture but the lecturer—and particularly the lecturer's manner, that intrigued his audience. Always unconventional, Mr. Roosevelt strode about the platform, gesticulated, addressed the audience, amongst whom sat King Albert, as "Gentlemen" and "My friends" as the fancy took him. He was deadly in earnest, and created a highly favourable impression upon his hearers who, led by the King, applauded him loudly.

The Exhibition year was a great one for Brussels, for during the twelve months there were over one hundred and fifty International Conferences held in the city. King Albert, delighted to know his country was entertaining within its borders savants from all over the world, attended the most important of these meetings, and often entertained the members at the Palace.

It is interesting, and perhaps tragic, to recall that their Majesties' first State visit, after their accession, was made to Berlin. Their relations with the German Court had always been of the friendliest. The King's mother was a Hohenzollern ; the Queen was a Bavarian and niece of the Emperor of Austria—facts that the Kaiser relied upon when he made sure that King Albert would allow his troops to pass through Belgium in the event of a war.

The visit was paid in May, 1910. The Kaiser being indisposed, his place was taken by the Crown Prince, who did the honours of the capital and was present at most of the functions arranged for the entertainment of the Royal visitors. At the first informal dinner at which King Albert and his Queen were present, over which the Crown Prince presided, there occurred an odd incident which, to anyone inclined to superstition, seemed of sinister import. The Crown Prince had risen and half-jestingly was about to drink the health of the Queen when, reaching clumsily for his glass, he overturned its contents. So rapidly the footmen repaired the damage that it passed almost unnoticed, as did the peculiar expression on the face of the Prince when he saw what he had done.

Berlin did its best to fête its guests and the crowds welcomed them warmly as they drove through the decorated streets. At a State banquet given to their Majesties, the Crown Prince made an eloquent speech in which, in the name of the Kaiser, he assured King Albert of the friendly sentiments with which the German people and their Government regarded the Belgian nation and its ruler. It was a long speech, full of fine sentiments and rounded periods. How much of it was sincere is known only to the speaker !

In the autumn of that year the visit was returned. In October, 1910, the streets of Brussels were *en fête* to welcome the Kaiser, the Kaiserin, and the Princess Victoria. There was a profusion of German flags flying everywhere, and wherever the Royal visitors went there were cheering crowds to greet them, and windows along the line of route let for fabulous sums. The Belgian Press laid itself out to do homage to the visitors, and even the Kaiser must have been satisfied with the compliments accorded him.

The Kaiser's love of uniform is well known. Naturally, all tunics had to be made with a view to concealing the fact that his left arm did not match his right. The arm was not, as so many writers have declared, withered ; it was perfectly formed, but much smaller than the normal limb. So cleverly did the Court tailors work that any difference was hidden.

The Emperor did not very much admire the Belgian officer's

uniform, but, at a reception, he noticed one official most gorgeously arrayed and made surreptitious inquiries as to his rank in the hope that an honorary rank might be given him with the right to wear this striking uniform! With regard to his love of uniforms, a typical example of the vanity of the Kaiser was given in a letter written in May, 1908, to Prince von Bülow, in which he says:

"When you are with the King (of Sweden) this evening before dinner he will, as he has told me in confidence, present you with the Order of Saint Seraphim in gratitude for your work in the North Sea question.

"Perhaps you will be so good as to suggest to him that he might perhaps make me a Swedish General. I have been a Swedish Admiral since 1888. The Admiral's uniform is, however, so frightful that I look like a Landrat (a country official).

"That is why I could not put it on for the reception at the railway-station, as would have been *de rigueur*. Do not, of course, give this reason, but the relations of our armies involves my receiving Swedish officers next month. I really cannot receive them in evening dress and yet want to be Swedish."

It was at this time that the Kaiserin was growing somewhat stout, and of this her husband did not approve. A gentle, kindly soul, she had long been taught the exact place she filled in the scheme of things from the Kaiser's point of view. Since he did not wish her to become fat, fat she must not be. Doctors and "professors" of diet were consulted, and, as a result, the Empress was put on the strictest diets—a regime which caused her, often to the dismay of her hosts, to sit through many banquets with an empty plate before her.

The Kaiser's reception at the Hotel de Ville will be remembered for many years by those who witnessed it. Here the Kaiser was received by the redoubtable M. Max, the Burgomaster of Brussels, whose fame and heroism will ever be a proud memory in the annals of that city.

The Kaiser, who loved greatly to pose as an art-critic as well as an expert in architecture, duly rhapsodized over the Hotel de Ville which, built in 1400, is beyond even an Emperor's praise. He mentioned the height of the tower, and dilated at some length upon the figure of St. Michael—the tutelary saint of Brussels—overcoming the devil. When the masterpiece of Martin van Rode was unfortunately blown down and badly damaged in a terrific storm of 1863, Heima, the artist, replaced it with a facsimile as nearly like the original figure as possible.

It was always the delight of the Kaiser to air his knowledge of art, and he professed great annoyance if any masterpiece

was allowed to leave Germany for any other country. He was very angry when, in 1906, the Duveens bought for a quarter of a million the Hainauer art collection—one of the most magnificent art collections in Germany. In no measured terms he expressed his annoyance that the authorities of the Berlin Museum had allowed these masterpieces to pass from Germany. It would seem that his views have mellowed, since he has sold some of the gems acquired by Frederick the Great, which he inherited, to an American collector. He only desisted from parting with other treasures on the strong representations from the German nation!

In Brussels, however, there was nothing to hinder him from rhapsodies before the art treasures which King Albert and M. Max displayed to him. No doubt he was immensely flattered by M. Max's courteous acknowledgment, when the Burgomaster said: "Your Imperial Majesty, the august personification of the people, lover of art and of beauty, you manifest by your visit your interest in an edifice that our intense patriotism considers one of the most precious jewels of architecture that our ancestors have left us."

In his reply, in which the Emperor thanked M. Max for his welcome and for the reception given "in this illustrious edifice, the jewel of architecture and treasury of historical souvenirs," he said:

"I am happy to salute the town of Brussels, the centre of a country which is distinguished by the serious and laborious spirit of its inhabitants. An admirer of the brilliant results obtained from all time by the Belgian nation in the domains of industry and commerce, I congratulate it with all my heart on the triumph it has won in the recent Exhibition."

M. Max, in the prison into which the Germans cast him in the War, must have felt the irony of events as he remembered the Kaiser's praise of the Hotel de Ville and the other historic buildings of Brussels, so many of which his troops did their best to lay in irreparable ruins. Fortunately for himself and the nation, M. Max's sense of humour never deserted him, even in prison—a fact which added to the wrath of the Germans.

At a farewell banquet, King Albert proposed the toast of the Kaiser and uttered his sincere sentiments concerning the relations of the two countries.

"Sire," he said, "the Belgian people appreciate fully the amiable interest shown by your Imperial Majesty, and they salute the Emperor and Monarch so far-seeing and enlightened, who is known so well to favour the growth of his country in all the domains of human activity. They desire not less sincerely

that relations of the most complete confidence should exist between the two reigning Houses, which shall fortify the friendship of the two nations.

"As for myself, united to your Imperial Majesty by blood relation as well as by affection, as you were pleased to recall to me at Potsdam, I know the worth of the sentiments you express to the Queen and me, and I desire to say that we are deeply grateful for them. I am happy to take the opportunity of expressing to your Imperial Majesty the warmest wishes for your happiness and for the glorious and prosperous continuance of your reign, and that your noble efforts will continue to preserve the peace of the world and thus benefit all nations."

The Emperor replied in German—his choice of his own language arousing some slight comment, even at that time. His speech was considered more flowery than the quiet sincerity of that of his host, and in the course of it he said:

"The brilliant reception which has been prepared for us by Your Majesties and the Belgian people in this splendid capital has profoundly touched us and awakened sentiments of gratitude, all the stronger because we find in this reception a subject of closer union which exists not only between our families but also between our two peoples.

"Full of amiable sympathy, I, in common with all Germany, observe the surprising success which the Belgian people has won in all the domains of commerce and industry by its indefatigable activity, the crowning of which we have been able to salute in the Universal Exhibition, which was so brilliantly and successfully held this year.

"The whole earth is enveloped by the world-wide commerce of Belgium. In that, there is a field of pacific action in which Belgians and Germans meet everywhere. Equal admiration fills us for the cultivation of the beautiful—a domain in which the artists and poets of Belgium have acquired such a marked place. May the relations, full of confidence and neighbourliness, of which the recent negotiations between our two Governments have given such amicable testimony, be still more strengthened. May the reign of Your Majesty spread happiness and prosperity amongst your Royal House, and among your people! This is the most profound wish of my heart, with which I cry 'Long live their Majesties, the King and Queen of the Belgians. Hoch!'"

This speech, when reported in the Press, impressed the Belgian people deeply—indeed, so greatly were they touched by its noble sentiments that when the Germans invaded Brussels four years afterwards they found copies of it placarded all over the walls! Apparently, the officers commanding the troops did not

appreciate the Belgians' long memory, for the first thing they did was to order the placards to be torn down.

The German colony in Brussels did full honour to the visit of their Imperial Majesties. Deputations from various German societies, the German Chamber of Commerce and its like, waited on the Emperor with speeches of welcome, while there was a special visit paid to the German school and various institutions of a philanthropic nature.

In the light of after events, there is little doubt that even at that time there was a pan-German movement being encouraged in Belgium by German agents, who hoped—how vainly later history proved—to gain friends among the Flemings. As far back as the spring of 1909 there occurred that curious incident of the pan-German placard which appeared on the walls of Antwerp.

This placard, which bore the Belgian national colours, announced that in the last five hundred years France had ravaged Belgium no less than 170 times, and had always been against the interests of that country. The main purpose of the placard purported to be a protest against the French Consul-General's declaration that the Theatre of Varieties at Antwerp helped in the diffusion of the French language. Flemish is, of course, spoken throughout Antwerp.

This placard was suppressed, but its origin is easily imagined, as is the source of those peculiar postcards which were offered so freely for sale in Belgium. These cards purported to show a view of Europe in the year 1950—a view in which Belgium, Holland, Denmark, and Austria had all been absorbed by the German Empire! There appeared also an atlas in which Europe was remodelled on much the same surprising lines.

Yet while these straws, which indicated very plainly which way the wind blew, were making their appearance, the German Emperor himself lost no opportunity of parading his friendliness towards Belgium and its ruler.

When the Belgian Mission went to greet him at Aix-la-Chapelle in 1911, he assured them that Belgium had nothing to fear on the part of Germany. In September of that year, while at the Swiss manœuvres, in the course of conversation with the President of the Swiss Confederation, he remarked on the efficiency of the Swiss Army. He said: "What a pity that the Belgian Army is not as well prepared, and is incapable of resisting French aggression"—the implication, of course, being that France was the enemy which Belgium had to fear.

In view of the manner in which "the scrap of paper" was treated, it is curious to recall that, on the celebration of the

seventy-fifth anniversary of Belgian independence, Herr Graf von Wallwitz said: "And, as for us Germans, the maintenance of the treaty of warranty, concluded at the birth of Modern Belgium, is a sort of political axiom which, to our thinking, no one could violate without committing the gravest of faults."

It may be added, in this connection, that in 1913, when "The Day" was being toasted in every mess-room in Germany, General von Emmich, who was afterwards in charge of the bombardment of Liège, came to salute King Albert and Queen Elizabeth in the name of his Emperor, and spoke most eloquently of German sympathies for Belgium. In the same year, the Catholic deputy to the Reichstag, Herr Ertzberger, gave his word of honour that there had never been any question of invading Belgium, and that Belgium might always count on the party of the Centre to see that all international engagements were respected.

In addition to their ties of blood, Wilhelm hoped that his seniority would help him in his endeavours to influence King Albert, just as he had expected it to influence King Alfonso of Spain. During the Algeciras conference he wrote to Prince von Bülow, threatening not to visit Spain unless King Alfonso agreed with his wishes. In this letter occur the following sentences:

"According to your account, the King of Spain persists in refusing to tell us anything about the Franco-Spanish Moroccan agreement because he has promised secrecy to France. . . . . The King of Spain expects a visit from me, but he refuses to be the least bit obliging to me in politics.

"I propose to Your Serene Highness to have them told quite curtly in Madrid that if His Majesty does not communicate to me the agreement with France regarding Spain and if Spain helps, with the support of France, to checkmate the conference, then I will not visit Spain this year.

"I am so much older than the lad that it is up to him to do what I want."

Reviewing the Kaiser's character in the light of such a communication, one concludes that it was colossal vanity that was one of the chief causes which brought him to ruin and involved his country in disaster. Herr Eulenberg, in his recent book, described him as "that splendid firework. . . . one of the most brilliant frauds ever wrapped in the royal ermine." His mother, the Empress Frederick, in her letters, the publication of which caused him such annoyance, left no doubt as to his ruling passion being pride.

During his visit to Belgium he frequently expressed surprise

that King Albert should be at such pains to ascertain the views, not only of the party in power, but of the Opposition. He was frankly amazed at King Albert's efforts to understand the wishes and aspirations of the people. He believed, as he took no pains to conceal, in the divine right of Kings, while King Albert has believed as fully in the divine rights of the people:

"Why grant so many audiences?" he asked King Albert, "and to men of no account? You have your policy—it is for them to follow it."

"My country and I, we make our policy together," said the King.

"But we Hohenzollerns are the bailiffs of God," came the grandiose response. He used this same phrase in his book published after the War.

It is possible that events might have shaped themselves rather differently for one of "the bailiffs of God" if he had ever been told the truth. He chose his own ministers and, when they differed from him, he dismissed them, with the easily imagined result that there gathered round his throne only men who were willing to flatter and echo the views of their Imperial master.

Even his reading was "bowdlerized" carefully with a view to sparing his feelings. He had a special newspaper printed daily in gold ink, containing suitable extracts from all printed matter dealing with him and his policy. He lived in a curious world of make-believe in which, in his own imagination, he stalked, a colossal, sabre-rattling figure—the admired, the feared, and the envied of all other nations.

However politely the Kaiser was received with his wife and daughter by King Albert, the latter must have formed his own opinion, an unfavourable one of such a vainglorious Monarch.

CHAPTER XIII

SHADOWS OF COMING EVENTS

An impartial judge of Politics—A shower of Socialist petitions—Queen Elizabeth's dignified composure—A general strike—Advance in education—Strengthening the Army—Notable articles in *Le Soir*—" Peaceful penetration " of Belgium by spies—German methods of espionage—The Kaiser's mistakes as to Belgium and Russia—The Tsar's hint.

DURING the five years intervening between King Albert's accession to the throne and the outbreak of the Great War, his relations with his Parliament were of the greatest interest to the Kaiser and to the German Government. No doubt they were more than a little dismayed to find that he displayed a will as strong as that of his uncle, Leopold II, though it was turned to more altruistic ends. While he took a prominent part in the government of his country, when he considered it right to do so, no party could embroil him in their strategy for their own ends.

King Albert came to the throne when the political affairs of the nation called for a firm hand. The Catholic party had been in office for twenty-five years, and, though as a matter of form they tendered their resignation when he succeeded, the King, also as a matter of form, begged them to remain in office. But the Socialists, of whom Belgium had always possessed a considerable number, had attacked the Government again and again, while Liberal opposition had been becoming more and more violent.

King Albert, as we have mentioned, was called the " People's King "—a title he welcomed, but when he came to the throne there were circulated certain reports to the effect that he would be a Socialist king, a contradiction in terms which, no doubt, gained credence with some sections of the public. The rumour inspired the Socialist party with the belief, or at least the hope, that in the new Monarch they might find a supporter. Since no man, king or commoner, was better aware of the folly of extremist views of any kind than was King Albert, the Socialists were to find themselves sadly mistaken. But there was certainly this hope at the back of their attack on the Catholic Government

at the election of 1910, the year after King Albert's accession.

In Belgium, General Elections are rare. Members of the Chambers are elected for four years, and in 1910 it was the re-election of the Chamber which the Socialist Party opposed with an even greater strength and bitterness than they had displayed hitherto. Their attack failed and then they commenced an agitation for electoral reform, an agitation which they pursued by means of strikes and disorders lasting over a lengthy period.

Into this storm they did their best to drag the King. He was, of course, to open Parliament as usual, and the Socialist party prepared for the event by arranging that their supporters should line the route along which the King would ride from his Palace to the Palais de la Nation. King Albert rode on horseback, while the Queen, accompanied by her little sons, preceded him in a carriage. The appearance of her carriage was the signal for a foolish and most unseemly scene. Many petitions demanding universal suffrage had been prepared, and many of these were impaled on staves ready for thrusting before the faces of their Majesties; many others were thrown at their feet or tossed through the windows of the carriage. The Queen's composure never deserted her for a moment. She had started with the windows of her carriage open and, though her dress became thickly strewn with scraps of paper flung at the carriage, she refused to allow the windows to be raised. So unconcerned were the young Princes that they amused themselves by arranging the petitions into neat little piles!

The King was pelted so incessantly with petitions that at one time it looked as if his charger would take fright and bolt. But excellent horseman as he was, His Majesty kept his seat, and without hastening his pace in the least or betraying the slightest annoyance, rode slowly on to the Palace.

Inside the building the hostile demonstration went on, but the King continued to ignore it. When interruptions were at their height, a man rose in the public gallery and called out in Flemish "Long Live the Queen!" The exclamation evoked such a response that the Socialist clamour was for the time overcome by the expressions of loyalty that arose from all parts of the Chamber. Later in the debate, M. Vandervelde—the Socialist leader—announced: "We have nothing against the King; it is the Government we attack."

The disappointed agitators determined to try again. On this occasion their efforts took the form of a General Strike, which occurred in April, 1912, and, at first sight, looked like being a very serious affair. The strikers were hopeful that, in order to

settle matters, the King would intervene, and insist on the Government yielding to their demands.

A weak man might have yielded. King Albert was not weak, and, in addition to his desire for the real good of the people, he had the necessary judgment and foresight which enabled him to determine in which direction wisdom pointed. He decided to support the Parliament in power, but advised that there should be appointed a Commission to inquire into the justice of the Socialist claims.

The Kaiser professed himself as highly satisfied with the action of the King of the Belgians. He approved of him! In discussing the Belgian strike with a Belgian diplomatist, he said: "Your King did well. I myself could hardly have done better! I foresee that in many ways he is likely to follow my example." Had he realized that, in supporting his Ministry, King Albert made it possible for the speedy passing of the Army Bill, of which more will be said later, the Kaiser's approval might not have been so complete.

If King Albert had shown the Socialist Party that no amount of clamour or threats of any kind would move him from the course upon which he had decided, on another occasion he proved to the Catholic Party that he would oppose them if he felt it to be in the best interests of the nation.

His Majesty had always realized to the full the supreme importance of education and had watched carefully the legislation relating to it passed in Great Britain. In the year after his accession, there was a movement on foot to change the existing law regarding school attendance. In his speech made in November, 1910, the King thus referred to the question:

"It is to the father of the family that the right belongs of watching over the education and instruction of his child, of choosing freely, and with full independence, the school to which he will confide it. My Government will propose measures to you for the efficacious guarantee of this indestructible right."

The measures proposed were introduced in a Bill by M. Schollaert, who was then Prime Minister. It made education compulsory, but allowed the parent to choose the school to which he would send his children. This measure the Liberal and Socialist parties opposed fiercely on the grounds that the influence of the priests would result in the children being sent to clerical instead of to State schools.

Many sound arguments were put forward and the King, after making personal investigations, consulted with the veteran, M. Beernaert, who was Prime Minister during part of the reign of Leopold II and had often angered that autocrat by the

outspokenness of his opinions. Another statesman whom he consulted was M. Woest, who, when a member of the Cabinet, had done much in framing the Education Law of 1884 and its amendments in 1895. Neither approved of the Bill as it then stood, and, having heard their reasons, His Majesty, after discussing the question with others fully qualified to express an opinion, sent for M. Schollaert and recommended that the Bill should be dropped. The Prime Minister agreed, but resigned office, being succeeded by the Baron de Broqueville.

As the Socialists in the matter of the General Strike had been loud in their complaints that the King had given way to the Catholics, so now, in the matter of the Education Bill, the Catholics proclaimed that he had yielded to the Socialists. Both were wrong: His Majesty, being free from party prejudice, had chosen, as he has always tried to choose, the wisest course for the good of the nation at large.

Turning from domestic politics, which had excited much controversy but had stabilized the position of the Sovereign as far-sighted ruler, attention must now be directed to the military position of the country. The outbreak of hostilities in 1914 did not find Belgium wholly prepared for war, but that she was as ready as the invaders found her, was, in a large measure, due to the active interest of the King in his Army, and its increase in strength, for which he was still labouring in that fatal August of 1914.

In certain quarters, it is firmly believed that the fact that the Belgian Army was in course of reconstruction hastened actually the date of the War. The Kaiser believed King Albert would allow his troops to pass through Belgium. Indeed, he boasted of it in his secret conclaves, when he was preparing the overthrow of Great Britain. If there was a doubt as to Belgium's complaisance, it should be put to the test before the Belgian Army had attained the strength and organization at which King Albert was aiming.

King Albert was related to other Royal Houses besides those of Germany, and certain hints had already been dropped in his ear by relatives who had not been misled by Germany's apparent friendliness. From other quarters these hints had been spoken aloud. Belgium felt safe in her neutrality, but, during 1911, there appeared in the French newspaper *Le Soir* a series of articles in which the writer made it plain that all the authoritative German military writers believed the invasion of Belgium to be inevitable should Germany ever be at war with France. These articles circulated pretty freely in Belgium and aroused much comment, to the indignation of the Kaiser, who, intent

as he was on making reassuring statements, was furious with the writer's disclosures. If the latter had had the misfortune to be attached to a German newspaper, the Kaiser would have made short work of him.

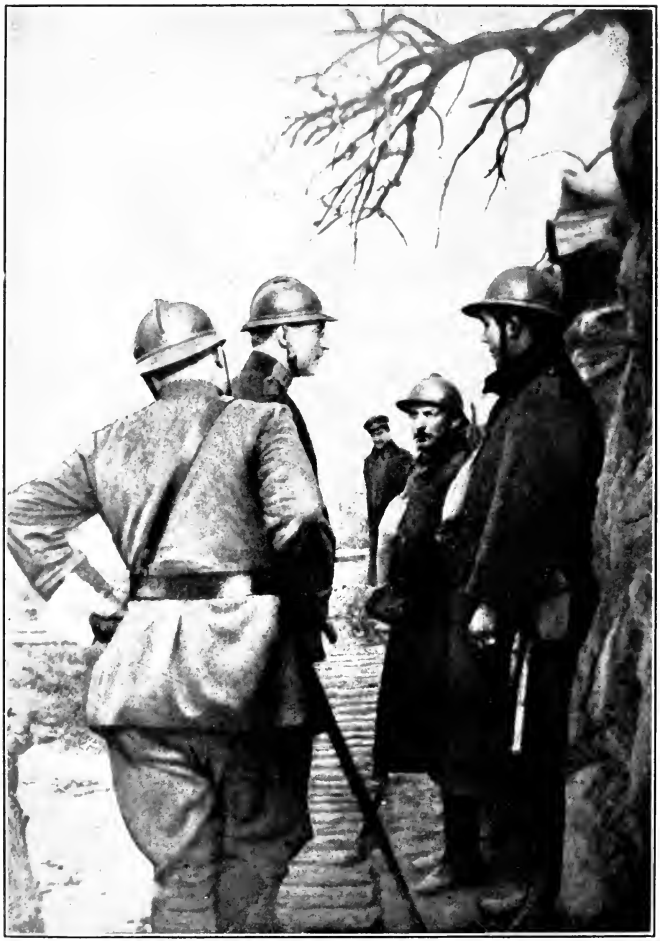
Still more alarming than the articles was the fact that France, aware that Belgium's military forces were weak, joined with Great Britain in giving Belgium a friendly warning. King Albert, who for many years had been at work upon Army reform, now prompted instant action. He decided that the existing state of affairs should be made known to the country, and in February, 1913, Baron de Broqueville, addressing the Chambers, made a lengthy statement dealing with the Army as it was, and as certain events made it of supreme importance that it should be.

In his speech, the Baron pointed out that it was impossible to remain blind to the fact that certain alliances and the grouping of certain Powers made it a possible, though a remote, contingency that Belgium's neutrality might be threatened. It, therefore, behoved the nation to realize that it must adopt a real system of compulsory military service.

The new proposals, which King Albert let it be understood had his full approval, included a scheme by which the strength of the Army (which, under the old regime, had never been more than 210,000 men—and that total only on paper) would increase to a war strength of 340,000 soldiers. This total, according to the Prime Minister's estimate, would give 150,000 men for a field army; 130,000 men for the manning of the fortresses; and 60,000 men as a reserve force. Though King Albert used all his influence to hasten matters, the Bill did not become law in time for all classes named under the new Act to be called up. At the time of the enemy's invasion, the Belgian Army reserves numbered no more than 260,000 men, a fact that was, of course, well known to Germany and taken into account in her scheme of operations.

The forts of Liège, Antwerp, and Namur absorbed a force of fully 130,000 men. When war broke out, rather than deplete the trained force to this extent, the military commanders gave the task of defending these forts, as well as that of guarding roads, bridges, and railway lines, to the Garde Civique—a force resembling in some ways the British Volunteers, as their officer explained at a banquet given in their honour when members of the Garde once paid a visit to England.

The Garde Civique came into being at the time of the Belgian revolution, and, while its primary use was to maintain order in the towns, it was always understood that it should assist the Army in time of need. The Garde was drilled twelve times



E.N.A.

KING ALBERT TALKING TO HIS TROOPS IN THE TRENCHES, — 1914

From left to right :—
BACK ROW—PRINCE LEOPOLD OF BELGIUM: KING ALBERT: KING ALFONSO OF SPAIN
FRONT ROW—H.M. THE QUEEN OF SPAIN: H.M. THE QUEEN OF THE BELGIANS

yearly, and it consisted of a fine body of men whose services proved invaluable during the first weeks of the War. The Germans refused to recognize their right to defend their country and announced that they would treat them as irregulars and shoot them when captured. On learning this, and knowing beyond doubt that these threats would be put into execution, the Belgian authorities disbanded the Garde. The disappointment of the men was so great, and their demands to be allowed to risk their lives in the defence of their country so insistent, that they were reformed and, at their own express desire, allowed to risk the vengeance of the invaders.

The Army Bill and all that it implied had the full approval of the nation, and the young men of Belgium showed themselves ready and eager to serve their time with the forces. The enthusiasm spread even to the lads under military age, and the Boy Scout movement, which King Albert had done his best to foster, received an additional impetus. These boys rendered very valuable service during the time of actual warfare. They were invaluable at Headquarters, and manifested the most conspicuous bravery when in danger from the enemy. One member, Joseph Lieven, was created a Chevalier of the highest Order, King Albert himself decorating him with the Cross of the Order of Leopold for his gallantry under fire.

The full history of German espionage has yet to be written, and if ever recorded, it will be the most amazing story of all the amazing events of that time. It is certain, beyond any doubt, that the German Secret Service was probably the most efficient which the world has ever seen. The Kaiser himself held somewhat peculiar views on his spy system. He considered it to be the bouden duty of every German to be willing, nay eager, to do a little amateur spying on behalf of his or her country. On one occasion he protested against a payment made for a special piece of information. "Is it not enough," he demanded, "for this man to have the honour of serving the Fatherland, that he should demand a small fortune for his services? To the true German, patriotism should be so great that other countries should not be able to guard their secrets from his vigilance!"

Some "true Germans" certainly did their best, and, in most cases, they were paid for it! To many brave men of high courage, despite their obnoxious profession, the last payment came from the rifle's mouth as they stood with their backs to a whitewashed wall.

For several years before the War, Germans had been settling in Antwerp in ever increasing numbers. Reports had it that

there was in permanent residence a Chief of the German Secret Service Staff, who enlisted promising recruits from the many Germans coming to Belgium as workmen, clerks, and apprentices at all the principal business establishments. There was a steady "pacific penetration" of Belgium that could, by no possible means, have been the result of chance, or of anything but deliberate design. When War actually broke out, many of these "friendly" visitors revealed themselves in their true colours. The officer who guided the German troops into Luxemburg was recognized as a leading inhabitant of the city, a trusted and respected "citizen" who had settled there long ago and done his best to obliterate his German origin. The officer who led the first troops into Charleroi was afterwards found to be an employee of a big engineering works there, a man who had had an insight into many mechanical secrets likely to be used in warfare. The man who guided the first Zeppelin over Antwerp had himself lived for many years in the city, the intimate friend of many loyal Belgians.

Despite the constant friendly assurances of the Kaiser, King Albert was by no means blind to what was occurring in his country. Though the spying was done with such skill and secrecy that no open action could be taken, all the information despatched did not reach its destination!

In their espionage, the Germans, in those pre-War months, were helped materially by the fact that pigeon-flying is a favourite pastime of the Belgian workman. Pigeon racing was still one of the favourite sports, and in certain districts it was said jestingly, that the Belgian workman divided his wages into three portions—one for himself, one for his family, and one for his carrier pigeons. Some idea of the number of pigeons to and from the various meeting-places may be gathered from the fact that, before the War, the railways received three million francs annually for carrying the baskets. During the Brussels Exhibition as many as 100,000 birds were released.

As may be imagined, the German spies were amongst the most enthusiastic pigeon-fanciers. Always in the back-yard there appeared the neat pigeon coup, and always the strain of bird was of the best and swiftest. No one will ever know how many messages were carried by these innocent feathered messengers, but it was King Albert who was the first to point out the immense advantage such birds were to enemy aliens. For some months before the invasion, the King had done his best to discourage the keeping of the carriers.

So sure were the Germans that the Kaiser's honeyed speeches, and the constant assurances of his statesmen, had soothed the

mind of the Belgian people, that a certain amount of spying—though, naturally, it went by other names—was done more or less openly. On the Baraque Michel, the highest point in Belgian territory, there was under German control an observatory for the purpose of practising triangulation; while at La Panne a German mission had installed an apparatus for wireless telepathy. In the Ardennes German pedlars, began to multiply exceedingly. They seemed strangely indifferent to trade, but were exceedingly willing to engage in conversation, and would spend most of their time gossiping with all and sundry, preferably with employees of engineering works and men in similar occupations.

Not all the news they gathered was authentic! All Belgians were not blind to the real purpose of these artless questioners, who took so deep an interest in the doings of their new country, and more than one letter went over the frontiers containing information strange indeed! There was one young man, such an easily-drawn-out young man, who loved Belgium and had his own methods of serving her. He talked to many of these men and in the friendliest way possible, betraying all kinds of secrets—or so his hearers fondly believed. Later, their superiors began to act upon the "information," with disastrous results.

The valleys of the Sambre and the Meuse were infested by German officers, who, more or less openly, studied the surrounding country—so openly indeed that France began to suspect that Belgium must have some secret understanding with Germany, and dropped more than one hint of her suspicions.

As has been stated, it is certain that the Kaiser depended on retaining King Albert as an ally. It may be that he even hoped Russia would be persuaded to be his friend! Some years before, he had tried to negotiate a Treaty with the late Tsar, and, when Nicolas hesitated, had wired with that love of including the Diety in all his actions which has ever characterized him: "We have joined our hands; we have sworn before God, who has heard our oath. . . . What is signed is signed. God is our witness."

At the time of the Great War, the Emperor's respect for signatures which heaven had witnessed, or otherwise, seemed to have weakened!

It is certain that Russia anticipated war, for the late Tsar's parting remark to a diplomatist who was leaving for Sofia was, "Mind, we shall not be ready for war before 1916."

Whatever suspicions King Albert may have entertained these were crystallized into certainty by his visit to Potsdam at the end of 1913.

CHAPTER XIV

THE KAISER'S TALKS WITH KING ALBERT

Belgium's neutrality guaranteed—King Albert's momentous talks with the Kaiser—" War is now inevitable "—King Albert's arguments disregarded—" Both England and France have had their day "—Report of conversations sent to France—M. Cambon's comments—The Kaiser's appeals to King Albert and Queen Elizabeth—King of Roumania's warning—Insolent attitude of Germans in Belgium—" We will name your streets "—The coming of world-wide calamity.

THE neutrality of Belgium was declared at the Congress of London in 1831. It was mainly a device of the Powers, accepted, but not greatly desired by the Belgian people, as Leopold I reminded Queen Victoria in a letter to her after the neutrality had been declared. But once the country had been declared neutral, the Belgian nation wished that neutrality to be protected. As time went on, unfortunately, signs seemed to indicate that Belgium might once more become the "cockpit of Europe."

Both France and Germany made military preparations that made it clear that, should war occur between them, Belgian neutrality would be violated. French strategists saw plainly that, should Germany attack France, she would attack through Belgium, to avoid the French forts guarding the frontier between Belfort and Sedan. They realized also that, by taking possession of Belgium, Germany could prevent the British forces from landing there. As long ago as 1892, a French writer declared: "There is a German interest superior to German neutrality before which that neutrality must yield."

As to the German military authorities, the exact position of Belgium in their war plans had been decided long before that visit to Potsdam which aroused King Albert to a full sense of the danger threatening his country. Bernhardi, in his book published in 1911, had stated: "Any natural obstacle, any powerful fortress cannot offer resistance in Belgium and Holland to a hostile invasion, and neutrality is only a paper rampart."

King Albert was Honorary Colonel of a German Dragoon Regiment, and, towards the end of October, 1913, he visited this regiment, then stationed at Luneville, afterwards going on

to Potsdam and meeting there the Kaiser. Despite various suspicious happenings, King Albert was more or less under the impression that there was sincerity in the many protestations of German friendship and that Belgium had nothing to fear from Germany's aggression. His interview with the Emperor was a painful awakening.

The Kaiser dreaming of world domination and confident of victory, made a great display of German military and naval strength. To King Albert's dismay, he made no concealment of the reason for these preparations.

"War," said the Kaiser, "is now inevitable, and the day is fast approaching."

King Albert demanded his reasons for this astounding belief.

"France wants war," declared the Kaiser. "She is arming rapidly, she has revealed herself by the voting on the three-years' military service. She wants war—she shall be satisfied."

King Albert, who was well acquainted with the temper of France, knew her to be pacific in her intentions, and tried vainly to enlighten him.

"France desires peace," he insisted. "She has a right to maintain her defences and does so, as do all countries, but that is all. She does not want war. You are mistaken."

"I am never mistaken," came the solemn answer. "France wishes for war; she wishes to recover Alsace Lorraine, and she thinks she can do so by fighting. We shall prove her mistaken."

King Albert continued his arguments. He said—what was true—that France was coming to acquiesce in the loss of her two provinces. Certainly, she would never risk a war with no other purpose but to regain them.

"I am convinced that France expects war," announced the Kaiser, with a tone of finality.

"And England?" asked King Albert.

The Kaiser hesitated before replying. "England has no love for France," he exclaimed angrily.

King Albert, amazed and horrified at this outburst, expressed his doubts as to the outcome of such a conflict. The Kaiser was genuinely amused.

King Albert did his best to point out England's desire for peace, her recent efforts in that direction—efforts with which France had shown herself in full sympathy. He spoke, too, of the risks, the uncertainties, the terrible responsibilities of warfare; but the Kaiser waved his arguments contemptuously aside.

Other diplomatic interviews at this stage show that the Kaiser

grew even more hostile in his views, and more confident in his predictions of success. No effort was spared to show King Albert the strength and the power of Germany, or to indicate how that strength and power might be used.

There is no doubt that these demonstrations were given with a view to securing King Albert as an ally. Their effect was very different. Knowing the Kaiser, King Albert was loth to believe that his views were in any real sense those of the German Government. Determined to find out for himself before he left Potsdam, he had an interview with General von Moltke, who, to his dismay, reiterated the sentiments of his Royal master. He, too, announced that war was inevitable—a war from which Germany would emerge victorious and mistress of the world.

"War is coming," said von Moltke. "A war forced upon us by the Powers who are jealous of our commercial and scientific prosperity."

"You are mistaken," King Albert urged: "England wishes for peace; France has little to gain from war. Would you plunge Europe in blood?"

Von Moltke smiled grimly. "I promise your Majesty it would not be a long immersion," came the cynical reply.

"You would incur a terrible responsibility," urged the King.

"There will be full recompense for those who help us support it," replied von Moltke.

"I need not remind you that Belgium is not only neutral, but solemnly pledged to support her neutrality," King Albert answered.

Von Moltke remained silent.

Disturbed and alarmed, King Albert did what he considered his duty. Before he left for Brussels, he authorized Baron Beyens, the Belgian Minister at Berlin, to give M. Jules Cambon a confidential account of what had occurred between the Kaiser and himself. Writing on the matter, Baron Beyens says: "What reason had the German Emperor for this pessimistic conviction?" He alluded to the Kaiser's declaration that France intended war; a statement, he said, which impressed his Royal visitor all the more in view of the fact that belief in the Monarch's pacific sentiments had not yet weakened in Belgium. It was that France herself wanted war, and that she was arming rapidly with this intention, as was shown by the voting of the law on three-years' military service. William II believed himself, at the same time, assured of victory.

"The Belgian Sovereign, who was better acquainted with the real disposition of the French public and the French Government, tried vainly to enlighten the Emperor.

"What was the object of these confidences? It is not difficult to guess. They constituted an invitation to the Belgian King, in face of the danger overhanging Western Europe, to throw himself into the arms of the stronger Power—arms ready to open for the purpose of clasping Belgium, and then strangling her."

The baron duly made his report to M. Jules Cambon, who, in his turn, sent the following report to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Stephen Pichon. The dispatch is dated November 22nd, 1913:

"I have received from an absolutely sure source, a record of a conversation which is reported between the Emperor and the King of the Belgians, in the presence of the Chief of the General Staff, General von Moltke, a fortnight ago—a conversation which would greatly appear to have struck King Albert. I am in no way surprised with the impression created, which corresponds with that made on me some time ago. Hostility against us is becoming more marked, and the Emperor has ceased to be a partisan of peace. The German Emperor's interlocutor thought up to the present, as did everybody, that William the Second, whose personal influence has been exerted in many critical circumstances in favour of the maintenance of peace, was still in the same state of mind. This time, it appears, he found him completely changed. The German Emperor is no longer in his eyes the champion of peace, against the bellicose tendencies of certain German parties. William II has been brought to think that war with France was inevitable and that it will have to come to it one day or the other. The Emperor, it need hardly be said, believes in the crushing superiority of the German Army and of its assured success.

"General von Moltke spoke in exactly the same sense as his Sovereign. He also declared that war was necessary and inevitable, but he showed himself still more certain of success. 'For,' said he to the King, 'this time we must put an end to it (*cette fois il faut en finir*), and your Majesty can hardly doubt the irresistible enthusiasm which on that day will carry away the whole German people.'

"The King of the Belgians protested that, to interpret the intentions of the French Government in this manner was to travesty them and allow oneself to be misled as to the feelings of the French nation by the manifestations of a few hotheads or of conscienceless intriguers.

"The Emperor and the Chief of Staff none the less persisted in their point of view.

"During this conversation, the Emperor, moreover, appeared overwrought and irritable. As the years begin to weigh upon

William II, the family traditions, the retrograde feelings of the Court, and, above all, the impatience of soldiers, are gaining more ascendancy over his mind. Perhaps he may feel I know not what kind of jealousy of the popularity acquired by his son, who flatters the passions of the Pan-Germans; and, perhaps, he may find that the position of the Empire in the world is not commensurate with its powers. Perhaps, also, the reply of France to the last increase in the German Army, the object of which was to place German superiority beyond question, may count for something in these bitternesses, for, whatever one may say, it is felt here, that the Germans cannot do much more. One may ask what lay behind the conversation. The Emperor and his Chief of Staff may have intended to impress the King of the Belgians, and lead him not to resist, in case a conflict with us should arise. Perhaps, also, there may be a desire to have Belgium less hostile towards certain ambitions displayed here with regard to the German Congo. But this latter hypothesis does not seem to me compatible with the intervention of General von Moltke.

"Further, the Emperor William is less master of his impatience than is generally believed. More than once I have seen him allow his innermost thoughts to escape. Whatever may have been the object of his conversation, which has been reported to me, the confidence has none the less the gravest character. It corresponds with the general precariousness of the general situation, and with the state of a certain portion of opinion in France and Germany. If I were allowed to draw conclusions, I would say that it would be wise to take into account the new fact that the Emperor is growing familiar with the order of ideas which formerly was repugnant to him, and that, to borrow from him a phrase he likes to use 'We should keep our powder dry.'"

During the months that followed the Kaiser made several attempts to gain from King Albert some profession of his intentions when the fatal hour should strike. Germany was determined to violate the neutrality of Belgium, should it be necessary for her plans to do so. But, though her curious mentality did not prepare her for the world-wide indignation which that act aroused, she would have preferred for Belgium to become her ally, if by any means her Emperor could persuade the King.

William certainly did his best. He made the strongest representations to the King, on the grounds of their personal friendship, on the score of their blood relationship, and in the supposed interests of his country. There were interviews and many letters. The report, so freely circulated, of a last-moment telephone conversation may be discredited. Before the invasion

of Luxembourg, the Kaiser was well aware that King Albert was not to be turned from his resolution.

The Kaiser even approached the Queen, not with a direct appeal, but with more subtle approaches—to her love of her native country, her close association with the Austrian Court, and her many relatives who were wholly or in part of German blood. To all these appeals, Her Majesty had but one answer: "My husband and I are one; I abide by his decisions"; an attitude which enraged the Emperor greatly. Though he had always made it plain that subservience to her lord and master was, in his eyes, a woman's cardinal duty, he found that in this case as in many other instances, circumstances alter cases!

In 1912, King Charles of Roumania had given his nephew, King Albert, friendly advice to be alert in defending Belgium's frontiers. "The miracle of 1870 will not be repeated. Belgium runs a great risk of seeing her neutrality violated by one of her three neighbours."

The world admired justly the heroism, the calm courage, and the unflinching steadfastness displayed by King Albert during the War, but only he himself and his most intimate circle knew of the terrible anxiety pressing upon him in the months preceding the outbreak of hostilities. He was attached to Germany by ties of blood, for his mother had been a Hohenzollern and his wife was a Bavarian. He had to put all these personal matters from his mind before he could decide what was best to be done for his people.

Of his people's bearing in the hour of trial he had no doubt. He knew his country's history, knew her to be no stranger to warfare, or unaccustomed to the ravages of the invader. Those who professed themselves amazed at the courage and endurance of the Belgians in their hour of trial could have been acquainted but slightly with their previous history. That record made it impossible for there to be any other answer to the question asked during the fatal August—"Has Belgium a Soul?"

For centuries past rival nations had settled, or attempted to settle, their differences on Belgian soil. In the half-century preceding the Treaty of Utrecht, practically every city had been pillaged—many of them more than once—and the soil of Belgium had been soaked in blood. Yet, throughout all adversities, Belgians preserved their identity as a nation, and observed the rules of their ancient Constitution.

At the close of the seventeenth century, Villeroi laid half Brussels in waste, destroying the Hotel de Ville and many of the finest buildings. The ashes were scarcely cold before the Belgians, with the courage and persistency that have never

failed them, set themselves to repair the damage with complete success.

King Albert, seeing with terrible clearness what lay before him, had no doubt as to the spirit of the nation. Yet the consequences had to be weighed. Belgium, though gallant, was small. Her forces, even had they been as a few months later they would have been, were as nothing compared with the vast hordes of Germany. Though neither the King nor anyone else had any idea of the lengths to which the invader was prepared to go, his conservations with the Emperor and von Moltke had left him in little doubt as to the ruthless determination with which they were prepared to pursue their self-chosen policy of invasion.

In these harrassing months, His Majesty was at least supported by the knowledge of Great Britain's friendly feeling towards his country. It was, as we have seen, Britain's insistence which had gained Belgium her neutrality, and she had always maintained, in the strongest possible manner, her intention of helping to protect that neutrality, should occasion arise. As far back as Waterloo, the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs, replying to a critic of England said :

"I have been asked what England has done for Belgian independence, for the liberty of the world. What has she done ? Is contemporary history ignored ? She was the last asylum of freedom while a conqueror held Europe under his iron sceptre ; she sustained a gigantic struggle to restore independence to this Continent. What has she done in the last two years ? She stretched forth her powerful hand first over France and then over Belgium and she said to the other Powers : ' You shall not interfere with these two revolutions ' ; and those two revolutions remained untouched. What has she done for us in particular ? She has, among other things, prevented the sub-division of our territory. When the refusal of the Duc de Memours was known, plans for sharing and distributing our soil became general. It was England who opposed the project with greater energy than anyone else. What has she done in the last three months ? She concluded in our interest a striking Treaty with France ; she broke away from all her traditions by her rupture with Holland."

It is small wonder then that, in the hour of his need, King Albert felt that he could appeal to King George with every hope of his appeal meeting with an immediate response.

When war came, it may be added, the Kaiser's efforts to induce King Albert to join him did not cease with the actual invasion of Belgian territory. After Brussels was in possession

of the enemy, the German Governor of Brussels, Field-Marshal von der Goltz, sent fresh proposals to King Albert who was then at Antwerp—proposals that were treated as the insult they were.

In view of Germany's cool regard of Belgium's neutrality, it is of ironic interest to recall that, in the year of King Albert's birth, Germany declared herself as apprehensive that Belgium would not strictly maintain her neutrality. There came from the German Foreign Office this reminder:

"A State which enjoys the privilege of neutrality seems bound in strong measure by that fact. *It has to be watchful that its territory does not become the theatre of enterprise directed against the peace of neighbouring States, or against the security of their natives.* The most powerful Empires have regulated their legislature on that basis, and have completed it when necessity made itself felt."

To this Belgium replied:

"Belgium, independent and neutral, has never lost sight of her international obligations, and she will continue to fulfil them to her fullest extent. To acquit herself of this task, she finds the most secure support in her institutions which issued from the entrails of her past and, appropriate to the character of the country, have sustained during half-a-century the trial of events, and have become the indispensable conditions of her existence."

This dignified reply was, as *The Times* described it, "at once correct and proud."

Throughout the weeks preceding the outbreak of war, the German colony in Brussels, many of whom certainly knew of the coming invasion and had allotted to them the parts they were to play, grew very confident. They were indeed so confident that they forgot sometimes the discretion enjoined upon them. In one Belgian city there was a proposal afoot for renaming certain of the streets, and at a dinner party, where some of the civic dignitaries were present, the proposal was discussed. A German present, flushed with anticipations of "der Tag," beamed complacently on the company. "Don't worry," he said, "we will name the streets for you."

This was the dangerous condition of affairs in the summer of 1914, the most critical summer in the memory of living man. Some of the Powers were arming and waiting only for an excuse to set a match to the train that should fire all Europe. Power watched Power, nation had vigilant eyes upon nation, and a great deal of attention was centred upon Belgium by other countries besides Germany. If the crisis came, what would she do? How would her King act, and in his action, would he have the

support of his people? Owing to his profound belief that it was no part of a King's duty to interfere unnecessarily with the affairs already entrusted to his Ministers, King Albert had not, unlike the Kaiser, figured largely in the foreign Press. Since he had been on the throne only a few years, comparatively little was known of him outside his own country. In those years of modest, unassuming hard work for the welfare of his people, irrespective of class, creed, or party, King Albert had, however, gained the full confidence of his people. When he made his great decision, his subjects, loyal not only to their country but to their King, supported him with unswerving fidelity.

CHAPTER XV

THE COMING OF THE GREAT WAR

The Archduke's assassination—"What a marvellous curtain-raiser!"—The Kaiser's marginal note—Invasion of Luxembourg—"By whose orders do you invade my country?—"Germany cannot heed the tears of a woman"—The Kaiser amazed at Belgium's neutrality—"I never imagined Belgium would sacrifice so much to gain so little"—Mr. Lloyd George's apt analogy—Germany's ultimatum to Belgium—King Albert's decision—A noble reply—A telegram to King George—Sir Edward Grey's speech—Belgium's united front—"The guiding star of a whole brave nation."

ON June 28th, 1914, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the Imperial crown of Austria-Hungary, and his wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg, drove through Sarajevo in an open carriage to the Town Hall to receive the homage of the municipality. On their way, a bomb was thrown at their carriage, but the Royal couple escaped unhurt, but two officers were wounded. The Archduke, undismayed by this startling incident, resolved to carry out the programme arranged for him, and the drive continued. After visiting the Town Hall, they were on their way to the hospital to inquire after the wounded officers when a Bosnian student, Gavrilo Princip, sprang at the carriage and fired twice at the Archduke. One shot struck the Archduke in the throat, and the other wounded the Duchess, who was trying to shield her husband. Both died shortly afterwards. That pistol shot was destined to let loose the dogs of war. The full truth concerning this assassination has never yet been revealed, though the many strange circumstances by which it was surrounded make it difficult to believe that it was merely a political murder, carried out by the usual type of mad anarchist concerned in such affairs. On being told of the assassinations, the German Crown Prince made what was perhaps the most cynical of all his cynical utterances.

"Both assassinated—what a marvellous curtain-raiser!"

Of the events that followed the assassination of the Archduke and Archduchess, all the world is unhappily aware. It is a significant fact that the Kaiser did not attend the funeral of the Archduke, and his excuse was lame. There are conclusive proofs that Germany prepared at once for war, though

Maximilian Harden is almost the only German who will admit that Germany ever wanted war. Harden declared: "We wanted the war! Why try and hide it? We wanted it for the purpose of for ever insuring the prosperity of Germany and her hegemony over all the other Powers."

The aged Austrian Emperor, with one more family tragedy added to his sad records, was now only a figurehead in his country. His ally, the Kaiser, maintained that he wanted peace, and this in spite of the fact that, by his own annotations of a report giving Sir Edward Grey's hopes that Austria would consider Servia's national dignity, he showed that he approved of Austria's action.

"Servia's national dignity does not exist," he wrote on the margin of the document. "Servia is not a State in the European sense of the word—it is a band of brigands!"

On August the first, Germany ordered a general mobilization of both her Army and Navy. On August 2nd she gave an indicarion of her intentions towards Belgium by invading Luxemburg, though Herr Bethmann-Hollweg blandly informed the Luxemburg Minister of State that the measures taken in Luxemburg by the Germans did not constitute a hostile act, but were only intended to insure against an attack on the railways by the French!

The truth was that, on the morning of August 2nd, the inhabitants of Luxemburg, a neutral State, awoke to find that the roads, bridges, and railways were in the hands of the Germans. The Minister of State sought out the commanding officer, and reminded him of the Treaty of 1867. The officer acknowledged blandly the Treaty's existence, but announced that it would not be allowed to make any difference!

Here was the beginning of Herr Bethmann-Hollweg's idea of a solemn treaty being no more binding than "a scrap of paper," if it suited his nation thus to treat it. When this famous, or infamous phrase, first came to the ears of King Albert, he uttered a prophecy that time proved terribly true.

"'A scrap of paper?'" he repeated. "If they thus describe a Treaty, in what terms will they value human life—as cannon fodder?"

After the Minister of State's failure, the Grand Duchess of Luxemburg herself drove to the Adolf Bridge, and endeavoured to block the way with her car. She demanded that the officer commanding the troops should be brought to her. When he arrived, she asked him: "By whose orders do you invade my country?"

"By the orders of the German Emperor, Your Serene Highness," replied the officer.

"Then tell the Emperor," replied the Grand Duchess, "that he is sacrificing the honour of Germany."

This message was telegraphed at once to the Kaiser, but, on receiving the news of the check in the invasion of his Armies, he called at once the Imperial General Staff on the telephone.

"Advance!" he ordered, "Germany cannot heed the tears of a woman. The honour of Germany will be upheld in her victories."

On finding her appeal to the Kaiser disregarded, the Grand Duchess telegraphed a protest to Great Britain against the invasion of the German Army. At the same time she sent a message to the Kaiser, which read: "You have invaded Luxemburg. Such sacrilege cannot bring success to your Army."

In the previous April the Grand Duchess had welcomed the King and Queen of the Belgians and hopes had been expressed for the strengthening of the bonds of friendship between Luxemburg and Belgium. It is probable that some discussion had taken place as to the war cloud that overhung Europe, for the conversations between the Kaiser and King Albert had left an ineffaceable impression on the latter.

After Luxemburg's neutrality had been disregarded by Germany, King Albert realized that it was almost impossible that the invasion of his country could be prevented. Up to the last, however, he made most strenuous efforts to preserve Belgium's neutrality, and to the last the Kaiser did his best to persuade him to come to his aid.

King Albert did not take up the sword in any spirit of aggression. He was not misled by vanity into any theatrical sabre-rattling attitudes, and had no use for the "mailed fist." He faced the conflict as a man sure of his courage, and as a King sure of his people. No one who talked with him, or even looked upon him, during those fateful days could have any doubt that the burden of his responsibilities was heavy upon him. In later days President Woodrow Wilson said enigmatically that: "a man may be too proud to fight." King Albert was proud to fight, but never for one moment did he lose sight of the fact that pride may be an expensive attribute both for an individual and a nation.

A favourite German expedient during the War was to excuse questionable actions on the plea that they had been forced on Germany by the example of other countries. For her invasion of Belgium she gave the same excuse. The Chancellor, in his speech in the Reichstag, admitted that the invasion of Belgium was illegal, but announced that it was due to "strategic necessities." These strategic necessities were Germany's belief that France was preparing to attack her through Belgium—a belief

for which there was not the slightest foundation, as was proved by the fact that the French troops arrived too slowly for them to have been massing on the frontier as Germany alleged.

To the end Germany hoped that Belgium would allow her troops to pass through without protest. The Kaiser's secret amazement at the heroic resistance shown by Belgium when the German Army invaded her country is proved by a letter written some time later by the German Emperor to the Austrian Emperor Francis Joseph, in which he said: "I never imagined that Belgium would sacrifice so much to gain so little! One cannot but have some admiration for the King (King Albert), who allowed his people to perish for the sake of an ideal." In 1916, the Kaiser, talking to General Ludendorff, made the significant remark: "If Germany had had Belgium as an ally, the War would have finished at least a year ago."

In a speech at the City Temple on November 11th, 1914, Mr. Lloyd George made clear what would have been her dishonourable position had Belgium allied herself to Germany:

"Imagine," he said, "that your right-hand neighbour came and made you the following proposal: 'See, my friend, I've got to cut the throat of your left-hand neighbour, only, as his door is barred, I can't catch him unawares and so I shall lose my advantage over him. So you will do me a little service—nothing, that isn't entirely reasonable, as you will see—you will just let me come through your garden. If I trample down your borders a little, I'll have them raked and put in good order again, and if, by ill-luck, I damage or kill one of your children, I promise you a nice little indemnity."

On July 31st, Sir Edward Grey, foreseeing what might happen, formally inquired of the French and German Governments if they were prepared to respect the neutrality of Belgium. A Note was also sent to Belgium, informing the Government of Great Britain's action, and assuming that Belgium herself would do her utmost to preserve her neutrality which Great Britain expected other Powers to uphold.

France sent this speedy and definite reply:

"French Government are resolved to respect the neutrality of Belgium, and it would only be in the event of some other Power violating that neutrality that France might find herself under the necessity, in order to assure defence of her own security, to act otherwise. This assurance has been given several times. President of the Republic spoke of it to the King of the Belgians, and the French Minister at Brussels has spontaneously renewed the assurance to the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs to-day."

As we have seen, Belgium herself was mobilized, but, as M. Davignon states in a conversation with Sir Francis Villiers, the British Minister at Brussels, she was only following the example of Holland; and her mobilization was to be taken merely as a profound desire to maintain her neutrality.

On the evening of Sunday, August 2nd, Germany presented to Belgium her famous ultimatum, and gave the Belgian Government exactly twelve hours to answer it—twelve hours to answer an ultimatum, the consequences of which meant literally life and death to Belgium, and those twelve hourse were in the night. Twelve hours in which to answer this:

VERY CONFIDENTIAL.

"Reliable information has been received by the German Government to the effect that French forces intend to march on the line of the Meuse by Givet and Namur. This information leaves no doubt as to the intention of France to march through Belgian territory against Germany.

"The German Government cannot but fear that Belgium, in spite of the utmost good-will, will be unable, without assistance, to repel so considerable a French invasion with sufficient prospect of success to afford an adequate guarantee against danger to Germany. It is essential for the self-defence of Germany that she should anticipate any such hostile attack. The German Government would, however, feel the deepest regret if Belgium regarded as an act of hostility against herself the fact that the measures of Germany's opponents forced Germany, for her own protection, to enter Belgian territory. In order to exclude any possibility of misunderstanding the German Government make the following declaration:

"Germany has in view no act of hostility against Belgium. In the event of Belgium being prepared in the coming war to maintain an attitude of friendly meutrality towards Germany, the German Government bind themselves, at the conclusion of peace, to guarantee the possessions and independence of the Belgian Kingdom in full.

"Germany undertakes, under the above-mentioned conditions, to evacuate Belgian territory on the conclusion of peace.

"If Belgium adopts a friendly attitude, Germany is prepared, in co-operation with the Belgian authorities, to purchase all necessaries for her troops against a cash payment, and to pay an indemnity for any damage that may have been caused by German troops.

"Should Belgium oppose the German troops and, in particular, should she throw difficulties in the way of their march

by a resistance of the fortresses on the Meuse or by destroying railway roads, tunnels, or other similar works, Germany will, to her regret, be compelled to consider Belgium an enemy.

"In this event, Germany can undertake no obligations towards Belgium, but the eventual adjustment of the relations between the two States must be left to the decision of arms.

"The German Government, however, entertain the distinct hope that this eventuality will not occur, and that the Belgian Government will know how to take the necessary measures to prevent the occurrence of incidents such as those mentioned. In this case, the friendly ties which bind the two neighbouring States will grow stronger and more enduring."

This amazing communication, with its veiled promises and thinly veiled threats, engaged the immediate and anxious consideration of the King and his Government. All through that historic night King Albert presided over the council meeting summoned to consider the ultimatum. No sovereign ever presided over a more fateful meeting, or realized more seriously his responsibilities. When His Majesty took his seat at the head of his Council his decision was already made, but the decision had not been an easy one. After centuries of turmoil and oppression, Belgium had settled down to a century of peace, in which she had made the most remarkable strides in commerce, education, and the arts of peace, and her future was of even greater promise. Moreover, Germany had considerable grounds for her confidence in her ultimate triumph. Her Army was at that time the finest fighting machine in existence; she was fully prepared. Belgium might have considered her a friend worth having. But the honour of Belgium was a possession which German gold could not buy, nor German might vanquish, and King Albert made his decision and, by making it, altered probably the whole history of the War, for, if Belgian troops had not checked the early German advance, matters might have taken a very different turn.

In that dark hour His Majesty had the satisfaction and support of knowing that his Council shared his views. Belgium would keep her word. In her reply to the German Ultimatum, she declared in unmistakable terms that she would fight for her honour and her independence. She protested that the intentions attributed to France were against the known facts:

"Moreover if, contrary to our expectations, a violation of Belgian neutrality should come to be made by France, Belgium would fulfil all her international duties, and her Army would oppose to the invader the most rigorous resistance. The attempt

upon her independence, which the German Government threatens, would constitute a flagrant violation of the rights of nations. No strategic consideration justifies violation of right. Were it to accept the propositions that have been put to it, the Belgian Government would sacrifice the honour of the nations and at the same time go back on its duties to Europe. Conscious of the part that Belgium has played for more than eighty years in the world's civilization, it refuses to believe that the independence of Belgium can be preserved only at the price of violation of her neutrality. If that hope is ill-founded, the Belgian Government is firmly resolved to repel by every means in its power any attempt upon its right."

This reply, which M. Poincaré describes rightly as "of imperishable beauty," was handed to the German Minister early on the morning of August 3rd. Even while the King and his Council were deliberating, Germany was endeavouring to justify still further her illegal action.

In the middle of the night, the German Minister at Brussels went to the house of the Secretary-General of the Belgian Foreign Office to complain that the French had dropped bombs in Germany. It was a false report which, even if it had been true, was in no wise the business of Belgium. As the Secretary-General pointed out, it did nothing (though the German Minister seemed to think it did) to justify the violation of Belgian territory.

On that same day the French Government offered Belgium the support of five French Army Corps. The Belgian Government sent the following reply:

"We are sincerely grateful to the French Government for offering eventual support. In the actual circumstances, however, we do not propose to appeal to the guarantee of the Powers. The Belgian Government will decide later on the action which they may think it necessary to take."

On August 4th, King Albert made a personal appeal to King George, which was actually delivered to His Majesty during lunch at Buckingham Palace. Belgium and Great Britain had for some years been on the friendliest of terms. King Albert knew that Great Britain would keep her obligations, and that King George would be the first to recognize these. With this assurance, His Majesty wired:

"Remembering the numerous proofs of Your Majesty's friendship and that of your predecessor, and the friendly attitude of England in 1870, and the proof of friendship you have just given us, again I make a supreme appeal to the diplomatic intervention of Your Majesty's Government to safeguard the integrity of Belgium."

On reading this telegram, King George remarked quietly: "We must help." It may be believed that this remark, devoid of all theatrical display, marked the actual commencement of the Great War, so far as Great Britain was concerned.

In response to King Albert's appeal, Sir Edward Grey, acting for the British Government, sent a protest to Germany against the violation of Belgium. Germany, in reply, declared again that what action she had taken in regard to Belgium had been taken only in defence against France:

"Please impress upon Sir Edward Grey that Germany Army could not be exposed to French attack across Belgium, which was planned according to absolutely unimpeachable information. Germany had consequently to disregard Belgian neutrality, it being for her a question of life or death to prevent French advance."

On that same day Great Britain sent an ultimatum to Germany, giving her until midnight to withdraw from Belgium. Germany begged that Great Britain to remain neutral, but would not promise to withdraw from Belgium. The sands in the hour-glass, in this grave crisis, were rapidly sinking. Bewildered by the sudden developments, crowds in London thronged Whitehall and watched with the deepest anxiety the coming and going of Ministers to Downing Street. In Parliament the latest information was communicated by the Prime Minister and Sir Edward Grey in tense silence. Party controversies were hushed amid the terrible apprehension aroused by the thought of a European War, the end and result of which no living man could foresee.

Consternation reigned in the Foreign Ministry in Berlin when the British Ambassador conveyed the ultimatum telegraphed by Sir Edward Grey on behalf of Great Britain. The Kaiser, acquainted by telephone with the contents of the ultimatum, ordered that it should be brought to him at once. An official in attendance on the German Emperor, at the moment when the draft was presented to him, says: "The Emperor crushed the document in his hand, and was so vexed at its import that for five minutes he could do nothing but stride up and down his room with one hand behind his back, holding the offending document. It was obvious that he had hoped for Great Britain's neutrality until the German Army had at least passed through Belgium and reached the frontier of France. Great Britain's ultimatum considerably upset all his plans." A meeting of the Cabinet and the Imperial General Staff was at once called and the contents of the ultimatum were considered carefully.

It has been erroneously stated that the Kaiser, seeking the friendly co-operation of King Albert, telephoned from Potsdam to the Belgian King at the Royal Palace, Brussels, and sought his permission for the German Army to pass peacefully through Belgium. I have it on official authority that such an occurrence did not take place. What actually did happen was that, during King Albert's visit to Berlin just before the War, the Kaiser sought his aid, and made many hostile remarks against France. King Albert, as a good friend of France, tried his hardest to change the German Emperor's views, but without avail. On his return to Brussels King Albert caused a Bill to be passed increasing the strength of the Belgian Army, but before these estimates could be brought into force Belgium was invaded by Germany.

Speaking of telephone conversations, it is a fact that the Kaiser, on hearing of the Sarajevo crime at Kiel—he was there on the Imperial yacht for the Regatta—at once spoke with the Emperor Francis Joseph by international telephone from Kiel to Vienna. The conversation was presumably to offer condolences, although the real purport of that telephone talk is known now to only one person—the Kaiser.

On August 3rd, Sir Edward Grey made his famous speech in the House of Commons, in which he revealed the secret arrangement made between France and Great Britain in 1912. This speech was made more memorable by the fact that at its conclusion Mr. John Redmond, leader of the Irish Nationalist Party, rose and, in an eloquent oration, declared that in this, Ireland was at once with the Empire.

After King Albert had been assured of Great Britain's friendship, His Majesty proceeded to the Parliament House, where he delivered a remarkable address. The route was lined with dense crowds of people, all anxious to cheer the King and to make manifest their approval of his action. Those who were in Brussels on that day often recalled the scene in the dread years that followed. In the streets of the capital Belgian flags, French flags, British flags, and the Stars and Stripes of America fluttered everywhere, and the people wore almost a holiday aspect. Not long afterwards those streets resounded to the tramp of armed soldiery. Brussels was to realize that the "mailed fist" could not only strike, but strangle. The horrors of war had not descended yet upon the lovely old city, and its citizens turned out *en masse* to cheer their Sovereign. They were ready to face the future with stout hearts and brave spirits.

After that historic assembly, it was stated erroneously that King Albert had appeared in field kit. Though many of the

assembled legislators were thus attired, the King, who was the last man to make any theatrical display, wore his habitual uniform of a Belgian General without any decorations. His Ministers wore conventional attire. Queen Elizabeth and her children were in the Royal box.

In a profound silence, the King rose to make his speech :

"Never since 1830 has a more grave hour sounded for Belgium. The strength of our right, and the need of Europe for our autonomous existence, makes us still hope the dreaded event will not occur. If, however, it is necessary for us to resist the invasion of our soil, that duty will find us armed and ready to make the greatest sacrifices. Our young men have already come forward to defend the threatened fatherland.

"One duty alone is imposed upon us, namely, the maintenance of a stubborn resistance, courage, and union. Our bravery is proved by our faultless mobilization and by the multitude of voluntary engagements. This is the moment for action. I have called you together to-day in order to allow the Chambers to participate in the enthusiasm of the country. You will know how to adopt with urgency all necessary measures. Are you decided to maintain inviolate the sacred patrimony of our ancestors ? (Cries of "Yes" from all parts of the hall.)

"No one will fail in his duty, and the Army is capable of performing its task. The Government and I are fully confident. The Government is aware of its responsible ties, and will carry them out to the end to guard the supreme welfare of the country. If a stranger should violate our territory, he will find all the Belgians gathered round their Sovereign, who will never betray his constitutional oath. I have faith in our destinies. A country which defends itself wins the respect of all, and cannot perish.

"God be with us in this just cause.

"*Vive la Belgique independante !*"

These final words were repeated by a thousand lips, as the King ended his heart-stirring speech. No one who was privileged to be present on that occasion is likely to forget it. As a rule, King Albert's manner was unusually composed, but on this occasion he was unable to conceal his emotion. When he alluded to Belgian honour and Belgian determination, his voice quivered ; and when he came to the end of his speech, it was with an effort that he was able to pronounce the concluding sentence.

The King resumed his seat amid a storm of cheers. It was a demonstration that must have removed any doubt, if it ever existed, as to the whole-hearted loyalty of his people. Their Majesties were cheered continuously as they left the Chamber,

and the shouts of the people followed them until they had disappeared into the Palace.

In the Chamber itself there was a renewed outburst of cheering when it was announced that M. Vandervelde, the Socialist leader, had been created a Minister of State, and had accepted office as a sign that in the coming struggle all parties were united in the interests of the nation. From the balcony the Premier, Baron de Broqueville, addressed thousands assembled in the streets. "I declare," he said, "in the name of the nation, which is united in one heart and soul, that our people, even if it is conquered, will never submit!"

Within the next twenty-four hours, the Germans besieged Liège, and Belgium was at War.

On the tomb of William the Silent are the words: "As long as he lived, he was the guiding star of a whole brave nation." King Albert, in the next four years, was to win the same crown of immortal praise.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FALL OF LIÈGE, BRUSSELS, AND ANTWERP

"Liège should have fallen at once"—General Leman's valour—"Put in your despatches that I was unconscious"—King Albert as letter-writer—The Kaiser's wily invitation—Royal portraits prohibited—Antwerp besieged—Queen Elizabeth's life imperilled—"Leave this trench, or—or there will be a new King to-morrow!"—Belgian strategy in defending Antwerp—The city falls—Enemy's false reports.

BELGIUM having declared war, King Albert placed himself at once at the head of his Army. He was with his troops at the historic battle of Liège, which took place during the night of August 4th and 5th. Liège was a fortfied centre specially planned to deal with any invasion. There were twelve forts, some two or three miles apart, and, for the purposes of an adequate defence, it was essential that not only should the forts be manned, but the intervals between must be guarded by troops. This was done as well as possible, but from the first the Belgian Army was outnumbered hopelessly at the ratio of five to one.

The Belgian troops, inspired by the presence of their King, fought with a courage and supreme devotion that won the admiration and evoked the amazement of the whole world. The Germans, with 120,000 men pitted against a force numbering at the outside 22,500 men, and with equipment and armaments far superior to those of their opponents, believed that they had little more to do than march through Liège as victors. They were mistaken. The Belgian soldiery put up such a magnificent defence that the German Army was seriously delayed and their plans thrown into confusion.

The Kaiser was furious at this resistance of Liège, and wrote several characteristic notes to officers who had been in command. "Liège"—he said—"should have fallen at once; and if the methods I have advocated had been followed more strictly the loss would have been restricted to the enemy. You must teach these Belgians to evacuate at once, *and it can be done!*"

The Crown Prince followed this bombastic declaration with a statement to the effect that, if the penetration of Belgium did not proceed more quickly, he himself would be forced to take

KING ALBERT
A soldier first. King afterwards.

H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES PHOTOGRAPHED WITH PRINCE LEOPOLD OF BELGIUM

command of the troops—a "threat" which had due effect. But it was not until later that he arrived—not to take command, but to take whatever treasures from the châteaux which he looted.

The Belgians lost heavily, but, under the direct command of General Leman, they fought with such conspicuous gallantry that, as a mark of appreciation of the resistance of the city, France conferred upon Liège the Cross of the Legion of Honour.

General Leman was blown up in a shell explosion, but was still alive when discovered under some ruins by the Germans and taken prisoner. General Leman wrote a personal letter to King Albert in which he said :

"I am convinced that the honour of our arms has been sustained. I have not surrendered either of the fortress or forts. Deign, Sir, to pardon any defects in this letter. I am physically shattered by the explosion of Loncin. In Germany, whither I am proceeding, my thoughts will be—as they have ever been—of Belgium and her King. I would willingly have given my life the better to serve them, but death was denied me."

A German officer's (Colonel Erich von Steinbach) homage to General Leman is a fitting tribute not only to the Belgian General but to every man who fought that day for Belgium and her King :

"General Leman's defence of Liège combined all that is noble, all that is tragic."

"As long as possible, he inspected all the forts daily to see that all was in order. By a piece of falling masonry dislodged by our guns, both General Leman's legs were crushed. Undaunted, he visited the forts in an automobile. Fort Chaudfontaine was destroyed by a German shell dropping in the magazine. In the strong fort Loncin, General Leman decided to hold his ground or die. When the end was inevitable, the Belgians disabled the last three guns and exploded the supply of shells kept by the guns in readiness. Before this, General Leman destroyed all plans, maps, and papers relating to the defences. The food supplies were also destroyed. With about a hundred men, General Leman attempted to retire to another fort, but we had cut off retreat. By this time our heaviest guns were in position, and a well-placed shell tore through the cracked and battered masonry and exploded in the magazine. With a thunderous crash, the mighty walls of the fort fell. Pieces of stone and concrete, twenty-five cubic metres in size, were hurled into the air. When the dust and fumes passed away, we stormed the fort

across ground literally strewn with the bodies of the troops who had gone out to attack the fort and never returned. All the men in the fort were wounded, and most were unconscious. A corporal, with one arm shattered, tried valiantly to drive us back by firing his rifle. Buried in the debris, and pinned beneath a massive beam, was General Leman.

"'Respectez le General—il est mort,' said the aide-de-camp.

"With gentleness and care, they showed they respected the man who had resisted them so valiantly and stubbornly. Our infantry released the General's wounded form, and carried him away. We thought him dead, but he recovered consciousness, and, looking round, said: 'Put in your despatches that I was unconscious.'

"We brought him to our Commander, General von Emmich and the two Generals saluted. We tried to speak words of comfort, but he was silent—he is known as the silent General. "I was unconscious—be sure you put that in your despatches.' More he would not say.

"Extending his hand, our Commander said: 'General, you have gallantly and nobly held your fort.' General Leman replied: 'I thank you. Our troops have lived up to their reputation.' With a smile, he added: 'War is not like manœuvres'—a reference to the fact that General von Emmich had been recently with General Leman during the Belgian manœuvres. Then, unbuckling his sword, General Leman tendered it to General von Emmich. 'No,' replied the German Commander with a bow, 'keep your sword. To have crossed swords with you has been an honour.' The fire in General Leman's eyes was dimmed by a tear."

King Albert's grief at the fall of Liège and the terrible destruction caused by the enemy was assuaged somewhat by his pride in the valour of his troops—a pride which he took every opportunity of expressing to the men themselves. He visited the wounded, attended military funerals and spared no effort to cheer and encourage the men whose heroism had won world-wide praise.

> "When shall their glory fade?
> Was there a man dismayed?"

In one hospital, while talking to a man badly wounded in the chest, the King asked if there was anything he could do for him. Somewhat embarrassed by his Royal visitor, the man stammered out that he wished to write home, but as yet no one had had time to do it for him. At once His Majesty took paper

and pencil from his tunic, and asked the man to dictate his news. There followed the usual letter to the family at home, but, when it came to the end, the man, struggled to a sitting posture and stammered: "Add this, Your Majesty:

"When the neighbours ask news of me, do not say 'He is wounded.' Say he killed four Germans in a hand-to-hand fight, and he honoured the King." When the letter reached its destination it was found that the King had added five words: "And the King honours him!"

Before the Belgian troops retired from Liège, they blew up nearly all the bridges. The Germans had to bring in their big siege guns—guns which they had never dreamt would be wanted at Liège to demolish the forts. The retreat was heart-breaking. "War"—as Count Bernsdorff once took occasion to remind us—"is not afternoon tea," but even those who were in some measure prepared for scenes of warfare were shocked at the ruin and desolation which the invading hordes left in their path. King Albert, who had spent much time in the peaceful countryside of his land, was aghast when he saw the harvest trampled underfoot, villages laid waste, and people rendered homeless.

His people have not only refrained from reproaches: they have repaid him with their undivided loyalty and affection.

At Liège the Germans lost about 20,000 men—a huge number considering the smallness of the Belgian troops opposing them. When at last they occupied the city, they fined it two million pounds—for having the audacity to defend itself! They took as hostage against the payment of this enormous sum several leading citizens. After this they proposed coolly to King Albert that his country should allow them a free passage through to France, when they would do no more damage. The Kaiser wrote a confidential letter to King Albert in which he asked him to state upon what terms he would withdraw his opposition to the German troops. "Doubtless I shall agree to your proposals," he wrote, "and, if so, I pledge my personal honour that they shall be carried out."

King Albert's answer was a curt refusal.

"Were I tempted for one moment to consider your proposal," he said, "your assurance would make me hesitate!"

In the name of his country the King stood steadfast. Belgium had made her decision, and she would abide by it, cost her what it might. From that time onwards, Germany decided that it should cost her very dear indeed.

With the fall of Liège, there was nothing for King Albert to do but retire with his troops to Antwerp. Before he reached the city there occurred the sack of Louvain—an act that will be for

ever an awful stain on the *Kultur* of which Germany had professed herself to be so proud.

The German troops crossed the Meuse between Visy and Huy; they gained Thirlmont; and fought against the Allies—for Belgian troops now had reinforcements—the historic battle of Mons.

King Albert, who had moved his troops back to Louvain, preparatory to the retreat to Antwerp (whither the Belgian Government had retired from Brussels on August 17th), hoped to avoid the bombardment of the ancient and historic city by withdrawing his troops and offering no resistance. His hopes proved vain, and the town, with its magnificent buildings, its famous University, its churches, and its world-famed library, was sacked and pillaged ruthlessly.

At the same time, the Germans occupied Brussels, which had been evacuated by Belgian troops to avoid the horror of bombardment. The occupation of his capital was for King Albert a terrible blow, though it was one which he had realized that he might be called upon to face. Reports reached him that the invaders had undermined both the Hotel de Ville and the Palaces. Though the truth of these reports was never confirmed, they caused His Majesty, who had already been an eye-witness of some of the atrocities of which the enemy was capable, to wonder if his capital might even yet be laid in ruins, despite his efforts to save it.

The German occupation of Brussels delighted the German Crown Prince, who had always liked the city and, on more than one occasion, had remarked that it would make an excellent summer residence. It is more than probable that Brussels owes the preservation of its magnificent Hotel de Ville to the fact that the Crown Prince had designed it for his future occupation.

It was an additional sorrow to the King to know that, in spite of the fact that they had been allowed to enter Brussels without having to fire a shot, the Germans had imposed upon the city a fine of fifty million francs—a fine which led to the historic duel of wits between M. Max, the intrepid Burgomaster of Brussels, and the German Governor of the city. The sequel to this remarkable contest, in which M. Maz was acclaimed as victor, was the imprisonment of the brave Burgomaster in a fortress at Glatz in Silesia. M. Max's courage and humour were not to be quelled even by captivity, and they did not fail him as the weary months passed.

Brussels might be in the hands of the Germans, but its citizens were unswervingly loyal to their King and Queen. Their Majesties' portraits—the King with his troops and the Queen in the dress of a sister of the Red Cross—sold in thousands.

Indeed their popularity was so great that in the end the Germans prohibited the sale of any portraits of the Royal Family, posting placards in some towns to this effect:

"To the Burgomaster of the city.

I beg you again to draw the attention of all the booksellers, stationers' shops, etc., by hand-bill or by means of the newspapers, that they are forbidden, under any circumstances, to display the portraits of the Royal Family of Belgium, either in the windows or in the interior of the shops.

Those who act otherwise will be severely punished.

The Commandant of the Magazine.
[Signed] *Henz.*"

Occasionally, the police would enter a shop to see if the order was obeyed. Occasionally they entered for other purposes, as is testified by one unfortunate stationer who, when asked if the police did not enter his shop to seize what displeased them, replied: "What displeases them? No, no, they seize more particularly whatever *pleases* them!"

Belgians, loving their King and Queen, contrived to disobey this order, and it became a point of honour for every family to possess at least one portrait of King Albert in his field kit, Queen Elizabeth in her Red Cross dress, and Prince Leopold as a trooper. Many and various were the hiding-places designed for these treasures. Portraits of Queen Elizabeth—"our dear brave little Queen," as the Belgians spoke and wrote of her in those days—became a kind of mascot, and Belgian mothers would sew little medallions bearing her portrait into the clothing of their children with the prayer that it might keep them from harm.

Now that King Albert had revealed himself definitely the foe of Prussianism in all its manifestations, the German Press poured abuse on him and Queen Elizabeth. They called him the "Slave of England" and "A melancholy King, abandoned by God." The Kaiser had the idea that the deity had been engaged exclusively by himself "for the duration of the War." German writers inveighed against King Albert's "blindness, which verges on stupidity," and, after they had exhausted their epithets, they invented new ones for use against the Queen, who had "deserted her country and betrayed her Fatherland," for which crimes, they said, she would certainly suffer.

While the invaders were forbidding the sale of portraits of the Royal Family, German cartoonists were busy, and the caricatures published of the Belgian King and Queen were often beyond the bounds of decency; the British Royal Family fared

little better, though it was Sir Edward Grey who excited the most bitter venom. He was drawn usually with horns and a tail! Needless to add that these foul drawings excited only contempt amongst those whom they libelled.

When he left Louvain, King Albert withdrew his troops into the fortifications of Antwerp. Thither Queen Elizabeth had already journeyed from Brussels, and was with the Royal children in the Palace in the Place de Meir, prepared to withstand the siege of the Germans.

At the beginning of the siege, Antwerp took the situation with unconcern, hardly realizing that the fall of the city was possible. King Albert, who foresaw with terrible clearness the possible outcome of the immediate warfare, fully realized the gravity of the position. Though he was gratified at the welcome given to him on arrival by the inhabitants, he did his best to discourage any popular demonstrations, and gave his officers to understand that this was no time for them to join in any of the distractions which the city still offered in those early days of the War. If the King drove through the town, he endeavoured to avoid manifestations which he considered were out of place after the slaughter at Liège and in view of the fact that the invaders were slowly marching across Belgium.

Queen Elizabeth followed the King's example. Crowds, who had not yet known anything of the rigours of warfare, were in the habit of gathering outside the Palace and cheering in the hope that she would appear on the balcony. After she had acknowledged once or twice their salutations, she directed that the shutters of the windows should be closed. The people, understanding her desire for privacy, respected her wishes by abstaining from demonstrations. She preferred to use her time visiting the wounded and working for the benefit of the Army. A Zeppelin dropped bombs near the Palace. Undismayed by the "terror by night" the Queen was solicitous on behalf of her children and consented reluctantly to their removal to England, where they were taken to the country seat of the Marquis Curzon, who was a personal friend of the King and Queen. Their safety was an alleviation to the anxiety that weighed so heavily at this time on their Majesties.

The siege of Antwerp was for King Albert perhaps one of the bitterest incidents of all those terrible years. He knew that, once his stronghold had fallen, Germany would indeed consider Belgium her own. He was disappointed, too, that the Allies had not come more quickly to his aid, though no one knew better than he that the foe had struck at the hour when she thought Britain at least was unprepared.

He was continually with his troops, consulting with his Generals, chatting with the soldiers, who were often unaware of his identity. Never at any time did he confine his operations to the base. Indeed it was a source of considerable anxiety to his staff that he would penetrate into the front-line trenches, expose himself to what they considered needless danger, and even take an active share in the fighting. News of his intrepidity penetrated to the German line, and, at a later date, when the opposing forces were very close, there was an attempt to take him prisoner on more than one occasion. It was after one such attempt that a deputation waited upon the King, and begged him for the sake of his country not to run unnecessary risks.

"How can I call any risk unnecessary when my soldiers have to incur it?" asked the King. After that, it became the nerve-racking task of the commanding officer to devise some means whereby His Majesty could be lured away from the danger zone. A breathless aide-de-camp would dash up and salute, saying: "Your Majesty, there is a despatch at headquarters!" Or the O.C. would murmur some words about a badly wounded officer in the rear who would be deeply gratified by a word. On one occasion, ———, whom the death in action of his superior officers had placed in unexpected command, lost his head entirely at the sight of his Sovereign trying to locate a particularly expert sniper in the enemy lines.

"Your Majesty," he stammered, "for God's sake leave this trench, or—or—or——"

"Or what?" asked King Albert quite coolly.

"Or there'll be a new King to-morrow!" exclaimed the over-anxious young officer.

Antwerp had been considered the great Belgian stronghold, and it was some little time before the inhabitants fully realized that it was not as impregnable as its *enceinte*, its *caponnieres* (which were really useful only as a defence against infantry attack) and its forts had led them to believe. At first, the siege was not very serious, but King Albert was under no illusion as to the ultimate end, and he used his utmost efforts to prepare both the soldiers and the people for the bombardment which he knew was inevitable.

The soldiers needed little encouragement. From the moment when war had been declared, practically every fit man had placed himself at the service of his country. So great was the rush to recruit that applicants were bidden to wait until uniforms and equipment had been increased to meet the demand. Those who, for physical or other reasons, could not fight, showed their patriotism in other ways. Without hesitation, all parties voted

all the money which the Government felt it necessary to call for, and scenes of the greatest enthusiasm took place outside the Parliament House. Ministers were cheered continuously as they passed in and out.

The troops in defence of Antwerp were in high spirits and anxious to come to grips with the foe. One recalls a remark of a soldier to King Albert, who had been talking to him of the coming battle and its possibilities.

"After Liège," said His Majesty, "I know my men will gain themselves fresh honour."

"Your Majesty," answered the man, "for myself, I fight for three things—victory for my country, honour for my King, and a German helmet for my sweetheart."

On September 15th, the Germans made their first serious attack upon Antwerp, and, in reply, the Belgians effected a piece of excellent strategy. They cut the dykes, and flooded the country for miles around, thus forcing the invaders to fall back and inflicting a great loss both of guns and men upon them. They followed up these tactics by a fierce and gallant sortie, before which the Germans were forced to retire with heavy loss.

On September 25th, the Germans, reinforced by troops from the French frontier, renewed their attack. The Antwerp garrison was strengthened at this time by the presence of the British Naval Brigade and the Marines. As the days passed, it was realized, however, that, despite the most gallant resistance, the fall of the city was but a matter of time. On October 7th, the Belgian Government transferred itself to Ostend ; and, two days later, King Albert with his troops evacuated the city. After a terrific bombardment, the Germans invested it.

King Albert had now seen town after town of his beloved country invaded, and not only invaded but ruined and despoiled. He saw the land laid waste, the churches demolished, and historic buildings, such as the Kaiser had professed to hold in veneration, left a heap of crumbling stones. True to his indomitable spirit, he did not regret for a moment his decision, nor did he falter in his task.

When, under fire, the inhabitants of Antwerp left the city, they fled to Holland, where their Dutch neighbours gave kindly shelter to thousands of refugees. The Belgian spirit of light-hearted confidence remained, and among the people who stayed there was here and there one who dared to play jokes upon the German invaders.

Shortly after the investment of the town, the Germans placarded the walls with a statement to the effect that they had just captured 52,000 Russians and 400 guns in Eastern Prussia.

In a spirit of ironic defiance, a Belgian altered the first letter of "Russians" to an "M," and covered up the first two letters of "Canonen," thus making the announcement read, "52,000 sparrows and 400 nuns!" As a punishment for this "crime," the Germans imposed upon the town a fine of 25,000 francs!

The fall of Antwerp was an occasion of great rejoicing to the enemy. They took advantage of their victory to circulate absurd rumours to the effect that, after King Albert had "vowed to die in the city with his last soldiers," he had fled "amid the maledictions of his subjects." He wanted, so stated the reports published in German newspapers, to make peace; but Britain would not allow him to make the necessary overtures to the Kaiser. Not long afterwards a German newspaper published this:

"KING ALBERT WISHES TO MAKE PEACE.

"From Brussels the *Hamburger Nachrichten* hears from a very reliable source that the report is confirmed which states serious differences exist between Belgium and England—that is, that all relations are interrupted between King Albert and the British Staff. The King desires an understanding with Germany, which Great Britain is endeavouring by all means to prevent."

These reports were, of course, too absurd to contradict. From the very beginning, King Albert and King George exchanged personal letters and telegrams expressing the most cordial understanding between the two countries—an understanding which strengthened and deepened with the progress of the War. This Anglo-Belgian entente was the best reply to rumours which were part of the German propaganda intended to create disunion.

CHAPTER XVII

QUEEN ELIZABETH'S WAR WORK

Taking a personal share in hospital work—The Belgian woman's gift of a bed and mattress—Comforting disfigured soldiers—"I will think of you, I will pray for you daily"—In a hospital during an air raid—The Prince of Wales watching the Queen's skilful treatment of a wounded man—"Her husband is fighting too . . . Her man's name is Albert"—Organizing bands of musicians—The lost children found—Their Majesties' temporary homes.

WHILE King Albert led his troops into battle, Queen Elizabeth used all her efforts to care for the wounded caused by those battles.

On the outbreak of hostilities she at once placed herself at the head of the Red Cross and enlisted the willing services of Belgian women, all of whom, equally with the men, were anxious to serve their country in any capacity.

The nurses and doctors in the Belgian field hospitals required as good nerves and as much courage and devotion as the soldiers on active service. For them, moreover, there was not the stimulus of the actual fighting, but only the unending work of receiving the wounded and tending the sufferers, often with inadequate supplies. The wounds created by new methods of warfare were often such as made even men and women hardened to such sights sicken at their task.

It is difficult for anyone who had even the slightest experience of the field hospitals in the early days of the War to think or write calmly of the scenes they witnessed. Yet the Queen, who was not of robust physique and has that sympathetic temperament which makes it difficult to witness suffering, shrank from nothing. There was hardly a field hospital in the whole of Belgium that she did not visit at some time or other during the War.

She not only visited them, but took part in the actual nursing, often assisting in the dressings and in the work of the wards. Her Majesty did a great deal of her nursing under Doctor Depage, who had helped her in her training. Her previous experience, when assisting her father, Duke Charles Theodor, stood her in good stead. From her girlhood she had been used to sick beds

and the consolation of suffering, so now she passed through ward after ward, bringing cheer and comfort in her train.

As the field hospitals travelled from place to place where they were most needed, the Queen did her utmost, and inspired others to do their utmost, too, to find suitable buildings in which they could carry on their magnificent work. She was intensely anxious that there should be full equipment for both the wounded and the staff. Often bedding was impossible to procure in sufficient quantity, and the wounded slept on straw. Her Majesty organized house-to-house collections for bedding, and, when the hospital was at Furnes, she gave twenty beds with spring mattresses for the use of the most serious cases.

Once when it had proved exceptionally difficult to get supplies, the Queen, attended by only one lady-in-waiting, went from house to house to see what could be obtained. The inhabitants of the place were for the most part more than willing to give, but the exigencies of war had left them with little. Few recognized the slender, gentle-voiced lady, who pleaded for the wounded soldiers, as their Queen. One good woman, who had given all but the bed on which she herself slept, was so overcome when she learned of her visitor's identity, that she hurried after her up the street, dragging her one mattress behind her as a final offering!

The Queen visited the hospital at Furnes twice regularly every week, and her visits were made without ceremony of any kind. She was never accompanied by more than one lady and, as a rule, by a Belgian medical officer. Her interest in the patients was felt and appreciated by everyone in the hospital. Her thorough knowledge of surgery and medicine made her able to understand and appreciate the methods of nursing, and she never failed to pay due tribute to the staff for their efforts and for the extraordinary ingenuity with which they carried out serious operations with wholly inadequate materials.

In one hospital in four days there were admitted nearly four hundred patients, many of them with wounds necessitating grave operations, yet all the surgeons had to work with were two scalpels, a finger saw, and a few forceps!

From bed to bed the Queen would pass, a slight figure always plainly clad, usually in black, with a word for each of the men who had suffered in her country's cause. To each she spoke—to Belgians, French, and Germans (for there were usually a few Germans brought in with the rest), as Her Majesty made no distinction. They were suffering; they had made the supreme sacrifice for what each believed to be the right, and in that place of pain at least there was no room for bitterness.

In the early days of the War, the Queen expressed a hope that

Belgian women who could write both English and German would force themselves to forget their wrongs, and, for the sake of humanity, attend hospitals to write letters for prisoners other than Belgians. She realized how the anxiety of many a soldier's home would be alleviated if news, however slight, reached their homes. In the Queen's mind, as in the minds of her noble fellow-workers in the cause of the Red Cross, a wounded man had no nationality; he suffered, and that was enough to evoke all that was humanly possible to ease his pain, both mental and physical.

Sometimes the King accompanied the Queen on her visits of mercy—always in his soldier's uniform without decorations of any kind. Together they would go round the hospitals, not so much as a King and Queen visiting their subjects, but as a kindly, simple man and woman, eager to do what they could for their fellow-creatures. Her Majesty was deeply interested in the visits which Madame Curie, the world-famed scientist, paid to the hospital at Furnes, where she stayed to work for a week, bringing her X-ray equipment for the use of the hospital. To aid Madame Curie in her much-valued labours on behalf of the wounded, there was fitted up for her a radiographic department with the aid of thick curtains and much brown paper. Here this remarkable woman worked with untiring zeal, taking radiographs of innumerable cases. Her daughter was assiduous in helping to develop the plates, and thus enabled Madame Curie to achieve work of the utmost value.

At a later stage in the War, the Queen took a deep interest in the marvels of plastic surgery, which enabled so many poor fellows to take up their work in the world after leaving the hospital. At one hospital some very severe facial cases were being treated, and the head surgeon, anxious to spare the Queen some terrible sights, begged her not to visit that particular ward. Her Majesty was not, however, to be deterred by the awful disfigurements. "They suffered for their country," she remarked, "and the Queen of that country should be the last to shrink from them." She spoke to each man in turn, pressing his hand in kindly sympathy before she turned away.

Passing month by month from hospital to hospital, Her Majesty constantly encountered those pitiful screams of homeless refugees who, with houses shelled and villages laid waste, straggled to the frontier. They would be met carrying their few poor possessions on their backs, or pushing wearily their hand-carts before them. Little children, hardly old enough to realize the horror which had befallen them, might be seen pushing perambulators filled to overflowing with what could be gathered

up of the few remaining household possessions. Old men staggering under sack-loads of clothing and bedding and women burdened with the strangest assortment of miscellaneous goods, were fleeing from misery into darkness. The Queen saw them all, and with tears in her eyes would stop to speak to them as they passed. They could not tell her where they were going, for to half of them their destination was unknown. They only knew that their homes had been destroyed by the enemy and that now they must seek an unknown country and an unknown future.

These processions distressed the Queen even more than the scenes at the hospital, for there at least all that was possible was being done. For these poor refugees there was nothing Her Majesty could do except to give a child a caress or slip some silver coins into a woman's hand. Her Majesty sought no recognition and, in her war work, was content to be taken for an ordinary member of the Red Cross. But to the refugees she would sometimes reveal her identity if she thought that by so doing she could give some slight comfort or even shadow of encouragement to the poor creatures.

"I will think of you, I will pray for you daily," she would tell them, as they trudged on their desolate road.

As all the world knows, the Red Cross was no defence against the enemy's fire. Germany tried to excuse her shelling of hospitals on the ground that war must be conducted in a logical manner. Therefore, said the enemy, to wipe out the medical staffs, who help to fit men once again for the battlefield, was quite a logical feature of the campaign, just as, of course, German officers considered it was "logical" to take cover behind a living shield of Belgian women. In one instance the Queen was actually visiting a hospital when it was set on fire during an air-raid. The staff were naturally anxious to get Her Majesty out of the buildings into a place of safety, but the Queen refused firmly to consider her own security and took part in assisting the wounded into cover.

When the raid was over and things had quietened down, the doctor in charge of the hospital ventured to compliment Her Majesty on her courage.

"My courage!" answered the Queen with the smile that had grown so rare in those days. "In what way did it differ from that of your nurses? When you make your report, if my presence is mentioned, it must be as one of them—no more."

While he was with his regiment in Flanders, the Prince of Wales visited several Belgian hospitals. In one he stood unnoticed, watching a nurse dressing a serious shrapnel wound.

After a few minutes, he turned to the doctor at his side and remarked: "That man will certainly recover if skill and care have anything to do with it."

The doctor smiled. "Yes, Your Royal Highness," he answered, "Her Majesty is extremely proficient."

"Her Majesty?" questioned the Prince.

"Yes, that is the Queen," explained the doctor.

Later, Her Majesty conducted the Prince round the hospital, and he was so impressed with her knowledge of medical matters and her keen interest in nursing that, when next he was on leave, he told his sister, Princess Mary (who had just finished her service in the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children), of Queen Elizabeth's war work. Princess Mary, who had become a skilled and experienced nurse, was so interested that a correspondence began between herself and the Queen—a correspondence which has continued to this day. Kindred interests in nursing were their first and lasting bond of sympathy.

The Queen of Spain, it may be added, was also greatly interested in hospital work and did much to stimulate progress in medical matters in her own country. She founded hospitals started clinics, and revolutionized in many ways the hospital system in Spain. When, after the war, she visited Belgium, Queen Elizabeth personally conducted the Queen of Spain through some of the hospitals in which she had worked, and they had long discussions as to medical institutions in their respective countries.

In her thought and care for the wounded, the Queen did not forget their wives and families. She organized many schemes of relief, often presiding at concerts and entertainments given on their behalf, and chatting with relatives of the wounded whenever an opportunity offered. Often the women did not know to whom they were talking. Once, after the Queen had taken part in a social gathering given to cheer the relatives of the men on active service, the wife of a soldier talked to another of the evening's events:

"Did you see that dark lady who spoke to me?" she asked. "A nice lady she is. I told her Jules was fighting, and she said her husband was fighting, too. It appears that Jules and he are in the same regiment. It may be that they are friends. Her man's name is Albert—like the King!"

The Queen was concerned for the well-being of the Belgian refugees who had found a temporary home in England. In the course of her correspondence with the Queen, Princess Mary gave her reports of what was being done for them. She sent the Queen some photographs of the memorial which had been erected

to the memory of Belgian soldiers in the churchyard at Shorncliffe.

After the first terrible battle on the Yser, when the casualty lists on both sides were enormous, nearly two thousand wounded Belgian soldiers were brought to Folkestone. There, unhappily, fourteen died and were buried in Shorncliffe churchyard. The Belgian refugees wished to erect a memorial to their dead compatriots and, with this end in view, a subscription list, headed by King Albert's sister, the Duchess of Vendôme, was started. In September, 1918, the monument was erected with this inscription: "To the hospitable soil of England, to the people we have learned to know and love, to those who were so good and charitable to us, we forever entrust our dear sons who are sleeping here in their last sleep. The Belgian Exiles."

Throughout all the terrible years in which she saw Belgium laid waste and its sons slain in their thousands, the Queen never lost heart or faith in the ultimate triumph of the Allies. In 1918, a party of Welsh journalists visiting Belgium were presented to the Queen. Before they left, she begged them to tell her exiled compatriots to have courage and endure patiently a little longer. She repeated part of King Albert's speech to his troops, in which he had said: "The end is in sight, the hour is decisive, the enemy is retiring everywhere." Her Majesty also asked the journalists to thank the Welsh people for having been so kind to the refugees, and having shown such delicacy of feeling in their treatment of the homeless strangers.

The Queen, who is an excellent musician, devised the happy idea of forming "Queen's Orchestras," consisting of musicians from various regiments. They were sent to play on the different war fronts to cheer and encourage the fighting forces. Towards the end of the War, the Royal Belgian Band, composed of 117 men, each specially chosen by the Queen, visited London and were given a most cordial reception. The Queen had drawn up the programme specially for the occasion.

The men travelled under the conductorship of M. de Thoran, and were met by a British regimental band which played the Belgian National Anthem. They were welcomed by the Marchioness of Carisbrooke and other distinguished ladies whose guests they were at the Royal Opera House. The Band gave a splendid concert at the Royal Albert Hall, and their selections were encored repeatedly to the great gratification of Her Majesty, when she received a report of their visit to London.

Queen Elizabeth not only devoted her own days to the service of her country, but permitted and encouraged her children to do all that they could. A mother might have been forgiven if

she had decided that a son of fourteen should be kept as much as possible from the horrors of warfare, but, when King Albert gave way to Prince Leopold's eager desire to serve with him, the Queen did nothing to hinder him from realizing this ambition. Proud and gallant in his soldier's uniform, the young Prince could often be seen going the rounds with his father, taking messages to and from Headquarters, and in all ways submitting to Army discipline.

It was the Queen's motherhood and deep affection for her own children that made her sympathize so intensely with the refugee families in their terrified flight. As it was the great aim of the enemy to strike terror into the civilian population, families were often separated intentionally, and in many sad cases were never reunited.

The enemy's method in dealing with the villages through which they wished to pass was always the same. First they shelled it heavily with due attention to any public or particularly fine building which it might contain. When the occupants had fled in panic, leaving their wounded behind them, the soldiery entered, armed with incendiary bombs which they threw into what houses remained standing, thus reducing the whole place to a heap of ruins. So proud were they of this work of destruction that often on a singularly complete ruin would be found "I did this" in German, with a signature attached.

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that families fleeing often in darkness should be separated. Of one such family, consisting of the mother, grandfather—the husband was fighting—and three little children, only the mother reached the frontier. On their way they had encountered a party of Germans foraging, and, in their terror, the children had taken to their heels and were lost. When, after a frantic search, the poor mother realized her loss, she turned home into Belgium, and begged her way back to where the King and Queen were at that moment lodged in a Flemish farmhouse. It took her weeks to find them—weeks in which she endured all kinds of privations and was in almost continual danger. At last she found the Queen and, by persistent lying in wait, contrived to speak to her as she was setting out for a special visit to a dressing-station. Weeping, the woman poured out her sad story. She said that as Her Majesty was a mother she would understand what it meant to lose her little ones—two boys and a girl, like the little ones of Her Majesty. Would not her Majesty in pity help her to find them again ?

The Queen promised to do what she could, not with much confidence, for such tragedies were all too common. She gave

orders that the bereaved mother should be cared for. By a fortunate chance, an English officer of high rank was just then in consultation with King Albert. To him the Queen repeated the story. Inquiries were set on foot, and it was found that the children had, by some odd chance, strayed into the British base, from which they were rescued and restored to their overjoyed mother.

During all the four years of warfare, the King was constantly with his troops, and, whenever it was possible, the Queen would be in some simple residence at the base where His Majesty could join her when his duties permitted. Often it was an ordinary farmhouse, or sometimes a chateau, when the Germans had left one standing or failed to wreck and loot the contents. In this temporary home they lived a life of the utmost simplicity, with rations which were little better than those served out to the troops. Prince Leopold, who was in the uniform of a private of the 12th Regiment of the Line, was carrying out his military duties. King Albert, who wore not even a ribbon on his khaki tunic to distinguish him from any other infantry officer, would allow himself brief respite for rest and refreshment, and spend a few hours with the Queen and his son, renewing the family life in which he had always found the greatest happiness.

From these unpretentious dwellings, the Queen would go forth on her errands of mercy to the field hospitals. Once, at La Panne Hospital, she had only just left the building when the Germans began to shell it.

It was a constant source of comfort and strength to the Belgian people to know that their King and Queen not only sympathized with their sufferings, but shared in them. Their Majesties had been forced, early in the War, to leave not only their capital, but Antwerp and Ostend. The Queen was one of the last to leave. They, too, had been under fire ; they knew what it meant to live in danger and sorrow ; and, remembering these things, their loyalty to their Sovereigns increased with the successive sacrifices which they were called upon to make.

On Sundays their Majesties would go to the nearest church, and worship with the villagers, often sharing the same pew with women who had come to pray for their husbands, with old men who had come to intercede for their sons. A despatch appeared in the *Daily Mail*, in the first year of the War, gives an accurate and touching picture of their Majesties attending Divine worship :

"It is All Saints' Day ; the time, 7.30 in the morning ; the scene, a narrow lane between the sand dunes by the side of a

little brick church. The lane was quite empty when, round the corner, came a solitary couple, walking side by side.

"It was the King of the Belgians and his Queen, walking to early Mass at the little church. Thirty yards behind them, followed a single officer, but, except for that, a stranger would have detected no more of the artificial signs of kingship in the pair than that the husband was unusually young for a General.

"Without speaking, they came along the sandy lane, and as they drew near there could be seen on their faces the expression of a noble sorrow. For All Saints' Day is the vigil of All Souls; and Belgium has never known so sad an All Souls' Day as to-morrow will be. Not a family but will weep to-morrow for some soldier who has fallen during those deadly months of summer."

On no one did grief and anxiety press more heavily than upon King Albert and his Queen. They learnt the meaning of "the fellowship of suffering," and on their faces are the lines graven by the horrors of the War that devastated their country and robbed Belgium of the fine flower of its race.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FALL OF ANTWERP AND THE BATTLE OF YPRES

The Zeppelin air-raid on Antwerp—" I am the Sword of the Most High "—Extraordinary German propaganda—Brussels in war time—Belgian Government moves to Havre—France's graceful welcome—Attempt to disunite Belgium and Britain—King Albert and King George's friendship—The ruin of Ypres—King Albert's birthday celebrated in France—" What are books to me ? " said the Kaiser—German psychology at fault.

UP to the last, the German Emperor had expected that Antwerp would not put up any resistance. For years preceding the War, German propaganda had seen in *Flamingantisme* an instrument for its own ends. Such propaganda had been circulated surreptitiously in Antwerp, where certain members of the Fleming movement frequently made use of such expressions as "The Great Fatherland" and "Our Mother Germany." So convinced was the Kaiser of the effective work of his agents that he had actually prepared the speech which he intended to deliver in front of the Cathedral, when German troops had occupied the city ! In flamboyant language he meant to eulogize those who had shown themselves the friends of the Fatherland, and welcome Antwerp as a German possession !

But his plan miscarried. The Flemings proved themselves as loyal, as patriotic, and as truly Belgian, as were the Walloons. Fleming and Walloon fought side by side in the defence of their country. At a later stage, General von Bissing made an elaborate effort to separate the two races, but the attempt proved equally futile.

The Kaiser, having declared "I am the sword of the Most High and His representative upon earth," decided that against the defiant Antwerp the sword must be indeed unsheathed. Accordingly, it was upon that city that the first giant Zeppelin rained death-dealing bombs. The bombing party were ordered to make a special effort to find the temporary Royal Palace, as the Germans paid King Albert the compliment of believing that, if he were killed, the heart of Belgium would indeed be broken.

But the effect of this air-raid, though the damage to property was considerable and many civilians were killed was not nearly so great, and fortunately the public buildings escaped serious injury.

Besides dropping bombs, the Zeppelins let fall over Antwerp hundreds of copies of this extraordinary circular, printed in both French and Flemish :

"Belgian Soldiers,

Your blood and your whole salvation, you are not giving them at all to your beloved country ; you are only serving the interests of Russia, a country which desires only to increase its already enormous power, and above all the interest of England, whose perfidious avarice has given birth to this cruel and unheard-of war. From the commencement, your newspapers, paid from French and English sources, have never ceased to deceive you, telling you nothing but lies as to the causes of the war, and the battles which have followed ; and this is still done every day. Consider one of your army orders which affords proof of this—this is what it contains :

"You have been told that your comrades who are prisoners in Germany have been forced to march against Russia with our soldiers. Yet your common-sense must tell you that this would be a measure quite impossible to execute. When the day comes when your comrades who are prisoners return from our country and tell you with how much benevolence they have been treated, their words will make you blush for what your newspapers and your officers have dared to tell you, in order to deceive you in so incredible a manner. Every day of resistance makes you sustain irreparable losses, while with the capitulation of Antwerp, you will be free from all anxiety. Belgian soldiers, you have fought enough for the interests of the Princes of Russia, for those of the capitalists of perfidious Albion. Your situation is one to despair of. Germany, who is fighting for her life, has destroyed two Russian Armies. To-day no Russian is to be found in our country. In France, our troops are about to overcome the last resistance. If you wish to rejoin your wives and children, if you wish to return to your work—in a word, if you wish for peace, put an end to this useless struggle, which is ending only in your ruin. Then you will quickly enjoy all the benefits of a favourable and perfect peace. VON BESSELER,

Commander-in-Chief of the Besieging Army."

At the same time the Kaiser was saying : "The only means of preventing surprise attack from the civil population has

been to interfere with unrelenting severity, and to create examples which, by their frightfulness, would be a warning to the whole country." He had authorized the sack of Louvain, which the British Premier, Mr. Asquith, described as "the greatest crime committed against civilization and culture since the Thirty Years War."

It became an increasingly common thing for these circulars—all containing the wildest statements, including one that the King and Queen of England had fled from their country—to be dropped all over Belgium. In time, they became one of the stock jokes of the Belgian soldiers, who were not quite so stupid or so incredulous as their enemies chose to believe. It is interesting to recall that, at the conclusion of the War, Brussels received a "greeting" of quite another kind, when the British dirigible R 33 flew over the city and let fall a streamer of the Belgian colours, with an address of friendship for the heroic Burgomaster Max and the people of Brussels.

What had befallen the Belgian capital within five months of the outbreak of war may be gleaned from the pages of Rudolf Binding's striking volume, *A Fatalist at War*, in which there is an interesting account of this German officer's visit to Brussels in January, 1915 :

"The town, which I had never visited before, is magnificent in the true sense of the word. The site is ordained by Nature to be the fit and appropriate setting for a city. The relation between the upper and the nether city is singularly fitting. As a prospect, more could have been made of St. Gudule. . . . I was in St. Gudule this morning ; a priestling read out a horribly long *document précieux*, as he called it, from the bishop ; it was anti-German propaganda, political clap-trap of the first water and exceedingly dull. I was the only officer in the church.

"With its German garrison, German sentries at the Royal Palace, German officials in the Post Office, German railway guards, and von der Goltz's bright lads of the Jungdeutschland in the streets, feeling very soldierly with their smart turned-up hats with the brown cockade, and saluting vigorously, the town is very strange—an experience in itself. The happy-go-lucky citizens count themselves lucky, in a way, not to know how the War is getting on. *Il faut attendre*, and they wait. Waiting is tiresome, and one must kill time somehow. So one kills it. This is, roughly speaking, the train of thought of the Boulevards."

In the four years of war, King Albert and Queen Elizabeth

had many experiences of being under fire, and realized the peculiar horror of air-raids. Their first experience of the latter was during this attack on Antwerp, and their Majesties were aghast at the injuries thus made on civilians.

King Albert made personal inquiries into each fatality, and the Queen visited the hospitals in which the victims lay. Speaking to one of the officers in command of the British Naval Brigade, King Albert said: "In the past, Antwerp was laid desolate by the religious frenzy of Philip II. Now that it is again the victim of 'the sword of the Most High,' it would seem to me that both Philip and the Emperor were better acquainted with the Devil!"

The Kaiser's bitterness against Antwerp was increased by the fact that owing to the besieging General's faulty strategy, the Belgian Army had been able to retreat in good order. Save for a contingent, which, together with the 1st British Naval Brigade, was forced over the Dutch frontier and interned, the Army established itself on the banks of the Yser, and effected contact with the Allied forces. This enabled the Belgian forces to take part in the great Battle of Flanders.

Throughout the whole of the war period, King Albert was constantly with his troops. The only occasion on which he left his country was in 1918, when he flew over to England for the Silver Wedding of King George and Queen Mary. He was in frequent communication with the Generals commanding the Allied forces, and helped with them to map out the plans of campaign. Field-Marshal Haig said of King Albert that he had shortened the War by five years. As "the man whose heart would not be broken" he won world-wide admiration.

But though the King moved with his Army, the Belgian Government had perforce to seek some permanent resting-place. When it was seen that Ostend would fall into the hands of the enemy, the Government moved on to Havre and, for the first time in modern history, a Government had its headquarters outside its own country. At this period the French Government had left Paris and was in Bordeaux.

Strange as was the situation, neither the Government nor its country was disconcerted in the least degree at the turn of events. Before Ministers quitted Belgian soil, the Government issued this proclamation:

"Citizens! For nearly two months and a half, Belgian soldiers have, by heroic exertions, defended the soil of our Fatherland, foot by foot. The enemy counted on annihilating our Army at Antwerp, but a dignified and orderly retreat has shattered this hope and secured the preservation of military forces,

which will continue to fight for the first and most just of causes.

"From thenceforth these forces are to be operating towards our Southern frontier, where they will be in touch with our Allies. Thanks to this powerful assistance, the triumph of right is assured. The circumstances of to-day add yet another trial to the sacrifices which have been already accepted by the Belgian nation with a courage equalled only by their extent. To save ourselves from playing into the hands of the invader, it is necessary for the Belgian Government to establish its seat provisionally in a place where we can with our Army in touch with the forces of France and England, ensure the exercise and continuity of the nation's Government. That is why the Government leaves Ostend to-day with a grateful memory of the reception accorded by the town.

"The Government will be established provisionally at Havre, where the noble friendship of the French Republic offers not only the complete exercise of our authority and duty, but the fullest sovereign rights.

"Citizens, this temporary ordeal to which our patriotism must submit will, we are certain, be soon avenged. Belgian administration will be carried on as far as local circumstances permit. The King and the Government rely upon the wisdom of your patriotism. On your part, you may count on our entire devotion, on the valour of our Army, and the assistance of our Allies, to hasten the hour of our common deliverance.

"Our dear country, so foully betrayed and treated by one of the Powers which had sworn to guarantee her neutrality, has roused the ever-increasing admiration of the whole world, by reason of the calmness, the courage, and the foresight of all her children. She will continue to deserve this admiration, which is her great comfort to-day.

"To-morrow she will emerge from these trials greater and fairer than before, by reason of the fact that she has suffered in the cause of justice and for the honour of civilization.

"Long live Belgium, free and independent!"

When the French President, M. Poincaré, heard that the Belgian Government was being forced to leave its own country, he telegraphed immediately and personally to King Albert, and, in the name of France, offered him hospitality, assuring him of welcome and his safety.

King Albert replied, thanking the President warmly, and saying: "We await the hour of mutual victory with unshakable confidence; fighting side by side for a just cause, our courage will never fail."

The Belgian Prime Minister, Baron de Broqueville, also telegraphed to the French President :

"Monsieur le President : At this moment, when the fortune of arms leads it to the hospitable soil of the friend of Belgium, the Government of the King has the honour to present to the Chief of the State its homage and its most respectful sentiments, and begs him to be kind enough to accept the expression of its unshakable faith in the triumph of right. It rejoices that France, united with Great Britain and Russia, is the generous and proud champion of the right."

To this M. Poincaré replied :

"Monsieur le President du Conseil : As we have personally assured His Majesty King Albert, it is with pride that France will welcome to-day on her soil the Government of the noble people which is defending with so much heroism its natural independence and outraged public right. The Government of the Republic does not separate the cause of Belgium from that of France, and has taken all the necessary measures, so that the Government of the King may retain in Havre the free exercise of its powers. The certitude of final victory will lighten for you, as for the French departments still invaded, the passing trial, from which our countries will emerge more closely united, stronger, and greater than ever."

Baron de Broqueville telegraphed to M. Viviani, thanking him for the welcome accorded to the Belgian Government, and saying :

"Belgium, which has sacrificed everything for the defence of honesty, honour, and liberty, regrets nothing. She has the confidence arising from the knowledge of a duty accomplished, and the certainty of the triumph of the Allies' cause."

In his reply, M. Viviani said that the Republic was proud to be able to offer hospitality to a noble nation, which had rendered such service to the common cause, and expressing his confidence in the triumph of justice and right.

These exchanges of messages of goodwill between Belgium and her Allies were a source of bitter annoyance to the Kaiser. He was specially infuriated at the cordiality of the relations existing between King Albert and King George. As time went on, and victory was still delayed, these messages, constantly exchanged between the two Sovereigns, threw him into such paroxysms of rage that his Ministers judged it best to keep them from his notice. In some cases, these messages were sub-edited in the most ludicrous fashion.

KING ALBERT WITH THE PRINCE OF WALES

KING ALBERT PHOTOGRAPHED IN THE AUTUMN OF 1928
On the left is seen Prince Charles, and on the right the Duke of Brabant.

Great as was his resentment towards Belgium, his bitterness towards Britain was still greater. All the scornful and malicious things that he had said concerning King Albert he repeated, with additions, about King George. This change in his attitude highly amused King Albert. Once, when he was talking to King George on one of that Monarch's visits to Belgium during the War, he remarked smilingly that there was one thing he found difficult to forgive, and that was the fact that the Kaiser hated him most. "I feel it's a compliment," he added, "and I thought it was reserved for *me!*"

It is certain that the full force of Teutonic hate was reserved for Britain and her rulers. The famous "Hymn of Hate" had England as its objective:

> "We hate with but a single hate,
> We have one foe and one alone—
> England!"

The Kaiser ordered his troops "to devote the whole of your attention to the treacherous English, and to walk over General French's contemptible little Army." He tried afterwards to deny this order, but he made so many similar statements throughout the War that his denial lost weight.

The German people were always led to believe that, but for Britain, Belgium would have been their ally. Reports such as the following were constantly appearing in the German newspapers:

"Opinion in Belgium is daily becoming more conciliatory. Belgium may, for the moment, be compared with a woman who is beginning to love despite herself, and who, through pride and vexation, says 'No' as loudly as possible, for fear anyone should see what was happening to her. But one does see it, despite the ribbons of the national colours—indeed, precisely on that account."

When the Belgian Army retired from Antwerp, after having fired the great oil tanks containg immense stores of oil, and rendering the shipping in the river useless to the invader, the enemy followed them as fast as possible. But the Belgian troops were entrenched behind the Yser before they came up with them, and, after a brief respite, the great Battle of Flanders began.

Much has been, and will be, written of the Battle of Ypres, although in reality there were actually several Battles of Ypres. Indeed, this part of the country was throughout nearly the whole of the War the scene of fierce fighting. The ground came to so terrible a condition that adequate trenches could not be dug, and sandbag parapets had to be erected, while great tracts

of land became liquid mud, in which men and animals were often engulfed.

The destruction of Ypres, with its world-famous Cloth Hall, was one of the most bitter blows that King Albert and his subjects had to bear. In the early history of Belgium, Ypres had been ill-fated. When the fanatical Philip of Spain had finished his fighting there, only 500 inhabitants were left. Before the War, Ypres was a quiet, prosperous town of about 18,000 inhabitants who, proud of their ancient traditions, lived the orderly lives of Belgian citizens.

Ypres had many historic buildings, the chief being Les Halles. The Cloth Hall was the chief glory of the town. This Hall was built in 1300, and had a frontage of 433 feet ; its façades were ornamented with statues of the Counts of Flanders and other illustrious Belgians.

There was also the Cathedral church of St. Martin, built in the thirteenth century and containing many wonderful carvings, pictures, and monuments, besides some famous tombs. The Public Library had many priceless manuscripts and a wonderful collection of books, while the Municipal Museum also contained many artistic treasures.

When the War ended, Ypres was literally a heap of ruins. Of the Cathedral there remained only a shattered tower and crumbling walls. The lovely Cloth Hall resembled the ruins of an ancient castle. Ypres had become a tragic graveyard—the most terrible, yet the most glorious graveyard in history, for 250,000 dead lay within its borders.

The first of the great battles of Ypres began on October 15th, 1914, and lasted three weeks. The Germans lost over 250,000 men, and the Allies over 100,000.

The first shell fell on Ypres on October 7th, 1914, and the last in October, 1918. Throughout those four years, there was hardly a day when the town was not directly under fire.

The courage and heroism of the Belgian troops was fully equalled by that of the Belgian people, who, until they were ordered to leave the city, displayed the utmost coolness and courage. Their phlegmatic contempt for the Germans amazed the Allies.

The first act of the enemy when the town was in its hands was to take the Burgomaster and three of the most prominent citizens as hostages for the fine of 70,000 francs which they inflicted upon the city. Nevertheless, the spirit of the inhabitants remained unbroken. A shell tore off a large portion of the roof of the church of St. Peter, while a service was in progress, but the service continued ! When gas shells were raining on the city,

and the troops were forced to retreat, the inhabitants hurried into the streets to offer them milk as they went. The Military Cross and the Croix de Guerre were not awarded Ypres without cause.

These were heart-breaking months for a King who, together with his people, had to suffer all the horrors of invasion by troops who were directly incited to act as barbarians. His Majesty never faltered. By this time he had the comfort of knowing that his troops were supported by the British Expeditionary Forces and also by the French. Their combined lines extended from the coast to Switzerland. Consoled as he was by firm belief in ultimate victory—a belief that never deserted him for one moment—it was terrible for him to see city after city invaded, sacked, and pillaged. In every case, too, many of the innocent inhabitants—civilians who should have been immune from interference—were ill-treated, assaulted, and even put to death.

An occurrence that gratified the King very much in the midst of his sorrows were the celebrations in France of his birthday. These celebrations were, of course, perfectly spontaneous, and were a tribute to a King who epitomized the heroism of his country, and was a man who had shown the full glory of manhood.

Throughout all France the day was kept as a fête day, and King Albert was deluged with telegrams of congratulations from every part of the country. The President wired his good wishes, for which the King sent a cordial telegram of thanks. Havre, where the Belgian Government had still its provisional headquarters, was *en fête*, and everywhere the Belgian colours were to be seen entwined with the flags of the Allies. In the principal church there was celebrated a Te Deum, to which service came famous French and Belgian statesmen and military commanders, as well as any humble folk glad to pay homage to a King whom the world honoured.

From all countries there had gone up such an outcry against the wanton destruction of famous libraries and cathedrals, and the ruin of artistic and historical treasures that could never be replaced, that a deputation of German professors—not all of whom were like one great German scholar in his advocacy of German supremacy at all costs—waited upon the Kaiser, and humbly, very humbly, begged him to suggest to his officers that such vandalism was unnecessary.

"Books!" exclaimed the great exponent of "Kultur." "Books! What are books to me in this hour! This upstart Belgium, this treacherous and perfidious England, is not impressed by books. Blood is the only thing that will teach them the might of the

Fatherland—blood, and still more blood! As for the cathedrals, I regret these"—it was no doubt awkward for "the Sword of the Most High" to explain away the cathedrals—"but, later, I myself will raise far greater monuments to the God who is granting us the victory!"

Both the victory and the monuments were, fortunately for the world at large, destined to remain a figment of his diseased imagination. And Europe, later on, did her best to replace some of the literary and artistic treasures that German vandals had destroyed so ruthlessly. From ancient homes of learning like the University of France, the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh, splendid gifts were sent to the Belgian libraries and art galleries that the Kaiser's troops had done their best to annihilate. Few events in the War did the cause of Germany greater harm, and created more sympathy for Belgium in the United States, than the reckless destruction of her cathedrals and libraries. In this, as in so many other events, the German psychology was utterly wrong.

CHAPTER XIX

THE KING AND HIS GALLANT ARMY

Visiting the stricken field—Ridiculous rumours of the King's flight—How the Germans looted and destroyed—" A herd of wild beasts "—Attack on Paris thwarted—Banquets that were never held—Mr. Asquith's eloquent speech—" Belgium must be broken," writes the Kaiser—The tailor's goods taken—Von Bissing's failure to disunite the Belgians—Mr. Hoover's relief organization —" Barbarians, but not cowards."

AFTER the battle of Flanders, King George visited King Albert and was taken by the latter over the stricken war area. It represented "the abomination of desolation," deserted except by a few poor souls here and there, who, in spite of everything, had refused to leave their ruined homes. Villages laid in wreckage; broken roads, on which lay scattered the household articles and odd garments dropped by refugees in their terror-stricken flight; trees twisted and uprooted by the explosion of shells which had left the earth yawning in great craters. There were other sights, such as pen may not describe and the eye having seen may never forget. All this misery the two Monarchs saw as they walked, rarely breaking silence, for before that vast tragedy words were meaningless. They were dry-eyed, for men's tears had dried at their source in these awful times, and the only gesture made was, when looking across a "no-man's land," where burial parties were still at work, King George laid his arm on that of the younger man in silent sympathy.

The two Sovereigns walked unrecognized usually, but if news of their approach spread there was naturally a rush to see them. In his anxiety for a close view, one poor fellow on crutches slipped and stumbled with his crutches beneath him. Both Kings helped him to his feet, and it was characteristic of the indomitable spirit of the men that, recounting this experience to his comrades, the soldier said light-heartedly: "What chance has Jerry got if, when one of his bullets knocks a chap over, two Sovereigns pick him up again?"

It has often been asserted that the Germans used dum-dum bullets, but surgeons who worked in the field hospitals deny this. They declare that the bullets used were of a special kind

which, when they struck their objective, turned right over and inflicted wounds far more serious than those usually made by rifle fire.

For the next three years the War raged with varying success. To King Albert it must have seemed at times that his country was in its death agony, for, whether the battles ended in victory or defeat for the Allies, Belgium suffered more and more. The stream of refugees flowed out to England, Holland, and France; and ever the ferocity of the invaders seemed to increase. Fresh troops which kept pouring into the country, constantly expressed their surprise that King Albert and Queen Elizabeth were still in Belgium. Often, until definite proof was afforded them, they refused point-blank to believe that King Albert was with his Army.

"No, no," they would say, "we have read in our newspapers the King and Queen have fled. They were forced by their people to fly, and it may be they have been murdered. They are certainly not in Belgium."

Doubtless the wish was father to the thought, but throughout the whole four years of the War these reports of the supposed flight of King Albert were circulated in Germany. It was part of their propaganda.

After the bitterness of the occupation of Brussels, King Albert and the Queen had to face the fact, with all that it implied, that German troops were quartered at Laeken. In their private salons—the salons in which the German Emperor and the Crown Prince had been entertained with cordial hospitality—there took place those orgies for which German officers gained a disgraceful notoriety. The wine cellars were soon rifled, and so much to their taste did they find the vintage that, even after they had left the Palace, they sent back messengers to make a further search of the cellars. At Laeken the same incidents happened as had occurred at "Les Amerois." Valuable treasures were removed, and wanton damage was done for the sheer love of destruction. All over Belgium, fine châteaux were sharing the same fate—a fate that made one ruined householder, surveying what was left of a building that had been a stately and gracious mansion, exclaim: "Next time, please God, it will be invaded by a herd of wild beasts. I should prefer it!"

All that was of value was removed from these stately homes of Belgium. If the removal was by officers of high rank, the "loot" was sent back to Germany; if by private soldiers, it was, where it was possible, included in their kit. What did not seem worth stealing was smashed to pieces. Nothing escaped, and there were left behind evidences of the enemy's occupation

such as cannot be described, such as could only be committed by the sons of Kultured Germany!

While King George was in Belgium, King Albert personally conducted him over one of the châteaux that had recently been evacuated. From garret to cellar they went, looking at pictures torn from the walls and stamped to fragments; at furniture smashed wantonly and crockery ground almost to powder. The invaders had behaved so violently that even the nursery had not been spared, and it was here that the two Kings paused, looking round for some moments in silence. Then King Albert pointed to a child's toy engine, which had plainly been stamped upon, and said: "I see things like that day after day; at first I fought for Belgium, now I fight for humanity!"

Much moved, King George answered: "Germany shall repay you—if indeed reparation is possible."

"It will be a long task," King Albert replied. "But my country will rally to the work of reconstruction with the same spirit in which she took up the sword to defend her liberty."

Queen Elizabeth was specially grieved when she heard of the occupation of the Palace at Laeken. Though she was a Queen, she was still a woman; and it was at Laeken that she had spent much of her early married life. There her children had played, and she and King Albert had spent many happy hours in the grounds, when their duties permitted them to enjoy the home life of which they were both fond.

"It will be haunted," she exclaimed sadly, "haunted by most shameful ghosts! Can I ever be happy again there—if, indeed, happiness is possible anywhere in our most sad country? Can we ever take the children back there?"

King Albert assured her that even such ghosts as these could be exorcised, and that in the hour of victory, Laeken should know once more its old glories. When at last the Royal Family was able to return to Laeken after the War, the Queen had most extensive alterations made and King Albert himself was at great pains to see that no effort was spared to obliterate for her the memories of that time when the Château was in German occupation.

The troops under King Albert had, in common with all the Allied troops, to retreat occasionally before the overwhelming numbers brought against them. It was these retreats that particularly tried the spirit of the soldiers. They longed to fight as, day by day, fresh proofs of the enemy atrocities were revealed, and their longing to get to grips with the invader grew more fierce. Whenever it was found absolutely necessary to retreat, to prevent undue waste of life, His Majesty would go

himself amongst his men, talking to them, explaining plans, telling them of his hopes, and making clear to them the strategic value of the Allies' moves in the war area.

The German people had been assured often and impressively of victory, swift and complete, of the triumphant advance of the German Army—an advance that nothing could possibly hinder. When, despite the lying reports upon which they were constantly nourished, it became clear to them that the War would not " be over in a month," as they had been promised, and that the enemy were inflicting terrible casualties upon their soldiers, the popularity of the Hohenzollerns began to fade a little. The unwelcome truth began to percolate through their minds that final victory would not be theirs. It was with the idea of reviving hopes that the Crown Prince took the head of the troops marching against Paris, for "according to plan"—the Kaiser's plan—the capture of Paris was to be the end of the War and the final phase of German victory.

The plans for the German occupation of Paris were drawn up to the last detail. The Prince was to lead his Army along the Rheims Paris road and concerning Rheims the *Berliner Blatt* told its readers just what was to happen :

" The Western group of our Armies in France has already passed the second line of the French forts, excepting Rheims, whose royal antique splendour, contemporaneous with the white lilies, will soon be *reduced to powder by our artillery.*"

Very cultered indeed !

Once in Paris the troops were to march along the Champs Elysée, in full regimentals. The order of the march had been prepared with minute attention to detail. At their head, in his favourite uniform, that of the Death's Head Hussars, was to march the Crown Prince.

The Kaiser had naturally an even more important part in this melodrama. At the head of a million and a half of his soldiers, he was to appear in the captured city and dictate his terms. Providing that French provinces and an enormous sum were offered, he would call a truce and cease to fight France. Great Britain was next to be annihilated. If France refused the Kaiser's terms, then Paris was to be sacked ! The Kaiser had made special plans for Belgium. King Albert would, of course, be forced to abdicate ; he might even be punished for his intolerable defiance. In any case, the Belgian throne must be left vacant for the Kaiser to fill. Whom he would select to occupy it was not stated definitely, owing to the fact that there had been brisk competition among his sons for the honour, and the Imperial mind had not yet decided on their respective claims !

As all the world knows, the Allies made a magnificent effort, the German Army was pushed back, though German papers claimed for the Crown Prince a "wonderful victory," and Paris remained safe. The story of the too speedy advance of Von Kluck's forces, some of whom actually spent a night in the exquisite Château at Chantilly, given by the Duc d'Aumale to France, only a short journey by train from Paris, is one of thrilling romance. Apparently, the enemy's intelligence department was at fault, for the Germans imagined they would have an easy task now that they were so near the France's capital. But, to his immortal glory, General Gallieni rallied every available man to the rescue, despatching them in taxi-cabs and motor-cars to the assistance of General Manowry, and the enemy's plans were thwarted. It was found later that, so certain had they been of entering Paris, menus of festive banquets had been drawn up and every arrangement had been made for triumphant celebrations. As the old Scottish lines say: "The best-laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley," and the Kaiser and his Army never ate their dinners in Paris.

When it was known that the French capital was the great objective of the German Army, Mr. Asquith, the British Premier, speaking at the Guildhall, urged England to make yet further efforts. Referring to her defence of Belgium, he said:

"If we had been base enough to be false to our word and faithless to our friends . . . we should have been admiring as detached spectators the siege of Liège, the steady and manful resistance of a small Army to the occupation of their capital with its splendid traditions and memories, the gradual forcing back of the patriotic defenders of their native land to the ramparts of Antwerp, countless outrages inflicted by buccaneering, levies exacted from the unoffending civil population, and finally, the greatest crime committed against civilization and culture since the Thirty Years' War—the sack of Louvain. For my part, I say sooner than be a silent witness, which means in effect a willing accomplice, of this tragic triumph of force over law, and of brutality over freedom, I would see this country of ours blotted out from the pages of history." This eloquent declaration made a world-wide impression as proving Great Britain's determination to "fight to a finish."

In a speech delivered at Broxburn in Linlithgow, Lord Rosebery, a former Prime Minister, came from his settlement and said: "When the German Foreign Secretary was asked if he was really going to infringe the neutrality of Belgium, he said: 'You are not going to war for that—going to war for a scrap of paper.' A great Power that treats 'scraps of paper'

like that is not unlikely to be scrapped herself. The German Chancellor in Parliament said : ' We knew we were doing wrong in invading the neutrality of Belgium, but we were compelled to do wrong.' A nation that begins a great war by declaring that its foundation is wrong, and that it is obliged to do wrong, is likely to fare badly if there be a God in Heaven."

King Albert had more to face even than the brunt of battles and the ever-increasing horrors of invasion. The Teutonic mind is slow to acquire an idea and equally slow to discard it. Germany still harboured the idea that the Flemings were yet at heart her allies. The Kaiser in particular never lost the hope entirely that Belgium, or at least half of her, would be willing to swear allegiance to him. Since terrorism seemed useless, he decided that other measures must be tried.

" Belgium must be broken," he wrote to the Crown Prince, whose attempts at breaking her had not been so far successful, and who was then concentrating on Verdun. " Remember this—a house divided against itself cannot stand. Divide Belgium, and it will fall, and fall into our hands. We shall, of course, take it when victory comes, but, if we could by any means force it to surrender willingly, it would shake the Allies, and impress our people here. This last is of growing importance."

The ideas of the Crown Prince did not apparently go beyond the sword, and it was left for Von Bissing, one of the few German Generals who realized that there might be other armaments besides blood and fire—compelling as they might be, and no doubt impressive in their effects upon the civil population. They had not been entirely successful in breaking the heart of Belgium, or even that of its King. So the mind of General Von Bissing set to work to devise other ways. He grasped the fact that though a masacre of the inhabitants might be impressive as a gesture, yet, with the wanton destruction of property, it might make victory, if and when it came, a somewhat barren honour. There were, he decided, better uses to make of the men than to shoot them. They could have the honour of working for Germany !

During the winter of 1916–1917, 150,000 Belgian workmen were taken from their employment, and an attempt was made to force them to work either behind the German lines or in German Commandos. There is the courage of resistance, as well as the courage of action, and the Belgians possessed them both. The workers would not work, and not even the Teutonic methods which were employed to make them labour could break their spirit. At last there remained nothing for the invaders

to do but break up the industries, which they did very thoroughly, and transport the machinery to Germany.

Nothing was spared. An English tailor under Royal patronage had a branch in Brussels, but the city had not been occupied more than a few days when his rolls of suiting evidently attracted the attention of someone in command, for an army lorry drove up to the tailor's door and, within a few minutes, the shop was cleared, down to the reels of thread!

King Albert was very proud of the action of the workers. He realized to the full what such resistance must have cost, and he lost no opportunity of letting the men know the consolation he derived from this proof of their loyalty. Indeed, through the whole of the conflict, the King was never without the solace supplied by evidence of his people's support in the action he had taken.

No one, however sympathetic his imagination, who has not been an actual eye-witness of a country subject to invasion—an invasion during which the enemy set at defiance every law that had hitherto protected non-belligerents in similar cases—can have any idea of the indignities as well as actual dangers to which the inhabitants of towns and villages were subjected. Yet never for a moment did the Belgian people repent of their refusal to be the friend of Germany or falter in their resistance. Once, after the invaders had passed through a village and left their usual traces of their visit, King Albert walked through the deserted streets, talking to the few people who had the courage to venture abroad and doing his best to offer what consolation was possible. He met one old farmer, leaning sadly upon his gate and surveying the desolate ruins of what had once been a prosperous homestead, half his house demolished, his crops ruined, and the very earth torn and gaping with shell wounds.

Von Bissing tried other means of dividing Belgium against herself, in order to bring about her downfall. He explained personally his new policy in his remarkable "Political Testament," a document of which the Kaiser approved highly

Von Bissing made a determined, carefully planned, and persistent effort to set the Flemish against the Walloons. With this end in view, he tried to replace the French University at Ghent by a Flemish one. Though he contrived to enlist the aid of a few Flamingants—extremists who in pre-War days had regarded Germany as their Motherland—the great majority of the Flemings protested vigorously at what they considered rightly most unwarrantable interference with their educational establishments. Von Bissing nothing daunted went considerably further. He set up administrative separation, and two capitals at Namur

and Brussels, with divisions of all Government offices between Fleming and Walloon, in his attempt to constitute them as two different nations.

King Albert watched the movement with some little anxiety. This deliberate endeavour to set one half of his people against the other was intensely repugnant to him. Had the schemes, even in a minor degree, succeeded, it would have added greatly to the administrative difficulties of the Belgian Government and to the responsibilities of His Majesty himself when peace was restored. Though everything possible was done to ensure the success of the project, it was doomed to fail from the start, and, in the end, even the determined Von Bissing had to admit his failure.

Throughout the whole of the war period, Belgium asserted herself triumphantly as one people under one king, and thus she has remained.

King Albert and Queen Elizabeth took the deepest interest in the work of the Commission of Relief in Belgium, which was organized in the first instance by Mr. Hoover, late President of the United States. During the War years the Commission distributed over £2,500,000 from British sources alone, and was the the means of relieving an enormous amount of distress. Its work His Majesty acknowledged most gratefully, sending special messages of thanks to all the countries which had contributed when the War was over. Mr. Herbert Hoover had relinquished his enormous financial responsibilities almost at a day's notice and he devoted his magnificent powers of organization to serving the distressed peoples who had suffered most in the War. He was well supported by helpers in this fine work.

King Albert, like the world at large, was deeply stirred by the exploit at Zeebrugge when, under the command of Sir Roger Keyes, a British squadron destroyed a great deal of enemy material on the mole protecting the harbour. Under this mole was exploded an old submarine filled with explosives, and two discarded cruisers, heavily laden with cement, were sunk at the entrance to the harbour. It had grieved the King to realize how useful the Germans had found Zeebrugge in their submarine warfare, and this splendid exploit of the British landing-party was just the kind of thing to delight his soldier's heart. He wrote a personal letter to King George expressing his deep admiration of the courage and ingenuity displayed in the exploit, and expressed the hope that he himself might later on be able to make some public acknowledgment. This hope he realized in 1920, when he dedicated the memorial in the cemetery at Zeebrugge to thirty-one of the British who lost their lives in the landing.

King Albert did not confine his attention to his own troops,

but paid frequent visits to the French and British lines, where he would confer with the commanding officers and often move freely among the men, talking and jesting with them. He was rarely recognized for, as has been mentioned, he wore nothing to distinguish him from any other officer. Once, when even the marks of his military rank were hidden beneath a greatcoat which he had hurriedly thrown over his tunic, he came upon a party of British Tommies playing the forbidden game of "Crown and Anchor." At his appearance, the men strove to hide the evidences of their pastime, but His Majesty who, like Nelson, knew when to have a blind eye, shook his head smilingly.

"Right-o, mate," said the relieved voice of a little Cockney. "Only you never know; we get some 'brass hats' here now and again, and you can't always tell who they are. Now look at you, if you only had a few medals and about fifty yards of gold braid, why, you might be King Albert of the Belgians!"

This sally highly amused the man's comrades, but no one laughed quite so heartily as King Albert, secure in his incognito.

On one occasion King Albert paid a special visit to the 29th Division, and, not content with visiting the headquarters, insisted on going round the Front. Despite the protests of the officer accompanying him, the King went so close to the Front lines that at one time he was within fifty yards of the German trenches. To the great delight of the men, on September 28th, 1916, the Corps Commander issued the following notice:

"The King of the Belgians and Prince Alexander of Teck were each impressed by the smartness and fine appearance of the officers and men of the 29th Division, and Sir Aylmer Hunter Weston desires to congratulate all ranks on the good impression that the Division has made on the Sovereign of our gallant Allies."

Being, as he always had been, a sportsman in the best sense of the word, King Albert never allowed anyone to call the German troops cowardly. "Barbarians, yes," he said, "but in the mass not cowards. They have been misled, shamefully misled, but they die as bravely for their country as my men die for theirs, and I myself have seen some magnificent examples of heroism—heroism that has made me wish with all my heart it were in a better cause."

CHAPTER XX

THE TRAGEDY OF NURSE CAVELL

" Brussels will be haunted for ever "—German disregard for all appeals for clemency—" It would have been better had I issued a Royal pardon "—Edith Cavell's life-story—Her arrest for harbouring refugees—Sentence of death pronounced—" Patriotism is not enough "—Her serenity in prison—The firing-party—Spy mania in all countries—King Albert's discovery of a spy.

THOUGH King Albert had moved among scenes of bloodshed and barbarism since the War began, nothing shocked him so much as the arrest, trial and subsequent execution of the heroic Englishwoman, Nurse Edith Cavell. This piece of infamy shocked the whole civilized world, but to the King and Queen of the Belgians it was an added grief that it should have taken place in the capital of their country—a capital from which they themselves had been exiled.

" Brussels," said His Majesty, " will be haunted for ever by the ghost of this noble woman, shamefully murdered. I thought no act of our enemy could surprise me further. I was mistaken. This foul deed will live when great battles are forgotten."

Though at first His Majesty did not believe that the Court would inflict the death penalty ; or, if it did, that it would ever be carried out, he did his best from the moment of Nurse Cavell's arrest to get her released. He made appeal after appeal in all quarters where he had the faintest hope of success. But, determined to "make an example," the German Military Governor of Brussels, General von Saubersweig, refused even to consider the appeal issued from the United States Embassy.

In a certain paper at the time there appeared a cartoon showing the German authorities who ordered the execution sitting in conclave, when there entered an attaché.

"Has the execution of Edith Cavell taken place?" they asked. "Yes," answered the attaché. "Good! Then bring in the American protest" was the answer. This is an accurate picture of the German attitude on the matter.

It was believed that, at the last moment, the Kaiser would make a "gesture" and forbid the execution ; Queen Elizabeth

had high hopes of the effect of Austrian intervention. She herself made personal appeals, both directly and in writing, to every person of influence whom she thought might be able to intervene, but in vain.

It was reported on excellent authority that the Kaiser regretted afterwards that the execution had been actually carried out—not on the score of clemency, but on more personal grounds. It was rumoured that personal appeals had been made to him by his own countrywomen to alter the sentence of death to that of a term of imprisonment, and his refusal had not added to the prestige of the House of Hohenzollern. He is reported to have remarked, when some of the protests of neutral countries had penetrated into the Palace at Potsdam (where news was always carefully "filtered" for the Imperial ears): "It would perhaps have been better had I issued a Royal pardon; still—she was English!" In his whole record, history will condemn most emphatically this failure of the Kaiser to prevent a noble woman's execution. He stands, and will ever stand at the judgment-bar of History, dishonoured, as was Pilate, for cowardice in failing to do justice.

Edith Louisa Cavell was a native of a Suffolk village, where she was born on December 4th, 1865. She was the daughter of the Rev. Frederick Cavell, who was Vicar of Swardston for forty years. After being educated in Brussels—an experience which gave her an enduring affection for Belgium—she studied medicine and hygiene in Germany before returning home. Then she qualified as a nurse at the London Hospital, displaying a natural gift for her profession. Miss Cavell was appointed superintendent of Highgate Infirmary in 1900. Six years later, she became matron of the Ecole Belge D'Infirmières Diplomées, which has since the war borne her name.

On the outbreak of war she chose to remain at her post, doing her best for the wounded as they arrived at her hospital. She assisted fugitives to get out of Belgium and across the frontiers, and was particularly ingenious in inventing ruses for getting them safely across. Up to the time of her arrest on August 5th, 1915, she had already been the means of helping over 200 refugees to safety. Often she hid the men she was helping in the cellar of her house in Brussels, until trusted guides could conduct them to neutral countries. The Dutch frontier was particularly dangerous, for it was guarded by live wires, and many poor fellows were electrocuted in endeavouring to negotiate it.

Over a score of other suspects were arrested together with Nurse Cavell. These were all confined separately, and allowed

to see no one, not even a legal representative. They were questioned separately, and, when this cross-examination proved useless, they were told that "So-and-so has admitted everything; if you confess also, we will see that things are made easy for you." Though no one responded to the lure, little by little a certain amount of information was obtained. Nurse Cavell, who scorned lying of every kind, even when it might have secured her own safety, admitted her share in helping the men to escape. They had no real evidence against her to support the charge on which she had been arrested.

It was an instance of the tragic irony of things that suspicion was first cast upon Miss Cavell by means of a letter written to her by one of the fugitives whom she had aided. This letter, in which the man thanked her for the part she had played in helping him to safety, was intercepted by the Germans; when confronted with it, Nurse Cavell admitted the truth of the allegation, and her fate was sealed. Her so-called "trial" was held on October 7th, and sentence of death was pronounced four days later.

The details of Nurse Cavell's trial are too well known to need re-telling. The German military authorities have always maintained that it was a perfectly fair trial, and that the sentence was scrupulously just. Their chief argument for this belief is the fact that, when asked if she was aware that the punishment for her offences was death, Miss Cavell answered in the affirmative. Of course, she had known the penalty, but the knowledge had not deterred her from her work of mercy.

The real truth of the matter is that, in arresting Miss Cavell, the German authorities hoped that they were gaining a clue to the Allies' system of espionage—a system which they had been trying to unravel for months. It was not the "crime" of helping men to escape which they really wished to fasten upon heroic Nurse Cavell, but the guilt of being a spy in the service of the Allies. Of this she was completely and entirely innocent, and not all their investigations could prove her otherwise. She had helped fugitives across the frontier. "Any woman would have done the same," she said, when the risk of what she did was pointed out to her. Of all else she was innocent, and the German failure to discover the secrets which they had hoped to unearth made them too angry to consider mercy on the less serious charge with which they charged her.

With Nurse Cavell was tried Philip Bodard, a boy who had helped her in many ways, and who was accused with her. To him the military authorities were lenient and his sentence was only six months imprisonment.

To the end, Nurse Cavell bore her captors no ill-will. Her

historic declaration that "Patriotism is not enough," her love for her own country which must not be marred by hate for another, her attitude of quiet composure, and her noble resignation, touched even those who were set to guard her. More than one of them showed distaste for their task, so impressed were they by her serenity under the shadow of death. She read her little Testament in prison, and awaited her doom with Christian fortitude.

Of the actual execution, there have been a dozen conflicting accounts. The favourite German account is that the execution was carried through in the usual manner with no untoward incidents. A woman who had broken the law was led out to be shot, and that was the end of it, in their judgment. But people in Brussels, rightly or wrongly, still believe that, when the order to fire was given, one of the firing party, overcome by repugnance at his dreadful task, refused, and, despite repeated commands, persisted in his refusal. Thereupon, the officer in command drew his revolver and shot the man. This last agony was too great a strain for a woman who could face her own death, but could not be unmoved by the death in such circumstances of another, and Nurse Cavell fell forward in a faint, whereupon the officer despatched her with his revolver. The Germans have always denied strenuously that one of the soldiers refused to carry out his orders, but in Brussels the story still persists, and portraits of the soldier in question have actually been sold.

There is no doubt that the German military authorities, who had failed to break the spirit of the people of Brussels despite very earnest efforts, hoped that this culminating example of "frightfulness" would assist them materially in their plans for the entire subduing of the city. In this they were grossly mistaken. Once more their psychology was entirely at fault. The people of Brussels were not subdued—they were incensed. Nothing could have stiffened their resistance so relentlessly as this barbarous murder, and if to conquer their spirit was the enemy's chief aim, they must have been disappointed woefully in its failure.

Three years were to pass before King Albert returned in triumph to his capital. When he entered Brussels again, and his first public duties were over, he made a reverent pilgrimage to the scenes associated with the trial and execution of the heroic Englishwoman, to whose memory he never failed to pay tribute.

Edith Cavell's body was brought in May 1919 to her native land. A solemn service was held in Westminster Abbey, and afterwards the body was taken to Norwich and buried in the precincts of Norwich Cathedral. The statue commemorating

her in St. Martin's Place, London, was unveiled by Queen Alexandra in 1920, and is the work of Sir George Frampton, R.A. Several other memorials to Nurse Cavell have been erected in different parts of the British Empire, and two or three biographies of her have been published.

The spy mania was virulent in all countries during the war years, but in the enemy-occupied territory of Brussels it rose to fever height. The fact that the Germans, despite their utmost efforts, could never locate the centre of the French espionage system added to their fury. The results were disastrous for any civilian upon whom suspicion happened to fall, for the most innocent actions were liable to be construed into proofs of guilt. German spies were very daring, and took the greatest risks on the chance of obtaining any information as to the strength of troops and the likelihood of attack.

In one instance, it was through the direct agency of King Albert that a spy was caught. The man wore the uniform of a Belgian officer, and he had a complete answer to every question put to him. So successful was his deception that he had penetrated well into the Belgian lines before his ruse was discovered. King Albert, as was his wont, was moving amongst his troops, and encountered the spy. At first, unsuspectingly, the King engaged him in conversation. His Majesty asked the man his native place and, when told Antwerp, spoke to him in Flemish. The spy's answer was glib, but he replaced two Flemish words by German ones. His suspicions aroused, the King questioned the man more closely, with the result that a firing-party was requisitioned in due course.

Two spies, in the uniform of the Red Cross, worked amongst the wounded for some days without being suspected. When at last attention was directed to them, they managed to get clean away, taking with them the Red Cross ambulance which they happened to be driving at the time!

CHAPTER XXI

KING ALBERT'S WAR VISIT TO ENGLAND

Their Majesties attend the Silver Wedding of King George—Great welcome in London—*The Times* on the visit—"The end is in sight"—Queen Elizabeth's interest in British war work—Conference with military leaders—The final offensive—The House of Hohenzollern's unpopularity—"This must be the decisive blow."

KING ALBERT only left Belgium once during the whole of the War period, and that was in July, 1918, when he and Queen Elizabeth flew over to England to be present at the celebrations of the Silver Wedding of King George and Queen Mary.

Their Majesties' departure had been kept a profound secret, and only those immediately concerned were present when they entered the seaplanes that were to bring them across the Channel. The King's machine took off first, and a few minutes afterwards that of the Queen followed, landing in England without mishap in excellent time. They were, in the words of Lord Curzon, the first King and Queen to descend upon English coasts from the skies.

London gave their Majesties a wonderful welcome. From the moment of their arrival on the afternoon of July 7th, to that of their departure from Charing Cross station on July 11th, there were cheering crowds to shout their admiration of King Albert and his country. At Buckingham Palace the Band and Pipers of the Scots Guards gave them a musical welcome. The King was in the uniform of the 5th Dragoon Guards. At the Palace their Majesties were joined, to their delight, by the young Count of Flanders, who had come from the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth. His brother the Duke of Brabant was detained at Eton by influenza.

On the special occasion of their drive through London, it was noticed that King George and Queen Mary, with that gracious tact which has ever characterized them, took special care that their Royal guests should be always in the foreground. All through that day the tall and commanding figure of King Albert in his khaki uniform and Queen Elizabeth, who wore white.

were given the place of honour. London's splendid welcome to its revered guests was well summed-up in the leading article which *The Times* devoted to the occasion :

"The coming of the King and Queen of the Belgians to this country must not be allowed to pass without a special word of welcome. They came to be present at the Silver Wedding of King George and Queen Mary—a mark of friendship which the King and Queen appreciate. Not before this, since the War began, has King Albert crossed to these shores, though others of his country have found a welcome here. It has been his part to sustain his Army in the field by his companionship and example, and well he has played his part. Perhaps we in this country, though we bear our own burden of anxious work, do not think enough of the long-drawn sufferings of the high-souled people of Belgium who live under the heel of the enemy. The thought of them can never be absent from the mind of their King, and between him and them there is the spiritual companionship of endurance undismayed. King Albert's refusal to sacrifice the honour of his country for the price Germany offered has its place among the great decisions of history. His staunchness through these weary years of war, his faithfulness to the remnant of Belgian soil that is preserved inviolate from invasion, his modest yet shining endowment of personal gallantry and brave patience, have won for him the warm admiration and affection of the British people, who honour a true man unbowed by the misfortunes of his Kingship. His wife they respect and honour, too, for her devotion, her courage, and the proud contempt of circumstances of ease at which she might have snatched. In the King and Queen of the Belgians, Great Britain salutes the very soul of loyalty to a word pledged, high minds not cast down by long misfortune, hope and confidence indomitable."

Both their Majesties attended a concert given on July 10th at the Royal Albert Hall by the Belgian orchestra of 118 instrumentalists, mentioned in a previous chapter. Here again the Royal guests and the Belgian band, in which the Queen had taken so personal an interest, received a marvellous ovation from the great audience. Again, King George and Queen Mary insisted on their guests having priority in entering the Royal Box. The rendering of "Brabançonne" and the British National Anthem formed a thrilling end to the concert.

Queen Elizabeth who had done so much for the wounded and for all those who had suffered by the War, was deeply interested in all that Queen Mary had to tell her of her own war work in England. She was delighted with the wonderful

results of the Needlework Guild. Her Majesty and Princess Mary spent many hours comparing notes as to their hospital experience, and so excited did they grow over their "cases" that Queen Mary declared smiling that she believed both of them would have enjoyed the visit more if they could have been taken together to a hospital and left there!

During her visit, Queen Elizabeth contrived to see many examples of what Britain was doing for war sufferers of every kind. When she left England, she gave Queen Mary £500 to distribute in any way she thought best.

The country was determined to do every honour to King Albert, and, from King George to "the man in the street," came endless tributes of admiration and esteem. During the brief visit the King and Queen managed a lightning trip to Edinburgh and saw the Forth Bridge which German reports had so often "destroyed."

On July 11th a deputation from Oxford University attended at Lord Curzon's house in Carlton House Terrace, to confer upon King Albert the honorary degree of D.C.L. The Chancellor in person offered the degree, and, in reply, King Albert made a moving speech in which he expressed his appreciation of the honour that Oxford had done him.

Lord Curzon paid a striking tribute to King Albert on this occasion. In his memorable speech he said:

"The glory of Belgium is summed up in her King. From the day, at the beginning of August, 1914, when King Albert stood in the Belgian Parliament, and said: 'The country that defends itself commands respect, such a nation can never perish," he has stood forward as the spokesman of his country's honour and a champion of the world's freedom.

"We can never forget those three weeks of immortal renown, when little Belgium stood up against the hosts of Germany, and gave time for the British Army to be rushed across the Channel, and for the French Army to array itself; gave time for the glorious retreat from Mons, and for the still more glorious victory of the Marne.

"The Martyrdom she endured is not forgotten. Persecuted as they were, the Belgians disdained to murmur. Belgium had been sustained by her unconquerable spirit, but mostly by the example of the King and Queen."

On July 21st, Belgian Independence Day was celebrated by a solemn service in Westminster Abbey, when the grand old building was packed to overflowing by those who wished to pay tribute to both the country and its King. Later in the day, Lord Balfour made an eloquent speech on the day and its

significance, to which M. Carton de Wiart replied, speaking in both French and Flemish.

While King Albert was in London he had several private conferences with certain military commanders who were then in England. Directly he returned to Belgium, he met the Allied commanders and discussed the plans for the final movements which resulted in the enemy demanding an Armistice. As I have mentioned, the outlook at the time was not very favourable. Desperate, the Germans were making attack after attack on the Allied lines, and in some instances Allied troops had had to retire to positions in the rear of those they had held at the outbreak of hostilities. In 1916 the Allies had had considerable success, gaining territory on the Somme, but, by their latest offensive, the Germans had almost neutralized these victories.

What was even more alarming was that on the Aisne they had won back the positions which it had taken the French troops three different campaigns to gain. They had advanced so far that some of their batteries were placed almost within shell range of Paris.

It was a perilous position, and already in certain quarters there were murmurs of a "Seven Years' War," instead of the five that Lord Kitchener had predicted. Yet King Albert still had faith in his own prophecy, and encouraged his men for their last and greatest effort by telling them that it was indeed to be their last.

Despite their apparent victories, the Germans, owing perhaps to disruption at home and the dissatisfaction which there certainly was amongst the troops, felt that if the victory they had promised the nation was to be won at all it must be won speedily. With this end in view they launched in mid-July a new offensive on a mammoth scale. Every available man was used, and practically the whole weight of the German Army was thrown against the Allied troops. If the offensive had succeeded, the history of the War might have concluded in a somewhat different fashion. But two days after the German atttack, the Allies launched a counter-attack and succeeded in checking the advance. The fighting went on for two months before the last attack was made —an attack which, as we shall see, was made under the direct personal command of King Albert.

In Germany, matters were not going well with the House of Hohenzollern. Already it had been hinted to the Kaiser that his resignation might be inevitable. He had replied to this with a characteristic outburst, in which he stated that, though the bullets tore up the pavement in front of his Palace, he would remain on the Throne. The German people, however,

had other views on the matter, and, in the end, the Kaiser did not wait for the bullets. He was determined not to abdicate until he knew beyond any shadow of doubt that there was no alternative. During those last three months of the fighting, he kept the military staff busy answering his explosive notes. and attending to his various contradictory orders.

"This must be the decisive blow," he wrote. "The enemy is on the run ; give them no rest. The German nation relies on you to give them the victory over-long delayed. Reports have reached me that Belgium is preparing an offensive. This you can ignore, but the Allied line must be broken beyond repair." It was the German line that was broken beyond repair, and it was the Belgian offensive that broke it.

CHAPTER XXII

THE END OF THE WAR

King Albert's battle-cry—The Kaiser's ample provisions—Belgium's hour of triumph—Marshal von Hindenburg's admission—Return to Brussels—An unforgettable scene—King Albert acclaimed—President Wilson's telegram—The Hotel de Ville flagstaffs—Cardinal Mercier thanked—Great procession through Brussels—" Brabançonne's " significance—United Belgium—" I would like to re-enter Brussels."

AFTER the retreat from Antwerp, and the first of the series of battles on the Yser, the Belgian forces had been reduced from 95,000 to less than half that number. They preserved their defences of about twenty square miles during the whole period of the War, and took a due share in all the battles of the Allies in Flanders. On September 28th, 1918, there was launched the final and decisive attack and King Albert was at the head of the Anglo-Franco-Belgian forces.

The King believed firmly that this was the end, and, with this faith burning brightly in his heart, he issued an inspiring battle-cry to his soldiers :

" Soldiers,

" Go forward and make a powerful assault upon the enemy positions by the side of your heroic British and French comrades. It is your duty to drive back the invader, who has been oppressing your brethren for the last four years. The hour is decisive. The Germans are retiring everywhere.

" Soldiers, show yourselves worthy of the sacred cause of our independence, worthy of our traditions, worthy of our race. Forward for right, for freedom, for glorious and immortal Belgium."

How the soldiers responded to this stirring appeal is written for ever in the glorious history of Belgium.

The great advance was made from the coast to the Armentières–Lens front. So magnificently did the Allies fight that, before it was dark, the British had taken Becelaere, Gheluvelt, Zandvoorde, Kruiseik, and Zonnebeke. Poelcappelle had also

A CHARMING GROUP TAKEN IN THE ROYAL PALACE AT BRUSSELS

Back row—Crown Prince Leopold: Prince Charles. *Front row*—Princess Marie-José: Queen Elizabeth: Prince of Wales: King Albert.

KING ALBERT WITH PRINCE LEOPOLD AND THE PRINCE OF WALES DRIVING THROUGH THE STREETS OF BRUSSELS

fallen, and the Belgian troops had routed the enemy from Houthulst Forest.

On the next day the advance continued, King Albert pushing his men forward with continued success; but a change in the weather favoured the enemy by giving them an opportunity to rest and strengthen their resistance.

On October 14th, King Albert renewed his attack, driving the enemy back everywhere. Within thirty-six hours, Thourout was surrounded by the Allied troops, and on the coast the Germans, seeing that the end was near, began to blow up stores and armaments. Within another two days, the Allies were in Ostend, and on October 20th had reached the Dutch frontier. Soon afterwards came the enemy's request for an Armistice.

The Bulgarians had already surrendered a month before and in the interval Turkey had signed an Armistice, and Austria followed on November 3rd.

It was reported that the Kaiser did not want the Armistice; and that he cabled furious threats to the Generals proposing it—threats he well knew he had not the power to fulfil. Bombastic to the end, he harangued his Ministers in the old familiar manner, and vowed he would, as the bailiff of God, stand by the Fatherland to the end. When, however, he found the Fatherland had other views, fearing the revolt of the people when the actual signing of the Armistice took place on November 10th, he slipped quietly, very quietly, away to Holland. In the grey dawn of a winter morning he arrived at a wayside station to enter upon the remainder of his life as a dishonoured exile.

He had dreamt of world power; he had pictured himself entering into the fallen capitals at the head of a triumphant Army. When dethroned and disgraced, he stepped out at Doorn station there were barely half a dozen people on the platform.

An interesting sidelight on the Kaiser's supposed willingness to sacrifice himself for his people, and his determination to "suffer all things" with them, was revealed by the condition of the larders attached to his private household after his flight. Millions in Germany were starving, but the Kaiser's store-cupboards were provisioned to withstand a siege of long duration! There, all neatly stacked in the white-tiled rooms, were great cans of every kind of preserved meats; sacks upon sacks of white flour; hundreds of cases of eggs; and enormous quantities of fats of all kinds; tea, coffee, cocoa, and preserves; hundreds of tins of biscuits, cases of dried fruits, dried vegetables, hundred-weights of sugar, and food supplies of every possible kind and in unlimited quantity. Despite his constant claiming of the Deity

as his personal Ally, the Kaiser seems to have provisioned his castle on the assumption that "God helps those who help themselves."

When in those fevered weeks which followed the Armistice —weeks in which the war-weary world could only begin to estimate its wounds and losses—there arose the question of war guilt and the punishment for that guilt, in many countries there arose a clamour for the trial of the Kaiser, and even for his execution, and the question was seriously discussed by the Governments of the Allied nations. King Albert, who had never been inclined to violence, suggested that the ex-Kaiser should be detained, politely but forcibly, until after the Peace Conference had taken place, and then be allowed to live in any country except Germany or the Allied nations. British statesmen objected, no doubt wisely, to any action that would tend to make a martyr of the fallen Monarch, despite an election cry of "Hang the Kaiser!" In the end he was allowed to remain at Doorn, from whence he has issued lengthy volumes telling the world the truth, more or less, about the House of Hohenzollern, and claiming innocence in the events that brought about the War.

It is the truth to assert that to no one living did the cessation of hostilities come with such profound relief as it came to King Albert. He had fought because honour left him no other course; he had gone into the struggle with courage, but without any illusion as to the glory of war; he had seen what that glory had done to his country, most of which lay a heap of ruins; his people had fled from the countryside which had become a graveyard, with its earth torn and riven by countless explosions. Germany had sought war, and had been prepared to pay its price, though she had never dreamt of the final reckoning. Belgium had not sought war, had deemed herself immune from it, and, though with indomitable courage she had paid the price, only she herself knew just what that awful price had been.

Belgium was triumphant, but her people had been decimated; the flower of her youth lay slain, and she had suffered as no other country had suffered. Many of her historic buildings, her priceless art treasures, such as no industry or effort could ever replace, had been destroyed wantonly. It is small wonder that King Albert felt, as he showed clearly to those about him, that the hour of victory was not the time for riotous rejoicing but for solemn thanksgiving; not for tumult, but for silence. The sword was sheathed, but its bloody work remained as an everlasting witness.

Of Belgium's feelings, when at last the real reign of terror ended, under which her inhabitants had lived for the last four

years, it is needless to write. Greatly as the Allied nations had suffered, they had not endured the anguish of seeing their countries in German occupation and their land turned into a battleground. The Belgians had bitter memories, too—cruel insult to avenge, and to remember, apart from the horrors incidental to warfare. During the first weeks of peace, when Germans were still in the country, it was feared that their feelings might overcome them and lead to rioting and attacks upon the invaders. It says much for the inherent good-nature of the race that, apart from one or two minor incidents, nothing of any serious importance took place. In a few places the feelings of the citizens ran so high that officers entering the towns to surrender their guns had to be shepherded hastily into the Hotel de Ville and kept there until dusk had fallen, when they could be got away unseen —a humiliating occurrence which we may hope that the officers in question appreciated fully.

At Charleroi it had been arranged that 300 German lorries should be driven into the town to be handed over, but it was decided wisely that the population, who had seen what those lorries could carry away, might not be able to watch that procession with unbroken calm. So the lorries were surrendered less formally, much to the relief of their drivers!

After the signing of the Armistice, the highways and byways of Brussels presented a strange and moving spectacle. All the roads leading to the capital were thronged with Allied troops, Belgians, French, and Americans—and everywhere they passed between lines of cheering spectators, who shouted, sang the various National Anthems, and flung favours at the passing soldiers.

There were other and more sinister signs of the invasion. Along the roads, flung aside in rage and weariness, was a long array of German equipment, broken waggons, abandoned stores; while in the fields here and there were groups of guns, left in mute surrender to the conqueror.

So crushing was the blow which the troops, under the command of King Albert, had inflicted, that not even the Germans could deny the result. They did their best to put it down to the harsh conditions of peace and home difficulties, but even the fire-eating Marshal von Hindenburg had at last to make matters plain. From his headquarters, he sent the following telegram to the new German Government, which had established itself simultaneously with the downfall of the Kaiser:

"The Armistice Committee states that the enemy members of the Committee, especially the French, are adopting a less courteous

attitude, and are continually demanding impossibilities, and that it is not improbable that the French are anxious to find a pretext for renewed hostilities. I must therefore strongly emphasize that the German Army, by reason of the hard terms of the Armistice and influenced also by difficulties at home, is no longer in a position to resume the fight. Even a fight against the French Army alone would be impossible."

That blunt statement left no room for doubt as to Germany's defeat, and it deepened the gloom which had fallen upon the enemy's land. After so much concealment of the truth, Germany found it hard to believe the bitter facts.

Soon after the Armistice, British cavalry rode over the Plain of Waterloo, passing over the historic routes. They were given a most enthusiastic welcome by the onlookers who, in that hour, surely buried beyond recall all lingering memories of old feuds.

After the decisive battle in which the Belgians had played so glorious a part, King Albert issued the following message to his men :

" Army Headquarters, November 18th, 1918.
Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and Men,

" You have deserved well of your country. Your heroic resistance at Liège, Antwerp, and Namur, imposed a check on the march of the enemy hordes, which was fatal to them. For more than four years you have bitterly defended in the mud of the Yser the last strip of our territory. Finally, compelling the admiration of the world, you have just inflicted sanguinary defeats on the enemy. The oppressor, who terrorized our people, who profaned our institutions, who threw the best of our fellow-countrymen into prison, and everywhere exercised an arbitrary despotism, is vanquished definitely and the dawn of justice has arisen. You are going to see again your towns, your fields, your relatives, and all those who are dear to you.

" Belgium, reconquered by your valour, awaits you to acclaim you. Honour to our wounded, honour to our dead, glory to you, officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers ! I am proud of you. I have asked much of you, but you have always given me your aid without stint.

" The gratitude and admiration of the nation are yours.

" Albert."

On November 22nd, the King and Queen re-entered their capital ! For four years the King had been an exile from the city in which he had passed much of his youth, the city which

had acclaimed him King, and, even during German occupation, had remained fiercely loyal to him. In spite of the "reprisals" of the invader, in spite of the punishments inflicted for the "crime" of still professing fealty to their Sovereign, the people of Brussels had never ceased to give proofs of their loyalty to King Albert and his Queen.

Only those who actually lived under the German Eagle in Belgium can have any adequate idea of what it had cost the the citizens of Brussels to be able to make the proud boast that, during the whole of those four years, not once did the German flag fly over the Town Hall. There, in order that he might always be on the watch, the indomitable Burgomaster Max slept; after his arrest, M. Lemmonnier was equally vigilant until he too was arrested; and M. Steens, who was in the office when Peace came, was no less determined to prevent this humiliation to Brussels. The German authorities stormed in vain. At last they issued a command that the great flag-poles were to be set free for their use. That day the flag-poles were handed to them—cut in pieces!

The people were as unconquerable in spirit as were the Burgomaster and the sheriffs. Soon after the German occupation, the military authorities had ordered that no patriotic emblems were to be displayed, including, as was mentioned in a previous chapter, the portraits of King Albert in his soldier's uniform, of Prince Leopold in his ordinary private's kit, and of Queen Elizabeth in her Red Cross dress. They commanded that the flags, the streamers, of national colours, with which the people tried to preserve their courage under oppression, were to be destroyed under threats of pains and penalties. The people forthwith took their little treasures into the churches, and kept them there until their city was their own once more.

Independence Day has been observed always as a holiday in Belgium. The Germans forbade its celebration, and commanded that the shops should remain open. The shops remained open, but with empty windows! Everywhere the people wore green—the colour of hope. In the Cathedral, which was packed to overflowing, the brave Cardinal Mercier preached a sermon of scathing condemnation of enemy methods, and afterwards huge crowds joined in the singing of the "Brabançonne."

For daring to remember its ancient glories, the Germans promptly fined Brussels a million marks!

King Albert always retained grateful memories of the devotion and courage with which Cardinal Mercier played his part in cheering and solacing the people in the War. On December 13th, His Majesty, with whom was the Prime Minister, visited the

Cardinal at Malines and, thanking him warmly for his unfaltering patriotism during the War, invested him with the Grand Cordon of the Order of Leopold. The King stayed talking with the Cardinal for over an hour, and then inspected the Metropolitan Palace, which various bombardments had damaged severely. As the King left, amid scenes of the wildest enthusiasm from the crowds, whose imagination had been stirred by his visit to the Cardinal and all the memories which it evoked, the Cathedral chimes rang out for the first time since the invasion. Cardinal Mercier's name is one of the great names which must ever be remembered with honour and gratitude.

To say that Brussels welcomed its King is to say little. Apart from their acknowledgment of his personal valour and his qualities as a King, the Belgian people had been deeply touched by the fact that their Majesties had, at grave risk of their lives, never (except on their one flying visit to England) quitted Belgian soil, setting an example that was followed by practically all of the great families of Belgium.

"Their Majesties stayed in Brussels, and so, of course, did we." That was the quiet and simple explanation given—an explanation covering ruined châteaux, rifled treasures, lost fortunes, and imperilled lives. "Their Majesties stayed in Brussels, and so, of course, did we!"

Now that the King had come once more to his own, Brussels literally went mad with patriotic enthusiasm. There were moments when the King and Queen were with difficulty able to conceal their emotion.

Even the weather entered into the spirit of the occasion, and the sun was shining brightly when the King, arriving by the Port de Flandre, left his car and, mounting a horse, began the triumphant ride into his capital. By him, in a dove-coloured riding-coat, came the Queen with H.R.H. Prince Albert (now Duke of York) in R.A.F. uniform, and Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, the hero of Zeebrugge. Following them were Prince Leopold in khaki and his younger brother in midshipman's uniform, with General Boissiedy, who was in command of the French Sixth Army.

The route chosen was by way of the Rue de Flandres, Rue Ste. Catherine, Rue du Marche au Poulets, the Boulevard Anspach, Boulevard du Nord, Boulevard de Jardin, Botanique Rue Royale, and Rue de la Loi, and so to the Palace de la Nation. There the King took up his stand for the march past of the troops of the Allied nations.

No one who saw that sight can recall it without a stirring of the pulse. All the Allies were represented—British, Belgian,

French, and American battalions. England, Scotland, and Newfoundland were represented in the former. With the British marched General Plumer of the Second Army, General Birdwood of the Fifth Army, and General Jacobs of the 2nd Corps. These officers, together with others of the Allied staffs, took their places with the King. The glitter of bemedalled uniforms, the slight radiant figure of the Queen, the expression on the face of a King who had known four years of exile, and the background of a city set free from shameful captivity, made a scene never to be erased from living memory.

The Americans came first, with a battery of artillery, said to be the first American guns to enter Belgium. The British were led by Highlanders, who had a specially warm welcome as they passed with kilts swinging and pipes skirling. Though at first puzzled and a little amused at the " Kilties," the Belgian people grew to have a real affection for them—an affection they soon professed to feel for the music of the pipes!

The Belgians marched past, and by that time the cheers had become a hoarse roar. Tears streamed down the faces of the women, and not even the impressiveness of the ceremony could prevent a wife or mother from occasionally breaking the line and throwing herself into her man's arms as he marched past her.

Fortunately, the Germans had done comparatively little damage to the city, save for the fact that they had stripped it literally of every available scrap of metal. Door handles, finger plates, columns, metal bases into which pillars had been set—everything had been removed for the purpose of increasing the enemy's metal resources.

It took King Albert days to read the messages of congratulation which an admiring world showered upon him. Among the numerous telegrams from the heads of nations was one from President Wilson, congratulating the King on his re-entry into Brussels, and saying that the entry was " the marching to a final triumph which has cost the Belgian nation much suffering, but from which it will arise in new strength to a higher destiny."

In the afternoon of November 22nd, there was a civic ceremony at the Hotel de Ville, when the King entered the Gothic Hall and received the homage of the city amid scenes of impressive pathos. His arrival was the signal for tumultuous cheering and great shouts of " *Vive le Roi!* "

Many dignitaries were present, and among them Cardinal Mercier was a stately and dignified figure in his robes. Near him stood Mr. Brand Whitlock, the United States Ambassador, and Burgomaster Max who, to his great delight, had been released two days earlier, just in time to witness the King's entry into

his capital. With him His Majesty shook hands with great cordiality. It may be added here that the Freedom of the City of Edinburgh was presented to M. Max in March 1924, at a ceremony which was remarkable for its cordial recognition of the Burgomaster's courage.

The King had near to him Prince Leopold, Prince Charles, and Princess Marie-José, and there were presented to him addresses of welcome from the Burgomaster and the President of the Relief Committee, to which he made a brief reply of thanks.

A little later, the King went out on to the balcony overlooking the Grand Place, and once again, received the plaudits of the crowd. The scene, lit by searchlights, revealed dense masses of loyal citizens, and, as a fitting close to a wonderful day, must have done much to erase from the King's memory the pain and bitterness of the War's four years. His Majesty stood bare-headed while the band broke into the stirring strains of the " Brabançonne."

M. Vandervelde, the new Socialist Minister of Justice, speaking at the first meeting of his Party in the Maison du Peuple, after the liberation, pleaded for the preservation of the amity engendered by the War. For the benefit of those who were still surprised at seeing Socialists hold office he added : " I wonder at their wonderment. They ought, for the last four years, to have ceased to wonder. Four years ago, Catholics alone attended Mass ; during the War free-thinkers were seen attending Mass, in order to hear the ' Brabançonne,' which has been sanctified in the struggle for liberty."

It is a natural and recognized thing for all nations to love their National Anthems, but for the Belgians the " Brabançonne," partly because they were forbidden to sing or play it in the occupied areas, had become more than a patriotic air. It had become the symbol of hope, of freedom, of courage, of all that the Belgian people longed for with the hour of their liberation. Played in defiance of the German orders, in hours of weariness it had cheered them, in suffering it had consoled them, and, as the following most touching little story will show, at the moment of death it has given courage and supreme dignity to the great sacrifice.

The Burgomaster of a town had been taken as a hostage, and, after a farcical trial, was sentenced to be shot at dawn. From his prison he sent a message to his little daughter : " Rise up my child," he said, " and at the hour of my execution go to your piano and play the ' Brabançonne,' and in my heart I shall hear it and rejoice."

The comment of *The Times* on the King's return to his capital

is interesting for the fact that it brings out the striking unity of the Belgian people in their hour of trial:

"Doubts there have been, and misgivings. Doubts whether the Allies would stand by Belgium to the end, misgivings on the fighting front as to whether those in the occupied homeland would rise above persecution and temptation. But faith has conquered; the faith of men like M. Max through four years of captivity in Germany, combined with the stoical endurance of the population under the German yoke, and with the epic bravery of the Army of the Yser. The victory of the Allies, itself a triumph of faith, has done the rest. Those who fought and those who endured at home have come together again in an irresistible impulse that is extremely touching. Sooner or later they must all go their ways, parties and individuals, but the memory of their reunion must surely remain as an injunction.

"The common link is the Crown and person of the King, whose hold upon the affections of his people is intimate and apparent, whether he kneels with them in the Cathedral here in Brussels, or whether he passes through wildly cheering crowds in the streets of Liège and Namur."

Once when King Albert had been talking with Belgian troops in the trenches, some of them had said to him how they longed to be at home with their wives and children. "What would you like best, Sire?" asked one of the soldiers.

"I would like to re-enter Brussels," said the King.

Instantly the war-weariness of the men seemed to drop from them, and they said: "Will you let us conduct you there immediately. Say the word, and we will start with you!"

How they loved their King, those simple, faithful soldiers. They recalled how he had collected their letters for home, promising a swift despatch; how he had watched by the wounded and consoled their last moments.

"I would like to re-enter Brussels." That wish of King Albert was fulfilled at last. He was at home again.

CHAPTER XXIII

KING ALBERT'S CALL TO THE NATION

The King's first post-war speech in the Chamber—A proud review of the War—How Belgium resisted the first enemy onslaughts—The Allies' splendid aid—Unity in peace as necessary as in war—Government plans for reconstruction—Flemish and Walloon to be on equal terms—Manhood suffrage—" The heroic war for the defence of right and liberty."

TO those who were privileged to be present on that momentous occasion when on the outbreak of the War King Albert delivered his impressive address before he took the field with his soldiers—the last address which he uttered in his capital—there was a special interest in contrasting that event with the occasion on which, for the first time since his exile from his own city, the King entered the Chamber of Deputies to make his first speech in the hour of peace.

Throughout their occupation of Brussels the Germans had used the Chamber and its salons as an officers' club and casino. In the stately Chamber itself they had been in the habit of holding cinematograph exhibitions, and they had left the building in the state of dirt and disorder which was the common evidence of their occupation. It had taken a small army of workmen, working at full pressure all the time, to get it into a proper condition ready for the King's visit.

The Senate Chamber was the sole exception to the state of confusion in which the rest of the building had been left. It was in this hall that Nurse Cavell had been tried and condemned ; and even the Germans had respected it, for they left it perfectly clean and in good order.

When King Albert took his place in the Chamber every seat was filled, and the whole audience waited in an impressive hush for His Majesty's words. An erect and kingly figure, the marks of four years of heroic endurance very plainly visible upon his face, he stood alone on the tribunal. His son, Prince Leopold, standing at attention, was a little distance behind him. To the left sat the Queen holding a bouquet of orchids which added a charming note of colour to the soft grey tint of her costume. With Her Majesty were Princess Marie-José, Prince Charles, and

Prince Albert, while there were also present the principal members of the diplomatic corps of the Allied nations.

It was a profoundly solemn moment. It was known that His Majesty would speak at some length, and would touch upon many of the questions which would require an immediate answer, now that Peace had come. With the whole of the country, save a narrow strip which King Albert and his troops had defended so fiercely, in the hands of the enemy, Belgium had had nothing to say in the legislation of her own country. Now, with victory achieved, there was much to be done. Knowing their King, Belgians had no lack of faith in the future, and awaited his declaration.

Speaking in tones that could be heard all over the Chamber, the King said :

" I bring you greetings from the Army. We have come from the Yser, our soldiers and I, after passing through liberated towns and country. Here I stand now before the representatives of the country. Four years ago, you entrusted to me the National Army, with the mission of defending the country in danger. I come now to render to you an account of my acts. I come to tell you of what the soldiers of Belgium have been, of the endurance they have shown, of the bravery and courage they have displayed, and of the great results their efforts have achieved. What were the principles which guided my conduct and theirs throughout the long War ? On the one hand, it was to perform fully our international obligations, and to maintain the prestige of the nation—duties to which every people who desire to be respected must remain faithful. And on the other hand, to economize the blood of our soldiers, to look after their welfare—material and moral—and to mitigate their sufferings.

" In the campaign of 1914, the operations of the Belgian Army were decisive in enabling the great Armies of the Allies to arrest the powerful German offensive on the line on which, for nearly four years, it was at a standstill. It was during this campaign that was at stake, it may be truly said, the liberty of the world—a gigantic struggle, which was carried on in Belgium and France, and which was to decide whether in reality the German hegemony should dominate humanity. The nations of the Entente were not equally in a state of readiness to sustain with their whole strength the tremendous blow which was to fall. Two of them only—France and Russia—were in a situation to oppose on land, without great delay, the undertakings of the Central Empires, which long and minute preparations had brought to the zenith of their force.

"To the Belgian Army fell the splendid but perilous lot of taking its place at the point where the German General Staff, confident of a decided blow, intended to launch the greater and better portion of their forces. Fighting alone during two-and-a-half months, on the whole breadth of Belgian territory from Liège to Antwerp, and then from Antwerp to the Yser, the Belgian Army first broke the invaders' first audacious attack; then slackened and checked the movements of its powerful salient; and, lastly, contributed, by the long and heroic battle which it fought on the banks of the Yser, to the definite holding up of the German troops.

"The campaign of 1915 opened under the best auspices. Great Britain was creating powerful Armies, Italy was bringing important assistance to the Entente, and four great military peoples were now going to fight against the Central Powers. Soon reorganized, thanks above all to the patriotism of that ardent youth which braved all dangers across the frontier to place itself at the orders of its country, the Army began in the muddy trenches of the Yser—the last rampart on which it had planted the national flag—the watch which it was to keep tirelessly for nearly four years. Here it bore the brunt of many hard fights in order to maintain intact the possession of its position, waiting patiently for the day when it would at last be possible to leave them, defeat the enemy, and drive him out.

"The year 1918 brought this longed-for gain. America, our new and powerful Ally, having added the weight of its superb and enthusiastic efforts to that of the Allied nations, our formidable enemy tottered. That was the moment that the Belgian Army awaited. At dawn, on September 28th, exerting all its strength, it leapt to the assault of the enemy's lines, and, with one single, irresistible sublime bound, captured the Flanders ridge, which until then had defied the attacks of the most valiant troops, and continued to attack and pursue the enemy, side by side with the Allied Army, until the day when the enemy was forced to declare himself defeated.

"In concluding this short account of our military operations I say to all that Belgium can regard with pride the task accomplished by her Army during this unprecedented struggle. The Army fully performed its duty, carried to a high pitch the national prestige and the reputation of our arms, and rendered the whole world an inestimable service.

"I have another duty to perform, that of testifying to the fine military qualities of the Allied troops which fought on the soil of our country in brotherly union with ours, all of them

animated by the same ideal and the same spirit of sacrifice and honour—the soldiers of France, Great Britain, and the United States, who came to our help. I bow respectfully before those who are dead and reside in our earth which will for ever be sacred. Belgium, in her great gratitude, will preserve devoutly their glorious memory. Honour be also to our glorious dead, who fell facing the enemy on the battlefield and before the firing parties, to those who perished on the barbed wire along the Dutch frontier, to those who were murdered treacherously, to those who suffered a martyr's death in atrocious prisons and concentration camps, to those who died of grief and distress—all deserve well of their country, and their names should be added to those who fought in 1830.

"It is my heartfelt desire to congratulate the occupied parts of the country on the noble attitude preserved by them under the German yoke. My first thought goes out to the relatives of soldiers, who remained almost without news for four-and-a-half years, whereas the combatants in the other Armies continued in contact with their families, and, in the exchange of affectionate correspondence and during periodical leave, could enjoy the necessary mutual encouragement. The Belgians outside Belgium, and those within, found themselves separated by an impassable barrier. In spite of the ingenious and admirable efforts of those who, at the risk of their liberty, set themselves to keep in constant touch, the war inflicted on our children at the front and on the relatives who remained at home, a prolonged torture of living and suffering, without knowing what fate had reserved for them.

"With what valour did the Belgian people stand this long and cruel trial! Every day would add a fresh pang to material privations, anxiety for the morrow, and the inroads of distress. The many branches of relief work softened the rigour of these conditions. All classes of society, animated with the same spirit of mutual understanding and affection, were seen to draw closer together to allay suffering and distress. Women once again displayed what is only to be expected of their goodness, and of that intuition which enables them to discover the wound to be healed and the pain to be soothed. These noble feelings of solidarity maintained throughout the country the most solid ties, and they constitute a living testimony to a union which cannot be broken in the future. Suffering, nobly shared and borne with bold heart, has become a common patrimony, as it maintained during those days in the whole population that serene confidence which has been justified fully by events.

"It is inconceivable that the noble union of which Belgium has given so admirable an example during the War should give place on the morrow of the liberation of our territory to a resumption of barren quarrels. This union should remain a reality in present circumstances, and that is the basis of the composition of the new Ministry, which has agreed to pick up where it was left off, the arduous task accomplished by the two preceding Cabinets in circumstances of anguish and with a patriotism which never weakened. The country will be glad to see its national representative renew contact with the Government, pending the day in the near future when it can be consulted by means of elections, after the return of those who have been carried far from their country by the War, and after the fulfilment of the necessary preliminaries. Equality in suffering and endurance has created equal rights to the expression of public aspirations.

"The Government will propose to Parliament to break down, in patriotic accord, all the old barriers, and achieve national consolidation on the basis of equal suffrage for all men who have reached that age of maturity which is requisite for the exercise of civil rights. Meanwhile, Parliament will be called upon to pass urgent laws, with the object of coping with the immediate effects of the War, and especially with a view of assuring the speedy repatriation of all those whom various causes keep away from the land of their fathers. The administration of the country, which has been upset during the long period of occupation, must be reconstituted with an enthusiasm worthy of that displayed by the soldiers in critical moments. The great work will require the co-operation of governmental commissions of technicians or specialists of industry, finance, and labour. From this co-operation, the country can expect a full development of its vitality and exterior economical expansion.

"With the assistance of the State Councillors, the competent Government departments will assure for the sorely-tried working classes the conditions necessary for their physical, moral, and intellectual development, the observation of the principles of sound social hygiene, and effective measures for their protection from alcoholism.

"Religious practice which, for believers, is a great source of comfort in the days of painful trial, has never been in the Army an obstacle to good comradeship. How, therefore, could difference of opinion in this domain be a source of division in civil and political life?

"The law and its execution must combine to make a reality

of these principles. The complicated tasks of supplying the country with food during the War, which was carried through owing to the valuable support of the United States, Spain, and the Netherlands, must be pursued with the help of responsible bodies. The National Purchasing Office must continue its activites, with a view to the refitting of industry with machinery and the provision of raw material. In the collective interest, the loss and damage which the War has caused to individuals call for complete and speedy reparation.

"The effects of the ravages of war have shown how everything hangs together in economic life. The destruction of one wheel in the machine is enough to put all the others out of order. This solidarity requires a loyal alliance between capital and labour. When the legislator is called to sanction a coalition of interests, the Government will take care at the same time to assure a just balance between the interests of masters and men, where there might be a discrepancy.

"The necessity of a fruitful unity demands sincere collaboration between all the children of the same mother country, without distinction of origin or language. In the domain of languages the strictest equality and the most absolute justice will rule the drafting of a Bill, which the Government will lay before the national representatives. In this way will be achieved an accord destined to perpetuate the unity and indivisibility of the country, affirmed during the War by the sacrifice of so much blood. Reciprocal respect for the interests of Flemings and Walloons must permeate the administration, give to each a certainty of being understood in his own language, and assure him of full intellectual development, particularly in higher grade instruction. The interests of the country that exist in our two populations will be able, in its own language, to develop fully a personality and originality in intellectual and artistic productions.

"The Government will lay before Parliament a proposal to create a Flemish University at Ghent, but reserving to the Parliament, which will follow the General Elections, the task of determining the final details. The machinations of those who, at the time when the existence and future of the country were at stake, aimed at consummating its ruin, cannot be made the object of an amnesty. The Flemish population have themselves already stigmatized these machinations, and the culprits must submit to the rigours of just repression. The suspension of the administration of justice during the occupation was bound to give rise to considerable arrears. Events are striking the hour of far-reaching reforms in our judicial organizations.

"By their constancy, stoicism, and heroism, the Belgian Army and Belgian people won the sympathies and the admiration of the world, and became in its eyes the expression of the sacred cause of justice. Unfailingly true to her obligations, but unjustly attacked, Belgium took up arms to defend her honour and independence. She leaves the struggle bruised, but proud and crowned with glory.

"Victorious and emancipated from the neutrality imposed on her by the treaties which the War has shaken to their foundations, she will enjoy complete independence. These treaties, which determine our position in Europe, do not protect us against the most criminal attack. There must be no more crisis, such as that of which the country was the victim. Belgium, restored to her rights, will settle her destinies according to her needs and aspirations in complete sovereignty. She must find in a new statute the guarantees which will make her safe from the danger of future aggression. She will take the place which fits her dignity and rank in the coming international order founded on justice.

"Foreign invasion and occupation have inflicted on the country immense damage, complete reparation for which is due to it from the enemy. At the outbreak of hostilities, Belgium tried to prevent an extension of the War to the territory of the Congo Basin, but in vain. The aggression of Germany compelled us to fight. Here the colonial Army did its duty in very difficult circumstances. The events of the War in Africa, the loyalty of the native population, and the progress made, have created between Belgium and the Congo indestructible ties. As Belgium solemnly and spontaneously proclaimed on the occasion of the taking over of the Congo, the protection and welfare of the natives will remain our first care.

"There are, moreover, necessary conditions to the developments of the colonies. We are determined to make all the sacrifices for the pursuit and fulfilment of our civilizing mission in Africa. The nation will set itself to multiplying the means of transport in the colony for the commercial development of its immense natural wealth.

"Our colonial territory is settled as a firm and integral part of the country. The powerful friends, with whom Belgium has been surrounded, will remain as true to her in peace as they were in war, and they will help the country to set up machinery again and obtain supplies. By commercial conventions with the great Allied countries, Belgium will obtain wide access to new markets and ensure the future of the port of Antwerp. The nation pays unanimously its homage to Allied and associated

countries which, with her, carried through to victory the heroic War for the defence of right and liberty."

This speech was received with prolonged applause, which continued until the King, with the Queen and the Princes, left the Chamber. The passage in which King Albert promised equal suffrage had provoked a tumult of cheers, though that referring to the Flemish University at Ghent had been received in silence, since certain sections of the Belgian people did not favour the establishing of a second University. Before the War and after it, the determined policy of the King was to do full justice to the Flemish, whom he considered as truly Belgian as were the Walloons. Indeed, in the War they proved themselves equally patriotic.

As the King and his people had set themselves with one accord to the solving of the problems of war, so now they concentrated their energies to the more hopeful though hardly less difficult problems of peace. As may be expected, the War left Belgium practically bankrupt. But so well had her finances been administered that she had no debt, but one of long standing of 4,500,000,000 francs. She had to borrow to meet her expenses now that the War had ended.

The War had rendered Belgium's position politically very different, for it had ended her neutrality and forced her to consider an active foreign policy such as before had not been necessary to her independence. This was naturally a matter which gave King Albert and his Ministers much cause for consideration, though it was a source of the most intense gratification to His Majesty that, by reason of her bitter and prolonged struggle, Belgium had at last received full recognition as an independent State, with the right to her friends and her enemies—rights which other nations had accepted as a matter of course.

Territorially, the War made little difference, except that Belgium regained the districts of Eupen and Malmedy, which had been wrested from her by Prussia in 1815, while in German East Africa she received the mandate to administer for the natives the wealthy Ruana and Urundi districts.

Belgium was given the right, unlike any other State which took part in the War, of being reimbursed by Germany for her War expenses, and she was also released by the Allied nations from any debts which she had been forced to contract in order to maintain her Army, meet the expenses of administration, and pay for the feeding of her people in the invaded territories. Belgium was also, under the Treaty of Peace, to receive one-tenth

of the sum which Germany was ordered to pay, a debt which so far Germany has not liquidated.

Whatever financial benefits Belgium was granted, they would, even had they been paid, have been useless in restoring her ruined cities, her desolated villages, her riven countryside, without the extraordinary efforts of the Belgian people themselves.

Heartened and inspired by the example of their King, in peace as in war, the Belgians set to work with splendid energy to wipe out every trace of the invader and his hated works. How remarkably successful their toil has been may be seen by every visitor to Belgium. The country has practically no unemployed. Its factories are humming with work; its docks are a scene of incessant activity; and everywhere the great task of obliteration and reconstruction is going on.

CHAPTER XXIV

KING ALBERT AND RECONSTRUCTED BELGIUM

The awful plight of Belgium—" The King Albert Fund "—The famous Library of Louvain—Rebuilding Ypres—Nieuport's recovery—" Francs-tireurs fired upon us "—" Belgium will remember "—The Kaiser " digging trenches "—His least harmful work of destruction—A flattering film for home use—Belgium has an art treasure returned—Incessant activity of the King and Queen—A new Belgium.

TO recover from a long and cruel war is a difficult matter for any nation, but when that nation had been at the mercy of an invader who showed no mercy for four years ; when enemy hordes had overrun the land ; when its people had been forced to flee, leaving behind them their homes and all that they contained ; when they returned to find not only the homes, but the very villages or towns in which they stood, blotted out, then that task was indeed stupendous.

Belgium had not only to heal her war wounds, to gather together the scattered remnant of her Army, to care for her wounded, and make provision for the dependents of her dead, but she had also to gather to herself again half of her people scattered in three countries, reunite them with their families, and give to them a home and the means of livelihood. While some kind of trade had been possible for the other countries engaged in war, Belgium had seen her trading ended, her markets gone, her industries ruined, and the machinery wherewith those industries had been carried on broken up or carried away into the enemy's country. She had to make her blood-drenched lands fit for harvests, and to rebuild and make fit for human habitation whole villages that had been razed to the ground.

From the hour of the signing of the Armistice, King Albert devoted the whole of his energies to the restoration of his country —a task which, though arduous and beset with innumerable difficulties, he found infinitely more congenial than the war labours which for the last four years had absorbed his days. Now he was rebuilding Belgium, and, moreover, rebuilding her with every hope that though her sacrifices had been enormous they had not been in vain, and that phœnix-like she would rise

triumphant from her own ashes, more free, more independent, and more glorious than she had been for centuries past.

The Belgians, always a home-loving people and heart-sick with their exile, though much had been done to soften its rigours, hastened back to their country from the moment that Peace was declared, and, almost before the enemy guns had been removed from the land the work of restoring their ravages had begun.

One of King Albert's first schemes was to inaugurate a fund known as "The King Albert Fund" to provide temporary dwellings for the population until their ruined homes were rebuilt for them. These dwellings took the form of suitable huts erected in colonies outside every town that was in the course of reconstruction. For each of these "mushroom towns" King Albert appointed a special Royal Commission, the Commissioners sitting in court to hear the claims of those who, having lost their homes through the War, were appealing for new ones. It was sad, and at times a decidedly difficult task, but the Commissioners carried it through with great tact and patience. So determined was His Majesty that full justice should be done to every applicant, that he made it a special rule that, if a claimant was not satisfied with the Commissioners' decision, he could take his petition to the King in person. So fair and impartial were the Courts that, of all the thousands of cases they heard, not more than a score were taken to the King.

It was King Albert's special wish—a desire very near to the heart of both their Majesties—that the houses of the poor should be rebuilt with a view to giving their occupants a higher degree of comfort than they had experienced in pre-War days. As far as possible, this has been done, though the failure of Germany to settle her debts has not enabled the plans to be carried out entirely.

Perhaps if Germany had liquidated her debts, more might have been done to restore so far as possible some of Belgium's historic monuments, but the restoration (so far as such treasures could ever be restored) of the library of Louvain was a source of much gratification to His Majesty. The United States undertook to provide the library building, and in 1921 the plans of an American architect, Mr. Whitney Warren, were passed by the Belgian authorities for the rebuilding of the library on the Palais du Peuple. The Allies promised to provide the books. Needless to say, it was impossible to replace many of the 300,000 volumes or any of the valuable manuscripts which the Huns had reduced to ashes, but, as it was stated at the time of the project, "on the ruins of the old library the intellectual leaders of the

whole world, without distinction of race, belief or creed, will build up a new home of science, where the 150 professors and 3,000 students of the Alma Mater of Louvain will resume their studies."

To King Albert, who inherited from his father the love of books, the reconstruction of the library, for which he had hardly hoped, gave His Majesty the keenest pleasure, a delight which he expressed repeatedly to those who had made the restoration possible.

As we have seen, Ypres was one of the towns to suffer most damage. At the end of the War it was a heap of ruins; yet the spirit with which the Belgians commenced their task of reconstruction is manifested by the fact that one of their earliest acts in Ypres was to clear the Station Place, fill it with flower-beds, and border with trees the Boulevard Mapol leading from it.

King Albert, whose great desire it was to remove all traces of the War from his country and all sad memories from the hearts of his people, so far as such a thing was possible, was anxious for work to begin at once on Ypres. But the wreckage was so great that it took longer than was anticipated for the work of reconstruction to make real headway. Nearly four thousand private houses were wholly demolished. Of these, nearly all have by this time been restored; while the Gothic churches of St. Peter and St. James, the Gothic Templars' House (which is also the Post Office), the Chatellenie, the Hôtel de Grand, and the Hospice Belle, which were founded in the thirteenth century, have all been restored.

It was impossible for much of the architecture to be restored to its original beauty, but it was King Albert's express desire that whenever possible the restoration should follow the original to the last detail. During the work on many of the old buildings the King paid visits to see how the restorer was proceeding—visits in which his knowledge of Gothic architecture proved invaluable, for His Majesty was able to give many useful hints to those who were superintending the work.

Even more has been done at Nieuport which, being close to the Yser, was completely wiped out, than at Ypres. Nearly one thousand houses were destroyed and most of these have been rebuilt, while, under the direct supervision of the King Albert Fund, the thirteenth century church has been restored to its original beauty. So also has the fifteenth century Cloth Hall, and there has also been erected a sixteenth century Town Hall, connected by a covered bridge with the Cloth Hall. The work has been done with such infinite care and skill that only an expert could detect a trace.

At Dixmude the task of rebuilding was rendered extraordinarily difficult from the fact that the Germans had established here large concrete works. Before a single new brick could be laid, nearly 70,000 cubic feet of concrete had to be removed—in itself a herculean task. In pre-War days, Dixmude, with its canals, its mills, its red-and-white houses, and its markets (wherein the chief commodity was the butter for which the town was noted), had a character all its own. In the restoration everything possible was done to maintain the characteristics in accordance with the past appearance of the town as its inhabitants knew it. The church of St. Nicholas, which contained a famous picture by Jordaens, was restored; and so was the Renaissance Hôtel de Ville and the Gothic houses which did much to give the old town its picturesque appearance.

The same loving care was exercised in Dinant, that old town with its tragic history. Ancient, charming Dinant was ravaged by war long years before the Germans did some of their cruellest work therein. The Kaiser visited it in 1915, and, gazing at its ruins, remarked complacently: "It was a pretty town . . . it is very regrettable that the francs-tireurs should have drawn upon it this misfortune." This was always the excuse of the Germans for the ruin and havoc which they wrought upon the town. "Francs-tireurs fired upon us!" They said it at Dinant, and for this supposed action they shot in cold blood against a garden wall in the Rue Leopold, 160 persons. Altogether, 606 men, women, and children were killed, while of 1400 houses in Dinant, only 300 remained standing.

It was of such walls as those in Dinant that King Albert sadly remarked, "What the enemy has left standing holds more terrible memories than some of his ruins."

In the first ten years after the War, Belgium spent £211,000,000 on the work of restoration. So well was the work done that, except for some fortified works and trenches near Dixmude which have been purposely preserved, it is now difficult to find many traces of the invaders in post-War Belgium.

"Belgium will remember," King Albert said. "Her sons, and her sons' sons, will be burdened with remembrance of her sacrifices, but it is the wish of myself and my people that every trace of enemy invasion should be effaced."

It was not only the buildings but the very earth itself that had suffered by the ravages of battle. King Albert, who always recognized the needs of the agriculturist, took the deepest interest in the claims of the farmers. He was insistent that in all cases those claims should be met to the full, and he took the trouble to look into several schemes for the reclamation of the

shell-wrecked land and the restocking of the farms. Rather than deliver up their cattle to the Germans, the Belgian farmers had turned them loose. Less than six years after the last shot had been fired, every acre of the battlegrounds was being cultivated fruitfully.

In the Reconstructions Bill, which was introduced into the Belgian Parliament in 1919, it was stated: "Everything must be done in order to hasten the work of reconstruction, and to put an end to the sufferings of the unhappy people, who have lost their homes, and have been obliged to appeal for hospitality in Belgium and abroad." And Belgium has done her utmost to carry out these intentions.

Another reform which King Albert helped to originate was the institution of cités-ouvrières, something after the style of the garden cities which, on his visits to England, His Majesty had much admired. It had long been his intention to introduce the idea into his own land when circumstances permitted, and at last the opportunity came. These Belgian garden cities will multiply with the years; there are already many excellent examples near Limbourg and in the neighbourhood of Ypres.

Belgium had so many of her art treasures ruined, and so many others stolen during the German invasion, that it is interesting to recall that, in one solitary instance, she actually had something restored to her! In the Cathedral of St. Bavon, at Ghent, there was Van Eyck's "Adoration of the Lamb," a masterpiece which took the artist ten years to execute. It was a favourite picture of Queen Elizabeth's. It was placed in the Cathedral in 1432; three hundred years later, some of the panels were removed and sold to an English collector, who sold them again to the King of Prussia in 1823 for 400,000 francs. They were placed in the Kaiser Frederick Museum at Berlin, while only the central picture remained at Ghent.

When the German invasion of Belgium was an accomplished fact, the German art journals proclaimed with audacious certainty that, in the near future, the rest of the picture would come to Berlin, and thus the whole of Van Eyck's masterpiece belong to the German nation. Fortunately, however, the guardian of the picture at Ghent, realizing that the treasure was in great danger, hid it. Though special messengers were sent to search for it, he had chosen the hiding-place so well that it was never found. When the Treaty of Versailles was drawn up, as some slight recompense for the art treasures which the invaders had destroyed wantonly, it was decided that Germany must restore to Belgium the panels which had once formed part of the picture.

"Since they have stolen the horse," King Albert remarked,

"it is doubtless remarkable that we should get back a piece of the halter." It was a source of considerable gratification to His Majesty that Belgium once more possessed the picture in its entirety.

A War relic in the possession of King Albert, which afforded him much grim amusement, was a cinematograph film of the German Emperor engaged in some of his activities at Spa. This film, needless to say, was taken for the benefit of the Germans at home, and part of it showed the Kaiser digging trenches as if he were with the troops at the front ! Though it was not damaged, no Belgian town knew more of the German invasion than Spa, the oldest watering-place in Europe. During the summer of 1918, the Kaiser, Von Hindenburg, Ludendorf, and the Headquarters Staff were installed there, and they requisitioned all the villas, hotels, and public offices for their accommodation. Underground shelters were contrived specially for the safety of the War Lord and his personnel in case Spa should be visited by hostile aircraft. The shelter at Neubois, which was specially designed for the Emperor, and is 16 feet wide by 8 feet long, and has a most massive steel door, can still be seen there.

In August, when it was seen how matters were going, the Staff of the Imperial Navy also moved to Spa. When he was not conferring with his Staff, the Kaiser spent his time in the woods of Geronstere, where some of the films were taken, cutting down little trees. It is a pastime which he follows nowadays at Doorn and is surely the most harmless form of destruction in which he has ever indulged ! He enjoyed making little paths and erecting seats in various parts of the woods. When the end came, and the troops at Spa hoisted the red flag, the Crown Prince was summoned in order that he and his father might confer at the Hôtel Brittanique. Ignominious flight was decided upon, and all the world is familiar with the close of this chapter in the Kaiser's career.

Under the guidance, and inspired by the tireless enthusiasm of its King, Belgium did much to restore her towns and villages, to make fertile her ravaged lands, but she must still suffer for many years from the enemy's ruthless destruction of her natural beauties. Many of the old towns were guarded by poplars, girt with little woods, made beautiful by the gentle mantle of moss and lichens, with which kindly Time softens his traces. The uprooted trees will not be replaced in the lifetime of those who saw them fall ; the blasted woods will not regain their green glory for many springs ; and another century must dawn before something of the old beauty returns, before the mellow hand of Time touches the new bricks, softens the outlines of stone

Associated Press Photo

THE ROCKY PINNACLE OF THE CORNEILLE FROM WHICH KING ALBERT FELL TO HIS DEATH ON THE AFTERNOON OF FEBRUARY 17TH

Associated Press Photo

THE IMPRESSIVE SCENE IN THE CHAPELLE ARDENTE IN THE ROYAL PALACE AT BRUSSELS, WHERE KING ALBERT LAY IN STATE

pillars, and gives back to Belgium some of her old-world grace.

To their Majesties, who had a keen affection for the charms of country life, this destruction of the natural beauties of their land was a deep grief. Whenever it was practicable, King Albert urged the planting of trees. "We can at least replace those," he told one of the Commissioners, "and it is our duty to give the next generation as much of the beauty of old Belgium as we can."

As throughout the years of warfare Queen Elizabeth had ever been by the side of her husband, sharing his danger and taking her full part in the work and anxiety of that terrible time, so she co-operated with him in the months following the signing of the Armistice, in his efforts for reconstruction. She made the care of war orphans and the orphans of refugees her chief concern, and originated all kinds of schemes for raising money on their behalf. She never relaxed her efforts for the wounded who needed succour for many weary months after the last shell had fallen on Belgian soil.

Those early post-War months were, if possible, more trying for their Majesties than the actual hostilities had been. Free at last to go where they chose over their own country, they saw for themselves what that country had suffered at the hands of the invaders, and everywhere they went fresh scenes of desolation met their eyes.

"One does what one can," the Queen remarked wearily to the lady-in-waiting who had been with her all through the War years. "And one is pleased and hopes it may help; but at the next turn one realizes that one's best efforts are nothing—one drop of consolation in a vast sea of misery and desolation." But the consolation grew, and the tides of that sea went back.

Only those who were in the immediate circle of their Majesties could give any account of the tirelessness of their labours during 1919. All day long King Albert was looking into plans for the assistance of his country, plans to put workmen back to their trades. It must be remembered that, though the men were back, all the machinery had to be provided anew. There were plans for re-creating the ruined industries, for revising old laws that the War had made inoperative, or for making new ones that the exigencies of the period rendered necessary, endless details for dealing with the food supply, and with the hundred-and-one problems arising from the fact that half a nation had been repatriated.

Those of His Majesty's Staff who had hoped to see their Sovereign take a well-earned rest after the prolonged anxiety of service with his troops, were doomed to complete disappointment. All Belgians, animated by a patriotic desire to

see their country rehabilitate herself, worked hard during those post-War months, but none worked harder than the King. In his labours he was sustained by the knowledge that he was not merely defending his country, but helping to build her up anew.

King Albert and his people did not labour in vain. In an incredibly short space of time a new Belgium began to appear. Indeed so complete was the transformation that tourists visiting Belgium had difficulty in believing in the extent of the damage which the invader had done. They expected to see desolate ruins, and in their place they found new villages; stone dwellings, sound and sanitary, had taken the place of the old cottages which, though perhaps more picturesque, were often damp and insanitary; they saw cities rebuilt and inhabited by citizens who, busy and thriving, were doing their best to put away from them the tragic memories of those bloodstained years. They saw a nation re-created, a nation whose sacrifices had not been in vain.

CHAPTER XXV

KING ALBERT AT ZEEBRUGGE AND YPRES

Commemorating the Zeebrugge heroes—A visit to Ypres—An eloquent tribute to Britain's valour—" These free citizens who died to ensure the reign of freedom "—Enthusiastic greeting in London—Presiding at the Royal Literary Fund banquet—Lord Curzon's eulogy.

THE late King Albert was deeply impressed by the gallant attack on Zeebrugge, and, on St. George's Day, April 23rd, 1920, accompanied by the Queen, he unveiled the memorial to the heroes of Zeebrugge amid most impressive scenes.

The day was wet, but that did not prevent the gathering of huge crowds, anxious to do honour to the men who had struck so deep a blow at Germany's submarine warfare. The appearance of their Majesties was the signal for a great outburst of cheering, which the King and Queen acknowledged again and again. By the King's special wish the crowd was permitted to come quite close, so that, as well as seeing, they could hear His Majesty's speech.

Sir Roger Keyes, the Admiral who had been in charge of the landing-party during the attack on Zeebrugge, was standing at the head of his men. After the Queen had greeted him formally, there occurred a charming incident, indicative of the thought and consideration which have always characterized Her Majesty. Going close to Sir Roger Keyes, with a friendly smile, she slipped into his hand a match-box of handsome design, on which was embossed a representation of St. George and the Dragon.

King Albert chatted freely with the men, asking them for details of the raid, and talking of their mutual war experiences. As a mark of their appreciation, one of the men presented His Majesty with the badge of the Zeebrugge Survivors' Association, to which belong all the men who had taken part in that historic attack.

The King, unveiling the memorial, made a most impressive speech, in the course of which he said :

"This memorable expedition to Zeebrugge, by which Admiral

Sir Roger Keyes and his magnificent crews composed of volunteers drawn from the whole Fleet, put an end to the German submarine campaign, will rank among the most heroic deeds of the Navy. It is worthy of a force which through many centuries has never ceased to uphold in the highest degree those military virtues which make for the solidity of nations."

Lord Emmott, President of the Memorial Fund, replied to His Majesty, who made a close inspection of the memorial, on which was inscribed :

Lest We Forget.
In Memory of our Countrymen who fell on St. George's Day, 23 April, 1918.
Erected by British Salvage Section,
St. George's Day, April 23, 1920.

The King laid a magnificent wreath at the base of the memorial. Their Majesties then returned to their train and, as they departed, the guns of the "Caloden" fired a salute in their honour, while the crowds filed past the memorial, laying flowers at its base, until it was almost smothered in fragrant remembrances of what must always rank as one of the bravest deeds of a war prolific in acts of magnificent gallantry.

After the unveiling, the British Legion telegraphed to King Albert, who, in replying, said :

"The King was most touched by your telegram, and by the homage you tender to the Belgian people. His Majesty thanks you sincerely, and commands me to say how extremely pleased he was to be able to testify to the British Navy the admiration and thanks of Belgium."

An even more stirring spectacle, one which gratified deeply the whole of the Belgian nation, was the conferring upon the town of Ypres, first, the Croix de Guerre, which was presented by M. Poincaré in February, 1920 ; and then the Military Cross, which, on behalf of King George, was presented by Field-Marshal Lord French on May 19th, 1920.

Ypres, for four years the scene of some of the fiercest battles fought throughout the whole of the campaign, was *en fête* for the day. Everywhere flags were flying ; everywhere were dense masses of people, all with the British and Belgian colours in their coats or pinned on their dresses.

Lord French, with whom was General Sir Charles Harrington

and Colonel Fitzgerald, was received at Ostend with a salute of 19 guns. From Ostend, Lord French travelled by special train to Ypres, and on the historic battlefield he and King Albert greeted each other.

King Albert, who had travelled from Brussels, arrived at Ypres about half-past four. He was in General's uniform, and wore the Ribbon of the Garter and the Croix de Guerre, while Lord French wore the Grand Cordon of the Order of Leopold.

People from all parts of Belgium had come to Ypres to see the ceremony, and there was an immense number of distinguished visitors, including the British Ambassador, the Governor of the Province of West Flanders, the Burgomaster of Ypres, the Minister of National Defence, the British Military Attaché General Hannoteau, General Gibb, General Henniker and General Wyatt.

After they had chatted for a few moments, the King and Lord French inspected the Guard of Honour of the 2nd Regiment, and then, followed by the Grand Marshal of the Court, and the rest of the company, walked in procession to the Grande Place, where a special stand had been erected.

In a moving speech, the Burgomaster of Ypres spoke of the ancient history of the city and its recent sufferings, and ended by a cordial greeting to Lord French.

Replying in French, the Field-Marshal said that his mission marked the indissoluble bonds renewed between British and Belgians by the events of the War. The Belgian Army, he said, had been inspired by the glorious example of its valiant chief, King Albert, and the ruins of Ypres would be for ever a glorious monument in memory of gallant deeds. Then, speaking in English, Lord French thanked the Burgomaster for his warm welcome.

Those who were privileged to hear King Albert's speech are not likely to forget it nor the bearing of the man who made it. The King had fought near Ypres, he had seen it day by day being reduced to a heap of rubble, its people fleeing, its lands laid waste, the city itself a graveyard. He had known hours in which, not only Ypres, but his whole country, seemed threatened with annihilation. Undeterred he had fought on, and now slowly, but very surely, his country was regaining her old glories. Ypres, and not only Ypres, but the whole of Belgium was being rebuilt and was once again the homeland of her own people. It was little wonder then that, though he spoke clearly in resonant tones, there were moments when his voice faltered and memories of the past overcame the pride of the present.

"We are here," he said, "in a place which events and remembrances have made for ever famous. In the Middle Ages, Ypres was one of the most powerful towns, whose characteristics were art, wealth, and thrift, progressing under the guidance of the free institutions conferred by the corporations. In our times, the still splendid monuments recalled that renowned past. Later on, the city was severely treated during the long wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which devastated our provinces. It was at that time that Vauban rebuilt the imposing ramparts, which alone have remained through all the destruction. In modern times, Ypres was a happy and quiet town, developing itself in an exceptional surrounding of monuments, which made her attractive and were the pride of her inhabitants.

"To-day, only lamentable ruins recall the most terrible struggle, and associate the misfortunes of the peaceful but brave populations of Ypres with the events of some of the most heroic stands of the World War.

"We are very grateful to His Majesty King George for the honour he bestows upon the town in conferring on her the Military Cross, and the token of esteem he gives thus to her inhabitants who have lost everything, their actual property, the heritage of the past, those marvels of architecture, of which they were so rightly proud. It is a pleasure for us that the King chooses for his mission Field-Marshal Lord French, whose name is definitely associated with the defence of Ypres. Everybody knows the immense military effort accomplished by the Armies of the British Empire during the War. They fought in three parts of the world—in Europe, Asia, and Africa. On the entire battle-front, from the North Sea to the Persian Gulf one sees them developing their action, in Belgium, in France, in Italy, at Salonika, at Gallipoli, in Palestine, and in Mesopotamia. But on this immense line, if one wishes to fix a theatre where the power of the British Army acquires a particular intensity, it is the Franco-Belgian front that must be pointed out, and if, on that front one wishes to mark the point where the fighting of the British Forces reached its climax, everybody would name Ypres.

"One after another, the contingents of the mother-country and of India, then those of the Dominions, displayed their bravery on that ground. Ypres was the principal point of co-operation of the forces organized in the nearest regions as well as those distant ones of the Empire.

"It was near Ypres that in November, 1914, the gigantic German wave which swept over the West stopped, exhausted.

May I be allowed to express my admiration of the tenacity of the troops of the First Expeditionary Corps, and to their clear-sighted chief, Field-Marshal Lord French, to whom we greatly owe this first stage of the victorious decision, as well as in Mons, in the first days of the War, when the Commander-in-Chief recognized in time that the struggle would be too unequal, and was able to save his Army from being surrounded, and kept it for the Battle of the Marne.

"Also in Ypres he knew how to estimate the enemy's superiority, and to avoid being turned. The resolution he took at the beginning of the battle to extend his line with the First Corps instead of reinforcing it, and the fact that he used all his effort in the defensive, had on the issue of the struggle an importance it is right to insist upon.

"After this first memorable battle, where Germany saw her hopes of victory on the Western Front vanished, the Ypres salient was never quiet, and during three years new British contingents came to train in this often troubled region. When, in 1917, the great British Army, at the utmost point of her strength, undertook to continue alone the wearing-out of the German forces, begun by the Allies, this same battlefield of Ypres was chosen on which to fight her dangerous enemy. All the British troops of the Franco-Belgian front fought in that region during more than three months a nearly continuous battle, unequalled in violence and unheard-of difficulties of ground, and thus shook and disturbed greatly the military strength of the enemy. In September, 1918, it was from the Ypres salient that under the command of its gallant chief, General Plumer, the Second British Army, in close co-operation with the Belgian Army and the Sixth French Army, started for the great offensive of which the result was to free the Flemish coasts, and to form the prelude to the victorious end of the War.

"During this long war, many points of the line stretching from the North Sea to the Vosges underwent alternatives of advances and withdrawals. The salient of Ypres alone on the left wing of the front defended by British tenacity, shared with the region of Verdun on the right wing, maintained by French valour, the perilous honour of remaining the two inviolate strongholds of the main War front. We are here on sacred ground. One hundred and fifty thousand British, Australians, and Canadians, brave among the bravest, sleep their last sleep. Near these ruins they fell for the cause of the independence of nations; they lie on the line where they broke the assaults of the Power who tried to make brutal force overrule right. The

British soldier has proved here the stubborn courage, the quiet spirit of sacrifice, the faith in his race and country, which have made the greatness of Britain, and created one of the most powerful Empires that ever existed."

Then, with a reverent gesture, King Albert removed his cap, and added :

"I pay a tribute of deep admiration to the memory of these heroic warriors. I extend to them the homage of respect and gratitude of the Belgian nation. We shall always consider it a sacred duty to care piously for the graves of these incomparable soldiers, these free citizens who died to ensure the reign of freedom."

After the King had finished speaking, the procession was re-formed. The band of the Belgian Grenadiers marched first ; then followed Belgian troops ; the Black Watch with other British troops ; and the band of the Highlanders. The King, walking with Lord French, entered the Cemetery and, walking direct to the centre of the burial-ground, laid there a magnificent wreath of orchids and violets. Lord French and the other officers present also deposited wreaths.

The post-war years saw England and Belgium becoming ever more closely knit in the bonds of friendship. King George and Queen Mary visited Belgium, where they received a right royal welcome from its people ; and on many occasions King Albert and his Queen were the honoured guests of England. During one of these visits His Majesty was made a Field-Marshal of the British Army, as his grandfather had been before him, and the relations between the two Sovereigns have been of the most cordial description. Usually their Majesties flew over, and on one occasion they were the guests of Lord Curzon of Kedleston at Hackwood Park, where their children had stayed during part of the War period.

Their Majesties' first State visit to England was made in July, 1921, when Londen fêted them in an effort to do homage to a man whom, as a leading newspaper phrased it, "they had discovered was not only a King, but a soldier, a statesman, a patriot, and a hero."

It was not only the material needs of his people with which King Albert occupied himself during the post-war years. He had always been proud of the literary achievements of his country, achievements which it has ever been his aim and endeavour to foster in every possible way. His Majesty took

a deep interest in, and had a wide knowledge of, the literature of other countries. It was a knowledge of this, coupled with a full realization of their Majesties' generous sympathy with every form of distress, which prompted the members of the Royal Literary Fund to beg their Majesties, during their State visit to England to attend the anniversary dinner at the Guildhall.

King Albert and Queen Elizabeth both accepted, and His Majesty also consented to occupy the chair, as his uncle, King Leopold II, had done on a similar occasion nearly half-a-century earlier, when the dinner took place at St. James's Hall. The occasion was particularly memorable for the fact that this was the first time when any foreign Monarch had been invited to preside over a gathering at the Guildhall in the City of London.

The assembly was, as may be imagined, a most distinguished one. Not only were the giants of English literature present, but diplomats, statesmen, and eminent men in other walks of life had gathered to do honour to a Sovereign whose interest in literature was known to be not a passing enthusiasm. The guests included Lord and Lady Curzon, the Earl of Athlone, Lord and Lady Tennyson, the Duchess of Somerset, and Monsieur Henri Carton de Wiart, the Belgian Ambassador.

When their Majesties arrived at the Guildhall, Lord Tennyson, as President of the Fund, presented them with an address:

"May it please Your Majesty. We, the members of the Corporation of the Royal Literary Fund, which exists for the assistance of authors in distress and their dependents, and is managed by a Committee composed mainly of distinguished men of letters, rely in large measure upon our annual appeal at the anniversary dinners for collecting the funds to carry on our work. Your Majesty's presidency over our banquet this year will be of the greatest service to us. We look upon Your Majesty's presence to-night, and the presence of your Royal Consort, as a tribute to our English literature from Your Majesties and from Belgium, the home of famous Universities, famous writers, famous artists. We also regard it as a pledge of affection from the Belgian people to the British people. The Belgian and British peoples are alike in many things—more particularly, in that each lives under a free constitutional Government. We are proud to remember that, in 1830, Great Britain was foremost in aiding Belgium to achieve her independence. You, Sir, have been rightly termed 'the Saviour of Belgian freedom.' But you are more than this. In the face of a terrible and world-shadowing danger, you led your people into the path of duty

and honour, and are among the chief champions and saviours of the freedom of the world."

Replying, King Albert said :

"It is to me a great gratification to be welcomed by the distinguished members of the Corporation of the Royal Literary Fund. Your kind address has profoundly touched me. I take it also as a message of friendship from the British writers and artists to their Belgian colleagues. During the War, generous assistance was given to those who took refuge in this country. As early as November, 1914, a National Committee was formed in Great Britain in order to contribute to the restoration of the library of Louvain. The books which have been sent by this Committee are remarkable for their excellent selection. I rejoice to have this opportunity of testifying my high regard and esteem for the splendid work of the Royal Literary Fund, and of congratulating you upon the services you have rendered to so many men of letters worthy of your discreet relief."

At the banquet King Albert proposed the toast of "King George V, our Munificent Patron," and later the toast of "Queen Mary and other members of the Royal Family." He gave the toast of the evening in the following impressive speech :

"I rise to give you the toast 'Prosperity to the Royal Literary Fund.' It is with genuine pleasure that I have accepted the invitation to take the chair at this gathering, which affords me an opportunity of meeting many distinguished English writers, and of proclaiming my profound admiration for English Literature. Human culture owes a great deal to that long series of masters who have made this country as great in poetry, in history, in philosophy, as she is in politics, in science, in world-wide trade. The importance of intellectual activity can hardly be exaggerated. Literary productions have fortunately not been checked by the War. A keener interest in poetry has never been shown than during these years of intense strain, when those who struggled and those who suffered sought solace in the highest sphere of thought. Now, our work of restoration would not be complete if it were limited to the reconstruction of our factories. Welfare is not itself an aim. It is a means of attaining to a higher ideal of life. Our efforts are to be devoted to the intellectual developments of both countries which victory has liberated from the threat of barbarism. But those very men who give their lives for these unselfish labours are too

often confronted with the most troublesome difficulties. It is the delicate task of the Royal Literary Fund to extend to them the help they happen to need. This splendid work has been done with admirable tact and effectiveness for over a hundred and thirty years. From this chair, I make a strong appeal to all who understand the immense social significance of literature, to lend their cordial support to this admirable institution, 'unrivalled throughout the world,' as my beloved uncle, King Leopold II said, when he had, in 1872, like I have myself to-day, the honour of taking this place at your anniversary dinner, and I endorse his sentiments. May the Society always be able to discharge the difficult work which has been entrusted to it! May all who have ever drawn inspiration from the great thoughts which literature holds, all who have been helped and instructed and cheered by the written word, join in the heartfelt wish embodied in the terms of the toast which it is my privilege to submit to you—'Prosperity to the Royal Literary Fund.'"

In a speech made by M. Emile Cammaerts, the distinguished Belgian author, he said that throughout the whole of their reign, their Majesties had, through their personal interest and sympathy, succeeded in removing the prejudice existing in Belgium against Belgian authors.

Lord Curzon, proposing the toast of "The Chairman," made a most eloquent speech, in the course of which he said that during the last few days the Court, the Corporation of the City of London, and the populace in the streets, had had abundant opportunities of testifying their admiration of the splendid King and Queen who had been the guests of the nation. They recognized in His Majesty King Albert, as posterity would also recognize, one of the heroic figures of the War. A ruler who rendered priceless service to his own country and to ours, for, after all, was not Belgium our shield in the early days of the War? He was a man among kings and a king among men. Might they not also rejoice to join in that tribute their homage to the Queen—a Queen who, by her homage, her tender regard for suffering, and her endurance, enshrined herself in the undying love of her country, and would forever occupy a place, along with her husband, in the annals of that immemorial time. The list read out that evening was the largest and most creditable that had ever been announced at any of the meetings of the Royal Literary Fund. Surely it was fit and right that it should fall to His Majesty the King to have discharged that task, not only because he was a friend of all good things in his own country but because he represented a country which, in relation to the

size of its population, had, he believed, turned out as many, if not more, eminent men of letters and of the arts than any country of a corresponding size in Europe. The days were gone by when literature or the arts required the patronage of the Courts or the smiles of Kings. They now appealed to a wider audience, and were sure of support of the cultured sense of mankind. Nevertheless, even in these days of democratic equality, when the republic of letters was a Kingdom by itself, able to stand on its own merits, and to challenge the world, it was surely right and proper that the artistic and imaginative genius of a country should find its champion and its spokesman in the person of its King.

King Albert, who subscribed £100 to the Fund, was very gratified to learn that, owing to his appeal, the subscriptions for that anniversary totalled the record sum of well over £3000.

The banquet closed with the playing of the Belgian National Anthem, but what pleased the King and Queen much more was the spontaneous tribute of the guests who, with one accord, broke into the time-honoured strains of "For he's a jolly good fellow!"

CHAPTER XXVI

KING ALBERT'S GUESTS. HIS VISIT TO THE U.S.A.

Royal Sovereigns entertained in Belgium—An enjoyable visit to the United States—Indefatigable sightseer—Listening-in to President Hoover—The Duke of Brabant's tour in the Congo—" Tell him of my wrongs "—Sir Herbert Samuel's tribute—A memorial to Sir Henry M. Stanley—The Prince of Wales' greeting—King George and Queen Mary visit Brussels—The family relationship—King George's speech.

IT was not only with Great Britain that King Albert strengthened the bonds of friendship. During the years following the War, he and Queen Elizabeth visited many different countries and entertained many Royal visitors.

The King and Queen of Italy paid a visit to Belgium in 1922, and were much impressed by the work of reconstruction which King Albert showed them. In the following year, the King and Queen of Spain were the guests of their Majesties. The Queen of Spain visited some of the Belgian hospitals and held long conversations with Queen Elizabeth and the hospital authorities as to various schemes they had each originated in their own countries.

In the same year, the King of Norway visited King Albert.

In 1924 the King and Queen of Roumania were guests of King Albert and Queen Elizabeth, who visited Sweden in 1926.

As was mentioned in an early chapter, King Albert visited the United States as a young man. It was therefore a double gratification to him to accept the cordial invitation of the President to pay a return visit in 1919. An American warship was placed at his disposal, and in September the King and Queen Elizabeth, together with Prince Leopold, crossed the Atlantic to be the guests of President Wilson for three weeks.

On the 22nd of the month they arrived at Ostend from Brussels, and were received by the Burgomaster and the Municipality. A large crowd had assembled to wish them God-speed. After receiving the addresses of the Burgomaster, the Royal party went on board the warship destroyer, *Ingram*, which left the

harbour at midday, preceded by the destroyer *Hale*. Three miles off Calais, they were transferred to the *George Washington*, the ship that had brought President Wilson to Europe for the Peace Conference. On the journey they were accompanied by a numerous suite, including General Jacques, one of the heroes of the Yser.

While in the United States, King Albert made full use of his time, just as on his previous visit. Always anxious for the improvement of his country, he studied with the keenest interest the factors that have contributed to America's prosperity. He spent so much of his time in various trade and scientific investigations that one American newspaper remarked humorously that America had hoped that the King of the Belgians was coming to her for a well-earned holiday, but that he had evidently made up his mind that it was to be a business trip. With all the goodwill they bore him, they could not possibly answer all his inquiries inside three weeks, the journal concluded.

Nevertheless, King Albert, who with the Queen and Prince Leopold, was given a great welcome by the American people, contrived to amass an extraordinary amount of information. Much of it he put to practical use on his return to his own country. King Albert maintained cordial relations with succeeding American Presidents. As a proof of the great keenness with which His Majesty kept in constant touch with everything that was going on, not only in his own country but throughout the civilized world, it may be mentioned that when Mr. Herbert Hoover had been elected to the Presidency, King Albert, with many of his Ministers and a distinguished gathering, listened-in to Mr. Hoover. The President-elect sent a special greeting to the King, and King Albert replied in very cordial terms.

The King effected many remarkable improvements in various departments of the administration of Belgium, but nowhere were changes more drastic than in the administration of the Congo. It was his constant aim to develop the Congo and to improve the welfare of the natives.

In the spring of 1925, Prince Leopold (now Duke of Brabant) set out on a six-months' tour of the Congo, covering much the same route as his father had travelled in the tour he had undertaken when Heir to the Throne. The Duke, who was

accompanied by Colonel Raquiz, was seen off by the King and Queen and his sister Princess Marie-José, and boarded the *Anmersville* on April 21st. Burgomaster Max and the Burgomaster of Antwerp were among those who assembled to wish the Duke farewell, and a huge crowd cheered him on departure.

The Duke's tour was as thorough as that of his father before him. Like King Albert, he made personal investigations into all matters of administration, and, at his father's request, he prepared a lengthy and fully detailed report for His Majesty.

The native chiefs gave the Duke a great welcome, seeing in him a resemblance to his father, whose coming at a time when certain reforms were badly needed they have never forgotten. One old gentleman who was presented to the Duke gave him a lengthy list of minor complaints against his brother-chiefs, all of which he required settling. " You will ask your great father, and he will do it, as he did all things before," the ancient man declared. " Tell him of my wrongs, and then tell him that now there are no wrongs ! " This statement, which sounds contradictory, must be considered satisfactory in its implications.

That " there are no wrongs now " was amply proved in a letter from Sir Herbert Samuel which, during a recent discussion on the Congo Budget in the Belgian Chamber, was read by M. Jaspar, the Prime Minister and Minister of Colonies. In his letter, Sir Herbert Samuel referred to certain criticisms which he had felt called upon to make twenty-five years ago, on the administration of the Congo, and he went on to say :

" I should like to-day to express my respectful congratulations on the complete change that has been achieved, and the brilliant results that have been obtained. Recently I made inquiries of the organization in England whose special task it is to keep in close touch with interests of the native population in all parts of the world, and inform public opinion of all cases of abuse. I received the assurance that for many years past they had received no complaints with regard to the Belgian Congo ; on the contrary, that colony was now regarded as being in the fore-front of progressive and enlightened colonial administration. The recent journey undertaken by the Belgian Sovereigns with such courage and devotion, impels me to take my pen in hand

and to address to them, as well as to the Belgian administration, these few words of sincere respect."

This change in the Congo position was a matter of the greatest satisfaction to King Albert who, true to his designation as a democratic Sovereign, made it his chief interest to see that everything possible was done for those whose needs were most likely to be overlooked. Realizing, as he always realized, that "without vision, the people perish," His Majesty combined with his enthusiasm for practical matters his utmost efforts to promote the success of artists, authors, and sculptors. He was deeply interested in the most successful Exhibition of Flemish and Belgian Art, which was held at Burlington House in 1927. The King and Queen Elizabeth, with King George and Queen Mary, extended their patronage to an exhibition of works of the British School, held in Brussels.

King Albert was the patron of the scheme for erecting a memorial to the late Sir Henry M. Stanley, the famous explorer, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of his arrival at Boma, after traversing the Dark Continent. The Queen continued her unfailing interest in all philanthropic schemes, and was always ready to be the patron of any society formed to help the poor and the suffering. As was always her practice, Her Majesty displayed not a theoretical but a practical sympathy, and often visited in person the victims of poverty, sickness, and misfortune, in whom her interest had been aroused.

When violent storms injured the dykes in the district near Termonde, the Queen paid a visit to the scene of the disaster, and spent some time in the distressed area. Part of the journey had to be undertaken in great discomfort. For an hour-and-a-half Her Majesty had to drive in a light cab through blinding rain, often through water two feet deep, but, though begged by her attendants to turn back, the Queen persisted in her effort and arrived at Termonde as it was getting dark.

Once there, she sought out the authorities and discussed with them the measures for relief that were being taken. Some of these schemes she superintended, and visited the sufferers from the flood, doing all that was possible to cheer and console them.

The Prince of Wales' popularity in Belgium is almost as great as it is in his own country. When, in April, 1923, he visited Belgium, to unveil the British War Memorial, he was

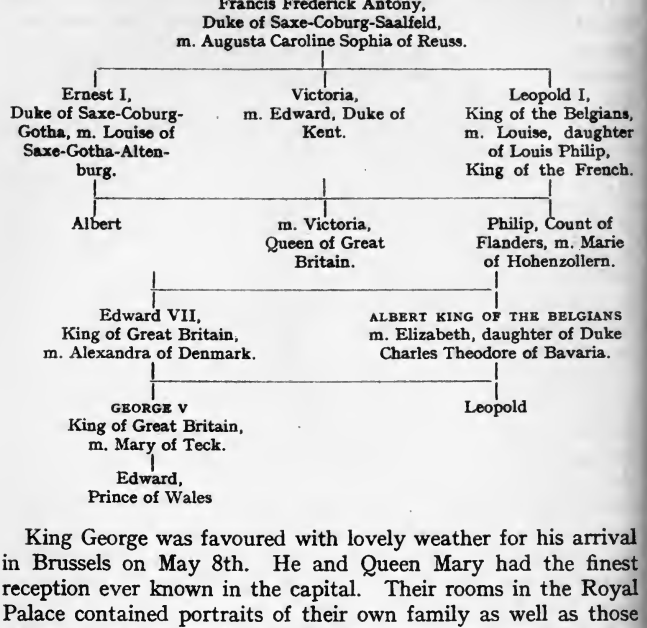
in greater danger of being mobbed than any Royalty has ever been in Belgium. The crowd took the greatest trouble to get a glimpse of him; they swarmed up posts, clustered on roofs, hung perilously out of windows, and risked life and limb for a sight of Britain's Heir Apparent.

The Prince carried out a very busy programme during his visit. Not for one moment in his public appearances was he free from the battery of cameras and, used as he is to being photographed, he has certainly never been "shot" oftener than he was during his stay in Brussels. One "sitting" which he not only tolerated but enjoyed, was arranged by the Queen when, in the garden of the Palace at Brussels, a British photographer took the Prince standing with Prince Leopold, and another picture of the Prince of Wales seated in the midst of the Belgian Royal Family.

In 1922, King George and Queen Mary paid their first State visit to Belgium since the War. The Belgian people were disappointed that the visit had been so long delayed, but this feeling did not cloud in any way their enthusiasm when at last their Majesties arrived. Even King Albert, eager for a great reception for his guests, was content with the welcome his people gave to them. The greeting given to Field-Marshal Earl Haig and Admiral Lord Beatty, who were in attendance on their Sovereign, was very enthusiastic, and the Belgian people cheered these War veterans to the echo.

In view of the friendship between the British and Belgian Royal Families, it may be interesting to study the following genealogical table showing the relationship between King George and the late King of the Belgians. In the male line the two Monarchs belonged to the same family, King George being the senior representative. Their nearest common ancestor is Duke Francis Frederick Antony of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, of whom King George is doubly the great-great-grandson, for his grandparents, Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, as may be seen in the table, were first cousins.

King Albert was only descended once from the common ancestor and was one generation nearer to him. His father, Philip, Count of Flanders, was the younger son of Leopold I, King of the Belgians, and was first cousin of both the grandparents of King George. Thus King Albert was doubly second cousin once removed to the British Monarch.



King George was favoured with lovely weather for his arrival in Brussels on May 8th. He and Queen Mary had the finest reception ever known in the capital. Their rooms in the Royal Palace contained portraits of their own family as well as those of their host and hostess. The British Royal Standard flew over one of the wings of the Palace, and the King and Queen had to appear on the balcony to satisfy the enthusiasm of the crowds.

Their Majesties visited the Congo Museum, where they were welcomed by the Minister of the Colonies, M. Franck. After a thorough inspection of the contents of the museum, they went to Laeken and took tea with King Albert and Queen Elizabeth. The rhododendrons in the gardens were an exquisite sight.

At the State banquet, King George made a long and notable speech, emphasizing the friendship between Belgium and Britain, concluding with the toast to the " Sovereigns of a nation whose fortunes will always be dear to my family and my people."

Following the State visit, King George and Queen Mary made a solemn pilgrimage to the graves of the fallen near the battlefields of France and Flanders.

On returning to England, he sent a cordial message to King Albert saying, "we shall never forget the time spent in Your Majesty's capital, and the true Belgian welcome with which we were received throughout your country has made a permanent impression on us."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE BELGIAN ROYAL FAMILY

Love of home life—Princess Marie-José's popularity—Playing at a Brussels concert—Royal appreciation of authors and artists—Veneration for genius—MM. Pugno and Ysaye—Duke of Brabant's choice of a bride—" Leopold has found me an ideal daughter-in-law "—Princess Astrid's upbringing—" Aren't you going to put up your branches ? "—Trained in homecraft—" My wife would cook my dinner "—The Royal wedding—A great welcome in Belgium's capital.

THE life of the Belgian Royal Family had, both in pre-War days and in peace years, been of the simplest and happiest character. Both the King and Queen had domestic tastes, and, when the duties of their position permitted, nothing pleased them more than to retire into the privacy of family life, and pass their time much as any Belgian family would do. It had always been the endeavour of the King to be the friend as well as the parent of his sons—an aim in which he succeeded so well that he always had their full confidence. This enabled him to be their guide, not only during the years of adolescence but even after they reached manhood's estate.

Queen Elizabeth brought up her children on sound, but by no means old-fashioned, lines and allowed them to develop their tastes and ideas in such manner as would enrich their personality. Prince Charles, the more studious of the two Princes, is an accomplished violinist. He and his sister, with the King and Queen as an interested audience, often played together. Both the Princes are devoted to their only sister, with whom in the days of childhood they shared their amusements as well as their studies.

While Prince Charles takes after his mother, the Duke of Brabant closely resembles the late King, both in appearance and in temperament—a fact that gives great satisfaction to the Belgian people. They see in him a worthy successor to a Sovereign who has done so much for his country and deserved so well of his subjects.

Princess Marie-José, now the Princess of Piedmont, who is wife of the Crown Prince of Italy, bade fair even as a girl to rival her parents in her popularity. The Brussels people took the

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KING BORIS OF BULGARIA AND M. LEBRUN, PRESIDENT OF FRANCE (WEARING SILK HAT), HEADED THE PARTY OF VISITING PRINCES. BEHIND THEM ARE (*left to right*) THE PRINCE CONSORT OF HOLLAND, PRINCE OLAF OF NORWAY, THE PRINCE OF WALES AND PRINCE GUSTAV ADOLPHE OF SWEDEN

[*Associated Press Photo*

WITH BARED HEADS, MEN AND WOMEN CLUNG TO EVERY POINT OF VANTAGE TO WATCH THE PASSING OF THEIR KING. HERE IS THE SCENE AS THE CORTEGE ENTERED THE RUE ROYALE

Princess to their hearts when they saw her waving her handkerchief excitedly from the Palace window, when her father was on his way to take the oath on his accession to the throne. The Princess was a firm supporter of the Anglo-Belgian entente, for she was educated for some years at a convent in England and had an English governess. The Princess was called " the little lioness of Belgium," on account of her wonderful curly hair. She has inherited her mother's musical abilities, and is an accomplished musician. In February, 1929, she delighted a crowded audience in Brussels by playing at a concert given by the pupils of the High School at which she is completing her studies. At the concert, which was in aid of a fund for assisting girls without means to undertake advanced work, Princess Marie-José played the concerto in A minor by Schumann (Op. 24), displaying much feeling and a high degree of technical skill. She was encored again and again. The price paid for seats at this concert was nearly £3 apiece. During the War, Princess Marie-José acted as a seller on Flag Day at Wimbledon, as she was visiting her aunt, the Duchess of Vendôme, who has a house at Wimbledon. There was great eagerness to purchase flags from the youthful Princess.

King Albert and Queen Elizabeth, realizing that art, literature, and science had not received much recognition in the later years of King Leopold's reign, made a point of inviting notable men in these fields of human activity to their parties at Laeken and to the Palace in Brussels. Among their guests were MM. Emile Verhaeren, Eugène Ysaye, the famous violinist, Victor Rousseau, and other eminent men. For the work of Verhaeren the King had a warm admiration ever since he was a young man, and in their homes the King and Queen often asked him to read his poems to them. The genius of Maurice Maeterlinck was appreciated by them from the first publication of his books and they attended a special performance of " Pelléas et Melisande " at the Monnaie Theatre. For this occasion, M. Gabriel Fauré, the famous French composer, came specially to conduct the music, and Madame Bartet, of the Comédie Française Theatre, recited.

Their Majesties did their utmost to inspire in their children a veneration for genius. Once when a distinguished author had lunched at the Palace, the King said to his children : " Look well at this gentleman and you will be glad to say some day that you have had the honour of lunching with him."

The Queen visited privately many of the leading artists' studios. She was a great appreciator of the work of Laermans, and was grieved to hear that the artist's sight was failing. She

wanted to send him to her father, the Duke Charles Theodore, that he might examine his eyes, but about this time the Duke died. The artist's mother narrated how Queen Elizabeth visited the artist's home and encouraged the family to expect an improvement in his eyesight, which fortunately came to pass. This incident is, with other delightful stories of their Majesties, related in Maria Bierme's charming book entitled *Albert and Elizabeth of Belgium*. Queen Elizabeth has given sittings to several artists, being most good-natured in meeting their requirements, with the result that portraits of her have been very successful as likenesses, as well as works of art. She has enjoyed frequently fine performances on the pianoforte and violin by those masters, Raoul Pugno and Eugène Ysaye, of whose genius Belgium has been rightly proud.

The married life of their Majesties had been so uniformly happy that they determined that their children should be unfettered in their choice of a life partner. When they became aware of the Duke Brabant's affection for Princess Astrid of Sweden, they were delighted with their future daughter-in-law. The part which the Duke (then a lad of 15) had played in the War, where he was constantly with the troops, and the scenes he was compelled to witness, had a sobering effect on his youth, making him rather old for his years. These experiences certainly matured his judgment, the wisdom of which was never displayed to better advantage than when he fell in love with Princess Astrid. They were little more than boy and girl in years, and it was a case of love at first sight on both sides. If the match had been arranged with parental foresight, they could not have suited one to the other more admirably. As Queen Elizabeth remarked smilingly, " I might not, even had I tried, have succeeded in finding for my son an ideal bride ; but Leopold has done more, he has found for me an ideal daughter-in-law ! "

Princess Astrid is the younger daughter of Prince Carl, Duke of Vastergotland, brother of King Gustav of Sweden. Up to the time of her marriage, she had spent nearly all her girlhood in her native city of Stockholm, where she was educated with the thoroughness which is characteristic of her nation's ideas on the training of young people. From her earliest childhood, the Princess showed a remarkably independent personality and considerable strength of character. Combined with this, she possesses fortunately a strong sense of humour, which the new King much appreciates. The Duchess carries this light-hearted humour into every department of her new life.

The physical training of the Duchess was hardy, for much of her recreation took the form of ski-ing trips, or skating on

the numerous waterways of Stockholm. These pastimes she can now share with her young husband, for the Belgian Royal Family enjoy all forms of winter sports. When they go to Switzerland, they take an enthusiastic part in every form of outdoor exercise.

Like the King, the Princess was brought up to take a deep and sympathetic interest in everything that concerned the life of her nation. During the later years of girlhood, one of her hobbies was to collect the folk-lore of her country, the myths and legends in which Sweden abounds.

Midsummer-day is kept as a festival in Sweden, and it is the pretty custom on that day to festoon the doorways of every house with the branches of the silver birch, for which the country is famed. One Midsummer-day the Princess chanced to be walking down a village street, when she came upon a house undecorated—a house in whose doorway there stood an old peasant woman gazing sadly at the birch branches at her feet.

Princess Astrid stopped and spoke. "Aren't you going to put up your branches?" she inquired kindly.

The old woman, ignorant of the identity of the smiling girl before her, shook her head. "Alas, my rheumatism will not let me," she said, "and there is no one to do it for me."

"Oh, we must remedy that," came the instant reply. "Now, if I may go into your kitchen and fetch a chair, I'll have them up in no time."

The doorway was duly decorated, but, when the old lady learned who had done it, the branches were left there as a permanent souvenir of "when our Princess decorated my house with her own hands."

The home life of the Duke of Brabant's bride was very simple. Princess Astrid and her sister, Princess Marthe, frequently wore national costume, which proved an extremely effective setting for their good looks. There is a quaint tradition, common in many homes in Sweden, which in the Royal Household was never overlooked. At the conclusion of the family meal, the Royal children, when allowed to leave the table, would go first to their mother and then to their father and, kissing them on the forehead, would thank them for the bountiful meal provided.

Princess Astrid's education was not confined wholly to school-room studies. From her childhood the Princess had shown a fondness for culinary experiments. So, believing that every woman should know something of what goes on in her own kitchen, her mother encouraged her in her taste for cooking;

and often the Princess would cook simple dishes for the family dinner-table.

When Princess Astrid became engaged, she took an extensive course in housecraft and mothercraft, with the result that to-day she is, if required, as competent to run her own house as any woman in Belgium. Though she takes no active part in the work of her home, her practical knowledge has made its supervision easy.

Queen Elizabeth, who is herself very domesticated, is proud of her daughter-in-law's proficiency in home affairs, and often the Queen and the Duchess make shopping expeditions together —expeditions of which the object is not the acquisition of gowns or personal articles, but the restocking of linen cupboards or the careful selection of kitchen requisites.

A young officer friend of the Duke of Brabant, who had recently married, was complaining ot the Duke about the servant problem.

"Our cook has left," he announced. "We shall get no dinner!"

"Our cook might leave," the Duke answered with twinkling eyes, "but then my wife would cook my dinner. Possibly my mother would help her, so you see I'm independent of cooks!"

The Duchess has excellent taste in clothes, and always appears a figure of up-to-date elegance. So up-to-date is her costume that the shortness of her skirts once provoked a clerical protest, a protest entirely undeserved by the Duchess, who understands the art of combining smartness with good taste in both the cut and the length of her clothes.

Both King Albert and Queen Elizabeth were delighted with the engagement of their son to Princess Astrid, and Belgium prepared a right royal welcome for the charming Princess who had captured the heart of their Prince. For over twenty years they had witnessed the ideal home life of their Sovereigns, and they hoped for its continuance in that of the Heir Apparent and the girl he had chosen for his bride.

The civil marriage was celebrated at Stockholm on November 5th, 1926. On the previous evening there was a reception held in the city's wonderful new Town Hall, at which the Mayor delivered in French a speech of welcome to the Duke and of congratulations to the happy young couple. Later in the evening Prince Carl gave a State banquet, which was followed by a gala performance at the Opera-house, where the Royal box had to be enlarged considerably to give seating accommodation to all the Royal personages who had arrived for the wedding.

The wedding ceremony itself took place in the "Riks-Sal," or Royal Hall, where the Swedish Parliament meets. In the

ordinary way, one end of the Hall was occupied by a dais on which stood the Royal throne, but, for this occasion, this was removed, and chairs put in place for the four Kings, two Queens and the other Royal guests who were present.

The guests, besides the Royal visitors, numbered over a thousand. The ladies being in white Court dresses, and the men in full uniform, the assembly made a brilliant spectacle as, seated on cushioned benches round the hall, they awaited the coming of the bridal procession. The young Duke was a gallant figure as with head very erect and the half-proud, half-embarrassed look usual with young bridegrooms, he walked by the side of his bride. Her face was delicately flushed, her eyes sparkling, and she looked a delightfully regal yet girlish figure in her bridal gown of glistening white. Twelve bridesmaids and twelve groomsmen followed, and the ceremony began after the band had played the Wedding March.

The ceremony was conducted by the Mayor of Stockholm. Bride and bridegroom uttered their responses in clear, composed tones, audible throughout the hall, and the look which the Duke turned on the slender figure at his side left no doubt as to the sincerity of his vows.

The young Duke and Duchess drove back to Prince Carl's Palace in a carriage drawn by four horses, with postilions and outriders carrying lighted torches. All along the route great crowds had assembled to cheer the bridal pair, and shout good wishes for their future happiness. After the wedding breakfast, the Duke of Brabant left for Ostend, and his bride and her family started for Malmo, to embark on the battleship *Fylgia* bound for Antwerp.

The people of Brussels had started a subscription list that the young Duchess might receive a wedding-gift which should represent the warmth of their feelings towards her. They selected for their gift a diadem, set with nine fine brilliants from the Congo, and a piece of exquisite tapestry. This last was chosen as a compliment to the bride's knowledge of tapestry, which had been gained largely from her interest in the weaving that is the oldest hand-craft of her native country. All over Sweden peasant women spend long hours at their looms, and so proficient Princess Astrid became that she could tell at a glance in which province of Sweden a piece of tapestry had been woven.

The King and Queen, with Prince Charles and Princess Marie-José, accompanied the Duke of Brabant when he went to meet his bride at Antwerp. When the *Fylgia* came to anchor, Princess Astrid's natural feelings overcame the strict etiquette

of the occasion and, running down the gangway, she was clasped in her husband's arms.

When she alighted at the station at Brussels, *en fête* for her reception, the Duke was soon satisfied with the welcome that his future subjects gave to his bride. The young Duchess made her way still further into their hearts when, with a reverent gesture, she laid the bouquet of orchids she had carried on the tomb of the Unknown Warrior.

On the day after the Duchess's arrival, the religious ceremony took place at the church of St. Gudule, and among the distinguished guests was the Duke of York, who had travelled specially from England to be present.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A KINGLY FIGURE.

An unostentatious traveller—"I will wait till the next train"—The Golden Rose presented by the Pope—Removing war ravages—A normal Budget—Building development in Brussels—A temperate capital—Court functions again celebrated—The King and Queen in the streets—"It is King Albert, that is why I am not looking"—Compensations for the past.

KING Albert was a great traveller all his life. He saw very much of the world, and put his journeys to the best possible use. In this liking for travel King Leopold III takes after his late father, as he resembles him in the simplicity with which he prefers to tour. Of all Royal travellers, surely none of them set out on journeys with less ostentation than King Albert. He travelled incognito frequently and would prefer to do so always, if possible. He took the lightest amount of luggage and the smallest retinue, thus securing the least publicity, which was His Majesty's aim. On one occasion, the King decided to catch an earlier train from Brussels but, on arriving at the station, found that all the seats had been taken. The officials apologized. Had they known, of course . . . but a compartment should be emptied at once. "Not at all," said His Majesty, "these people have all paid for their seats and they have a right to occupy them. I am a little late and that is my fault. Kindly disturb no one. I will wait till the next train," and he did.

Just as during the rather difficult years with problems which confronted him when he was Heir to the Throne, his great aim was to fit himself for the position he was to fill; so it was the King's desire that his sons should study the problems of post-war conditions. With this end in view, the new King has travelled widely. In November, 1928, he and his wife toured the East Indies for nearly six months, his object being to study scientific and colonial matters, so they visited Java, Sumatra, Ceylon, and Singapore. The Duke amassed an immense amount of valuable information, which he has since put to practical uses in his native country.

Like his late father, the new King takes a keen interest in all

schemes for the training and welfare of young men, and is ready to lend his patronage to any plan of which he approves, or to speak at any meetings designed to assist the training of youth.

The Belgian people, who had such good reason to love their Sovereigns, were much gratified when, in 1925, His Holiness the Pope paid Queen Elizabeth the greatest compliment in his power by presenting her with the famous Golden Rose. This gift the Catholic Church bestows only on its most exalted members; it was presented to the Queen of Spain on the occasion of her marriage to King Alfonso.

To King Albert and his Queen later years brought compensations for the past. Neither they nor their country were ever likely to forget—indeed there remained too many indelible remembrances—those years when their very lives were at stake. But Belgium has reaped at last some harvest from those blood-stained years, and it had been granted to her King to see it. King Albert had rejoiced to see the country he loved, in whose defence he risked not only his throne but his life, rebuilt and her people flourishing anew. He witnessed an increase of her commercial prosperity, and the renaissance of her art. Her sciences made great progress. From ruin, chaos, and slaughter, he saw beauty, order, and life rise triumphant in Belgium; and in this vision he reaped his just reward.

As Baron Cartier de Marchienne said in a memorable speech at a dinner of the Anglo-Belgium Union: "Everything points to the hope that when Belgium celebrates the centenary of her independence, she will have effaced the principal traces of the ravages of the War."

To what extent the late King helped in that effacement, only his subjects can know. He spared no possible effort to assist his country back to her pre-war prosperity, and his people to their pre-war occupations and security. He took a personal interest in every problem with which the country was faced—and some of these post-War questions were very intricate and extremely difficult of solution; he helped materially to develop Belgium's foreign policy, which the abandonment of her neutrality had made imperative; and he made home administration his constant care.

Thanks to his practical interest in the National Fund for Scientific Research, learning increased materially. His Majesty realized the profound importance of all branches of education, and extended his patronage to many learned societies, taking the chair at their important meetings occasionally.

It was a matter of intense gratification to the late King that, owing to special efforts on the part of the Government, Belgium

presented in 1928, for the first time since the War, a normal Budget; while her debt had been decreased by the substantial amount of £7,560,000.

King Albert saw his capital develop and spread in all directions; and the erection of fine buildings in Brussels could challenge those of almost any city in the world.

Indeed, the special apartment-houses of eleven stories, which sprung up in the Leopold Quarter, are the finest and most self-contained in the world. Known as the Residence Palace, these flats contain their own shops, theatres, gymnasiums, swimming-baths and garages. Apart from the great Palais de Justice, they are now the biggest buildings in Brussels. Blocks of flats are springing up in all directions, and Brussels has more than made up for the arrest in her natural development during the War.

The late King was concerned in watching the commercial development of his capital, which, under his reign, improved in many other ways besides that of accommodation. While Brussels was always a sober city, the fact that the legal "closing hour" is now one o'clock, and that in hotels and restaurants it is now illegal to sell more than about two litres of spirits, has materially helped in the cause of true temperance.

His capital was at one time often called "little Paris," but it was King Albert's ambition that Brussels should have an individuality of its own. Under its new regime it is developing one, an individuality expressive of the Belgian national characteristics—industrious, cheerful, active, and independent, gay, friendly, but lacking entirely anything approaching licence.

Court life in Brussels, which was allowed to languish sadly during the later years of the reign of Leopold II, had hardly time to revive before the outbreak of hostilities. It recovered all, if not more than all, its old splendours under the late King. State banquets, State balls, and gala festivities were, under their Majesties' patronage, celebrated with such magnificence as was suitable for a branch of the most ancient Royal House in Europe.

Apart from her rank, Queen Elizabeth was extremely popular in social circles. An invitation to her garden-parties at Laeken was an honour to be striven for, and is appreciated highly when it is bestowed. While their Majesties fulfilled their social duties punctiliously, they were happiest when they could be free from the cares of their position and enjoy the quiet family life in which they found their fullest contentment. This was possible at Laeken or on their other country estates.

Both their Majesties, as well as their children, mixed freely

among the people. It was no uncommon sight to see Her Majesty, unattended save by one lady-in-waiting, walking in the Bois, shopping or mingling with the crowds in the main Brussels thoroughfares; while the King, often quite alone, indulged freely in his favourite walking exercise, stopping to chat with friends on the street.

Belgium respected the Sovereigns' desire for privacy, and, beyond an occasional curtsey or raising of hats, allowed them to do as they wished and pass among their subjects unnoticed. This sometimes caused foreigners no little surprise. Once an American, walking in the Rue Royale, caught sight of King Albert in his familiar tweeds, striding along on the opposite pavement. Eagerly he caught his Belgian friend by the sleeve. "Look, quick!" he commanded, "isn't that King Albert? Look!" "It is King Albert," came the quiet reply—"that is why I am not looking."

If any proof of King Albert's popularity with his subjects was needed, it was shown on his birthday, when a ceaseless stream of people went to the Royal Palace to sign their names, and His Majesty received actual sack-loads of letters and telegrams from all classes of society; every one of them was read personally by His Majesty and received its due reply.

King Albert did much for his country. He fought for her, he worked unceasingly for her advancement. No Monarch living deserved better of his people, or was regarded by them with more complete trust and affection. He brought Belgium through the hour of her humiliation, he laboured without stint for her rehabilitation, and he stood before the world as great in his noble manhood as he was illustrious as a Sovereign.

CHAPTER XXIX

CONCLUSION

Tragic death of King Albert—Fall from craggy precipice—His subjects prostrated with grief—Tributes from foreign kings and statesmen—Scenes at the lying in state—Homage paid by contingents of ex-servicemen—"The British Empire can never forget the heroic figure," telegraphs King George to Belgians' new King—Requiem Mass at Cathedral of St. Gudule presided over by Cardinal Archbishop of Malines—Emotion of King George and Queen Mary at service in Westminster Abbey.

A CHANCE slip on the afternoon of February 17th, 1934, when climbing the Corneille, a craggy eminence 100 feet high at Marche les Dames on the banks of the Meuse, cut short, after a reign of 25 years, the life of Albert I, King of the Belgians. A keen mountaineer, he had stopped his motor car, about 3 p.m., in the environs of Marche les Dames, and put on his climbing boots and equipment. Then telling Van Dyck, his servant, to meet him at the base of the Corneille in a couple of hours, he disappeared into the woods alone. This was the last time he was seen alive.

There was no sign of the King when Van Dyck reached the foot of the pinnacle at the appointed time. An hour passed, and as dusk was drawing on, the man became uneasy, and, leaving the car, he made through the woods towards the rocks, looking to right and left carefully the while. Standing alone in the gathering darkness, he shouted, but there was no reply save the echo of his voice among the rocky peaks. Running back to the roadway, he met a gamekeeper who aided him in his futile quest.

At last Van Dyck went to the village and raised the alarm. Immediately gendarmes and villagers joined in the search. Van Dyck also telephoned to Brussels to Count de Paoul, the Marshal of the Household, about the King's disappearance. Count de Paoul sent an orderly post haste to Namur. Count Xavier de Grünne, President of the Alpine Club of Belgium, an expert rock-climber, taking pocket torches and climbing kit, accompanied him.

At 9 p.m. an excited audience who waited in vain at the Palais des Sports in Brussels for the King to present a trophy,

were told that he had been delayed by a breakdown. Meanwhile the hopeless search continued along the banks of the Meuse. At 2 a.m. the searching party found the end of a rope at the base of the Corneille, and following it they found the King's body huddled up on the ground. *Rigor mortis* had set in. He had been dead for hours. A gaping wound in the head and the fractured skull showed that death had been mercifully instantaneous. A rope to which he had been clinging had apparently either frayed or slipped, with the result that he fell some 60 feet, and then striking a ledge, rolled along the lower slopes of the crag into a gully at its base.

The King's body was brought to Brussels in his motor car, arriving at the palace of Laeken at 3-30 a.m., but the news was not conveyed to the Queen until 6 a.m. The Duke of Brabant, now King Leopold III, who was staying with the Duchess and their children at Adelboden, Switzerland, was informed of the accident by telephone at 5 a.m., and set off at once for Laeken. The King of Italy conveyed the news to King Albert's daughter, the Princess of Piedmont.

Announcements in all the churches on that tragic Sunday morning gave the Belgian people the first intimation of the death of their beloved King. Later, salvoes of artillery were fired in Brussels.

The following proclamation was issued by M. Max, the Burgomaster of Brussels, later in the morning, and was placarded throughout the city :—

> " Dear Fellow-citizens,—It is my cruel duty to announce awful news to the population. The King died yesterday, the victim of a terrible accident. The nation will feel with sorrow the immense loss which it sustains. Robbed of a Sovereign who personified the destinies of the nation with so much greatness and prestige, our country will unite in this trial round the Royal Family whose deep grief it shares."

The following proclamation was later made by the Government to the people :—

> " The King is dead. At the dawn of the twenty-fifth year of his accession, when the country which he had saved held him in higher affection and respect than ever, and counted more than ever upon his calm and serene wisdom amid the perils of the hour, a fearful accident has deprived Belgium of the leader of whom it was so proud. The sorrow of the nation will be profound. Its first thought will be one of infinite gratitude for the King who, as a worthy successor of his grandfather and his

uncle, had devoted all the strength of his high intelligence, and all the resources of his great heart, to the service of Belgium. The country has lost a guide, a support, and an incomparable servant, who in peace and in war had thought, acted, and lived for it alone. The gratitude of his people surrounds his remains and prepares a cloud of glory for his name.

"Albert I was a statesman and a soldier. Belgium addresses to Her Majesty the Queen the homage of its own sorrow as the only consolation that may be given to her. It places its hope in the Prince who succeeds three great Kings who founded, glorified, and protected the country. He will wish with the aid of Providence to continue the work of his august father and bring to a successful end the task at which he worked so magnificently in the loyal exercise of the rights and duties of his constitutional prerogatives."

His Majesty, King George of England, sent the following message to the Duke of Brabant, as soon as he heard of King Albert's death :—

"It is with the most profound sorrow that I and my people have learnt of the tragic death of your illustrious father, and I hasten to offer our heartfelt sympathy to you and the people of Belgium.

"The British Empire can never forget the heroic figure whose courage was an inspiration to the Allies throughout the dark years of war, and will join with the Belgian people in mourning the loss of a true friend and ally."

"GEORGE R.I."

The King and Queen also sent private messages of personal sympathy to the Duke of Brabant as well as to Queen Elizabeth.

The Prince of Wales sent a message of condolence to Queen Elizabeth, and messages of sympathy were sent to the Belgian Royal Family by the Duke and Duchess of York and by Prince George, who was in Africa at the time.

The body of King Albert was carried on Monday evening, February 20th, through the streets of Brussels from Laeken to the Royal Palace in the city. Silent crowds lined the six-mile route by which the simple procession, composed only of a gun-carriage with cavalry escorts, followed by the Royal Princes, the household and the ex-soldiers' colours. Mounted torch-bearers flanked both sides of the gun-carriage, on which lay the coffin, drawn by six black horses.

When the procession, moving slowly between dense lines of people reached the Belgian Unknown Soldier's grave, which is

on the road from Laeken to the Palace in Brussels, the gun-carriage halted. The members of the British Legion in Belgium had joined the other delegations of ex-servicemen here. Their colours dipped to the ground in salute as the gun-carriage stopped, and when it moved on again, the ex-servicemen's standard-bearers fell in behind the last escort, while Saînte-Gudulés muffled bells began to toll.

While the dead King lay in State in a candle-lit chapel of flowers in the Royal Palace, with chiefs of the Army and Air Force, leaning on their swords, keeping vigil, the Belgian people filed past in a continuous pilgrimage to look for the last time on his placid features, made the sign of the cross, and moved silently on. It was a procession nearly a mile in length, and in places ten to fifteen deep. Arriving at the palace, the people were ushered two by two into the presence of the dead King, who wore the Khaki uniform of a lieutenant-general of the Belgian Army with the sash of the Order of Leopold across his breast. Only his head and shoulders were visible, the rest of the coffin being draped with the Belgian flag. The Royal Standard which floated over Belgian G.H.Q. during the war, hung limp beside him. A small crucifix and the Royal coat of arms were behind the coffin, at the four corners of which, their hands and heads resting on the hilt of their swords, stood motionless guards.

While the dead King was receiving silent homage from his mourning subjects, both British Houses of Parliament paid tribute to his memory, and expressed sympathy with his relatives and the people of Belgium. In his address to the House of Commons, the Prime Minister said :—

> " The late King held a unique place amongst the rulers of Europe. No envy shadowed him, and none of the pride and circumstances of imperial splendour kept him in the glare of the light.
>
> " This quiet, unostentatious man, unshakable in his devotion to national liberty and his loyalty to obligations, became the embodiment of his people and one of the most powerful personal factors in the conduct of the war."

Among the numerous tributes to the memory of King Albert was a long telegram written by His Holiness the Pope with his own hand to the bereaved Queen immediately after he had been informed of King Albert's death very early on the morning that the body was found. He then retired to his private chapel to recite prayers for the dead.

Numerous American tributes included one by Mr. Hoover, former President of the United States, who referred to the dead sovereign as a "man of great simplicity and nobility of courage."

President Roosevelt sent the following message to the Duke of Brabant :—

> " My country learns with sincere sorrow of the death of His Majesty, your father. In his official life he was just and wise, and in his private dealings a true friend to all.
>
> " The American people join me in sending your Highness our deep condolence."

Gen. Smuts, Premier of South Africa at the time of the Peace Treaty, sent the following message :—

> " More than in any other instance in the Great War I saw him as the moral mainstay of his people at a time when crowns were at a discount. I met two crowned heads whom I counted among the very best human beings I had ever had the privilege to know. One was King George, the other King Albert."

At 2-30 p.m., on Monday, February 19th, M. Doumergue, accompanied by MM. Herriot and Tardieu, the Ministers of State, reached Brussels by train from Paris and drove straight to Laeken where they were received by Queen Elizabeth and her sons. Having offered them the condolences of the French Government, M. Doumergue and his colleagues saluted the body of King Albert, and M. Doumergue placed a wreath at his feet.

President von Hindenburg sent a telegram of condolence to Queen Elizabeth, and most of the German newspapers paid very generous tributes to the memory of the dead monarch, but among all these messages of condolence it was significant to note that none was received from the exile at Doorn—the ex-Kaiser. It is also of peculiar interest that although the Belgian Court sent official notification of King Albert's death to all royal relatives and royal courts, no message was telegraphed to the late German Emperor, an oversight which caused Wilhelm II to feel very vividly the fact that he has no part in world affairs to-day, although he was so integral a part in the working out of King Albert's destiny!

The premiers of the various British Dominions also sent messages of sympathy with the Belgian people and the Royal Family.

Despite the inclemency of the weather, four Chamonix guides climbed the Pic Albert I in the Mont Blanc range two days after the king's death, and planted on its summit a Belgian flag as

a tribute to his memory. The peak was named after the late King Albert many years ago.

The King's death caused great sorrow in Swiss mountaineering circles. The president of the International Union of Alpine Associations, whose headquarters are at Geneva, expressed the sympathy of Alpine climbers of the whole world to the Belgian Minister and to Queen Elizabeth.

While King Albert was lying in State, Signor Agostini, the guide who for many years accompanied him on his mountaineering expeditions, revealed to the press details of his royal patron's narrow escape from death in the autumn of 1933—a few months before his fatal fall from the rocky pinnacle overhanging the Meuse. He was climbing in company with other mountaineers the Cima Brenta, which towers 10,000 feet high—the loftiest peak of the Brenta Alps, and was just half-way up, when a rock which he grasped began to slip. With his hands and the aid of Agostini he prevented the block from falling, but they were both almost overpowered when the climber next on the rope came to the rescue. The two men and the King then, by their joint efforts, kept the rock in position until all the others following on the rope had got to safety. "Left to itself," says the *Corriere della Sera*, "the loose rock then crashed into the 'chimney,' smashing with a tremendous noise at the foot of the rocky face."

From 8 a.m. on Tuesday, February 21st, the second day of the lying in State, until 3 a.m. on Wednesday—nineteen long hours—a steady stream of mourners filed past the King's coffin, and when at that early morning hour the gates of the palace were closed, the thousands still waiting in a queue, kept up their vigil until the time of readmission—five hours later. And again all through Wednesday night people stood in the street, patiently waiting to pay their last homage to their King. Funeral bells tolled all through the hours of King Albert's last night in his palace.

At 7-30 a.m. on Thursday, February 22nd, the coffin, covered by the Belgian colours, was carried from the chapel where it had lain in State to the Palace Square and placed on a gun-carriage. Eighteen officers bearing national flags formed a guard of honour. Then a procession of 20,000 ex-Servicemen filed past the body and gave the salute. First came Belgian ex-servicemen, followed by British, French, Roumanian, Italian, Czecho-Slovak and Russian contingents, while detachments of the war-maimed brought up the rear. For nearly two hours there was no gap in the ranks of those who had responded to the military word of command "Eyes Right" in King Albert's last

review of those with whom he shared the hardships and the dangers of tedious battles.

Then the funeral cortege commenced to form, and moved off at 10-15 a.m. for the Cathedral Church of St. Gudule to the strains of funeral music and the booming of 101 guns. Officers and men, representing every regiment in the Belgian army, headed the procession, followed by the General Staff. Then came the King's personal standard, behind which were the officiating clergy. Immediately after them followed the gun-carriage bearing the coffin, on which rested King Albert's helmet, crowned with laurel, his mantle and sabre and the Belgian flag. Drawn by six black horses, the carriage was flanked by the King's military household and two detachments of grenadiers. And in the rear followed the King's favourite horse, led with empty saddle and field-boots reversed in the stirrups.

Next came King Albert's sons, Prince Leopold, now King Leopold III, and Prince Charles—both in khaki. Immediately behind them came Prince Umberto of Piedmont, King Albert's son-in-law, in the light grey-blue uniform of an Italian officer. The Prince of Wales followed, his sword draped with crepe. He walked with King Boris of Bulgaria, the Prince Consort of Holland, and Prince Gustav Adolph of Sweden.

Then came President Lebrun, representing France, followed by Cabinet ministers and other officials of foreign governments and several foreign kings and princes.

Silent crowds, estimated at 2,000,000, at least, lined the seven-mile route along which the cortége passed from the Royal Palace to the Cathedral and thence to the Church of Notre Dame of Laeken, where the interment took place. Thousands knelt and prayed as the gun-carriage, bearing the coffin, passed by them.

When the procession arrived at the Cathedral, the interior of which was draped in black, the coffin was borne through the main door to the catafalque on which the King's tunic, helmet and sword rested. The Cardinal Archbishop of Malines presided at the Requeim Mass in the Cathedral, and gave Absolution. Queen Elizabeth with Princess Astrid (now Queen of the Belgians), Princess Josephine of Hohenzollern, and the Duchess of Vendome (sisters of King Albert) with Princess Clementine, widow of the late Prince Napoleon, attended the service. King Albert's daughter, the former Princess Marie-Jose, who is married to the Crown Prince of Italy, had been too ill to venture on the journey from Rome.

At the conclusion of the service the procession was re-formed to the Church of Notre Dame of Laeken, at the

main door of which the gun-carriage carrying the coffin drew up. Then Belgian and foreign troops marched past to the strains of funeral music. After this the coffin was borne inside the Church, and when the final Benediction was pronounced, it was placed in the Royal vault, and the booming of 21 guns told his mourning subjects that their warrior king was laid to rest.

At the memorial service for King Albert at Westminster Abbey, which was held simultaneously with the service at St. Gudule's, the King and Queen joined in the hymns and were very deeply moved as the Precentor, in a voice broken with emotion, rendered the special words of the collect.

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