

BRITAIN MOURNS

"In the sudden death of King George VI Britain mourns the passing of a monarch whose life was an inspiration to all over whom he ruled."

Yesterday he was among them at Sandringham — King to the rest of England and the Empire, but to them the Squire, the kindly man who passed among them; and then ...

(B.B.C). "This is London. It is with the greatest sorrow that we have to make the following announcement. It is announced from Sandringham at 10.45 today, February 6th, 1952, that the King, who retired to rest last night in his usual health, passed peacefully away in his sleep early this morning."

The heart of the nation stops, the flags lower in tribute — over the Mother of Parliaments, high over Big Ben, the flag is low as the news spreads — the King is dead. The King — our King — is no more with us. Swift from the press the news flows to the farthest corners of our island. In our hearts we feel, this cannot be.

Outside the Royal Exchange, they wait silenced; not knowing for what they wait. Here he was named King 15 years ago as elsewhere in his capital. In Marlborough House to the Queen his Mother comes one more great sorrow and in our sorrow the great Dominions join us.

To the old Abbey at Westminster the people come with their little anonymous prayers. Wherever a man's worth is measured by his service to his fellow men they mourn George the Sixth.

In Downing Street the people gather as always in time of trouble as the Premier leaves to meet Parliament. The King is dead but there is much to do, for government must continue.

In front of Buckingham Palace the crowd gathers, bewildered, as they had gathered four months before when the first news came that the King was seriously ill. From holiday in Balmoral the King came then to London on medical advice. His long rest had not cured some deep set trouble. X-Ray showed structural alteration to one lung. The King was gravely ill and even as we watched and waited, the nation prayed. "Operation on the King," we read, and knew how ill he was. But success seemed to crown the skill of the surgeon. But now, the King is dead, peaceful, in his sleep.

Fifteen years ago, following the abdication of his brother, George the Sixth became King and was crowned at Westminster. With the pomp and ritual born of a thousand years, the man who had sought the quieter part in life was crowned ruler of the greatest empire in history. The Coronation Oath he vowed that day he was to redeem with a life of unselfish service.

For himself, with his devoted Queen, he chose the joys of the countryside whenever his heavy duties would permit, and it is as a family man that we shall best remember him. His happy family life gave the strength he so greatly needed for his task and was an inspiration to his people. Today the nation's sorrowing sympathy goes to the gracious lady who was for twenty nine years his devoted partner.

These were the early happy years.

Then came the war. The King had a sad and weary task to perform. Wherever his people suffered he came, and by his presence brought comfort and assurance in their ordeal.

And when victory crowned our arms the King led our rejoicing.

It was the King who opened our year of festival, but we did not know then that his serious illness had already begun.

The summer months - his last summer - were gladdened for the King and Queen by the birth of a grand-daughter, Princess Anne. Today her mother is our Queen Elizabeth, and Prince Charles heir to the throne. With the birth of the grandchildren, the happy family was made complete.

It was in Kenya, at the Royal Hunting Lodge, that the news of the King's death reached his daughter. When she returned from a night in the forest it was to learn that she is now the Queen, acceding to her father's throne immediately: there is no break in the continuity of the British monarchy. It was her own decision to return at once to London.

It was a bitter January day when the Princess left for Kenya. Making his first public appearance since his operation, the King seemed in good health as he walked hatless from the plane. It was the beginning of a tour he had hoped one day to make himself ... It was a farewell, it was also, as events turned out, goodbye ... He was giving the Commonwealth his life and with it a Queen.

And now the King passes from our midst ... Now, the King, who denied his people no duty that they asked or imposed, who was their most faithful constant and diligent servant, takes his rest, and Britain mourns.