

THE LAST SALUTE

Through the night the people wait, silent and patient. Their night's rest they give to the king, keeping vigil that they may make their last salute to a beloved monarch. For over three miles the queue stretches, and there are peoples from many lands in it. The night ends, the doors open and into the Hall of Kings (the Great Hall of Westminster) passes the long, silent column.

In the sombre grey the catafalque is the only island of colour ... the great brass cross from the Abbey; the candles from the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior; the coffin draped in his royal standard; and the brilliant uniforms of his guards; and reverently passing the island in an endless stream, his people.

At short intervals the guard changes, perfect in their precision, moving in their pageantry, and oblivious to the passing throng. The king rests safe in their keeping till the long last journey to Windsor begins. Of George VI it will be written "This was a King his people loved."