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George V: Never a Dull Moment By: Jane Ridley

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From one of the most beloved and distinguished historians of the British monarchy, here is a lively, intimately detailed biography of a long-overlooked king who reimagined the Crown in the aftermath of World War I and whose marriage to the regal Queen Mary was an epic partnershipThe grandfather of Queen Elizabeth II, King George V reigned over the British Empire from 1910 to 1936, a period of unprecedented international turbulence. Yet no one could deny that as a young man, George seemed uninspired. As his biographer Harold Nicolson famously put it, "he did nothing at all but kill animals and stick in stamps. The contrast between him and his flamboyant, hedonistic, playboy father Edward VII could hardly have been greater. However, though it lasted only a quarter-century, Georges reign was immensely consequential. Hefaced a constitutional crisis, the First World War, the fall of thirteen European monarchies and the rise of Bolshevism. The suffragette Emily Davison threw herself under his horse at the Derby, he refused asylum to his cousin the Tsar Nicholas II during the Russian Revolution, and he facilitated the first Labour government. And, as Jane Ridley shows, the modern British monarchy would not exist without George; he reinvented the institution, allowing it to survive and thrive when its very existence seemed doomed. The status of the British monarchy today, she argues, is due in large part to him. How this supposedly limited man managed to steer the crown through so many perils and adapt an essentially Victorian institution to the twentieth century is a great story in itself. But this book is also a riveting portrait of a royal marriage and family life. Queen Mary played a pivotal role in the reign as well as being an important figure in her own right. Under the couple's stewardship, the crown emerged stronger than ever. George V founded the modern monarchy, and yet his disastrous quarrel with his eldest son, the Duke of Windsor, culminated in the existential crisis of the Abdication only months after his death. Jane Ridley has had unprecedented access to the archives, and for the first time is able to reassess in full the many myths associated with this crucial and dramatic time. She brings us a royal family and world not long vanished, and not so far from our own.

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