

A light for the New Year (1939)

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Christmas 1939 is fast approaching. The King is expected to give a rousing patriotic Christmas message to the country over the wireless. We were, after all, at war with Germany and apprehensive about the mighty German war machine which for several months has been raging through Europe and is expected to invade us imminently.

For his speech the King, a gentle peaceful man with a stammer had to find the words to say, then overcome his stammer to deliver them on the day.

He found his words in the writings of a British lady Minnie Louise Haskins living in America and writing in Edwardian times, and on Christmas Day his voice came over loud and clear but haltingly as he tried to hide his stammer. He quoted “And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year ‘Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown’. And he replied ‘Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known Way.’”

I remember the company I was in during the broadcast were willing the King on to beat his stammer – and when he had done so we thought that if he could do that we could beat Hitler and the Nazis. Piece of cake!