

Into The Future

From Dame Enid Lyons, LONDON. June 2 1953.

The young Queen came through the great west door into a sudden stillness.

Behind her waves of cheering still echoed from the streets, but within the Abbey the restless stirring of the past four hours, the muted murmur of voices had died into silence at her approach.

It would break in a moment into jubilant music, but for a precious instant all was still.

Lovely she looked in her shimmering gown and crimson robe. Lovely she was and utterly beloved. Jewels glinted as she moved and her hair was crowned with a coronet of diamonds.

There was something gallant about her, something infinitely moving in the thought of the burden to which she was about to dedicate herself.

I had been up at dawn, snatching a hasty breakfast, driving through a misty drizzle to the Abbey. Then walking with encumbered dignity from the main door, where I was deposited, to the entrance appointed for my reception. It had then begun to rain and with matchless gallantry a gentleman-at-arms conducted me by another drier route to the stairway I was destined to climb.

Some reassembly of my draperies was called for-the white and silver train of my dress, the rose satin train of my mantle-and some rearrangement of my impedimenta. I gave away my sandwiches to a smiling onlooker, readjusted my gold collar, settled my flowing veil and took a new grip on my handbag and my entry card.

My seat was in a gallery in the south transept. Below me was the sanctuary, the rose and gold of the empty throne-chair standing out in isolated grandeur against the gold-coloured carpet.

Right in my line of vision were the choir stalls where 16 years ago I had sat to watch another Coronation and where today the Prime Minister and Mrs. Menzies would represent Australia with so much dignity and

grace.

It was a scene of incredible beauty set against towering walls and vaulted arches that have brooded over centuries of Britain's storied past.

As the time for the Queen's entry approached, the sense of drama deepened, and then, in a momentary pause, two men and two women arrived with brooms and carpet sweepers and hastily tidied the floor. It was a domestic touch of unexampled homeliness - a contretemps most housewives strive desperately to avoid.

One wonders if this was the hand of the Earl Marshal, whose mastery of detail has become almost a legend, or that of his beautiful wife. But the moment passed, as all incongruous moments do, and the great ritual moved to its solemn climax.

A Coronation is the one occasion still remaining in which the State invokes divine authority in a ceremony wholly religious. It stirs emotions often dormant and wakens memories of other simpler days and purer manners. A man's heart is touched to chivalry, a woman's to maternal tenderness.

I had waited eagerly for the moment of enthronement and the reception of the homage. With the Crown upon her head and wrapped in the Robe Royal, or Pall of Cloth of Gold, a cloak of glowing magnificence, the Queen sat on the Throne while first the bishops and then the princes and peers paid her their vows.

When her husband knelt before her, placed his hands between hers and repeated the words of homage, there were few who watched unmoved. And when the august ritual was over she turned and went out into the future and whatever it may hold.'