

man off Cowes, England, who sometimes knows no more about yachts than the cost of his own in easily earned thousands. Clad thus, our yachties were to take up certain positions in the Gulf, wait a certain time, then follow the Gothic as per orders, at a respectful distance. This, thank goodness, they did not do.

Order was there, the order of good seamanship, when we on North Head saw the Gothic standing in the drizzle off Tiri Island a little after eight o'clock in the morning, and the small craft all about like seagulls waiting on a fishing boat. They were still in position when the Queen's yacht came slowly out of a tiny patch of sun, and grew slowly nearer, larger, whiter, as she entered the Rangitoto Channel. But when she drew level with the Head, the race was already on—when she had rounded it, and the guns of the Army establishment on its southern side were already banging out their welcome, the little craft had turned official welcome into a delirious picnic. Everything had been thrown overboard but joy and good manners: they were racing alongside, dipping madly in and out of the spray, plunging like Neptune's foam-flecked horses, throwing up plumes of green sea, carving other patterns of green behind them in the leaden waters of the gulf. And the yachties who handled them so superbly were, for the most part, superbly clad as usual—old shirts, old shorts, old headgear, the right garments for the job.

MANY Royal occasions have I seen, but never one like this. Every seaworthy boat of this sea-girdled city seemed to be out there between the booming guns and Bastion Point, all the craft we have watched being got ready in our northern bays (knowing as we watched that all along the twenty-mile waterfront there was the same activity for the same great day). White and pastel-coloured boats predominated, demoiselles in summer frocks; but there were also the more sober and matronly craft, newly-painted, also looking their best—the dark blue launches that ply in and

out of the harbour on various commissions, the coastal steamers, the scows taking a day off from cattle or coal-carrying to Thames or Coromandel, lolloping through the drizzle with the ponderous whale-like motion of their kind. They were all there; and the hearts of all Aucklanders lifted in patriotic pride to see them there, to know that the guests they greeted were admiring them as we were, from the bridge of the Gothic. We all hoped passionately that, whatever the weather might do for good or ill later, the Queen would remember her entry into Auckland as an occasion of big and little boats, managed by the men who love them.

On Christmas Eve we in Devonport saw the Queen and her husband again, this time in a more domestic, cosy way, and on one of Auckland's loveliest days. Warm sun, bright skies, a lovely breeze: here we were at our best, feeling our best, hoping that she would enjoy the change in climate as much as we were doing. This warm identification of ourselves with our visitors needs no apology: it is one of the most spontaneous emotions of humanity, an instinctive kindness which in the last few days has been at odds with the effusions of the Press. Never has the divorce of newspaper language from public thought been so significant: in the one, unfeeling clichés coming thick as hailstones, in the other a homey identification of the speaker with the spoken-of, especially among the women. "It's horrid for her, coming straight from the tropics into this—why on earth didn't someone bring an umbrella down to the wharf for her?" or "She'll be enjoying the

sun, now, after that nasty drizzle." Just as each yachtie, one felt on Wednesday, was sure the Queen and the Duke were noticing the spick and spanness of his own beloved craft, so the mothers, at the Devonport rally, were sure that the Royal eyes as they went by, were on their own pride-and-joy. "The Duke looked straight at our Des, and smiled," we said collectively, knowing this to be impossible in all cases, but still maternally sure that any father, even a Royal Duke accustomed to the best, couldn't help noticing, and smiling at, our lovely offspring.

I AM wondering, though, what the children who saw the Queen so close will remember? Will they, too, have identified themselves with these till now mythical personages? ("Is he another Philip?" said our own, with the arrogance of childhood, as I whiled away the waiting in the hot sun by telling

him something of the great ones he was soon to see.) Or will they remember the banks of flowers, insouciant and lovely, which the women of Devonport had been preparing with loving skill since midnight, and which now hung surprisingly fresh in the warm air? Or will they remember with surprise that the Queen was smaller than they had thought? This comment, coming from a five-year-old, is surprising until you remember those pictures from Jamaica and Fiji: an important central figure in a light dress standing out from the rest and therefore, to a child's unsophisticated eye, larger than the rest.

Probably, though, all of us who were so close to the Royal car this Christmas Eve will remember the Queen and her husband always in New Zealand sunshine, against a delicate blaze of New Zealand flowers. That, and the memory of little boats scudding merrily over grey seas beside the Gothic will be the Queen's visit to Auckland, for us.



RIGHT: Her Majesty broadcasting her Christmas Message at Government House, Auckland. BELOW: The little ships of Auckland escorting the Gothic into harbour—"they turned official welcome into a delirious picnic"

