



LEFT: Christchurch crowded Cathedral Square to welcome the Queen and the Duke

dom tapped and yet too often lavished upon unworthy objects. Here now is someone who merits this affection which not all can feel or will admit, which flowers inarticulately in most. If some confuse it with the grosser forms of idolatry that is a pity. It may be intellectually humbling, but it exists, how it exists!

[N Christchurch the days hit a golden apogee. The week-end we spend at the beach, toasting happily, curling up at the edges. Travellers drop in with their tales of Queen and Duke borne along on waves of excitement and of sympathy. "She must be full up with it!" The radio is clogged with speeches and shouting. (Should the word "truly" be banned from our lexicon?) Sky is like a polished plate. How to convey the serenity of park and trees, the pleasant sobriety of stone, suburbia's trimness? It's no lie, Christchurch is summer-lovely and expectant.

Golden Days in Christchurch

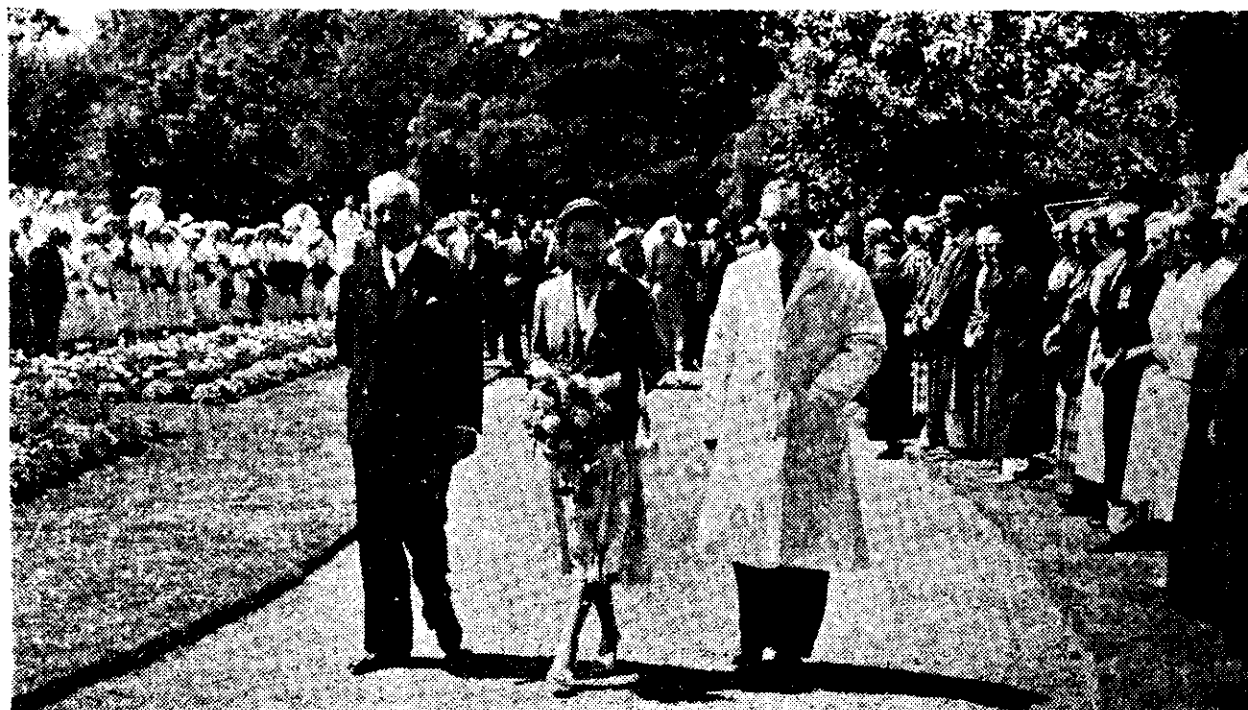
THE old lady is almost tearful. "I've asked them again and again to do something, but they don't come." Her house in Christchurch, proud to the chimneys and edged with iron lace like a doily, gleams with new paint. Flowers tingle, grass is juicy, the hedge is a long beast shorn and plump for slaughter. The hedge? But it straddles a decayed wire fence. You can't see it. Yet the Queen as she passes may notice a little old body red with loyalty, white with pride but blue with a fear of being found out. Everything should be just right, the conscience as clean as a front doorstep.

[N Rhodes the days drop as softly as fruit from trees." We are not Mediterranean and can't know such felicity. But days during The Visit are filled with something other than ourselves. They seem somehow creative in a wide sense of what exactly it may be embarrassing to enquire. But of goodwill, good humour, unselfishness, there is no doubt. It is that rare occa-

sion which people can feel is not somehow engineered to fill hotels, shops, someone else's pocket. Of course, the souvenirs are there, biscuit-tins, badges, bottle-tops. But they're irrelevant this time. This can't be washed off or broken. It takes strange forms, collecting pictures, touching cars, the racing for another gawk ("We want the Queen"). But it springs from an awkward, simple affection that is too soli-

WE stroll behind the first jittery, chattering crowd. This is the test. Will they unbutton? Christchurch crowds have a reputation for being aloof. They laugh when a boy in a Hillary headgear drops his sandwiches on the street and carefully replaces

THE silly season is over. The firm which trussed up a tractor in cellophane as a suitable gift for a farming friend has now draped it in bunting. Hairdressers are sitting pretty with a head start. The Income Tax building, prompt as ever, is in the van with Royal motifs. A golden St. George shakes a spear at a rival firm's landscape-with-figures spread over its low roof: "Welcome to the Garden City." One bridge over the Avon is a study in juggling, coloured balls caught in mid-air and crowns aswarm with flowers. Last-minute consternation: will the Clarendon Hotel be right royally decorated to house a Queen? The manager assures us that garlands, chastely looped, will be just the thing. He has them ready. Friday sees the last of the office boys standing on the pavement with tacks and bunting while their employers sweat aloft, the satin backs of their waistcoats looking wet with light. Sunday night everybody goes in to see what they've done—by car.



THE QUEEN IN THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTCHURCH HOSPITAL
"The days of the visit are filled with goodwill, good humour, unselfishness"

N.P.S. photograph