

A Good Time Was Had By Almost All

IT was the Coronation Day of Charles II. Samuel Pepys had got himself a passing good seat in the Abbey; had been suitably impressed by the ceremony; had passed on to the celebrations, and had almost passed out at the same.

"I took my wife and Mrs. Frankleyn to the Axe-Yard," he wrote in his diary, "in which at the farther end there were three great bonfires, and a great many gallants, men and women; and they laid hold of us, and would have us drink the King's health, upon our knees, kneeling upon a faggot, which we all did, they drinking to us one after another. Which we thought a strange frolick, but these gallants continued thus a great while, and I wondered to see how the ladies did tittle."

Afterward, having sent his wife home to bed, the still willing Samuel went to the house of a friend where again they drank the King's health—and again—till, as the diary records it, "one of the gentlemen fell down stark drunk—and I went to my Lord's pretty well."

"Thus did the day end, with joy everywhere."

"Now, after all this," remembers Pepys, "I can say that besides the pleasures of the sight of these glorious things, I may now shut my eyes against any other objects, nor for the fortune

trouble myself to see things of state and show, as being sure never to see the like again in this world."

Pepys's not-so-sober reflections on the divers glories of Coronation Day, 1661, are included in an NZBS Coronation feature starting shortly from YC stations. There are six programmes, each a verbatim reading from the observations of a writer of the times. Anne Boleyn's Coronation is described by John Gough, James I's by Gilbert Dugdale, George III's by Oliver Goldsmith and Horace Walpole, Queen Victoria's by Queen Victoria herself, and George V's by Victoria Sackville-West.

Not all these writers were as impressed as Pepys by the dignity of monarchy and the spontaneous joyfulness of the people. Goldsmith observed somewhat sourly that many were more impressed by the gorgeous costumes than by the significance of a king entering into a solemn compact with his people. "The weak must have their inducements to admiration as well as the strong," he concluded, "whether this be effected by a diamond buckle or a virtuous edict, a sumptuary law or a glass necklace." After inquiring for a spectator's seat and finding it too expensive, Goldsmith decided, with Bacon, that "Pageants are pretty things, but should rather study to make them elegant than expensive."

Walpole, too, found the prices not to his liking. "At the Coronation of George II my mother gave forty guineas for a dining room, scaffold and bed-chamber. An exactly parallel apartment, only with rather a worse view, was this time set at three hundred and fifty guineas—a tolerable rise in thirty-three years!" In point of fact, Walpole was not impressed by any of it—"The gabble one heard about it for six weeks before, and the fatigue of the day, could not well be compensated for by a mere puppet-show; for puppet-show it was, though it cost a million."

Even Victoria Sackville-West's colourful description of George V's Coronation was sullied by grossly material considerations. "Everybody streamed out of the Abbey, greatly relieved," she wrote. "They were tired, but how impressive it had been! And, thank heaven, no one had thrown a bomb."

The series, under the title of *Coronation Year*, will begin from 2YC at 10.6 p.m. on Wednesday, May 13, and



"... and I went to my Lord's pretty well"

will be heard thereafter on Fridays and Wednesdays at approximately the same time. From 3YC the first broadcast will be on Friday, May 15, at 7.30 p.m. The programmes will also be heard from other YC stations.



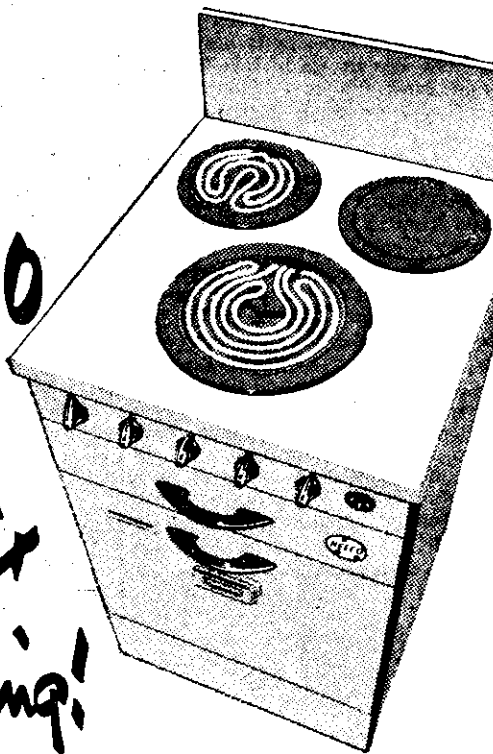
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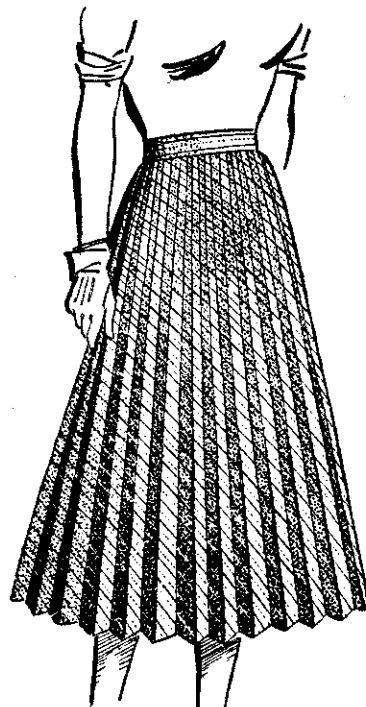
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