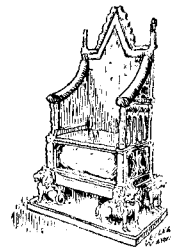


The Mystical Estate



By Anne Fremantle

Mrs. Fremantle, an English-born lady of learning and perception, undertakes to unravel the enigma that is British Royalty with clues offered in three lately published books.

A KING'S job," said Louis XIV, "is a big one, dignified and delicious." In spite of the many changes in the world since the Sun King's day, there is little doubt that Queen Elizabeth II, sixty-first in line since Egbert (the first to receive, in 809, the homage of all the other English kings) would agree with him. Elizabeth II, who became Queen of Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa, and a whole alphabet-long list of islands and odd bits of territory, from Aden to Zanzibar, on February 6, 1952 (the day upon which her father, King George VI, "was alive and was dead") inherits a securer crown, though shorn of most of its power, than perhaps any of her ancestors. And certainly a more truly popular one. Never has any sovereign come to the throne with more heartfelt affection, from her subjects. Nor have British subjects ever before acquired a Queen so magnificently groomed and trained for her job, nor one who so genuinely appears to enjoy it, and herself.

It seems unbelievable it was a bare eighty years ago that orators in London's Trafalgar Square hailed the coming of the Republic of England, and that such respectable characters as John Morley and Joseph Chamberlain (trinitized with the oddly unrespectable Sir Charles Dilke) made their appearance on the Republican platform. When Queen Victoria came to the throne, many prophesied she would be Britain's last monarch, and Edward VII was heard audibly to wonder whether his grandson would inherit his crown. But now, even the indomitably Socialist Sidney Webb, even the left-wing Labour rebel Aneurin Bevan, could and can suggest no alternative to the Crown.

Why, in a world in which most crowns have toppled or at best have wobbled, has the British Crown, on the contrary, so steadied itself in the last fifteen years that today, on the brow of a slim twenty-seven-year-old female, it has a most solid and

satisfactory air? Age and a millennial tradition are not alone enough. The son of St. Louis who ascended the guillotine had both. Nor is the virtue of the wearer sufficient, although as Sir Winston Churchill put it, the Royal family are able to "make a mass of people realize that they are good." For, as Sir Charles Petrie points out in "Monarchy in the Twentieth Century," Farmer George III with his bourgeois virtues, and virtuous Victoria, lost the Crown both power and prestige, while Victoria's rakish son, Edward VII, vastly enhanced both during his brief reign. Legitimacy, of course, has nothing to do with it: the absolutely legitimate James II lost in three years more than the totally claimless Henry VII and the remotely kin George I acquired and bequeathed. As Sir Charles further shows, there was no historical or constitutional reason why the House of Cromwell should not have established itself as successfully as did the Tudors or the House of Hanover.

There would seem to be three major requisites essential to an enduring monarchy. The first is that it be above party. And today, at least, it must to some extent be above purely English interests. For well over a hundred years, the British Crown (from the Revolution of 1688 to the accession of Victoria in 1837) was an enormously important part of the machinery of political party government. The long Whig ascendancy, the curious and horrible tradition (that lasted over two hundred years) of struggle between father (or mother) and son, with a King's Party and a Prince of Wales' Party always in evidence, the factionalism deplored in such satiric songs as "The Vicar of Bray" and such tracts as Bolingbroke's "The Patriot King" combined to produce kings who impinged on the public consciousness only as either the partisans, or the prizes, of some ministerial coup, or some cabinet shuffle. Sir Charles Petrie, following Thackeray and Landor, shows the four Georges and William IV as un-English, unhygienic, unlettered, and unloved, with unpleasing personal habits, nasty favorites (male and female) and sordid, often sadistic, family relationships.

It is a long way, dynastically as well as morally, from George II's "Dat is

The Books

These are the books mentioned in Anne Fremantle's article:

MONARCHY IN THE 20TH CENTURY. By Sir Charles Petrie. New York: The Macmillan Co. 233 pp. \$3.50.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN. By Allan A. Michie. New York: William Sloane Assoc. 396 pp. \$5.

ELIZABETH AND PHILIP. By Geoffrey Bocca. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 248 pp. \$3.50.

one big lie" on being informed of his accession, to Victoria's "I will be good." Yet Victoria was constantly making marginal annotations on state papers: "never would she consent"—and she always did. With her, however, the British sovereigns, while losing power, began a new career of prestige. They began to be above party considerations, and to be intensely concerned not with Hanoverian, but with British crises. Sir Charles Petrie gives a detailed and fascinating account of the constitutional crisis of 1911, when King Edward VII threatened to flood the House of Lords by the creation of an almost unlimited number of peers. Sir Charles describes George V intervening on several occasions, choosing Stanley Baldwin instead of Lord Curzon to succeed Bonar Law, and, by persuading Ramsay MacDonald not to resign during the economic blizzard of 1931, being responsible for the formation of the National Government. How rightly the King had gauged his people's sentiment on this occasion was amply demonstrated at the next General Election.

ALLAN MICHIE, a veteran American newspaperman long stationed in London, gives, in his excellent and most readable book "God Save the Queen," the story of two other contemporary occasions when the King—George VI this time—"by indirections found directions out." Mr. Michie gives in full the touching and hilarious correspondence between the King and Sir Winston Churchill when the latter was worrying the life out of General

Eisenhower to let him travel along as a witness of D-Day. The King's tact and firmness alone finally prevented the Prime Minister from sailing as a crew member of one of His Majesty's ships. Again, Lord Mountbatten revealed, according to Mr. Michie, that it was only at George VI's personal request that he acceded to the Labour Government's request to go out to India as the ultimate Viceroy. Indeed, as the "unmoved Knower" of all cabinet secrets,—technically his secrets—the King is a constant source of calm and continuous counsel for all his ministers, of whatever their political complexion.

A SECOND "must" for a monarch is that the living impersonation be not too far from what the imagination and desire of their people will him or her to be. Here Geoffrey Bocca in "Elizabeth and Philip" throws light on the complex of choices always facing royalty: how much may they smoke? drink? play cards? gamble on horses? shoot stags? how should they dress, how much may they weigh? and how much mourn? Sir Charles points out that when Queen Victoria protracted her mourning for Prince Albert, she weakened the power of the Crown itself, and also injured her own personal popularity. The tragedy of the abdication of Edward VIII was that for his people it was so "sad an end to their high hopes" which had been raised from his earliest youth by one whose life "had been a pathway of promises." Not only do the people want to see their royalty, they like to see them dressed up: in the worst days of the Depression, when the Duke of Kent and Princess Marina were married, the flamboyant photos of the new duchess's several tiaras were greeted by badly undernourished slum-dwellers in rat-ridden, water-

logged basements with "Coo, ain't she a dream?"—never with "what she got I don't have?" The age-old tradition of physical contact between King and people is still very strong. The King's Evil (scrofula) is no longer cured solely by the King's touch, but the royal handshake, the royal glance have all, indeed, perhaps more, of their old power.

The third, and of course the most important factor, present in the British monarchy and in no other, is its intense pragmatism. It used to be said of the bicycle that it contradicted all the laws of mechanics. Still, bicycles have continued to proceed forwards. Likewise the British monarchy, although in many ways a contradiction of all that monarchy implies—royal birth for example—survives surprisingly well. From the anointing of the King of Dariada (Argyll) by St. Columba in 574 (the earliest attested coronation in the British Isles) to the present-day British kings have been killed on the battlefield, murdered in dungeons, beheaded, "crowned and again uncrowned," exiled, and shut up as mad. Living members of the royal family have advertised beauty creams; been paid as traveling salesmen; danced the can-can; married commoners and even Jews; had Nazi in-laws; visited the Pope; and ended up better loved than ever before.

All three authors, Messrs. Petrie, Michie, and Bocca, go into the question of the cost of the British monarchy in considerable detail, and have much that is little known to tell. The monarchy costs Great Britain about three million dollars a year, considerably more than the Presidency costs Americans, who are more than three times as numerous. But this sum is double-entry bookkeeping, for it is covered by the revenues of the Crown lands, ceded to Parliament by the King. These revenues, from which the Civil List is paid, balance the budget so far as the cost of royalty is concerned. But they do not account for the vast sums accumulated by various members of the royal family, beginning with Queen Victoria, which, tax-free and death-duty-free, now amount to more than the sums granted by Parliament.

Max Lerner commented with amazement on the way the British keep their Empire together with "sticks and stones, a bit of glue and some swagger." Mr. Michie has some delightful anecdotes illustrating how the archaic, anachronistic institution of monarchy functions: Queen Mother Elizabeth, after launching the great ship named for her, coming down the gangway clutching a bag of white buns for her husband who hadn't seen such a thing during the six years of war. Elizabeth



Victoria—"injured her popularity."

II, aged five, tugging at her grandmother to let her go on to the balcony at "Buck House" where "there are lots of people waiting to see me" and being sternly sent out of the back door by Queen Mary. King George VI, on the last evening of his life, after shooting over fifty hares and pheasants, going out three times to the kennels to see his favorite dog, which had a thorn in its paw. Elizabeth ordering Philip to sit down, while she rode standing in a white jeep through Canadian streets. Mr. Bocca's stories are racier: Philip calling Elizabeth, and not once only, "silly sausage"; Elizabeth brushing a child's tiny flag impatiently off her knee; Philip, "with admirable self-control" refraining from "bringing down a couple of skulking sightseers" with his gun on the royal honeymoon.

THE British Crown is not only, like Old Glory, a symbol of the free association of a number of peoples. It is one of these same people, carried about and near-worshiped, plastered with jewels or decked in uniform riding a parade horse, but still able to talk about "my wife and children" or to say "it's me blowers they say have gone wrong" when dying of lung-cancer. Mr. Michie quotes the London *Observer* as explaining that the real binding force of the Crown is that, in the person of one human being, the member of a very typical human family, it has "cleared the channels of the people to the subconscious and emotive strata of the collective soul." In the reign of the first Elizabeth, Sir Walter Raleigh wrote that "the councils to which Time is not called, Time will not ratify." In the reign of Elizabeth the Second, it is possible to see just how well time has been called in to the councils of the essentially incarnational and viable Crown.



—Photos from Culver.

Edward VIII—"... 'sad an end'."

God Save the Queen!

By Bernard Kalb

One of the cheapest and most comfortable ways of attending the coming Coronation of Elizabeth II is through books. Mr. Kalb reports on seven volumes that will help.

JUST about the hottest piece of real estate in the world these days is a comparatively small rectangle of downtown London, where, on June 2, a Queen—the sixth Queen Regnant in British history—will be coronated. Not an inch of that rectangle has been overlooked, yet a little shoulder-space is hard to come by. A baron, a viscount, even a marquess, among the fortunate 7,500 royal guests (some with a sandwich or two sewed into the silky linings of their robes to sustain them through the long ceremony), have been allotted no more than eighteen to twenty inches of Westminster Abbey, the scene of thirty-seven coronations since 1066. Outside, along the Mall, in Trafalgar Square, down the processional route, bleachers to seat 100,000 have been constructed by the Government. There isn't a seat to be had these days, despite the fancy prices. Window space, roof space, balcony space, any kind of space—these, too, are gone. Only the last scraps of ground within the rectangle are being held, unreserved, for 435,000 persons on a first-come, first-served basis, a set of conditions which should make things nice and jolly in the early morning hours of June 2. There are 8,326,137 loyal subjects in London alone.

To anyone this side of the Atlantic, these statistics would appear to be all the more reason to *remain* this side of the Atlantic. Here, the Coronation can be attended comfortably—by book. There is plenty of new literature on the subject, and it's a pleasure to report that, even in print, the Coronation is altogether majestic and triumphant. Of the seven new books that have come my way, each, it turns out, is aimed at a different level of coronation interest—the general, the historical, the scholarly, the pictorial, the anecdotal, the casual.

To get down to cases, the handsomest package of the lot is "The History of the Coronation," an outsize 9" x 12" volume, which, lucidly and pictorially, ranges over the complex and vast subject. Its author is Lawrence E. Tanner, MVO, VPSA, and Keeper of the Muniments and Li-

brary, Westminster Abbey. Mr. Tanner is a double-threat man. A gentleman who served as the Gold Staff Officer at the coronation of King George VI in 1937, he is also a scholar who knows just about all there is to be known about coronations. His book is divided into the irreducible aspects of any enthroning—the coronation setting, origins of the service, the ceremony and ritual, dignitaries at the ceremony, some medieval coronations, more historic crownings, coronations of Queens Regnant, the Coronation Chair and Regalia, and the music. Complementing the text are 111 half-tone illustrations—from a reproduction of the only known contemporary impression of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth (1559) to an arresting series of photographs of the Coronation of George VI.

DETAIL by detail, the coronation story is constructed by Mr. Tanner—not only the story of the coming Coronation but of coronations of the past. The panorama is rich and reverent. Nor does it exclude an occasional contretemps. At the Coronation of Queen Victoria in 1838, to single out one coronation-with-a-hitch, the bishops started the Litany before the delivery of the Regalia, or, as the Regalia is known to most people west of the Atlantic, the jewels. Well, that's wrong. What is more, the service was actually suspended for a second to discuss the question of just which finger the Ring was to be slipped on. The archbishop, a stickler for protocol, put it on Victoria's fourth finger, despite the fact that the Ring by mistake had been made to fit her pinky. Victoria didn't forget it, either. That night, after "the Proudest day of my life!" she wrote: "The archbishop had (most awkwardly) put the ring on the wrong finger, and the consequence was that I had the greatest difficulty to take it off again, which I at last did with great pain." Altogether, Mr. Tanner's contribution is an excellent, dignified encyclopedia on coronations.

The overwhelming impact of June 2 has also sent Randolph S. Churchill to the typewriter, and he's come up with a pretty interesting account of what it's all about. He, like Mr. Tanner, has jotted down the details of what may be expected at the coming big event. Further, Mr. Churchill has done some broken-field running across one thousand years of British history, stopping to take on the old

The Books

These are the books Bernard Kalb mentions in his article:

THE HISTORY OF THE CORONATION. By Lawrence E. Tanner. New York: British Book Centre. 96 pp. \$4.50. A handsome, lucid, pictorial wrap-up of the Coronation story.

THE STORY OF THE CORONATION. By Randolph S. Churchill. New York: British Book Centre. 152 pp. \$3. An interestingly told account of coronations, dealing in all aspects of the subject.

THE CORONATION BOOK. By Leonard Wibberley. New York: Farrar, Straus & Young. 191 pp. \$2.75. A breezy, anecdotal book. On the lightweight side.

THE CORONATION SERVICE OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II. By E. C. Ratcliff. New York: Cambridge University Press. 79 pp. \$1.75. The text of the coronation service, together with a short history of the rite. For the serious scholar.

THE FORM & ORDER OF THE SERVICE . . . IN THE CORONATION. New York: Cambridge University Press. 63 pp. \$1.75. The text of the Coronation service—no more, no less. A first-rate job of typography.

THE QUEEN & HER ROYAL RELATIONS. By Conrad Miller-Brown. New York: British Book Centre. 47 pp. \$2. Just the thing for anyone interested in who's related to whom in European royalty.

THE BOOK OF THE CORONATION. By Francis Hunt and Alan Lindsay. New York: Funk & Wagnalls. 30 pp. \$1.50. A fragmentary account, with comic-book type illustrations.

stand-bys, like the significance of the coronation and the Abbey ceremony. At one point, Mr. Churchill, in a bow to that little innovation of our century, the TV set, discusses what impact television is likely to have on the crowds in London's streets. "It may well be found that this year television will steal the crowds," he concludes. In this connection, Scotland Yard is quoted as saying that the biggest crowds are drawn by funerals, with royal weddings runners-up. Coronations are a close third. One other thing: Mr. Churchill devotes a chap-