The Coronation

Could the weather have been worse? Or could
the drenched and shrieking crowds, who thronged
London's pavements have shown more enthusiasm
than they did? When the great, golden, gaudy
couch lumbered by, carrying our young Queen
to her Coronation, mighty surging cheers swept
the eager crowds.

Here are the service men of every race and
land. Here are the gorgeous uniforms, steady
matching contingents of blue, red, grey and
white, like flowing rivers of colour. Malays,
Maurus, and Marinnes followed each other in
bewildering processions. Medals chimmed,
spurs jingled and helmets glittered - all
singing with each other to do honour to our
Queen.

For those who were privileged to be in the
Abbey, time stood still. In that holy place -
past, present and future were met together,
and centuries of tradition were unfolded by the
solemn ceremonies - from the simple wooden
throne, enriching a yet more ancient stone, to
each piece of the Royal Insignia.

Surrounded as she was by blue and
scarlet robes, the glitter of gold, and jewelled
crowns, bewigged judges, shining Orders and
Stairs, strange dark faces and unknown
voices - she yet kept a gentle dignity and
a clear calm voice.

She has pledged her life to us and we
have all taken part with her in her solemn
dedication as she sat with the crown of
St Edward on her head.

Then came the fanfares of trumpets, the pealing of bells, and salute of mighty guns, as she drove back to her Palace along the decorated London streets. The wind and rain added their voices to the roving cheers and acclamations, and the whole length and breadth of Britain exuberantly welcomed their crowned Queen.

Now came the smaller local celebrations: - from every hilltop bonfires shot up from peak to peak in a twinkling chain. Triumphal arches became full of glimmering lights, and - after night had fallen - the sky was filled with screaming flickering fireworks.

In Canterbury a mighty crown had been built on a hill overlooking the town, and at a given signal it became alive with colour and appeared to float over the heads of the happy crowds.

In the Outer Hebrides an open-air service was held for all the people, and the preacher was a man of 92, who had been presented to the Queen.

Voices calling and laughing from John-O-Grants to hands and far into the night - Coronation tea, maps and pageants, Fancy-dress races and carnivals - no amount of rain could dampen this day. One wonders exactly how many performances of "Merrie England" were going on in towns and villages. Many were the coronation trees planted and coronation seats placed in advantageous spots.

In Cornwall, an ox was roasted. It weighed half a ton, took fourteen hours to cook and made over two thousand delicious sandwiches. The sight and smell of such an enormous amount
of unsalted meat being cooked, doubtless caused much mouth watering. Butchers were waiting with huge gleaming knives to cut juicy slices for the large throngs assembled.

In Dorset, in the lovely buttercup meadows, rival village teams pitted their strength in such old pastimes as Tug-of-War and weight lifting, while a bonfire as big as a haystack roared over Blackmore Vale.

And in my home town, Frome? Our festivities were centered in the park. Many folk stayed in the quiet of their own homes in the morning, and joined in the prayers for the Queen, some attended Communal Services in the Churches, or shared a friend's television. But at two o'clock, a great pilgrimage to the park began. Soon after we had all saluted the Union Jack, the air was filled with songs from hundreds of small voices, as children encouraged their playmates in the races. Every child had a free tie and a Coronation Mug. Every elderly person could view television in the hall in the park, and have a communal tea together. Here was a tent of guides working — here a tent of scouts, while on the lawn, the army cadets gave us a display of drill. Another interest was the potter's wheel from the School of Art, where bowls and jugs appeared as if by magic. The happy voices of the local Operatic Company could be heard from a great marquee. Then, as evening came, we wended our way back to the television sets. Now we should see our Queen again, now we should remember once more the purpose of the day.

As the moment drew near, silence fell over many a group in hall and home. That young clear voice came to us again, as we had heard
it in the morning and Elizabeth our Queen, once more assured us of her love and devotion and service to England and all its boundaries.

We saw her stand on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, her husband at her side, and wave and wave again, to her excited people. With one sketch of her hand she transformed into fairyland - and no lights shone brighter than her sparkling crown.

In our Victoria park, a blaze show of fireworks brought memorable day to its close. A day we shall all remember - not for our mugs, not for the holiday, nor for the fireworks, but because June the Second, nineteen-fifty-three was the start of a new Elizabethan Era - may the conquering of Mount Everest be but the first of many such exploits in all fields.

The Queen is now Queen indeed. On June the Second nineteen-fifty-three she promised true allegiance to her people, and we accepted her as Queen. She is now Queen in spirit, as well as in inheritance, she has been anointed with holy oil, and has accepted the privilege of Royal Kingship.

Long may She Reign.

Books from which this is written =
Coronation Number of Time and Tide.
Coronation Number of European Daily Mail.
The Queen.