

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD

EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK REGISTERED NURSE.

No. 2025. Vol. 85.

APRIL, 1937.

Price Sevenpence.

A SPIRITUAL AND HISTORIC CEREMONY.

The issue of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING dated July 1st, 1911, contains a description of the Coronation of King George V and Queen Mary, on June 22nd, 1911, written by the then President of the Society of Women Journalists, who, with a few highly favoured members of the Nursing Profession, was allotted a seat in the Abbey. Her impressions of the glorious and never-to-be-forgotten Ceremony reprinted below may be of historic value to the world's Nurses, now that another Coronation is at hand.

THE CORONATION.

JUNE 22nd, 1911.

Vivat! Vivat! Rex Georgius!
Vivat! Vivat! Regina Maria!

The sacring and crowning of King George V and his Queen Consort Mary is accomplished, and around the world the glory of it has resounded.

In this place to describe the ceremonial of the Coronation in detail is impossible, yet may we touch on the solemnity of the religious service, on the stupendous grandeur of the scene within the Abbey Church of Westminster, and on the human emotion of the hour.

Privileged to attend the Coronation we have it in mind to live every minute of those magic hours. In the grey dawn we awake, and watch the day lighten, and soon after five come to the closed doors of the Abbey the first guest to arrive with a card of admission. The morning is sweet and fresh, and a free hour gives time for a tour around within the barriers, through which happy people begin to pass. Wonderful preparations for the seating of those who can pay are to be seen on all sides—tier upon tier of gaily decorated seats have been erected, and Westminster Hospital has thus almost disappeared from view. In Parliament Square, Parliament Street, indeed, as far as eye can see, gorgeously decorated seats are ready. Thus early the pavements are sparsely peopled, and around the Abbey no one is permitted to stand.

At six of the clock there crosses from Westminster Hospital to the Abbey a Sister, followed by a band of neatly uniformed nurses—like a little flock of doves—each carrying a little basket containing all the necessary nursing appliances for the restoration and comfort of those who later may suddenly require them. These little Sisters of Mercy disappear within the gates of the Abbey, and are to be seen later, stationed in conjunction with a medical officer, in the various sections into which the audience is divided; and from which, as they well deserve, they have a fine view of the magnificent ceremony.

The Nursing Sisters and men of the St. John Ambulance Association are early on the scene, and are later stationed at 54 separate positions along the route of the Procession.

By 6.30, when the Abbey gates are opened, quite a little crowd of the happy few favoured with cards of invitation are awaiting admittance. Amongst them robed peers and peeresses, men in Court dress and uniform, and ladies décolleté, in shimmering satin gowns, veils, plumes, and gems, and so humdrum is custom that it appears quite natural to see all these wonderful human birds of Paradise, winging their way through the grey cloisters and doorways of the sombre old Abbey. Once within—and we were there for eight short hours—the magical vision is revealed. The whole interior is presented in a tone of tender grey. Closer inspection proves that the walls, arches, and seats are uniformly covered with brocade of blue and silver, a sympathetic setting to the brilliant raiment of the guests; on the carpets of dim blue the crimson Chairs of Estate and waiting Thrones stand out in bold relief, and the Chair of Destiny with the immemorial stone—fateful and sombre—contrasts with the glittering golden vessels on the Altar.

As time passes, and the congregation flows silently in and fills every available space, all becomes glorious without—nothing on earth can exceed the splendour thereof. The pomp and gorgeous vestments of the bishops, the noble splendour of the peers, the resplendent grandeur of the peeresses, the grace and beauty of the invited guests; and then, with the first strains of seraphic music, the heart throbs begin. As in a dream pass Bishops and Regalia, great Officers of State, the Royal Children, and the Princes and Princesses to their appointed places.

Vivat! Vivat! Regina Maria! The wild musical cry of the Westminster scholars crashes through the arches, resounds to the roof, and heralds the coming of the Queen.

Pale, beautiful Queen!

In spite of her wonderful robe of purple, all encrusted with gold, and lined with Royal ermine, she strikes a note of simplicity; her bearing is stately and restrained, her fair head unadorned is slightly bowed, her dress of white and gold is severely cut. She wears no Orders or ribbons; her neck, her hands and arms are bare, a few rare gems flash about her throat; she presents a truly regal figure. Following the Queen, three on either side, are the six train-bearers—beautiful maidens in simple white satin gowns adorned with pearls, and Her Grace the Duchess of Devonshire, the Mistress

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)