THE MECHANIZED COLUMN

BEWILDERING VARIETY

MONSTERS OF WAR AND LITTLE JEEPS

The mechanized column had an unexpected majesty of its own that impressed the people who lined every yard of the route it followed (and it covered fully 14 miles) from Regent's Park eastward out to Bethnal Green; thence south-westward by way of London Bridge to Kennington Oval, and so, crossing Vauxhall Bridge, to Millbank to join the marching column at Westminster.

That it created general wonder was understandable. Never before, surely, have motor vehicles been seen in such numbers and such variety. It began quietly and normally enough (so far as motor transport was concerned) with the little procession of the chiefs of staff at VE Day and VJ Day, and supreme allied commanders, in big, shiny open cars, escorted by Army and police motor-cyclists. Most of these chiefs were recognized and the best known of them were enthusiastically cheered by the crowds.

Then we saw two ranks of police motor-cycle patrols; blue-clothed men with snow-white gauntlets on glossy maroon-coloured machines moving with a steadiness and perfection of "dressing" that earned a burst of applause. Behind them came allied commanders in open cars, and then commanders of the Royal Navy, the Army, and the Royal Air Force, each in a spotless scout car and each service group led by its own service dispatch riders—and the onlookers had a special greeting for the women D.R.s of the National Fire Service who followed the R.A.F. commanders.

There was a torrent of armoured fighting landcraft, and amphibians, and what used to be called, during the war, "soft-skinned" transport, including all manner of mobile offices, workshops and stores, and mechanical and electrical plants and appliances, great and small. Vehicles tracked or half-tracked, or on wheels that numbered from four up to (it seemed) 24 and more; guns towed and guns self-propelled; tanks, transporters, tenders, trailers, trucks, and troop-carriers; huge ducks (officially DUKWS) and little weasels, and jeeps that swim; bowsers, lorries, omnibuses, vans, caravans, containers, carriers, coaches, mobile bakeries, and canteens; ambulances and pumps and turntable ladders; cranes, dozers, excavators, sweepers, ploughs, scrapers, and tippers—even a river tugboat and a diesel locomotive (both of these part of the Royal Engineers column) carried on vast trailers, the *tout ensemble* of the tug being probably the longest and loftiest feature of the show.

UNEXPECTED COLOUR

The lighter iron tracks put up a merry clatter, the heavy ones an ear-splitting roar; yet there was little noise from even the biggest of the wheeled vehicles on their gigantic black-painted rubber tyres. Unexpectedly, again, there was a fair amount of colour in this column. The Navy's vehicles (and onlookers were surprised by the variety of the Navy's landcraft) were the same dark shade of grey as his Majesty's ships; the Army's, the familiar dark green known officially as "olive drab," and those of the R.A.F. a faintly blue-grey. But the engines and appliances of the N.F.S. were back to the warm red of the old days of the famous London Fire Brigade—all save the trailer pumps of the oversea detachment who served in North-West Europe, which rightly sported the olive drab.

Then there were the colours of the London buses, and the buses from Halifax and Manchester representing the provincial public transport services which came to London's help in the time of need. The G.P.O. showed a mobile telegraph office in a beautiful shade of green, and the chocolate-and-buff of the L.M.S. vehicles was smartly conspicuous. The Army's vehicles were enlivened by patches of the various corps colours—combinations of red and blue for the R.A., R.E., and R.A.O.C.; blue and white for the Royal Signals; red and green for the R.A.S.C.; red, blue, and yellow for the R.E.M.E.

Every vehicle was "poshed up," spick-and-span, and shining. And seeing them thus, so trim and smart, somehow switched the mind back to the everyday aspect of so many of these engines of war and civil defence in the recent past. It brought a queer pang to the heart, of mingled pride and pity, to think of appliances like those of the rescue and fire-fighting services (to which the crowd had shouted in grateful remembrance), quietly manned and methodically working in a hell of bursting bombs and flame, in London and a dozen other cities of this our country: to think of fighting vehicles, not always quite like the monsters here to-day, in desperate action at Sidi Rezegh and "Knightsbridge," Alamein and Wadi Akarit, Termoli and the Sangro River, Tilly-sur-Seulles and Villers Bocage. Most vividly of all, to recall the privilege of having seen tanks and armoured cars just like these, so spotless now but then so soiled and scarred, and hung about with blackened cooking pots and kettles and braziers, yet each painted with its (usually feminine) name and a gay device (a voluptuous female or a sheer grotesque), and for that day decked with fresh flowers; the grimy, grinning crews half out of the turrets, some waving winebottles, as they roared and lumbered on to the liberation of Brussels and Antwerp.

It was good that London should see, too, what used to be called the "funnies" or the "comics," which in N.W. Europe could be "whistled-up" through the renowned 79th Armoured Division when some "Operation Tough" called for them. The great Sherman flails which exploded mines with their thrashing chains; the bridge-laying tanks; the great assault vehicles of the Engineers known universally as Avres—Churchill tanks variously equipped with assault bridges or with fascines (huge bundles of faggots) for getting over ditches, and armed with the grim petard or spigot mortar which threw what looked like and was called a "dustbin" full of H.E. against extra strong defences.

GERMAN BOMBS

Then there were the things with zoological names—crocodiles, or Churchill tanks fitted with a great, searing flame-thrower; kangaroos, or tank-bodied troop-carriers; buffaloes, which are armoured amphibian troop-carriers; and weasels, the smaller, general-purpose carriers, also able to swim. In the march were also specimens of the Centaur dozer, an unturreted cruiser tank with a mighty sweeping blade in front to clear obstructions at high speed in advance of A.F.V.s, and also to fill up craters—you might call it a racing bulldozer. The original bulldozer, of course, was there; officially the angle dozer, or universal earth-moving machine, used in every campaign of the whole war. The R.E. column further included two German 4,000lb. bombs which lay deep underground unexploded (one at Croydon) for years and were taken out and neutralized a few months ago, and with the R.A.F. column were two 22,000lb. British bombs. Everywhere throughout the column appeared the ubiquitous little jeep.

Generally, it would be difficult if not impossible to point to a single aspect of the war-time effort, in terms of things that move on wheels or tracks, of the British people that was not worthily represented in this mechanical pageant. Save only one or two monsters which in the rehearsal march had proved likely to upset the perfect timing of its progress and were left in dignified solitude in Regent's Park. But their disappointed crews were fitted in somewhere else in the column.

HALL OF VICTORY

Sir Shenton Thomas was last week elected chairman of the Over-Seas League in succession to Marie, Marchioness of Willingdon.

Lady Willingdon, taking the chair at the annual general meeting of the League for the last time, announced that the council intended to erect a Hall of Victory at Over-Seas House as a war memorial. It would be part of the rebuilding scheme, and would replace the badly blitzed drawing room.

Lady Willingdon succeeded her husband as chairman in 1941. She has now been elected a vice-president of the League.

Player's Please

A Naval Secret!

As the Raiders swept over Malta during the blitz on that battered Island, the words "Player's Please" went across the wires, and in a lengthy raid—"More Player's Please".

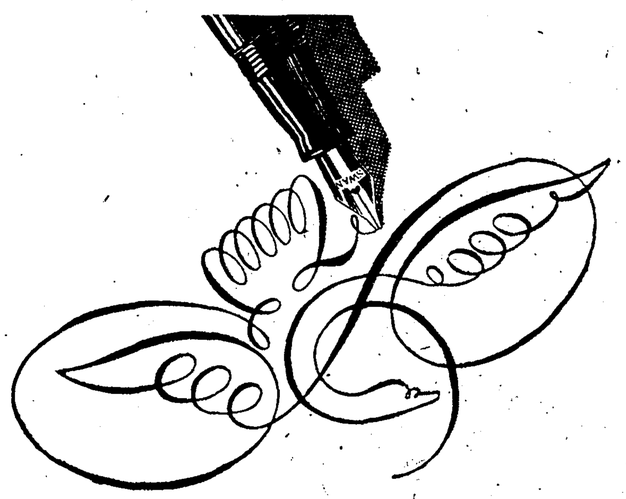
★ It is now revealed that this "national" phrase was used in Naval orders as a secret code for ordering and extending the Island's protective smoke screens.

... A great compliment which emphasizes once again the popularity of

Player's Please

PLAYER'S NAVY CUT CIGARETTES · MEDIUM OR MILD · PLAIN OR CORK TIPS

N.C.C.593H



Though thoughts are elusive, you'll catch them in flight with a smooth-flowing Swan in your hand when you write.

LONG MARCH ON FOOT

CRUSADERS' OWN TRIUMPH

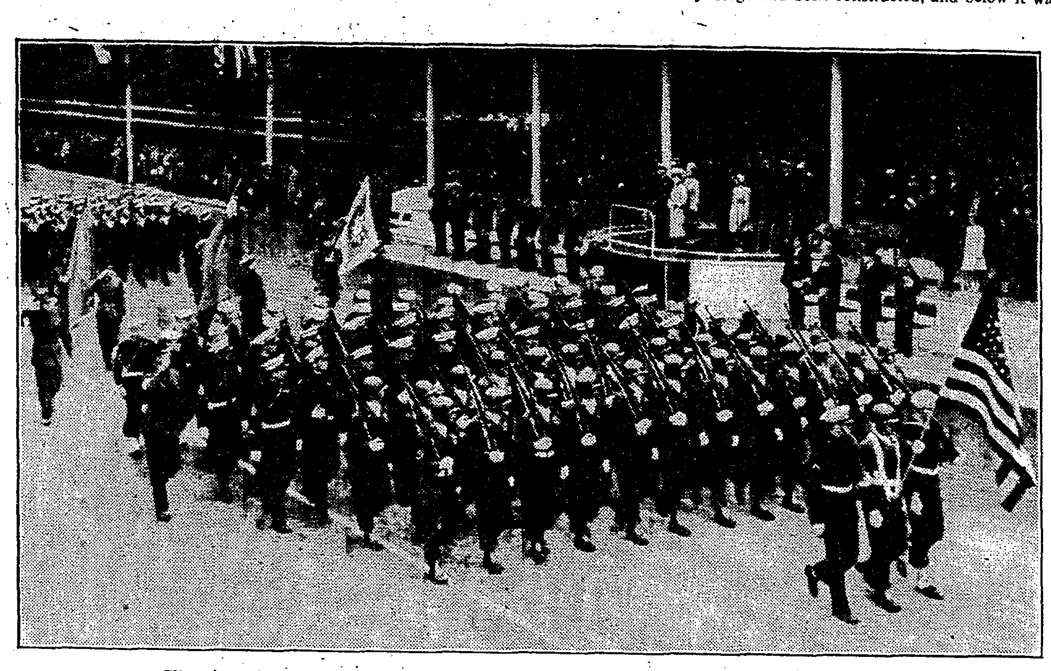
PROUD ACCOMPLISHMENT

They have learned great faith and little fear
and a high heart in distress,
And how to suffer each sodden year of
heaped-up weariness.
They have borne the bridle upon their lips and
the yoke upon their neck.
Since they went down to the sea in ships to
save the world from wreck.
—Kipling ("The Scholars").

These men and women of the services, so many of whom had their education in the war, 20,000 of them with those from the Dominions, India, Burma, and the Colonial Empire, these representatives of a series of kingdoms spread over a quarter of the habitable globe yet knit in one vast Commonwealth and Empire: together with another 1,005 allied troops, they were marching towards their King. Crusaders all, they were the delegates of those millions of sailors, soldiers, and airmen who had taken part in the six-year struggle "to save the world from wreck."

And as they marched perhaps the tramp of their feet and the music of the bands echoed in the hearts of those 540,000,000 subjects who form throughout the world a vast and peculiar family of nations. While for escort what of those unseen hosts—comrades in arms in many battles whose sacrifice of life itself had made this Victory Parade possible, they having served their day?

In this triumphal march, too, were men of the Home Guard, who had also served by standing by and waiting in city, town, village, and hamlet defying the invader who never dared to invade. There were the civilian services, civil defence services, industrial workers, utility and general services, all taking part in this token representation.



The American contingent passing the saluting base, followed by that of China.

Headed by a Guards band came contingents of the allied forces led by the United States, followed by China in a place originally reserved for the U.S.S.R., and by France and other allied forces in alphabetical order. Poland and Yugoslavia were not present.

As the column turned its course from Marble Arch into Oxford Street and away towards the saluting base, the cheering began which was to last for 48 minutes at any given point on a route more than 2¼ miles long. No ordinary route march this. Here was a living way thickly lined with warm-hearted, hero-worshipping humanity—wives, children, fathers and mothers, brothers, sweethearts and comrades, too, come to see the culmination of those wearing years of war. Former prisoners of war mingled on the pavements, they whose minds must have flashed back to those days of captivity when at times they had wondered—and who would blame them?—"O Lord, how long?" This was indeed a human column being watched and cheered along its journey by a concourse of humanity. Those taking part in this parade of victory were there on behalf of those—and there were so many—who had died that the rest might live and rejoice on this day.

SPIRITUAL TIES

The allied troops were accorded their praise, each in turn, and impartially. Then the Dominion troops—Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, and Newfoundland. How these men were cheered and cheered—for the spiritual ties between Mother Country and Dominions have increased with the years—and those relatives from oversea knew that their reception was an expression of wholehearted admiration for duty well done. India, too, had brought new colour with her bright turbans into the parade.

Next the representatives of all corners of the Colonial Empire; each brought to mind some incident in the war which would take its place in history. Sentiment demanded a special reception for those from Malta, island of the George Cross, which should have been crushed early in the war, but instead remained to fight on.

Now came an onrush of mighty cheering—like waves beating—for the men of the Royal Navy who were coming into view headed by a Royal Marines band, which was leading representatives of all branches of the service together with a contingent of the Wrens. There followed the Merchant Navy contingent—"unforgettable, unforgotten."

Civilian services headed by the Metropolitan Police Central band, leading policemen from all over the country, marched into the picture; the N.F.S. and the Salvage Corps; civil defence and nursing services; the W.V.S. and the Women's Land Army and Timber Corps and farm workers followed. The Rescue Service attracted particular attention by its two rescue dogs.

MULTIFARIOUS DUTIES

Next the Army, with its every branch in the picture of the day, too numerous to mention—glider pilots, parachutists and commandos, the Nursing Service, A.T.S., allied Air Forces, with the Central Band of the R.A.F. Most aspects of Britain's service and civilian war effort were there to remind those who looked on of the multifarious duties undertaken during those grey six years.

It mattered little that those lining the route became a little confused. Many were not sure about the two Greek soldiers in their white ballet-like skirts, or the Transjordan Frontier Force in spotted red headdresses; of many other things. They only knew that those taking part in the march were of one brotherhood who had won through.

The procession of triumph went on its way: Trafalgar Square, naval contingents receiving perhaps the silent blessing of the silent Nelson; on to the Embankment, the R.A.F. noting their own national memorial; the Army to join with others later in passing that reminder in Whitehall of those "Glorious Dead" of another earlier struggle against aggression. At the beginning of that war the then Prime Minister had declared: "We will not sheathe the sword until . . ." Nearly 30 years later another Prime Minister had hurled defiance at the enemy, to be followed subsequently by the terms "Unconditional surrender!" With that an accomplished fact men and women of the Commonwealth and Empire, together with allied force contingents, marched in triumph to salute the King in The Mall.

IN THE PARKS

PICNICS SPOILED BY RAIN

In the afternoon the solid masses which had packed the procession route since the early hours began to seek relief from the pavements in the parks. Here at first it seemed that the sure instinct which had placed these green and wooded acres within earshot of London's busiest thoroughfares was going to be justified in providing rest and recreation to the weary crowds. Hundreds of families, well provisioned with food baskets and carrying rugs and collapsible chairs, streamed on to the grass, well content, after sharing in the national ceremony, to spend an hour or two in the purely domestic pleasure of a picnic. In the streets they had formed part of the mass of the nation, but here in the parks they resumed their family identities, each in their own little encampment, refreshing themselves after their own fashion and recounting the adventures of the morning to music from loud-speakers in the trees above them.

Unhappily, shortly before 1 o'clock the promise of a lowering sky was fulfilled and rain began to fall. Immediately the open spaces cleared and each tree became the centre of a huddled group. By 2.30 it became a downpour. Paper hats became sodden, rattles lost their bite, and the picnickers, hearing that the entertainments were cancelled, left to seek less treacherous shelter than the dripping trees.

For the more hardy there were still two interests. The Salvation Army Regent Hall band, after some difficulty in ousting shelterers from the bandstand in Hyde Park, carried out their programme, while in Green Park the R.A.F. exhibition of aircraft attracted a steady stream of sightseers, in spite of the rain and the thick mud underfoot. This representative collection was dominated by the huge Lancaster bomber, but the exhibits which attracted the chief interest were the jet-propelled Meteor III and Sea Vampire. During the fly-past many people took advantage of the unique opportunity to compare the grounded machines with those swooping overhead. Among those filing past were many demobilized airmen, some of them naval veterans, who spoke with wry affection of the "stringbag" or "flying bedstead" while their eyes dwelt with longing on the Sea Vampire.

ENTERTAINMENTS CANCELLED

Of the cancelled entertainments Londoners particularly regretted that the Nautical Band was unable to perform on the open stand in the Cockpit. It had entertained them throughout the war years and had once been blasted from the Hyde Park bandstand by a flying bomb. The 200 London schoolchildren who had arrived in coaches to give a children's ballet and an exhibition of folk dancing had to take their Jack-in-the-Green and Hobby Horse to the Cyril Sharp Hall in Regent's Park, where they enjoyed a party of their own, heartened by the promise that they would be given a further opportunity to perform during the week. Meanwhile, the garlanded maypoles, built by the Ministry of Works to the specification of the seventeenth-century London maypoles, stood solitary in the rain.

During the evening the weather was a little more kind and the parks filled up again with strolling parties. There was music everywhere and dancing on the green came into its own. If the rain had washed out the scheduled programmes, the Londoners were quite capable of taking the initiative in their own hands and bringing their own Cockney gusto to the rural scene.

After the weather deteriorated, St. James's Park changed, within an hour, from a well-filled resort for picnics to an almost deserted expanse littered with paper bags, empty bottles, and remnants of food. Few who watched the procession were fully prepared for the torrential rain. Hatless and in flimsy summer frocks and costumes many women sought any available shelter in which to don the jackets of obliging escorts, and to improvise head-gear from newspapers and handkerchiefs.

PATHS FLOODED

As in the other parks, open-air entertainments, which were to have included band concerts, were impracticable. Rain lashed the surface of the lake, in which fountains were playing for the first time in many months, and saturated the turf. Water collected in wide pools at the lower levels, paths, in places, were submerged, the few remaining petals of the tulips—the gift of the Dutch nation—were beaten to the ground, and the blooms of the rhododendrons and lupins were damaged.

Few chose to remain in the park under such conditions. The people sought shelter wherever it offered—in spectators' stands in The Mall, in refreshment tents, or beneath the trees. Others placed tarpaulins across branches of shrubbery, or lodged sheets of corrugated iron on railings. Some crowded beneath overcoats and mackintoshes held aloft for protection.

Small groups of sightseers lined the railings of Buckingham Palace throughout the afternoon, in the hope of seeing members of the Royal Family. Conditions did not favour long vigils, however, and the crowds were not sufficiently large to obstruct even the footpaths.

In Regent's Park some thousands awaited the return of the mechanized column to parking areas after the parade, but the crowds dwindled rapidly when the rain set in and the vehicles excited little interest until the weather improved.

R.A.F. BOMBER SQUADRON TO VISIT U.S.

The R.A.F. Bomber squadron No. 35, which is to fly to the United States next month, will visit New York, St. Louis, Los Angeles, Denver, Long Beach, California, San Antonio, Texas West, and Palm Beach, Florida. Sixteen Lancasters and two Yorks will take part in Air Forces Day on August 1. No. 35 squadron was in the Pathfinder Force during the war and was to have formed part of the "Tiger Force" organized to join the American B-29 Super Fortresses in bombing Japan. The officer in charge of the visit will be Group Captain R. C. M. Collard, station commander at Graveley. Wing Commander A. J. L. Craig will command the squadron of about 40 officers and 176 other ranks.

PAGEANTRY AT NIGHT

THE KING LANDS AT WESTMINSTER

AQUATIC DISPLAY

The Palace of Westminster, where at 10 o'clock the King and Queen and the two Princesses arrived in the royal barge, was the focal point of London's night celebrations. Vast crowds on the bridges of Westminster, Lambeth, and Vauxhall and on the embankments on both sides watched for two hours a display of the genius and ingenuity of modern pyrotechnics across a famous and noble stretch of the Thames.

Happily the heavy rain, which had prevented some of the planned celebrations of the afternoon, abated as evening approached and ceased long before the beginning of the royal journey to and upon the river, although the sky was clouded and slightly marred the full effects of the fireworks and the flights of aeroplanes. Thus the crowds, which had begun to assemble hours before the river pageant and display, could stand, closely packed as they were, in comparative comfort. They moved in thousands in the direction of Westminster, through the decorated streets and past the great public buildings where at nightfall the flood-lighting picked out architectural details that daylight does not commonly reveal. Trains from the outer suburbs and far beyond brought thousands more to the stations, from which they made their way to the nearest point to the Thames they could reach.

A great gathering of members of both Houses of Parliament and their friends and other privileged ticket-holders assembled during the evening within the Palace of Westminster and on the terrace. Here a landing-stage had been constructed, and below it was moored a pontoon, in readiness for the arrival of the royal party. On the river lay barges with elaborate apparatus for throwing upwards powerful jets of water and of coloured lighting to illuminate them, which were soon to take their part in the wonderful spectacle, and there was continuous music through loud-speakers.

For more than two hours the crowds waited in silence until the police craft which were to escort the royal barge cut their way sharply, with spray streaming from the bows, up the river towards the Cadogan Pier, Chelsea. Here the King and Queen and the Princesses arrived shortly after 9 o'clock, and were received by Alderman Gerald Thesiger, the Mayor of Chelsea, Mr. Chuter Ede, the Home Secretary, and Sir John Anderson, chairman of the Port of London Authority, with Admiral Sir Harold Burrough, Commander-in-Chief, The Nore, and Sir Harold Scott, Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

BRILLIANT SCENE

The sound of cheering, growing in volume, warned the waiting multitudes at Westminster that the royal barge was on its way down the river. Soon they themselves took up the ovation as the royal barge passing Vauxhall Bridge with its escorts, all in perfect alignment, came downstream to where H.M.S. Chrysanthemum lay moored below Waterloo Bridge. Here the formation turned and sailed up river to the sound of continuous cheering.

The climax of the evening celebration came when the King, the Queen, and the Princesses disembarked at the terrace of the Palace of Westminster. From the pontoon they climbed the gangway to the landing stage, where, standing above the height of the river wall and clearly revealed by converging lights, they remained while the National Anthem was played through a great number of loud-speakers and maroons fired a royal salute. The King, in the uniform of an Admiral of the Fleet, stood at the salute and the Royal Standard was broken on the Victoria Tower.

The gathering on the terrace cheered loudly, and the cheers were echoed by the more distant spectators, deeply lined on the other side of the river beside St. Thomas's Hospital and on Westminster Bridge. The King descended the steps to the terrace and met the reception party, which included the Lord Great Chamberlain, the Lord Chancellor, the Speaker of the House of Commons, and Mr. E. H. Keeling, M.P., Mayor of Westminster. The royal party made their way to the Lord Chancellor's rooms, from which they watched the fireworks, and there they were joined by Queen Mary and the Duchess of Kent, who had travelled by car.

At midnight, after a wonderful and exhilarating spectacle, the great crowds began to disperse, not without difficulty. They surged over the bridges, along the Embankment and Whitehall, jostling and being jostled, but in good spirits after what must have been to many a long ordeal of waiting. Outside Buckingham Palace the crowds stood and cheered till long after midnight, when the King and Queen with the Princesses made their last appearance on the balcony to wave their greetings.

RIVER JOURNEY

BOATS PASSING IN THE DUSK

Thamesside was strange territory to thousands who gathered on Saturday night between Albert Bridge and the House of Lords. The throng leaning and peering over the Embankment wall, or sitting along the verge of Battersea Park, never thickened more than a cinema queue. Weather permitting, visibility allowing, they would have a nice easy view of the Royal Family, with an outside chance of getting to Parliament Square, one, two, three miles away, in time for the fireworks.

There was to be nothing gorgeous or exciting to see; simply a few boats passing in the dusk, a few moored river craft lit up, an M.T.B. with its company cheering at the rails, vague figures standing out against the light of the royal cabin. That was enough to bring thousands down to unfamiliar Millbank and Cheyne Walk, which they found well decked, windows open, and parties being given in houses and flats behind the riverside trees.

It was a grey, calm, Whistler evening, with the tide at flood. One could feel the rain waiting overhead. There were no loud-speakers to drown the hum of placid voices. The flood-lights in Battersea Park made no impression on the dusk; but way down the river, where the bend to Lambeth begins, the great power station was flood-lit to a warm, ruddy hue and giant cranes stood out as from a great dock. One wished their Majesties could be leaving half an hour later, in real darkness, or that there should be a sunset afterglow or some moonlight to bring the river surface to life. Then one remembered that there was to be a great and colourful climax for this water-show down at the Houses of Parliament, and there must be a period of deepening darkness before the rockets began.

EMBARCATION

At the little Cadogan Pier under the Albert Bridge a handful of naval officers and ratings, and an unnoticeable number of policemen kept a way clear for the Royal Family, whose arrival was heralded by cheers as they passed the Royal Hospital grounds. Down the bridge to the pier, handshakes and a few words with Admiral Sir Harold Burrough, C.-in-C., The Nore, the Home Secretary, Mr. Chuter Ede, and Sir John Anderson, chairman of the Port of London Authority, and then they were off. Four police launches led the way, and to the crowds waiting two miles up the river there were just six white and six red lights getting slowly bigger. One could spot which was the royal barge by the lighted cabin, by the moment at which the two M.T.B. crews in the first reach gave their cheer, by the wake of powerful screws doing eight to 10 knots.

Now it was really getting dark and Battersea Power Station stood out as a fiery signpost. There were some chortling hoots from odd river craft at their moorings, launches, and cruisers, and a white-clad party moored off the Chelsea Bank appeared to be drinking the royal toast standing. As the King's barge passed the ranks on the Embankment broke, and there began a trek at many different speeds towards Westminster. Many a carefully laid plan now went wrong. Many cars had been brought and parked along the road, with the idea of following the royal progress on land. The plan worked well enough for a mile or so, but at Grosvenor Road the police intervened, and drivers were diverted west. One party accepted the challenge, abandoned their car and began a steady jog with linked hands past the Tate, past Vauxhall Bridge, and so to the Abbey. Without their help your correspondent would have missed the fireworks, for Millbank was just a whirlpool of aimless walkers.

In this last quarter of an hour the royal barge had passed under three packed bridges to Westminster, where the landing stage was lit up for the climax, and where the crowd on the bridge gave a mighty cheer. Past the Discovery to Waterloo Bridge in the light of a few trial fireworks, then back in a wide sweep to the Houses of Parliament. Perhaps the procession should have touched the city at Southwark Bridge, for St. Paul's was lit in honour and expectancy and the golden cross stood out under the low rain clouds.

A PATCH OF CRIMSON

In Parliament Square the crowd were enjoying all the thrills of perfect timing by watching the hands of illuminated Big Ben and listening to the B.B.C. commentator working up the expectancy of listeners at home. At one minute to 10 the Abbey sprang into radiant beauty. Then came rockets, the boom of Big Ben, and searchlights fixing a point above the Victoria Tower. Up there unseen figures were hauling down the Union Jack to give place to the Royal Standard, its lower edge picked out by flood-light as a fluttering patch of crimson.

This was all for the moment. Somewhere behind the mass of the House of Commons there was a more exclusive ceremony going on. So the crowd in Parliament Square settled down to wait 15 minutes for the fireworks. Cars were stranded in mid-square; an inter-station bus edged its way round and round, bound either from Victoria to Euston or Euston to Victoria, it did not matter much which. The rain tried to fall and there were rumours that fireworks had been cancelled. An American voice on the loud-speakers asked us to listen to an impromptu party singing away the time, and sure enough the impromptu party began with the same perfect timing as the fireworks.

Then the maroons went off, and the music and the singing began as a background to the fireworks. Handel's music was effectively drowned by the traditional moans of admiration from the crowd. Up in Trafalgar Square a dense mass which did not know its London and thought to see the Thames display as clearly as would Nelson's figure was excited by the roars of the Westminster crowds. They came surging down past the Horse Guards and ran head-on into the first columns of home-bound Tube travellers. A right royal mêlée took place, from which your correspondent emerged before the recruiting office in Great Scotland Yard where the sergeant stood ready to reap the fruits of the grand parade.

ROYAL EMPIRE SOCIETY

The Royal Empire Society gave an afternoon party on Thursday in honour of the India and Burma contingents for the Victory parade, when all services were represented under the command of Brigadier Choudhry. LORD CLARENDON, chairman of the council, presided, and FIELD-MARSHAL LORD BIRDWOOD addressed the guests in Hindustani. General Sir William Slim, under whom many of them had served in Burma, was present.

CASCADES OF COLOUR

VIVID DISPLAY ON THE THAMES

Appropriately, the final event in the Victory Day programme had its setting on the Thames at Westminster, seat of the nation's Government throughout the war years. Explosives and other adjuncts of warfare were modified and adapted to produce a spectacle of surpassing beauty. The placid surface of the famous waterway, which so often in recent years reflected the ruddy glare of flames, mirrored instead the rainbow colours diffused by flood-lit fountains played from firefloats.

Searchlight rays probed the low clouds not for the detection of hostile aircraft but as integrals in an entrancing colour combination, the fiery progress of rockets culminated only in clusters of coloured stars and other pyrotechnic effects.

The night crowds concentrated on the river banks between Hungerford and Lambeth Bridges. The bridges and adjacent roads became densely packed and the vantage points offered by riverside buildings were fully used. Vehicular traffic was forced almost to a standstill at an early hour.

The Thames was devoid of its customary miscellany of small craft. Flanking the channel between Hungerford and Vauxhall Bridges were moored firefloats and barges manned by members of the National Fire Service.

ROCKET BARRAGE

As the King and Queen and the Princesses disembarked at the Houses of Parliament beams from many searchlights disposed in a wide arc flashed simultaneously into the sky, and a royal salute was given by 41 aerial maroons. The searchlights dipped to form a fretted pattern on the low cloud as opening bars of the National Anthem resounded through the loud-speakers, and its conclusion was followed by cheers which echoed across the water.

Fountains of water ascending from the N.F.S. craft and dispersing into broad cascades began the night's display. Comments of admiration were spontaneous and universal as these were illuminated with tinted flood-lights, to create luminous beauty of constantly changing intensity. The arches of Westminster assumed a mauve tint, and from its sides played jets illuminated in yellow. Forming a background tracery of colour, searchlight beams changed here with precision and regularity.

Spectacle followed spectacle in resplendent succession as fireworks were discharged from points on either side of the Houses of Parliament. Salvos of 200 rockets emitted featherlike formations of sparks among which floated coloured globes. Wide areas were illumined by the brilliancy of succeeding aerial cascades, which varied in character from colourful combinations of sparks and stars to effects reminiscent of the crackle of an anti-aircraft barrage. One set provided a convincing aural representation of a salvo of aerial bombs from release in the air to final destruction. Others emitted clouds of yellow sparks through which comet-like trails plunged downward.

FIERY MASSES

Interspersed with rocket displays were demonstrations at water level from barges on the river. Roman candles hurled successions of stars in varying colour combinations above the glistening water, and young and old spectators gazed with fascination at high columns of fine yellow sparks which drifted dust-like in the slowly moving air.

At 11 o'clock the multi-coloured river lights were dimmed for exhilarating displays of aquatic fireworks, floating slowly in the gentle current of the river itself. These formed fiery masses which rose and fell in the slight swell. Dense clouds of smoke eddied in their glare, and helped to create an illusion of a river on fire.

Indistinctly through the noise of hissing sparks and muffled cheers was heard the throb of engines of an aeroplane overhead. It was to have cooperated in displays with the searchlight teams, but the plans were modified because of the low cloud ceiling. On one run only over Westminster Bridge was it possible to discern the indistinct outline of the bomber as it nosed through the eddying mist.

A series of set pieces displayed opposite the Houses of Parliament depicted likenesses of members of the Royal Family. Cheers resounded from all sides as gradually the "portraits" of the King, the Queen, and Princess Elizabeth were etched in silver light.

The outlines were undimmed when fresh salvos of rockets soared upwards to fill the sky with coloured lights. More Roman candles introduced the most spectacular display—a double cascade which spanned the river behind Westminster Bridge, throwing into high relief the figures of the thousands who watched from the bridge.

Salvos of magnesium shells concluded the programme as they bathed the scene in intensely white light, searchlights again dipped in salute, and the National Anthem was broadcast to mark the end of a memorable day.

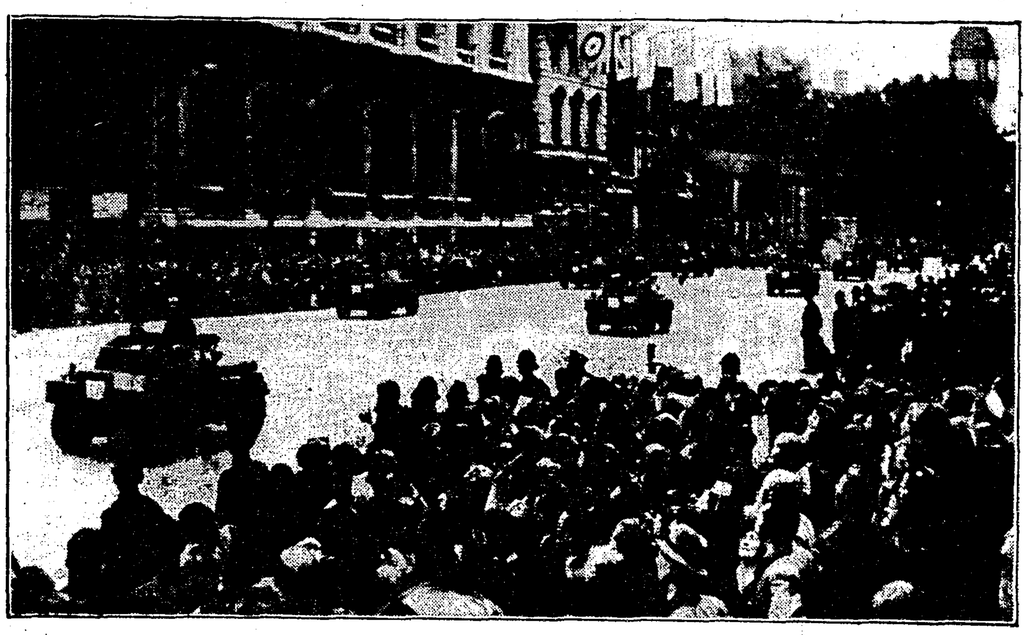
A number of casualties from falling rocket sticks were treated at the casualty clearing station at New Scotland Yard following the firework display. The injuries were mostly facial and one man had his nose split open.

"We have been dealing with one casualty of one sort or another every three minutes," a St. John Ambulance man told a reporter.

THE KING'S MESSAGE TO THE BRITISH LEGION

The King, as patron of the British Legion, which celebrates its silver jubilee this year, has sent the following message to its president, Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice:—"On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the British Legion I am glad to congratulate you and all your members on what has been achieved. I rejoice with you that once more we are at peace. Those of you who are veterans of the second great war will share my deep admiration for the work of your comrades, the ex-Service men and women of former wars, who have built up the strong and flourishing organization which you find awaiting you at home. As your patron, I send my best wishes to all in the British Legion, both young and old, for the years to come."

Congratulatory messages have also been received from General Eisenhower, Field-Marshal Lord Montgomery, Field-Marshal Lord Alexander, Marshal of the R.A.F. Lord Tedder, and Admiral of the Fleet Lord Cunningham. The Legion came into existence on July 1, 1921, when four ex-service organizations of the 1914-18 war were welded into one by the late Field-Marshal Lord Haig.



Commanders of the Royal Navy riding in scout cars along Whitehall.