

A ROYAL FANTASY

I had a most peculiar dream the other day. I dreamed that I went with a party of Christians to the Royal Wedding. It was an amazing event. I've never heard such noise, nor seen such colour. The world and his wife were there to see a fairy-tale display of pomp and circumstance — a Prince of the Realm coming to claim his bride.

The crowds were ecstatic, the cheering was incessant and deafening, and people kept breaking into raucous renditions of the National Anthem and Rule Britannia. Hands were waving flags, handkerchiefs or anything else they could find, and if there was nothing to wave people just waved their arms in the air. Little groups of otherwise perfectly ordinary housewives and office-workers launched into spontaneous dancing, and there was hardly a dry eye to be seen. A couple of pensioners were yelling "We love you, Andy".

I was caught up in all this, right at the front of the crowd, when I turned round to make sure I hadn't lost sight of my party in the excitement. To my shock, I saw that everybody I knew was staring at me, as if I was mad. They were all standing, or sitting, with arms folded, clearly embarrassed by the wild abandon apparent all around, and most of all by my own unseemly lack of inhibition. I couldn't understand it — they actually looked miserable rather than joyful. "Come on!" I shouted. "We're supposed to be celebrating!"

"We don't all have to celebrate in the same way," said someone sourly, pouring a cup of tea from a Thermos flask. "We're not all exhibitionists." Somebody was handing round sheet music parts for the National Anthem, which we all proceeded to sing at funereal pace, but suddenly my attention was caught by a stir in the crowd to my right. It was the Royal Couple, on walkabout! I shouted, I



sang, I stretched my arms over the crowd and, wonder of wonders, I caught the eye of the Prince himself! He came over to me, touched my outstretched hand briefly, and said something I didn't catch properly for the noise, but that didn't matter. I turned as he passed on, to grin at my friends, but... they weren't looking; they were all sitting on folding chairs in reverent postures, hands clasped and eyes directed solemnly at the ground.

"Didn't you see?" I exclaimed.

"Shhh!" a few glaring faces said, "Where 's your respect?"

"But you missed him..." I almost sobbed, "you missed the Prince."

"Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King.

Let them praise his name with dancing

and make music to him with tambourine and harp.

For the Lord takes delight in his people"

(Psalm 149 w2-4)***

JCG