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FLOYD R. PERKINS

MEET LADY ELIZABETH BOWES-LYON
(Continued from Page 6)

beth was kept busy writing letters home for those who were incapacitated for doing so themselves. And one wonders how many of those dictated letters written in her girlish hand are now treasured throughout the length and breadth of the land. Much as Queen Elizabeth owes to her birthplace, St. Paul's Waldenbury, her formative and adolescent years were almost entirely spent at Glamis, whose historic associations could not but keenly impress her plastic and romantic mind.

The castle is situated in the great valley of Strathmore, where a fertile plain slopes gently towards the Grampians on one side and the Sidlaw Hills on the other. There are, indeed, few more peaceful spots in the world than Glamis, and a great silence seems to brood over it, making it a blessed relief to wonder in its quiet glens and forget the roar of London. In the old days it was a well-fortified stronghold, there being originally nine walls surrounding the castle itself. Long ago these had fallen, but even today there are on the lawn two towers, last relics of those days of strife. Scottish history is full of battle and romance, and Glamis has more than played her share in the wild happenings of ancient days. Here, up the great stone stairs of the castle, they carried King Malcolm II. in 1304 to die of his wounds after the battle of Hunter's Hill. And the castle is associated with the names of many of those early Scottish kings who slept under its ancient beams. Many of the rooms are called after the honoured guests royal or otherwise, who have at different times slept in them. There is Scott's room for instance, where the famous Sir Walter Scott slept once when as a young man, he visited the family; and to this day the bed he used is still hung with the Scott tartan in accordance with the old hospitable custom of always putting a visitor to sleep beneath his own plaid. Such then is the home in which the future Queen of England lived her most impressionable years. Like all her kindred, she loved the place intensely, proudly regarding the ancient pile as the greatest heirloom of a great family.

Lady Strathmore now realized that her young daughter was growing up and soon would have to mix in the new England, whose dawn was so anxiously awaited. The result was that Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon was sometimes to be seen in London, either with her mother, or with her married sister Lady Elphinstone. Peace then came, and at first it seemed to work little change in the quiet life of Lady Elizabeth. It was a considerable time before Glamis Castle lost its military atmosphere. The Strathmore family naturally felt that for them the war had not ended till once more they were all united. Unfortunately they had a long wait, and a number of disappointments, before Captain Michael Bowes-Lyon, who was a war prisoner, was able to return from Germany. Now indeed, the war seemed really over to Lady Elizabeth when her own immediate family was at last reunited. At eighteen she faced the world, as did all her generation, with an experience wider in some respects than was that of their parents at more than double their age.

Lady Elizabeth, was now grown up, but no one quite knew when the event took place. She began to accept more social engagements, and visited considerably at various country homes, until almost unconsciously she found herself in the full whirl of social life. Now of course less time was spent at Glamis, as the Earl and his family spent a considerable amount of the year in town. Until 1920 they retained their town house in St. James Square; afterwards moving to 17 Burton Street—the house later to be so well known to the public as the birthplace of Princess Elizabeth. By this time Lady Elizabeth gained a large circle of personal friends apart from those of her family, sometimes invited to visit the Princess Royal (then Princess Mary) at Buckingham Palace. She proved to be a great social success, and was in demand everywhere, and became known as "the best dancer in London".

The Forfar Ball is one of the most important social events of the year over the border, so in 1921 Glamis castle entertained a large party for the occasion. One visitor was expected who had never been there before, and one can imagine the young hostess must have felt some slight trepidation at the thought of entertaining royalty for the first time. When the King (then Duke of York) arrived, however, all her fears ceased, and she realized he would prove an asset rather than a responsibility to her as hostess. A

large party had been invited to meet him, and naturally Lady Elizabeth was most anxious to look her best.

Now comes a chapter of romance, though its inevitable sequel did not occur for months. Imagine a young and handsome Prince, a lovely lady, and the two of them exploring together a grey old castle famed in song and history; and what better setting could be found for the development of an old-fashioned love story. Princess Mary was staying with friends not far away, so the two girls seized the opportunity of meeting. They say in the North, "If you want to know a man, meet his sister." The visit seems to have strengthened the friendship between the two girls, and when a few months later the engagement of the Princess Mary was announced, Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon was one of the favoured young beauties who were to form the bridal retinue. Princess Mary's wedding was the first time Lady Elizabeth took part in a great Royal public function, and she had to face the criticisms and comments of a huge crowd. If ever a pretty girl had a complete triumph, it was Lady Elizabeth on that wedding day. Every bridesmaid was pronounced lovely, but by common consent Lady Elizabeth was the most charming of the whole bevy.

So began the last summer of the girlhood of the future queen, and she little thought how soon her whole career was to be changed. It was toward the end of 1922 that rumour suddenly began to be busy with the name of Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon. Before then she had been simply one among many of the beautiful young girls in society, but now she was singled out for particular interest. There is no denying the fact that coming events do cast their shadows before them, and now hearsay linked the name of Lady Elizabeth with a royal marriage.

The Duke was only waiting his time before asking the most important question in life. He has always shown himself a man to give due consideration to every issue. He had taken his raval career seriously; he took his social obligations seriously; and now at this most important juncture of his life he realized he had not alone himself to please, but that he must choose a wife whose influence would be as beneficial to the State as it would be in her own home. Inquiry proved however, that at least he could assure the lady of his choice that she would receive the warmest of welcomes, not only from the family at Buckingham Palace, but also from the great British public. So assured that his choice was not only a wise one, but also one that would be of benefit to the nation he loved, the Duke went on Saturday, January 13, 1923 to stay at St. Paul's Waldenbury. The next day being Sunday, he and Lady Elizabeth walked together through the woods of the castle estate—and no doubt to the Queen that wood will always seem an enchanted place, for it was there she made the great decision of her life.

The enthusiasm aroused everywhere by the announcement of this royal engagement proved beyond all doubt the attitude of the British public towards His Royal Highness' commoner fiancée.

Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon has impressed all beholders as being full of the joy of life, and her looks have spoken the simple truth. Like a child she could enjoy the passing moment and saw all the fun in all kinds of situations. Everyone knows, however, a woman may be classically beautiful, and yet fail to attract, and looks without charm are worthwhile. Fortunately the Queen is possessed of both. The public know her admirable poise and dignity mingled with that winning manner that endears her to all hearts—A charming and winning smile is one of the greatest gifts that a woman can possess, and it is her smile which has made the Queen renowned throughout the Empire.

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