

There'll Always Be an England

Because we spend a lot of time in Britain, my wife, Cita, and I were especially interested in the reaction of American friends to the royal wedding. Some enjoyed the spectacle; many thought it rather nice that this beautiful commoner fit the glass slipper; many thought the whole process a silly anachronism—“twits in sashes,” one commentator joked. They are all right, but they miss the real importance of the event.

For the royal family, the wedding marked an end to what the British would call a rough patch. The emotionally obtuse Prince of Wales failed to convince his young wife, Diana, that men in his position traditionally had mistresses and that, as one Tory grandee told me, “she should take the diamonds and be quiet.” Then there was Diana’s manipulation of the media. Knowing that her picture on the front page was worth a boost in circulation of 50,000, she tried to induce editor friends of ours to play up the brutal treatment she had received from a royal family that offered no support to a teenager way over her head in both the family’s businesses, being royal and being loved. Finally, the Queen’s inability to comprehend the depth of the emotions unleashed by Diana’s death at 36 in a car crash almost brought down the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, renamed Windsor when World War I became something of an issue.

I arrived in London the morning after Diana’s death, and I, too, was amazed at the floral outpourings and the tears from a tough-looking plumber. Were it not for Tony Blair, who finally persuaded the Queen to put a quiver in the royal upper lip and dispatched his media-savvy team to the palace, Kate Middleton might have married Bill the helicopter pilot, instead of becoming

the Duchess of Cambridge, consort of Prince William.

But there was something even more important than the second kiss and the staged plain-clothes departure from the palace by the royal newlyweds. Britain has endured a wave of immigration that has strained its social fabric. New documents reveal that Blair and his then-chancellor of the exchequer, Gordon Brown, secretly opened the door to a wave of immigration almost ten times the level they inherited. Blair was infatu-



ated with multiculturalism, Brown with the prospect of cheap labor that would keep wages and prices down while he went on a spending binge. Both knew their Labour party constituents would hate this: It is, after all, *their* schools that were inundated with non-English-speaking kids, *their* hospitals overloaded with new immigrants, *their* neighborhoods that saw strange new costumes and smelled unfamiliar cooking, *their* jobs that were threatened. So the decision to open the gates was kept a deep, dark secret until some Blair aides recently leaked the truth.

The result is a Britain with more unassimilated immigrants than it can comfortably absorb, and a strain on its welfare, education, health, and hous-

ing systems. When Cita visited the northern town of Bradford recently, she was the only woman in a shopping center not in a burka. When we stroll down Oxford Street, we see as many shoppers wearing headscarves, veils, and the like (and often pushing prams) as we see women in jeans. Now 62 and ever tone-deaf, Prince Charles, should he outlive his 85-year-old mother, wants his title changed from Defender of the Faith—Anglicanism—to Defender of Faith.

Never mind the positive contributions many immigrants have made to the economic and cultural life of Britain: That’s for the metropolitan elites to savor. Those contributions are less relevant to the middle class, which bears the social costs of the immigration of millions with no interest in assimilation, some of them violently hostile to Western values.

Which is where the wedding comes in. It was quintessentially British, a reaffirmation of the country’s unity under the crown, a comfort to those who are feeling like strangers in a strange land. The service was a reaffirmation of the Christian nature of the country, welcome even to the more than 90 percent who do not attend church but who fear the Islamization of their nation, where *sharia* law already reigns in parts of the country. Watching the wedding crowd from the balcony of our London flat, we saw not a burka.

Most important, the wedding promised that Britain’s future will at least in broad outline resemble the past. Princes William and Harry—the heir and the spare, as they are known—retain some of the magic that Walter Bagehot noted was essential to any monarchy. Yet they’re also working stiff—very rich ones, wallowing in unearned wealth and titles bestowed by a doting grandmother, but working stiff all the same. Better still, the line of work they have chosen is military service to their country.

IRWIN M. STELZER