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## Address at Westminster Abbey Wreath-laying

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## WESTMINSTER ABBEY WREATHLAYING

June 21st 1986

ROSEMARY MARTIN was our Guest of Honour. She had been invited because of her very sympathetic portrayal of Dolly Winthrop in the BBC Television film of 'Silas Marner' - a much loved character with a special place in George Eliot's novel.

After she had placed the Fellowship chaplet of laurel and white carnations on the Memorial Stone which had been unveiled exactly six years earlier by Gordon S. Haight, Miss Martin admitted that, prior to the invitation to play Dolly Winthrop in the film, she had read no George Eliot. She was interested in the part and then read 'Silas Marner', first the novel and then the BBC script.

It is her usual practice to wait until she begins to rehearse before starting to form the character she is to play, and this is often affected by the person she is playing her principal scenes with - in this case,

Ben Kingsley, whose work she greatly admires. However, as soon as she began to rehearse, she discovered that the character of Dolly had, much to her surprise, already got under her skin. Miss Martin admits she is not normally a patient person, but suddenly found herself imbued with an unusual patience in relation to what she was doing and to the other actors. She found herself 'protecting' Ben Kingsley in the same way that Dolly protected Silas.

One of the big problems in the film was acting with a wilful small child. Eppie in the novel is a strong-minded little girl - she knew that the coal hole was her place of punishment and went there before Silas found out what she had done wrong! The television Eppie seems to have been a very strong-minded little child - and she knew what she would do and what she wouldn't. She also appears to have had a powerful set of lungs and her obstinacy was matched with her screams of protest! She didn't like either Dolly or Silas (and the feeling seems to have been mutual) but Miss Martin managed to cope with this small handful as patiently and sympathetically as Dolly herself might have done.

Miss Martin concluded by saying that she felt that she would very much like to maintain the calm and the patience of this truly good woman, into parts that were nothing like Dolly Winthrop, and she felt grateful to George Eliot for creating Dolly, and for giving the actress and her listeners the opportunity to read all the other novels and find in them, as she had in 'Silas Marner' a great deal for which to be thankful.

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