

October 31, 1936



Mrs. Wallis Simpson: Will she say "No"
to King Edward VIII?

BRITISH PUZZLE: Would Mrs. Simpson Marry King? Is Its Latest Turn

"The question," a London West End matron remarked last week, "is not whether His Majesty would marry Wallis (Mrs. Ernest Aldrich Simpson), but whether Wallis would marry the King."

Put in reverse that way, the world's current number one guessing-game hummed afresh in schoolrooms, drawing-rooms and walk-up kitchens from Bangkok to Buffalo, all but overshadowing this week's expected divorce hearing.

The English matron, a close friend of the Simpsons and who wished to remain anonymous, hastened to explain that if the Baltimore belle refused to wed the monarch it would not be because she did not like him, but because she is "proud."

Other friends, in and out of Court circles, equally coy about having their names used, pointed out that the American woman would not wish to be Queen if there were any question of not being "accepted"; that she would not wish to be the cause of any criticism, however unjust, being directed at her royal companion; that, in any case, her social position as a "close friend" would be somewhat higher than that of amorganatic wife.

Mrs. Simpson

Spectacle—Meanwhile, the 88,000 town-folk of Ipswich, Suffolk, were treated to the amazing spectacle of constables solemnly escorting an imaginary person through the crowds and into the County Assizes. First came two trumpeters in the scarlet jackets of the Coldstream Guards. Next, escorted by the red-robed Lord Mayor, came Mr. Justice Hawke. The trumpets blew, the crowd bared heads, Mr. Justice Hawke marched into court. A sermon opened the calendar. Subject: "Christian Morality."

Saturday's preview was also a dress rehearsal for the long-awaited show—*Simpson, W., vs. Simpson, E. A.*—scheduled for Tuesday.

Newspaper men who jammed the *Pickwickian* city's hotels thought it would not take more than ten or fifteen minutes. Customary British procedure is for the complainant to take the stand, establish her identity, give the dates of marriage and separation and outline the basis for misconduct charges. At this point a hotel bill usually is produced in evidence, marked "paid and bearing the name of defendant and wife". Hotel employees then testify that the gentleman in question stopped at their hostelry, and that the "and wife" was not the plaintiff. The judge then grants a decree nisi.

Ordinarily, the innocent party may apply for an absolute decree, necessary to remarry, at the expiration of six months. However, in special cases the interval may be shortened with the court's consent.

Watchful—British newspaper men present were there, not to file stories for publication, but to "keep their editors in touch" by phone. Unshackled by the newspapers' "gentlemen's agreement," the *News Review* hammered away on the question: "Can the King marry a Commoner?"

The *News Review* reported that he could, provided she were not a Roman Catholic (Mrs. Simpson is not). The magazine stressed that the monarch needed only his own consent, not that of the Privy Council, and mused:

"A Queen's coronation is invariably separate from that of the King. If a Queen is to be crowned, the rite of having a lady-in-waiting open her robe while the Archbishop of Canterbury anoints her bosom with a cross of holy oil will doubtless be foregone, as it was in the case of Queen Mary."

Mention of the Queen Mother sent reporters hurrying to Her Majesty's new quarters in hopes that she would have something to say about what all London was thinking. She did.

In language that might be interpreted as a rebuke to newsmongers, gossips and stuffy prelates alike, she said crisply:

"The friendship is His Majesty's affair."