

EDWARD'S EMPIRE-SHAKING ROMANCE

Tradition vs. Love,
Tory vs. Commoner,
Baldwin vs. Nature

In 1533—King Henry VIII, in despair because his fat, aging Queen, Catherine of Aragon, had not given him a male heir, and passionately in love with Anne Boleyn, tried to win a marriage annulment from Pope Clement VII. He failed. Then the monarch, who was to be six times bridegroom ere he died, broke with Rome, married the pretty young Lady-in-Waiting, and gained Parliament's recognition as the "only head in the earth of the Church of England."

In 1936—The Rev. Alfred Walter Frank Blunt, Bishop of Bradford in that Established Church, assailed its head, and forced on the British monarchy—and the British Empire—the gravest crisis it has faced since Charles I lost his head three centuries ago. King Edward, like his long-ago predecessor, was in love, and determined to marry Mrs. Wallis Warfield Simpson, the American-born commoner whose two divorced husbands are still living.

From the "tight little isle" to the uttermost corners of the far-flung Empire, this astounding news burst with such suddenness and fury that by Monday his enemies had maneuvered the idolized monarch to the verge of abdication. For the stability of the Empire and the fate of a war-eager world, the crisis held incalculable danger.

The Bishop was speaking last week to his Diocesan Conference on the religious significance of the Coronation. With the bluntness his name suggests, he commended the King to God's grace, "which he will so abundantly need, as we all need it, for the King is a man like ourselves, if he is to do his duties faithfully.

"We hope he is aware of his need. Some of us wish he gave more positive signs of such awareness."

The press associations sent out the speech with this notation: "We draw your special attention to the last paragraph. You may publish or delete this as you wish." London papers deleted it.

What was behind the good Bishop's bombshell? Had he touched off the Empire-quivering blast at Baldwin's behest?

Belatedly, the well-named prelate answered that question himself:

"About Mrs. Simpson? Heavens, I've never heard of the woman. Why, I only meant to suggest that His Majesty should attend church more regularly."

Babbitts—But the fat was in the fire. The pompous press of the ultra-Tory, ultrarespectable Midlands had leapt on the story almost unanimously, with scorching editorials which belied the Bishop's disclaimer of an officially inspired campaign.

Birmingham, stronghold of Neville Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer and probable successor to Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, read in *The Post*:

"The Bishop of Bradford's words are words of reproof—such reproof as nobody, whether cleric or layman, has thought proper to address to the King of England for many a long day. They are not necessarily to be condemned on that account as mere impertinence. . . . At any rate, he (Doctor Blunt) must be assumed fully to have satisfied himself that the gossip and rumor and highly circumstantial tale-telling as to one particular phase of His Majesty's private life is not without its basis of solid truth."

The *Yorkshire Post*, which includes on its Board of Directors Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden's father-in-law, argued that Doctor Blunt must have had good reason for his remark, and added:

Beyond the Seas—His Most Excellent Majesty Edward the Eighth, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, Ireland, and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India, emerged as the slave of 500,000,000 subjects ranging from the greatest peer to the smallest pigmy.

The Prime Minister had organized official support in that vast domain which sprawls over more than one-quarter of the globe. In Ottawa, Premier W. L. Mackenzie King made a break. Correspondents dashed to him with a report that all Dominion Governments had agreed to back Baldwin. "Has Mr. Baldwin made any statement?" he asked. "No." "I have nothing to say," the Premier added quickly, "except that I heard many rumors when I was in England, and have heard many since I came home."

Australian Ministers raced to Canberra. The Governor-General of New Zealand hurried to his Capital. South African authorities feverishly worked out code messages from Whitehall.

Sacrifice—And editors for the first time revealed to His Majesty's subjects in two hemispheres the crisis which worried Mr. Baldwin all summer. One thought pounded in world-wide editorials—Sacrifice, Sacrifice, Sacrifice. The King must make a man's supreme gesture for the good of the Empire. Round the globe, editors hammered:

India: "Public opinion is behind the Government solidly."

Northern Ireland: "Within limits, His Majesty's private life is his own affair, but, if the correct significance is attached to conversations at Buckingham Palace concerning the difficulties which have arisen between the King and his advisers, then the nation has legitimate concern."



Mrs. Simpson: the cause of England's crisis

Australia: "The dignity of the Crown can not be trifled with without inflicting the gravest hurt.

"There is no constitutional reason why the King may not make whom he freely chooses his wife, but the King's subjects must be conceded a corresponding freedom in such a supremely important matter as who may be Queen. . . . Amid the most diverse circumstances, the King never has been found wanting in service and sacrifice. This crisis challenges him to make a supreme display of these qualities, for his own and the monarchy's sake."

Canada: "It would be calamitous if at this time any cleavage between the King and his Ministers should necessitate the exercise by Parliament of its undoubted disciplinary powers."

South Africa: "His own happiness is a small price to pay for such devotion and for the benefits it confers, and by renouncing his happiness, the King will add yet another claim to the affection of his people."

Symbol in Theory—The news left the Empire speechless. In New York, *The Herald Tribune* neatly pointed out the one weakness of the imperial system. "Apparently,

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the British Constitution, for all its marvelous and metaphysical subtleties, contains one serious defect. In making the monarchy a symbol, it was obliged to retain the monarch, who is a man. And there is no provision as to what happens when a symbol falls in love. In modern constitutional monarchies, the symbols have never done so, or have done so only according to the rules as established by law and precedent. The possibility that one might do otherwise apparently has been overlooked by constitutional theory; yet, as every one knows, it is a very obvious human possibility, and one likely to produce incalculable effects upon human behavior."

Symbol in Love—Behind the guarded gates of turreted Fort Belvedere, his favorite country residence, the fair-haired, youthful-looking man of forty-two stood like a rock against the wave of appeals.

Trained to rule from childhood, he ascended the Throne less than a year ago with a personal popularity probably unequalled in the Empire's history. In all his life, he had failed his people in only one of their expectations: he refused to marry, "I shall never marry," he said years ago, "until I am in love."

Just as he entered his forties, he met Mrs. Wallis Warfield Simpson, a Baltimore girl descended from Maryland and Virginia families who trace their ancestry to William the Conqueror's knights. Divorced from Winfield Spencer of the United States Navy, she was, at the moment she met the King, married to Capt. Ernest Simpson, a London ship-broker, whose British nationality she still retains.

American newspapers immediately chronicled Edward's obvious devotion to the charming brunette, but when he suggested last spring that Parliament make some provisions for his future bride, even politicians were so ignorant of the bachelor King's intentions that the request inspired good-humored laughter.

Last summer, Mrs. Simpson accompanied the monarch on his Adriatic cruise; in October, she obtained a divorce on the ground of adultery. Next April, her decree becomes final (unless the King's Proctor has the decree nisi annulled), and there is no law to prevent the stubborn man in the palace from marrying her. They could even marry in the Anglican Church, which permits its clergymen to officiate at weddings of divorced persons, and obliges an unwilling pastor to lend his church to another minister.

Yet, arrayed against the law, stands the stifling tradition which governs the lives of English kings. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of All England, threatened to boycott the Coronation if the monarch persisted. He got a sharp: "Please remember that I am the head of your organization."

Symbol's Choice—What could the King do?

He could of course give up the woman he loves, but the simplest solution seemed the only one which did not occur to him.

He suggested to Baldwin that he marry Mrs. Simpson without making her his Queen. The Liberal London *News Chronicle*, casting about for one of the compromises in which the English excel all races, offered this solution.

"There are many people in this country who would not desire to see as the Queen of England a woman who had previously been married. There are some—tho they must to-day be extremely few—who would see an objection to an American citizen* occupying that high rank. . . . The public would, we think, wish that he should marry a woman of his choice, but that he should do so in his capacity as Duke of Cornwall. His wife's position would then be that of King's Consort, not that of Queen of England. For such an arrangement there is the precedent of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort, and if necessary, Parliament should pass the requisite legislation to make th' arrangement possible.

"Moreover, if the King should feel disposed in the special circumstances to acquiesce in Parliament passing an act of

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exclusion barring from the Throne any possible issue of his marriage, thus leaving the existing succession to the Throne unchanged, that would be a gesture which would overcome many scruples."

Albert, the Prince Consort whom Victorian gossips dubbed "the Queen's German husband," was not permitted to discuss State affairs, or even household problems. The fat little Queen sat at the head of the table, with her husband on her right, and toastmasters always drank her health before the Prince's.

Yet Victoria's was not a morganatic marriage, and that was the heart of the proposal to make Wallis Warfield Duchess of Cornwall.

Red Tape—For such a marriage by a reigning monarch, no precedent exists in England. The idea drew from the Prime Minister his first public utterance:

"In view of widely circulated suggestions as to certain possibilities in the event of the King's marriage," he told the House of Commons, "I think it would be advisable for me to make a statement. No such thing as a morganatic marriage is known to our law. The Royal Marriages Act of 1772 has no application toward the sovereign himself . . . The King himself requires no consent from any other authority to make his marriage legal, but as I have said, the lady he marries, by the fact of her marriage to the King, necessarily becomes Queen.

"She, herself, therefore, would enjoy all the status, rights and privileges which both by positive law and custom attach to that position, and with which we are familiar in the cases of Her Majesty the late Alexandra and Her Majesty Queen Mary, and her children would be in direct line of succession to the Throne.

"The only possible way this result could be avoided would be by legislation dealing with a particular case. *His Majesty's Government are not prepared to introduce such legislation.* Moreover, the matters to be dealt with are of common concern to the Commonwealth as a whole, and such a change could not be effected without the assent of all the Dominions. I am satisfied from the inquiries I have made that this assent would not be forthcoming."

Impasse—In the impasse, the King could accept Baldwin's resignation and name another Prime Minister. But Maj. Clement R. Attlee, Labor leader and logical man for the job, apparently allied himself with the Government and promised not to take office if it resigned over the constitutional issue. In the Commons he played the rôle of an end-man in a minstrel show, feeding Baldwin his lines, helping to cut debate.

Altho Labor suspects that the King's promise to workers during his Welsh visit—"Something will be done!"—lies at the root of Tory pressure, the Party hesitates to back him against the Ministers. For English constitutional history is in a sense the story of the long process which reduced the powerful English monarch to the automaton in ermine and gold he is to-day.

Edward might name one of his defenders in the Cabinet Prime Minister. His friend, the War Minister, Sir Alfred Duff Cooper, and Home Secretary Sir John Simon, reputedly backed him in the Cabinet's heated sessions.

On the floor of the Commons, Baldwin's enemy, Winston Churchill, who, in his brilliant, volatile Tory-Liberal-Tory career has never been the slave of political conventions, thrust himself forward as the King's champion. Twice, with his ruddy face more flushed than usual, he insisted the Government take no "irrevocable" step without informing Parliament.

None of these men could command a majority in the House. If one of them became Prime Minister and fell, he could ask the King to call a general election. The issue of the King's right to marry the woman he loves would then go before the voters of Great Britain.

Edward's only other choice was to take Baldwin's hint, and abdicate. Giving up his people, his royal titles, the pleasant English life he loves, the Crown lands and his

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State income, he would go into exile as Duke of Cornwall, Baron Renfrew, or plain David Windsor. Of his great wealth and million-dollar income, he would retain only his personal wealth, unknown, but estimated at about \$500,000 a year.

In the latter event, the British and Dominion Parliaments would have to approve Edward's act, and the succession of his heir, the Duke of York.

The King's second brother, who will be forty-one next Monday, has none of the Sovereign's charm or popularity. Possibly for this reason, Court and political circles, the bitterest opponents of Edward's "demagogic" activities, look on the Duke as a more reliable figurehead.

His marriage to Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, a Scottish commoner, pleased the people. The plump Duchess's popularity surpasses the self-conscious Duke's to such an extent that a London newspaper once dared to remark: "The Duchess of York and her husband left London last night."

York's greatest handicap lies in his stutter. Opening an exposition while technicians toyed with a microphone, he once broadcast to all Britain: "The d-d-damned thing d-d-doesn't work."

His best asset is his elder daughter and heiress, Princess Elizabeth, a golden-haired, blue-eyed child of ten.

Friends—The Simpson affair and the Cabinet's intrigues burst on the great mass of Edward's friends with a suddenness which found them unprepared to defend him.

Churchill rounded up some sixty M. P.'s. Lord Beaverbrook and Viscount Rothermere, who reputedly returned from a one-day American visit by royal command, threw to the monarch the support of their sensational, popular papers.

All his champions fought for time.

"You can not smuggle the greatest living Englishman off the throne during the weekend," Rothermere proclaimed in his *Evening News*. "The present haste is indecent and is giving rise to unpleasant rumors affecting high political and other personages. No Government which, on this matter of supreme importance, runs counter to the wishes of the people of England, can survive."

The *Liberal Star*, thinking better of its original boldness, dropped this sentence from late editions: "There may be better Prime Ministers; there is no better King."

"Abdication is out of the question," Rothermere's *Daily Mail* trumpeted.

"Why can not time be granted?" Churchill asked. "The fact that it is beyond the King's power to accomplish the purpose which the Ministers oppose until the end of April (when Mrs. Simpson's divorce becomes final) surely strips the matter of constitutional urgency. . . . I plead, I pray that time and tolerance will not be denied."

Col. Josiah Wedgwood, Laborite M. P., and member of the family famous for its china, startled the Commons with a motion aimed at the Archbishop of Canterbury. Edward's position, he insisted, could not be affected by the Coronation or "the presence or absence at it of any dignitary or personality whatsoever."

In the press, the Laborite went further, screaming: "Don't bully the King! The thing we have got to avoid more than anything else is abdication. . . . The King is beloved. Any change will tear the country in two."

Thousands of workers and young people of all classes demonstrated for the Poor Man's King. They surged around the gates of empty Buckingham Palace, singing "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow!" They haunted Downing Street, booed the Prime Minister, and thrust their placards—"Hands off our King! Abdication means revolution!—under the Archbishop's nose. "We want Eddie and we want his missus!" mobs yelled before the Duke of York's residence. "Edward's right and Baldwin's wrong!"

"Up America!" a gray-haired woman shouted in Hyde Park. "Mrs. Simpson might make the best Queen England ever had."

Mrs. S.—But Mrs. Simpson was no longer in England. Described as agast at the

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storm which had broken over her friend, she had passed the week in seclusion, save for several trips to Fort Belvedere. She went there on Thursday night for an interview which, according to rumor, left both her and the King in tears.

Still protected by his attentions, she departed for the Newhaven-Dieppe Channel steamer that night, in the Buick he had given her, accompanied by a royal chauffeur, secretary, and the King's ex-bodyguard.

In a nightmare forty-eight-hour dash across France she had the protection of French police against thirty car-loads of pursuing reporters. Only one correspondent caught up with her. "I have no immediate plans," she told him. "The King is the only judge." Finally, nervous and lined with exhaustion, she found refuge at the Cannes villa of Mr. and Mrs. Herman Rogers, American friends who had shared the Adriatic trip and accompanied her to Balmoral Castle last summer.

The King's seclusion rivaled hers. He went up to Marlborough House to visit his heart-broken mother. He received his brother York at Buckingham Palace, in a scene described as stormy. The royal family canceled all public engagements.

At Fort Belvedere, King Edward saw his closest advisers, and conducted bitter interviews with Baldwin, who on one occasion departed so harassed that he forgot his hat.

Exchange—Amidst uncertainty unrivaled since the war, government securities dropped sharply and all trading was "nervous." Lloyd's increased its coronation insurance from 25 per cent. to 50 per cent. overnight, then refused further quotations. Throughout the Empire, business men canceled coronation boom orders, and on the Exchange brokers clamored to know what the crisis meant in "pounds and pence."

Their inquiries evoked the Bishop of Bradford's belated and unconvincing explanation, his plaintive: "The people make a good deal more of the thing than they have any right to do."

Time—Suspicion spread that political intrigue lay behind the haste to force the monarch's decision. Faced with hostile demonstrations at home and a growing popular sympathy for the monarch throughout the Dominions, Baldwin backed down.

"In considering this whole matter," he told the House of Commons on Monday, "it has always been and remains the earnest desire of the Government to afford His Majesty the fullest opportunity of weighing the decision which involves so directly his own future happiness and the interests of all his subjects."

International—To the world at large, it seemed incredible that the British Government should risk the stability of the island and the Empire at a moment when the dynamite-laden Spanish war constituted a continuous crisis for Europe.

Romantic France sympathized with the monarch. Germany, which had placed high hopes in the monarch as pro-German, banned the news. So did King Carol of Rumania. He would have been glad to play it up, in revenge for the British royal family's snubs over his own peccadillos. But for Carol the story was a boomerang which might easily hit his friendship with red-haired Magda Lupescu.

In the United States the press and public opinion swung to the monarch. Many suspected that Mrs. Simpson's American birth was as black a mark as her two divorces. As Jack Beall emphasized in the *New York Herald Tribune*, the London press, led by *The Times*, protested the point too much. "It would not further purposes of State," he added, "for it to be known that here they consider an American as a sort of clever, higher vertebrate who, rather unfairly, has learned to speak a language something like their own." Colonel Wedgwood voiced the same charge: "Why on earth should not the King marry an American if he wants to? What is it that makes an American inferior to a German?"

Another Laborite, Sir Stafford Cripps,



Duke of York . . . or King Albert I?

observed: "I can not help feeling that if the lady in question had been a member of the British aristocracy under precisely similar circumstances, a quite different decision would have been come to by the Government."

William Allen White, strong behind the King, urged him in the *Emporia, Kan., Gazette* to broadcast this statement from the "front porch" of Buckingham Palace. "You are all a bunch of white-livered hypocrites, for if I was to carry this gal on the pay-roll as a *sub-rosa* cutie instead of taking her in through the front door and giving her a good name, you would all wink and snicker and say 'Oh, well, boys will be boys,' but anyway she is not that kind of a girl and I am not that kind of a fellow."

In truth, no American paper seemed to express what the *London Times* describes as the American attitude: "a profound and wide-spread sense of bewilderment extending far beyond the individual monarch."

In fact, Sinclair Lewis, through the *New York Post*, begged the monarch to come to America. "David Windsor, come over here! We are a funny people, because we believe in righteousness. We believe that a man must have his own conscience, his own wife. We believe that perhaps the most important thing that has happened in the last one hundred years is whether David Windsor should have his own life or not.

"We believe that it is perhaps more important to the British Empire that a young man in England named David Windsor should be completely loyal to the girl he loves than to the British mirage."

From the bewildered individual who had to make that tremendous decision, no word came. The world felt sure he would make it, not as King Emperor, but as a man.