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“The Woman I Love”

The underlying motives for King Edward VIII's abdication

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“But you must believe me when I tell you that I have found it impossible to carry the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge my duties as King as I would wish to do without the help and support of the woman I love.”¹ These words came from King Edward VIII, in his farewell address to the nation and the world. Sitting at a desk in a room at Fort Belvedere with his three younger brothers the day before, the King signed his resignation papers becoming the first British monarch to voluntarily abdicate the throne. The King’s reasoning behind his actions was simple, and yet complicated royal matters in ways never seen before. The King had fallen for a luxury he could not afford; the King had fallen in love with a soon-to-be-twice-divorced, American, Roman Catholic named Wallis Simpson. While some newspapers tried to simplify the messy situation—“King Makes His Decision: Chooses Woman Over Throne”—the King’s abdication went deeper than it seemed.² On the surface, the abdication may seem romantic—the King gives up power and title to spend his life with a common woman—but as the layers peel away, the selfish benefits become clear. King Edward VIII’s abdication was more than a romantic gesture to Ms. Simpson; it was a political strategy to avoid conflict with Parliament regarding his future as a King, the process of fighting to change legislations, and criticisms from the Royal Family about Ms. Simpson’s religion, morals, and intentions.

From the beginning, Edward (born Edward Albert Christian George Andrew Patrick David Windsor) was destined to be king, though he strongly disliked the idea.³ Born to the Duke and Duchess of York (later King George V and Queen Mary) on June 23, 1894 during the reign

¹ King Edward VIII. *Farewell Speech from Windsor Castle*. Podcast audio. BBC. 7:01. Accessed September 15, 2012. http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/edward_viii/12937.shtml.

² Birchalls, Fredrick T. “The King Makes His Decision: Chooses Woman Over Throne After ‘Long and Anxious Thought,’” *The New York Times*, (New York City, NY), Dec. 11, 1936.

³ H.R.H. Edward, Duke of Windsor. *A King’s Story: The Memoirs of the Duke of Windsor* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1947), 36.

of Queen Victoria, his great-grandmother, Edward became fourth in line for the throne. As great-grandson of the monarch, Edward was given the title *His Highness Prince Edward of York*. Edward's childhood was similar to upper-class children at the time; he was raised by nannies rather than directly by his own parents and instead of attending school as a child, a tutor was brought to him.⁴ By the age of thirteen, Edward began his formal schooling at Osborne Naval College, and had an awful experience. In his memoir, the Duke says, "Despite my most determined efforts to uphold what I guessed must be the traditions of the British Navy, I left Marlborough house with tears drenching my new blue uniform," and then going on to describe how he disliked the school, yet he had, "not dared complain to my parents," showing the stoic relationship between the Prince and his parents.⁵ At the age of fifteen Edward was moved to the Royal Naval Academy at Dartmouth where he remained for another two years. The future King's life was exactly on schedule.

May 6, 1910: a new King takes the throne. King Edward VII, Edward's grandfather had died and King George V (Edward's father) ascended the Throne. Upon his father's kingship, Edward was named *Duke of Cornwall*.⁶ One month later on his sixteenth birthday, Edward was named *Prince of Wales* (crowned 13 July 1911) and became second in line for the throne.⁷ Edward was withdrawn from Naval academy before his graduation, and began attending Magdalene College, Oxford where he graduated in eight years, but without any academic qualifications.⁸ When The Great War broke out in 1914, Edward was of age and served, but not in the line of duty. In a letter to a friend the young soldier writes, "I long to be taking my chance

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 68

⁶ Ibid., 71

⁷ The title of *Prince of Wales* is not automatically given to the King's successor. If he so chooses, the King may withhold the title. Ziegler, Philip. *King Edward VIII* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 24-25.

⁸ Ibid., 58.

in the trenches with my brother officers and in fact all able bodied Englishmen.”⁹ The future king’s life was too precious to be risked in the field of battle, so inside he sat. The King’s discomfort with the Royal lifestyle from an early age foreshadowed his inability to fulfill expectations: a shortcoming that would ultimately lead to his abdication.

While the future king was attending naval schools and receiving lessons on how to become King, a beautiful, determined, young woman was growing up over three thousand miles away on the east coast of the United States. Wallis Simpson (born Bessie Wallis Warfield) was born into a well-to-do family on June 19, 1896.¹⁰ Due to her father’s premature death shortly after her birth, Wallis and her mother lived off the charity of generous family members.¹¹ While the Prince attended the Royal Naval Academy, Wallis attended one of the most prestigious girls’ schools on the east coast—Oldfields School.¹² While visiting her cousin one April in Pensacola, Florida, Wallis met a United States Navy aviator names Earl Winfield Spencer, Jr. and they were married less than seven months later. Due to ‘Win’ and his alcoholic habits, their relationship was strained.¹³ Wallis’s uncle forbade her from petitioning for divorce from Win, as he took divorce very seriously. Wallis spent time in Asia, specifically China, avoiding her husband and family. She is rumored to have had multiple affairs, one even ending in a pregnancy Wallis decided to end prematurely resulting in her lost ability to bear children, though these rumors were never confirmed.¹⁴ Regardless of her actions and alleged wrong-doings in Shanghai, Wallis returned to the United States where her divorce with Mr. Spencer was finalized 10 December 1927.¹⁵ Wallis’s first husband was gone, and the next was already involved in her life.

⁹ Windsor, 113.

¹⁰ Sebba, Anne. *That Woman* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2011), 4-5

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 23

¹² *Ibid.*, 13.

¹³ Sebba, 14.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 48

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 60

Mr. Ernest Aldrich Simpson, a shipping executive, and Wallis were involved romantically before either had divorced their previous spouses. After both were divorced, (Wallis from Win, and Ernest from his wife Dorothea) Wallis became Mrs. Ernest Simpson on July 21, 1928. Due to the Wall Street crash in 1929, Wallis lost all her money, and moved with her husband to England, as the shipping industry was still thriving.¹⁶ There the couple was introduced to Lady Furness, Prince Edward's mistress at the time, who then introduced the couple to the Prince. The Prince attended house parties hosted by the couple and became friends with the Simpsons, Wallis especially, from 1931 – 1934. In 1934 while Lady Furness was away in New York, the Prince's affair with Mrs. Simpson is said to have started, as staff found the two in bed together, yet the Prince denied this to his father, King George V.¹⁷ Evidence of their affair started to become more obvious, but still moving slowly, as she was still married. Lady Furness, along with other close friends of the Prince started noticing how he flaunted her, how she corrected him and advised him on clothes and food.¹⁸ While the Prince's past lovers referred to him as "sir" in public, Wallis dared to call him "David."¹⁹ As the relationship between Prince Edward and Mrs. Simpson continued, officials and family members began to worry, after all, this was a twice-divorced American. The situation turned from a harmless affair into a serious problem upon news of the King's death; the reality of succession had become very real.

Five minutes before midnight January 20, 1936, King George V died in the presence of his family. Edward says this of that night:

"Death came to [my father] five minutes before midnight. And while my mind was still trying to comprehend the profound event that had in that instant

¹⁶ The Great Depression in the U.S. began with the Wall Street Crash in October 1929 when the DOW Jones dropped over sixty points in a period of two days.

¹⁷ Martin, Ralph G. *The Woman He Loved* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 147.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

occurred, my mother did an unexpected thing. She took my hand in hers and kissed it; before I could stop him my brother George, who was standing beside her, stepped forward and followed her example. I knew of course that this form of homage was now by custom my due. But like my father the action embarrassed me. I could not bring myself to believe that the members of my own family, or indeed anyone else, should be expected to humble themselves before me in this way. Nevertheless, these two spontaneous gestures served to remind me, however needlessly, that I was now King.”

What did his ascension to the throne mean? It meant that the Prince was now a King, and his relationship with Wallis suddenly became a serious issue. Now, there was legislation in the way of their love, not to mention the still-looming fact that Wallis was still Mrs. Simpson.

The 1701 Act of Settlement the Parliament of England was issued in order to settle the succession to the English and Irish crowns and thrones.²⁰ The act clearly states that if a member of the Royal Family were to marry a Roman Catholic, they could not ascend the throne.²¹ This was in direct threat to the relationship between the King and Mrs. Simpson; if their relationship were to carry on, he could not marry Wallis, as she was a Roman Catholic. Though this particular piece of legislation was not the deal-breaker, it only added to the mounting pressure against the King’s affair.

Another piece of legislation pushing the couple to end their relations was the Royal Marriages Act of 1722. This act states that any descendant of King George II, male or female, could not marry without the consent of the reigning monarch.²² However, any member of the royal family who has a marriage that violates the Act does not lose his or her place in line to the throne, but the offspring is considered illegitimate.²³ Though this Act did not directly affect the

²⁰ *Chronological Table of the Statutes*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Bogdanor, Vernon. *The Monarchy and the Constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 55.

couple's relationship while Edward was still only a Prince, and they did not request to marry until after he had become King, the Act still applied to Catholics, of which Mrs. Simpson was one. If the two wanted to marry, they would have to receive the approval of both houses of Parliament, which, as the King knew, due to his shaky relationships with members of Parliament, were not probable.

The largest piece of legislation against the relationship between the King and Mrs. Simpson was the Constitution. When the King proposed to marry Mrs. Simpson, who's divorce was still not finalized, he directly contrasted the advice of his ministers. The government of the United Kingdom and the Dominions of the British Commonwealth directly opposed the proposed marriage between Mrs. Simpson and the King, raising political, religious, and moral objections and hoping to the end process as quickly as possible.²⁴ In a Parliament debate regarding the Abdication Bill, 1st Earl Atlee said of the Bill, "We on this side desire to support this Bill in order that we may carry out the wishes of His Majesty that this chapter in our history which is closing should be closed with the least possible delay," clearly showing his interest in ending the matter quickly.²⁵ The Church of England does not allow re-marriage if the spouse is still living, and Mrs. Simpson not only had one living spouse, but two.²⁶ The King went directly against the government and openly stated whether on or off the throne, he intended to marry Mrs. Simpson, causing what is referred to as the Abdication Crisis of 1936.²⁷ Though the King's defiant nature caused some tension between the Throne and members of Parliament, the most

²⁴ Lord Beaverbrook. *The Abdication of King Edward VIII: A vivid, day-by-day record of the Crisis as seen by an insider* (New York: Atheneum, 1966), 29.

²⁵ "His Majesty's Declaration of Abdication Bill". *Commons and Lords Hansard, the Official Report of debates in Parliament*, last revised 2010, accessed 8 March, <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1936/dec/12/his-majestys-declaration-of-abdication>.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Ziegler, 178.

stressful relationship for the King at the time of his reign, other than his romantic relationship, was that between the King himself, and the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister at the time of King Edward VIII's reign was Stanley Baldwin. The Crisis that came with the ascension of King Edward VIII and his relationship with Mrs. Simpson was the last major test of Baldwin's political career. The Prime Minister openly disliked the romantic relationship between Mrs. Simpson and the King, once saying he could tolerate her as a "respectable whore," if their relationship remained behind closed doors, but not on the throne.²⁸ Baldwin also believed Mrs. Simpson to be politically pro-Germany and in, "close contact with German monarchist circles," and therefore refused to trust that she really loved the King.²⁹ The King and Baldwin's relationship was strained due to this Crisis. Baldwin threatened that if the King married Mrs. Simpson he, along with the majority of government, would resign: a threat the King deemed credible enough to take into consideration as he pondered abdication.³⁰ Though their relationship was strained, to say the least, Baldwin still hoped, for the sake of the nation that the King would choose the throne over Mrs. Simpson. In the address to the House of Commons the day of the King's abdication, Baldwin said:

"This House to-day is a theatre which is being watched by the whole world. Let us conduct ourselves with that dignity which His Majesty is showing in this hour of his trial. Whatever our regret at the contents of the Message [of the King's abdication], let us fulfill his wish, so what he asks, and do it with speed."³¹

His speech to the House of Commons demonstrates his belief that whatever must be done, must be done for the benefit of the people, portraying Baldwin as a true politician for the people: he would not stand for what he believed to be the King's selfish actions.

²⁸ Williamson, Philip. *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 326.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 328.

³⁰ Windsor, 393.

³¹ Baldwin, Stanley. "Members of the House of Commons." House of Commons. 10 December 1936.

Among the many people influencing the King's decision about abdicating the throne were his opinioned family members. Though he had died months earlier, King George V's opinion of both the Edward and his relationship with Mrs. Simpson remained valid in the King's mind. King Edward VIII and his father's relationship in the last years of King George V's life deteriorated, mostly due to the relationship between Edward and Mrs. Simpson. King George was appalled at his son's infatuation with married women, and often condemned him for not settling down earlier in life.³² Just before his death, the King said of his son, "After I am dead, the boy will ruin himself within 12 [sic] months," displaying the distrust the King had against his son. King George V preferred his second son, Albert and Albert's daughter Elizabeth, saying of the two, "I pray to God my eldest son will never marry and have children and that nothing will come between Bertie and Lilibet and the throne."^{33 34} Though King Edward did not have his father to deal with in person, he had his father's words trapped inside his mind, constantly replaying and telling him what he should do, as he would later reflect in his memoirs.³⁵

Another family member that had a great influence on Edward and his looming decision was his mother, Queen Mary (Mark of Teck).³⁶ The Queen openly disapproved of divorce, as it was against the teaching of the Church, and therefore discouraged Edward's relationship with Wallis.³⁷ The Queen also disliked Mrs. Simpson, stating she was unsuitable to be the wife of a king. She disliked Mrs. Simpson so much, that even after Wallis was presented in court to King George V and Queen Mary, the Queen refused to meet with her in public or private.³⁸ Despite the Queen's immense dislike for Mrs. Simpson, she continuously hinted that Edward should not

³² Ziegler, 199

³³ 'Bertie' and 'Lilibet' were King George V's nicknames for his son, Albert and his granddaughter, Elizabeth (respectively).

³⁴ Ziegler, 201.

³⁵ Windsor, 143.

³⁶ Ziegler, 34

³⁷ Ibid., 206.

³⁸ Windsor, 231.

abdicate his throne for feelings she believed were trivial and fleeting.³⁹ Since the King refused to give up Mrs. Simpson, the Queen was disappointed with the damage she thought had been done to the crown, but not nearly as disappointed as she would have been if Mrs. Simpson became Queen Wallis.⁴⁰ Nothing had been finalized and a decision had to be made; though the King's future was unclear at the beginning of December 1936, in only a few short days, everything would change.

The time came for the King to make a decision: would he keep the throne, or the girl? On December 10, 1936 the King signed an Instrument of Abdication renouncing the, "Throne for Myself, and for My descendents," in the presence of his three younger brothers.⁴¹ The same day, Edward spoke before the House of Commons regarding his abdication:

"After a long and anxious consideration, I have determined to renounce the Throne to which I succeeded on the death of My father, and I am now communicating this, My final and irrevocable decision. Realising [sic] as I do the gravity of this step, I can only hope that I shall have the understanding of My peoples in the decision I have taken and the reasons which have led me to take it. ... I am most anxious that there should be no delay of any kind in giving effect to the Instrument which I have executed and that all necessary steps should be taken immediately to secure that My lawful successor, My brother, His Royal Highness the Duke of York, should ascend the Throne."⁴²

The last step before it all became official was the passing of the Act entitled *His Majesty's Declaration of Abdication Act 1936*. The Act specifically stated that upon signing (1) The King immediately ceased being King, (2) The King's descendants could have no title and could not succeed the Throne, and (3) That The Royal Marriages Act of 1722 would not apply to any

³⁹ Windsor, 402.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 228.

⁴¹ *Instrument of Abdication* (1936)

⁴² Windsor, 409

marriage after his abdication.⁴³ The Act was passed, the nightmare was over, and the King was freed.

Edward addressed his people the next day in his famous radio farewell:

“At long last I am able to say a few words of my own. ... A few hours ago I discharged my last duty as King and Emperor, and now that I have been succeeded by my brother, The Duke of York, my first words must be to declare my allegiance to him. This I do with all my heart. ... And now we all have a new King. I wish him, and you, his people, the happiness and prosperity with all my heart.”⁴⁴

Lastly, came the subject of titles. Since Edward renounced the Throne, he should not have received a title.⁴⁵ However, his brother, King George VI, gave him the title Duke of Windsor, and also allowed him the style *His Royal Highness*. King Edward VIII was now Edward, Duke of Windsor.

The King had given up his throne to spend the rest of his life with the woman he loved, but until her divorce was finalized that following May, the Duke could not see her. The two were married June 3, 1937 without any members of the royal family present, per mandate of the King. Wallis Warfield became Wallis, Duchess of Windsor, though to Edward's dismay, Wallis would not receive the style *Her Royal Highness*.^{46 47} The Duke and Duchess assumed they would settle in Britain after two years in France, allowing his family, Parliament, and the people a chance to adjust to the situation, but the King with the support of his wife and his mother threatened to cut

⁴³ *His Majesty's Declaration of Abdication Act 1936* (1936)

⁴⁴ King Edward VIII. *Farewell Speech from Windsor Castle*. Podcast audio. BBC. 7:01. Accessed September 15, 2012. http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/edward_viii/12937.shtml

⁴⁵ Per the Letters Patent.

⁴⁶ Wallis changer her last name to Warfield before the wedding ceremony.

⁴⁷ Ziegler, 289

off the Duke's allowance, should he return uninvited; they spent the rest of their days in France, only returning to London in 1965.^{48 49}

“God save the King,”⁵⁰ were King Edward VIII's last public words to the people that were once his. A King with power greater than anyone could have known had given it all up. While he used love as an excuse, his reasons were more selfish, in order to avoid creating any more conflict that he already had. His relationship with Mrs. Wallis Simpson that broke morals when he was Prince threatened to break laws as he became King, and served as the perfect excuse to back away from the family business. After a reign of less than one year, King Edward VIII abdicated his Throne, remaining to this day the only British monarch to voluntarily abdicate. There is no doubt that the King was in love with Mrs. Simpson; in a letter to Wallis the January following his abdication, Edward writes, “God bless WE my sweetheart and hold tight. I love you so dearly. Your David.”⁵¹ If Edward had not used his love as a political strategy to escape, and instead valued his responsibilities over his personal agenda, he and Wallis might have been King and Queen, instead of Duke and Duchess.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 477.

⁴⁹ At the request of Queen Elizabeth II.

⁵⁰ King Edward VIII. *Farewell Speech from Windsor Castle*. Podcast audio. BBC. 7:01. Accessed September 15, 2012. http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/edward_viii/12937.shtml

⁵¹ Wallis and Edward referred to themselves as ‘WE’ meaning their initials, but also playing on words.

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Lyrics "Jason Mraz - The Woman I Love". Maybe I annoy you with my choices, Well, you annoy me sometimes too with your voice. But that ain't enough for me To move out and move on. I'm just gonna love you like the woman I love. We don't have to hurry, You can take as long as you want. I'm holdin' steady, My heart's at home. With my hand behind you I will catch you if you fall I'm gonna love you like the woman I love Sometimes the world can make you feel You're not welcome anymore. And you beat yourself up, You let yourself get mad. And in those times when you stop lovin' That woman I adore You can relax, Because, babe, I got your back. I don't wish to change you, You've got it under control. You wake up each day different Another reason for me to keep holdin' on. [Verse 2] We don't have to hurry You can take as long as you want I'm holding' steady My heart's at home With my hand behind you I will catch you if you fall Yeah I'm gonna love you like the woman I love. [Verse 3] Sometimes the world can make you feel You're not welcome anymore And you beat yourself up You let yourself get mad And in those times when you stop loving' That woman I adore You can relax Because, babe, I got your back Uh, I got you Uh, Yeah I don't wish to change you You've got it under. control You wake up each day different Another reason for me to keep holding' on I'm not attached to any way you're showing up I'm just gonna love you like the woman I love Yeah I'm gonna love you Oh, Yeah I'm gonna love you Cause you're the woman I love. More on Genius. Artist: Jason Mraz. Song: The Woman I Love. Tuning: Standard " Capo 4. Tabbed by: Donnie Niemi. Email: dniemi3 at hotmail dot com. Version: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=739gZhhj_p4. Chords: F 133211.Â FCBut that ain't enough for me. EAmAm7/GTo move out and move on. FCGsus4CI'm just gonna love you like the woman I love. [Instrumental]. FC* Gsus4C. [Verse]. FCWe don't have to hurry. Gsus4AmYou can take as long as you want. FCI'm holdin' steady. The official video of "The Woman I Love" by Jason Mraz from the album 'Love Is A Four Letter Word'. Download Now: <http://smarturl.it/love> Download 'The Woman I Love' single & video: <http://smarturl.it/TWILSingle>. Directed by Elliott Sellers - <http://elliotsellers.com>.Â We Steal Things.â™ and "Love Is a Four Letter Word," made pop history with his singles "I'm Yours" and "I Won't Give Up," racked up two Grammy Awards, and won the prestigious Songwriter Hall of Fame Hal David Award. In addition to his 2018 album "Know."™ making waves on the US Billboard 200, Mraz has also recently made his Broadway debut in the musical Waitress. "The Woman I Love" lyrics. Jason Mraz Lyrics. "The Woman I Love". Maybe I annoy you with my choices Well, you annoy me sometimes too with your voice But that ain't enough for me To move out and move on I'm just gonna love you like the woman I love. We don't have to hurry You can take as long as you want I'm holdin' steady And my heart's at home With my hand behind you I will catch you if you fall I'm just gonna love you like the woman I love. Sometimes the world can make you feel You're not welcome anymore And you beat yourself up You let yourself get mad And in those times when you stop lovin' The woman I adore You can relax Because, babe, I got your back Mm, I got you.