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Nottingham Evening News (United Kingdom) Thursday, December 10, 1936

If the monarchy is not a conventional institution, is the monarch entitled to conventional behaviour, like marrying for love as opposed to marrying for duty? Can they lose their temper in a gathering of heads-of-state? Is divorce possible? Is he allowed to fall in love with a divorced foreign woman and other things that we, conventional people, are entitled to do?

These questions were relevant at the end of 1936 when the British monarchy suffered one of its seasonal serious crises. On De-

cember 10, King Edward VIII shook the country, the Empire and the world with the announcement that he would renounce the throne after only 10 months and 21 days in the job. To put it romantically, he abdicated for a love of a woman. And an American, twice divorced woman at that. A certain Mrs Wallis Simpson, "dark, petite, graceful, vivacious and witty, excellent taste in dress", as this newspaper described her.

For a monarch bound to tradition, dating, not to say falling in love with this woman was

very unconventional behaviour. The very conservative Church of England, of which he was the head, put it bluntly in its newspaper: "We feel bound to point out that this grave crisis has arisen from ignoring the widely accepted moral law which is the fundamental basis of all Christian civilization. Anything that undermines the sanctity of family life is calculated ultimately to destroy the rock upon which the structure of the nation is built. We do not hesitate to say that if Parliament and the nation agreed to the King of England



marrying a woman who has already two husbands alive, the British Empire would receive its death sentence."

No wonder the pressure was too much to bear for the King. And in a radio speech he told the nation: "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."

A weak personality? an unprofessional monarch? a victim of a country trapped by tradition? the triumph of love? Your call.