



# The Private World of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor

*Hugo Vickers*

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The story of King Edward VIII, the Duke of Windsor, who abdicated the English throne in 1936 to marry Wallis Simpson, the woman I love, an American who was twice divorced, is perhaps the most romantic saga of the twentieth century. While the dramatic events involving this famous couple may be familiar, this fascinating book provides a fresh look at their lives through the extraordinary collection of private photographs recently discovered in the Windsor residence in Paris, many of which have never been published before. In 1986 Mohammed Al Fayed, who revitalized two venerable institutions, Harrods in London and the Ritz Hotel in Paris, purchased the Paris mansion that had been the last home of the Duke and Duchess; he also acquired the contents of the house. As the residence was being restored, a few photographs emerged from drawers and chests, together with old scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, and other mementos of the couple's life together. But it was not until 1988 that the mahogany lid covering the bathtub in the Duke's bathroom was lifted to reveal the most exciting find - an additional hoard of some ten thousand photographs. The staff had hidden the pictures in the bathtub to keep them safe from acquisitive visitors during the Duchess's long illness, when many private papers were disappearing from the house. The photographs range from family snapshots to formal portraits by such well-known photographers as Cecil Beaton and Karsh of Ottawa. This remarkable cache of photographs, scrapbooks, and other objects from the house reveal the Windsors' very different backgrounds - the Duke as a royal prince, brought up to be heir to a worldwide empire, the Duchess growing up in an unremarkable family in Baltimore. The photographs show them as young adults, portray their romance, and reveal their thirty-five years of married life in exile following the Abdication.

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