



# The Playboy Princes: The Apprentice Years of Edward VII and VIII

*Peter Beer*

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**A fascinating dual biography proves that controversial Royal Family members are not necessarily only a feature of late 20th- or 21st-century life**

Edward VII (1841-1910) and his grandson Edward VIII (1894-1972) were born in different eras, but it is illuminating to compare the early and middle years of the two Princes of Wales as kings in waiting and discover how their youth informed their years on the British throne. The privileges of rank aside, they were heirs to an unenviable role, and this study presents a unique portrait of strained apprenticeships for which there was no satisfactory precedent. Theirs was an upbringing dictated by dogmatic prescription and the heavy weight of obligation. As they pursued their lives according to their distinct personalities, they were never relieved of parental strictures, especially with regard to Queen Victoria and her eldest son, who filled the void with shallow interests, a profligate style of living, and the delights of Parisian nightlife. Inevitably the two princes were consigned to filling much of their time with insubstantial engagements not best suited to their characters and which reveal a common vulnerability. In the case of the future Edward VIII, he took a jaundiced view of matters of state and preferred dance floors, riding to hounds, and the ministrations of lovers. This book is the story of the heirs' progress that provides often unexpected perspectives on two public figures better known through the history of their respective reigns. For readers in this era, the similar position of Prince Charles ensures that this survey is a timely as well as a surprisingly entertaining read.

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