



Noblesse Oblige: The Duchess of Windsor as I Knew Her

Richard René Silvin

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All “British Royal watchers” and Windsor aficionados know about the only voluntary abdication in British history when, on December 10, 1936, the handsome, young, beloved King Edward VIII handed over his three hundred twenty-five day reign to his brother; who, on that foggy night, became King George VI. The famous abdication speech, delivered in a radio address to the nation, contained the memorable words “I cannot undertake the heavy burden of state without the love and support of the woman I love” and became one of the era’s most repeated phrases. The historic act catapulted the relatively obscure, twice-divorced Wallis Simpson to international fame as she became both demonized and intriguing. Within weeks and in an unprecedented act, Time Magazine named Mrs. Simpson the first “Woman of the Year.” Now, twenty-five years after the Duchess of Windsor’s death, the first personal description of the legendary lady is available. Readers of *Noblesse Oblige, the Duchess of Windsor as I knew her* by Richard Rene Silvin will learn intimate details of the Duchess as Silvin refutes most of the defamatory and scurrilous rumors which surrounded the legendary lady and which, she herself, abhorred but never discussed. The Duchess of Windsor Silvin describes is anything but the detached, cold ruthless, superficial lady history has heretofore portrayed. Instead, readers will “meet” a clever, funny, profound and loving woman. *Noblesse Oblige* begins in 1973, when the-then twenty-five year old author was appointed by US AID, a branch of the State Department, to restructure a famous Parisian hospital, which was the lonely, recently widowed Duchess’ only charity and reputed to be the sole beneficiary of her estate. In keeping with her largely unrecognized tradition of charity work, the Duchess took it upon herself to study the inner workings – and intrigues - of a modern hospital. She took a keen interest in Silvin who would become her protégée and certainly the object of her final, well thought out public battle. *Noblesse Oblige’s* readers are also exposed to a researched history of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor beginning with their early lives and which follows them to their deaths. The book contains newly revealed details of the Duke’s peaceful demise, in May of 1972, when he serenely passed away in his Paris home, surrounded by his completely devoted Duchess, competent nurses, favorite Pug, Black Diamond, and treasured items. Sadly, and in stark contrast, Silvin describes the Duchess’ decade-long illness during which, in an undiagnosed form of dementia, she gradually lost control of her arms and legs, was inhumanely kept alive for six years, slowly isolated from friends, stripped of her dignity and even her nurturing child-substitutes – her dogs. The book both begins and ends with vivid and detailed descriptions of the hospital Board of Governor’s meetings where a still keen-minded Duchess brilliantly strategizes to save the author from being terminated. In her own words, quoted in the book’s first chapter (“God knows I can appreciate being the victim of a plot!”) she embarks on her last quest for what she thought was justice. As the story reaches its climax and wearing her chalcedony sapphire jewelry, which she claimed “has mystical powers to assist us” she uses the tragic death of Aristotle Onassis to further her agenda while quoting the motto of the highly revered British “Most Noble Order of the Garter” Honi soit qui mal y pense (Shame on those with evil thoughts.) *Noblesse Oblige* (another one of the Duchess’ favorite expressions) contains amusing accounts of famous Parisian physicians, high-level French politicians, international socialites and even a vulgar and notorious American Congressman. Because of the book’s famous characters and venues, some names and facts have been altered. *Noblesse Oblige* is the author’s third book following *I Survived Swiss Boarding Schools* and *Walking the Rainbow, an Arc to Triumph*.

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