



0. "WEDDING of the CENTURY" - Story Preface

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Prince Albert Frederick Arthur George (known to his family as "Bertie" and the rest of the world as the Duke of York) married Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon on April 23, 1923. This is a picture of the couple on their wedding day. The original photograph is part of the Royal Collection. On the day they married, they had no idea that they would one day reign as King George VI and Queen Consort Elizabeth.

Life was happy at Glamis Castle, a home owned by Elizabeth's family. As a regular visitor, Bertie saw what it was like to be part of a loving family in a calm environment. It was something he wanted for himself.

Since he was the second son of King George V and Queen Mary, Bertie believed he would play a royal-family role, but he would never be king. He could concentrate on building his own life with Elizabeth.

Prone to outbursts of temper—perhaps due to his stammer—Bertie was mostly calm when he was around Elizabeth. That helped his stammer, which was markedly lessened in her presence. The prince could not wait to marry his fiancé.

Although her family was of Scottish nobility, Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon was considered a commoner. The marriage of Bertie and Elizabeth—scheduled for April 26, 1923—would be the first time a royal had married a commoner in several centuries.

People in Britain, still weary after the difficult years of World War One, were excited about the upcoming event. Perhaps it would be a national holiday! Soon the press referred to the pending marriage as "Wedding of the Century."

Because of Elizabeth's status (or lack thereof), they would not become "man and wife" at a royal chapel. Instead, they would be married at Westminster Abbey.

Three months isn't much time to plan a wedding—especially when everyone in the country is following the story—but Bertie and Elizabeth had lots of help. When the wedding cake was ready, people lined up for blocks to view the ten-foot masterpiece (which was displayed in the bakery shop's window).

England is known for its spring rains, but April 26th dawned bright and beautiful in 1923. People lined the streets of London to watch Elizabeth and Bertie—now called the Duke of York—leave their respective homes and make their way to the Abbey. We can still see silent-film footage of "The Wedding of the Century."

Bertie's marriage to Elizabeth changed his life:

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the Duke's marriage to his happiness and character. It transformed him, and was the turning-point of his life; it also had the additional advantage that his parents became devoted to his young wife, and subsequently their two grand-daughters, and this brought the Duke much closer to his father than any of his brothers. (A Spirit Undaunted, by Robert Rhodes James, page 96.)

Once the Duke of York had a new Duchess, both "Their Royal Highnesses" had new responsibilities. Among other things, they would have to travel throughout Britain's empire. They would have to greet people, on behalf of the King. And ... the Duke would have to address very large crowds. Some of those addresses would be broadcast by a new company called the BBC.

Bertie had a new wife, but he still had the old stammer. Soon, that stammer would be the talk of the whole country.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/-WEDDING-of-the-CENTURY-The-King-s-Speech>

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Media Stream



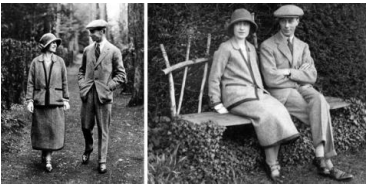
Glamis Castle - The Queen Mother and Macbeth

Photo of Glamis Castle by Baryonic Being, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Bertie and Elizabeth on Their Honeymoon

Photo online, courtesy the U.K. National Archives.

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Bertie and Elizabeth - Wedding Cake

Silent footage video clip, from 1923, online courtesy the Royal Channel at YouTube.

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Bertie and Elizabeth - Wedding, 1923

Silent film footage of the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of York, online courtesy U.K. National Archives.

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