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Ladies and gentlemen, this is the second in a series of six lectures on the British monarchy from Queen Victoria to the present, and this lecture is on Edward VII, who succeeded his mother, Queen Victoria, in January 1901.

At the Accession Council of Edward VII, someone commented that it was attended almost solely by those who had reached power under Queen Victoria's reign, and it was like a meeting of a men with a load off them, and a commentator said the Queen, who had been the idol of her people, had come to press on the springs of government with something of the weight of an idol, and in the innermost circle of public life, the prevailing sentiment was relief.

As I indicated in my lecture on Queen Victoria, she was an unexpected sovereign: she did not know until she was 10 years old that she might be Queen. But Edward VII knew from the time that he was conscious that he would be King. In fact, he was created Prince of Wales one month after his birth and he was heir to the throne for 59 years, which is not perhaps an enviable position. One commentator has said that probably no position in the world is more difficult than that of the heir to a constitutional monarchy, and the reason is that his position was not, and indeed still is not, recognised by the constitution in the sense that there are specific duties attached to the position. The Prince of Wales was not required to assist the Queen or even necessarily expected to do so in any of her activities. So, Edward VII had no defined work as Prince of Wales but lots of temptations.

The first Prince of Wales to find a genuine role for himself was the future Edward VIII in the 1920s, and he became a spokesman for the generation of ex-servicemen, but this was to be forgotten, unfortunately, after the abdication of 1936, and the present Prince of Wales has I think found an important role for himself, in particular through the creation of what has been called a welfare monarchy, involving work with various charities that he has created, such as the Prince's Trusts. It is true that, in the 19th Century, Edward did undertake various public duties: he opened buildings, he laid foundation stone, he presided at various charitable events, and indeed, he probably undertook more than his fair share of these because, after the death of his father, the Prince Consort, in 1861, Queen Victoria severely limited her public appearances and she withdrew into seclusion, coming to be known as the Widow of Windsor. Edward was particularly interested in medical research, and he marked the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, in 1897, by inaugurating the Prince of Wales Hospital Fund for London, which later became the King's Fund, a health charity which still exists. He also played a prominent part in the founding of the Royal College of Music and the Imperial Institute.

Uniquely for a member of the royal family, he served on two royal commissions, the first on Housing for the Working Classes, as it was called, and the second on what was called the Aged Poor. Now, to deal with housing, he familiarised himself with housing conditions by touring, incognito, the slums, as they then were, of Holborn and St Pancras, and he spoke in the House of Lords on what he had seen, but he did not sign the report of the Commission on leasehold and franchisement, which he thought was politically controversial. In the case of the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, he signed neither the minority report advocating non-contributory state pensions nor the majority report opposing it, on the grounds that these proposals too were party-political.

Edward also interested himself in foreign affairs. He enjoyed travel, and he acquired the important skill of extracting valuable information from those with whom he came into contact. He spoke fluent French and German, and indeed, he spoke English with a German accent.

But it is fair to say that, as Prince of Wales, he is remembered far less for his public works than for his lifestyle, his life, indeed, of pleasure, and he was sometimes known as the Prince of Pleasure. This style of life was I think in large part a reaction against the way he had been treated by his parents.

It had to be said that, with all their virtues, Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort were not good parents. They proposed for Edward a rigorous educational regime with which he could not cope. He tried hard to achieve the unrealistic expectations of his parents, but he had little interest in literature or intellectual matters, though he did enjoy classical music, and in particular opera. Perhaps surprisingly, he was gripped by Parsifal, an opera lasting near six hours, which he later saw at Bayreuth, the Festival of Wagner opera. But his prime gifts were those of sociability, charm and tact rather than of intellect, and his parents responded by arguing that he had a weak character and this was partly a result of their rigid and unimaginative parenting. In 1861, the Prince Consort died of typhoid fever, two weeks after a visit to Cambridge to reprimand his son for a youthful escapade with an actress. Now, the Queen blamed Edward, quite unfairly, for her husband's death, and this increased the distance between them. Significantly, Edward had been christened Albert Edward because Queen Victoria wanted a future line of kings called Albert, but when he came to the throne, he called himself Edward and not Albert.

Queen Victoria did not prepare her son in any way for the monarchy. It was not until 1885, when Edward was 41, that Gladstone managed to persuade the Queen to allow him to receive reports of Cabinet discussions. He was not given the key to Foreign Office boxes until 1892, and it was not until 1898 that he began to act as the

Queen's legally appointed deputy. But at the end of her life, when Queen Victoria was nearly blind, she had to have state papers read to her, and she did not ask Edward to do it, she asked Princess Beatrice to do it instead. She thought he was too lazy to be a good King, and in 1863, she wrote this: "The poor country, with such a terribly unfit, totally unreflecting successor - oh, that is awful! He does nothing! Bertie, I grieve to say, shows more and more how totally, totally [both underlined] unfit he is for ever becoming King."

Now, baulked of a settled role for himself, he lived a life of pleasure. The Victorian constitutional writer, Walter Bagehot, said "All the world, whatever is most attractive, whatever is most seductive, has always been offered to the Prince of Wales of the day, and always will be. It is not rational to expect the best virtue where temptation is applied in the most trying form, at the frailest time of human life." Much has been written on Edward's various love affairs, or supposed love affairs, to my mind somewhat tedious, and I think much of it exaggerated. We have to ask what Edwardians meant by terms such as "mistress" and "love affair", not I suspect the same as we mean by them today. For example, the Countess of Warwick, who was regarded as his mistress, said this. She said he had once been bothersome as she sat on the sofa, holding her hand and goggling at her. Otherwise, she said, he had been a very perfect gentle lover. The Kaiser was shocked at a country house, where he said there had been unseemly romping in unlighted corridors and one lady had even gone so far as to take off her slipper! I suspect that many of these so-called love affairs were nothing more than harmless flirtations, which is why Edward's wife, Queen Alexandra, tolerated them. But still, in the words of one of his biographers, Edward, and I quote: "He freely acknowledged his failure to observe the seventh commandment as rigidly as he should". The biographer then added: "What is less well-known is how faithfully he kept the other nine." But all this led to much gossip.

As King, he spoke to Margot Asquith, wife of the Prime Minister, and was rather acerbic in style. He spoke about a previous Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, a bachelor, whom the King disliked, partly because he thought him rather effeminate, and the King said to Margot Asquith, "It is a great drawback in a man not to be able to love a woman." Margot Asquith wrote in her diary, "I felt inclined to add "How many, Sir?"

And there were scandals. The first of them was in 1870, when the Prince of Wales appeared as a witness in a contested divorce case, the Mordaunt case, and that was the first time a Prince of Wales had appeared in a court of law since the days of Prince Hal, the son of Henry IV, in the 15th Century. The details of the case were somewhat sordid, and Queen Victoria ordered the newspapers reporting the case to be hidden from her younger children. The husband in the Mordaunt case said he had warned his wife against seeing the Prince of Wales alone, and some argued that Edward was fortunate not to be cited as a co-respondent. His friends believed he was guilty of nothing beyond thoughtlessness. Edward insisted he had not been involved in an improper relationship, and he could, had he wished to do so, have refused to appear in court as a witness - he could have claimed privilege and was told this by the Lord Chief Justice, but he chose to appear, which may be an indication that he was innocent. Queen Victoria, who rarely gave him the benefit of the doubt, thought he was innocent. She said, "Bertie's appearance did great good, but the whole remains a painful lowering thing, not because he is not innocent, for I never doubted that, but because his name ought never to have been dragged in the dirt or mixed up with such people."

It led to unfavourable comments. Shortly after the case, Gladstone told his Foreign Secretary, "To speak in rude and general terms, the Queen is invisible and Prince of Wales is not respected." There was, at that time, a brief flurry of republican activity, which worried the Queen enormously, and she thought she had become so unpopular, "It is useless to expect that Edward will ever come to the throne", and she thinks the monarchy will last her time and that "It's no use thinking of what will come after if the principal person himself does not". But the republican activity ended when Edward recovered from an illness of typhoid which had killed his father. He was very near death, but he recovered and that ended this brief flurry of republican activity.

But then, in 1876, there was another scandal, the Aylesford divorce case, which Edward himself was not involved with, though he had written flirtation letters, perhaps no more than imprudently, to Lady Aylesford, who was being sued for divorce by her husband, but what Edward was accused of was having colluded with her adultery by encouraging her husband to travel abroad with him on a trip. Queen Victoria believed Edward's explanation, that his letters to Lady Aylesford were innocent.

Then there was another scandal, this time not to do with women but with gambling, which involved Edward's second appearance in a court of law, and that was in 1891, the Tranby Croft case. Tranby Croft is a country house near Hull, where Edward had been playing baccarat, which at that time was illegal if played for money, and Edward was the banker in this game. One of the group was accused of cheating at the game and sued for slander, and Edward was called as a witness. Queen Victoria wrote to her daughter it was a "fearful humiliation to see the Prince of Wales dragged through the dirt just like anyone else" in a court of justice.

So, Edward's first two vices were women and gambling. His third vice was overeating, which some psychologists say is a sign of unhappiness. His official biographer declares tactfully that he, and I quote, "never toyed with his food". A typical day at Sandringham began with a glass of milk in bed. Then there was breakfast, bacon and eggs, haddock and chicken, toast and marmalade, and then an hour's shooting, followed by turtle soup. At half-past two, it was time for a hearty open-air lunch. After that, there was tea, poached eggs, petit fours, and preserved ginger, and then scones, hot cakes, cold cakes, and scotch shortcake, but all that was a mere preparation for dinner at 8.30pm, which consisted of 12 courses. Once, when Edward was staying as a guest at

a country house, there was a dinner of just nine courses, after which most of the guests were groaning, but Edward asked, plaintively, "Is there to be no cheese?" Even in the last days of his life, when he was really very ill, his biographer says that he was "...seen to do full justice to turtle soup, salmon steak, grilled chicken, saddle of mutton, several snipes stuffed with foie gras, asparagus, a fruit dish, an enormous iced concoction, and a savoury".

He drank comparatively little: a couple of glasses of champagne at dinner and a glass of cognac; but he smoked 12 large cigars a day and 20 cigarettes in between. Perhaps not surprisingly, his health was not good. He suffered continually from bronchitis and difficulties with breathing.

His main characteristic I think was bonhomie, though he combined it with dignity, and perhaps unlike many members of the royal family, he could laugh at himself. On the day of his coronation, he showed himself to his grandchildren in his robes and said, in a strong German accent, "Good morning, children - am I not a funny-looking old gentleman?"

But I think all this gossip has largely obscured the significance of his reign, which was very great. We have seen that he was not very well-prepared for monarchy, and some were fearful. The *Time* said, on his accession, "We shall not pretend that there is nothing in his long career which those who respect and admire him could not wish otherwise." Some said he would not be the king his mother had been... But contrary to the expectations of many, he proved a great success as a constitutional monarch. He worked hard at his papers and mastered the details of government. Indeed, he worked so hard that it caused him stress and may have contributed to the illness which killed him in 1910.

He forged a new relationship between monarchy and public. As I have said, Victoria, after 1861, appeared little in public. She opened Parliament only seven times after 1861, and the last occasion had been 1886, and she ceased in the later part of her reign to play a public role. Her authority came from her length of service, her personality, her integrity, and perhaps in part from her prejudices, which were largely those of the English middle class.

Edward had criticised Queen Victoria for her seclusion. He said, "I feel sure that if you were to drive in the parks and be seen occasionally there, the people would be overjoyed beyond measure. We live in radical times, and the more the people see the sovereign, the better it is for the people and the country," which seems to me correct. Edward himself opened Parliament in every year of his reign and he read the speech from the throne himself, something Queen Victoria had not done since 1861.

He had a capacity for ceremonial and showmanship which is surely part of monarchy, and this was to be shown in his visit to France in 1903, which paved the way for the Entente Cordiale. Edward opened the stuffy windows which had been closed by Queen Victoria. He enjoyed life and wanted others to enjoy life too.

One of his radical critics said: "He quarrelled with nobody and always forgave. He cared as much for popularity abroad as at home. He wanted an easy life and that everybody should be friends. He did have a temper, admittedly, and it could appear with startling suddenness out of a clear sky, but it disappeared just as quickly. He was basically a kindly man."

As a social leader, his guest lists went beyond the landed aristocracy to which Queen Victoria had confined herself. In 1902, he founded the Order of Merit, which of course still exists, to honour service officers and civilians distinguished in the arts, science and literature. He admitted industrialists to his inner circle - Sir Thomas Lipton, the tea tycoon, whom he took with him on a sea trip, and the Kaiser dismissed this as "going yachting with his grocer". He also admitted Jews into his social circle, which was new at that time - the financier, Ernest Castle. He proposed peerages for both Lipton and Castle, but his Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, refused, Lipton because he was from the industrial middle classes, and Castle because he was Jewish. His tolerance towards Jews I think helped integrate Jews into the country. The Countess of Warwick, whom I have already mentioned, made the following comment about his tolerance, a comment I think which is itself not devoid of anti-Semitic stereotypes. She said: "We resented the introduction of Jews into the social set of the Prince of Wales, not because we dislike them but because they had brains and understood finance. As a class, we did not like brains. As for money, our only understanding of it lay in the spending, not the making of it." I think Edward played a large part in integrating Jews, just as you may argue the Queen and the Prince of Wales played an important part in the integration of non-white citizens into British life.

Edward was a tolerant man, without racial or religious prejudice. On a visit to India as Prince of Wales in 1876, he complained to Queen Victoria about the treatment of the native chiefs in India, and the Queen agreed and forwarded his letter to the India Secretary.

He objected to the wording of the Protestant Declaration which he was required to read at the opening of his first Parliament, a declaration which repudiated Roman Catholicism as, I quote, "superstitious and idolatrous". He asked the Prime Minister to alter what he referred to as the "crude language". No statutory alteration was made, however, until 1910, after his death. He paid a private visit to the Pope in 1904.

He also began the tradition of inviting working class and radical leaders to royal palaces and charming them with bonhomie and cigars. One working class MP, Henry Broadhurst, said, after he had been to Sandringham, he

said, "I left Sandringham with the feeling of one who had spent a weekend with an old chum of his own rank in society, rather than one who had been entertained by the heir-apparent and his princess." But there was an element of condescension in all this this, because Broadhurst, when invited, protested that he owned no dress clothes. Edward said, "That's alright", and so he had dinner served in his room rather than with the other guests...

When the socialist and republic leader, Keir Hardie, was unwell, Edward enquired after his health and was criticised by Admiral Fisher on the grounds that Hardy was a socialist and republican, but Edward lost his temper and said, "You don't understand me - I am King of **all** the people!" He was an expert at what might be called the human side of monarchy.

His reign was short, just over nine years, from 1901 to 1910, but it saw two major and profound changes in British politics: the first was the replacement of the Conservatives by a radical Liberal Government, which won a huge electoral victory in 1906; the second was the revolution in British foreign policy, symbolised by the Entente with France in 1904 and with Russia in 1907. The King played an important role in both of these changes.

Edward probably did not welcome the advent of the Liberal Government, which was a Government of the radical left. He was conservative in his instincts, though his conservative instincts meant that he agreed with the Liberals in preserving free-trade and he was very hostile to Joseph Chamberlain's campaign for tariff reform. But whatever his private views on Liberal policy, the King behaved with impeccable constitutional rectitude and this was helped by the fact he was on very good personal terms with the new Liberal Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. Campbell-Bannerman is a Prime Minister now largely forgotten, but he achieved, in 1906, the largest electoral victory by any party of the left ever secured in Britain. In fact, he was the only one of the four Prime Ministers of Edward's reign whom the King really liked. He felt the others patronised him. By chance, they had met while on holiday in Merienbad, shortly before the General Election, and they had talked and met for a long time. There was an illustrated newspaper with a photo of them talking, and the caption on the photograph was "Is it peace or war?" But Campbell-Bannerman, who was as genial as the King, he said to his Private Secretary, "Would you like to know what the King was saying to me? He wanted to have my opinion whether halibut is better baked or boiled."

Campbell-Bannerman was, like the King, genial and good-natured and, like the King, a man whose common-sense enabled him to make better decisions than many seemingly cleverer people made. On his death, his successor, Asquith, said, "He had, in its highest and best development, the genius of common-sense." But it was by no means obvious when the Liberals came to power, and they came to power before the General Election because the Conservatives were split in the two by the tariff reform proposals, and one group was free-trade, the other group for tariff reform, a bit, in some ways, like the European Union issue, and they were so split that they resigned, in December 1905, rather than go to the country. It was the last Government that resigned with a security majority, so it was then up to the King to choose the next Liberal Prime Minister, and although Campbell-Bannerman was leader in the Commons, there were many Liberals who did not want him as the next Prime Minister because Campbell-Banner was a Liberal of the left and the Liberals of the right, led by Asquith, and Grey, who was to be Foreign Secretary, thought he was too far to the left, too radical, and they also thought he was too old, at 69, and would not be an effective leader. What they wanted to do was to suggest that he become a figurehead Prime Minister by going to the House of Lords, kick him upstairs, and they rather improperly sought to involve the King in this intrigue. One of the conspirators wrote to the King to say that Campbell-Bannerman should go the Lords, but Edward refused to play any part in this conspiracy, and when he summoned Campbell-Bannerman, he simply said to him "We are none of us as young as we were, Sir Henry", but when Campbell-Bannerman said he would remain in the Commons, the King accepted it, and Campbell-Bannerman turned out in fact to be a strong and effective Prime Minister.

The King remained on good terms with the Liberals, and indeed, as Prince of Wales, he had been on good terms with the Liberals, including Queen Victoria's *bête noir*, Gladstone, so he was in general much friendlier to the Liberals than Queen Victoria was, not that that was particularly difficult to achieve...

In foreign policy, there was a movement away from splendid isolation to a continental commitment, and Edward played a crucial role in changing the atmosphere in relation to the French. He was unusual amongst monarchs I think, in that he was more interested in Europe than he was in the Empire, and on his travels, he had met every crowned head in Europe, except the Kings of Serbia and Romania, but he had a particular affection for France. As a boy, Queen Victoria had made him kneel before the tomb of Napoleon in Les Invalides, and Edward had made a good impression even then. The French socialist, Louis Blanc, declared that he was "vraiment charmant". In 1878, he was President of the British section of the Paris International Exhibition, and in his speech at the banquet held to celebrate the occasion, he declared his faith in the Entente Cordiale - he was one of the first to use the phrase.

At the end of the 19th Century, France was still seen by many as Britain's hereditary enemy, and colonial rivalries in Africa had brought the two countries to the verge of war in 1898, and in the Boer War, which began in 1899, French public opinion was solidly on the side of the Boers, not the British. But with Edward's visit to Paris, much changed. Now, of course, the King had no powers to negotiate an agreement with the French, and he did not seek to do so, but what he did was to alter the atmosphere.

In May 1903, he visited Paris, on his own initiative, without a Cabinet Minister to advise him or to liaise between him and the French Government. He informed neither the Foreign Secretary nor the British Ambassador in advance. He was, it may be argued, straining the limitations of constitutional monarchy, almost to breaking point, because the constitutional position is, and was, that the monarch must always be accompanied by a minister because he has no power of independent action and so anything relating to foreign policy must be known to ministers who are responsible to Parliament and, through Parliament, to the voters. But Edward, instead, travelled with a Foreign Office diplomat, who reported back to the Foreign Secretary. It meant the Foreign Secretary was presented with a *fait accompli*, and indeed, had Edward listened to his Foreign Secretary, he would not have gone to Paris at all.

When Edward arrived in Paris, he spoke in fluent French of how at home he felt in Paris. He said "Comme si j'étais chez moi!" and this led to a great change in French opinion. A Belgian representative reported to his Foreign Office, and this was private of course: "Seldom can such a complete change of attitude have been seen as that which has taken place in this country during the last fortnight towards England and her sovereign." When Edward arrived, he was greeted with cries of "Long live the Boers!" and even "Long live Joan of Arc!", but when he left, he was greeted with cries of "Vive le roi!" and "Vive l'Angleterre!" The Entente, agreed a year later, was more than a series of diplomatic agreements, it was an emotional commitment, and that depended upon emotional forces which transcend diplomacy, and it was these that the King understood.

Edward was later to be criticised in Germany, particularly during the First World War, for a policy of encircling Germany, through agreements with France and then with Russia, and that I think is rather absurd. First, I do not believe there was any such policy on the part of the Government of the day, but, secondly, even if there had been, the King, unlike Germany's Kaiser, could play no part in policymaking. As a constitutional monarch, he could not have done that. He was not a politician or a negotiator, but he assisted the Government in forming its policy by exercising the monarchical function of influencing opinion and creating an atmosphere. The cultivation of personal relationships, which Edward was particularly good at, was an important asset at that time, and no doubt still is, for British diplomacy. So, his activities, although from a modern perspective unorthodox, created no constitutional problem because he was in fundamental agreement on foreign policy with his ministers.

The Entente, I think, was a landmark in European history because it ensured that Germany would fail in two attempts to dominate Europe and it survived - arguably it still survives now. At that time, it survived even the vicissitudes of English cooking! In 1898, before Edward became King, the French Ambassador was entertained to a meal at Windsor Castle, and he said, "La cuisine était detestable!" He said, "I would not tolerate a dinner like that in my own home!" Under Edward of course, the cuisine would have improved enormously and he would have made sure that it was first-class, as I am sure it is today, but there are perhaps not as many courses served today as Edward would have liked. But the French Ambassador also said that any clerk at the Foreign Office could draw up a treaty, but only the King could have secured the right atmosphere for a rapprochement.

The Entente with France in 1904 was followed by an agreement with Russia in 1907, and that was more difficult for many people to accept because Russia, unlike France, did not have a parliamentary system - it was an autocracy, and the Russian Government institutionalised official anti-Semitism. In 1908, this time after the Entente was created, the King made an official visit to Russia and was attacked for this by people on the left. Ramsay MacDonald, the future leader of the Labour Party, said was "an insult to our country" because the Czar was "a common murderer". Keir Hardie accused the King of "consorting with murderers". The Labour Party and some Liberals wrote to the King to object to the visit, and there was a vote in Parliament, in effect criticising the visit, in which 59 MPs voted against it. The King then cancelled invitations to four of the 59 who had voted with that group, invitations he had previously sent out to a royal garden party - he then cancelled the invitations, and this led to even greater fury, and one of the MPs said it was "an insult to my constituents and an attempt by the sovereign to influence the votes of members by social pressure". The Labour Party denounced the omissions as an attempt by the court to influence MPs. Keir Hardie went even further: he said the King had kept outside politics since Charles I, and Edward had better do the same! Now, after these protests and after some of the MPs apologised to him, Edward renewed the invitations, but in my view, his cancelling of the invitations was a grave mistake, I think his only constitutional mistake. Having said that, it is worth noting the King raised with the Russian Prime Minister his objections to the anti-Semitism of the Russian regime, and that was more than his Liberal ministers had done. The Russian Prime Minister promised to alleviate the condition of the Jews in Russia, but actually little changed.

Some historians have said these Ententes brought Britain into an alliance system which divided Europe into two armed camps and it was this which led to the War in 1914. But the Entente was really a settlement of colonial claims and not an alliance, and by 1914, Britain had no specific commitments, and I think the War would have occurred even without the Entente because Britain could not allow a hostile power to control the coast of Belgium or France. What the Entente ensured was that when the moment of decision came, Britain and France were united in their response. The Entente ensured that Britain and France would together resist the attempt of Germany to secure hegemony in Europe, both in 1914 and then again in 1939.

A future Editor of the Times noted in conversation with Edward that he had "an ever-present sense that, though England was the heart and the head of the British Empire, she was, and increasingly must be, an essential part of Europe". He did not believe that Britain could remain in splendid isolation from Europe, since the stability of the Continent was of fundamental British interest. Edward, I think, would not have supported Brexit, but his son

and heir, George V, would I think have done so because he once said, and this is something Edward VII would not have said, but George V once said, "Abroad is bloody - I know, I've been there!" But Edward was a cosmopolitan who would have voted "remain".

In 1908, Campbell-Bannerman resigned through ill-health and died very shortly afterwards, and was succeeded by Asquith, who the King didn't like very much. Asquith was asked to be appointed in the hotel at Biarritz, where the King was staying, the only time that a Prime Minister has ever been appointed in another country. Edward was much-criticised in the press for this, and the implication was that his pleasures were more important than constitutional rectitude, but I think that is unfair. Edward was on holiday because he was very ill and had been told to try and secure some sea air for his health. He had a room on the ground floor of the hotel because he could not climb the stairs and was suffering from heart trouble, bronchitis and fits of choking. He was very annoyed that his ministers did not defend him from the accusation that he had been frivolous.

He was even more annoyed by an episode later in 1908, which played an important part in the diplomacy of Europe, that led to war in 1914. In August 1908, Edward met the Emperor of Austria, Franz Joseph, to congratulate him on his diamond jubilee at the Austrian resort at Bad Ischl, and they held discussions on foreign policy. But Franz Joseph did not tell Edward that Austria was about to annex the provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which he had been administering since the Treaty of Berlin of 1878, but which belonged to the Turkish Empire, and when Edward heard of the annexation, which was in breach of an international treaty, he was furious and felt he'd been deceived. Someone who was with him said, "No one who was there can forget how terribly he was upset. Never did I see him so moved!" He saw it as a breach of a treaty and as a personal breach of faith to him. He wrote a tactful letter to Franz Joseph, but made it clear that he deplored the breach of a treaty which could only be altered with the consent of all the contracting parties, and from then on, he did not trust Austria, and he did not trust Austria's ally, ruled by his nephew, the Kaiser. It was, of course, in the capital of Bosnia, Sarajevo, that Franz Joseph's nephew, Franz Ferdinand, was killed in 1914, the episode which led to the First World War, which of course Britain entered because of another breach of an international treaty when Germany violated Belgian neutrality. So, the annexation of Bosnia prefigured the crisis which led to war in 1914, and it had a profound influence upon Edward. In April 1909, he wrote to his Prime Minister asking him whether, in framing the budget, the Cabinet took into consideration the possible, but the King hopes improbable, event of a European war.

The end of Edward's reign was marked by a constitutional crisis, not resolved at his death, which was left to George V to resolve. The crisis was caused by the House of Lords' rejection of Lloyd George's 1909 radical budget, called the People's Budget. The House of Lords, at that time, was composed almost wholly of hereditary peers. There were no life peers, except for the law lords and the bishops, and it had a vast Conservative majority, which was more or less permanent. In response to that, the Government put forward a resolution in the House of Commons saying that the Lords' action was a breach of the constitution and a usurpation of the rights of the Commons, and they said that the powers of the House of Lords must be restricted, but if the House of Lords refused to accept any restriction of their powers, which at that time were unlimited by statute, there was only one way of overcoming its resistance, because the House of Lords couldn't be dissolved like the Commons, so the only way of overcoming its resistance would be to swamp the Conservative majority with a creation of Liberal peers, and that would require the consent of the King.

There was a precedent for that. In 1832, it had been threatened by the Whig Government to overcome the opposition of Conservative peers to the Great Reform Bill, and William IV reluctantly had consented to that creation if necessary. Very curiously, this whole issue, which one may think is one of the past, was raised again last week! A Conservative MP, Jacob Rees-Mogg, who favours Brexit, said, "If the House of Lords seeks to prevent it, then a mass creation of peers might prove the only way to secure that the will of the people in the referendum is accepted," so we may see that issue again.

Edward VII was not very happy with the budget, which he thought far too radical, but he thought the House of Lords shouldn't reject it. Indeed, he said the peers would be mad to reject it. He asked the Prime Minister if he could talk personally with the leaders of the opposition to try and persuade them not to reject it, to conciliate. He summoned the leaders of the opposition to Buckingham Palace and he asked them to persuade the Lords to pass the budget, but he found them stiff and uncommunicative, and once they rejected it, Edward then became very worried about any weakening of the Lords by the Liberals. The way he saw it was that both the monarchy and the House of Lords were hereditary institutions, and the danger was an attack on the one could lead to an attack on the other. He may have thought the monarchy was weaker than in fact it was, and he once introduced one of his ministers to the Prince of Wales by saying, "Let me present to you the last King of England". But to keep the monarchy, he wanted to keep the House of Lords as it was. He thought any reform meant weakening the hereditary basis, and that would threaten the monarchy, and restricting the powers of the Lords meant weakening its authority, and to create peerages would be to cheapen the hereditary institution. So, his first reaction was to say that he would not be willing to create peers.

The Liberals said it was not necessary actually to create them, only to threaten it, because the peers had given way in 1983 as soon as they knew that William IV had agreed to creation, so you would not actually need to create any but just threaten to do it.

After the rejection of the budget, the Government decided to dissolve and appeal to the people. There was an

election meeting at the Albert Hall, at which Asquith, the Prime Minister, said this: "We shall not assume office and we shall not hold office unless we can secure the safeguards which experience shows us to be necessary for the utility and honour of the party of progress." He then said: "The absolute veto must go. The will of the people, as deliberately expressed by their elected representatives, must, within the limits of the lifetime of a single parliament, be made effective." The implication was the King had agreed to at least threaten to create peers if the Lords refused to accept a limitation of powers, but of course he had no such agreement from the King, and the King was alarmed. The King's Private Secretary told the Prime Minister's Private Secretary that he regards the policy of the Government as tantamount to the destruction of the House of Lords, and that two General Elections would be needed for such a fundamental change: the first would be on the budget; the second on the House of Lords. Now, this was a new constitutional doctrine because William IV had not demanded two General Elections in 1932. The King's Private Secretary did put out a lifeline: he said the King might support life peerages. The Prime Minister's Private Secretary said "That is no good either because the Lords will reject that too." Perhaps it's a pity the Government did not follow that up at that time.

In the Election, which was – in those days, Elections took place over a few weeks. They were not just on one day as they are now. The result of it was the Liberals had lost the large absolute majority which they won in 1906, and the two parties had roughly the same number of seats, the two major parties, but the Liberals stayed in power with the aid of the votes of the Labour Party and the Irish Nationalists, and that gave them a majority of 124. But the King said he thought the result of the Election inconclusive and you could not possibly consider the creation of peers on that sort of basis.

On 20th February, when Parliament met, Asquith had to tell the House of Commons that he had no guarantee, contrary to what he had implied in his Albert Hall speech, and he also said he did not intend to ask for them before introducing a measure to restrict the power of the Lords. He said this, and these, I think, are important words. He said, "To ask in advance for a blank authority for an indefinite exercise of the royal prerogative in regard to a measure which has never been submitted to or approved by the House of Commons is a request which, in my judgement, no constitutional statesman can properly make and is a concession which the sovereign cannot be expected to grant." What Asquith was referring to was what came to be known as a "contingent guarantee", namely, that if the Liberals won another Election, the King would agree to create peers, and he said you cannot ask for that. But he was to do precisely that later in the year because his backbenchers and the Irish Nationalists said they would not continue to support him unless he were to do that and restrict the powers of the Lords.

In April, Asquith actually asked for what he had said in February he would not ask, contingent guarantees. He told the King he would dissolve Parliament for a second election, but he said he would not feel able to advise a dissolution except under such conditions as would secure that, in the new Parliament, the judgement of the people, as expressed in the elections, would be carried into law. Now, the King said he could not do that because that would be tantamount to supporting the Liberal election programme, and he said the Liberals had no mandate for it – they had lost seats in the January Election. The King said he was being asked to declare his policy in advance, before the Election, and before anyone had seen the bill proposing restrictions on the power of the House of Lords. The King said, presumably, he would act on the advice of the government of the day, but he was not willing to give an advance commitment for a hypothetical situation. The King's Private Secretary said that he should rather abdicate than agree to it. The King was unsympathetic to the proposal for a contingent guarantee. His argument was: have another election and let us see what happens. He was putting forward the doctrine that the King should not give a pledge on a matter of public policy in advance of being asked to act on advice, which was an understandable position.

On 27th April, there was something which came to be grandiloquently called "the Lambeth Palace Conference", because the Archbishop of Canterbury said he would act as an intermediary, and he introduced the King's Private Secretary to the leader of the opposition, Arthur Balfour, and Balfour said that, if the King refused the Prime Minister's request, and Asquith resigned, he, Balfour, would take office.

On 6th May, the King died, and his last words were in response to being told that his horse had won the 4:15 at Kempton Park – he said, "I am so glad."

Would he eventually have agreed to the creation of peers, as his son George V did? It raises the issue of whether the sovereign is required to accept the advice of his ministers on a fundamental constitutional issue if he can secure the advice of an alternative set of ministers. Now, suppose the Government had resigned and Balfour had taken office... Balfour would not have a majority in the House of Commons, so he had have to go to the country. In those circumstances, might not the resignation of the Liberals look like a dismissal by the King, and would that not bring the monarchy into party politics? What would Edward have done? We shall never know. He died with the crisis still unresolved.

He was, in many respects, an ideal constitutional monarch, genuinely impartial in his dealings with ministers. He argued with them sometimes about legislation, but once the Government had made up its mind, he did his best to assist them and gave way with good grace. Unlike Queen Victoria, he sought to help ministers of both parties.

A left-wing newspaper said on his death: "It is not that democracy has become subservient, but monarchy has

become reasonable. The King reigns not in defiance, but in conformity to the popular will. The people, no longer trampled serf-like under foot by hereditary despotism, are now controlling partners, managing directors if you will, in the great imperial syndicate."

Edward assisted in this process, the process of democratising the monarchy, by acting constitutionally and, above all, by spreading goodwill. Margot Asquith, whom I have quoted earlier, who was very acerbic, nevertheless said in her diaries, "A kinder, more considerate and courteous man than King Edward never lived."

Unlike Queen Victoria, he was a good parent. He doted on his successor, George V. He was devoted to him, and they had an ideal relationship. George V said, in his diary, "We are more like brothers than like father and son," and on his father's death, he wrote in his diary, "I have lost my best friend and the best of fathers. I never had a word with him in his life. I am heartbroken and overwhelmed with grief." Edward did not make the mistake of refusing to initiate his heir into the mysteries of government - he did not act like Queen Victoria. But, sadly, he did not discuss the House of Lords crisis with his son, and that was a great pity because, when Edward died, the great constitutional crisis involving the role of the monarchy and the upper house remained unresolved and it was left to the new King to try to resolve, and how he did that will be subject of my next lecture!

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