



Dirty Bertie: An English King Made in France

Stephen Clarke

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The entertaining biography of Edward VII and his playboy lifestyle

Despite fierce opposition from his mother, Queen Victoria, Edward VII was always passionately in love with France. He had affairs with the most famous Parisian actresses, courtesans, and can-can dancers. He spoke French more elegantly than English. He was the first ever guest to climb the Eiffel Tower with Gustave Eiffel, in defiance of an official English ban on his visit. He turned his French seduction skills into the diplomatic prowess that sealed the Entente Cordiale. A quintessentially English king? Pas du tout! Stephen Clarke argues that, as "Dirty Bertie," Edward learned all the essentials in life from the French.

Dirty Bertie: An English King Made in France Details

Date : Published July 15th 2014 by Random House UK (first published May 22nd 2014)

ISBN : 9781780890340

Author : Stephen Clarke

Format : Hardcover 400 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, Biography, Humor

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Richard Southworth says

I was a big fan of Stephen Clarke's history book 1000 Years of Annoying the French, and this is written in much the same informative and humorous style, expanding upon that book's chapter on Prince Bertie/King Edward VII. It provides a detailed picture of Bertie and how his pursuit of pleasure in France helped him to develop diplomatic skills that proved very useful as a prince and a king. I was less interested in the long descriptions of the various French establishments, though, so they brought the book down a little for me.

David Myles says

Stephen Clarke makes history in and yes maybe if he had lived Edward the caresser would have prevented the first world war. But what a life he is definitely along with Charles 2nd and Henry 8th the king's you would want to spend an evening with!

Brendan says

Written in a self-consciously chatty style that contains too many asides and diversions that try far too hard to be witty, this is nonetheless an interesting exploration of the life of Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII. From the stultifyingly Puritan atmosphere of his childhood and adolescence, through the louche excesses of his frequent trips to Paris and Cannes, and finally to his short but unexpectedly successful reign as King and "peacemaker", "Bertie" comes across as irresponsible, good-natured, surprisingly sensitive, utterly self-indulgent, a "good bloke" who was a lousy husband, and who nonetheless made himself into a successful diplomat and monarch. Hinted at but kept safely at arms' distance are the poverty and exploitation which underpinned the lifestyle HRH enjoyed - especially the sexual exploitation of women - while "Bertie's" manifold failings as a husband and father are mentioned but not explored in depth. One senses the reader is meant to regard him with an indulgent sentimentality that acknowledges but prefers not to dwell on his moral hypocrisy, while at the same time celebrating his achievements as a self-made man. Nonetheless, the author's research is impressive, the narrative packed with useful historical titbits for trivia boffins; and as the title implies, the focus is on engagement and interest rather than insight and revelation. An easy read for a lazy afternoon or two.

Courtney says

Stephen Clarke brings history to life as he turns data into drama. Using several sources for legitimacy, Clarke paints a picture of King Edward VII (Bertie) as an awkward boy turned playboy turned successful sovereign. Bertie was an English royal who happened to be a Francophile because of the joie de vivre found in France. He could misbehave away from the Victorian reign (his mother) and in so doing forged political connections that would serve him and his country well later in life. The book is an interesting lesson in history, culture and the (often unlikely) ties that bind nations. While an enjoyable read, the book seemed to repeat the same

stories/themes over and over, so it got tiresome at the end--thus my three-star rating.

Karen says

A really enjoyable book - made easier by the writing style. Stephen Clarke has taken the story of Edward VII (or Bertie) and made him seem a real human.

His mother, the formidable Queen Victoria didn't want him to have *anything* do do with the affairs of state, as she suspected that he would discuss the secrets with his friends over dinner, meaning that any sort of espionage would be blown out of the water.

Stephen discusses the reasons behind Bertie's love of France, and whilst he doesn't go into too many details of the affairs, it was plain to see that Bertie was the original playboy prince - but one who went on to bring the British Royal family (aka the "Firm") into the 20th century.

I wish more history books were written like this - too often they are drier than dust, and make reading them a chore. This was different - for the right reasons. It was humorous, informative and more to the point well researched. A book I will certainly recommend as one to read.

Chris Boulton says

Okay, after reading that.. I'm totally a fan of Dirty Bertie, he was cool when you consider the fact he was able to turn, what was effectively, a 50 year teenage rebellion against his parents, into a pretty nifty short reign as King. His parents priorities for him was not his thing, he wasn't good with reading, mathematics and all those things that the Victorian period was expecting of their well-to-do population and they basically looked at him/treated him with scorn because of it, add to that, the Victorian morales of virtue, respectability and clean living and you had a childhood that was not what you'd call fun. I think the funniest thing is the way that Queen Vicky and ole Prince Bert treated him when he lost his virginity at, what was it?, 20 years of age .. that the world was ending.. and QV's need to inform his future in-laws, with a heavy, heavy heart, that he wasn't pure as the driven snow and they just shrugged and asked when the actual wedding would be. You could just imagine she was *takes off sunglasses* not amused.

Even now, in this 'enlightened' day and age, there is an element of worry that someone who has had quite a sheltered childhood will eventually go off the rails when they've discovered 'sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll' and that their life will be ruined for ever more from that point on. You might not think you are like that but I would put ANY money on the fact that deep down a part of you is like 'oh god!' when you hear about someone who is likely to go down that path. However, here is an example of someone who went off the rails (as far as the English were concerned) but used it to his advantage when he became King and should be considered, on the information in this book anyway, a great Peacemaker. You could consider the fact that everything spiralled out of control so quickly after he died as a sign of how well he kept things in check with his extended family when he was alive, though the historian in me knows that there must be a lot more to it than one overweight, over-sexed, cigar smoking English/German/Honorary French King.

Look, ignore all the rubbish I've just written.. and let me just say this: read this book and you'll love Bertie as

much as I do, okay?

Melissa Choi says

If history was taught the way Stephen Clarke writes in *Dirty Bertie* in school, kids would never fall asleep in history class. This thoroughly-researched semi-biography of King Edward VII is a fascinating look into the forces, from his stoic and puritanical upbringing to the seduction of French *joie de vivre*, that shaped the future king of England and transformed him into one of the greatest diplomats of his time. Clarke connects the dots and even paints the precarious picture of the tumultuous and volatile European climate at the turn of the 20th century, concluding that one of the major reasons that World War I started, was because Uncle Bertie wasn't around to diffuse the tense situation.

The moral of the story though is that King Edward VII is a bonobo by nature (as opposed to a chimp), and bonobos are good at keeping the peace, even though they possess highly questionable morals.

I'm an amateur history buff, never studying it formally in school, so I was psyched to learn about the historical love-hate relationship between France and England, the French Revolutions and the establishment of republicanism in France, *la commune*, the Franco-Prussian War, and even an obscure little nugget that would get you props on Jeopardy! Or trivia: Fashoda. I highly recommend this entertaining expose of one of the most interesting characters the world has ever seen.

Hettie says

Littered with inaccuracies and some down-right false information. Many footnotes simply refer to 'if you want more information, read my other book'. Extremely prejudice to the point of being offensive - especially towards women and Germans. Clearly a big fan of Edward VII, so good for the author. I don't care about how much he's fanboying. The tone is so condescending and this book - much like his other one - glorifies the English as though they are God's gift on Earth. Even the title of this book is wrong, so??? Just a huge waste of time and money

Andra Nicoara says

This has probably been one of the most interesting and at the same time fun books I've read in a while. To be honest, I didn't really know much about King Edward VII and I didn't feel a pull of curiosity towards researching him; however, this book captivated me and not only did it teach me about him and history, it also made me feel personally close to him and his character. Like Stephen Clarke's other books, this one is witty and charming, just like Bertie himself. I wholeheartedly recommend this book to anyone who wants to know more about history or just to discover an interesting and well-rounded (no pun intended) character!

Mary Newcomer says

Learned quite a bit about a period of history I wasn't familiar with and as I've lived in France for over 40 years (I was born in the US), I was interested in the French part of the story. However, I wasn't too interested in knowing all the women Bertie bedded in the world. I think a bit too much time was spent on explaining his sexual conquests, but it did have the advantage of giving us an indication of how rich, aristocratic men filled their time. (much could be said about that!)

Laura Greenwood says

<http://a-reader-lives-a-thousand-live...>

Title: Dirty Bertie: An English King Made in France

Author: Stephen Clarke

From: Netgalley

Genre: Non-fiction, Biography

Release Date: 15th July 2014

Challenges: COYER Scavenger Hunt, 2015 Netgalley & Edelweiss Challenge, 2015 Reading Assignment

Links: Goodreads - Amazon

Edward VII: Ultimate European diplomat and Parisian to the core. Known for his women and his cancan dancers, what is it that makes this English King such a powerful European figure even before his ascent to the throne.

I don't normally read biographies, but this one was written by Stephen Clarke, and for me that was enough to read it! I've never really given much thought to Edward VII (my interests in history are older than that in general) nor in pre-World War 1 history, but I thoroughly enjoyed reading Dirty Bertie. Saying that because of the non-fiction nature of the book, and the fact that I don't normally read biographies, I did find that I dipped in and out of this book and it took me a couple of weeks to read.

As with Stephen Clarke's previous books (or at least the previous ones that I've read) I found his way of presenting the facts to be amusing and there were several moments where I found myself laughing aloud at some of the turns of phrase. I think that Clarke truly has a talent for making information come alive.

The sequence of the chapters worked well for me, rather than chronologically (though there was some sense of this), the chapters focused on different things, and rather than having a lot of different asides, Clarke directs readers to relevant chapters as well as using a limited number of footnotes. These didn't overwhelm and in the kindle edition they were clickable and situated at the end of the chapter.

I wasn't surprised that I enjoyed this book, Clarke has a wonderful way of writing and I already know that I like it, and I found that I not only learnt more about Edward VII but about France and Paris as well (though already having a working knowledge of some things was helpful too!)

Aishuu says

This is a lot of fun! I love history told from interesting POV, and this showed a different POV on Edward VII. The author's sense of humor made it a very lively read, although it should be noted that this really doesn't stand alone - the author keeps referencing his own 1000 Years of Annoying the French to provide context (which I also enjoyed and read first). The writing is intimate and is accented with many French phrases, so some minor familiarity with French would help (translations were not always provided, which was fine with me, but might be a challenge to someone who doesn't speak/read any French).

This seems to be well-researched, but isn't for serious scholars... or the French. I would categorize this as humorous history. If you enjoy things like "Horrible Histories" you'd probably get a kick out of it.

Lukas says

Just superb description of the late nineteenth century and why France was great even though it was troubled as hell.

Darla Ebert says

Period pieces are always an absorbing read. Of course I should have looked closer at the actual subject matter, the underlying theme. Sordid and a bit too much of that, however the background of Prince Albert/King Edward was fact and therefore necessary to the unraveling of the story which explains his love of all things French.

Stephen Clarke is a top notch writer even if I feel uncomfortable with some of his disclosures and observations. He is witty and the material is well-researched.

Gonzaga Escauriaza says

Stephen Clarke tiene mucho éxito pero yo no acabo de cogerle el punto.
