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PRINCESS MARGARET (Continued)

who had become even more religious since the death of her father, was that her marriage to a divorced man could not be consecrated in her church and would, therefore, be no marriage.

Undoubtedly, in order not to embarrass her sister, who is the Temporal Head of the Church of England, she and her husband would be forced to live in exile, much like her uncle, the Duke of Windsor, and the woman for whom he gave up his throne. And the one fact which London journalists were sure about was that Margaret would hate to stop being a Princess. In spite of her night-clubbing and pink champagne, her upbringing had given her no training for living as an ordinary human being.

During the frantic days when the London papers cried "Maggie, make up your mind!" Townsend was finally cornered by one veteran reporter who told him, "Be a good chap, you don't know what a state my editor is in about this." And Townsend replied, "You don't know what a state I'm in about it!"

Finally Maggie made her mind up. She said no, and Peter Townsend went back to Brussels. Her devoted subjects relaxed and hoped that, when she got over her disappointment, she would marry one of the 14 eligible princes whom the newspapers cheerfully listed for her, as a hint. But as time went on, the Princess gave no indication that she was trying to find a successor for Peter. She saw him at least twice in 1956, once in July at the country home of a mutual friend, three months later at luncheon, reportedly for only the two of them, at Clarence House. Then he resigned from the Air Force and set out to drive around the world in a jeep.

The *London Daily Mail* paid him approximately \$15,000 for a series of rather dull articles about his travels. People more or less forgot him. Margaret, staying at home and skipping public engagements, was called by one sassy columnist the "Part-time, Stay-at-Home Princess." The only man she was seen with regularly was her old platonic steady, Billy Wallace, whom even the most romantic had just about written off as husband material.

ON MARCH 25, this year, there were a few listless lines in London newspapers announcing that Peter Townsend had finished his trip and had returned to Brussels. Two days later, Margaret was back in the headlines, as a result of a tea party for three in the Queen Mother's chintz-draped drawing rooms at Clarence House. Peter had come to London and telephoned, like any old friend. And like an old friend, he had

been asked to tea. Perhaps none of the three people who drank that tea had any idea that they were making headlines. But the word spread fast and, while curious crowds gathered outside, so did the newspapermen. Even the stately *London Times*, which deprecates printing any news about the private lives of the royal family, had three cameramen there.

Commander Colville (whom a newspaper friend of mine reports as "never learning") told the press blandly, "The Queen knew all about it before she went to Holland (she was away on a state visit). You would be wrong to picture this in the framework of a great romance." But reporters managed to find out that the Queen had known nothing of the tea party in advance. When presented with this information, Colville said, "No comment."

There was no question in anybody's mind, however, that the Queen was angry. When she got back from Holland, she went straight to Windsor Castle and summoned Margaret back on Sunday morning from an Army Ball in Germany, where the Princess had danced until 4:30 a.m. That afternoon and the next morning, the Queen had two meetings with her sister, with Philip reportedly present. Afterward, the two sisters were seen riding together, whether really reconciled or just putting a good English royal face on the matter, nobody knows.

A good friend of mine in London, a newspaperman who follows Margaret as closely as she allows herself to be trailed, wrote me his impression of the situation: "Townsend is an ambitious, intelligent man who loved his job with the royal family. There is no doubt that Margaret fell for him, heavily, or that he was fond of her, although probably not quite as 'madly' in love. He and the Queen Mother were devoted to each other and I'm told she still misses him a great deal.

"We suspect that Townsend engineered the visit—inviting himself suddenly, so that no courteous girl,

or her mother, could possibly refuse him—to press his suit again. To put it crudely, Townsend had not given up hope of a good, cushy job (as a sort of poor man's Prince Philip) which he believes he could do superbly well, and probably could. But his conduct in pursuing Maggie with an object which could only result in her breaking her very solemn statement seems to us questionable."

The general tenor of the English newspapers and of the letters written to the papers by the English public, which takes its royal family seriously, had overtones of resentment, too. One letter said: "We are fed to the teeth with this silly so-called romance between the Princess and a divorced man who has left a good wife and two children. One might have imagined that the group captain would have had the grace of a gentleman and stayed in seclusion."

Even before Townsend returned, John Gordon, editor-in-chief of the *London Sunday Express*, wrote: "What a curious fellow Group Captain Townsend is. He declares he shrinks from publicity, yet, as a rejected suitor, he wanders around the world exploiting his grief-stricken, love-lorn condition with a success that must be the envy of every publicity expert... I am sure that his determination to stay in the limelight must be very embarrassing to the royal lady who renounced him."

Right now, as happened before when Margaret said no to Townsend, people and the press seem to be sorry for her. However, moods change quickly and nothing is duller or more irritating than a sulky Princess who does not pull her weight in entertaining, or at least titillating, her subjects. As time goes on, the prospects of her marrying and having a family of her own seem more and more remote. She seems even to have lost her early great interest in her nephew and niece. She is no longer the carefree young wise-cracker who announced, when the Queen named her baby: "Now I'm Charlie's aunt!"

Peter Townsend will probably come back—and back again—until somebody stops him. So far, he has made no move toward finding himself another wife or a post which would remove him permanently from Margaret's vicinity. After all, why should he? What more has he to lose?

On the other hand, Princess Margaret, who has already lost a great deal herself, stands in danger of sacrificing even more: her sister's approval, Prince Philip's affection, even the sympathy of her subjects. It is no wonder that she is a troubled girl, and it is a sorry fate for the fun-loving little madcap Princess.



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