freedom were his passion, Nehru, highly intellectual and gifted, was also a lonely man looking for sweet, tender companionship during the dark days of the partition of India. As frustrated as he often was at the helm of Indian National Congress leadership and as head of the Indian Government, Nehru had a childlike desire for constantly sharing his intimate thoughts and emo-



A Love that lasted till death.

tions. Just at that time, Edwina Mountbatten, herself loveless, came and filled a void in his life.

Once, Nehru with the Mountbattens, drove up to the retreat at Mashobra on the Himalayan foothills for a few days of rest. He and Edwina would meet every morning in the garden and later in the evening stay up late, even after Montbatten had retired to his room. Pamela, Edwina's younger daughter, had accompanied them. Later she wrote: "I have often been asked whether I think Nehru and my mother were in love. The answer undoubtedly is yes, they were." Returning to Delhi from Mashobra, Nehru immediately wrote to Edwina:" Life is a dreary business and when a bright patch comes it rather takes one's breath away."

Mountbatten, who liked Nehru, was aware of his wife's relationship with him. He wrote to his elder daughter, Patricia: "Please keep this to yourselves but she and Jawaharlal are so sweet together. They really dote on each other in the nicest way." He considered his wife's affair to be a relatively low risk in personal terms as he believed that Edwina could not leave him for the prime minister of India. It was better for him to allow her to carry on with Nehru than to risk her going off with another person, the circumstances of which he possibly could not control.

After the Mountbattens finally left India, in a rather unusual communication to King George VI in May 1948, Nehru chose to highly praise the outstanding contributions of both Lord and Lady Mountbatten to India and expressed his gratitude. What is extraordinary was Nehru's entreaties to the King to confer upon both the Mountbattens (Lord Mountbatten was the King's cousin) some special recognition. He pursued the matter repeatedly by follow up letters and enquiries through India's High Commissioner in London. In the end, in July 1948, the King's Private Secretary rebuffed Nehru, informing him that the King felt that adequate recognition had already been given and further recognition would not be justified.

Back in England in 1952, Edwina had to undergo a dangerous surgery. Just before, she entrusted to Mountbatten the custody of Nehru's love letters to her. In a note, she told her husband: "Some of them have no 'personal' remarks at all. Others are love letters in a sense, though you yourself will realise the strange relationship-most of it spiritual-which exists between us. Jawaharlal has meant a very great deal in my life in these last years and I think I in his." Edwina recovered from the surgery. Once Mountbatten informed Nehru that Edwina "needs a rest but will never take one as we both know." Nehru replied, "The only way, apparently, for her to get some rest is to come to India. So I hope she will do it this winter." She visited Nehru in India almost every winter, often for several weeks, without her husband except for one occasion.

Lady Edwina Mountbatten died in her sleep while visiting British North Borneo in 1960. A pile of letters lay on her bedside table-a few she was reading were found on the bed. They were all from Nehru. According to her wish, Lord Mountbatten buried her at sea off the coast of Portsmouth. Nehru sent two Indian destroyers to accompany her body.

Still the Prime Minister of India, Nehru died in 1964. The first British visitor to see him lying in state in Delhi was Lord Louis Mountbatten.