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AGENCY AND MATRILINEAL TIES; QUEEN VICTORIA AND HER DAUGHTERS

by

Lydia PenseL

B.A., Southeast Missouri State University, 2020

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Arts Degree

School of History and Philosophy  
in the Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
August 2023

THESIS APPROVAL

AGENCY AND MATRILINEAL TIES; QUEEN VICTORIA AND HER DAUGHTERS

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Lydia Pensel

A Thesis Submitted in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Master of Arts  
in the field of History

Approved by:

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Lydia Pensel, for the Master of Arts degree in History, presented on May 12, 2023, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: AGENCY AND MATRILINEAL TIES; QUEEN VICTORIA AND HER DAUGHTERS

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Joseph Sramek

This study examines the impact of Queen Victoria's political and diplomatic power on the marriages of her five daughters. Queen Victoria's influence on her daughters' marriages highlights her enduring behind the scenes power despite some claims to the contrary. Unlike the sons' marriages, where considerable outside political influences were brought to bear, the daughters' marriages were almost solely influenced by Victoria. Examining the Queen's five daughters offers an alternate view of her motherhood while simultaneously exploring the diverse gender dynamics between her and her daughters.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my three wonderful committee members: Dr. Joseph Sramek, Dr. Jonathan Bean, and Dr. Getahun Benti. I would also like to acknowledge my peer, Deanna McGuckin. Thank you for helping me and encouraging me throughout this process.

## DEDICATION

To my parents, thank you for allowing me to follow my dreams.

Thank you for always supporting me along the way.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
CHAPTERS	
CHAPTER 1 – Introduction.....	1
CHAPTER 2 – Historiography .....	5
CHAPTER 3 – Queen Victoria: The Dynastic Orchestrater’s Origins.....	12
CHAPTER 4 – Princess Victoria: The Marriage Craft Begins.....	20
CHAPTER 5 – Princess Alice: The Forgotten Daughter.....	29
CHAPTER 6 – Princess Helena: The Marriage Alliance That Divided the Family.....	38
CHAPTER 7 – Princess Louise: The Black Sheep.....	48
CHAPTER 8 – Princess Beatrice: Baby Gets Married.....	57
CHAPTER 9 – Conclusion .....	67
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	70
VITA .....	75

## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

The recent passing of Queen Elizabeth II has caused the world to ponder the history of the British monarchy. With this reexamination, the gaze of history should be cast back further to an earlier Queen, Queen Victoria. Scholars following David Cannadine have asserted that the British monarchy lost almost all its political power during Queen Victoria's long reign and transformed into the modern ceremonial entity we see today.<sup>1</sup> While largely agreeing with the Cannadine thesis in recent years, scholars have interpreted Queen Victoria variously as a feminist icon and as a media personality. However, scholars still underestimate how Queen Victoria managed to exert political power during her long reign. In this thesis, I show how Queen Victoria shaped her daughters' marriages, thereby exercising political power.

One way that Queen Victoria exercised personal and political power was in her choice of consort. She chose to marry Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, a minor German principality. While she could have chosen to marry any European monarch for reasons of statecraft, she chose to marry for love. Prince Albert offered Victoria little in return in terms of political or diplomatic advantages. Her sole motivation became her deep and undying trust in a man she had confidence in after having so many influences in her life prove unworthy.<sup>2</sup>

Instead of marrying Albert to foster alliances, Queen Victoria married him for love. Victoria was headstrong and, "she was the last person to be told about what was done in her name."<sup>3</sup> She encouraged the same in her children while also creating lasting alliances that would

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<sup>1</sup> David Cannadine, "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition, c. 1820-1977,'" in *The Invention of Tradition* ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger, 101-164 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Queen Victoria's childhood was rather unhappy as her mother wish to control her in every way possible. Beyond this, her mother was under the control of Sir John Conroy, who isolated Victoria. Conroy manipulated Victoria and her mother.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Hibbert, *Queen Victoria: A Personal History* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 106.



produce and prosper, earning her the nickname “the grandmother of Europe.” An evaluation of the marriages of her five daughters, Victoria, Alice, Louise, Helena, and Beatrice, specifically shows how important marriages and alliances were to Victoria and the stability of the royal family, particularly from a gender perspective. These marriages also highlight how princesses, as in centuries past, were often political pawns in a broader European diplomatic context. Far from demonstrating a diminution of royal authority, these marriages allowed Queen Victoria to become the “supreme matchmaker of Europe.”<sup>4</sup>

Of course, marriage brokering between royal families in Europe was nothing new. Queen Victoria’s grandparents (King George III and Queen Charlotte) had a happy brood of fifteen children. Yet when George III died in 1820, not a single one of his surviving sons had produced a legitimate male heir. Further examination proved “that King George had no fewer than fifty-six grandchildren,” with Prince Charlotte, the oldest grandchild, being the only legitimate heir.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Princess Charlotte, Victoria’s eldest cousin (and the only legitimate child of George IV), had tragically died in childbirth three years prior. Thus, when Queen Victoria was born in 1819, she stood third in line to the throne behind her two uncles, the future George IV and William IV and she became the new hope for the monarchy.

By contrast, Victoria and Albert, went on to produce successful familial alliances.<sup>6</sup> The perceived shame that the previous generation brought to the royal family, Victoria and Albert both strongly felt, had to be rectified under her reign with strong legitimate marriage alliances that produced legitimate heirs. This explains Victoria’s unwavering motivations in marriage craft as she constantly wished to right the wrongs of her family’s mistakes. Albert also came from a

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<sup>4</sup> Adrienne Munich, *Queen Victoria’s Secrets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 122.

<sup>5</sup> Hibbert, *Queen Victoria: A Personal History*, 25.

<sup>6</sup> Miles Taylor, “The Bicentenary of Queen Victoria,” *Journal of British Studies* 59, no. 1 (2020): 121-135, 129.

broken home: his parents divorced when he was just four years old, and his father had a scandalous reputation throughout European royal and aristocratic circles as a lecher. As A.N. Wilson explains, Ernst, “like Victoria’s Hanoverian uncles, was a lecher and a roue. No one would look at the married life of Duke Ernst I of Coburg, or the domestic life of George IV and William IV, and find in it a role model for family virtue.”<sup>7</sup> Albert, deeply embarrassed by his father’s behavior, thus joined his future wife in her ardent wish to put the past behind them and become a model family for the nation.<sup>8</sup>

While marriages of royal children to smaller Protestant royal houses may not have been new for the British monarchy, the extent Victoria achieved with her matches is significant.<sup>9</sup> Her eldest daughter Vicky, for example, married the Crown Prince of Prussia and was the mother of the future Kaiser Wilhelm II. Two more of her daughters- Alice and Beatrice- married German princes, in Alice’s case, Louis Grand Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt, and in Beatrice’s case, Prince Henry of Battenberg. A fourth daughter, Helena, wed a prince of the Danish royal family. Finally, a fifth daughter, Louise, broke centuries of royal precedent by marrying Lord Lorne, the future Duke of Argyll. She was the first English or British royal to marry a commoner in three centuries, ever since Henry VIII’s sister Mary Tudor married Charles Brandon, the first Duke of Suffolk, in 1515.

However, aside from the marriage of the eldest daughter Victoria to the future Kaiser Friedrich III of Germany, the marriages of her daughters (and Victoria's role in determining them) tend to be ignored. Nevertheless, with the death of Prince Albert in 1861, Victoria was the chief decision-maker for each of her younger daughters’ futures. Rather than seeing her as a

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<sup>7</sup> A.N. Wilson, *Victoria: A Life* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), 67-68.

<sup>8</sup> A.N. Wilson, *Prince Albert: The Man Who Saved the Monarchy* (London: Atlantic Books, 2019), 13.

<sup>9</sup> Taylor, “The Bicentenary of Queen Victoria”, 128.

relatively powerless female cipher, who merely “reigned but did not rule” in Walter Bagehot’s famous formulation, I join Miles Taylor in asserting the need to free Queen Victoria "from the age that she supposedly embodies" and regard her as "a subject of study in her own right."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 123.

## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORIOGRAPHY

There is a vast scholarly literature on Queen Victoria, and indeed a whole age named for her. However, much of this has tended to marginalize Victoria as a historical actor.<sup>11</sup> With the digitization of Queen Victoria's journals in 2012, recent scholarship on Queen Victoria has developed into areas previously seen as insignificant. Recent scholarship delves into gendered, cultural, and social aspects of Queen Victoria's reign as well as her personal life. However, the evaluation of Queen Victoria in the scholarly environment is marked by one central piece of scholarship.

One highly influential approach to studying Queen Victoria was pioneered in the early 1980s by David Cannadine. In, "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition, c. 1820-1977,'" Cannadine contends that during Queen Victoria's long reign, the monarchy transitioned from being a largely unpopular institution, mired in political controversy, into a deeply popular, unifying, cultural reference point for the British nation.<sup>12</sup> From the 1870s onward, Queen Victoria enjoyed widespread popularity among her subjects. Her uncles (George VI and William IV), by contrast, while wielding far more political power than she did, were also far more controversial. By ceasing to be politically powerful, Cannadine contends, Victoria laid the groundwork for the British monarchy's enduring strength and resilience ever since. While most other European monarchies have been toppled, mostly after the end of the First World War, Britain's remains intact to this day.

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<sup>11</sup> Most works on Queen Victoria's reign existed in purely biographical analysis, with little emphasis on deeper factors. Many notable biographies in recent years include the works of Julia Beard, Christopher Hibbert, and A.N. Wilson. While these works are helpful for a general analysis of Queen Victoria's life, deeper investigation is needed to understand the historical context better.

<sup>12</sup> Cannadine, "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual".

These arguments about Queen Victoria's role in the transformation of the British monarchy have deeply influenced other scholars over the past four decades. A decade after Cannadine wrote his seminal article, Adrienne Munich and Margaret Homans pioneered the reevaluation of Victoria's legacy in the 1990s and, were among the first academics to examine Queen Victoria in a gendered context. Both Munich and Homans largely embrace the Cannadine thesis in the assumption that by the end of her reign, Queen Victoria largely possessed ceremonial authority while losing much of her political power. However, both scholars also began to challenge the prevailing narrative by directly evaluating Victoria from a feminist perspective. Both examined Queen Victoria from a cultural-historical perspective, something not deeply explored by Cannadine. Munich and Homans, thus, created a trend in historical scholarship that emphasized and reasserted the importance of Queen Victoria's legacy in the historical context.

Munich first published her work on Queen Victoria's secrets which consist of, "observable methods or formulas of defining and authorizing Queen Victoria's power." It is important to note that these are not new revelations but previously established facts. However, these "open secrets about the Victorian age that have heretofore been unacknowledged as enabling methods of Queen Victoria's monarchy." In the context of women, Munich's title and inclusion of secrets also refer to "what has been taken to be an unknown female essences."<sup>13</sup>

Victorian's womanhood further added to the mysterious nature of her rule as her "success in permeating the cultural imagination suggests a mysterious womanly formula, made all the more secret because possessed by a queen." While Munich acknowledges she may not be adding any new revelations, she chooses to reexamine areas previously overlooked in the context of

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<sup>13</sup> Munich, *Queen Victoria's Secrets*, 27.

Queen Victoria's reign. Munich established the foundation for which future studies of Queen Victoria's reign could flourish."<sup>14</sup> She also specifically challenges Cannadine's perceptions of Queen Victoria by interpreting Victoria from a feminist perspective. Munich opened scholarship to analyzing Queen Victoria in a new light. As she is no longer just a figure for which an age is named, she is now a female monarch who actually had a voice.

Homans and Munich assert, Queen Victoria's true character and achievements may have been overlooked because of the gendered prejudices of her time and contend that "Queen Victoria has been hidden in plain view" for over a century."<sup>15</sup> Not only do the authors evaluate different aspects of Victoria's reign, such as her activities in "nation-making" compared to other female monarchs, but they also emphasize the differences in Victoria as she aged and her legacy after death. The most extensive grouping of essays concerns Victoria as monarch and how she was able to become both a cultural icon and a nationalist symbol through her femininity. Homans and Munich's work provides a scholarly approach that looks beyond the biographical lens of Queen Victoria as they cast her in a new light as not a ruler but far more than this.

In recent years, Margaret Homans's work has been a catalyst for scholarship on Queen Victoria. Homans emphasizes Queen Victoria's "being as a form of doing," and that how she is represented, whether it be in writing or through images are manifestations of Victoria's agency. She argues, "Victoria's monarchy presents a particularly interesting case for the study of royal agency and royal identity." As she continues, "what constitutes an action, and who does it when it is done because to the paradoxes of a constitutional monarch's power at any time are added the complications introduced by Victoria's gender in an era characterized by its heightened and

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Homans Margaret and Adrienne Munich ed., *Remaking Queen Victoria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

pervasive gender consciousness.”<sup>16</sup> By evaluating Queen Victoria’s writings after the death of the Prince Consort, one can glean her true feelings on controversial issues that have cast her in a different light in the past. Homans truly engages Victoria’s primary sources to dispel previously held notions about her being removed from politics. Homans does not disagree with the argument raised by Cannadine that Queen Victoria held less power at the end of her reign than any previous generation of monarchs. However, Homans deeply criticizes “the sexist assumptions that have prevented historians from giving her sufficient credit for her understanding of her role and for her efforts to perform it well.”<sup>17</sup>

After Homans and Munich’s innovative gendered analysis of Queen Victoria, historian John Plunkett embraced the cultural turn in scholarship in the early 2000s with his 2001 book, *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch*. Plunkett evaluates and examines how the reproduction of royal images in prints and visual media put the monarchy at the center of the new national identity in Britain.<sup>18</sup> Yet, like Homans and Munich, Plunkett works within the framework of Cannadine’s analysis. However, Plunkett’s work takes both Cannadine’s and Homan’s analysis a step further with his detailed study of the cultural effects Queen Victoria images had on the nation. Advancements in printmaking, illustrations, engraving, and stamps led to Victoria’s name and image being circulated at a level previously unheard of.

However, as Plunkett argues, the advent of photography became the true catalyst for the propagation of Queen Victoria’s image because the people could see what their sovereign honestly looked like for the first time.<sup>19</sup> This also gave way to the notion that the royal family

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<sup>16</sup> Margaret Homans, *Royal Representations: Queen Victoria and British Culture, 1837-1876* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 19.

<sup>17</sup> Homans, *Royal Representation*, 18.

<sup>18</sup> John Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media*.

was just like everyone else, which Plunkett views as a tool used by the royal family to control the given narrative to their people. Plunkett's work provides a deeper cultural analysis of Queen Victoria and her reign in terms of print media and her image, which offers new perspectives on Queen Victoria's role in the minds of her subjects. It also provided other areas of analysis to view the often-overlooked queen.

After Plunkett's work, historical scholarship pertaining to Queen Victoria did not see a resurgence until the late 2010s, with the recent work of Miles Taylor. In his 2018 book, *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*, evaluates Queen Victoria's interest, role, and influence on colonial India.<sup>20</sup> Similarly to Plunkett, Taylor largely uses a cultural lens of analysis and examines three central themes throughout his book. First, he examines how much agency Queen Victoria exercised and argues she was more of a dynastic imperial ruler in India rather than a constitutional monarchy, thus showing the limitations of Cannadine's argument. Secondly, he assesses how the Government of India used the Queen's name and image to ensure peace. Finally, he explores how Queen Victoria's image proliferated throughout the empire and how she ascended to the status of an iconic figure within India and the British Empire as well as at home in Britain.

Not only does Taylor challenge the prevailing scholarship, he does so in a way that does not negate the harsh realities of some of Victoria's actions, particularly her adoption of native children and her stance on suffrage. He can finally give an accurate representation of Queen Victoria's agency rather than passivity, which follows the trend in scholarship before him. Crucially for my work, Taylor also directly challenges Cannadine's argument about Victoria losing all of her political power when highlighting her deep involvement with colonial India. It is

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<sup>20</sup> Taylor, *Empress: Queen Victoria and India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).



clear throughout Taylor's work that she played a much larger role in her colonies than previously thought.

Taylor continues this examination in an article he published in 2020.<sup>21</sup> In this piece, he wishes for the field to shift its vision away from pure biography, which he exemplified in his previous work. He advocates for a direct analysis in three distinct themes of Queen Victoria's reign that need evaluation: her role as a female monarch at a time when women were supposed to retreat to the "private sphere;" her role in building a dynastic monarchy; and her connection with both church and state. Beyond these three themes, he also offers three more justifications for the reevaluation and study of Queen Victoria. First, with the digitization of her journals in 2012, scholars may more readily access her thoughts than in the past. He also asserts, a greater need to study royals such as Queen Victoria due to their significant role in nineteenth-century politics. Lastly, the Victorian era continues to fascinate modern generations. With this article, Taylor essentially reinforces the need for new historical scholarship on Queen Victoria while drawing attention to her dynastic aspirations.

Lucy Worsley, chief curator of the Historic Royal Palaces, has similarly revised interpretations of Queen Victoria. In her 2018 book, *Queen Victoria: Twenty-Four Days That Changed Her Life*, Worsley takes seriously, in contrast to previous historians, the significance of Queen Victoria's private worlds in her role as a public monarch.<sup>22</sup> Employing a micro-historical approach Worsley examines twenty-four significant days in Queen Victoria's long life, such as the day she became Queen, the day Prince Albert died, or the day her youngest daughter married. Doing so allows Worsley to show a more complex Queen Victoria as a historical personality as well as, vitally for my argument, highlighting her use of her own personal power.

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<sup>21</sup> Taylor, "The Bicentenary of Queen Victoria," 121-135

<sup>22</sup> Lucy Worsley, *Queen Victoria: Twenty-Four Days That Changed Her Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2018).

Indeed, in recent years, feminist historians such as Arianne Chernock have contended that far from being a mere ceremonial cipher, Queen Victoria was, in many ways, the nineteenth century's ultimate feminist icon.<sup>23</sup> Exploring Queen Victoria's relationship with the women's movement, Chernock revises previous scholarship, which contended that Queen Victoria's had disdain for the women's movement. By contrast, while Chernock acknowledges Queen Victoria's deep dislike of women's suffrage, she also points out that these political views of the Queen's were only known to a small circle of friends and associates and not widely known until decades later.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, she was deployed by both sides in their public appeals. The women's movement generally saw Queen Victoria as a symbol of female power due to her high status and influence. Far from being irrelevant to modern politics, Chernock urges that Queen Victoria was a key political figure and icon in her own right.<sup>25</sup>

The recent emphasis on scholarship about Queen Victoria has created a shift in the historical environment. No longer is Queen Victoria just a pretty face on a coin or a stamp or a woman on a statue. She is now a strong female queen who represented an age. With the reevaluation of Queen Victoria's image in recent years, several aspects of her life have been evaluated for the first time. One crucial piece is her influence and power over her children's marriage. Even in her marriage, Queen Victoria shows power over the establishment in her choice of Prince Albert. With the changing trends in historiography and the increased attention on the royal family, the path is now open to more closely examine Queen Victoria. In light of her diminished political influence, it became imperative for her to establish strategic alliances to strengthen her position.

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<sup>23</sup> Arianne Chernock, *The Right to Rule and the Rights of Women: Queen Victoria and the Women's Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Chernock, *The Right to Rule*, 1-2.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

## CHAPTER 3

### QUEEN VICTORIA: THE DYNASTIC ORCHESTRATER'S ORIGINS

When Queen Victoria became monarch in 1837, the country had great hopes for her after years of turmoil and embarrassment plagued the previous two reigns. George III's two oldest sons, George IV and William IV, between them, could only produce one legitimate heir, Princess Charlotte. After Princess Charlotte had died in childbirth in 1817, a race between George III's younger sons ensued to provide the next legitimate heir, who was Victoria, in 1819. Victoria, if she lived past her two uncles (George IV and William IV), would become the first woman to assume the British throne since Queen Anne over a century ago. While there has never been a prohibition of women becoming English or British monarchs – unlike elsewhere on the continent in Europe – female monarchs throughout English and then British history have been rare. Despite this, they are still important. Each of the female monarchs before Victoria (Mary I, Elizabeth I, Mary II, and Queen Anne) presided over eventful periods in English history.

In her early reign, Victoria wished to forge her own path. She was stubborn and chose to make her own decisions. She did seek guidance from those she trusted, particularly her uncle King Leopold of Belgium and Lord Melbourne, her first prime minister. She also received unwanted guidance from her mother, the Duchess of Kent, someone she had little trust in after her traumatic childhood. The Duchess of Kent's marriage intention for Victoria was for Victoria to marry her cousin Ernst, Albert's older brother. This meant that Victoria's life would continue much like it did before, still under her mother's strict guidance. Ernst had similar qualities to his father in his promiscuity.

As early as 1836, King Leopold tried to steer Victoria towards marriage with her first cousin Albert. Victoria initially rejected her uncle's idea. At their initial meeting, Victoria

described Albert, who was unwell the day before, as being “very pale and felt very poorly.”<sup>26</sup> This meeting even predated Victoria’s accession to the throne, which further proves the prevalence in Leopold’s mind that his niece and nephew should unite in marriage. It was also clear that Victoria only saw Albert as her cousin and that no feelings of intimacy had arisen.

During Victoria’s early reign, she had little thought of marriage and was, moreover, distracted by various controversies such as the “Bedchamber Scandal,” where Victoria refused to appoint Tory wives to her household against the wishes of Sir Robert Peel, the party’s leader.<sup>27</sup> These events caused a constitutional crisis because Victoria was seen as favoring one political party (the Whigs under Lord Melbourne) over another (the Conservatives under Peel). She also seems to have enjoyed being single. A good example would be her diary entries regarding Grand Duke Alexander’s visit for her birthday where they danced a Country Dance. (Alexander was the son of Tsar Nicholas I.)<sup>28</sup> These interactions between Victoria and Alexander were nothing more than innocent flirtation because both knew marriage would be impossible because of religious differences between their countries (she being Anglican and he being Russian Orthodox). Victoria would not give up her crown for a man, and Alexander would not give up his title or crown either.

Queen Victoria, as the sovereign, had complete control over all royal marriages, including her own, and could not be compelled into a marriage without her consent. This was quite different from the experiences of other women of her time and those of her daughters. Not only was she allowed to choose her own spouse, but she could also do so out of love. Crucially, she continued to possess a good deal of political power which she would not cede to her

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<sup>26</sup> Queen Victoria, *Queen Victoria’s Journal*, May 24, 1836, 315-316.

<sup>27</sup> Hibbert, *Queen Victoria*, 103.

<sup>28</sup> Queen Victoria, May 24, 1839, 256-257.

husband. This placed Victoria in a unique position. She often discussed the matter of her own marriage with Lord Melbourne, her first prime minister. Melbourne even proposed that she marry a commoner, an idea that Victoria flat-out refused.

Lord Melbourne did no favors for Leopold's marriage suggestions.<sup>29</sup> She details their conversation in her journal on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1839, stating, "Well, I mustered up courage, and said that my Uncle's great wish - was - that I should marry my Cousin Albert ...I could decide nothing until I saw him again.," As the conversation continued, Lord Melbourne grew increasingly concerned with Victoria's intention with Albert. Melbourne attempted to dissuade Queen Victoria, stating that, "cousins are not very good things;" - and "Those Cobourgs are not popular abroad; the Russians hate them." Victoria directly understood the implications of marrying Prince Albert or any other European prince. At this juncture, she was inclined to remain single, much like Queen Elizabeth I did several centuries earlier. Recounting what she told Melbourne, she wrote in her diary that "at present my feeling was quite against ever marrying."<sup>30</sup> This episode was an early indication that Victoria was quite resolute in her decisions and would not be swayed by anyone. Indeed, her headstrong nature and resolve continued throughout the rest of her life.

It was not until a later visit from Albert October of 1839 that she ultimately changed her mind on the question of marriage. Queen Victoria wrote this in her journal on October 10, 1839, "I went to the top of the staircase and received my 2 dear cousins Ernest and Albert, whom I found grown and changed, and embellished. It was with some emotion that I beheld Albert - who

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<sup>29</sup> Hibbert, *Queen Victoria*, 104.

<sup>30</sup> Queen Victoria, April 18, 1839, 80-81.

is beautiful.”<sup>31</sup> This shows a marked difference in Victoria’s demeanor towards Prince Albert as she has warmed to her cousins after years of cousinly indifference.

Not long after, Queen Victoria proposed to him. Following the historic example of Queen Mary Tudor, Victoria proposed to Albert since she was the sovereign, and all royal marriages required her approval.<sup>32</sup> On October 15, 1839, Queen Victoria proposed to her dear love Albert. As Victoria detailed in her journal regarding the proposal, Albert, at half past twelve, entered the closet where she was standing. After some time, he expressed his feelings on the subject he assumed she was going to discuss. When she finally asked the question, she described her happiness “and that it would make me *too happy* if he would consent to what I wished (to marry me).” Victoria finally felt she had found someone she wanted to spend the rest of her life with. She completely trusted Albert, so much so that she felt she was unworthy of him.<sup>33</sup> For so long, Victoria had decisions taken in her name, for the first time, she was able to finally able to act all on her own without interference from others. She could make impactful decisions on her own accord, which is why she chose Albert.

She chose Prince Albert because he was intelligent and willing to allow her power while still maintaining his own within the family. Historian Julia Baird examines their mutual love of power by saying, “At the heart of the struggle was the fact that both of them loved power: Victoria for the freedom it brought to her as a woman living in a century when most of her sex lacked it, and Albert for the license it gave him to lead, influence, and effect change.”<sup>34</sup> Many

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<sup>31</sup> Queen Victoria, October 10, 1839, 274-275.

<sup>32</sup> Cecil Woodham-Smith, *Queen Victoria: From Her Birth to the Death of the Prince Consort* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 189.

<sup>33</sup> Queen Victoria, October 15, 1839, 290.

<sup>34</sup> Julia Baird, *Victoria: The Queen* (New York: Random House, 2016), 135.

would see Albert as not an impressive match for her, but his qualifications were his pure, ancient blood and beautiful face, at least for Victoria.<sup>35</sup>

Prince Albert seemed to have felt likewise about their compatibility. He wrote about his happiness in a letter to his grandmother and detailed the proposal. He expressed his profound happiness in her asking for his hand in marriage. He also strongly believed that he and Victoria would have continual happiness. Victoria similarly wrote to Leopold. Immediately following the proposal, Victoria sent a letter to Leopold detailing the engagement and stating her intentions with Albert. She clearly stated, “My mind is quite made up—and I told Albert this morning of it; the warm affection he showed me on learning this gave me *great* pleasure. He seems *perfection*, and I think that I have the prospect of very great happiness before me.”<sup>36</sup> Leopold’s greatest desires had come to fruition, a match he had planned for diligently since their births within months of each other twenty years before finally panned out.

After completing her proposal, Victoria needed to announce her engagement to the Privy Council and Parliament. She held a meeting of her Privy Council on November 23, 1839, where she had this short sentiment to say in her journal, explaining her feelings in the moment. She expressed feelings of anxiety and deep feelings of utter relief when she finally delivered her message. The Privy Council received the news warmly and asked that this most gracious and most welcome communication “might be printed.”<sup>37</sup> While the Privy Council met Victoria’s announcement with much excitement, the real test would come when she made her announcement to Parliament. The announcement to Parliament also entailed the financial aspects of marrying Prince Albert, an issue that most surely would get messy. She was met with warm

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<sup>35</sup> Worsley, *Queen Victoria: Twenty-Four Days That Changed Her Life*, 125.

<sup>36</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain. *The Letters of Queen Victoria, Volume I (of 3), 1837-1843* Ed. Arthur Christopher Benson, and Reginald Baliol Brett Esher. (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, W, 1908),

<sup>37</sup> Queen Victoria, November 23, 1839, 75-76.

congratulations from both Houses of Parliament, and excited crowds lined the street as she approached. The Duke of Wellington, in his usual character, voiced the concern that in Victoria's announcement as she failed to state that Albert was Protestant, something that would cause great concern as she was forbidden as head of the Church of England from marrying a Roman Catholic.<sup>38</sup> Wellington also expressed concern regarding precedent but stated, "Let the Queen put the Prince where she likes and settle it herself."<sup>39</sup>

The greatest issue facing the couple was the establishment of Albert's allowance, an amount that Victoria thought should be much larger than was eventually given. However, Albert reassured her that he would continue to love and cherish her with or without the amount she requested. The formation of the Albert's royal household was another issue that needed resolving. Lord Melbourne greatly assisted Victoria in finding suitable candidates for the positions, something Prince Albert was less than thrilled about. In December 1839, Albert proposed the idea of starting his own household. Queen Victoria could not accept this for political reasons but assured him that he "may entirely rely upon me that the people who will be about you will be absolutely pleasant people, of high standing and good character."<sup>40</sup>

The final issue that had to be solved was the question of the honeymoon. Prince Albert proposed a honeymoon lasting four to six weeks, but Victoria disagreed. He then suggested a shorter duration, such as a fortnight or a week. She replied just as equally as sharply to this suggestion as she did with him being allowed to choose his household enthusiastically.<sup>41</sup> In her letter to Albert in January 1840, she emphasized to her future husband that she was sovereign

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<sup>38</sup> Saxon royal houses had Catholic and Protestant branches. There were many nasty rumors, therefore, that Prince Albert was Catholic, he was in fact Lutheran.

<sup>39</sup> Charles Morris, *The Life of Queen Victoria and the Story of Her Reign* (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1901), 105-106.

<sup>40</sup> Queen Victoria, *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 205.

<sup>41</sup> Hibbert, *Queen Victoria*, 124.



above all else, writing, “You forget, my dearest Love, that I am the Sovereign, and that business can stop and wait for nothing.” Parliament was in session, and “it is quite impossible for me to be absent from London; therefore, two or three days is already a long time to be absent.”<sup>42</sup>

Throughout these disagreements with Prince Albert, Victoria continually reasserted her dominance as the sovereign in the relationship, something that not even marriage would change.

The wedding on February 10, 1840, followed shortly after the engagement. Queen Victoria was very anxious yet excited about her wedding day. The most challenging aspect was that Albert left England to gather his things to make England his permanent home. During this time, much preparation was also happening for the wedding, which took its toll on Victoria as she grew sick at the beginning of 1840. Victoria, forced to her bed, pondered what life would be like as a married woman. Her most significant concern was giving up the independence she had gained in the past two years after finally escaping her mother's power. She also worried about having children, something she did not want, but fate has a sense of humor. Her greatest fear was if Albert would try to interfere in political matters, she was the ruler, and this had to be clear that he had no place in that area of her life.<sup>43</sup>

When the day finally arrived, there was much fanfare. This excerpt from the *Morning Herald* in London details the nation's mood that day. “This day the youthful QUEEN of England—the august and lovely representative of the illustrious House of Brunswick—enters into the holy state of matrimony with the PRINCE of her choice.”<sup>44</sup> With the excitement of the day's events, it also became clear that the nation understood the Queen's motivations in picking her consort. Her choice, first and foremost, was Prince Albert, and even the people understood

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<sup>42</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, *Queen Victoria: In Her Letters and Journals* Ed. Christopher Hibbert. (London: John Murray, 1984), 64.

<sup>43</sup> Baird, *Victoria*, 136-137.

<sup>44</sup> *The Morning Herald*, February 10, 1840.

this as they knew the headstrong nature of their Queen. The days' events would prove to be a joyous event for the people as well as Victoria.

Victoria woke with much excitement for the day describing in detail the events of the day. The wedding went against previous precedent by having the ceremony not in the evening. She spent the morning getting ready for the ceremony with her mother, Countess Lehzen, her trusted governess from her childhood, and her ladies-in-waiting. She wrote of the actual ceremony in her journal, where she explained the ceremony to be a very plain and simple event. She felt as if anyone that made the promises at the altar ought not to forget the everlasting expressions done at the altar. When the ring was placed upon her finger, she exclaimed immense joy and happiness. The procession was met by great applause as they left the church.<sup>45</sup>

For Victoria the most exciting part of the day was when Victoria and Albert were together for the first time as husband in wife. She later wrote in her diary, how profoundly in love she was with Albert and how tender and kind Albert was to her. Her ultimate feeling about the situation was expressed at the end of her entry, "His beauty, his sweetness and gentleness,- really how can I ever be thankful enough to have such a Husband!"<sup>46</sup> The marriage had finally happened and shortly after the honeymoon, Victoria was soon expecting the couple's first child, Victoria, the first daughter, was to be a key in Victoria's dynastic relations with other countries in Europe. These alliances proved crucial to the survival and influence of the British monarchy going forward.

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<sup>45</sup> Queen Victoria, February 10, 1840, 346.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 349.

## CHAPTER 4

## PRINCESS VICTORIA: THE MARRIAGE CRAFT BEGINS

Since the Princess Royal, Vicky, was the first of Queen Victoria's children to marry, background information is needed to understand Victoria's agency regarding Vicky's marriage to the future King of Prussia. Nine months after Queen Victoria's marriage to Prince Albert, Victoria Adelaide Mary Louise, Princess Royal of Great Britain and Ireland, was born on November 21, 1840.<sup>47</sup> First seen as a great disappointment because of her gender, "Pussy", as she was lovingly called, soon became the center of both of her parents' worlds. As Egon Caesar Corti observes, "The young mother's happiness knew no bounds, even though they had hoped for a boy. The baby was a delightfully sweet little thing in whom both parents sought for a likeness of the other."<sup>48</sup> The birth of Victoria was significant for another reason: hers was the first birth of an heir apparent to a reigning monarch since the birth of the Prince Regent (the future George IV) in 1762.<sup>49</sup> For many, the birth also signaled the true beginning of the Victorian Age.<sup>50</sup>

As she grew, the relationship between the Princess Royal and Prince Albert blossomed and not only because an exceptional father-daughter dynamic but a relationship of mutual respect. Albert rejoiced when the fact that Vicky could fill this void first became evident. Above all of her governesses, Vicky's first teacher and educator was her father.<sup>51</sup> From an early age, Vicky and the other royal children were subjected to a rigorous educational program devised by their father. Albert wished to instill a sense of learning and principle in his children, befitting

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<sup>47</sup> Richard Barkley, *The Empress Frederick, Daughter of Queen Victoria* (London: Macmillan, 1956), 1.

<sup>48</sup> Egon Caesar Corti, *The English Empress: A Study in the Relations between Queen Victoria and Her Eldest Daughter, Empress Frederick of Germany* (London: Cassell, 1957), 8.

<sup>49</sup> Barkley, *The Empress Frederick*, 2.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 14-15.

their position. As described in the Princess Royal's memoir, she "was clever, self-willed, and high-spirited; learning everything that was put before her with marvelous intelligence and rapidity."<sup>52</sup> Vicky thrived in the classroom, so well, in fact, that by the age of four, she could speak three languages. Vicky grew to be a brilliant woman but also a kind and compassionate woman. "Her character was now beginning to be formed," an observer remarked, "her many lovable and generous qualities seemed often to find none but the most grudging recognition."<sup>53</sup> Her kind nature, unfortunately, got her no praise in her future home.

After Vicky, the next child born was the future King Edward VII, who became the Prince of Wales upon his birth. Albert had many goals for him, and this is expressed at his christening where the King of Prussia was one of the godparents. Albert saw this as an opportunity to unify the two royal families through moral obligations. This was not merely a friendly gesture but sought to reinforce relations between Great Britain and Prussia. Prince Albert even felt that Prussia was the hope for unifying the Germanic people.<sup>54</sup> While some of Albert's goals ultimately became unrealized, there was another consequence of the connection with the Prussian royal family engendered by Edward's birth: Vicky's future husband would be the Prussian king's son.

Albert was concerned with the affairs of Germany, his ancestral home, which remained historically divided into nearly forty micro-states. He thought that Prussia was the key to Germany's ultimate prosperity due to its military and economic prominence as one of the larger states. This deep perspective and insight on the affairs of Germany was also shared by Queen Victoria as well. As Corti explains: "The Queen too, although born in the United Kingdom, was

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<sup>52</sup> Anonymous. *The Empress Frederick; a Memoir* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1914), 7.

<sup>53</sup> Anonymous, *The Empress Frederick*, 18.

<sup>54</sup> Corti, *The English Empress*, 8.

deeply rooted in her German heritage. Not only was her mother, the Duchess of Kent, German, but also her early advisors.”<sup>55</sup> German roots were prevalent within the royal family, and it was no surprise that Prince Albert wanted to maintain good relations for the future because of a possible marriage.

The royal children’s childhood appeared abnormal for the time period as the parents tried to keep their children away from the royal court, which in the past had a tendency to be scandalous under the leadership of the two previous monarchs. As Barkeley has observed, “Perhaps the most sensible decision of the parents was that the Royal children should come in contact as little as possible with the actual life of the Court.” Albert and Victoria did not feel that the court was not necessarily bad. They just understood the effect life court had on young impressionable minds.<sup>56</sup> This lack of putting on appearances and true acceptance of family life rather than the expectation of the nation created children who were more down to earth than previous generations. This close familial relationship between Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, and the children drew the attention of Prince Frederick of Prussia, Vicky’s future husband.

As Vicky matured, so, too, did her intellect and, with it, the plans that Prince Albert had for her. The next meeting between the British and Prussian royal families would occur in 1851, when she was just eleven years old. Her father was a leading force behind the Great Exhibition of 1851, which was considered to be his coming out party for the world. The first world fair, the Exhibition was also crucial for Vicky’s life as she met her future husband for the first time. Prince Frederick William of Prussia accompanied his family to the Great Exhibition. While “Fritz” may have been taken by Vicky, she was still a child, so their future was still unclear.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Barkeley, *The Empress Frederick*, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Anonymous. *The Empress Frederick*, 7.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

The Great Exhibition may have been the first time that Vicky and Prince Frederick met. However, the ideals of Germany and the possibility of someday marrying a German prince were always present during Vicky's childhood. Prince Albert looked on with great satisfaction as the relations with Prussia grew closer. With this, he hoped for future alliances with Britain.<sup>58</sup> Albert was ever conscious about maintaining good relations with Prussia. What better way to instill good relations than through the institution of marriage?

The Great Exhibition may have marked the first meeting of the Princess Royal and Prince Frederick, but sparks began to fly immediately, and both families began to draw closer. Prince Frederick was fascinated with what he saw at the Great Exhibition, especially Great Britain's prominence on full display to the highest degree. Queen Victoria thought very highly of Prince Frederick, and the fact that he had even learned English for the visit. When he spoke to Vicky for the first time, he spoke to her in English. She replied in perfect German.<sup>59</sup> Prince Frederick was enthralled by the English ways even before having experience with them at the Exhibition. His infatuation with the English only grew as his affection for Vicky grew. He may or may not have known about the potential love match. But he fell in love rather with England, and Vicky was an added bonus.<sup>60</sup> In time, Prince Frederick fell in love with Vicky, but his love for her intensified with his fascination of everything in Victorian England.

Although Prince Albert masterminded the pairing of his daughter with Prince Frederick of Prussia -- with the hope of a future match between the two - Queen Victoria was also supportive of the idea. Queen Victoria wanted her eldest daughter to marry Fritz because she saw many similarities between her husband Albert and Fritz, especially of their common heritage and

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<sup>58</sup> Corti, *The English Empress*, 11.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>60</sup> Barkeley, *The Empress Frederick*, 22.

political affiliation.<sup>61</sup> She was not naïve enough to think that a love match with Prussia would provide political advantages, as Prince Albert always seemed to be the one advocating for this, but Victoria was just as determined to maintain good relations with Prussia and to keep her beloved husband happy.

Queen Victoria was also quite “determined... to secure that the lives of her children should be entirely different from those of their great-uncles and great-aunts.”<sup>62</sup> The royal family before Victoria’s accession was distinguished by its of drama and scandal. Victoria saw her family’s follies as diminishing the public’s perception of the royal family, a fate she wished to avoid for her children. For Victoria, the surest way to avert this outcome was strategic marriages designed to uphold the legitimacy of the royal family.

September 14, 1855, marked the beginning of Vicky’s future, as Prince Frederick came to visit the newly completed Balmoral Castle in Scotland to spend time with the royal family. Throughout the time spent with the family, the interactions between Vicky and Fritz, as her family began calling Frederick, edged on the line of flirtation as both seemed to have to be in each other’s presence. Prince Frederick asked for Vicky’s hand in marriage on September 20, which Victoria and Albert gladly approved.

Queen Victoria commented on the day with this sentiment when asked about her true feelings for Fritz, the "oh! yes", with an indescribably happy look.” Prince Albert agreed that Fritz was excellent and had no reservations about allowing Vicky to marry him. He also emphasized that, “if she had not liked him, we should never have forced her to this step, for which she expressed great gratitude.”<sup>63</sup> After the proposal, Prince Frederick experienced

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>62</sup> Anonymous, *The Empress Frederick*, 19.

<sup>63</sup> Queen Victoria, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1855, 233-234.

immense happiness. Victoria and Albert were also thrilled as they “had tears in their eyes.” It was also asked of Prince Frederick to maintain secrecy regarding the engagement until after Vicky’s confirmation.<sup>64</sup>

Vicky was still only fourteen when Prince Frederick proposed, so the marriage had to be postponed due to her age. However, Prince Frederick contained himself in the secret from the princess for a short period, but he was unable to keep the secret any further when out riding with her and expressed to her his hopes and desires. He then reached over and gave her his hand and asked for her hand in marriage.<sup>65</sup>

Soon after the proposal and subsequent engagement, Vicky began preparing for her life in Prussia. She was fortunate, for there was time to learn about Prussian culture. Her entire education now focused on the assumption that she was to become the wife of the Prussian heir presumptive. She became the intellectual equal to Albert, who prepared her for the role of reigning sovereign rather than a Queen consort.<sup>66</sup> Despite this necessary tutelage, Vicky was to be prepared for her role as the future Queen of Prussia. Vicky enjoyed the time she spent with her father, as she noted in her diary, “From dear Papa I can learn more than from anyone else in the world; he explains everything so well and discusses things like no one else. In fact, the hours I spend with my parents are the happiest in the day.”<sup>67</sup> Vicky soon learned that moving away from her parents would be harder than expected.

The engagement was announced in May of 1857 when Queen Victoria sent a notification to Parliament. Prussia, at this point, was at a crossroads politically as the forces of liberalism and conservatism fought not just there but elsewhere in Europe as well. Each country, therefore,

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<sup>64</sup> Corti, *The English Empress*, 21-22.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

<sup>66</sup> Anonymous, *The Empress Frederick*, 26.

<sup>67</sup> Corti, *The English Empress*, 25.



perceived the marriage of Vicky and Fritz differently. In England, the Princess Royal was considered the ‘daughter of England’, and all its liberal values. By contrast, she was only seen in a few circles in Prussia, as representing a positive influence upon Prussian culture. Many others within Prussia looked upon her impending marriage with their crown prince with foreboding.<sup>68</sup> While Prince Albert fully believed and hoped her marriage to Fritz would be popular in Prussia, even more, popular than it was in England, in actuality, she was perceived as a threat to the conservative order of Prussia and as an influence that would further implement the ideals of liberalism, then sweeping through not only Prussia but through what became unified Germany.

Indeed, one of the greatest critics of the marriage was Otto von Bismarck, an outspoken voice for conservative if not reactionary politics who eventually became chancellor of the unified Germany in 1871. Bismarck had this to say about Vicky: “If the Princess can leave the Englishwoman at home and become a Prussian, then she may be a blessing to the country.”<sup>69</sup> Bismarck’s hopes were not met as the Princess was not able to let go of the ideals of her country, as a recurring theme of her mother’s letters, “is that she must never forget what she owes to her home, to England, and to her parents.”<sup>70</sup> This became a source of tension between Princess Victoria and Bismarck, who became the mentor to her son, Wilhelm, and saw her British influences as a threat to the German Empire.

Nevertheless, the marriage between Vicky and Prince Frederick took place. The date of the marriage was announced for January 25, 1858. The wedding ceremony symbolized the joining of the two nations of Great Britain and Prussia. However, the real challenges came when the Princess Royal had to leave her parents for the first time. As Queen Victoria wrote in her

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<sup>68</sup> Barkeley, *The Empress Frederick*, 50.

<sup>69</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain. *Dearest Child: Letters Between Queen Victoria and the Princess Royal, 1858-1861*. Ed. Roger Fulford, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965), 18

<sup>70</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, *Dearest Child*, 18.

diary, “What a dreadful moment, what a real heartache to think of our dearest Child being gone and not knowing how long it may be before we see her again! ... and my grief again burst forth.”<sup>71</sup> After the wedding and the departure of Vicky, the long correspondence between Victoria and Vicky began and lasted the rest of their lives. Her first letter to Vicky was right after she departed for the ship the *Victoria and Albert*. Victoria writes, “The object for which is so much had been going on had disappeared, the object of tenderest solicitude for 17 years in now in other but truly safe and loving hands.”<sup>72</sup> Victoria was bereaved to lose her eldest daughter to another country, but she saw that Fritz was a good man.

Queen Victoria was very open about her own grief and even wrote to her Uncle Leopold, where she described Vicky’s feeling of being quite well. The hardest challenge was the separation between Vicky and her parents, as she felt especially horrid about parting with her father. The challenge of Vicky leaving also affected Victoria as she had only parted from Vicky for short periods of time up until this point. She especially expresses her grief, “It is a *great, great* trial for a *Mother* who has watched over her child with such anxiety day after day, to see her far away—dependent on herself!” However, even with this anxiety, Victoria knew that Vicky had “in her good sense, clever head, kind and good heart.”<sup>73</sup>

Vicky was the eldest daughter and there was a lot at stake regarding her marriage. However, Princess Alice’s match would prove to be politically unifying after the death of the Prince Consort. His death led to an increased closeness between Victoria and Alice. The grief that Victoria felt regarding Vicky’s separation would prove minor and short-lasting compared to that

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<sup>71</sup> Barkeley, *Empress Frederick*, 61.

<sup>72</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain. *Dearest Child*, 27.

<sup>73</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain. *The Letters of Queen Victoria, Volume III (of 3), 1854-1861*, Ed. Arthur Christopher Benson, and Reginald Baliol Brett Esher. 3. Vol. 3. 3 vols. (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, W, 1908), 285.

she experienced after the death of her husband in 1861, but with this grief, she was even more determined to ensure successful matches for her daughters to instill success in the future. With her continual correspondence, Vicky played a role in the discussion and decisions of her sisters' marriage, as Victoria no longer had Albert to consult with.

## CHAPTER 5

## PRINCESS ALICE: THE FORGOTTEN DAUGHTER

The marriage of Queen Victoria's second daughter, Princess Alice, the often-forgotten daughter, demonstrates even more of Victoria's continuing personal power and authority. The stakes were lower than Princess Victoria's or Prince Edward's marriages, as Alice was the third-born. Even so, diplomacy persisted as the primary goal of marriage. Alice's marriage also marked the first major royal family event after the tragic death of the Prince Consort in late 1861. However, because Alice was the third child (of nine), little has been written about her. Victoria, overcome with sadness after the death of Prince Albert, was determined to allow her daughter's marriage to continue, but the event was rather somber. As Queen Victoria wrote in her diary, "Poor Alice's wedding (more of a funeral than a wedding) is over and she is a wife."<sup>74</sup>

After the marriage of Vicky, Alice became the next oldest daughter to live at home, so a great deal of the responsibilities fell on her now being the oldest. Responsibilities entailed being her mother's unofficial private secretary after Prince Albert's death. Her relationship with Queen Victoria also grew closer because Victoria realized that Alice would leave one day, and she needed to spend time with her when she could. She quickly assumed the position of eldest daughter in the house after Vicky had left. Alice and her mother had an understanding and "Queen Victoria, despite her faults, was immensely lovable to her daughters. Indeed, except as regards to the rather capricious Louise, she exercised an almost mesmerizing effect on all of them, even the independent-minded Princess Frederick William and the long-suffering Princess Beatrice," as Gerald Noel notes.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain. *Dearest Mama; Letters Between Queen Victoria and the Crown Princess of Prussia, 1861-1864*, Ed. Roger Fulford. (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965), 85.

<sup>75</sup> Gerald Noel, *Princess Alice: Queen Victoria's Forgotten Daughter* (London: Constable, 1974), 45.

Vicky's departure also marked a change in the relationship between Alice and her parents as Alice drew closer to both. Prince Albert often emphasized the importance of honesty and thoroughness of purpose because their lives would not be happy, worthy, or dignified.<sup>76</sup> Alice, in a closer relationship with her mother, seemed to be the best to understand her. She had a deep love for her but possessed a profoundly compassionate nature. Alice deeply respected and admired her mother's enduring relationship, recognizing her sovereignty and believing it deserved unwavering respect.<sup>77</sup> One of Alice's first challenges was trying to overcome her oldest sister's shadow, as the quieter Alice had a hard act to follow. Jerrold Packard states, "Alice's gifts were dormant, awaiting freedom from constant comparison with the star of the family. A material difference between the first of Victoria's daughters would be Alice's mature staying power: Vicky always cast her own unalienable talents over wide waters, while Alice would plumb a small pool to greater depths and often to a greater price."<sup>78</sup> Once Alice could express herself freely without the ever-present comparison, she expressed herself fully with her parents and siblings.

Alice's confirmation took place on April 20, 1859, soon after Vicky's wedding. She studied every night with Albert for several months to prepare for the ultimate test of her faith. Alice passed with flying colors, and her mother said she answered extremely well, she did so without hesitation. She may have been frightened but behaved admirably.<sup>79</sup> A mere five days later was Alice's sixteenth birthday, a day her mother covered in detail in her journal. Victoria states the occasion of her birth and just how much of a comfort and pleasure Princess Alice was

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<sup>76</sup> Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse, *Letters to Her Majesty the Queen* (Leipzig: Renhard Tauchnitz, 1885), 24.

<sup>77</sup> Noel, *Princess Alice*, 45.

<sup>78</sup> Jerrold M. Packard, *Victoria's Daughters* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 64.

<sup>79</sup> Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse, *Letters to Her Majesty*, 25.

to the family.<sup>80</sup> Her sixteenth birthday and her confirmation marked the beginning of adulthood for Alice, whose availability for marriage would now be on the horizon. It would not be until June of 1860 that Alice would meet her future husband.

Prince Louis of Hesse-Darmstadt, Alice's future husband, came for a visit to Windsor Castle during the Ascot race week, accompanied by his brother Henry.<sup>81</sup> Prince Louis came from a small area, and his blood, as some said was "only the palest shade of purple." However, he was still a prince and descended from Charlemagne.<sup>82</sup> Uncle Leopold was once more involved with interfering and matchmaking with another marriage as he was the one who encouraged Queen Victoria to invite Louis to Windsor. Queen Victoria may have had the assistance of her uncle in this marriage, similar to her own. However, this did not mean she was also utterly complacent in Alice's marriage. Nothing was to be done in the name of Victoria if she had not expressed it implicitly. Thus, with Victoria and Leopold's intervention, Alice and Louis began to get to know each other and hit it off almost immediately. Alice expressed her feelings in a dialogue with her friend Constance, Lord Clarendon's daughter. Constance recalls, "She talked exclusively of her anxieties and suffering for excessive love for Prince Louis of Hesse-Darmstadt. His is now the 'one being,' the only man she ever did, shall, or can or will love and Mama knows from his mother that she is the only girl he could ever bring himself to marry, so we expect it all to be arranged when we go abroad in September."<sup>83</sup>

Louis made another visit to England in November of 1860 and proposed to Alice during that time. Queen Victoria documented the engagement in her journal, where she observed Alice and Louis talking very intently by the fireplace. Immediately, when the group passed into the

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<sup>80</sup> Queen Victoria, April 25, 1859.

<sup>81</sup> Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse, *Letters to Her Majesty*, 27.

<sup>82</sup> Packard, *Victoria's Daughters*, 79.

<sup>83</sup> Nina Epton, *Victoria and her daughters* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1971), 88.

other room, both parties of the couple came up to Victoria with much haste. |Alice wasted no time in explaining to her mother Louis's intentions, "he had proposed to her & he [begged] me for my blessing, which I gladly gave him." As the evening progressed, Alice, Albert, Louis, and Victoria had a frank conversation about Alice moving to Germany, of which Alice did not object to due to her feelings for Louis. The evening ended in much happiness as "after a warm embrace of the dear young people we separated, Dear Alice was so happy & I overjoyed!"<sup>84</sup>

Another one of Victoria's daughters had been successfully matched with a German prince Queen Victoria again had to grant the blessing of the marriage for, under the Royal Marriages Act of 1772, no member of the British royal family could marry without the direct permission of the sovereign. Mutual happiness was to be found between the two, and Prince Albert even explained to Baron von Stockmar, one of his trusted advisors, "We like Louis better every day, because of his unaffectedly genial and cordial temper, his great modesty, and a very childlike nature, united with a firm character, and genuine goodness and dignity."<sup>85</sup> The marriage would not be for a year, and since Louis had no particular duties at home, they would make their home in England, much to the joy of Victoria who always wished to keep her children near. Louis remained at Windsor for Christmas, where he spent the time enjoying festivities with his future wife and family.<sup>86</sup>

At the start of 1861, there were mixed emotions as a new engagement brought excitement, while the passing of Queen Victoria's mother, the Duchess of Kent in March brought grief. Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, and Princess Alice were all with her when she passed, and

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<sup>84</sup> Queen Victoria, November 30, 1860, 329-330.

<sup>85</sup> Albert, Prince Consort, *Letters of the Prince Consort*. Ed. Kurt Jagow, (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1938), 354.

<sup>86</sup> E. F. Benson, *Queen Victoria's Daughters* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1838), 63.

this would be the foundation of Alice's sweet nature and nurturing during times of grief that would be useful later that year.<sup>87</sup> Victoria announced Alice's engagement and the details of her dowry before the House of Commons that spring, and both Houses of Parliament duly approved. Throughout the rest of the year, Louis made several more visits to England, was along with one even to the Scottish Highlands, which both he and Alice admired.<sup>88</sup>

The end of that year would mark a turning point in both the lives of mother and daughter with the sudden, tragic death of Prince Albert. The Prince Consort's death marked a shift in the reign of Queen Victoria as she was never the same after the loss of her love. He became ill in December of that year after confronting the Prince of Wales on allegations of promiscuity. Albert was prone to overworking and this now seemed to have done him in. He was dedicated to duty his entire life, in his marriage to Victoria, in assisting her in ruling, and in preparing Bertie for the role of future sovereign. His duty, in a way, would be his downfall as his illness persisted with little rest.<sup>89</sup> Victoria would go on to blame her husband's death on her eldest son for some years, even though he died of typhoid fever. Victoria would come to rely heavily upon Princess Alice in the immediate aftermath of her husband's death, during a time of immense grief.

Alice did all in her power to guard her mother from the painful and unavoidable reality of the loss of Prince Albert. During this time, Alice, as many authors and historians have observed, but most notably her sister Helena, developed a "force of character, combined with tact and judgement, truly admirable, setting and arranging everything for the Queen with Ministers and officials, and sustaining her mother by her own firmness and skillfully ministered sympathy."<sup>90</sup> Even *The Times* mentioned Alice's caring role, "It is impossible to speak too highly of the

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<sup>87</sup> Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse, *Letters to Her Majesty*, 30.

<sup>88</sup> Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse, *Letters of Her Majesty*, 30-31.

<sup>89</sup> Dulcie Ashdown, *Queen Victoria's Family* (London: Robert Hale, 1975), 101.

<sup>90</sup> Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse, *Letters of Her Majesty*, 32.



strength of mind and self-sacrifice shown by Princess Alice during these dreadful days.” Alice “understood that it was her duty to be the help and support of her mother in her great sorrow,” where she was also “great measure due to her that the Queen has been able to bear with such wonderful resignation to the loss that so suddenly and terribly befell her.”<sup>91</sup> During this time, the preparations for Alice’s marriage fell by the wayside. However, even through her grief, Queen Victoria knew that Alice’s marriage was what the Prince Consort wanted.<sup>92</sup> If it was not for Albert's insistence on Alice marrying Louis, the ceremony might have been canceled altogether.<sup>93</sup>

What should have been the happiest day of Alice's life turned into her acquiescing to her mother's emotional needs. Victoria dominated the whole sequence of events pertaining to the wedding, and Alice was perfectly content with this, as she wished to please her mother.<sup>94</sup> Alice was so concerned with her mother’s behavior that her wedding day became more about her mother's feelings than her own, thus showing the determined character of the queen.

The wedding took place at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight on July 1, 1862, and it was not a happy event as it was kept private. The dining room became a chapel.<sup>95</sup> Because of this emphasis of privacy, this meant that the bridesmaids chosen by Alice could not attend, and, instead, her sisters would serve as bridesmaids. The mourning customs were to be strictly followed, which meant that only the bride was in white, while Victoria wore black, and the bridesmaids wore quiet mauve and grey. After the ceremony, they changed back into their black mourning dresses.<sup>96</sup> Since the arrival of Louis, Victoria had been far more cynical of the

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<sup>91</sup> *The Times*, December 17, 1861.

<sup>92</sup> Benson, *Queen Victoria's Daughters*, 80.

<sup>93</sup> Packard, *Victoria's Daughters*, 102-103.

<sup>94</sup> Noel, *Princess Alice*, 91.

<sup>95</sup> Epton, *Victoria and her daughters*, 103.

<sup>96</sup> Ashdown, *Queen Victoria's Family*, 106.

bridegroom than she had before. “She detected ‘a lack of refinement in him’ and decreed that he must not bring any of his young officer friends into Alice’s society and intimacy, ‘for that would be most dangerous.’”<sup>97</sup> Once again, Victoria’s fears of the previous generations of royalty and their numerous scandals manifested in her distrust of Louis’s intentions.

Queen Victoria began the day having had little sleep, but she nevertheless had breakfast with the bride. She also gave Alice a prayer book, just like her mother gave her on her own wedding day.<sup>98</sup> She described that day in her journal, explaining that Uncle Leopold walked the bride down the aisle. Victoria also mentioned Alice’s dignity and self-possession throughout the service, which she stated Louis shared as well. Tears had to be held back on Victoria’s part, as she struggled to continue the day with her mounting grief. When comparing the day to Vicky’s ceremony, Victoria explained the day felt so very different from the happy occasion of Vicky’s marriage.<sup>99</sup>

The day after the nuptials is when Victoria wrote to her eldest daughter of the grimmer details of the day, “Poor Alice’s wedding (more of a funeral than a wedding) is over and she is a wife!” Queen Victoria was crushed by the day’s events as she stated, “though a dagger is plunged in me bleeding, desolate heart when I hear from her this morning that she is “proud and happy” to be Louis’ wife!” She then expressed her feelings, “I feel what I had, what I hoped to have for at least 20 years more and what I can only have in another world again. —What I shall not forget is Alice herself, and her wonder bearing—such calmness, self-possession, and dignity.”<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Epton, *Victoria and her daughters*, 103-104.

<sup>98</sup> Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse, *Letters to Her Majesty*, 33.

<sup>99</sup> Queen Victoria, July 1, 1862, 165,167.

<sup>100</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, *Dearest Mama*, 85.

After months of hardship and grief, Alice was finally able to marry her love, Prince Louis. The couple spent their honeymoon in a private cottage near Osborne, and after their short honeymoon, they prepared to leave for their new home. Louis and Alice had promised to come back to England for a long stay in the fall. Alice, during her absence from her mother, wrote her continually.<sup>101</sup> Her first letter detailed her praise to her mother, “My heart was very full when I took leave of you and all the dear ones at home; I had not the courage to say a word-but your loving heart understands what I felt.”<sup>102</sup>

This correspondence between mother and daughter, similar to Vicky’s, would last until Alice’s tragic death in 1878. On the first anniversary of her marriage, Alice shared with her mother her thoughts on her husband, “Oh, dear Mama, if you could only know how excellent he is! I wish I were good like him, for he is free from selfish, small or uncharitable feelings.”<sup>103</sup> Alice, ever the listener and sympathizer, just wished to have a confidant in her mother, as this letter suggests. Their relationship was always built on respect above anything else, even if love never faltered. Alice’s death in 1878 led to further turmoil in the family, as she died at the age of thirty-five from diphtheria. Victoria wrote of her sadness about Alice’s death which coincidentally was the same day Prince Albert passed as all in the household were crying and distressed. Many telegrams came throughout the day, wishing their condolences upon the family. In her grief, Victoria, described Alice as “talented, distinguished, tender hearted, noble minded, sweet child, who behaved so admirably, during her dear Father's illness, & afterwards, in supporting me, & helping me in every possible way.”<sup>104</sup> The fact that Alice died on the same day as her father also triggered a lot of painful emotions for her mother. As Queen Victoria later

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<sup>101</sup> Benson, *Queen Victoria's Daughters*, 83.

<sup>102</sup> Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse, *Letters to Her Majesty*, 95.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, 124-125.

<sup>104</sup> Queen Victoria, December 14, 1878.

wrote in her diary, “there seems something touching in the union which this brings, their names being forever united on this day, of their birth into another better world!”<sup>105</sup>

Queen Victoria profoundly influenced Alice’s marriage while allowing Alice to marry for love. While this may have been a love match, Alice’s marriage still required the groom to be of royal blood. Victoria had even more influence in this marriage because of Prince Albert death, which caused sole consent to fall on Victoria. Beyond this, Victoria saw that even the smallest alliances with principalities were an essential task for political advantage. The significance of Princess Alice’s marriage may not be marked by a highly influential marriage alliance, as she was married to a rather small minor German royal. However, from the contexts both of early twentieth-century European history and today’s British royal family, this marriage was quite significant. Alice’s daughter Alexandra married the last tsar of Russia, Nicholas II, creating familial ties in Russia Alice’s most illustrious descendant, however, was the late Prince Phillip, father to the current British king. Thus, King Charles III is twice descended from Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Queen Victoria, December 14, 1878, 196-197.

<sup>106</sup> Jiri Louda and Micheal Maclagan, *Lines of Succession: Heraldry of the Royal Families of Europe* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2002), 209.

## CHAPTER 6

## PRINCESS HELENA: THE MARRIAGE ALLIANCE THAT DIVIDED THE FAMILY

Queen Victoria's third daughter and fifth child, Helena's marriage, would cause a great amount of controversy and strife within the family as family members had to choose sides in the battle of whom Helena was to marry. If Alice is considered the "forgotten daughter," then Helena should be considered the nonexistent daughter as very little attention is paid to her in any form of written works, only two being written about her in general. And unlike Vicky and Alice, any letters written to Queen Victoria from Helena have largely been forgotten, if any existed. One area of written work that has survived and expresses Helena's character is the biography that she wrote in honor of her late sister Alice. While Helena seems to be somewhat forgotten, the significance of Helena's marriage is marked by her being the first bride to have her marriage completely arranged by Victoria since Alice's marriage was planned before the Prince Consort's death. The geopolitical environment of the time period leading up to Helena's marriage also marked a continual struggle. While Queen Victoria saw the political advantages of marrying her children, especially her daughters, she did not consider what the course of action would be if the house her children married into went to war. This is exactly what occurred prior to Helena's marriage.<sup>107</sup> Not to mention Victoria's own motivations in choosing Helena's marriage for proximity to herself, due to her continual grief.

Princess Helena, or "Lenchen" as she was affectionately known by the family, was traumatized it seems by the sudden death of her father. In a letter to a friend, she expressed her grief, "Sometimes, when I think of all I have lost, and that I shall never see in this world again, that dear adored Papa. When I think that all my life will be spent without Papa. But the Almighty

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<sup>107</sup> Ashdown, *Queen Victoria's Family*, 114-115.

in His infinite wisdom has done it all for the best.”<sup>108</sup> What is clear is the effect that Prince Albert’s held on his family was profound. However, it was essential that things move on even if Queen Victoria tried to refuse it. Much Alice’s wedding in 1862, Helena’s confirmation, which was traditionally a day of great celebration, also was akin to a day of mourning. While her older siblings were met with celebration and presents, Helena was met with somber and solemn faces. Victoria, in a letter to Vicky, offered her view of the impending confirmation at Osborne, which she described as an awful day, but Victoria was happy her children were near.<sup>109</sup> It is clear the deep effect Prince Albert’s death had on the family and the lasting impact it had on Queen Victoria, as her children came second to her deep personal grief.

After her confirmation, Helena was now considered a woman, and thus Victoria’s thoughts soon turned to marriage for her. Of all of her daughters, Victoria felt that Helena was the least promising.<sup>110</sup> She was even quoted as saying in a letter to Vicky, “poor dear Lenchen, though most useful and active and clever and amiable, does not improve in looks and has great difficulty with her figure.”<sup>111</sup> This reference of Helena’s faults shows a more critical side of her mother that is expressed throughout her writing. It also exemplifies the role of motherhood in Victoria’s life because she was more than just a Queen.

She was far more praiseworthy in a letter to her Uncle Leopold when she expressed her desires for her daughters in May of 1863, “A married daughter I must have living with me, and must not be left constantly to look about for help... I could not give her up, without sinking under the weight of my desolation.” While Victoria may have behaved in a dramatic manner, she just

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<sup>108</sup> Emily Baird, Princess Helena to Emily Maude, January 20, 1862, found in John Van Der Kiste, *Princess Helena: Queen Victoria’s Third Daughter* (South Brent: A and F Publications, 2013), 75-76.

<sup>109</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, *Dearest Mama*, 53.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, 311.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, 109.

wished to ensure her daughter's future husbands had "a sufficient fortune to live independently if I died, and plenty of good sense and high moral worth are the only necessary requisites. He need not belong to a reigning house."<sup>112</sup> Victoria also emphasized the importance of waiting for Lenchen to marry when she was nineteen or twenty, as Victoria thought she was the most suited for continuing to live at home. Thus, Helena's marriage would be far different from her older two sisters, as Queen Victoria's only motivations for the marriage was to keep Helena at home with her. She was willing to sacrifice any political alliances or other forms of diplomatic statescraft to keep Helena with her in her loneliness.

The first tentative measures took place in 1863, when several continental princes such as Henry of Hesse, brother of Prince Louis, the Princess of Wales's brothers from Denmark, and the Prince of Orange from Holland, were all presented as possible matches for Helena.<sup>113</sup> Writing from Berlin, Helena's older sister Vicky proposed Prince Albert of Prussia, a close cousin of her husband. He was quickly ruled out, however, because he would not move to England, and the thought of having two of Queen Victoria's daughters together in Prussia greatly concerned Prussian authorities. Another possible match who was quickly ruled out was Prince Elimar of Oldenburg.<sup>114</sup>

Instead, King Leopold, immediately set his sights on Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, who was the younger brother of Duke Fredrick, claimant for the Duchies of Schleswig-Holstein.<sup>115</sup> The issue with Schleswig-Holstein culminated from years of disagreements between Denmark and German states, which caused the Danish-German War of 1863-64. The greatest disagreement arose over an earlier Danish promise not to incorporate Schleswig into the Danish

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<sup>112</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 177.

<sup>113</sup> Seweryn Chomet, *Helena: A Princess Reclaimed* (New York: Begell House Inc, 1999), 35.

<sup>114</sup> Chomet, *Helena: A Princess Reclaimed*, 35-41.

<sup>115</sup> Benson, *Queen Victoria's Daughters*, 114.

kingdom, on which they reneged in 1863.<sup>116</sup> The two eldest children were immediately at odds with one another with Vicky being married to the Crown Prince of Prussia and Edward to Princess Alexandra of Denmark.

Yet despite the growing family friction, Queen Victoria continually supported the German side. However, she did so despite fully understanding that she had no constitutional authority to enact foreign policy except according the advice of her ministers.<sup>117</sup> Yet by choosing Prince Christian, Victoria and Leopold were pitting family member against family member in open conflict and threatening a diplomatic crisis besides. Yet, Victoria seems not to have cared. Prince Christian was perfect for Helena in her eyes. As the younger son, he had no claims to the duchy. Both Vicky and Fritz in Prussia thought very highly of him personally despite the diplomatic friction caused by Schleswig-Holstein. But most importantly, he was impoverished, which meant he would be most likely to live in Britain with Queen Victoria, thus ensuring that Helena would remain at her mother's side.<sup>118</sup>

Queen Victoria was determined that the marriage between Christian and Helena go forward. In August of 1865, she traveled to Coburg to unveil a statue of Prince Albert, where she was accompanied by all nine of her children.<sup>119</sup> She also convinced Prince Christian to make the journey to Coburg to get to know Helena. As Helena had no clue what her mother's intentions were, she enjoyed the prince's company without bias.<sup>120</sup>

She also openly wrote in favor of the marriage when she corresponded with Vicky. In her letter on September 11, 1865, Victoria expresses her excitement of the potential match of Helena

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<sup>116</sup> Keith A.P. Sandiford, "The British Cabinet and the Schleswig-Holstein Crisis, 1863-1864." *History*, vol. 58, no. 194, 1973, pp.360-83, 361.

<sup>117</sup> Sandiford, "The British Cabinet," 160.

<sup>118</sup> Ashdown, *Queen Victoria's Family*, 114.

<sup>119</sup> Eptom, *Victoria and Her Daughters*, 114.

<sup>120</sup> Benson, *Queen Victoria's Daughter's*, 117.



and Christian. Above all else in Victoria's intentions had to be her own happiness as she claims to Vicky, "You know that Lenchen could not and would not leave me, as in my terrible position I required one of my daughters to be always in England." While Victoria had hesitations about his age, being that he was significantly older than Helena, he was described by "others of his excellent qualities and good character," which eventually won Victoria over, and she then allowed for him to visit.<sup>121</sup>

Before ensuring the marriage or even entertaining the idea of taking Christian into her family, Victoria required Vicky and others to examine his character to ensure Helena had a suitable match. In a way, Victoria and Vicky had more say in Helena's marriage than even Helena did. One of Victoria's greatest hesitations, as expressed in her letters, was that Christian was thirty-four years old and Helena was just nineteen.<sup>122</sup>

In a letter to her friend Queen Augusta of Prussia, Vicky's mother-in-law, in October of 1865, Queen Victoria described Helena and Christian's encounter. "In Prince Christian of Holstein-Augustenburg we believe we have found the right husband. He has made the most favourable impression upon Lenchen, and so has she upon him." After these events, Christian expressed, through his brother, his intentions of getting to know Helena better. Queen Victoria continued in the same letter, "Though naturally no engagement has taken place, and cannot take place till they know each other better, yet I may regard the matter as pretty well settled, and that sets my mind at rest."<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain. *Your Dear Letter: Private Correspondence of Queen Victoria and the Crown Princess of Prussia, 1865-1871*, Ed. Roger Fulford, (London: Evans Brother, 1976), 41-42.

<sup>122</sup> Hannah Pakula, *An Uncommon Woman: The Empress Fredrick, Daughter of Queen Victoria, Wife of the Crown Prince of Prussia, Mother of Kaiser Wilhelm* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 114.

<sup>123</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain. *Further Letters of Queen Victoria: From the Archives of the House of Brandenburg-Prussia*, Ed. Hector Bolitho, (London: Thornton Butterworth LTD, 1938), 157.

The couple's engagement was announced in the Highlands in early 1866. This engagement announcement proved to be difficult for Victoria, as she had not opened Parliament since Prince Albert's death, something the British monarch traditionally did at the beginning of each parliamentary session. If she were to secure an adequate dowry for Helena, she would have to open Parliament, something that would challenge her emotionally to the core. The day of the announcement, February 6<sup>th</sup>, she explained her feeling of the day in her journal, "A fine morning. Terribly nervous and agitated.... All was silent and all eyes fixed upon me, and there I sat alone. I was greatly relieved when all was over, and I stepped down from the throne."<sup>124</sup> Victoria may have been highly fearful of opening Parliament again, but she successfully achieved the dowry amount she intended for Helena.<sup>125</sup>

However, while parliament readily acquiesced to Helena's impending marriage, trouble was brewing within the royal family. The announcement of the engagement and the betrothal of Helena and Christian was met with much controversy. In favor of the marriage was Vicky, who helped choose Christian. However, Christian's family had claims to Schleswig-Holstein. Bismarck disapproved of the match, and it angered him deeply since the British were aligning themselves with an enemy. Vicky, by pushing for the marriage of Helena to Christian, was trying to anger Bismarck, something she was not afraid to do.<sup>126</sup> Yet what she failed to consider were the bruised feelings of her own brother, the Prince of Wales. Not only was Christian's family at odds with Prussia, but they were also at odds with Denmark, the home of the Prince of Wales's wife, Alexandra. Indeed, "Bertie," as the Prince of Wales was known in the family, was so

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<sup>124</sup> Queen Victoria, February 6, 1866.

<sup>125</sup> Ashdown, *Queen Victoria's Family*, 115.

<sup>126</sup> Packard, *Victoria's Daughters*, 113.

infuriated by the union that he threatened to estrange his involvement with the family if his voice was not heard. Bertie also had Louise and Alice on his side.

Louise had several reasons for opposing the match. She thought, firstly, that Helena needed to escape from her mother's clutches and that she was solely pressured into the marriage for the sake of their mother's happiness. Secondly, she felt that the proposed union would anger the Prussian royal family and thus be bad for Britain's diplomacy. Finally, the age difference between Christian and Helena bothered her.<sup>127</sup> Alice opposed the match solely because she feared that Helena would not be able to escape the hold her mother held on Helena. She wished for Helena to be free from her mother's grasp. However, despite the objections of three of her children, Queen Victoria continued with her plan.

Family turmoil was a secondary consideration to Queen Victoria's desire to maintain a daughter at her side at all times. To add further insult to injury, right before the wedding was to take place, war broke out between Prussia and Austria over the settlement of Schleswig-Holstein. Fritz, Vicky's husband, was the head of the Prussian army, and Louis, Alice's husband, was allied with the Austrian troops. Two sisters who had no reason to quarrel before were now on opposite sides of a war. Not to mention the fact that their sister was about to marry into the house that caused all this turmoil for the sake of their mother's happiness, not Helena's!<sup>128</sup>

The day of the wedding was set for July 5, 1866, but because of the recurrence of war, Vicky and Alice were unable to attend, a fact that most likely helped the day's events go more smoothly.<sup>129</sup> Besides the ongoing war, Alice was heavily pregnant and could not travel, and Vicky was recovering from the death of her son Sigmund, who had succumbed to meningitis not

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 113-114.

<sup>128</sup> Ashdown, *Queen Victoria's Family*, 114.

<sup>129</sup> Packard, *Victoria Daughter's*, 115.

even a month before the nuptials. Alice did send a few words of well-wishing two days before in a letter to her mother, “For dear Lenchen’s wedding day receive every warm and affectionate wish. May God’s blessings rest on their union!”<sup>130</sup>

Queen Victoria also recorded the day’s events meticulously in her journal, explaining how she had breakfast with Helena as well as, her agitation and dismay of the coming events. She described the long wait for the coming nuptials as well. She described giving away her daughter and jointly walking her down the aisle with Bertie, who seems to have become reconciled to the marriage in the end. At the end of the ceremony, Helena deeply embraced her mother, and the same sentiment was shared by Christian.<sup>131</sup>

Helena’s wedding was unique in the fact that she was walked down the aisle by her brother and mother, something that was unheard of for some time. Bertie and Victoria gave her away, as Bertie finally reconciled to the idea of Helena’s marriage. At Vicky’s wedding, her father gave her away. At Alice’s, her Uncle Leopold gave her away. The uniqueness of not only brother, but also her mother signifies the importance of Victoria’s role in her life. This further implies the importance of Helena’s wedding as being the first time that Victoria would have to function as the sole parent since Albert’s death, as she secured the marriage and should be the one to give her away.<sup>132</sup> In a letter to Vicky, Victoria explained her decision, “How could dear Fritz believe or even think I would ask Bertie or Alfie to give away Lenchen! If dear Papa and Uncle Ernest were not there I was the only one to do to it...I never would let one of my sons take

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<sup>130</sup> Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse, *Letters to Her Majesty*, 222.

<sup>131</sup> Queen Victoria, July 5, 1866, 179-181.

<sup>132</sup> The practice of giving a bride away by her father comes from the English Book of Common Prayer 1549, where it states in the matrimony section, “And the minister receiving the woman at her father or friends hands: shall cause the man to take the woman by the right hand, and so either to give their truth to other.” Even until the last major revision in 1662, the did book state that the bride would be given away by her father or friend, with no insinuation that her mother could give her away.

their father's place while I live!"<sup>133</sup> The quarrel with Bertie is also significant because he was able to push his previous feelings aside and be there for his sister on her wedding day.

This wedding was far different from the funereal tone of Alice's wedding, even if it was also a small affair, taking place in a private chapel rather than St. George's Chapel, and Victoria once again wearing her black mourning clothes.<sup>134</sup> A few days after the events, she wrote to Vicky with a full description of the wedding, "Lenchen looked extremely well, and so did Christian, but certain relations (an old Aunt especially) made one uncomfortable."<sup>135</sup> Bertie was very amiable and kind. There were great crowds and great enthusiasm. How I wished to have dear Fritz by me! I was never so alone."<sup>136</sup>

For their honeymoon, the couple took a tour of Europe. They were the first couple to take their honeymoon abroad. This would be their last breath of freedom for some time as they were to live as Victoria's companions at Frogmore Cottage and later at Cumberland Lodge on the grounds of Windsor Castle. They lived a rather dull and uninteresting life, but one that caused no harm to Victoria.<sup>137</sup> Her path was different from her sisters, as Ashdown describes, "And Helena, unlike Vicky, had nothing beyond domesticity to tax her; unlike Alice, she had money enough to make her life comfortable. These were compensations for lack of grandeur and excitement both her elder sisters would come to envy ever more strongly as the years passed."<sup>138</sup>

Helena's life is the story of the forgotten in the historical record and the overall story of Queen Victoria's nine children. While forgotten, this should not negate Helena's importance. Not only did her marriage cause temporary rifts in her family because of Queen Victoria's insistence

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<sup>133</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, *Your Dear Letter*, 82.

<sup>134</sup> Queen Victoria, July 5, 1866, 179-181

<sup>135</sup> Victoria is referring to the Duchess of Cambridge in her use of Aunt.

<sup>136</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, *Your Dear Letter*, 78.

<sup>137</sup> Ashdown, *Queen Victoria's Family*, 121.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, 121.

that her daughter stay close to her, but Helena's marriage also marked the first marriage the queen planned as the sole parent. Victoria seemed very willing to sacrifice her relationship with most of her children, as well as cause strife within the family, over Helena's marriage to Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein. Beyond this, she was also willing to jeopardize political relationships with Prussia, Denmark, and Austria for her personal happiness.

Ultimately, events conspired to benefit Victoria, having her daughter close by and Helena living her days with little concern. Victoria even read and commented on correspondence and reports from the Danish-German War and the Austro-Prussian War. However, she did as was expected of her as a sovereign and acted only with the advice of her Foreign Minister thus ensuring she never exceeded her constitutional power.<sup>139</sup> The marriage of her fifth daughter Helena marks a time when Victoria's failure to successfully employ strategic marriage craft almost caused political and familial turmoil because of her insistence for her own happiness.

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<sup>139</sup> W.E. Mosse, "The Crown and Foreign Policy. Queen Victoria and the Austro-Prussian Conflict, March-May, 1866." *Cambridge Historical Journal*, Vol. 10, 2, 205-223,223.

## CHAPTER 7

## PRINCESS LOUISE: THE BLACK SHEEP

Unlike Princess Helena, more is known about her younger sister Louise, the future Duchess of Argyll. Born in 1848, the year of revolutions, she was said to be of a rebellious spirit. Not only did Louise live her life to the fullest, but she also attended the Royal Academy of Art, was an accomplished sculptor, and lived in Canada, where her husband served as Governor-General of Canada.<sup>140</sup> Louise was described as “good looking, outspoken, independent, indiscreet, often caustic, and in her mother’s opinion, ‘the most difficult’ of all her daughters,” because of her unwillingness to follow her mother’s suggestions mindlessly.<sup>141</sup>

Louise refused to have discussions held in her name and would not let her mother dominate her. She also was very headstrong, and when Queen Victoria decided her suitors, Louise was the first to veto any candidate she did not see fit. For it was said, “there was never a question of her staying at home as a help and companion to the Queen who was perfectly ready to see her married when she came of age.”<sup>142</sup> Her marriage to the Duke of Argyll was the first marriage between an English or British princess and a non-royal for over three centuries, ever since King Henry VIII’s sister Mary married Charles Brandon, the first Duke of Suffolk, in 1515.<sup>143</sup> Victoria not only orchestrated a marriage for Louise with the Duke of Argyll but also established a precedent for future British royals, particularly younger royals who were not in the direct line of succession.

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<sup>140</sup> Lucinda Hawksley, *Queen Victoria’s Mysterious Daughter* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2013).

<sup>141</sup> Hibbert, *Queen Victoria*, 394.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, 394.

<sup>143</sup> Mark Stocker. “Louise, Princess, duchess of Argyll (1848-1939).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Albert's death also impacted Louise, but since she was younger than her older sisters, she had less responsibility than the rest of the family. It would only be more expected of Louise once her older sister Helena was married. Like her older sister before her, Louise took on the unofficial responsibility of being her mother's private secretary. When Prince Albert passed away, the private secretary job became Alice's responsibility, with Helena waiting in the number two spot. When Alice married, Helena moved up, and so did Louise. Through Helena's marriage, Louise took over the role of private secretary. However, Beatrice, her younger sister, was too young to assume the second position, thus leaving Louise to work alone. Victoria doubted Louise's ability to fulfill her older sisters' responsibilities because she needed to be more obedient than Helena.<sup>144</sup> In a letter to the Princess Royal, she stated, "I have too much anxiety, too much worry and work, and I miss Lenchen terribly as I can't speak *a coeur ouvert* to Louise (though she does her best) as she is not discreet, and is very apt to take things always in a different light to me."<sup>145</sup> The professional relationship between Louise and Victoria was characterized by occasional disagreements, particularly among Victoria's daughters, due to their contrasting personalities and varying perspectives on task execution.

Princess Louise and her mother often disagreed as Louise was "'decidedly cleverer' than Princess Helena and keen to express her own opinion."<sup>146</sup> Louise's headstrong motivations most likely hid her disappointment and sensitivity as her mother's biting comments often got to her. Victoria felt that Louise was indignant, and that her disobedience impeded her work. Louise believed her mother's low opinion of her until Princess Alice started to praise her; after that

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<sup>144</sup> Jehanne Wake, *Princess Louise: Queen Victoria's Unconventional Daughter* (London: Collins, 1988), 64.

<sup>145</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, *Your Dear Letter*, 82.

<sup>146</sup> Wake, *Princess Louise*, 64.



point, she began to question her mother's assumptions and start to believe in her own self-worth.<sup>147</sup>

One area of great conflict between mother and daughter was women's rights. Unlike her mother, Louise was an open supporter of the women's suffrage movement along with her oldest sister, Vicky. However, Vicky could not support the cause much because she lived in Prussia. Instead, she encouraged Louise to take up the cause with her friends, General and Sybil Grey. Indeed, Louise began corresponding with the social reformer Josephine Butler, one of the leading advocates for passing a married women's property bill.<sup>148</sup> Louise even stated in a letter to Butler in March of 1869, "It has been with great interest, and pleasure, that I received your letter. I do take great interest in the happiness, and well-being of women, and long to do everything that I can to promote all efforts in that direction."<sup>149</sup> Contrast this with Queen Victoria's doubts about women's political capabilities. As she wrote to her Uncle Leopold in 1852, "We women are not made for governing—and if we are good women, we must dislike these masculine occupations; but there are times which force one to take interest in them *mal gré bon gré*, and I do, of course, intensely."<sup>150</sup>

In addition to disagreeing with her mother over women's rights, Louise was headstrong regarding her future marriage partner. Unlike her older sisters, Louise was not about to acquiesce to her mother's choice of a husband solely to have her approval. Historian Elizabeth Longford explains that Victorian mothers commonly had a hand in their daughter's alleged choices. However, the royal aspect of Louise's marriage added more qualifiers. Four aspects

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>148</sup> Hawksley, *Queen Victoria's Mysterious Daughter*, 116. Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian Marriage* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 52.

<sup>149</sup> *Darling Loosy: Letters to Princess Louise 1856-1939*. Ed. Elizabeth Longford. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), 24.

<sup>150</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain. *The Letters of Queen Victoria, Volume II (of 3), 1844-1853*, Ed. Arthur Christopher Benson, and Reginald Baliol Brett Esher. (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, W, 1908), 548.

were expected in a potential match for Louise: must be morally clean, must be willing to make his home in Britain, must have wealth and pedigree to allow Louise a life to which she was accustomed, and must inspire affection to the bride.<sup>151</sup>

The first candidate presented to Louise was Prince Albert of Prussia, known as “Abbat.” Abbat was previously a potential match for Helena. Louise rejected the idea of marriage with Abbat even before meeting him. Vicky, Alice, and Prince Alfred, one of her brothers, were eager for Louise to marry Abbat, even when she would not entertain the idea.<sup>152</sup> While some within the family were eager for Louise to marry Abbat, others were less than thrilled. The Prince and Princess of Wales, Prince and Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, and Queen Victoria disagreed with the match. But most importantly, Louise herself vetoed the idea, preferring to consider other candidates.<sup>153</sup>

For once, Louise and Queen Victoria agreed: the daughter’s bridegroom must come from their own country. Victoria expresses this in a letter to the Prince of Wales in November of 1869, where she details Louise’s wish to stay in England and that neither Louise nor Victoria would hear of the Prussian match.<sup>154</sup> It became apparent that Louise would not be married to a Prussian, or foreign prince of any kind, as she and Victoria understood that forging alliances with the peerage of the country would be a better option. Ultimately, Louise chose a Scotsman, John Campbell, Marquis of Lorne. Louise successfully persuaded her mother of the suitability of the match, thereby resolving the issue at hand.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Elizabeth Longford, *Darling Loosy*, 21.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid*, 104.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid*, 111.

<sup>155</sup> Ashdown, *Queen Victoria’s Family*, 128.

As mentioned earlier, marriages between royal princesses and British aristocrats were almost unprecedented: the last was over three centuries ago. Thus, there was some opposition within the family. Bertie raised the long-standing precedent of only marrying other European royals as well as felt that the unfair advantage that would arise with the marriage to a subject.<sup>156</sup> Bertie also objected because Lorne was a member of the House of Commons. Beyond this, Lorne was a Gladstonian Liberal, and a marriage to Louise would suggest political favoritism by the Crown. The issue of rank was another problem for the Prince of Wales.<sup>157</sup> Although Bertie expressed his reservations, as the family's matriarch and the nation's sovereign, Queen Victoria had the final say in the matter. She also heard concern from Vicky and Alice, but their opposition to the match was far less than the Prince of Wales.<sup>158</sup> Once again, in a similar fashion to Helena's marriage, the older siblings felt obliged to assist in their younger siblings' marriages. The absence of Prince Albert in both cases could justify the bold actions of the older siblings. However, Queen Victoria would not let anyone, even her older children, interfere with the marriages of Helena or Louise.

In a letter in response to the concerns voiced by the Prince of Wales, Victoria made her options clear. She described Bertie's objections to the marriage as being objections to not only Louise's happiness but peace and prosperity within the family. Most intriguingly, Victoria wrote, "Times have much changed; great foreign alliances are looked on as causes of trouble and anxiety and are of no good." This is largely attributed to the pain felt from the wars with Denmark, Prussia, and Austria, in which her children were directly involved. As she recounted, "every family feeling was rent asunder, and we were powerless... It will strengthen the hold of

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<sup>156</sup> Packard, *Victoria's Daughters*, 132.

<sup>157</sup> Epton, *Queen Victoria's Daughters*, 162-163.

<sup>158</sup> Packard, *Victoria's Daughters*, 145.

the Royal family, besides infusing new and healthy blood into it, whereas all the Princes abroad are related to one another.” She does not fully denounce the use of foreign alliances with several family members, and she expressed openly the need for new blood to strengthen the throne morally and physically.<sup>159</sup>

She promoted Louise’s to the Marquess of Lorne similarly to Vicky, “When the Royal family is so large, and our children have (alas!) such swarms of children, to connect some few of them with the great families of the land—is an immense strength to the Monarchy and a great link between the Royal Family and the country.” Victoria also emphasized the inclusion of new blood.<sup>160</sup>

Victoria had seen what the foreign alliances she had forged in the past had achieved. While they certainly augmented British foreign policy objections in Europe, they also caused turmoil and chaos within the family when the nations of different children’s spouses were at war. She knew the importance of forging alliances, but this also included domestic affairs, which she ensured with Louise’s marriage to Lorne. Her explanation to the Prince of Wales contradicts those she offered Vicky. This could be primarily due to the strained relationship Victoria felt with Bertie since the death of Prince Albert.<sup>161</sup> She also seem to be making more of an effort to persuade Bertie, something she knew she did not require in Vicky’s case due to their close relationship. She also contented that the infusion of new blood was a good thing, as all royal families had intermarried and were related.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, *The Letters of Queen Victoria: Second Series, Vol I*, Ed. George Buckle. (London: John Murray, 1926), 632-633.

<sup>160</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, *Your Dear Letter*, 306.

<sup>161</sup> Baird, *Victoria*, 308-309.

<sup>162</sup> Victoria herself married her first cousin, Prince Albert. A unique aspect is the focus on introducing new blood into the family line. Queen Victoria and some of her children were carriers or sufferers of hemophilia, a genetic blood disorder not identified until her grandchildren. Specifically, two of her daughters were carriers, a third may have been, and one son had the condition. This highlights the consequences of marrying within the family. It is

Queen Victoria also had to explain the significance to Queen Augusta, Fritz's mother and one of her closest friends, because such marriages were unheard of in Berlin. As she wrote, "I know that such a marriage is at first bound to cause sensation and surprise in Germany, but I myself have been long convinced of its suitability. Great alliances are desirable for certain members of the family, though I attribute little political importance to them, for they can no longer affect the actions of governments and are only a source of worry and difficulty for the princely family, as my own experience has taught me."<sup>163</sup> Not only does Queen Victoria assert in her letter that some family members are more desirable when forging alliances, but she also has come to reconsider her prior belief in strategic marriage alliances. After the events of Helena's marriage, she became more wary of such alliances. Furthermore, she says that these alliances have little governmental impact. This fact perplexes her. She still wishes to appease the British people and government because of Louise's marriage to Lorne. Little did Victoria know what governmental impact these marriages would go to war against each other in a world conflict just a mere forty-four years later.

Queen Victoria determined that Lorne was a suitable candidate, but still questioned his meager income. The couple then became engaged on October 3, 1870. The public announcement of the engagement happened on October 14. In her letter to Vicky, Queen Victoria describes her happiness about the occasion as she details the engagement and the that it may startle people, which she expected.<sup>164</sup> She understood the gravity of the situation that would occur in other lands. However, she knew the importance of continuing her plans of adding new blood to the family and strengthening domestic affairs.

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unknown in the historical record that Victoria fully understood hemophilia, but she understood the consequences significantly, mainly when it came to the death of her son Leopold.

<sup>163</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, *Further Letters of Queen Victoria*, 177.

<sup>164</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, *Your Dear Letter*, 302.

The wedding was set for March 21, 1871, as Louise had experienced a knee injury, and Victoria wished to ensure her health for the ceremony.<sup>165</sup> The mood between mother and daughter was very similar to before her engagement, Victoria openly fussed over Louise, and Louise essentially did as she wished. Louise saw freedom in sight as the marriage drew closer. Once again, Victoria opened Parliament on March 4 on in order to obtain Louise's dowery and future allowance.<sup>166</sup> This was the first time since Helena's marriage Victoria opened parliament. She knew how unpopular her requests for compensation were when it came to her daughters, as she had so many. However, in this case, the money would be spent in the country rather than beyond the nation's shores.<sup>167</sup> Little resistance was met, unlike in the past, Victoria received for her previous daughters' allowances, so the wedding would now occur.<sup>168</sup>

When the day of the nuptials finally arrived, Victoria, as per her usual tradition, recorded the events in her journal, which she described as a beautiful day with sunshine. Unfortunately, Louise suffered from a devastating headache before the ceremony. The ceremony she described as a joyous event, and she especially noted her grief when she saw the couple drive away.<sup>169</sup> Unlike Alice and Helena's weddings, Queen Victoria wore jewelry and a tiara for Louise's wedding while also donning her ever-present mourning clothes. Like Helena's wedding, Victoria also gave the bride away, something she would not relinquish since the Prince Consort's death.<sup>170</sup> The couple would go on honeymoon in Germany and Italy.<sup>171</sup> The marriage was happy, as they were not in love when they married, a fact common not only in royal marriages but in general

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<sup>165</sup> Longford, *Darling Loosy*, 29-30.

<sup>166</sup> Epton, *Victoria and Her Daughters*, 134.

<sup>167</sup> Benson, *Queen Victoria's Daughters*, 168.

<sup>168</sup> Ashdown, *Queen Victoria's Family*, 128.

<sup>169</sup> Queen Victoria, March 21, 1871, 66,68.

<sup>170</sup> Packard, *Victoria's Daughters*, 148-149.

<sup>171</sup> Longford, *Darling Loosy*, 34.

during the Victorian age.<sup>172</sup> However, the couple was happy enough. Notably, the royal couple did not have children, which some may view as a source of disappointment.<sup>173</sup> While they may not have had children, Lorne and Louise lived a happy life traveling worldwide and even in Canada. Louise was able to continue her love of art, her activism, and many adventures.<sup>174</sup>

The marriage of Princess of Louis to the future Duke of Argyll marked the first time that an English or British princess married a member of the aristocracy since the Tudor period.<sup>175</sup> Not only did this ensure domestic alliances, but it also marked a significant change of Queen Victoria prime motivation in terms of her strategic marriage alliances regarding her children. She considered a marriage between her daughter and a member of the British aristocracy to solve the problem of keeping another one of her daughters close to her and ensuring a good feeling with the nation. In her various correspondence, she emphasized the importance of new blood to the family for morality and health. By turning to a person of Scottish descent and a subject, Queen Victoria showed her utmost respect for her people by allowing one of her treasured children to marry him. The impact of Princess Louise extends beyond her lack of progeny, as her influence is still present on a global scale. Furthermore, her marriage was significant for future generations of royals marrying commoners.

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<sup>172</sup> Wake, *Princess Louise*, 104. and Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law*.

<sup>173</sup> Longford, *Darling Loosy*, 34.

<sup>174</sup> Lucinda Hawksley, *The Mystery of Princess Louise* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2013).

<sup>175</sup> Stoker, "Princess Louise".

## CHAPTER 8

## PRINCESS BEATRICE: BABY GETS MARRIED

The youngest child and last daughter of Queen Victoria, Princess Beatrice, marked the final marriage in Queen Victoria's alliance statecraft vision. With "Baby," as her family lovingly called her, the stakes of her marriage were far lower. Victoria did not want Baby ever to marry. She wished for Beatrice to be her constant companion. This situation was nothing new for Victoria, as she had already tried to accomplish this with Helena and, to a certain extent, Louise. However, it would not be until Beatrice acquiesced to her mother's wishes, unlike her siblings. Beatrice would not only go on to be her companion and private secretary, but she would also dictate and create transcripts of her mother's journals.<sup>176</sup> She would also do the self-appointed job of censoring her mother's works of any unfit material.<sup>177</sup> Also, through Beatrice's unwanted marriage, the royal family of Great Britain spread to the Spanish royal family with the marriage of Beatrice's daughter Victoria to Alfonso, the future king of Spain.<sup>178</sup>

In a letter to the Princess Royal in October of 1873, Victoria described her intentions for controlling Beatrice, "I hope and trust she will never leave me while I live, I do not intend she should ever go out as her sisters did (which was a mistake)."<sup>179</sup> Queen Victoria wished Beatrice never to marry and never even attend events without her mother. This relationship would change immensely when Beatrice met Prince Henry of Battenburg at her brother Leopold's wedding in Darmstadt. She returned home enthralled by her new friend and potential suitor. Victoria was not

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<sup>176</sup> Matthew Dennison, *The Last Princess: The Devoted Life of Queen Victoria's Youngest Daughter* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2007).

<sup>177</sup> Helen Rappaport, *Queen Victoria: A Biographical Companion* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 62.

<sup>178</sup> Packard, *Victoria's Daughters*.

<sup>179</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, *Darling Child: Letters Between Queen Victoria and the Crown Princess of Prussia, 1871-1878*, ed. Roger Fulford, (London: Evans Brothers Limited, 1976), 112.



as thrilled as Beatrice and in fact became quite angry.<sup>180</sup> Before further exploring Beatrice's marriage and the strain it put on her relationship with her mother, some background is needed.

Beatrice, the youngest child and last daughter, was born to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in 1857. Victoria had complications with Beatrice, so a tenth child would not happen, which meant Victoria could channel much of her motherly affection onto her youngest child. On her first birthday, Victoria wrote this about Beatrice, "No words can express what that sweet, pretty, intelligent little creature, is to us... She is so engaging, & such a delight to kiss & fondle. If only she could remain, just as she is."<sup>181</sup>

For Prince Albert, the void in his heart that had developed by Vicky's marriage was filled by the newest addition to the family.<sup>182</sup> This would all come to an end when Beatrice was four, as the death of the Prince Consort shook the entire family. A change in Beatrice's character happened almost immediately after Albert's death. Prince Albert always encouraged Beatrice's precociousness. He laughed at her naughtiness rather than scolding her. She was his antidote to depression. After the death of Prince Albert, Beatrice became her mother's crutch.<sup>183</sup> The rest of Beatrice's life would, from this point forward, belong to her mother, as Victoria could not bear to part from her.

Beatrice's childhood, even after the death of Prince Albert, continued to be abnormal compared to that of her older siblings. Her older sibling's education was essentially the responsibility of Prince Albert when he was alive. However, since his death, Queen Victoria took over the responsibility of ensuring Beatrice's education. It is peculiar that Victoria entrusted

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<sup>180</sup> Dennison, *The Last Princess*, 133.

<sup>181</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, April 14, 1858, 150-151.

<sup>182</sup> Dennison, *The Last Princess*, 26-27.

<sup>183</sup> David Duff, *The Shy Princess: The Life of Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrice, the Youngest and Constant Companion of Queen Victoria* (London: Frederick Muller Ltd, 1958), 46.

education to her husband since this is usually the mother's job. However, it shows Victoria's trust in her husband's abilities to prepare their children for the future. The central theme of the education was hard work. Victoria saw similarities to her childhood with Beatrice, so she assured that Beatrice would be well-rounded by seventeen. Beyond the traditional studies of German, French, and Latin, Beatrice also engaged in the art of letter writing, drawing, music, housekeeping, and cooking.<sup>184</sup> Religion was also very important to Victoria, and she even drafted a memorandum on the Princess's religious training, "I am quite clear that she should be taught to have great reverence for God and for religion, and that she should have the feeling of devotion and love which Heavenly Father encourages His earthly children to have for Him, and not one of fear and trembling."<sup>185</sup> Queen Victoria was the head of the Church of England, so it is no surprise she would emphasize religious studies in Beatrice's education. Interestingly, this was the first time she had direct control over one of her children's educations, so the inclusion of religious studies is even more impactful.

After her older sisters, Alice, Helena, and Louise, had married, she followed and undertook the role of unofficial private secretary to her mother. With each of her daughters, Victoria sought the same thing after Prince Albert's death, someone she could confide in and trust. Victoria tried to make each of her daughters her companion and sons to indulge her in her sadness. However, in every case, she failed. Beatrice finally became what she was looking for after some much strife and tenacity.<sup>186</sup> In Queen Victoria's loneliness, she cast Beatrice's life into the shadows of despair right along with her. However, Victoria truly cherished her youngest daughter, even when she took advantage of her kindness. Victoria wrote this on Beatrice's

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<sup>184</sup> Duff, *The Shy Princess*, 47-48.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid*, 52.

<sup>186</sup> Dennison, *The Last Princess*

eighteenth birthday, describing how she wished for her continued health and strength.<sup>187</sup> Unlike her other children, Victoria failed to see Beatrice's maturation into adulthood after her confirmation. Matthew Dennison expresses, "If Beatrice's siblings, with their munificent present, had hoped to offer her not only some recompense for her lonely servitude at her mother's side but also recognition of her confirmed adult status, their intent was in direct opposition to Victoria's. Victoria rejoiced that Beatrice, far from seeming grown-up, appeared quite the opposite at her confirmation service."<sup>188</sup>

Even with the undeniable fact that Beatrice matured into adulthood, Victoria clarified her intentions for Beatrice. She would not marry and be her constant companion. At the tender age of six, when presented with the opportunity to serve as a bridesmaid, Beatrice replied, "Oh no, I don't like weddings at all, I shall never be married. I shall stay with mother."<sup>189</sup> Victoria's intentions for Beatrice to remain unmarried were not hidden from her courtiers. In a letter to his wife, Sir Henry Ponsonby, Victoria's private secretary, expressed his wishes for Beatrice, specifically that she needed "a good strong man who would make her do what he wished." The choice of an Englishman was also emphasized, and their marriage must be soon. He also expressed his belief that Beatrice's personality was hindered by what he felt were Queen Victoria's excessive desire for her youngest daughter to always be by her side. Beatrice would only have a chance, he remarked, if she married.<sup>190</sup> Not only did Queen Victoria not hide her intentions for Beatrice to be an old maid, but she also prided herself in keeping Beatrice, so much so that she had others wishing for Beatrice's freedom.

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<sup>187</sup> Queen Victoria, April 15, 1875.

<sup>188</sup> Dennison, *The Last Princess*, 81.

<sup>189</sup> Quoted in Lucy Worsley, *Queen Victoria: Daughter, Wife, Mother, Widow* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd, 2018), 352.

<sup>190</sup> Epton, *Victorian and Her Daughters*, 150-151.

Queen Victoria may have broadly used marriage as a political means of strategic marriage craft to ensure domestic and foreign relations. However, she also felt vehemently opposed to the institution. After the death of her daughter Alice, Victoria wrote to Vicky about her and Alice's thoughts on marriage, "One thing I know she felt most strongly about and that was against early marriages for her girls—or getting married for marrying's sake. The longer I live the more I think marriages rarely are a real happiness."<sup>191</sup> Both the deaths of her beloved Prince Albert and her daughter Alice, as well as years of orchestrated marriages, had taken their toll on Victoria. She became very cynical about marriage, something not seen previously in her reign. These events would also account for her reluctance and strong opposition to the question of Beatrice ever marrying.

Despite this opposition, marriage candidates still arose for Beatrice, the most well-known being the Prince Imperial of France. After France lost the Franco-Prussian War and he was deposed, Napoleon III, his wife Empress Eugenie, and their son Louis Napoleon sought refuge in England.<sup>192</sup> The significance of the Franco-Prussian War beyond the exile of the French emperor would also mark another feature in Beatrice's life in the future. After the exile and events of the Franco-Prussian War, Queen Victoria and Empress Eugenie became close friends and even more so after the death of Emperor Napoleon III in 1873. Great interest was manifested in the Prince Imperial, as he was the court favorite. Beatrice's close friendship caused such a stir that the papers even erroneously announced an engagement between the couple.<sup>193</sup> While the details of their supposed engagement are not completely clear, what is entirely clear is Victoria's feelings about the match. She firmly opposed the match due to the political and religious controversy it

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<sup>191</sup> Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, *Beloved Mama: Private Correspondence of Queen Victoria and the German Crown Princess, 1878-1885*, Ed. Roger Fulford (London: Evans Brothers, 1981), 34.

<sup>192</sup> Dennison, *The Last Princess*, 84.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid*, 85.

would cause.<sup>194</sup> The rumors would continue until the Prince Imperial died in the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879. Whatever their relationship, the Prince Imperial's death greatly affected Beatrice, as she was distressed and quite stunned when receiving the news. The fact that her reaction survived the purge of her mother's journals also shows her affection for a friend who had passed.<sup>195</sup>

Beatrice's lonely fortunes would change in 1884 while attending her niece Victoria's wedding to Prince Louis of Battenburg, an officer of the British Navy and naturalized citizen, in Darmstadt.<sup>196</sup> At their nuptials, Beatrice would take a keen interest in Louis's younger brother, Henry, considered from Europe's most handsome family. "Liko," as his family called him, Liko was charismatic and charming at the first time he met Beatrice while she was so shy, she barely speaking. Yet sparks seemed to have flown during their first meeting, and Beatrice was soon besotted. She broke this news to her mother when they had returned home, something she would end up regretting.<sup>197</sup>

By almost every account, Victoria was furious upon hearing the shocking news that Beatrice brought her, so much so that the two did not speak for eight weeks afterwards. Victoria sent orders to Beatrice by way of written notes from one end of the breakfast table to the other at Windsor and at Osborne during this time.<sup>198</sup> Indeed, there is only one mention of Beatrice throughout Victoria's journal for six months. Before their feud, Queen Victoria wrote about her youngest daughter almost every day, in some form or another.<sup>199</sup> Victoria not only would not let Beatrice marry, but she would also even cut off all verbal communication with her until Beatrice

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<sup>194</sup> Ashdown, *Queen Victoria's Family*, 158.

<sup>195</sup> Dennison, *The Last Princess*, 86.

<sup>196</sup> Benson, *Queen Victoria's Daughters*, 220.

<sup>197</sup> Packard, *Victoria's Daughters*, 226-227.

<sup>198</sup> Epton, *Victoria and Her Daughters*, 171.

<sup>199</sup> Duff, *The Shy Princess*, 113.

came to her senses about marriage. Beatrice experienced loneliness like never before, as she had always been Queen Victoria's companion and friend. Before Liko, she had absolutely no experience with men. Beatrice was not even allowed to be in a room alone with one. She saw marriage as natural, as all her siblings were married. However, when she finally experienced her first love and affection for a man, she was shut down and made to suffer.<sup>200</sup>

After several long months of bitter strife between mother and daughter, in December of 1884, Queen Victoria finally acquiesced and agreed to the union between Beatrice and Liko, but not unconditionally. Victoria demanded that Liko give up his German Army career and live in England. There was not much the young couple could say, considering Victoria was the sovereign and a forceful mother.<sup>201</sup> After much deliberation and distaste for marriage, Victoria would eventually grow to like Liko. After the engagement, Queen Victoria often wrote about Beatrice's marriage. In her first letter to Vicky, she voices her feelings to her eldest child, "Lenchen and Beatrice have both written to you, and the former has told you of the pain it has caused me that my darling Beatrice should wish (which she never did till she had lost her dear brother) to marry, as I hate marriages especially of my daughters." Victoria was very clear that Beatrice was to, "remain always with me," and since she liked Liko so much, she "cannot refuse my consent."<sup>202</sup>

Victoria was obviously distraught over the marriage of her youngest daughter and could not shy away from sharing this with her eldest daughter. By this point in her life, she hated marriage, especially of her daughters. This is rather curious due to her having a greater number of daughters than sons and the political and domestic potential each daughter's marriage had. Yet

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Wilson, *Victoria*, 439.

<sup>202</sup> Hibbert, *Queen Victoria in Her Letters*, 287.

while Victoria may have been a monarch, above all else, she was also a mother, and the loss of her children, especially her daughters, caused her much grief that could not be rectified, even with the potential for dynastic relations. The letter also emphasizes the change in Beatrice's mind, at least according to her mother, after her brother Leopold's death. He died in April of 1884 of a cerebral hemorrhage.<sup>203</sup> While not known at the time, Leopold suffered from hemophilia, a disease that Beatrice was also a carrier of.<sup>204</sup> Leopold, being the closest in age to Beatrice's, death obviously had a significant effect on her and, as Victoria thought, could have caused her to pursue marriage quicker.

Unlike Louise's engagement, Beatrice's engagement received much opposition. The most vital voice came from the Hohenzollerns, partly because of the standoff between Vicky and her father-in-law regarding an issue within their court. Kaiser Wilhelm I even wrote to Bismarck, "We were absolutely startled last evening by a telegram from the Queen of England announcing the engagement of her youngest daughter to the third Battenburg son." Much animosity had arisen between the Hohenzollerns and the Battenburgs before the marriage took place. Kaiser Wilhelm also thought it strange that Queen Victoria held such a tight hold on Beatrice, writing, "To such depths has the Queen of an old and powerful dynasty descended to keep her daughter in the country"<sup>205</sup> Victoria also received criticism from her friend Augusta, who stopped communicating with her. The prospective marriage also caused other diplomatic strains as Russia was also not too pleased with the marriage of Liko and Henry either, primarily because of the actions of Liko's brother Sandro, Prince of Bulgaria (who was defying Russian domination

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<sup>203</sup> Christopher Hibbert, *Edward VIII: The Last Victorian King* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 148.

<sup>204</sup> Richard Stevens, "The History of Haemophilia in the Royal Families of Europe" *British Journal of Hematology* 105, no. 1 (2005):25-32, 30.

<sup>205</sup> Quoted in Pakula, *An Uncommon Woman*, 418.

and making himself unpopular in St. Petersburg).<sup>206</sup> The British people were also upset with the marriage to Prince Henry because they hoped that Beatrice would follow in Louise's footsteps and marry someone British. The penny presses even referred to Henry as the "German pauper" because of the drain they saw on the British treasury yet again paying for another foreign marriage.<sup>207</sup>

The wedding of Princess Beatrice and Prince Henry of Battenburg took place on July 23, 1885, at Saint Mildred's Church at Whippingham, near Osborne House.<sup>208</sup> Victoria described the day in detail, "Darling Beatrice's wedding day... I stood very close to my dear child, who looked very sweet, pure, & calm. Though I stood for the 9<sup>th</sup> time near a child & for the 5<sup>th</sup> time near a daughter, at the altar, I think I never felt more deeply than I did on this occasion, though full of confidence."<sup>209</sup> Victoria had married off her last daughter, whose loss she felt the most deeply. Beatrice stayed true to her word and continued caring for Queen Victoria, only taking a very short honeymoon to return to her mother.<sup>210</sup>

Princess Beatrice would faithfully serve her mother during life and after death. Due to Beatrice's efforts, she transcribed many of Queen Victoria's journals, giving her access to a valuable piece of her mother's legacy. Unfortunately, during this process, Beatrice also chose to censor many items she saw unfit, particularly the memories Victoria shared with John Brown and Abdul Karim.<sup>211</sup> Beatrice's dedication and loyalty to her mother caused her mother great joy, as well as sorrow, when Beatrice finally decided that marriage was in the cards for her. While

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<sup>206</sup> Duff, *The Shy Princess*, 118.

<sup>207</sup> Packard, *Victoria's Daughters*, 232.

<sup>208</sup> Worsley, *Daughter, Wife, Mother, Widow*, 357.

<sup>209</sup> Queen Victoria, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1885.

<sup>210</sup> Duff, *The Shy Princess*, 122.

<sup>211</sup> Wilson, *Victoria*, 574. John Brown, an employee at Balmoral became close to Victoria after the Death of Albert. Abdul Karim, an Indian who was sent to England as an employee of the crown. Victoria became very close to him in the years leading to his death.



Victoria was often selfish in her expectations of Beatrice, she continually showed her loving support. Beatrice's marriage may have marked a change in Victoria's previous daughters' marriages, especially since Beatrice found her own match. However, Beatrice's marriage was indeed to a foreign prince, a fact that Queen Victoria did not have to allow since she did not want Beatrice to marry at all. Not only did Beatrice's children continue the strategic marriage alliances, but Beatrice's line can still be traced today in the Spanish royal family.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Louda and Maclagan, *Lines of Succession*, 103.

## CHAPTER 9

## CONCLUSION

The legacy of Queen Victoria stretches into the modern age. While many of the monarchies in Europe did not survive World War One, Britain's did mainly because of Queen Victoria. Queen Victoria ruled during a time when females did not have many rights. Some might argue that Victoria's motivations to maintain political alliances with the other families in Europe failed after World War One, Victoria's ultimate mission was to secure the longevity of the British royal bloodline and its continuation into posterity. This goal she achieved. Adrienne Munich observes,

“The queen's gender marks her as an unconventional figure in an age excluding women from government. Although England lacked Salic law forbidding female monarchs, the relative rarity of English female sovereigns grants a queen prominence unavailable to a king. Particularly for her times, Victoria's presence on the throne highlighted controversies, debates, concerns, and anxieties about differences between men and women.”<sup>213</sup>

Not only was she a female monarch, but she also saw Great Britain at its most immense imperial potential as she was sovereign over the empire “where the sun never set” and during a time when British nationhood had primarily developed into a cohesive identity.<sup>214</sup> With her empire came a new title, Empress, a title no other female would hold in India.<sup>215</sup>

The marriages of Queen Victoria's daughters marked a phenomenon never seen before, as her predecessors had no heirs of their own. Queen Victoria's eldest daughter, Vicky, married the Crown Prince of Prussia, ensuring the first of many matches of Victoria's daughters with German princes. Not only did Vicky mark the beginning of such statecraft, but she would also go

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<sup>213</sup> Munich, *Victoria's Secrets*, 7.

<sup>214</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>215</sup> Taylor, *Empress*.

on to produce the heir and final kaiser of Germany, Kaiser Wilhelm II. Princess Alice, Victoria's meek second daughter, married Prince Louis of Hesse, a prince from a tiny German principality. Nevertheless, Alice's true legacy lies in her having a direct descendent of the British throne today through the late Prince Phillip (Charles III's parents being themselves third cousins). Victoria's third and most forgotten daughter, Helena's marriage to Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, not only marked the first marriage fully orchestrated by Queen Victoria, it also represented the first great divide in the family regarding a sibling's. Helena's marriage was also a marriage of convenience for the lonely Queen. Louise, the fourth daughter to marry, represented a change in historical precedent as she married the Duke of Argyll, the first marriage between an English or British subject and a member of the royal family since the Tudor period.<sup>216</sup> Beatrice, Queen Victoria's youngest daughter, and Prince Henry of Battenburg had a devoted and affectionate marriage. Victoria strongly insisted that Beatrice was to be her forever caregiver and confidant. Nevertheless, through Beatrice, another royal family can owe its survival to the works of Queen Victoria.

Recent scholarship, particularly the works of Miles Taylor, Margaret Homans, and Adrienne Munich, has evaluated the influence Queen Victoria expressed in India and Victoria's work compared to other queens. However, little scholarship has focused on Queen Victoria's influence on her own children's marriages. For the past decade, the letters and journals of Victoria have been digitalized, making it far easier to evaluate the legacy of Victoria's children. The modern royal houses of Europe that survived the two World Wars largely owe their present-day existence to Queen Victoria, as the royal houses of Belgium, Spain, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Great Britain all have a descendent of Queen Victoria on the throne.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Longford, *Darling Loosy*.

<sup>217</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Victoria-queen-of-United-Kingdom>

David Cannadine pioneered the modern, rigorous study of Queen Victoria in her historical context. However, his work largely ignores certain aspects of Queen Victoria's reign as he emphasizes the loss of political power of the monarchy. While overtly true in that Queen Victoria heeded the advice of her ministers and was said by Bagehot and others "to reign but not rule," by looking more closely at the marriages of her daughters, another view becomes possible. Queen Victoria exerted considerable power in determining each of her five daughters' marriages and this continued well into the second half of the nineteenth century, the period of time when Cannadine argues the diminution of her political power was most evident. Victoria not only exercised political power in her younger daughters' marriages, but she also set a royal precedent with the marriage of her daughter Louise to a British subject. Victoria was not marrying her daughters off to get them out of the house. As monarch, she was in the peculiar position to ensure maximum benefit to the nation and her family.

Queen Victoria's legacy expands far beyond having an age named after her. Her familial ties and alliances she created allowed one of the oldest monarchies in the world to survive while others failed. Evaluating Queen Victoria's influence in her children's marriages, primarily her daughters' marriages, is vital to a better understanding of foreign policy and alliances during the long nineteenth century. A crucial aspect of European history has yet to receive sufficient attention from historians - the legacy of Queen Victoria in this domain. Addressing this gap through a heightened academic focus on her contributions can rectify this oversight and provide a more comprehensive understanding of this historical period. She was not merely a pretty face on a throne. She was a wife, mother, grandmother, and most of all, a sovereign who forged a path for Great Britain and the longevity of success of the country that continues today.

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