

VICTORIA REGINA

A Record of Events in the Longest Reign in British History

SIXTY YEARS OF SOVEREIGNTY

Over a Contented and Prosperous Empire

HER BETROTHAL AND MARRIAGE

Joys and Cares of Home and State--Last Years of Wedded Life--Death of the Prince Consort--Later Years of the Queen's Reign

and the orphan. The result was, that he became known as the "Popular Duke," and no royal personage ever better deserved the title.

Two days after the death of the Duke, the Duchess of Kent, accompanied by her babe and her brother, Prince Leopold, set out for London. The Duchess arrived at Kensington Palace on the 29th of January, and on that very day the Prince Regent succeeded to the throne by the death of his father.

King George the Fourth presented the Princess on her fourth birthday with a superb token of remembrance, being a miniature portrait of himself richly set in diamonds. He also gave a State dinner party to the Duchess and her daughter. In the following year, in response to a message from his Majesty, Parliament voted an annual grant of £6,000 to the Duchess of Kent for the education of the young Princess. A suitable preceptor was now sought for, and the choice of the Duchess fell upon the Rev. George Davys, afterwards Bishop of Peterborough. She made it a rule that the Bible should be daily read to the young Princess. The Duchess confided fully in Dr. Davys; and when it was suggested to her, after her daughter became direct heir to the throne, that some distinguished prelate should be appointed instructor, she expressed her perfect approval of Dr. Davys, and declined any change; but hinted that if a clergyman of superior dignity were indispensable to fill the important office of tutor, there would be no objection to Dr. Davys receiving the preferment he had always merited. Earl Grey acted upon the hint, and made Dr. Davys Dean of Chester not long afterwards.

Lord Albemarle, Leigh Hunt, and others, have testified in almost identical terms to the many charms of the Queen as a young girl and the natural attractiveness of her disposition. From an account written by one of those who saw her in childhood we must quote the following paragraph: "Passing accidentally through Kensington Gardens a few days since, I observed at some distance a party, consisting of several ladies, a young child, and two men-servants, having in charge a donkey gaily caparisoned with blue ribbons, and accoutred for the use of the infant. The appearance of the party, and the general attention they attracted, led me to suspect they might be the royal inhabitants of the Palace. I soon learned that my conjectures were well founded, and that her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent was in maternal attendance, as is her daily custom, upon her august and interesting daughter in the enjoyment of her healthful exercise. On approaching the royal party, the infant Princess, observing my respectful recognition, nodded, and wished me a 'good morning' with much liveliness, as she skipped along between her mother and her sister, the Princess Feodora, holding a hand of each. Having passed on some paces, I stood for a moment to observe the actions of the child, and was pleased to see that the notice with which she honored me was extended in a greater or less degree to almost every person she met. Her Royal Highness is remarkably beautiful, and her gay and animated countenance bespeaks perfect health and good temper. Her complexion is excessively fair, her eyes large and expressive, and her cheeks blooming. She bears a very striking resemblance to her late royal father and indeed to every member of our reigning family."

Considering the principles in which she was reared, there was no wonder that the Princess developed from a dutiful daughter into a loving wife, a vigilant mother, a kind mistress, a generous benefactor, and an exemplary Christian. She had been schooled in habits of sobriety and religion, and the sentiments of obedience and self-control which were from the first impressed upon her, bore their legitimate fruit in after life.

On the 30th of August, 1835, the Princess Victoria was confirmed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, assisted by the Bishop of London, in the Chapel Royal, St. James's. In addition to the Princess and the Duchess of Kent, only the King, Queen Adelaide, and the Duchess of Saxe-Weimar, with some other members of the Royal Family, were present.

In May, 1836, the Duke of Coburg, together with his two sons, Prince Ernest and Prince Albert, paid a visit to England, and spent nearly four weeks at Kensington Palace with the Duchess of Kent. It was now that the Princess Victoria saw for the first time her future husband. The distinguished visitors were feted at Windsor and at St. James's by the King and Queen, and by every member of the Royal Family in England.

The Queen's last appearance at Court as Princess Victoria was at the drawing-room in honor of the King's birthday, May 29, 1837; and shortly afterwards she made her final appearance in public as heiress presumptive at the memorable charity ball given at the Opera House for the benefit of the Spitalfields weavers. Her life as Princess thus closed with a charitable act, and she had the satisfaction of knowing that the terrible sufferings which afflicted the poor in the East End were soon afterwards alleviated.

Victoria Regina.

At the present day, tidings, however fateful, or momentous flash silently over unconscious fells and floods to the uttermost limits of the Empire; but it was otherwise sixty years ago. Throughout the brief night of June 19, 1837, the land echoed to the furious galloping of horses and the ceaseless rattle of flying wheels for William the King lay dying at Windsor Castle.

He drew his last breath before dawn of the 20th, and mounted messengers thronged the highways yet more thickly than before in the early hours of the morning. Among them were two of very high degree--Dr. Hawley, Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Marquis of Conyngham; Lord Chamberlain--charged to proceed post haste to Kensington Palace in order to summon the Princess Victoria to the throne of Great Britain and Ireland. Leaving Windsor shortly after two in the morning, they did not reach Kensington till five o'clock. The Palace was wrapped in silence; it was with great difficulty that even the gate-porter could be roused. At last the Archbishop and Lord Chamberlain obtained admittance, were shown into a room and left to themselves. After waiting for some time they rang the bell, and desired the sleepy servant who answered it to convey to the Princess their request for an immediate audience, on business of extreme urgency. Again the dignitaries were left alone, and once more they pealed the bell. This time they were informed by the Princess's attendant that her Royal Highness was asleep, and must on no account be disturbed.

"We are come," was their reply "on

business of state to the Queen, and even her sleep must give way to that."

The attendant yielded and then, to quote the simple but vivid description of Miss Wynn, "in a few minutes she (the Queen) came into the room in a loose white nightgown and shawl, her nightcap thrown off, and her hair falling on her shoulders, her feet in slippers, tears in her eyes, but perfectly collected and dignified.

Bishop Fulford states that on being informed of her new dignity, the first words which the young Queen uttered were these, addressed to the Archbishop: "I ask your prayers on my behalf." They knelt down together, and Victoria inaugurated her reign, like the young King of Israel in the olden time, by asking from the Most High, who ruleth over the kingdoms of men, an understanding heart to judge so great a people.

The Queen's first Privy Council was held at Kensington Palace on the morning of the 21st. The incidents of this memorable Council have been preserved in the pages of Grenville, and that acid diarist himself seems to have been struck with admiration at the bearing of the young Queen: "Never was anything like the first impression she produced, or the chorus of praise which is raised about her manner and behaviour, and certainly not without justice. It was very extraor-

The guns in the park fired a salute at ten o'clock, and immediately afterwards the Queen made her appearance at the window of the Presence Chamber. She stood between Lords Melbourne and Lansdowne, and was received with deafening cheers.

The Queen and the Duchess of Kent regarded the proceedings with much interest. As her Majesty appeared at the window the hand of the Royal Guards struck up the National Anthem. On its conclusion, Sir William Woods, acting for the Garter King-at-Arms, and accompanied by the Duke of Norfolk as Earl Marshal of England, read aloud the proclamation containing the official announcement of the death of King William IV., and of the consequent accession of Queen Victoria to the throne of these realms.

When the news of Queen Victoria's accession became known to Prince Albert, who was then a student at Bonn, he wrote to her Majesty as follows on the 26th of June: "Now you are queen of the mightiest land of Europe, in your hand lies the happiness of millions. May Heaven assist you and strengthen you with its strength in that higher but difficult task. I hope that your reign may be long, happy and glorious, and that your efforts may be rewarded by the thankfulness and love of your subjects."



inary, and something far beyond what was looked for. Her extreme youth and inexperience, and the ignorance of the world concerning her, naturally excited intense curiosity to see how she would act on this trying occasion, and there was a considerable assemblage at the Palace, notwithstanding the short notice which was given. The first thing to be done was to teach her her lesson, which for this purpose Melbourne had himself to learn. I gave him the Council papers and explained all that was to be done, and he went and explained all this to her."

Melbourne asked the Queen if she would enter the room accompanied by the great officers of State, but she said she would go in alone. When the Lords were assembled the Lord President informed them of the King's death, and suggested, as they were so numerous, that a few of them should repair to the presence of the Queen and inform her of the event, and that their lordships were assembled in consequence; and accordingly the two Royal Dukes of Cumberland and Sussex, the two Archbishops, the Lord Chancellor, and Melbourne, went with him. The Queen received them in the adjoining room alone. As soon as they had returned, the proclamation was read, and the usual order passed. When the doors were thrown open and the Queen entered, accompanied by her two uncles, who advanced to meet her, she was quite plainly dressed, and in mourning. The Queen bowed to the lords, and took her seat, and then, in a clear, distinct, and audible voice, and without any appearance of fear or embarrassment she read the following declaration to the Council:--

"The severe and afflicting loss which the nation has sustained by the death of his Majesty, my beloved uncle, has devolved upon me the duty of administering the government of this empire. This awful responsibility is imposed upon me so suddenly, and at so early a period of my life, that I should feel myself utterly oppressed by the burden, were I not sustained by the hope that Divine Providence, which has called me to this work, will give me strength for the performance of it, and that I shall find in the purity of my intentions, and in my zeal for the public welfare, that support and those resources which usually belong to a more mature age and to long experience.

"I place my firm reliance upon the wisdom of Parliament, and upon the loyalty and affection of my people. I esteem it also a peculiar advantage that I succeed to a Sovereign whose constant regard for the rights and liberties of his subjects, and whose desire to promote the amelioration of the laws and institutions of the country, have rendered his name the object of general attachment and veneration.

"Educated in England, under the tender and enlightened care of a most affectionate mother, I have learned from my infancy to respect and love the Constitution of my native country.

"It will be my unceasing study to maintain the Reformed religion as by law established, securing at the same time to all the full enjoyment of religious liberty; and I shall steadily protect the rights and promote to the utmost of my power the happiness and welfare of all classes of my subjects."

The Princess Victoria was formally proclaimed Queen of Great Britain and Ireland on the 21st of June, from St. James's Palace.

The Prince's demeanor at this time was diffident and retiring; he was strongly averse to putting himself forward in any way; and it was determined by the friends both of the Queen and the Prince that, to prevent the premature report of a formal engagement between the cousins, as well as to allow the young Queen time for the consideration of her own feelings, Prince Albert should travel for some months. This he accordingly did, in company with his brother, through Switzerland and Northern Italy.

The Queen took up her residence at Buckingham Palace on the 13th of July, and four days later she went in State to dissolve Parliament. An immense concourse of people witnessed the procession, and the cheering all along the route was deafening. The usual formalities having been gone through, the Queen read her first speech from the throne. The closing passages of this document, which breathed of the constitutional spirit that has marked the whole course of her Majesty's reign, ran as follows:--

"I ascend the throne with a deep sense of the responsibility which is imposed upon me; but I am supported by the consciousness of my own right intentions, and by my dependence upon the protection of Almighty God. It will be my care to strengthen our institutions, civil and ecclesiastical, by discreet improvement wherever improvement is required, and to do all in my power to compose and allay animosity and discord. Acting upon these principles, I shall upon all occasions look with confidence to the wisdom of Parliament and the affections of my people, which form the true support of the dignity of the Crown, and ensure the stability of the Constitution."

Her Majesty read the speech deliberately, and with a sweet voice which was heard all over the House, while a natural grace and modest self-possession characterized her demeanor.

Her Majesty opened her first Parliament on the 20th of November, her progress to the House being marked by the most loyal demonstrations. When she had ascended the throne in the House of Lords, the Queen directed the Lord Chancellor to read the following declaration, which we are told she repeated after his lordship, sentence by sentence, very articulately, and with much feeling and solemnity:--

"I, Victoria, etc., do solemnly and sincerely, in the presence of God, testify and declare that I do believe that in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper there is not any transubstantiation of the elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, at or after the consecration thereof, by any person whatsoever; and that the invocation or adoration of the Virgin Mary, or any other saint, and the sacrifice of the Mass, as they are now used in the Church of Rome, are superstitious and idolatrous. And I do solemnly, in the presence of God, profess, testify, and declare, that I do make this declaration, and every part thereof, in the plain and ordinary sense of the words read unto me, as they are commonly understood by English Protestants, without any evasion, equivocation, or mental reservation whatsoever, and without any dispensation already granted me for this purpose by the Pope, or any other authority or person whatsoever, and without thinking that I am or can be acquitted before God and man, or absolved of this declaration, or any part thereof, although the Pope, or any other person or persons or power whatsoever,

shall dispense with or annul the same, or declare that it was null and void from the beginning."

The Queen's coronation was deferred till June, 1838. We will not dwell on the splendor of the ceremonial. Perhaps the most readable and not the least truthful account has been preserved in one of Barham's Ingoldsby Legends.

Important events must have kept the young Sovereign's mind under high tension at this time. The Ministry was falling into disrepute; there was war in Canada, and much discontent at home.

But the time had come when the Queen felt that she desired a nearer and yet a dearer one than any of the companions or counsellors of either sex by whom she was surrounded. The cares of state weighed heavily upon that young heart, and she required some one upon whom she could lean in times of anxiety and trouble, and whose love and counsel would cheer and sustain her in periods of perplexity. Speculation had long been rife as to when, and with whom, she would enter upon the wedded state. Fortunately, however, for her happiness, no reasons of State were allowed to dictate her course in this the most momentous change in a woman's life.

Betrothal and Marriage.

On the 26th of August, 1819--the same year which witnessed the birth of the Queen--was born to the reigning Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld a son, who was afterwards named Albert. The birth took place at the Rosenau, the summer residence of the Duke, about four miles from Coburg. This child, who was destined to be closely allied with England, was lineally descended from those great Saxon princes "whose names are immortalized in European history by the stand they made in defence of their country's liberties against the encroaching power of the German emperors, as well as by the leading part they took in the Reformation."

In his home at Ehrenburg, in the spring of 1839, Prince Albert was agreeably surprised, on entering his apartments after a long journey, to receive a smiling welcome from the features of his fair cousin, the young Queen of England. It appears that she had sent her portrait, executed by Chalon, for his acceptance, and it was privately placed, by her desire, so that it should be the first object to meet his view on his return.

The two brothers, Ernest and Albert, again visited England in the ensuing October, this being the third occasion on which they had done so. They reached Buckingham Palace on the 10th, and were conveyed thence in the royal carriages to Windsor Castle. The Queen appears to have been still more impressed than before with her young cousin, and in writing to her uncle Leopold she remarked: "Albert's beauty is most striking, and he is most amiable and unaffected; in short, very fascinating." Then, with maidenly reserve, as though she had been too communicative, she hastened to add: "The young men are both amiable, and delightful companions, and I am glad to have them here."

The engagement was made on the 15th of October. Prince Albert had been out hunting with his brother, and returned to the Castle about noon. Half an hour afterwards he received a summons from the Queen, and went to her room, finding her alone. After a few minutes' conversation on other subjects, the Queen told him why she had sent for him, and the whole story of mutual love was once more quickly told. "Though as Queen," observes one writer, "she offered the Prince her coveted hand--that hand which had held the scepter of scepters, and which princes and peers and the representatives of the highest powers on earth had kissed in homage--it was only as a poor little woman's weak hand, which needed to be upheld and guided in good works by a stronger, firmer hand; and her head, when she laid it on her chosen husband's shoulder, had not the feel of the crown on it. Indeed, she seems to have felt that his love was her real coronation, his faith her consecration."

The royal marriage was fixed for the 10th of Feb., 1840, and on the afternoon of the 8th Prince Albert arrived at Buckingham Palace, accompanied by his father and elder brother. The Prince brought as a wedding gift to his bride a beautiful sapphire and diamond brooch, and her Majesty in return presented the Prince with the Star and Badge of the Garter, and the Garter itself, set in diamonds. The Queen had been exceedingly gratified by the high tributes paid to the personal character of Prince Albert by men of all parties. Sir Robert Peel, the leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons, had especially spoken in generous terms, and felicitated the Sovereign and the country upon the forth-coming auspicious union.

Many were the ejaculations of "God bless her" which went up from the citizens of London on the morning of the 10th of February as they thought of the royal bride. The wedding ceremony was one of unusual interest, for more than a century had elapsed since the nuptials of a reigning Queen of England had been celebrated, besides which the youth and grace of Victoria had touched all loyal hearts.

Wedded Happiness.

Auspiciously as the Queen's married life began, it necessarily caused some friction in quarters which were ruled by old Court principles. It was difficult for the officials of the palaces to settle down under the new conditions. All was altered, and Prince Albert found that even in his own home it was necessary to be stern sometimes and to exercise his authority.

The daily life of the royal pair has been described in the Early Years of the Prince Consort. From the pages of this work we learn that the Queen and Prince breakfasted at nine, and took a walk every morning soon afterwards. When in London these walks were taken in Buckingham Palace gardens, which the Prince had already enlivened with different kinds of animals and aquatic birds. "In their morning walks in the gardens it was a great amusement to the Prince to watch and feed these birds. He taught them to come when he whistled to them from a bridge connecting a small island with the rest of the gardens."

After the walk "came the usual amount of business (far less heavy, however, than that now), besides which they drew and etched a great deal together, which was a source of great amusement, having the plates lit in the house. Luncheon followed at the usual hour of two o'clock. Lord Melbourne, who was generally staying in the house, came to the Queen in the afternoon; and between five and six the Prince usually drove her out in a pony phaeton. If the Prince did not drive the Queen he rode, in which case she drove with the Duchess of Kent or the ladies. The Prince also read aloud most days to the Queen. The dinner was at eight o'clock, and always with the

company. In the evening the Prince frequently played at double chess, a game of which he was very fond, and which he played extremely well." On returning from his rides, which were generally into those London districts where improvements were going on, the Prince "would always come through the Queen's dressing-room, where she generally was at that time, with that bright loving smile with which he ever greeted her, telling her where he had been, what new buildings he had seen, what studios he had visited." The practice in English houses for gentlemen to remain alone at the table for a considerable time after dinner was never favorably viewed by the Queen; and in this she had a second in her husband, who was a very temperate man, and not addicted to the pleasures of the table. Lord Campbell thus speaks of a royal dinner at which he was present: "The Queen and the ladies withdrawing, Prince Albert came over to her side of the table, and we remained behind about a quarter of an hour, but we rose within the hour from the time of our sitting down. A snuff-box was twice carried round and offered to all the gentlemen. Prince Albert, to my surprise, took a pinch."

Early in November preparations were made at Buckingham Palace for the approaching accouchement of the Queen. The Court removed from Windsor to London on the 13th, and on the 21st the Princess Royal was born at Buckingham Palace at 1.40 p. m.

The Queen speedily recovered from her accouchement, and opened Parliament in person on the 26th of January, 1841. Prince Albert, in the uniform of a field marshal, entered the House of Lords with the royal procession, and took his seat on the chair of State appropriated for him on the left of the throne.

The christening of the Princess Royal took place on the 10th, in the throne-room at Buckingham Palace. The font, new for the occasion, was very elegant in form and exquisitely finished. It was of silver gilt, elaborately carved with the royal arms, etc. The water used for the ceremony was brought from the river Jordan. The Archbishop of Canterbury officiated, with the assistance of the Bishops of London and Norwich, and the Dean of Carlisle.

The ensuing summer saw the Queen and her husband entering into the pleasures of the people and sharing them with much zest. They listened to the moving declamation of the great French actress, Rachel, and welcomed Adelaide Kemble, who made her first appearance in opera this season.

There was great rejoicing at Buckingham Palace on the 9th of November, 1841, when the Queen gave birth to her first-born son, and consequently the heir to the throne.

When the baby Prince was a month old the Queen issued a patent creating "our most dear son" Prince of Wales and



Earl of Chester. He was already Duke of Saxony, Duke of Cornwall and Rothesay, Earl of Carrick, Baron of Renfrew, Lord of the Isles, and Great Steward of Scotland.

The christening of the Prince of Wales, which was made a very imposing ceremony, took place on the 25th of January, 1842, in St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle.

The year 1843 brought with it many sad episodes. Terrible news came from Afghanistan, where "the fatal policy of English interference with the fiery tribes of Northern India in support of an unpopular ruler had ended in the murder of Sir Alexander Burnes and Sir William Macnaghten, and the evacuation of Cabul by the English." Other disasters succeeded, chief amongst which was the destruction of her Majesty's 44th Regiment.

As the year opened England was also at war with China. Fortunately the uniform success which had attended our previous hostilities against that Power once more smiled upon our arms, and brought the Celestials to reason. After the taking of Chinkiang-foo by the British, and the appearance of the English squadron before Naankin, hostilities were suspended, and negotiations for peace were entered into and concluded between the Chinese Commissioners and Sir Henry Pottinger.

Another daughter was born to her Majesty at Buckingham Palace on the 25th of April. The Prince Consort was present; but, with the exception of the Earl of Liverpool, Lord Steward of the Household, all the official personages arrived too late. They came just in time to see the first bulletin, and then left again, the Queen and the infant being reported as progressing most favorably. The infant Princess was christened on the 2nd of June, and received the names of Alice Maud Mary.

The last days of January were saddened for the Queen and her Consort by the death of Prince Albert's father, the Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, at the age of sixty years.

The Queen gave birth to a son on the 6th of August, 1844, at Windsor Castle. The event was scarcely expected so soon, and only three hours before, her Majesty had signed the Commission for giving the royal assent to various bills. The Queen's happy delivery was announced in the Times in precisely forty minutes after it had taken place at Windsor Castle; and as this was the first occasion on which the electric telegraph had been used, the rapid publication of the news was considered very surprising. The young Prince was christened on the 6th of September in the names of Alfred Ernest Albert, being afterwards created Duke of Edinburgh.

Her Majesty prorogued Parliament on the 9th of August, and on the evening of the same day set out with the Prince Consort on her first visit to Germany. On the 13th the royal visitors witnessed the inauguration of Beethoven's statue at Bonn, and in the evening there was a splendid spectacle on the river: Cologne



When 8 years old

ager of Wurtemberg (represented by the Princess Augusta), and the Duchess Dowager of Coburg (represented by the Duchess Dowager of Gloucester). It is stated by the Hon. Amelia Murray, in her Recollections, that the Duke of Kent wished to name his child Elizabeth, that being a popular name with the English people; but at the baptism the Prince Regent gave only the name of Alexandrina. The Duke requested that another name might be added, whereupon the Prince said: "Give her her mother's also, then; but it cannot precede that of the Emperor." So the Princess came to be called Alexandrina Victoria.

There seemed little probability that the child thus ushered into the world would ever become Queen of England. The Duke of Kent was the fourth son of George III.; but a series of unexpected changes soon brought his daughter near the throne. Upon the death of the deeply lamented Princess Charlotte, the only child of George IV., the Duke of York had become heir-presumptive to the crown. His Royal Highness had no children, however, and the Duke of Clarence, the third son of George III., came next in succession. The Duke of Clarence had married, and his wife, the Princess Adelaide, bore him a daughter, who, if she had lived, would in the natural order of things, have become Queen. But this child died in infancy, leaving the Princess Victoria the only scion of the royal stock.

The Duke and Duchess of Kent, with their infant daughter, went to Sidmouth, on the east coast of Devon at the close of 1819. The stay at Sidmouth, however, was destined to have a sad and fatal termination. The Duke of Kent was seized with a severe indisposition, occasioned by delaying to change his wet boots after a walk through the snow. Affection for his child had drawn him to the nursery immediately on reaching home. To a severe chill succeeded inflammation of the chest, with high fever, which resulted fatally. The Duke was perhaps more highly esteemed than any other son of George III. His public conduct was judicious and self-sacrificing. In the army he initiated many healthful reforms; after he ceased from active service in it, he interested himself in humanitarian movements of all kinds, especially devoting himself to the care of the military