

= Louise Lehzen =

Johanna Clara Louise Lehzen (3 October 1784 ? 9 September 1870) , better known as Baroness Louise Lehzen , was the governess , and later adviser and companion to Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom .

Born to a Lutheran pastor in Hanover , in 1819 Lehzen entered into the household of the Duchess of Kent and her husband Prince Edward Augustus , Duke of Kent and Strathearn . Five years later , Lehzen became governess to their only child , Princess Victoria . Lehzen became strongly protective of the princess , who resided in a household dominated by the controlling Kensington System , implemented by the Duchess and her comptroller Sir John Conroy . " Dear , good Lehzen " soon came to supersede all others in Victoria 's eyes , including her own mother .

Victoria became second @-@ in @-@ line to the British throne in 1827 ; to prevent Victoria from being surrounded by commoners , King George IV named Lehzen a Baroness of the Kingdom of Hanover later that year . Lehzen encouraged the princess to become strong , informed , and independent from the Duchess and Conroy 's influence , causing friction between the two and Lehzen . Attempts to remove the governess , who had the support of George IV , his brother William IV , and Victoria 's uncle Leopold I of Belgium , were unsuccessful .

When Victoria became queen in 1837 , Lehzen served as a sort of unofficial private secretary , enjoying apartments adjacent to Victoria . The queen 's 1840 marriage to Prince Albert led to significant changes in the royal household . Albert and Lehzen detested each other , and after an illness of the Princess Royal in 1841 , Lehzen was quietly dismissed . Her close relationship to the queen came to an end , though the two continued to write letters to each other . Lehzen spent her last years in Hanover on a generous pension , dying in 1870 . Historian K.D. Reynolds writes that Lehzen was a major influence on Victoria 's character , in particular giving her the strength of will to survive her troubled childhood and young queenship .

= = Family and early life = =

Johanna Clara Louise Lehzen was born in Hanover on 3 October 1784 , the youngest of seven daughters and two sons of Lutheran pastor Joachim Friedrich Lehzen and his wife Melusine Palm . Forced by circumstances to work for her living since she was young , Lehzen was employed by the von Marenholtzs , an aristocratic German family , where she earned glowing references .

Based on these references , Lehzen became part of the household of Princess Victoria of Saxe @-@ Coburg @-@ Saalfeld in December 1819 , when she served as governess to twelve @-@ year @-@ old Princess Feodora of Leiningen , the daughter of the princess by her first husband , the Prince of Leiningen . Princess Victoria was married to the Prince Edward Augustus , Duke of Kent and Strathearn , who was , at the time , fourth in line for the British throne . Lehzen and the entire household were moved to England in 1817 so that the new Duchess of Kent 's child might be born there , strengthening the child 's claim to the throne . The baby was a girl , christened " Alexandrina Victoria " after her mother and her godfather , Alexander I of Russia ; she would grow up to be Queen Victoria .

= = Tutor to Princess Victoria = =

The Duke of Kent died quite suddenly in 1820 , followed quickly by his father , King George III . Victoria 's uncle , the Prince Regent , ascended the throne as George IV . Victoria was now third in line for the crown , after her uncles the Duke of York and the Duke of Clarence , both of whom were well past middle age and neither of whom had legitimate heirs . As the likely eventual heiress , Victoria had to be educated accordingly . Feodora was now 14 , and no longer required the services of a governess . After the dismissal of nursemaid Mrs. Brock , Lehzen ? as she was always known in the household ? took over five @-@ year @-@ old Victoria 's care in 1824 . The Duchess and her comptroller , John Conroy made the appointment not only because Lehzen was German (rather than English) , but also because they believed she was unlikely to operate independent of their

wishes .

Twentieth century historian Christopher Hibbert describes Lehzen as " a handsome woman , despite her pointed nose and chin , clever , emotional , humourless . " At first fearing Lehzen 's stern manner , " dear , good Lehzen " soon came to occupy a place in Victoria 's heart that superseded all others , including her own mother , the Duchess of Kent . Lehzen encouraged the princess to distrust her mother and her mother 's friends , and to maintain her independence . The governess was uninterested in money and lacked ambition for herself , instead choosing to devote her time and energy to the princess . Victoria took to calling Lehzen " Mother " and " dearest Daisy " in private , writing Lehzen was " the most affectionate , devoted , attached , and disinterested friend I have . " As part of the controlling Kensington System devised by Conroy , after 1824 Victoria was to be accompanied by Lehzen at all times during the day ; consequently Lehzen was not allowed out to leave Victoria 's side until the Duchess dismissed her at nighttime , and was required to hold the princess ' hand when Victoria descended a staircase .

= = = Baroness Lehzen = = =

In 1827 , the Duke of York died , making the Duke of Clarence heir presumptive , and Victoria second @-@ in @-@ line to the throne . Conroy complained that the princess should not be surrounded with commoners , leading George IV to award them both titles ; Lehzen became a Baroness of the Kingdom of Hanover . George IV himself died in 1830 , and was duly succeeded by his brother the Duke of Clarence , who became King William IV . William formally recognised Victoria as his heiress @-@ presumptive . According to Lehzen , around this time the famous scene took place , in which Lehzen slipped a copy of the genealogy of the House of Hanover into one of the princess 's lesson books . After perusing it for some time , Victoria came to see that her father had been next in line after the king , and that Queen Adelaide had no surviving children . This was the first time Victoria came to realise the destiny that had been assumed by many since her birth ; that she would be the next British monarch . After a pause , Victoria is reported to have said " I will be good . " This story entered into folk legend for future English generations .

King William appointed his friend , the Duchess of Northumberland , as Victoria 's official governess in 1831 , but the role was mostly ceremonial , and the princess continued to depend on Lehzen . The Duchess was dismissed in 1837 by Victoria 's mother , the Duchess of Kent , for attempting to become more influential in Victoria 's education . During this time , Lehzen held no official position at court ; despite her recently acquired title , her commoner status continued to be a hindrance .

= = = Educating Victoria = = =

The wish of the Duchess and Conroy to keep Victoria dependent on their will was circumvented by Lehzen , who wanted her charge to become a strong , informed woman . As Victoria grew older , attempts were made by Conroy and the Duchess for Lehzen 's removal , or at least the lessening of her influence . Such tactics proved unsuccessful , as the princess became more devoted to Lehzen than before , as evident in her journals . Lehzen 's only true friend in the household , Baroness Spath , had been suddenly dismissed in 1828 on the orders of Conroy ; rumours abounded that the baroness witnessed " familiarities " between him and the Duchess . Members of George IV 's court speculated that Lehzen would be the next to leave , but she remained silent on the issue and preserved her position . In 1835 , the Duchess of Kent wrote her daughter a stern letter demanding that Victoria develop a more formal and less intimate relationship with Lehzen . The same year (in which Victoria turned sixteen) , plans to dismiss Lehzen fell apart after she devotedly nursed Victoria through a five @-@ week illness . Lehzen aided a weakened Victoria in her refusal to sign a document prepared for her by Conroy and the Duchess that would guarantee him a position when she became queen . During her tenure , Lehzen had the support of George IV , William IV , and another of Victoria 's uncles , Leopold I of Belgium , who all believed that she was vital to the princess ' health , happiness , and continued resistance to Conroy 's influence .

The education Victoria received from Lehzen was rudimentary but solid . Contrary to the prevailing

attitudes of the time , Lehzen , tutor Dr. George Davys , and others successfully encouraged Victoria to enjoy acquiring knowledge . Davys was put in charge of the " solid department of her studies " , while Lehzen concentrated on the " more ornamental departments " , such as dancing . Gaining an " enlightened education " , the princess learned to speak French , German , Latin , and English , liked history and was taught economics , geography , mathematics , politics , art , and music . Lehzen was strict , but rewarded the princess when she was obedient . In another departure from the era , Lehzen employed little to no corporal punishment ; at least , there is no record of it in the household accounts .

= = Victoria in power = =

When Victoria ascended the throne in 1837 , Lehzen enjoyed a prominent position at the coronation , and remained at court . Lehzen was installed at Buckingham Palace as a sort of unofficial private secretary , served as chief liaison for the royal residences , and carried the household keys as a sign of her position ; her signature was required for all payments of tradesmen 's bills , for instance . At this point , it seems that Lehzen had totally replaced Victoria 's mother both in terms of influence and affection ; Lehzen 's apartments adjoined the queen 's , while the Duchess of Kent was installed in a suite of rooms far removed from Victoria 's . For the first few years of Victoria 's reign , especially before her marriage to Prince Albert of Saxe @-@ Coburg and Gotha in 1840 , Lehzen had a very strong influence on the queen 's outlook on both politics and personal matters , despite the fact that she did not overtly involve herself in state affairs . Even after the queen 's marriage , Lehzen retained the private doorway into the royal bedroom , a source of displeasure for Albert .

= = = Supplanted by Prince Albert = = =

The coming of Prince Albert led to significant changes in Victoria 's household . Lehzen had opposed Coburg ambitions of Victoria marrying Albert , believing the princess to be a " second Queen Elizabeth , virgin and independent of male influence . " Albert was well @-@ educated , and had just completed a tour of Europe , preceded by years at the University of Bonn . Victoria 's court dismayed his puritan German sensibilities . Lehzen and Albert soon developed a dislike for each other ; she sought to thwart Albert 's will in various ways and he found her personally repugnant and unworthy of befriending the queen , referring to her as " the hag " and a " crazy stupid intriguer " .

When Victoria 's first child , Victoria , Princess Royal , was born on 21 November 1840 , Victoria trusted Lehzen to make the arrangements for the nursery staff . Lehzen put the nursery in the hands of a Mrs. Southey , a Mrs. Roberts , and Sir James Clark , despite Albert 's objections that Clark was wholly unsuited to the post , having already discredited himself during the affair of Lady Flora Hastings a year previously . Eventually , the Princess Royal fell ill , but the incompetent Dr. Clark declared it a minor ailment , incorrectly prescribing her with calomel . In fact , the young Princess Victoria had become seriously ill . Albert , who was devoted to his first @-@ born , confronted Victoria on the incompetence of the staff selected by the Baroness . There was a quarrel , after which Albert declared that he would leave the affair in her queenly hands , and be it on her head if the child died . Soon after this argument , Victoria gave in to him and ultimately dismissed Lehzen , ostensibly for her health . To Albert , Lehzen was a servant who had attempted to rise above her place in life , and he wanted Victoria to rely on him alone .

Reports of the reasons behind Lehzen 's departure varied ; court diarist Charles Greville noted she was leaving " for her health (as she says) , to stay five or six months , but it is supposed never to return . " The Times however reported that she was simply visiting friends in Germany . After her departure , family adviser Baron Stockmar remarked of the affair that " it was not without great difficulty that the Prince succeeded in getting rid of [Lehzen] . She was foolish enough to contest his influence , and not to conform herself to the change in her position ... If she had done so , and conciliated the P [rince] , she might have remained in the Palace to the end of her life . "

= = Death and legacy = =

When Lehzen was dismissed from the court in 1842 she returned to her native Germany , living in Bückeburg near Hanover . She lived with her sister on the generous pension that Victoria sent her , and covered the walls of her house with portraits of the queen . Though her sister died several months later , the baroness continued to support financially her many nieces and nephews . Lehzen continued to regard Victoria with affection , and the queen wrote regularly to her former governess , weekly at first and later monthly at Lehzen 's request . When visiting relations in Germany , the queen came to visit her twice in private . The Baroness Lehzen died in Bückeburg on 9 September 1870 , where she is buried in Jetenburger cemetery . Queen Victoria ordered the erection of a memorial to her . After Lehzen 's death , Queen Victoria spoke of her gratitude for their relationship , but commented " after I came to the throne she got to be rather trying , and especially so after my marriage ... [This was not] from any evil intention , only from a mistaken idea of duty and affection for me . "

During her time at the English court , Lehzen attracted attention outside of the royal household for her close relationship with Victoria . She was criticised for her influence with the queen , particularly from those who disliked German influences at court . Pamphlets , many released by the Tory party , complained of the " stranger harboured in our country " and the " evil counsellors " surrounding Victoria . One in particular , published as the Warning Letter to Baroness Lehzen , declared that a " certain foreign lady pulled the wires of a diabolical conspiracy of which Lady Flora was to be the first victim , " a reference to the Flora Hastings affair . More positive , The Times once described her as having simply " held a highly and strictly confidential situation about the person of the Sovereign . " As a sign of the perceived political influence she possessed , in 1838 false rumours suggested that Lehzen had been " converted " to the Whig party , and that she had been offered " an urgent proposal of marriage " by Whig prime minister Viscount Melbourne . Despite all of this criticism , historian Gillian Gill describes how Lehzen was honest and frugal ; even after Victoria ascended the throne , she seems to have made no demands for money or rank , preferring instead to simply be in the queen 's company . Historian K.D. Reynolds adds that Lehzen was a major influence on Victoria 's character and moral development , in particular giving the queen the strength of will to survive her troubled childhood and young queenship . Not all of her influence was positive however ; Reynolds also speculates that the 1839 Bedchamber crisis stemmed partly from Victoria 's unwillingness to lose Lehzen .

Baroness Lehzen has been portrayed numerous times in film and television . She was played by Renée Stobrawa in the 1936 German film Mädchenjahre einer Königin , Greta Schröder in the films Victoria the Great and Sixty Glorious Years , Barbara Everest in 1941 's The Prime Minister , Magda Schneider in the 1954 television serial The Story of Vickie , Olga Fabian in an episode of Hallmark Hall of Fame , Patience Collier in Edward the Seventh , Diana Rigg in the 2001 television serial Victoria & Albert , and Jeanette Hain in the 2009 film The Young Victoria .