ENGLAND'S GREATEST QUEENS

ELIZABETH I & VICTORIA

by

CHARLES RIVER EDITORS

England’s Greatest Queens: The Lives and Legacies of Queen Elizabeth I and Queen Victoria

By Charles River Editors

About Charles River Editors

Charles River Editors was founded by Harvard and MIT alumni to provide superior editing and original writing services, with the expertise to create digital content for publishers across a vast range of subject matter. In addition to providing original digital content for third party publishers, Charles River Editors republishes civilization's greatest literary works, bringing them to a new generation via ebooks.

Sign up here to receive updates about free books as we publish them, and visit charlesrivereditors.com for more information.

Introduction

Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603) "Video et taceo." ("I see, and say nothing") – Queen Elizabeth I When Queen Elizabeth II came to the throne in 1952, many commentators heralded the beginning of her reign as the second Elizabethan age. The first one, of course, concerned the reign of Henry VIII's second surviving daughter and middle surviving child, Queen Elizabeth I, one of England's most famous and influential rulers. It was an age when the arts, commerce and trade flourished. It was the epoch of gallantry and great, enduring literature. It was also an age of wars and military conflicts in which men were the primary drivers and women often were pawns.

Elizabeth I changed the rules of the game and indeed she herself was changed by the game. She was a female monarch of England, a kingdom that had unceremoniously broken with the Catholic Church, and the Vatican and the rest of Christendom was baying for her blood. She had had commercial and militaristic enemies galore. In the end, she helped change the entire structure of female leadership.

Elizabeth was the last Tudor sovereign, the daughter of the cruel and magnificent King Henry VIII and a granddaughter of the Tudor House's founder, the shrewd Henry VII. Elizabeth, hailed as "Good Queen Bess," "Gloriana" and "The Virgin Queen" to this day in the public firmament, would improve upon Henry VIII's successes and mitigate his failures, and despite her

own failings would turn out to “have the heart and stomach of a king, and a king of England too”. Indeed, that was the phrase she would utter in describing herself while exhorting her troops to fight for England against the Spanish Armada).

Elizabeth often has been featured in biographies that were more like hagiographies, glossing over her fits of temper, impatience and other frailties. It is fair to say, however, that she had also inherited her grandfather’s political acumen and her father’s magnificence, thus creating not just one of the most colourful courts in Europe but also one of the most effective governments in English history. It was an age of Christopher Marlowe’s and William Shakespeare’s flourishing creativity that still enhances English as well as comparative literature. Elizabeth was also patroness of Sir Francis Drake, the pirate, thereby promoting English settlement of foreign colonies. The Jamestown Settlement in Virginia would come in 1607, four years after Elizabeth’s passing, and the Plymouth colony in Massachusetts would come in 1620.

Elizabeth had also fought for her life time and time again in an era that was already unsafe for female leaders and she probably had remembered the searing feeling of realizing that her mother Queen Anne (Anne Boleyn) had been executed by her father arguably on a trumped-up charge. Danger was pervasive; strategy was needed not just to thrive but just to survive.

England’s Greatest Queens chronicles the life and reign of England’s most famous queen, but it also humanizes the woman who ruled one of the world’s most powerful kingdoms in an age dominated by men. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events in her life, you will learn about Elizabeth I like you never have before, in no time at all.

Queen Victoria (1819-1901) "Since it has pleased Providence to place me in this station, I shall do my utmost to fulfil my duty towards my country; I am very young and perhaps in many, though not in all things, inexperienced, but I am sure that very few have more real good will and more real desire to do what is fit and right than I have." – Queen Victoria, 1837

England has had no shortage of influential monarchs, but only Queen Elizabeth I and Queen Victoria had their nation's age literally named after them. Both the Elizabethan era and Victorian era have come to symbolize a golden age of peace and progress in every aspect of British life, with the long reigns of both queens also providing stability.

Of course, there was a critical difference between those two queens: Elizabeth I still wielded great power in the 16th century, whereas Victoria was a constitutional monarch with limited power over the workings of the British government. But in a way, that made Victoria even more unique, as she still proved able to mold the cultural identity of a nearly 65 year long epoch. Furthermore, Victoria established some of the ceremonial customs of the British monarch and became both the forerunner and role model of subsequent queens, a legacy that continues to endure with her great-great granddaughter, Queen Elizabeth II.

Though Britain's longest reigning monarch is now mostly associated with conservative values (particularly strict morality and traditional social and gender roles), Victoria and her era oversaw the cultural and technological progress of Britain and the West in general, architectural revivals, and the expansion of imperialism. While some of these developments have been perceived negatively over a century later, Britons of the 19th century and early 20th century often viewed the Victorian Era as the height of their nation's power and influence.

England's Greatest Queens chronicles the life and reign of Queen Victoria, while examining the enduring legacy of the era in British history named after her. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events in her life, you will learn about Queen Victoria like you never have before, in no time at all.

Queen Elizabeth I

Chapter 1: Early Life, 1533-1558

The Lady Elizabeth in about 1546, by an unknown artist Born September 7, 1533 at Greenwich Palace in England, as the daughter of England's sovereign King Henry VIII of England, Ireland and (nominally) France and his wife Anne Boleyn, Princess Elizabeth was born at a time of great strife in England. Her father Henry VIII had broken with the Holy Father, the Vicar of Christ, and the Catholic Church at The Vatican in order to annul his marriage to his first wife, Infanta Catherine of Aragon (later Queen Catherine) on grounds that part of the Book of Leviticus (stating "If a brother is to marry the wife of a brother they will remain childless.") forbade their marriage. This is because Catherine had been married to Henry's older brother and the erstwhile Prince of Wales, Arthur, but the Biblical passage had already technically been proven wrong by the birth of daughter Mary in 1516. Moreover, a much hoped-for Prince and male heir named Henry had been born in 1511, only to die after a few weeks as the infant Henry, Duke of Cornwall.

There were actually several reasons Henry sought to dissolve the marriage, using the religious one as a clearly faulty pretense. Henry believed that Catherine's inability to give Henry and England a surviving male heir made her a failure, and the ever-philandering Henry had become completely infatuated with Anne Boleyn. For those reasons, Henry clearly believed that he and Anne should marry in order to produce the next heir to the throne.

King Henry VIII Unfortunately for Henry, Catherine of Aragon was a well-connected woman in Europe, which had made her such an attractive bride for Henry's older brother in the first place. The daughter of Ferdinand and Isabelle, Catherine was related to the Holy Roman Emperor, and the power players in Rome had no interest in dissolving Henry's marriage with her.

Catherine of Aragon Henry had always been a believer in Catholic doctrine, so much so that he had taken great offense at Martin Luther's and later John Calvin's "heresies"[1] and had published his own tract in defense of the Mother Church, a book fittingly named *In Defence of the Seven Sacraments*. But Henry put his own power and family's royal line ahead of his Catholic faith, and he took a number of steps to break with The Vatican. In a move that would have global repercussions for centuries, Henry founded the Church of England and became the new church's supreme head and governor, successfully exhorting Parliament to pass several acts so adjusting and thereby capitalizing on the English pride of self-determination (as opposed to the idea of foreign domination via The Vatican). Henry remained, in theological terms, "Defender of the Faith" (the title that the Church had conferred upon him and which the British monarch still retains). Elizabeth, who was not nearly as concerned about theological questions would still use Henry's brand of nationalism to unite her people during her monarchical tenure.

Anne Boleyn

By establishing the Church of England, Henry could make his own rules, so to speak, and he used the break with the Church to dissolve his marriage with Catherine. In 1533, Henry and Anne were married, but the honeymoon phase wouldn't last long, with tragic consequences for Henry's new wife. However alluring and seductive Henry had found Anne's playful manner *before* the wedding, he soon began to tire of her, due in no small part to her unbending, stubborn nature. Anne also had a nasty habit of political machinations, especially dealing with religion, which came at a time when religious divisions within England were at their peak. Most importantly, Henry believed Anne was a failure, just like Catherine, because she hadn't given Henry a surviving male heir. Elizabeth's birth had not been particularly welcome by Henry (who wanted a male heir for England to succeed him as the next ruler of the House of Tudor) or by Anne (who herself had deposed a queen consort and thus had set a dangerous precedent that could hoist her own petard).

Nonetheless, Elizabeth I's birth made her the Inheritrix Presumptive to the English throne at the time. King Henry VIII's elder daughter Mary (later to go down in history as "Bloody" Mary I of England, a staunch Catholic, and later a persecutor of Protestant "heretics") was delegitimized via Act of Succession 1533 (First Succession Act) upon Elizabeth's birth, and her life was made rather miserable. Mary was compelled to be a lady-in-waiting to the infant Elizabeth, the same infant who had replaced Mary in the line of succession. A greater

humiliation would be harder to imagine. Elizabeth's place would not last long. Queen Anne's miscarriage of a male heir, upon hearing the news of her husband's hunting accident, made her especially vulnerable. King Henry VIII now had lost his patience with Anne, as he had with Queen Catherine.

Henry was caught in a bind, and his actions would affect his infant daughter's psychology for the rest of her life. Henry could not again afford a messy, long, drawn-out annulment process, and unlike Queen Catherine, who had had a powerful ally in Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, Anne's almost exclusively English ancestry conferred upon her no diplomatic or political leverage that might have given her protection against Henry's wrath. Henry had had Anne framed of various crimes, namely incest and adultery, under the alarming and death penalty-eligible headline of "high treason" against the King's Majesty.

Queen Anne was executed when Elizabeth was only two and a half years old. Throughout her life, her mother was a subject Elizabeth would be reluctant to discuss; it is likely the reason that Elizabeth would wait almost two decades before executing her subversive rival and cousin Mary, Queen of Scots, who was in Elizabeth's *own* custody. Naturally, and understandably, the perennial proximity of death to women who fell out of favor with the Establishment is a fear Elizabeth would carry with herself. Before Anne was executed, the Henry-Anne marriage was annulled by Henry himself as supreme governor of the Church of England. Elizabeth too was delegitimized.

After her mother's execution, Elizabeth saw her father marry four other wives, who were generally kind to Elizabeth. These wives — Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Elizabeth's own cousin Catherine Howard, and the widow Catherine Parr — would make efforts to include Elizabeth and Mary in court, even though Elizabeth had been given her own household by her father. In her own young life, Elizabeth was blossoming: she learned to speak and write Greek, Latin, English, Scottish, Irish, Cornish, French, Spanish, Italian and Flemish, as well as learning how to conduct complex mathematical calculations. The Venetian ambassador to Elizabeth's court later would observe that Elizabeth "possessed [these] languages so thoroughly that each appeared to be her native tongue."[2] Undoubtedly Elizabeth's emphasis on learning and cultural development had been informed by her own learning and value of erudition in manifold forms.

In the meantime, Elizabeth's young life was fraught with changes, often bloody and tragic ones. Queen Jane would die shortly after the birth of Elizabeth's half-brother and Henry's first surviving legitimate male issue, Prince Edward (later King Edward VI), in 1537. Edward incontrovertibly became the heir to the English throne, the third ruler of the Tudor dynasty. The humiliation that had been inflicted on Mary a la Elizabeth now was inflicted on Elizabeth a la Edward; Elizabeth was put in Edward's household and was commanded to carry the *chrisom* (baptismal cloth) at his christening. After Queen Jane, Henry would marry German grand ducal princess Anne of Cleves, a political marriage that Henry had regretted from the minute he laid eyes upon Anne. Henry quickly rejected her, but he did make amends by giving her Hever Castle (that had been Elizabeth's mother Anne Boleyn's family home) and a retinue of servants, as well as conferring upon her the title "The King's Sister." Elizabeth's next step-mother, Catherine Howard, would as a teenager be accused of "high treason" for consorting with her lover Thomas Culpeper. Henry had Anne Boleyn executed for fabricated incest charges, so naturally Catherine Howard lost her head for actual adultery. Henry's final wife and widow, Catherine Parr, skillfully managed Henry's choleric, irascible temper, and she got along well with Henry's children.

King Henry VIII died in 1547 basically a broken man and a magnificent ruler. His legacy of ruthlessness, ego and splendour was superseded in the public mind only by his founding of the Church of England and his six wives. To this day, schoolchildren know him by the latter (and by contemporary standards, unsavory) aspects of his legacy rather than by the intense complexity and confusion which attended Henry's split from The Vatican. Henry VIII was succeeded at first by Edward VI, but he had always been a sickly child much to his father's chagrin, and Edward would die in 1553 after just six years of reign.

King Edward VI

During Edward's reign, Elizabeth was the ward of her last step-mother, Catherine Parr, who subsequently married Thomas Seymour after Henry's death. Thomas was Edward's uncle and the brother of the Lord Protector, Edward Seymour. Seymour behaved inappropriately with Elizabeth, including entering her bedroom in his nightgown and slapping her on her private parts. Elizabeth found no protection even from her step-mother Catherine Parr, who turned a blind eye. Such conduct may well have turned Elizabeth off from the prospect of men, marriage and commitment, not necessarily because of what Seymour did to her but perhaps because Seymour's wife clearly had no control over her husband.

A strong Protestant, Edward did not want his crown to pass to Mary, a zealous Catholic whose brutal reign would include 280 "heretics" being burned at the stake during the "Marian Persecutions". However, Edward could see no constitutional, or indeed non-arbitrary way, to pass over Mary and instead choose Elizabeth. Hence, in his typical schoolboy penmanship, Edward's will attempted to override the Succession to the Crown Act 1543 (advocated by his father and passed by Parliament), barred *both* Mary and Elizabeth from the succession, and instead declared as his heir Lady Jane Grey, who was the granddaughter of Henry VIII's sister (and his father King Henry VII's daughter) Mary. Lady Jane was proclaimed queen by the Privy Council, possibly under duress, but her support soon waned after her own close blood relations distanced

themselves from her, and she was deposed after just over a week.

Queen Mary I

Thus, the long-suffering Queen Catherine's legitimate issue with Henry, Queen Mary, rode victoriously into London — joined by Princess Elizabeth, perhaps for appearance's sake, perhaps for legitimacy's in order to send a message of sorts to her Protestant subjects — and was crowned. Mary's nod to Protestants turned out to be just lip-service, and she quickly began persecuting Protestants for their alleged heresies against the Holy Mother Church. Mary's Catholic faith, along with the scarring memories of how she and her mother had been treated by Henry VIII and the Protestant reformers, strengthened her resolve to destroy the Protestant reformation. It just so happened to be the same faith in which Elizabeth had been inculcated, a natural religious upbringing for the daughter of Anne Boleyn. Mary ordered everyone, including Elizabeth, to attend Catholic Mass (as had Henry); Elizabeth at least appeared to comply.

In 1554, Mary announced her decision to marry her staunchly Catholic cousin Prince Philip of Spain, the son of the same Emperor Charles V who had imprisoned the Pope and thus made impossible Henry VIII's annulment from Mary's mother Catherine. It was rather assumed that while it was purely political and dynastic for Philip, the marriage had those elements as well as infatuation, if

not unequivocal love, for Mary. Philip, a Habsburg, married Mary and assumed the collective address: *Philip and Mary, by the Grace of God King and Queen of England, Spain, France, both the Sicilies, Jerusalem and Ireland, Defenders of the Faith, Archdukes of Austria, Dukes of Burgundy, Milan and Brabant, Counts of Habsburg, Flanders and Tyrol.*

Mary's English subjects were English first, and their religion was secondary to their collective identity. There was considerable distress and unhappiness among Mary's subjects over the marriage, partially because Philip was Catholic and partially because Philip was a foreigner. The formidable hydra of jingoism and nationalism reared its head. What now made Elizabeth's life increasingly difficult was that Protestant dissidents were making an icon out of her and presenting Elizabeth to the English people as a far superior alternative to Mary, who by this time had executed Thomas Cranmer, the influential Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury, and several others. About 800 Protestants read the tea leaves and went into self-imposed exile for their lives.

Mary I and her husband Philip attempted to retrench England back to the pre-Reformation era. Parliament repealed the Ecclesiastical Appointments Act 1534 and the Treasons Act 1534, which had made the monarch the supreme head of the Church of England, and basically disbanded the Church Henry had created. But because the powerful landowners who had benefited from King Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries were too influential, Mary and Philip had to accept that the lands and property would not revert back to the Catholic Church. Around January-February 1554, Protestant dissident Thomas Wyatt's rebellion broke out, and Mary's spies and government soon suppressed Wyatt. Wyatt had tried to enlist Elizabeth's help but either Elizabeth had refused or she had destroyed or successfully rebutted the evidence. Nonetheless, Elizabeth was summoned to court and was interrogated by Mary's senior officials regarding her part in the Wyatt rebellion. On 18 March, 1554, the Princess was imprisoned in the Tower of London.

By now, Elizabeth realized that her enemies wanted any excuse, even remotely credible, to frame her. The largely manufactured "high treason" charges with which Elizabeth's mother Queen Anne, her uncle Lord Rocheford, and her step-mother Catherine Howard were disposed of made clear to Elizabeth, especially in her formative years, that innocence counted for little against the monarch's

accusation. Elizabeth powerfully maintained her innocence, and indeed it seems that it was somewhat-valid paranoia that had gripped Mary. The Holy Roman Emperor's ambassador Simon Renard advised Mary that her throne would remain unsafe so long as Elizabeth was alive; Mary's Chancellor, Stephen Gardiner, tried to try Elizabeth. In the government, Elizabeth did have loyal and powerful supporters, including Lord Paget, who persuaded Mary to spare Elizabeth's life since there was no actual, or even circumstantial, evidence against Elizabeth's conduct.

In late May 1554, Elizabeth was compelled to move gaols from the Tower of London to Woodstock, Oxford, where she was to be imprisoned for almost a year. During this time Mary underwent a fake pregnancy, which turned out to be a tumour and ended up taking her life. King Philip did little governing in England, but he realized early enough that Mary would be unable to give him and Spain a male heir and that Elizabeth would succeed Mary very soon. Therefore, Philip shrewdly helped spare Elizabeth's life during Mary's short regime.

Philip and the Habsburgs knew that Elizabeth's influence and power would become tremendously helpful and indispensable. However, this Philip-Elizabeth alliance would not last very long because Elizabeth would spurn Philip's marriage proposal. Instead, it would be the Catholic Philip, with the blessing of The Vatican, who would attempt to invade Elizabeth's England in 1588 by sending his Spanish Armada. But all that would come three decades later.

Philip II

On November 17, 1558, Mary I passed away, and Elizabeth succeeded her as sovereign. At her house in Hatfield, Elizabeth was greeted by senior ministers with the deceased Mary's signet ring symbolizing the marriage between the monarch and her kingdom (as Elizabeth herself would equate, "all my husbands, my good people"). Underneath a large oak tree, Elizabeth is noted to have said: "*Mirabile dictu*, this is God's will."

The rest of Elizabeth I's life had just begun.

Chapter 2: The First Part of Elizabeth's Reign, 1558-1587

Handling Religious Divisions

When Elizabeth ascended to the throne of England in 1558, many questions were looming, none more important than the Settlement Question about the Church of England vis-à-vis the Roman Catholic Church. Mary's rule had not been a particularly successful one and had torn England apart. The reign of Empress Matilda, the only other woman ruler centuries ago, was so distant and had been so short-lived that it had been long forgotten, so there was not much of a template for a woman ruler to follow, especially for a young 25 year old queen. As a result, Elizabeth would have to all but invent that role for herself, and she decided, probably early, that objective metrics of success rather than any definitive or stereotypical "female" imprint was the better path to follow, at least at that point in time.

Elizabeth also realized that her fidelity to her kingdom was important for yet another, though somewhat related and imminent, reason. She could unite the warring religious factions of English people under the obvious banner: England. This would have the effect of subordinating, perhaps even subsuming, the religious question under the more immediate identity of English—ness. Elizabeth made an example of her devotion to country, as she later would make an example of her famed virginity (becoming in lore a "Virgin" with a capital "v," thus replacing in the public *zeitgeist* the Catholic legend of The Virgin Mary), which inherently was brilliantly strategic. Elizabeth told Parliament in 1559: "And, in the end, this shall be for me sufficient, that a marble stone shall declare that a queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin." If Elizabeth, whether out of personal wishes or political expediency, could not bear a child and become a mother, a role beloved by her subjects, then she could reinvent herself as *their* national mother and defender. Thus she could and did gain their allegiance.

Elizabeth demonstrated her will and her inclusiveness in being everyone's mother, and she did so early in her tenure; her coronation was officiated by Owen Oglethorpe, the *Catholic* bishop of Carlisle, at Westminster Abbey, even after it was Protestants who had been instrumental in saving Elizabeth's life and her claim to the throne through the difficult years of Bloody Mary's reign. In

government and religion, Elizabeth would steer a middle course, avoiding extremes — unlike her father and her siblings but very much like her late grandfather, Henry VII. Henry VII had realized, and Elizabeth, out of intuition or appreciation of the lessons of history, did too, that governing was a subtle art and possibly the subtlest of forms.

Elizabeth realized the virtues of filling the public vacuum on *her* own terms. This is a lesson Elizabeth would apply throughout her monarchical tenure. As far as devotion to England went, Elizabeth publicly demonstrated self-appreciation for the limits of her person's wishes. It was as if Elizabeth was making an importunate, though regal, plea that her quarrelling subjects follow her lead in putting England first, by separating her "body natural" from the "body politic": My lords, the law of nature moves me to sorrow for my sister; the burden that is fallen upon me makes me amazed, and yet, considering I am God's creature, ordained to obey His appointment, I will thereto yield, desiring from the bottom of my heart that I may have assistance of His grace to be the minister of His heavenly will in this office now committed to me. And as I am but one *body naturally* considered, though by His permission a *body politic* to govern, so shall I desire you all ... to be assistant to me, that I with my ruling and you with your service may make a good account to Almighty God and leave some comfort to our posterity on earth. I mean to direct all my actions by good advice and counsel.[3]

Elizabeth was able to keep well-disguised her personal religious inclinations. Even though she herself was a Protestant, devout but not evangelical, Elizabeth kept Catholic liturgy largely intact. Notable Catholic symbols such as the crucifix were kept, and Elizabeth minimized the importance of sermons, a point of contention with staunch Protestant reformers. Yet Elizabeth, in a very real sense, *had* to be a Protestant because Catholic doctrine held that Elizabeth never had been a legitimate issue of King Henry VIII because, as some English Catholics believed and The Vatican certainly maintained, Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn was null and void. Protestant doctrine was not enthusiastic about divorces and annulments, but it was more malleable from Elizabeth's point of view. Elizabeth had to balance the many religious and political factions on the religion question; her proposed compromise was to keep the monarch as the supreme governor of the church (the point that had meant the most to her father and had been anathema to Mary) while allowing Catholic elements such as

priestly vestments.

Elizabeth undoubtedly was helped by her good luck but it was also her strategy and artfulness and tact that had helped. Elizabeth was among the first English rulers to show that as important as *actions* can be, no less important are *inactions*. Silence on an issue and refusal to persecute or enforce shows at least as much about the design or priorities of the authority as does active enforcement or doing of some sort. Because of Elizabeth's clever manoeuvring and her immense good fortune, Parliament passed her proposed Act of Supremacy 1559, requiring all government officials to swear allegiance to the sovereign as the supreme governor or risk being removed from or ineligible for office; the heresy Acts so championed by Mary were repealed, in order to avoid persecution of dissidents that Mary had so fervently pursued.

Simultaneously, Elizabeth championed a new Act of Uniformity, rendering mandatory church attendance and the use of a new version of the Book of Common Prayer (1552). Under this new Act, the punishments for recusancy or the failure to attend church and comply with Elizabeth's religious laws were scaled down in severity.

The Virgin Queen

Some of the advantages that Elizabeth's "virgin" status in the public imagination conferred upon her have been mentioned, but another advantage became evident only gradually over time. By postponing marriage until the point that it stopped becoming a chip she could credibly play, Elizabeth could hold foreign and domestic suitors at bay. This was an essential element in Elizabeth's foreign policy. The suitors had an incentive to cooperate with Elizabeth, sometimes with each other and always with England. Thus, Elizabeth entertained marriage negotiations, alongside her own personal love life (mainly with her childhood sweetheart Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester as she herself later created him).

In 1559, upon finding herself on the throne, Elizabeth incurred her former brother-in-law Philip II's wrath by turning down his proposal of marriage. To stoke internal dissension among the Habsburgs, Elizabeth flirted with marriage

negotiations between herself and Philip's cousin Archduke Charles of Austria. By 1569, however, Elizabeth's relations with the Habsburg dynasty had worsened. In order to stay in the game, Elizabeth considered marriage to two French princes of the House of Valois: first Henry (whom Elizabeth endearingly referred to as her "Frog Prince"), Duke of Anjou, and second, his brother Francis, Duke of Anjou, the erstwhile Duke of Alençon. The Francis, Duke of Anjou, proposal had to do with a possible alliance against Spanish control of the southern part of the Netherlands. None of this was surprising then since marriage alliances for monarchs concerned only dynastic considerations; love and attraction traditionally had a limited role to play.

In 1563 Elizabeth is reported to have told a foreign ambassador, "If I follow the inclination of my nature, it is this: beggar-woman and single, far rather than queen and married." If she did in fact say this, it is unclear if she said so in order to raise the market price of some Prince's getting her hand in marriage, or whether it was actually her genuine view on marriage. When Parliament exhorted her to marry in 1566 (upon her convening Parliament only because she needed Parliament to raise revenues by taxation), Elizabeth said, "I will never break the word of a prince spoken in public place, for my honour's sake. And therefore I say again, I will marry as soon as I can conveniently, if God take not him away with whom I mind to marry, or myself, or else some other great let happen."

Notice the flexibly-placed hedging word, "conveniently." The truth was that by 1559 it was abundantly clear to everyone at court that Robert Dudley was at the very epicenter of Elizabeth's romantic life. Even if she did marry, he would remain there. Elizabeth remained irritated with each of his wives, and when she died almost 20 years after Dudley's death, among her most private possessions was a letter from Dudley.

However, there was one obvious problem with having a “Virgin Queen”. Throughout the early years of Elizabeth's reign, the succession issue came close to becoming the succession crisis. In 1563, after Elizabeth had almost died from smallpox but managed to survive due to what at the time was practically a miracle, her senior ministers as well as Parliament urged Elizabeth to marry or to select an heir that Parliament could then ratify. England was not yet free from the memories of the Wars of the Roses or the post-Henry VIII succession

traumas. Still, Elizabeth was unwilling to follow either course of operation. Her logic was that just as her own very existence had been a threat to Mary, the nomination of a successor would similarly imperil Elizabeth's own life and throne. She would let history take its course, and eventually the son of Mary, Queen of Scots, King James I of England (James VI of Scotland) would succeed Elizabeth and unite the two competitive neighbors's crowns. The Tudor line that Henry VIII was so frantically desperate to keep alive with a male heir would die with his daughter.

A Challenge to Elizabeth’s Throne

Elizabeth may also have been warned by the reckless behavior of her rival for the English Crown, her own second cousin once removed, Mary, Queen of Scots, of the Stuart dynasty. Mary was the grand-daughter of Margaret Tudor, Henry VIII's sister. This made Mary a claimant to the English Crown as well. Moreover, her Catholicism made Mary the true and rightful Queen of England in the eyes of many Catholics and The Vatican. Mary's first marriage to the Dauphin of France had made her the queen consort of France, but his early death and their lack of issue had made it untenable for Mary Stuart to remain in France. Upon returning to Scotland, she married her cousin and gave birth to James VI. Mary Stuart, exhorted by her Catholic supporters, had claimed Elizabeth's crown.

Mary, Queen of Scots This fact, coupled by the realization that several

English Catholics, especially rebels active in the Rising of the North movement, supported Mary Stuart ardently made Elizabeth I uneasy. But Mary Stuart did not help herself when she married James Hepburn, 4th Earl of Bothwell, who had raped her. The Scottish people rebelled, and Mary abdicated and fled southwards towards England. Elizabeth I was unsure at first what to do with Mary, so Elizabeth kept her imprisoned in several castles and manor houses inside England (making escape difficult and thus unlikely). After 18 years and 9 months in Elizabeth's custody, it became clear that the situation was becoming untenable mainly due to Catholic efforts on the continent and within England to have Elizabeth I assassinated and to raise Mary Stuart to England's throne after marrying her to the recusant Catholic Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk.

After the Rising of the North rebellion was crushed, Elizabeth had 750 rebels executed. In 1570, Pope Pius V issued a papal bull (*Regnans in Excelsis*), excommunicating the “heretic” “Elizabeth, the pretended Queen of England and the servant of the Devil.” The bull also emancipated all English subjects from loyalty and allegiance to Elizabeth. The bull went further: Catholics who complied with Elizabeth's orders would be excommunicated. However, the bull helped Elizabeth in that it pit England against foreign domination. Great leaders like Elizabeth know how to present a particular set of facts with a favourable spin. This was quintessentially so. Parliament, now incensed, passed laws against Catholics. This gave the mother-protector Elizabeth the chance to look magnanimous by mitigating these punishments.

In 1581, Parliament legislated to prevent the conversion of English subjects to Catholicism, directed with “the intent” to divert them away from being loyal to Elizabeth. Such an act was made a treasonable offense, carrying the ultimate punishment: the death penalty. Even though Elizabeth maintained in public that she did not wish to “make window into men's souls,” terrorism (or what she and her ministers saw as terrorism) was a Kantian “categorical imperative” of an exception.[4]

By some accounts, Elizabeth's spy master and principal secretary Francis Walsingham either trapped Mary or fabricated evidence on high treason charges associated with the plot initiated by Anthony Babington.[5] In 1587, Mary was executed for her involvement in conspiracies to assassinate Elizabeth. Elizabeth is said to have had deep misgivings about executing a fellow sovereign and

thereby setting a pernicious precedent. Nor had Elizabeth forgotten that her own mother, Queen Anne (though only a queen consort and not a queen regnant) had also been executed. Whether the rule of law protected rulers and others under the cover of sovereign immunity was now a dubious question. All this notwithstanding, Elizabeth also began to think that perhaps for a 16th female ruler there was wisdom in ruling and reigning alone, rather than alongside a husband.

Sir Francis Walsingham

Chapter 3: Final Part of Elizabeth’s Reign, 1587-1603

Preserving England

Unlike her father King Henry VIII, Elizabeth had no great ambition of increasing England's continental holdings. Most of her military were used for defense purposes. Part of the reason was that Elizabeth was not very concerned with expansion since preserving England's extant land was difficult enough. Another reason was that England's occupation of Le Havre, France from October 1562-June 1563 had concluded with an English defeat after England's French Protestant allies, the Huguenots, defected. The Huguenots had teamed up with the Catholics in order to re-conquer Le Havre.

Elizabeth had wished to exchange Le Havre for Calais, which she lost to the French in early 1558, but she did build on her father's idea of naval expansion. Through her fleets Elizabeth was able to pursue a more aggressive approach. When the war with Spain came, this strategy proved far more effective, when 80% of the fighting during that conflict took place at sea.

Characteristically, Elizabeth's strategy was subtle and multi-layered. She figured out that she could achieve England's goal of foreign riches while working toward the weakening or capitulation of other European powers if she let her pirates, as private commercial agents, raid foreign ships. By letting privateers do her dirty work, Elizabeth could then claim that her English government ships had been innocent of the deed, maintaining a form of plausible deniability that everyone could see through.

While she technically professed her innocence, Elizabeth did tip her hand in this regard when she knighted Sir Francis Drake upon his global circumnavigation. Drake became famous for his raids on Spain's ships, fleets and even ports (Spanish sovereignty notwithstanding). Elizabeth did play with fire here, and the piracy, along with the execution of Mary Stuart, gave Philip of Spain, as well as Catholic Christendom, a perfect excuse if not imperative to retaliate by attacking England. According to the Spanish and Holy Roman Empire’s ambassadors, even if Elizabeth formally had little control over her seafarers, she did not have to encourage their transgressions.

Sir Francis Drake

Upon losing Le Havre completely by 1563 and until 1585 (a remarkable period lasting more than two decades), Elizabeth I eschewed expeditions on the European continent. In 1585, Elizabeth decided to send her army to help Dutch Protestants against her former brother-in-law Philip. Months earlier, in December 1584, Philip made a strategic alliance with the French Catholic League, which diminished the ability of King Henry III of France to block Spanish and Habsburg control of the Netherlands. The alliance also enhanced Spain's orbit of power over the channel coast of France.

This chain reaction meant that because the Catholic League was particularly potent along the French channel coast, England was now especially vulnerable to invasion. Elizabeth appreciated the strategic importance of what had happened and was incensed. In 1585, the Duke of Parma took Antwerp by siege and put the Dutch as well as Elizabeth on the spot, forcing her into action. Usually a greater believer in diplomacy over military conflicts, Elizabeth signed the Treaty of Nonsuch (1585), requiring her to contribute military support to the Netherlands when their self-defense needs so commanded. Now it was Philip's turn to be incensed. Elizabeth's efforts to keep peace eventually failed, for the Nonsuch Treaty subsequently gave birth to the Anglo-Spanish War. Only in 1604 (after Elizabeth's passing and James I's accession), with the Treaty of London, would this conflict cease to exist.

Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, led this expedition at Elizabeth's behest and in her name. From the very start Elizabeth did have her misgivings. Elizabeth did not mind playing a double game, so long as England and "all my husbands, my good people" were secure. Her delicate strategy, to promote the military interests of the Dutch at least up-front by lending them her troops, while simultaneously holding secret peace discussions with Spain, was completely at odds with Dudley's expectation that Elizabeth was committing all her energies to the Dutch cause. Dudley had been made aware by the Dutch of their expectation to actively fight the Spanish, but Elizabeth had other aims. More than anything, Elizabeth commanded Dudley "to avoid at all costs any decisive action with the enemy." With all these political and diplomatic machinations afoot, Dudley incurred Elizabeth's extraordinary and now-famous wrath when he took the post of Governor-General of the Dutch States-General.

Robert Dudley

The Queen saw through this and deemed this to be a Dutch tactic to compel England to protect the Netherlands by assuming de facto sovereignty over the Netherlands. Elizabeth did not want any more trouble on her hands, and she had studiously been avoiding this move. Being blindsided by Dudley’s action, and now strategically and indirectly being forced to take this step offended her sensibilities greatly. Elizabeth made her annoyance lucid to Dudley, writing him,

“We could never have imagined (had we not seen it fall out in experience) that a man raised up by ourself and extraordinarily favoured by us, above any other subject of this land, would have in so contemptible a sort broken our commandment in a cause that so greatly touches us in honour....And therefore our express pleasure and commandment is that, all delays and excuses laid apart, you do presently upon the duty of your allegiance obey and fulfill whatsoever the bearer hereof shall direct you to do in our name. Whereof fail you not, as you will answer the contrary at your utmost peril.”

Amidst the explosive Netherlands situation came the real test of Elizabeth's reign, by which she would be remembered for centuries. Drake had attacked and humiliated Spanish ports and fleets, including those located in the Caribbean in 1585-86. In 1587, Drake had successfully attacked Cadiz, annihilating Spanish war ships intended by Philip to attack England someday. Now Philip and his Spanish court decided the hour of the Spanish Armada had come.

16th century depiction of the Spanish Armada On July 12, 1588, the legendary Armada started for the English channel. The Spanish plan was to take this invasion, led by the Duke of Parma, to the coast of southeast England, where they would be released to conquer Elizabethan England for the Spanish monarch

and Catholic Christendom. The Armada included over 150 ships, 8,000 sailors and 18,000 soldiers, and it boasted a firepower of 1,500 brass guns and 1,000 iron guns. Just leaving port itself took the entire Armada two days.

As everyone who has been taught history now knows, the Armada was one of the most famous military debacles in history. Now whether it was simple mathematical miscalculation or plain bad luck, coupled with English fire ships assailing the Spanish Armada, the Aramada was defeated – decisively so. The Armada found its reluctant way home in awful conditions, having permanently lost over one third of the ships. On the Irish coast, the Armada had suffered further losses. Not yet knowing what had happened to the Armada, internal English gentry and militias sought to secure and protect England under Dudley's leadership. This is when Elizabeth I consolidated even further her image as mother-protector of her people. Inspecting her troops, long and to this day a regal tradition, at Tilbury on August 8, 1588, Elizabeth looked like a Greco-Roman war god. Adorned with a silver breastplate, she famously spoke: My loving people, we have been persuaded by some that are careful of our safety, to take heed how we commit ourself to armed multitudes for fear of treachery; but I assure you, I do not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people ... I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a King of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any Prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm.

Elizabeth was hailed as a great savior of England, one who was willing to risk her own life to protect her children and her kingdom. In actuality, Elizabeth's luck had not been insignificant, but her preparations had also been immaculate, and indeed her pageantry had paid off. The monarch's procession to a service of thanksgiving at St Paul's Cathedral further solidified public support. Moreover, the vanquishing of the Armada became an unbelievably potent propaganda tool to warn away other sovereigns and kingdoms looking at England with desire.

This famous portrait of Elizabeth commemorates her victory over the Armada The Armada's defeat was for Elizabeth and for England's Protestants a powerful triumph. Rightly or wrongly, the English people including many of Elizabeth's Catholic subjects who did not relish the idea of Spanish rule interpreted this victory as a manifestation of Divine favour and of England's sacrosanct status under its virgin ruler. In this, as intimated earlier, Elizabeth was playing on pre-Christian legends about the inherent sanctity and purity of virgins.

What was ignored in the middle of the celebrations was that the Anglo-Spanish War did continue and would continue until 1604. In reality, on the facts it seems that this conflict often did favour Spain. After all, the Spanish retained the Netherlands, thus hanging the scepter of possible invasion from that side. Another pirate, Sir Walter Raleigh, advanced the argument that, regardless of Elizabeth's grand and eloquent speech at Tillbury, it was her careful planning

and subtle strategy that had stopped another full-scale war with Spain, stating, "If the late queen would have believed her men of war as she did her scribes, we had in her time beaten that great empire in pieces and made their kings of figs and oranges as in old times. But her Majesty did all by halves, and by petty invasions taught the Spaniard how to defend himself, and to see his own weakness." Elizabeth, it seemed, did not trust her generals all that greatly, Dudley being such an example. Elizabeth, for her part, claimed that once entrusted to fight on foreign shores her generals had a proclivity "to be transported with an haviour of vainglory." Of the Earl of Essex, Elizabeth wrote: “Where he is, or what he doth, or what he is to do, we are ignorant.”

Managing Foreign Affairs

It is very interesting to observe Elizabeth's actions when Henry IV, a Protestant, came to the French throne in 1589. Of course Philip and the Catholic League challenged Henry's right to reign, and Elizabeth was indeed concerned about Spain acquiring the channel ports. Furthermore, England's later campaigns in France were messy and fruitless. Elizabeth's army of 4,000 men basically trekked around the northern part of France and produced nothing. This retinue, after halving down to 2,000 men, finally withdrew in December 1589. In 1591, another campaign (consisting of 3000 men) also was an English catastrophe. Elizabeth's fallacy lay in part in the fact that she refused to appropriate adequate funds for the supplies and reinforcements needed by the troops. An army of the Catholic League almost entirely destroyed an Elizabethan army in north-west France in 1591.

Given her opposition from the Spanish and Catholic League, Elizabeth tentatively approached France even though she was still seething from the Le Havre debacle in 1563. In July 1591, Elizabeth sent yet another army in order to aid Henry IV in laying siege to Rouen, but this too was a disaster. Henry IV gave up the siege in April 1592. In short, this French campaign too was an Elizabethan disaster, much like Le Havre twenty years ago.

Elizabeth was queen of Ireland, but its predominantly Catholic population naturally put up resistance, and Ireland always represented the threat of defecting over to the continental Catholics or to give them aid and comfort. Elizabeth's strategy was to allocate and grant vast estates to her cherished courtiers, thus

stopping the rebels from lending Spain, Parma or other continental Catholics a military or economic base from which Elizabeth's England could be attacked. Whenever rebellions took place, Elizabethan armies swiftly were dispatched to engage in scorched-earth warfare. Sometimes they went to so far as to annihilate entire town populations by murder or starvation. One extreme case of the latter took place in the aftermath of a Munster revolt, when approximately 30,000 Irish people were killed by starvation. While the more appealing side of Elizabeth, possibly wisdom inherited from her grandfather, led her to require that the Irish be treated humanely, she seemed unfazed when the exact opposite happened. In Elizabeth’s mind, this was an unavoidable cost of doing business in that era. By 1602, after several failed attempts, the Irish revolt was crushed, though Elizabeth did not live to see the final surrender of the rebel leader. Soon thereafter, Spain and England would become signatories to a relatively long-lasting peace treaty.

Elizabeth maintained friendly relations with Tsarist Russia, a relationship begun by her deceased half-brother Edward VI. Tsar Ivan IV wanted an ironclad military alliance, but Elizabeth would only go so far as engaging Russia in a commerce and navigation treaty. Elizabeth had done something similar with the Barbary States; she had "agreed to sell munitions supplies to Morocco, and she and Mulai Ahmad al-Mansur talked on and off about mounting a joint operation against the Spanish." Even in the most necessary of times, Elizabeth preferred not to enter into a standing military arrangement with any other power. Ad hoc military entanglements were the furthest she usually was willing to go. Ivan IV even sought asylum in England, should his nobles and/or serfs rebel and fight him off the throne, and once proposed to Elizabeth I. Neither request was granted.

When Ivan IV was succeeded by his son Feodor, England's position in Russia became more precarious. Exclusive or almost-exclusive English trading rights in Russia were no longer acknowledged, and the English emissaries were ejected from the Russian court. Now at her wit's end, Elizabeth finally put forth the proposal of an Anglo-Russo military alliance, something she had up until now opposed, but Feodor rejected such an alliance. Even a great sovereign sometimes had to be flexible. As part of her deliberations with the Ottoman Empire, Elizabeth exported tin and lead and ammunitions to the Ottomans. Moreover, believing in the aphorism that an enemy's enemy is one's friend, Elizabeth actually pondered over the prospect of a collective military operation with the

Ottoman Emperor Murad III when war with Spain came about in 1585. Catholics on the continent, notably Spain, were terribly alarmed. Murad and Elizabeth capitalized on this point by signing in 1580 a Treaty of Commerce and by conspicuously suggesting that Islam and Protestantism had “much more in common than either did with Roman Catholicism, as both rejected the worship of idols.”[6]

After defeating the Spanish Armada, Elizabeth still faced harsh problems. The Spanish and Irish militaristic engagements continued wreaking havoc, the tax imposition grew deeper and deeper, and inadequate harvests and war costs were taking a deleterious toll on England's economy. Prices and inflation increased, while standard of living decreased. For the first time in her reign, Elizabeth began to crack down on Catholic dissidents, probably because the external environment was so ripe for papal representatives and disloyal Catholic subjects to cause insurrections in the name of religion. In 1591, Elizabeth created secret commissions to target and interrogate Catholics.

To keep up appearances about prosperity and tranquillity, Elizabeth allowed spies and the propaganda machine to churn out convenient versions of reality. In her declining years, Elizabeth had lost much of her earlier cachet, and a casual corruption had seeped into her government. Much of the reason for this corruption was that Elizabeth, now nearing her 70th year, was unable to keep up with governmental intricacies, and she enabled her senior ministers to do much more of the governing than she once had. By the 1590s, a new generation of ministers ruled the Elizabethan court. Rival factions (particularly Earl of Essex and Robert Cecil, son of Lord Burghley), whom Elizabeth once had been quite competent to hold at bay, now contended with each other and jockeyed for control.

Portrait of Elizabeth circa 1600

In these final years, Elizabeth I could not summon the energies to wage external war as well as war with Parliament whenever she needed to raise revenue. Consequently, she began to grant, with greater frequency than ever before, monopolies instead of asking Parliament for subsidies. She saw this alternative as a costless way to gain patronage. The practical effects were artificial price-fixing, the enrichment of Elizabeth's senior ministers from public moneys, and of course public vilification of the system. Elizabeth, master politician to the last, spoke to Parliament in November 1601 on this issue. She pleaded ignorance of the details of the issue and made an emotive plea, “Who

keeps their sovereign from the lapse of error, in which, by ignorance and not by intent they might have fallen, what thank they deserve, we know, though you may guess. And as nothing is more dear to us than he loving conservation of our subjects' hearts, what an undeserved doubt might we have incurred if the abusers of our liberality, the thrallers of our people, the wringers of the poor, had not been told us!" As usual, Elizabeth's pleas worked.

The Elizabethan Era

Not everything was doom and gloom, however. No matter how turbulent her reign may be viewed, given all the fighting with the Spanish and the manner in which she had even become Queen, what made (and continues to make) people so nostalgic for the Elizabethan Era is that this uncertain epoch also was the era of unrivaled cultural and literary development in English history. Indeed, around the beginning of Elizabeth's third decade as monarch, John Lyly's *Euphues* and Edmund Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender* were published to much critical (and some public) acclaim. At the end of Elizabeth's reign (during the 1590s), Shakespeare and Marlowe had come into their own. In the theatre world, the Jacobean era during which the theatre arts in England reached their very apex and which followed the Elizabethan one was also the result of the latter.

Elizabeth patronized these art forms and artists, though not as greatly as some have assumed. Nonetheless this misimpression too was a result of Elizabeth's stature and the fundamental political truism that the authority in charge receives the credit and the blame (fairly or unfairly). In Spenser's poetry, Elizabeth became immortalized as the perennially young "Faerie Queene"; others called her "Gloriana." Despite the fact that Elizabeth had in fact become half-bald during her small-pox ailment in 1562 (the same one that gave rise to the fear of a succession crisis should the young queen die), she used make-up and glamour to her extreme advantage.

Epilogue

Queen Elizabeth I of England died on March 24, 1603 at Richmond Palace. Though she had put Mary, Queen of Scots to death, her unmarried and childless status left no Tudor to follow her. Thus, she was succeeded by her rival Mary Stuart's son James, whose reign united the two kingdoms of England and Scotland.[7] All British monarchs have since descended from James.

Whether her reign remains such a fount of celebration -- even the Victorian age, not just the current Queen's reign, was compared with Elizabeth I's imperial majesty and success -- because of her immense good luck or her actual skill is perhaps a question never to be answered with complete satisfaction. What role poor leadership by subsequent kings played in making subjects nostalgic and interested in a revival of the Elizabethan Era is also unclear but certainly a factor. Nonetheless, Elizabeth I fits Shakespeare's description of Cleopatra (*Antony and Cleopatra*, II.ii.225–245): "Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale / Her infinite variety: other women cloy / The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry / Where most she satisfies."

One chronicler described Elizabeth I's Westminster Abbey funeral in these terms: Westminster was surcharged with multitudes of all sorts of people in their streets, houses, windows, leads and gutters, that came out to see the obsequy, and when they beheld her statue lying upon the coffin, there was such a general sighing, groaning and weeping as the like hath not been seen or known in the memory of man.[8]

Regardless of what credit she ultimately deserved, Elizabeth was remembered by contemporaries as an amazing figure, and she continues to be well regarded today. In the midst of the fighting with Spain, Pope Sixtus V remarked, "She is only a woman, only mistress of half an island, and yet she makes herself feared by Spain, by France, by the Empire, by all." As Elizabeth herself noted, “The love of my people hath appeared firm, and the devices of my enemies frustrate.”

Mastering the game in a man’s world, Elizabeth had positioned England to become Great Britain. Henry VIII had desperately sought royal stability with an heir, and it would undoubtedly have shocked him to watch Elizabeth provide it through a 44 year reign that united her subjects. The mother-protector had paved the way for Great Britain to become a global superpower that would dominate geopolitics for centuries.

Queen Victoria

Chapter 1: Victoria's Early Years

Princess Victoria at 4 years old. Portrait by Stephen Poyntz Denning On May 24, 1819, Alexandrina Victoria was born in Kensington Palace, London, to Edward Augustus, Duke of Kent [Edward Kent], and his wife Marie Luise Victoria, of Saxe-Coburg—Saalfeld, Princess of Leiningen, Duchess of Kent [Victoria Kent], a German aristocrat. This was Victoria Kent's second marriage; from her first marriage to Charles, Prince of Leiningen, in the German Empire she had already had two children named Carl Friedrich Wilhelm Emich, Prince of Leiningen and Princess Anna Feodora Auguste Charlotte Wilhelmine.

In order to understand Queen Victoria's life, it is important to understand the circumstances of her birth and upbringing. Princess Victoria was born into a family at war with itself and everyone else. They had been hemorrhaging power

in the United Kingdom since the year 1714, when the German dynasty of the Hanoverians (the lower House of Wettin) succeeded to the British throne through King George I, a direct ancestor to Victoria. Her paternal grandfather King George III, known somewhat impertinently as the Mad King George III (which is still the subject of much historical fiction even in modern times) had gone insane, a possibility that would plague Victoria throughout her life. Especially during Queen Victoria's post-natal depressions, doctors as well as her family would suspect that the genetic disease had got hold of her. Little did they know that George III had had porphyria, whereas Victoria's condition was quite different indeed.

King George III It might be said that Princess Alexandrina Victoria was even conceived to be Queen; at the time there was a palpable succession crisis in Britain. Victoria's first cousin and heiress presumptive, Princess Charlotte suddenly died in childbirth late in 1817. Charlotte's son was stillborn, and whether out of love for the late Princess or just out of a sense of national loss Britain went into mourning. George III's other sons, who were unmarried, raced to the altar to father an heir to the throne of Great Britain. Since the Prince of Wales, Prince Regent for the incapacitated George III, was separated from his lawful wife, the future Queen Caroline, there was no chance of a legal successor there. In order to incentivize the Georgian brothers to sire an heir, the bribe from Crown and Parliament was that their heavy debts – resultant from their Hanoverian excess – would be cancelled. Of course, from the days of George I the Hanoverian throne was bound up with the British one. The problem now was that Hanover, like most of the Continent at the time, had Salic law, meaning that women could not succeed to the Hanoverian throne. Thus, Victoria's uncle Ernest Augustus I, a son of George III, became King of Hanover, and the two thrones now diverged.

Even though another son of King George III, William IV, the Duke of Clarence (who would reign over Britain during 1830-37), did marry a minor German aristocrat, none of their children lived very long. After William was Edward Kent, who in rather a dastardly move (and yet preservative of ancestral ambitions) discarded his long-suffering mistress and married the German widowed duchess Victoria. Having had two children in her first marriage, she had given evidence of her fertility, so the risk of infertility was lower than it otherwise might have been. Of course, competition between the brothers and securing Parliamentary approval was high on the agenda, so the new Duchess of Kent needed to come to England. Debt problems made it difficult for Edward Kent to pay for the Duchess's safe passage, but eventually he managed to convey his court across the English Channel to Britain. At Kensington Palace, London (the palace that would eventually become the home of Princess Margaret and of Diana, Princess of Wales), Princess Alexandrina Victoria was born on 24 May 1819. The Prince Regent was unhappy with his brother Edward Kent and initially was unwilling to give him these grace-and—favour apartments. Princess Victoria was christened a month later.

This was an age of protocol where position, rank and etiquette mattered for

their own sakes, authentic purposes notwithstanding. Since the Russian tsar Alexander I was young Victoria's godfather in absentia (a common phenomenon among the closely-related royal houses of Europe), the name "Alexandrina" was available. But the recalcitrant, though not necessarily contrary, young princess insisted on being called by her middle name of Victoria.

On January 23, 1820, Edward Kent died, leaving young Princess Victoria to be controlled and dominated by her mother the Duchess of Kent, who was emotionally and possibly romantically beholden to her Irish advisor Sir John Conroy. Conroy and the Duchess wished fervently for a Regency should King William IV, whose heir the young princess Victoria now was, happen to die before Victoria's 18th birthday. The King knew of the Conroy-Duchess aspirations, and he had no intention to submitting to the wishes of his ornery sister-in-law, the Duchess of Kent.

Conroy Victoria would come to view her childhood years as “rather melancholy" due to the domineering ways of her mother and Conroy, who sought to use the heiress’s prestige and young age to boost Conroy’s personal

fortunes. Even as a teenager, however, Victoria proved precocious, even as she was isolated from contacting those who were out of favour with her mother and Conroy. At the same time, the Duchess often made sure she and Victoria stayed away from the King's court because it was populated by his illegitimate children, which was a norm for the period but frowned upon by the Duchess. Even here, the subsequently Victorian theme of strict morality was evident.

Princess Victoria, 1833

Chapter 2: Albert

Despite the protective (or oppressive) nature of her mother, as the young princess grew older she naturally became more interested in suitors, of which there were obviously many. Victoria's uncle Leopold, King of the Belgians, sought to match his 17 year old niece to his other nephew (and Victoria's first cousin), Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. Meanwhile, King William IV wanted the heiress to his throne to marry Prince Alexander of the Netherlands, the second son of the Prince of Orange.

Despite the machinations of the men, Victoria had her own opinions, which she shared with her diary. In it, the princess wrote that Albert "is extremely handsome; his hair is about the same colour as mine; his eyes are large and blue, and he has a beautiful nose and a very sweet mouth with fine teeth; but the charm of his countenance is his expression, which is most delightful." Conversely, Victoria characterized Alexander as "very plain". She later wrote to her uncle Leopold to thank him "for the prospect of great happiness you have contributed to give me, in the person of dear Albert ... He possesses every quality that could be desired to render me perfectly happy. He is so sensible, so kind, and so good, and so amiable too. He has besides the most pleasing and delightful exterior and appearance you can possibly see."

Albert, 1842

Marriage was not quite on the horizon in 1836, but a coronation was. On 20 June, 1837, the former Princess wrote in her diary, "I was awoke at 6 o'clock by Mamma, who told me the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Conyngham were here and wished to see me. I got out of bed and went into my sitting-room (only in my dressing gown) and alone, and saw them. Lord Conyngham then acquainted me that my poor Uncle, the King, was no more, and had expired at 12 minutes past 2 this morning, and consequently that I am Queen."

Upon succeeding to the throne of the United Kingdom, Victoria began to exert her newfound powers immediately. One of her first orders of business was to keep Conroy away from her, consigning him to the Duchess’s house and keeping him out of the new queen’s hair. In her early years, Victoria proved stubborn and willful, attributes not encouraged in a constitutional monarch and certainly not in a female constitutional monarch in the early 19th century. Moreover, it didn’t take long for the young queen to make her mark by bringing down the government of Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel down in what is now known as the "Bedchamber Crisis."

In 1839, Victoria's favorite Prime Minister, Viscount Melbourne, had resigned after Radicals and Tories voted against a Bill to suspend the constitution of Jamaica. This particular Bill took political power away from plantation owners who were resisting measures to abolish slavery in Jamaica. Peel had taken power; now the Queen was obstructing a traditional change at court. The Queen refused to give up her ladies of the bedchamber and gave what were perceived as petty slights to those whom she did not like. Many politicians and court advisors counselled Queen Victoria to marry, not for her own happiness necessarily but because a husband would rule over her unpredictable spirit and would help secure succession. A woman ruler at the time was not safe unless she could produce progeny.

As noted earlier, the royal houses of Europe were joined by blood and marriage. Victoria's mother and her brothers – one of whom, King Leopold I of Belgium, had been the husband of the illfated Princess Charlotte -- wished to keep the royal marriage with Princess Victoria within the family. Moreover, there just were not enough Protestant sovereigns, princes or grand dukes for Victoria to choose from. Victoria personally did interview many of them, which inherently was a revolutionary and ground-breaking move for a woman, even a ruler. Through it all, however, Victoria remained enamored with Albert. The Queen was bowled over by Albert's good looks and shy charm; indeed, she would retain this love for masculine beauty all through her life. She was also impressed by Albert's seriousness and meticulousness. For his part, Albert had endured a miserable childhood and family life, and it’s possible he saw in the impressionable, intellectually inferior young British Queen a person to be molded to his better liking. Ironically, Victoria had Albert’s education on her mind too, as she envisioned he would have to learn the proper protocols and ceremonial duties necessary of his position.

The Queen proposed – again, protocol dictated that no one could propose to her because of her rank – and they were married in February 1840. While it is true that there was enormous family pressure (especially from Leopold) for Victoria to marry Albert, she probably would have done so anyway. The Queen insisted that she would promise to “obey” Albert in her wedding vows. Even though she was the Queen Regnant, at home Victoria wanted Albert to be “master” and boss.

The marriage of Victoria and Albert, by George Hayter

However, this had its limits. It was at *home* and in *private* matters where Albert was boss, but all government and constitutional roles were Victoria's and hers alone. Victoria also had the keen political sense to realize that Albert's German roots would not play well among politicians, the British aristocracy or the people if Albert were allowed to meddle in politics, even slightly. At first, Albert only wielded the blotting paper as she signed official documents. Prince Consort Albert had always been persuaded to marry Victoria by his uncle Leopold, the carrot and prize being the great laboratory of England Albert would receive to execute his ideas through Victoria. He was therefore unhappy about his lack of job and status, for he too realized his intellectual potential and that this secretarial work was rather a waste of his talents.

Nevertheless, his primary function was to ensure the succession, which oddly enough offered him the chance to take a more hands-on role in things. When Victoria became so significantly pregnant that she could no longer maintain a

ceremonial presence, Albert assumed her functions. There are those who argue that had Albert not died in his early 40’s, he might have become something of a dictator. The Queen always had this importunate need to balance her maternal and wife role with her role of sovereign, a juggling act that sometimes got the better of her. After nine children in their first 16 years of marriage, Albert had established himself as her primary adviser, often drafting memoranda that she recopied in her own hand and signed.

Albert’s abilities were so noteworthy and undeniable that even the curmudgeon Duke of Wellington invited Albert to become chief of the army. This might have been Albert’s great chance to affect public affairs, but he declined the offer, explaining that he had to subsume his ambitions in the interests of the Crown. Albert was successful in helping Victoria organize her work and efforts, to such an extent that Victoria would feel most helpless without him. From May 1 to October 15, 1851, Victoria would be immensely proud of Albert’s Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London. Its motive force was to foster significant change, with light streaming through its 293,655 panes of glass. *Six million visitors* came to see it, an extraordinary number at any time but especially in that era considering the geographical difficulties and the fact that was almost a third of the entire British population at the time. Charlotte Brontë wrote to her father, "Whatever human industry has created, you will find there."

Albert had the imagination to realize that the Hanoverian ancestors of Victoria had well-nigh sapped all the political power out of the monarchy, and that the real governors were now the Parliament. As a result, the validity and legitimacy of the Crown were dependent, exclusively, on the moral stature of the monarchy and the Crown’s ability to encourage the arts and sciences. The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations was characterized as such: "Large, piled-up ‘trophy’ exhibits in the central avenue revealed the organizers’ priorities; they generally put art or colonial raw materials in the most prestigious place. Technology and moving machinery were popular, especially working exhibits." Everything from the Indian Koh-i-Noor diamond to Samuel Colt’s revolver to new daguerreotypes were on display there, and Victoria gave a speech that even moved Albert himself. Still, not everyone was pleased with the impressive (and excessive) displays.[9]

During the Crimean War (1853-54), when the couple, especially Prince Albert,

were suspected very falsely of Russian sympathies, this Victoria-Albert dual governance arrangement worked well.[10] Because the royal houses of Europe were joined, England in any case was evolving, after the first Reform Bill (1832), into a constitutional monarchy, with the sovereign's powers becoming symbolic rather than legislative. The authority of the throne now rested more and more in popular respect for its occupant.

However, the arrangement ended abruptly when Albert, died in December 1861 of what was very likely stomach cancer. His physicians called it typhoid, but no other cases existed in the area, rendering that diagnosis suspect. Victoria was inconsolable by his death, and though Albert was aware that he had been suffering from an inoperable ailment, Victoria just could not understand it because her own constitution was so hearty and strong. His wife’s mourning would last 13 years and would almost bring the monarchy down. Disparaging signs such as “To Let” would be hung from the railings and gates of Buckingham Palace at the absence of the Queen from public life.

Victoria’s mourning and depression were not even a secret, and the queen referred to her feelings in a letter to American First Lady Mary Lincoln after the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln in April 1865. "No one can better appreciate than I can, who am myself utterly broken-hearted by the loss of my own beloved Husband, who was the Light of my Life,—my Stay—my All, —What your sufferings must be...." The widowed Lincoln would write back, "I have received the letter which Your Majesty has had the kindness to write., I am deeply grateful for this expression of tender sympathy, coming as they do, from a heart which from its own sorrow, can appreciate the intense grief I now endure."

Chapter 3: The Queen's Children

Before Albert died in 1861, the couple had given birth to nine children, and over the course of her long reign and her children's marriages, Victoria would earn the moniker "grandmother of Europe".

Albert, Victoria, and the children

Princess Victoria Adelaide Mary Louise (1840-1901) was the daughter whom the Queen probably *admired* the most. She married Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia in 1858, who became the emperor of Germany but died after only three months of cancer of the larynx. He and Empress Victoria had shared a great, almost "English" instinct for liberalizing the stuffier Prussian imperial court in Germany. Indeed, this is why Victoria and Albert had arranged the match. Their eldest son became Wilhelm II of Germany (also known as Kaiser Bill of World War I), who became a most illiberal monarch and eventually led Germany to war *against* Britain in 1914. This contrast of intentions and reality — between Victoria and Albert's diplomatic ambitions and what actually transpired — caused tension and the dismantling of relations within the extended Royal Family, and it ultimately led to the renunciation of all German titles by Wilhelm's prickly British cousin King George V (Queen Elizabeth II's formidable paternal grandfather). Queen Victoria's favorite grandson was Wilhelm.

Queen and Princess Victoria, 1844

Princess Victoria had eight children in total. Her daughter Sophie went on to marry a Greek Prince and later became Queen of Greece. Princess Victoria passed away on August 5, 1901, of cancer, only eight months after the death of Queen Victoria.

Next came the child Victoria probably *despised* the most, a harsh but accurate assessment. **Prince Albert** (known as “Bertie” within the family) became King Edward VII in 1901 after Victoria’s passing. From the beginning, Victoria and Albert imposed a strict regime upon their eldest son, but he had a rather creative

and imaginative mind. Thus it should not have come as any surprise that he rebelled through over-indulgence in food, drink, women, gambling and sport. Victoria always blamed Bertie for the Prince Consort's death because the Prince Consort, upon hearing of young Bertie's sexual intercourse at the age of 19 with a young actress named Nellie Clifton in his military barracks, went to speak to him in Cambridge and got ill on his way there. To be fair, Albert probably died after a long struggle with stomach cancer and not his heartbreak over Bertie, but the Queen, in her irate and inconsolable state, was not interested in details. Nor was medical research advanced enough in those days. Bertie would always get the blame as far as his mother was concerned.

Edward VII in his coronation robes

At the age of 22, Bertie was married to the extremely beautiful but unintelligent Princess Alexandra of Denmark. Like most aristocratic and well-bred women in those days, Alexandra ignored Edward's extramarital affairs, of which there were no small number. Queen Victoria herself was shocked and alarmed that Edward was implicated in several divorce cases, the most infamous one of which concerned Lady Mordaunt. He had six children in total – Albert, George, Louise, Victoria, Maude and John. Maude went onto become the Queen Consort of Norway and George became monarch of the United Kingdom and oversaw British war efforts during World War I.

Princess Alice Maude Mary (1843-1878) was the Queen's third child. When she was 17, Queen Victoria decided it was time for Princess Alice to marry. She personally chose Prince Ludwig and Hesse as an ideal choice for her third daughter. Ludwig went on to become the Grand Duke Louis XIV, and within six months of arranging the introduction, they were married. Unfortunately, the marriage began in the shadow of Prince Albert's death (he had died shortly after arranging the introduction between Alice and Ludwig).

Alice went onto to have seven children – Victoria, Elizabeth, Ernst-Ludwig, Irene, Friedrich Wilheim (Frittie), Alix and Marie. Again, tragedy was to strike with the accidental death of her son Frittie. This loss weighed deeply on Alice and she went through a great depression. She mourned the loss until her own death and always talked about being reunited with Frittie in heaven. Her daughter Alix married Nicholas II, the last Russian tsar, and she would be assassinated along with her husband and children in 1917 by the Bolsheviks, thus ending the Russian royal house of Romanov.

Prince Alfred Ernest Albert (1844-1900) was Victoria and Albert's fourth child. Prince Alfred married the Grand Duchess Marie, daughter of Tsar Alexander II of Russia, and became the Duke of Saxe-Coburg. His eldest daughter Marie married the crown Prince of Romania, who later became King Ferdinand I.

Alfred was probably the most widely travelled of all his brothers and sisters. In fact, he was the first member of the Royal family to visit Australia.

Unfortunately, during his trip in 1868, there was an attempt on his life in Sydney. An Irishman made the attempted assassination, and when it emerged that the would-be assassin was a Catholic, it only helped harden bigotry towards the Irish Catholics. Alfred's mother was to outlive him by a year – his death in 1900 was due to cancer of the throat.

The fifth child born to Victoria and Albert was **Princess Helena Augusta Victoria** (1846-1923). Princess Helena was also known as “Lenchen” in the family. She was born a "blue baby," possibly because her mother was at the height of anxiety over the loss of her first trusted Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel. In 1866, she married Prince Frederick Christian of Schleswig-Holstein. The Queen insisted that Helena and Christian always remain with her and that Helena act as her private secretary. This was a condition before the Queen would consent to the marriage of Helena and Christian.

Princess Louise Caroline Alberta (1848-1939), the sixth child and one of only two of the Queen’s offspring to see the hostilities of World War II against some of her own German cousins, was revolutionary in some ways. Although these days it is acceptable and does not really raise an eyebrow when British royals marry outside the community, as the Prince William-Catherine Middleton wedding demonstrated, back then it was a conversation piece in gossip circles. In 1871, Princess Louise married John Douglas Sutherland Campbell, a commoner who would later become the Duke of Argyll.

Surprisingly, Princess Louise's engagement to John was supported not only by her mother but also by Benjamin Disraeli. Unexpectedly, the match also pleased the British public, which had feared yet another German marriage, which the general population felt had already occurred too often. Her husband became prominent in public life as an MP, and later on he became governor-general of Canada. The couple never had children, but they led an active and, by all accounts, pleasing and mutually satisfactory life together. This was undoubtedly one of the great-unsung royal love matches. When her husband died in 1914, Louise went into mourning and became something of a royal recluse until her own death in 1939 at the age of 91. Unlike Victoria’s for the deceased Albert, Louise’s grief for the departed Argyll was rather a settled resignation, which some might argue is a greater proof of love.

Prince Arthur William Patrick (1850-1942) was the seventh child born to Victoria and the Prince Consort. He married Princess Louise Margarete of Prussia. Arthur felt almost a sense of cosmic destiny that he was to join the armed forces, which he did, and he rose in rank until he was promoted in 1902 to the rank of Field Marshal.

One less-than-ideal fact about Prince Arthur was that he bore an unofficial allegiance to Germany, leading his brother King Edward to transfer him in 1911 to Canada, where he became the Governor General. His younger daughter, Princess Patricia, is well known to Canadians as Lady Patricia Ramsey, and Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry is named after her. Prince Arthur became Grand Master of the Freemasons in 1901 when Edward, who had held that post, succeeded to the throne. He served as Grand Master until his death in 1942.

Prince Leopold George Duncan (1853-1884) was the eighth child born to Queen Victoria. Prince Leopold married the German royal, Princess Helena Frederica of Waldeck, but he was a hemophiliac and died two years after his marriage. He was known for his keen intellectual interests, his education at Oxford, and his befriending Lewis Carroll, John Ruskin and Oscar Wilde. His son became Duke of Saxe-Coburg, would later be declared a “traitor peer” for siding with Germany over the United Kingdom during World War II, and remains to this day rather a blot on the British Royal Family for being a core Nazi supporter of Adolf Hitler who ran the German Red Cross’s extermination program for the mentally ill. Conversely, Prince Leopold’s daughter Alice would go on to be a most beloved member of the British Royal Family into the 1980’s.

Princess Beatrice Mary Victoria (1857-1944) was the youngest child of Victoria and the Prince Consort. The Princess was just four years old when her father passed away, and almost immediately Victoria turned to her youngest child as her only confidante, which must have been a source of inexplicable confusion to the young Princess. Queen Victoria’s rather selfish objective was to keep Beatrice at her side at all times, and she destroyed a potential love match between Beatrice and the French royal Louise Napoleon when Beatrice was just a teenager. Beatrice would not have permission to marry for the next 11 years. Then she would be allowed to wed Prince Henry of Battenberg after much disagreement with the Queen.

The Queen again put on the table the condition that Beatrice and Battenberg live in Britain permanently. Battenberg agreed to the deal, and they married and had children. Beatrice was to pass on the hemophiliac gene to her sons and her daughter, Victoria, who would bring this gene into the royal family of Spain. When Battenberg contracted pneumonia and died, Princess Beatrice remained as a recluse on a cottage on the Isle of Wight estate of her parents. In 1944, amidst World War II, the Princess died after a long battle with rheumatism. Her children would rule Spain and her grandson Lord Louis Mountbatten would be the last Viceroy of India. Princess Beatrice's great-grandson, Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark, would marry Princess Elizabeth (now Elizabeth II), and sire the current Prince of Wales, Prince Charles.

Chapter 4: Changes in Victoria's Empire

As a teenager, Princess Victoria was taken by her mother on a royal progress through the country. Although the Duchess's intention was to avoid attending her hated brother-in-law King William IV's coronation, for the future Queen the trip was a joyous exposure.

Princess Victoria was stunned by the poverty and costs of the industrial revolution then raging in Britain: "The men, women, children, country and houses are all black...," she noted in her diary. "The grass is quite blasted and black." A blast furnace the entourage passed was "an extraordinary building flaming with fire," after which everything continued to be "black, engines flaming, coals, in abundance; everywhere, smoking and burning coal heaps, intermingled with wretched huts and carts and little ragged children."

The future Queen was also moved by the enthusiastic crowds, lengthy welcome addresses by local officials, choirs singing patriotic anthems, and salutes. In 1837, Victoria would comment astonishingly after seeing "the steam carriage pass with surprising quickness, striking sparks as it flew along the railroad, enveloped in clouds of smoke & making a loud noise. It was a curious thing indeed!"

Upon becoming Queen, Victoria allowed herself to be persuaded by Albert's philosophy that fascination with science and technology was desirable and that the Crown had to change with the world. At his request, the Great Western Railway constructed a state carriage for the Queen. On June 14, 1841, the Queen and Prince made their first journey in it (from Slough to London), thus setting a trend for their countrymen to follow. Queen Victoria was "quite charmed," but Albert was concerned that its speed of 50 miles per hour was too fast, even as Lord Melbourne dismissed these worries as absurd. Moreover, Victoria and Albert refused to take the royal barge often and preferred instead to take the new steamship *Trident* when returning from their favourite holiday home, Balmoral. All these changes became part and parcel of Albert's Great Exhibition in 1851.

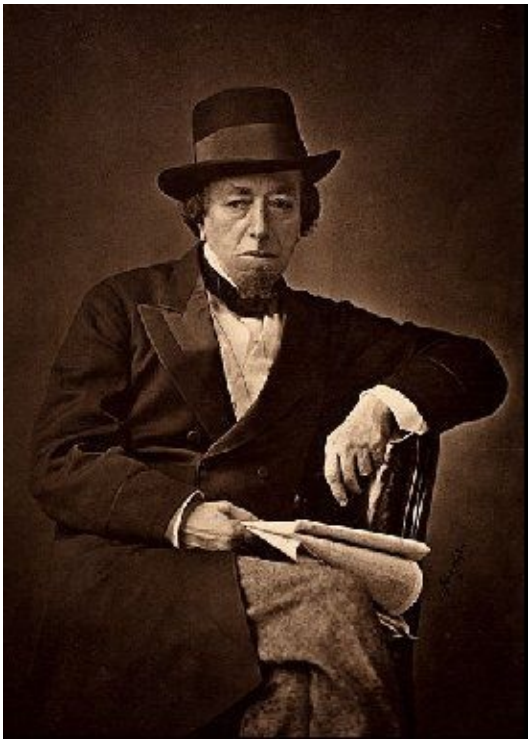
Two wars had already emphasized to Britain the importance of long-distance telegraphic communication: the Crimean War in 1853-54, and the Indian Mutiny

in 1856-57. No royal impetus was needed in those instances. But at Albert's death in 1861, his influence on the Queen, when it came to the engines of progress, ceased. Her attitude toward five later inventions which transformed Britain made that apparent, as she tolerated only three of them. In the later 1870s the typewriter began to revolutionize how people communicated on paper, but the Queen discouraged its use at her court. In January 1878 the Queen allowed Alexander Graham Bell to provide a demonstration of his newly-invented telephone, but her impression was not favorable: “It was faint.” When commercial service began in London in 1879, she refused to allow a telephone in the living quarters in any of her residences. On top of that, electric lighting everywhere at Balmoral created more glare for her than visibility in her last years, as her fading eyes were afflicted by cataracts. She would have none of it in her private quarters at other residences. At her Diamond Jubilee in 1897 she found the electric light “very inefficient.” The interested young woman inspired by her Prince Consort steadily give way to a dowdy, unchangeable older lady.

Chapter 5: The Business of Reigning

The Prince Consort's death altered the monarchy and the Queen irreparably. Victoria was inconsolable for a number of reasons. In addition to being shocked and at a loss, Victoria gradually came to realize that she had depended so long upon Albert's advice and support. With Albert gone, she became unsure she could reign alone.

In those initial years after his death, her long absence almost brought ruin upon her dynasty, and indeed the monarchy has never been *less* popular than it was in the 1870's. Not even during the 1997 shock and disgust over the monarchy's stiff-upper lip response to the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, was there a level of negativity comparable to the 1870s. Victoria's eldest son and heir Bertie, Prince of Wales, was intensely distrusted by his mother, so he was given no duties to cover for his mother's absence from public life. As noted earlier, Bertie's assignation with Nellie Clifton and Albert's shock over the affair, Victoria firmly believed, had caused Albert's death. In turn, this became a self-fulfilling prophecy, and Bertie became a womanizing playboy prince. Bertie almost died of typhoid fever, gaining him and the monarchy much public sympathy. Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, starting in 1874, flattered the Queen into opening Parliament for him and re-engaging herself in her duties.



Disraeli

The highly expensive Indian Mutiny in 1856-57 had led to reorganization of imperial rule in the subcontinent, and upon Victoria's return to visibility in the 1870s she desperately wanted to be acknowledged as “Empress of India.” Disraeli and his Parliament were only too glad to oblige and subsequently conferred this title upon the Sovereign.

The Prince of Wales, eager for a trip to India, to hunt and hold court with the Nawabs, Maharajas, Maharanas and Maharaos, persuaded the Prime Minister to organize a tour. Bertie’s easy charm made the trip a success, and he was an enormous success as an ambassador for the royal family and the monarchy and indeed the nation. On his way home, he found out that his mother, the Queen, had just been styled Empress of India.

Victoria had always been highly vulnerable to male beauty, but after Albert’s death her sex life completely ceased to exist. To help her remember Albert, her advisors brought down from Balmoral to Windsor Albert’s old Scottish gillie John Brown, a straight-talker who sat in on seances to channel the departed Prince Consort for the widowed queen. Brown got away with all as far as the

Queen was concerned, and he is thought to have taught Victoria how to put a nip of Scotch in her tea. Ignoring class and other tools of stratification, Victoria awarded him a medal for loyal service, and when he died of natural causes, the Queen was heartbroken. “If he had been a more ambitious man,” said Sir William Knollys, a member of the household staff, of John Brown, “there is no doubt . . . he might have meddled in more important matters. I presume the family will rejoice at his death, but I think very probably they are shortsighted.” Brown’s death brought Victoria sadness but it did make her public believe, again, that Victoria represented the middle-class values fitting for a national mother.

Chapter 6: Religion and Imperialism

The Victorian era is often given a negative connotation in the 21st century as being too stuffy, but in actuality Puritanism contradicted Victoria's lively character. After all, Victoria was queen in a transition that saw Britain's monarch become more of a figurehead than a ruler, and with that she worked to position the monarchy as a ceremonial caretaker who oversaw cultural customs and the like. Moreover, Victoria and her family had to live highly transparent lives in the equivalent of a fishbowl, making it all the more necessary to come across as personable.

In the same vein, the Victorian era is often considered an era of chaste morality, but Victoria, a true Hanoverian, enjoyed the sensual delights of matrimony, making it prudent for Albert to have a mechanical lock for their bedroom door at Osborne House installed within reach of his pillow. Albert and Victoria did not consider morality an absolute necessity because they were stodgy; they knew that the monarchy, in order to survive, had to set a moral example and be immune to even the potential for scandal. Victoria and Albert fell in love with middle-class Scotland and its Presbyterian values for this very reason, in contrast with English upper-class decadence and debauchery. A classic English aristocrat, Lord Melbourne declared to Victoria and Albert that this "damned morality would undo us all." In 1852, Albert observed, "We had found great advantage in it and were determined to adhere to it." She would write approvingly in 1855 of a sermon at a nearby kirk (Crathie Kirk) in which the sermon was: "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."

Avoiding theological subtleties (which Anglicans were obsessed with), it focused on respectable conduct. Victoria's robust practical sense also admired the fact that this was not for "fourteen percent" Christians (church on Sundays, but no devout conduct the rest of the week), and it was "not a thing only for Sunday." Victoria held Albert's view that slavery should be banned, and in an overtly political move not readily imaginable by royals today Prince Albert, soon after getting married, became president of the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and for the Civilization of Africa, in which he strikingly declared that slavery was "repugnant to spirit of Christianity." That the Christianity that arrived with the missions was a puzzling and culturally alien faith to Africans

and Asians posed no problems to missionaries and the churches that supported them at home, but the Queen gave ambivalent signs as to what she thought of the presence of missionaries in Africa. At the same time, the British government, irrespective of the Prime Minister in office, wanted the missionaries to keep a low profile because deep passions were stirred by religious conversion processes.

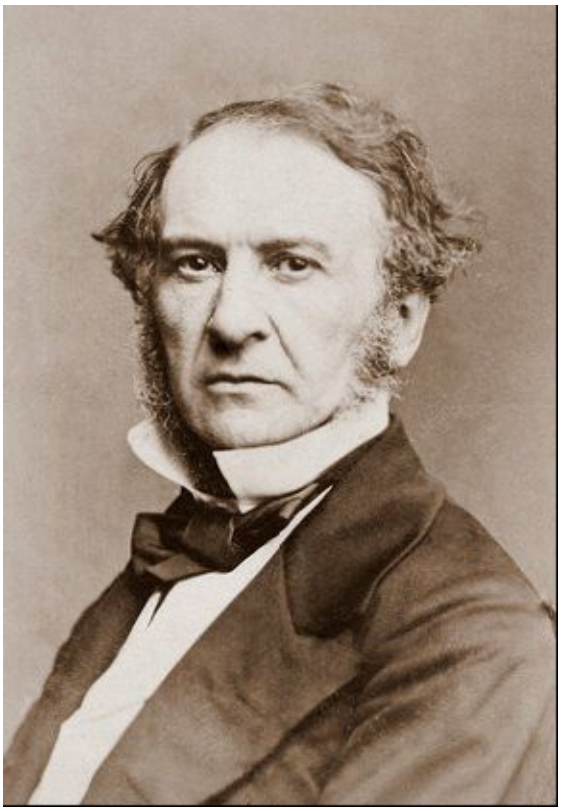
When it came to religious faith, Victoria was always a believer in God and in some form of posthumous spiritual existence, hence the reason she conducted quite a few séances to reach her beloved Albert. In June 1850, when Lord Ashley, later the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, was campaigning against the delivery of the Royal Mail on Sundays, she wrote to a Cabinet minister that she thought it was “a very false notion of obeying God's will, to do what will be the cause of much annoyance and possibly of great distress to private families.” The Queen had fallen back on her practical religiosity. Along similar lines, Victoria vigorously abhorred the Evangelical campaign to ban public band concerts in the parks on Sundays, as she (who loved the arts) believed it was one of the few recreational chances for ordinary people.

The Queen exhibited only a few of the prejudices of her people. She was hostile toward the Papacy and Roman Catholics. She was not at all anti-Semitic, or at least far less so than most of her subjects and courtiers. The only evidence of anti-Semitism that some have come up with is the Queen’s refusal to raise the banker Lionel de Rothschild to a peerage, but this was likely done only because the Queen considered his lending practices to be tantamount to legalized gambling. By the mid-1880’s, Lionel’s son Nathaniel was granted the peerage that Her Majesty had refused his father. The Queen had evolved, if she had ever been dated on the point at all.

Part of the stuffiness of the Victorian court was the Queen’s refusal to allow anyone else to be effusive or sentimental, though she embodied both of these attributes all her life. In fact, after the Prince Consort’s death this reached a crescendo. Victoria detested Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone’s overt piety, as well as his late-night rescue missions to save children and ladies of the night from their own miseries. Gladstone wore his religious and social conscience on his sleeve and walked the streets at night to confront desperate prostitutes, go with them to their rooms, and offer them Bibles and money to

convert to a moral life. The Queen did not appreciate these gestures and required Gladstone to wear a fresh batch of clothes every time he came to see her!

Victoria was also socially conservative enough to consider divorce anathema. Victoria's perspective was so sheltered that she almost refused to approve the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, which criminalized sex offenses against women and raised the age of consent. But it also criminalized acts of "gross indecency", which was a vague term but still offensive to Victoria's sensibilities, as she could not bring herself to believe that "women [could] do such things." The monarchy was important enough at the time in order for the Amendment to be changed to apply only to males, not females.



Prime Minister Gladstone

In May 1856, when Queen Victoria distributed the first Victoria Crosses at Hyde Park to troops who had distinguished themselves in the Crimean War, she was told of the Sepoy Mutiny in India. The chief cause was that British officers had instructed Hindu and Muslim soldiers ("sepoys"/"sipahis") to tear off the hand grenades laced with beef (objectionable to Hindus) and pork (objectionable

to Hindus and to Muslims) fat. Victoria complained of the “cruel suspense” of the probability that much British blood and Indian blood too were going to be shed in India. Victoria was an impatient woman as it was, and the slow transmission of information and details did not help calm her nerves. Victoria kept pushing Prime Minister Lord Palmerston to help secure the “defenseless state” of the United Kingdom in the aftermath of post-Crimea military retrenchments. Suddenly, the tax reduction plan had to be shelved.

More bad news was to come. Word arrived that the commander-in-chief of forces in India, General George Anson, had been murdered by the Indian sepoy rebels; he had in fact died of cholera, though the mutiny was in full force all around the Delhi region in northern India (now known endearingly as the rustic “cow belt”).[11] The Prime Minister quickly sent Sir Colin Campbell to India to fight for Britain. Sir Colin’s government would dethrone “the King of Delhi” (a British term of art to undermine the authority of the Mughal Emperor).

Under Victoria’s watchful eye, the British Empire would slip from business (the East India Company’s merchant control over India) to regency (the British authorities “protecting” the Mughal Emperor in Delhi) to, ultimately, direct rule over India, the brightest jewel in Victoria’s Crown. Victoria had very little idea about how wars are fought and the relevant logistics, and to an extent Albert’s naivete could also be blamed for allowing Victoria to state in so blasé a fashion, “Our troops are sure to remain victorious against the Sepoys in the open field, if numbers be not too disproportionate, if they be not badly led, or physically reduced by sickness or fatigue.” Restating the obvious, again with naivete, the Queen continued by assuring that the hard part would be for Sir Colin “to try to get a proper 'ensemble' into the military movements, and this will hardly be the case unless an army be formed at Calcutta strong enough to operate from thence with certainty upon the parts of the country in revolt.”

Queen Victoria’s note of admonition seemed almost like a mother telling the children in the nursery to play nicely and considerately with the neighbourhood children: “Our military reinforcements, [units] dropping in one by one, run the risk of being cut up by being sent on to relieve the different stray columns in distress.” These issues were insignificant when considering the Prime Minister’s responsibility to the Indian Government. Victoria then argued that Palmerston’s unworried approach did not assuage her concern “that the first [reinforcements]

which were dispatched [other than soldiers deployed in China] will arrive only in October? The time lost in the arrangements . . . brought their departure to July. There will be, therefore, two whole months . . . when the Indian Government will get no relief whatever, while fighting, marching, &c., lose . . . often as much as 500 men in a day." We should not make the mistake of thinking that this manner of royal intervention in the military was acceptable at the time. It was not. Queen Victoria, because of compliant Prime Ministers or the force of her personality or arguments, or a combination of these factors, just got away with it all.

"[T]he magnitude of the crisis," the Queen argued, was too large for the British Government to suddenly economize. Then she stunned Palmerson by stating that "[f]inancial difficulties don't exist; . . . and this appears hardly the moment to make savings on the Army [budget] estimates." She had got him right where she wanted him, and then she recited the laundry list of indignities and failings of Palmerson's government: "mismanagement, incompetence, penuriousness, confused responsibility, and indifference, already the source of national embarrassment in the Crimea," and now the Indian disaster. The East India Company, since the days of the Tudors in the sixteenth century, was exercising its prerogatives under the royal charter. It was now giving up its authority to the Crown and to the Parliament in Westminster. The Company owned land and collected taxes in India and ran the great show that was the British army in India. The Company was eventually appointed an overseer in London and of course the Governor General who was formally a Company employee was really beholden to the Prime Minister.

There is some doubt as to how much Victoria was being told about the situation in India. She was not a cruel or racist woman — she would indulge in Indian habits and would import Indian man-servants, most notably the servant Abdul, who would install a "Durbar Room" at her Osborne House residence — but her outbursts in favour of crushing the mutiny with a take-no-prisoners approach gives today's readers some pause and perhaps consternation. In December 1857, when the mutiny was decisively crushed, the Queen wrote to Lady Canning, the Governor-General's wife, "Thank God! Lucknow is saved!"

Was it? Thousands upon thousands of Indians as well as British officers and their families were killed. Villages were ransacked. And in its wake, a post-

French Revolution guillotine-type atmosphere, which saw the hanging of everyone from princes to ordinary Indians, was set up. Even the favorite sons of the last Mughal Emperor were killed for treason — a curious charge since "treason" can only be against a legitimate authority and the British had never, out of convenience, previously argued that they were the authorities running India.

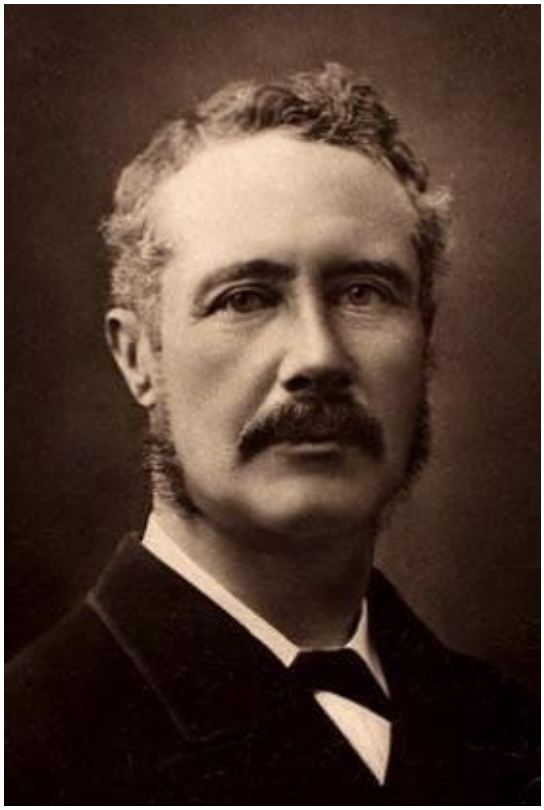
Parliamentary legislation to co-opt India through a Viceroy received Victoria's assent on August 2, 1858. The jubilant Queen wrote to Lord Canning, upon whom she conferred an earldom, that this change on behest of "that enormous Empire which is so bright a jewel of her Crown" was indeed "a source of great satisfaction and pride." In 1869, Victoria would authorize the Government to purchase the Suez Canal from the Emir of Cairo, by borrowing from Baron de Rothschild. This subcontinent would endure a messy carve-up in 1947, when the British would leave for good. Communal tension, mainly between Muslims and Hindus, had always been rife and complicated. In 1947, two arms of British India would be cut off and would become Pakistan for the Muslims and a secular India for everyone (including Muslims). In 1971, Pakistan itself would be carved up into the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (to the west) and the Bengali-speaking Bangladesh (to the east). Victorian ambitions directly led to these events, which continue to have geopolitical consequences today. Still, the Queen-Empress would also become mother to her Indian subjects, and the sense of adoration and even vicarious nostalgia remain on the subcontinent for the Victorian era and its queen.

Concerning colonial Africa, the Queen when meeting the deposed Zulu chieftain Cetewayo would impress him greatly by her charm even though she was his captor. In the interesting words of Sir Theophilus Shepstone, the chieftain had to be forced "to submit to the rule of civilisation" after the British and Boer forces had taken over Zulu lands. Victoria told Cetewayo that she "recognised in him a great warrior, who had fought against us, but rejoiced we were now friends." Cetewayo even gave the aging monarch a royal Zulu salute, accepting her suzerainty. Later, to a journalist, the chieftain would say of Queen Victoria, "She is born to rule men. She is like me. We are both rulers. She was very kind to me and I will always think of her."

In the southern part of Africa, the British had been having difficulties with the

Boers (Dutch settlers), who wanted African mineral-rich lands and wanted to establish colonies they called the Transvaal Republic and the Orange Free State. Once gold and diamonds were discovered in the Boer Witswatersrand, British landowners fought the Boers for control, and finally Gladstone relented in giving the lands back. In 1895, the Queen would be compelled to ask her Prime Minister to review British legal status in the Transvaal, due to the complications occurring there. It is here in the southern part of Africa that many suspect the seeds of the British Empire's decline first began to take root. It is also here that a young Indian lawyer named Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi would flag the second-class citizenship rights under the apartheid regime of South Africa. Gandhi would take this message to his native India and in 1947 lead India to political autonomy away from Britain.

By the late 19th century, Africa had become the playground for European powers to flaunt their might. However, the gains, which took the form of national pride and access to raw materials, would often be offset by the high costs. A prominent example had been Egypt and the Sudan, where native rebellions threatened to throw out the British, who had themselves ejected the French from the region. In 1884, General Charles Gordon, a legendary hero of the Crimea as well as the Taiping Rebellion in Shanghai, China, went to Africa with the Prime Ministerial and Royal mandate to crush the slave trade in the Upper Nile.



Gordon

Gordon’s job was to evacuate every single British resident, down to the last man, woman and child, from Khartoum, where the British were under direct threat by Sudanese mutineers. These rebels were under the leadership of a Muslim mystic known as the Mahdi. Gordon arrived too late and without adequate help, and on January 26, 1885, the Sudanese murdered the British, finally and in a macabre way displaying Gordon's head on a pike. Since Prime Minister Gladstone had failed to send resources on time, the Queen leaked her annoyance to the general public. In 1898, the Mahdist forces would be defeated, decisively, by an army officer named Sir Horatio Kitchener. The great war leader Winston Churchill, then just a youthful imperialist, would be in Kitchener’s command. British dominance was never gone for long.

Chapter 7: Celebrating the Queen's Reign

By the 1880s, the length of the Queen's reign began to be celebrated just as much as the substance of it, and 1887 marked the 50th year of her reign. With the elderly Queen's Golden Jubilee coming up, the Palace and its machine were now engaged in an enormous public relations campaign to make the Queen seem like a feminist, something she very clearly had never been. Yet the author Henry Adams' book *Celebrated Women of the Victorian Era* highlighted Victoria's character as one which "which all English girls may well do their best to imitate, and a life which, in their lowlier spheres, they may rightly attempt to follow. Her moral courage, her fortitude, her industry, her elevation of aim, and her tenacity of purpose -- these are qualities which they may successfully cultivate, even if they cannot hope to equal the Queen in perspicuity, in soundness of judgment, in breadth of intellectual sympathy, and in artistic feeling. They may take the woman as exemplar, though they cannot approach the Queen."

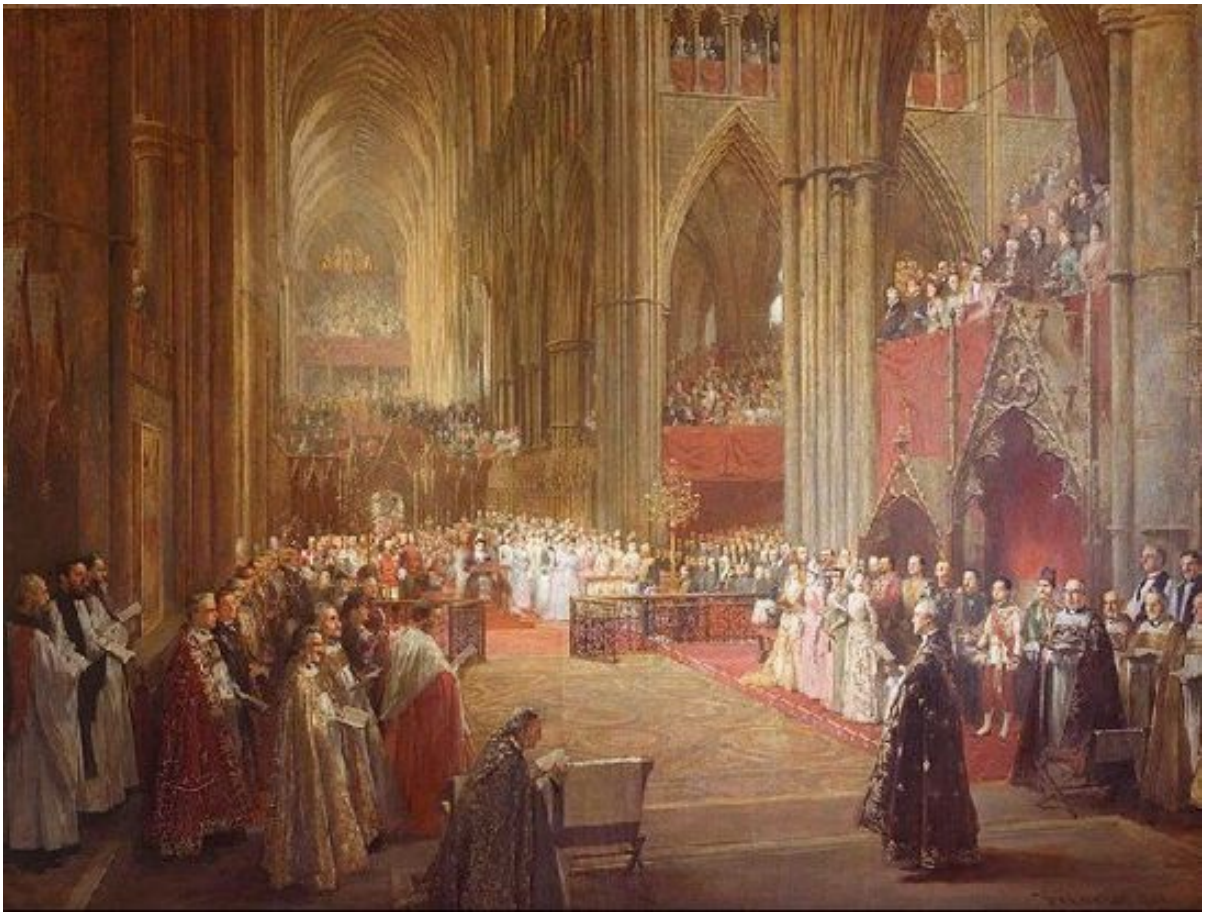
The trouble was that this book was devoid of any specific examples, although the Queen undoubtedly was the most prominent woman in public life anywhere in the world. Victoria also enjoying emanating the vibe of being sensible and cool-headed, which was made possible only because her private outbursts were not made public knowledge by her secretary Sir Henry Ponsonby. In *Ethics of the Dust* (1866), an instructive textbook for young girls, John Ruskin highlights "the simplicity and good housewifery of the Queen at Balmoral", when "some time ago, one of the little princesses having in too rough play torn the frock of one of her companions (a private gentleman's daughter), the Queen did not present the young lady with a new frock, but made the princess darn the torn one."

Regardless of any attempted spin, the longevity of Victoria's life and reign were enough reason for the British to celebrate, which they did in style. On 20 June 1887, Victoria began her day in a less than celebratory manner, eating breakfast aside the grave of her beloved Albert, before heading by train to Buckingham for a royal banquet that night. The celebration began in earnest there, as Victoria feasted with 50 foreign kings and princes, along with countless officials from across the empire. Victoria noted in her diary:

“Had a large family dinner. All the Royalties assembled in the Bow Room, and we dined in the Supper-room, which looked splendid with the buffet covered with the gold plate. The table was a large horseshoe one, with many lights on it.

"The King of Denmark took me in, and Willy of Greece sat on my other side. The Princes were all in uniform, and the Princesses were all beautifully dressed. Afterwards we went into the Ballroom, where my band played."

The following day marked the public celebrations of the Golden Jubilee. On 21 June, Victoria began the festivities by traveling in an open landau to Westminster Abbey, with an escort of Indian cavalry. Following the Queen was a seemingly never-ending parade of soldiers who marched past the throngs lined up on the street, many of whom were sitting on benches that had been created just for the celebration. It was said the benches alone stretched nearly 10 miles long. of soldiers in one colour, then another, marched past the spectators, who were accommodated on terraced benches along 10 miles of scaffolding erected for the purpose. Though the procession was a symbol of British magnificence, the queen herself wore a simplistic outfit consisting of a bonnet and a long dress, deciding to eschew a crown.



A depiction of a thanksgiving service on 21 June 1887 in Westminster Abbey celebrating the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria, by William Ewart Lockhard

This procession attracted everyone from everyday Britons to colonists and foreign dignitaries. Even curious onlookers attended the procession, including famed American novelist Mark Twain, who wrote that Victoria's procession "stretched to the limit of sight in both directions." Twain also noted the fancy ceremonial attire worn by many of the attendees, clearly not used to such scenes in America.

After she returned to her palace, Victoria made a public appearance on the balcony to huge ovations before retiring to the ballroom, where she handed out Jubilee brooches. Another banquet was held that evening, and this time Victoria was resplendent in a gown embroidered with silver roses, thistles and shamrocks. After being greeted by a countless number of foreign dignitaries,

Victoria took in a public fireworks display.

Victoria's Diamond Jubilee Photograph

In 1896, Victoria earned the distinction of becoming the longest reigning monarch in Britain's history, but the 77 year old insisted that public celebrations be held off for that milestone so that everything could culminate with the following year's Diamond Jubilee, which marked her 60th year as queen.

When 20 June 1897 came, Victoria noted in her diary, "How well I remember this day 60 years ago when I was called from my bed by dear Mama to receive

the news of my accession." Victoria began the celebration at Windsor Castle before attending a thanksgiving service at St. George's Chapel in Windsor. At the same time, similar services were held across the United Kingdom, most of which featured a hymn written just for the Jubilee, "O King of Kings" by the Bishop of Wakefield. The following night, another large royal banquet was held by the Queen, and a reception followed in the ballroom. Victoria took note of the decorations for the following day's public festivities in her diary on 21 June, "The streets were beautifully decorated, also the balconies of the houses, with flowers, flags and draperies of every hue."

As with the Golden Jubilee, the public celebrations took place on a day after the actual anniversary, with 22 June (a Tuesday) being officially commemorated as a festival at the behest of Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain. While public parades and receptions were held across the empire in honour of the Jubilee, the Queen's procession included representatives from across the empire. Victoria then held another large procession through London "for the purpose of seeing Her People and of Receiving their Congratulations on having attained the Sixtieth Anniversary of Her Majesty's Reign". As Victoria made her way to St. Paul's Cathedral, she was accompanied by 17 carriages in total, which carried members of her family, royalty from across the world, and numerous envoys, ambassadors and military officers. After a short service, she made her way throughout London, on a route that took her across London Bridge and Westminster Bridge.

That night, Victoria wrote down in her diary, "A never to be forgotten day. No one ever, I believe, has met with such an ovation as was given to me, passing through those 6 miles of streets, including Constitution Hill. The crowds were quite indescribable and their enthusiasm truly marvellous and deeply touching. The cheering was quite deafening and every face seemed to be filled with joy."

Chapter 8: Victoria's Legacy

Incapacitated by a series of small strokes, Queen Victoria died on January 22, 1901, four and a half years after her 1896 Diamond Jubilee. She had ostensibly departed with the Victorian era and its moral code still intact, which would come to take on a life of its own in public memory. Victorian morality has become notorious for its most prude practices, such as the refusal to say "leg" in front of a woman because it was too racy. As a result of the Victorian era's consternation with explicit displays of love in deed or word, the "language of flowers" was used to convey feelings, and even today red roses symbolize love, yellow roses indicate friendship, and pink roses suggest affection.

While there is no doubt that the era was traditionalist and conservative, and its queen strove to be a moral example, the perception of the Victorian era has become a bit extreme. And it's ironic that the woman who has come to symbolize the period was not at all stodgy. While nobody would accuse Victoria of being bawdy, the queen herself drew what would be considered erotic depictions of the male figure and even offered one up to Albert as a present. Victoria continues to be depicted in pop culture as the stately, humorless grandmother, but those who knew her saw her more human side.

Whatever the extent of the Victorian era's moral codes, the fact is that Victoria's simplistic worldview of plain values and rigid loyalties did not endure. Nor did Victoria's sense of buttoned-up morality. The accession of Victoria's son King Edward would see to the end of that by then dated ethos. Victorian morality, and even the era itself, quickly became a relic of the past that came to be viewed with a tinge of nostalgia, but Victoria set forth a standard of royal behavior against which every monarch and member of the Royal Family would be measured. Her beloved Balmoral would become the testing ground of royals, as well as politicians who, as her Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli once put it, had to come up "six miles north of civilization." Victoria's beloved grandson George V would revert back to the Victorian ethos, making this the harbinger of the public's rejection of King Edward VIII (George's eldest son and Victoria's great-grandson) and his married American mistress Mrs. Wallis Simpson. Victoria, through her antics and even her erratic behavior, nonetheless formed a closeness and bond with her peoples worldwide that gave her the

stature of mother. She remains alive and well in people's memory, having successfully tapped the pulse of her people in a way that few ever have.

[1] P. Smith, *Luther and Henry VIII*, 25 ENG. HIST. REV. 656, 667 (1910).

[2] Reports of the Venetian Ambassador, "Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 9 - 1592-1603," (H. F. Brown, ed.), *available at* <www.british-history.ac.uk/source.aspx?pubid=1008> (last accessed June 6, 2012).

[3] Emphases added. See, *e.g.*, E. Sitwell, THE QUEENS AND THE HIVE 178 (Bloomsbury Press, 1962); J. A. Froude, HISTORY OF ENGLAND FROM THE ACCESSION OF HENRY THE EIGHTH TO THE DEATH OF ELIZABETH 16 (Scribner, 1881).

[4] I. Kant, "Good Will, Duty, and the Categorical Imperative," ETHICS AND SOCIAL CONCERN (Anthony Serafini, ed.) (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1989), p. 29.

[5] R. Hutchinson, ELIZABETH'S SPYMASTER (Orion, 2011).

[6] K. O. Kupperman, THE JAMESTOWN PROJECT 39-41 (Harvard University Press, 2007).

[7] Despite their personal and political competition, Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart inadvertently joined up to give birth to Great Britain as we know her today.

[8] A. Weir, ELIZABETH THE QUEEN 486 (Pimlico, 1999) (statement of John Stow).

[9] Victoria's own paternal uncle King Ernest Augustus I of Hanover is known to have written to Lord Strangford: "The folly and absurdity of the Queen in allowing this trumpery must strike every sensible and well-thinking mind, and I am astonished the ministers themselves do not insist on her at least going to Osborne during the Exhibition, as no human being can possibly answer for what may occur on the occasion. The idea ... must shock every honest and well-meaning Englishman. But it seems everything is conspiring to lower us in the eyes of Europe."

[10] Especially during wars, this xenophobia tends to flare up. The next significant instance would be World War I, when Victoria and Albert's grandson King George V would drop all German titles (including his family name Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, inherited from Albert), becoming the House of Windsor; deny asylum to his first cousins the Russian tsar and tsarina Nicholas II and Alexandra, who along with their children would be murdered by the Bolsheviks; and would declare all British royals who fought for the German Empire and George's own first cousin Kaiser Wilhelm (Queen Victoria's eldest grandson through her daughter Victoria) to be "traitor peers" and have their properties confiscated.

[11] "The Queen must say," Victoria wrote to Palmerston in August 1857, "that the Government incur[s] a fearful responsibility toward their country. . . ." To Uncle Leopold, the King of the Belgians, the Queen said, "There is not a family hardly who is not in sorrow and anxiety about their children, and in all [social] ranks-India being the place where everyone was anxious to place a son!!"