

## CHAPTER LXXVII

### AN ANGEL AS HUSBAND

AMONG the remarks "let drop" by Melbourne was one that (January 10, 1844) is plainly of great importance. "It had been all along a grievance with Albert," said he, "that he was not sufficiently exalted and that he wanted to have the title of King." Albert was a Coburg, a young Coburg, and Coburgs did not care for crowns except upon their heads.

To be Albert's bride was Victoria's rapture. But she had no intention of sharing her throne.

*August 28, 1845:* . . . Beauvale told me another thing which I did not know before. When the proposal to give the Prince 50,000 a year was cut down by the Tories to 30, she was not angry but pleased. She did not wish him to be made so rich, and said the Coburgs were already sufficiently exalted and it was well they should have this little check.

In a year or two (1845) "her sentiments" were "very different." And "nothing is great enough for her husband, and she even insists on a throne like her own being erected for him under the Royal Canopy."

*February 11, 1842:* . . . They seem to pay great court to the Prince, whom the Queen delights to honour and to elevate.

*August 26, 1843:* . . . At the Council on Wednesday a question arose whether Lord Exeter, Groom of the Stole to the Prince, should stay and hear the speech read, which is only done by the great officers of State. I made Wharnccliffe go and ask the Queen herself and she said yes. I knew she would, for anything that can be done to enhance the dignity of the Prince is done. She has just had a chair of State set up for him in the House of Lords the same as her own, another throne, in fact. He is as much King as she can make him; all this, however, does not make him any more popular.

*January 26, 1848:* She [the Queen] is certainly a very odd

woman, her devotion and submission to her husband seem to know no bounds. When first she married, Melbourne told her she must not expect her domestic happiness *never* to be ruffled. She did not like this at all, but it never has; Albert never looks at her handsome ladies and maids of honour, he is absorbed with other objects, is full of ambition and the desire of governing, and having political influence. He has attained this object, for he and the Queen are now *one* with the Ministers; with these, as well as with the last, it was very different in Melbourne's time. They think her clever; some say she is cleverer than Albert, but he is remarkably well informed and takes vast pains with himself.

*September 11, 1854:* The Prince is exceedingly well satisfied with his visit to the Emperor [of the French]. The Queen wrote this to Clarendon, and said, "This prolonged absence is very trying to the Queen." Four days absence! Her Majesty thinks nothing of taking her ladies from their husbands and families for a month together, nor of the *trials* of those whose husbands are sent to the Baltic or the Euxine, certainly not to return for many months, perhaps not at all. Such is the personal selfishness and unreasonableness of people who have been accustomed never to be thwarted in any of their desires and to have everything their own way, and yet she has a strong sense of duty in great things, and is generally ready to yield to advice.

*June 28, 1857:* . . . The Queen has made Prince Albert "Prince Consort" by a patent ordered in Council, but as this act confers on him neither title, dignity, nor privileges, I cannot see the use of it, a very foolish act as it seems to me. He was already as high in England as he can be, assuming the Crown Matrimonial to be out of the question, and it will give him no higher rank abroad, where our acts have no validity.

*August 2, 1857:* . . . Prince Albert has been to Brussels for the marriage of the Princess Charlotte, where he seems to have made his first experiment of the effect to be obtained from his newly acquired title of "Prince Consort of England," as I see that he signed the marriage contract immediately after the Queen Marie Amélie, and before an Austrian Archduke who was present.

With the influence of the Prince Consort, Brougham was by no means pleased:

*March 19, 1843:* . . . Next came his comical reconciliatory intercourse with the Queen. He has been for a long time by way of being in a sort of disgrace. He always has spoken disrespectfully or disparagingly of the Court and of "Albertine," and he has said uncivil things in sundry pamphlets. He behaved very ill one night when he dined at the Palace, and has never been to Court nor invited since. The other day the Queen said to the Chancellor, "Why does Lord Brougham never come to Court?" This he repeated to Brougham, who considered it an overture, and by way of meeting it, he sent a copy of one of his books to the Queen, and another to Prince Albert. He received acknowledgments from both, and the Queen thanked him by an autograph letter. This was deemed a singular honour, and made a great sensation, and it was thought the more curious as he had just before made a most virulent speech, in which he had talked of vipers in a way not to be mistaken, and which was levelled at her former Minister, and his friend, Lord Palmerston.

*Ghent, June 16, 1845:* . . . All London was engaged for some weeks with the Queen's ball, and could think of nothing else, all the elderly folks of both sexes dressing themselves up and learning to dance minuets. There was nothing but practising going on at one house after another. At last the eventful night arrived, and everybody said it was a very brilliant and amusing sight. Brougham was not asked, and was furious. He flared up in the House of Lords and twitted Prince Albert *à propos* of Barry and the Houses of Parliament, so they shortly after asked him to dinner to appease him.

*September 16, 1845:* . . . He [Graham] also told me that she is naturally inclined to be generous but the Prince is fond of money. She is proud, and her pride disdains to get into debt, so that her affairs are well regulated and in good order, which is both sensible and creditable to her. I told him the anecdote about Albert's income and her satisfaction it was not larger, which evidently pleased him very much, for he said he was the person who most strenuously insisted on its being reduced in amount.

*March 8, 1847:* . . . George Anson told me yesterday that the Queen's affairs are in such good order and so well managed that she will be able to provide for the whole expense of Osborne out

of her income without difficulty, and that by the time it is furnished it will have cost £200,000. He said, also, that the Prince of Wales when he came of age would not have less than £70,000 a year from the Duchy of Cornwall. They have already saved £100,000. The Queen takes for his maintenance whatever she pleases, and the rest, after paying charges, is invested in the funds: or in land, and accumulates for him.

The exaltation of Prince Albert was sometimes alarming:

*June 21, 1854:* . . . He [the Duke of Bedford] told me this morning that it was owing to him that the Prince had got rid of the statue scheme. He wrote to Stockmar and advised him to get the Prince to put an end to it. No answer was sent, but his advice was taken.

To Clarendon, the Queen was "sincerely attached." Yet even Clarendon, when he took a long walk with Greville (April 30, 1847), admitted that "they [the Queen and Albert] interfere and meddle in a very inconvenient manner with everything they can; they acquired the habit in Aberdeen's time." It was "a peep behind the curtains of the Royal State." In fact, "the Queen [October 7, 1846] takes a more serious and prominent part in business than I was aware of."

*November 11, 1841:* . . . I find that, during the Queen's confinement, all the boxes and business are transmitted as usual to the Palace, and the former opened and returned by the Prince. He established this practice last year. At first orders were given to the Foreign Office to send no more boxes to the Palace; but two days after, fresh orders were received to send the boxes as usual, and to furnish the Prince with the necessary keys.

*Tuesday, December 16, 1845:* . . . Lord Lansdowne and Lord John Russell went to Windsor on Saturday. The first novelty that struck them was the manner of their reception; all is changed since they went out of office. Formerly the Queen received her Ministers alone; with her alone they communicated, though of course Prince Albert knew everything; but now the Queen and Prince were together, received Lord Lansdowne and John Russell together, and both of them always said *We*—"We think, or wish, to do so and so; what had *we* better do, etc."



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THE PRINCE CONSORT

by F. X. Winterhalter

The Prince is become so identified with the Queen that they are one person, and as he likes business, it is obvious that while she has the title he is really discharging the functions of the Sovereign. He is King to all intents and purposes. I am not surprised at this, but certainly was not aware that it had taken such a definite shape.

The Prince (September 22, 1857) was "to all intents and purposes King." Indeed, according to Clarendon (October 19th), "the manner in which the Queen in her own name but under the inspiration of the Prince exercised her functions was exceedingly good." Granville held that "the Prince had upon many occasions rendered the most important services to the Government."

*Hatchford, October 8, 1857:* . . . She acts in everything by his inspiration and never writes a letter that he does not dictate every word of. His knowledge and information are astonishing and there is not a department of the Government regarding all the details and management of which he is not much better informed and more capable than the Minister at the head of it; in Foreign Affairs particularly he has prevented a great deal of mischief, and kept the Government out of innumerable scrapes.

*London, October 19, 1857:* . . . [Clarendon] said that the manner in which the Queen in her own name, but with the assistance of the Prince, exercised her functions was exceedingly good, and well became her position and was eminently useful. She held each Minister to the discharge of his duty and his responsibility to her, and constantly desired to be furnished with accurate and detailed information about all important matters, keeping a record of all the reports that were made to her, and constantly recurring to them, e.g., she would desire to know what the state of the navy was, and what ships were in readiness for active service, and generally the state of each, ordering returns to be submitted to her from all the arsenals and dock yards, and again weeks or months afterward referring to these returns, and desiring to have everything relating to them explained and accounted for, and so throughout every department. In this practice Clarendon told me he had encouraged her strenuously. This is what none of her predeces-

sors ever did, and it is in fact the act of Prince Albert, who is to all intents and purposes King, only acting entirely in her name. All his views and notions are those of a Constitutional Sovereign, and he fulfils the duties of one, and at the same time makes the Crown an entity, and discharges the functions which properly belong to the Sovereign.