

# Marriage of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert

## Brak kraljice Viktorije i princa Alberta

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REZIME: Jako malo ljudi zapravo razmišlja o poslasticama dela koja čine kraljevske ili političke ličnosti. Mi najčešće ne učimo ili učimo vrlo malo o njihovim privatnim životima, najčešće zbog toga što ljudi misle da su ili nebitne ili prosto jer nema puno informacija. Kraljica Viktorija se definitivno potrudila da to ne bude slučaj. Kao jedan od najvažnijih vladara Ujedinjenog Kraljevstva, ona je napravila mnogo bitnih promena u kraljestvu, ali uprkos svoj snazi što je imala, ona je i dalje duboko brinula o svom mužu i može se reći da mu je čak i dozvolila da utiče na njenu vladavinu. Može se doći do zapisa iz njenog dnevnika, ali su poprilično ograničeni. Postoji još nada da će ceo dnevnik jednog dana biti objavljen. Uprkos tome da je ovo bio dogovoren brak, nije bio forsiran što je učinilo njihovu vezu veoma važnom i jedinstvenom. Retko kad se viđaju srećni brakovi posebno kod dogovorenih i kod brakova iz kraljevskih porodica. Oni zajedno prave velike promene čak i u drugim državama i uvode nove tradicije. Njihova decu su venčana sa predstavnicima drugih kraljevskih porodica širom cele Evrope i tako su ostavili svoj trag po celom svetu. Istraživački rad je uglavnom rađen pretraživanjem dostupnih veb stranica i videa i dokumentaraca o njima. Cilj ovog rada jeste da se dokaže na koji način i koliko privatni životi političkih ličnosti zapravo utiču na njihov politički život.

KLJUČNE REČI: brak, kraljica Viktorija, princ Albert, porodica, privtni život

REUME: Very few people think about the consequences of the actions made by royal or political figures in their private lives. We usually do not learn or learn very little about their private lives, mostly because people think they are not important or there is very little of them. Queen Victoria definitively made sure that was not the case. As one of the United Kingdom's most important rulers, she made many changes in the kingdom but despite all the strength she had, she still cared deeply for her husband and it is possible to say that she even allowed him to intervene with her reign. We can get some access to her writings from her diary but they are quite limited. There is still some hope that the whole diary will published one day. Despite this being an arranged marriage, it was not a forced one which made their relationship very important and unique. We rarely see happy marriages especially the arranged ones and the ones in royal families. They together make big changes even in other countries and bring new traditions in. Their children got married into other royal families around Europe leaving their traces all around the world. The research was done mostly by looking through online websites available and videos and documentaries made about them. The goal of this research is to prove how and how much their private lives impact in their political lives.

KEY WORDS: marriage, Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, family, private life

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## Introduction

Queen Victoria was the queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and empress of India. She became the queen of the United Kingdom just a few weeks after turning 18, and her reign lasted 63 years. The period of Queen Victoria's reign is called the "Victorian era" She restored the image of the monarchy during a time of economic, political and social changes, reigned over Britain for 63 years - the longest reign after Queen Elizabeth II's. She and her husband, Prince Albert are well known for their happy marriage despite of it being an arranged one which is quite of a surprise for the royal British family.

## Early life and the Kensington 'System'

On May 24 1819, as a child of Edward, Duke of Kent, the fourth son of King George III, and his wife, Princess Maria Louisa Victoria, in London's Kensington Palace, Queen Victoria was born under the name of Alexandrina Victoria. Just a few months after her birth, her father suddenly died.



Picture 1- Queen Victoria's childhood home

The Kensington System meant that Queen Victoria was not allowed to be apart from her mother and was kept isolated from other children. She felt lonely despite having her half-sister as a playmate through her childhood. That led to her having a collection of dolls that she dressed up with her tutor, a German governess named Louise Lehzen. She sparked queen's life-long interest in history. Not only did the queen show some exceptional talent in French and Italian, but also in her drawing and singing lessons. During her childhood, governess Louise Lehzen was not her first but rather her second tutor. Her first teacher was Reverend George Davys, Dean of Chester. He began teaching her at the age of five until she was eight, when the governess took over. During her education, even at a very young age, she had really strict schedules and had to stick to them. As a child, Queen Victoria was described as often mischievous but warmhearted. As a child, she began writing diaries regularly and that habit of hers never disappeared. Despite all of this, later on it was stated that her childhood memories are misremembered and that her mother loved her dearly and she had a big support from her tutors. At this stage of her life she only had a few trips outside the palace grounds.

Two visits were to Claremont to see her uncle Leopold I of Belgium, which greatly influenced Victoria's opinion on the system.

Her mother claimed that the System was there to keep the future queen safe but in reality it was to make her weak and submissive making her mother and her domineering comptroller, John Conroy, which would make them the real power in the country. He was able to control her mother as much as he did because of her language barrier.



Picture 2- Queen Victoria with her uncle Leopold

Queen Victoria was never actually meant to be the queen of England. The one that was supposed to be was King George IV's only daughter Princess Charlotte, who had died giving birth to a stillborn son in 1817, which caused a loss of two generations of heirs to the throne. After that the first child to be born was going to be the heir to the throne, and that was Queen Victoria.

Prince Albert was born on August 26 1819, just a few months after his first cousin Queen Victoria, with the assistance of the same midwife, Charlotte von Siebold. Albert and his elder brother, Ernest, spent their youth pretty close, but that was ruined by their parents' unstable marriage and eventual separation and divorce. The brothers were homeschooled by Christoph Florschütz and they later studied in Brussels.

### **Accession to the Throne and Marriage**

Prince Frederick died in 1827, followed by George IV in 1830. The next to succeed the throne was William IV, and Victoria became the heir presumptive. William compared her journeys to royal progresses and was concerned that they seen Victoria as his rival rather than his heir presumptive. In 1830, 1832, 1833, 1834 and in 1835 the Duchess and Conroy took Victoria across different parts of England and Wales. To the King's annoyance, Victoria was enthusiastically welcomed in each of the stops. Queen herself found these trips tiring and made her ill. Eventually, in October of 1835, she fell ill with serious fever but Conroy dismissed her illness as a childish complaint. When it was cleared that she was sick, Conroy tried to bully her into making him her personal secretary and signing paper guaranteeing him power when she came to the throne.

When she was seventeen, her uncle, Leopold I was keen on her marrying his nephew and her cousin - Prince Albert. King William IV did not agree with this match as he did not want her to be in contact with that side of her family again. In spite of that, she sent a letter to her uncle saying "...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."

In 1837, just a month after Queen Victoria turned eighteen, King William IV passed away. She 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."

The coronation was held on June 28 1838. The one responsible for the planning was her first Prime Minister Lord Melbourne. Since there were very few rehearsals, many mistakes were made during the ceremony. Some parts of the ceremony were almost missed. It was mistakenly interpreted "fourth finger" to mean "pinky finger" and sized her ring to fit that one instead. Though Victoria tried to have the Archbishop put it on her pinky during the ceremony, he insisted on forcing it onto the correct digit. "...and the consequence was that I had the greatest difficulty to take it off again, which I at last did with great pain," Queen Victoria wrote in her diary.

Picture 3- Queen Victoria in coronation robes by George Hayter, 1840



The first request she made as a queen was to get her bed separated from her mother's room. She moved from the Kensington Palace to Buckingham Palace leaving the Kensington System behind and dismissing Conroy and installing her mother in an apartment in the palace to keep their distance not too close.

The first year of her reign was pretty quiet but the second one was quite the opposite. A scandal occurred between her mother's lady in waiting, Flora Hastings and Lord Conroy. It was widely rumored that she was pregnant with his illegitimate child and the queen was not happy when she found out due to all the things Conroy did to her when she was a child. That rumored turned out to be false and that Lady Flora had a large tumor on her liver which was the cause of her death. After the examination was done and it was proved she was indeed not pregnant, Conroy, the Hastings family and the Tories pressed against the queen claiming that she spread false rumors.

The other rumor started because during this time she was highly reliant on Melbourne and her uncle. It was rumored that the Queen was having a romantic relationship despite the age gap of forty years. The truth was that she saw Melbourne as someone to look up to and a father figure. After these two years, she decided she was ready for marriage. Albert had returned to the United Kingdom with his brother in October 1839 to visit Victoria, with the intention of settling the marriage. The Queen proposed to him on October 15 1839 and Victoria's intention to marry was declared formally to the Privy Council on November 23. The wedding took place on February 10 1840. Victoria arrived at the chapel as part of a long carriage procession from Buckingham Palace. Albert was escorted by a group of his senior cavalry, while 12 bridesmaids carried Victoria's train.



Picture 4- The wedding outfits

The Queen wore a white satin and lace dress, which was seen as strange and unusual at the time. It was more common for brides to wear rich coloured and their best gowns, which could be used again for other occasions. The white dress was chosen as a symbol of wealth, purity, and secured that the Queen would stand out from the crowd in the procession. The silk dress used material woven in Spitalfields in London, while the lace was made in Honiton, Devon, supporting the then-flagging English craft. The dress was designed by William Dyce, the head of the Government School of Design, known as the Royal College of Art now. She was not the one who started this tradition of white wedding dresses but the one who popularized it. Because her father had died when she was still very young, she was given away, by her favourite uncle, Prince Augustus Frederic. She spent the evening after their wedding lying down with a headache, but wrote ecstatically in her diary: "I NEVER, NEVER spent such an evening!!! MY DEAREST DEAREST DEAR Albert ... his excessive love & affection gave me feelings of heavenly love & happiness I never could have hoped to have felt before! He clasped me in his arms, & we kissed each other again & again! His beauty, his sweetness & gentleness—really how can I ever be thankful enough to have such a Husband! ... to be called by names of tenderness, I have never yet heard used to me before—was bliss beyond belief! Oh! This was the happiest day of my life" Even though she really loved Albert, he never got the title of a king as it meant that she would lose most of her power over the kingdom.





Picture 5- Marriage of Victoria and Albert, painted by George Hayter

The wedding of Victoria and Albert remains the most recent wedding of a reigning British monarch. All monarchs ruling after Victoria were already married when they ascended the throne, except for Edward VIII, who got married after abdicating the throne.

Albert became an important political adviser as well as the Queen's companion, replacing Melbourne as the dominant influential figure in the first half of her life. Victoria's mother was evicted from the palace, to Ingestre House in Belgrave Square, but later on under the influence of Albert, the Queen and her mother's relationship got better.

### **The Children of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert**

During Victoria's first pregnancy in 1840, just a few months into their marriage, the 18-year-old Edward Oxford attempted to assassinate her while she was riding in a carriage with Prince Albert on her way to visit her mother. He fired twice, but either both bullets missed or, as he later stated, the guns had no shot.



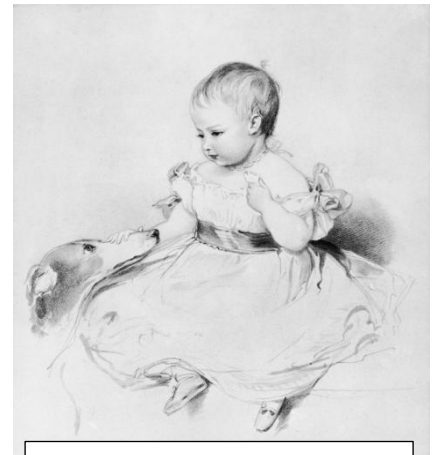
Picture 6- Contemporary lithograph of Edward Oxford's attempt to assassinate Victoria, 1840

She had 8 more children during her lifetime but she still hated being pregnant. Even though the Victorian era was filled with controversial social opinions, she still spoke openly about her joy towards her intimate life with Prince Albert. She struggled with the pregnancies, which she saw as the “shadow side” of marital life. She often complained about the physical, mental and emotional toll they took, sometimes even referring to herself as “nothing more than a breeding animal”. She claimed that newborn babies were ugly and felt disgust toward breast-feeding. considering it a "ruin" to intelligent young women - so much so, in fact, that she wrote in her diary upon finding out that her own daughters had chosen to breastfeed, "It makes my hair stand on end that my daughters have turned into cows. Despite having very little involvement in her children's lives, she was very fond of each one of them.

Her first daughter Victoria (Vicky) was born on November 21 1840, and, a year later, she was given the title of Princess Royal. She was born 3 weeks early and it caused a major issue in her health at the time. Because of that, the first disagreement between Victoria and Albert broke out, as they could not agree what would be the best way to take care of Vicky. In spite of the Queen's disappointment that she did not give birth to a male heir and her rough start of life, she was a very clever child and spoke 3 languages, French, English and German fluently by the time she was only three years old. She remained the closest to Queen Victoria even after she moved to Germany for her marriage.

Because she most likely suffered from post-partum depression after a few of her pregnancies, the motherhood made Albert take over many responsibilities as her regent. She once revealed in a letter to Vicky that she would only check up on her children directly

once in every three months. While raising the children, Albert had once said to Queen Victoria: "The root of the trouble lies in the mistaken notion that the function of a mother is to be always correcting, scolding, ordering them about and organizing their activities. It is not possible to be on happy friendly terms with people you have just been scolding," where he tried to reason the way Victoria was. Due to Victoria not being pregnant only 17 months during the time Albert was alive, Albert was the one who was taking care of their children and things such as their clothing and education. Their sons had 7 hours of strict studying 7 days a week.



Picture 7-A sketch of Princess Victoria drawn by her mother, Queen Victoria



Picture 8 - Queen Victoria; Princess Beatrice of Battenberg Portrait

A year after Vicky, her brother Edward (Bertie) was born. He was not what his parent were really expecting from their heir. They had hoped Albert to be raised as the future king of England. In fact, it was not until he was ten that Bertie came to realize that it was him, and not his more clever beloved sister Vicky, who was set to inherit the throne. He was not the best heir as the Queen and Prince have hoped. She complained that his "systematic idleness and laziness," were "enough to break one's heart." The true disappointment happened when he had a love affair with the actress Nellie Clifton. Due to the fact that just a few weeks after Albert had confronted Bertie, he had passed away, the Queen blamed him for his sudden turn in health. "Oh! That boy... I never



can or shall look at him without a shudder," she wrote in her diary. On her decision for Bertie to go on a trip abroad, which Albert had planned to complete his education, she added that, "Many wish to shake my resolution and to keep him here," but that to do so would "force a contact that is more than ever unbearable to me."

If we could say that Vicky was Albert's favorite, then Beatrice was Victoria's. She was born on April 14, 1857. She was the fifth daughter and their youngest child. Despite of queen not liking babies, she liked Beatrice and considered her attractive. Queen Victoria once said that Beatrice was "a pretty, plump and flourishing child ... with fine large blue eyes, pretty little mouth and very fine skin". That gave her a big advantage among her siblings. She had always been in the center of the Queen's attention.

### **Prince Albert's Death**

Just a few years after Beatrice's birth, and a few weeks after confronting Edward, Prince Albert had died. It is believed that the cause of his sudden death at the young age of 42 is abdominal cancer. Victoria was devastated.



Picture 9- The grave of Prince Albert and Queen Victoria

She blamed her husband's death on worry over Bertie's incidents. She said he had been "killed by that dreadful business". She entered the state of mourning and she was the one who started the tradition of wearing black as a sign of mourning. She entered a state of mourning and wore black for the remainder of her life. She avoided public appearances and rarely visited London in the following years. Her isolation from the public had earned her the nickname "Widow of Windsor". Her weight increased through comfort eating, which made her dislike public appearances even more. She went as far as she shut herself away from her family, especially from Edward. Even after climbing out of depression, she remained in mourning and in partial retirement. She resisted to perform the ceremonial functions expected of the monarch and withdrew to Balmoral and Osborne four months out of every year. Although Victoria resisted carrying out her ceremonial duties, she remained determined to retain an effective political role during this period and to behave as Albert would have ordained. The Prince's rooms in their residences were maintained exactly as he had them when he was alive. Her servants were instructed to bring hot water into his dressing room every day as they had formerly done for his morning shave. She had statues made of him, displayed memorials of him around the royal palaces, and she spent most of her time secluded in Windsor Castle or in Balmoral up in Scotland, where she had formerly spent so much happy time together with him.

## **Methodology of the Work**

This work had been with a deep research that started as a topic only about Queen Victoria's private life but as the research continued, during the last two months out of three and a half, it started focusing more on the marriage of the Queen and Prince Albert. The research relied on the help of internet websites and published parts of the Queen's diary. The topic was chosen because of the thought of school not teaching much or anything at all about some important political faces and how much their private life actually affects their position and actions in the political world. The idea of doing this topic stroke upon once during a class with my mentor and just a few weeks later, on the December 28, the research had been started to get written down. The research was officially finished on February 26, 2024.

## **Results of the Research and Discussion**

The marriage of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert stands as a remarkable testament to love, resilience, and partnership. Despite its origins as an arranged match, their relationship flourished into a profound bond characterized by mutual respect and shared purpose. Together, they navigated the complexities of royal life, shaping the course of British history with their dedication to progress and innovation. Their union challenged societal norms and expectations, inspiring generations with their devotion and unity. Prince Albert's influence as a political adviser and intellectual partner to the Queen played an important role in modernizing Britain and advancing causes such as education and public health. Meanwhile, Victoria's unwavering commitment to her husband's memory underscored the depth of their bond long after his untimely death. Through their marriage, Victoria and Albert left an indelible mark on history, serving as the hope of stability and continuity during a time of significant social and political change. Their legacy continues to resonate throughout the whole Europe. The results showed that the actions and decisions that political faces make do indeed leave an impact on their political lives which is really important when it comes researching about their overall lives. That is also a reason why I think we should also learn more about their private lives, as their private lives often tend to consequence their political decisions.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research digs into complex lives of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, with a particular attention put on their remarkable marriage. From their childhoods marked by isolation and strict upbringing to their eventual union, Victoria and Albert's story is marked by one strong devoted and enduring love. Despite the challenges they faced, including Victoria's early years under the Kensington System and Albert's stormy family background, their marriage blossomed into a partnership characterized by mutual respect and shared vision. Together, they navigated the complexities of royal life, leaving an indelible mark on British history and society. Their union was not only a personal triumph but also a catalyst for change. Prince Albert's influence as a political adviser and modernizer complemented Victoria's reign, ushering in an era of progress and innovation. Together, they championed causes such as education, public health, and the arts, shaping the course of the British monarchy and leaving a lasting legacy. Furthermore, Victoria and Albert's marriage serves as a timeless reminder of the transformative power of love and partnership. Despite the pressures of their position and personal tragedies, their unwavering devotion to each other remained steadfast, inspiring generations with their mutual respect and affection. In essence, the research highlights the profound impact of Victoria and Albert's marriage on both their personal lives and the course of history. Their story serves as a testament

to the enduring power of love and unity, illustrating how even when surrounded by the challenges of royal life, true partnership can transcend obstacles and leave an indelible mark on the world.

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