EDITING QUEEN VICTORIA:

HOW MEN OF LETTERS CONSTRUCTED THE

YOUNG QUEEN

BY

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Introduction

> The history of the Victorian Age will never be written...
> our fathers and our grandfathers have poured forth and accumulated
> so vast a quantity of information that the industry of a Ranke would
> be submerged by it, and the perspicacity of a Gibbon would quail
> before it.[1]
>
> Lytton Strachey, Eminent Victorians, (1918).

In this somewhat despairing tone, Lytton Strachey began the Preface to his Eminent Victorians. Three years later, seemingly undeterred, he attempted to cover a substantial portion of that Age when he produced his award winning biography of Queen Victoria.[2] His footnotes and bibliography comprised seventy-six titles: eight general reference and history citations; six newspaper and periodical citations; twenty-four biographies; and thirty-eight citations of published correspondence, memoirs, autobiographies and 'Life and Letters' titles. He also 'made use of certain unpublished passages in the manuscript of the Greville Memoirs'[3] but cited no other unpublished sources. The majority of footnote references were to the letters of Queen Victoria, but not the originals; he relied on the 1907 published version of the letters edited by Lord Esher and Arthur Benson.[4]

Strachey's range of sources and their usage is typical of the books written about Queen Victoria. His bibliography is representative of the range of documents which have been preserved, sometimes rescued, and assembled by librarians, by archivists, by custodians of family papers and by editors of published letters. This army of people were alluded to by E.H. Carr, when he reminded us of the selectivity of all such enterprises:

> Our picture [of historical events and episodes] has been preselected and predetermined for us, not so much by accident as by people who were consciously or unconsciously imbued with a particular view and thought the facts which supported that view worth preserving.[5]

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[1] Lytton Strachey, Eminent Victorians, Harmondsworth, Penguin, (1918), 1986, p. 9.
[2] Lytton Strachey, Queen Victoria, London, Chatto and Windus, (1921), 1937. This biography was awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize in 1922.
[3] Strachey, Queen Victoria, Acknowledgment to Trustees of British Museum, Contents page verso.
[4] Arthur Christopher Benson, M.A. and Viscount Esher, G.C.V.O., K.C.B. editors, The Letters of Queen Victoria. A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837-1861, in three volumes. Published by the authority of His Majesty the King. London, John Murray, (1907), 1908. The 1908 edition cited by Strachey was a cheaper edition, published without the genealogical tables and containing only one third of the illustrations of the 1907 edition.
[5] E. H. Carr, What is History?, Harmondsworth, Penguin, (1961), 1974, p. 13.

Editors of published letters, similarly motivated, selected their materials and placed them in the public domain, in order that particular people and events would be remembered as histories and biographies proliferated.

Letters themselves are primary materials, but in selecting and editing letters, then publishing them within sturdy covers, the editors imbue their selection with a quality of completeness which can be comforting but misleading. The gaps, breaks, discontinuities and silences that characterize archival research in collections of letters and family papers, for example, are not apparent when working from published collections. Astute editors, who want their volumes to be read, usually arrange the letters to produce a narrative, having a beginning, a middle and an end. The letters lose their essential 'primariness' and become something more akin to a secondary source. A published volume of letters thus can give a false assurance of comprehensiveness. For many biographers of Queen Victoria, the selected letters and earlier biographies formed a template of their subject. Consequently, and largely unknowingly, they were drawn into serial misrepresentations of the young Queen Victoria in relation to her education, her Queenship, her marriage and motherhood, and her knowledge of European political affairs.

This thesis begins with a detailed study of the processes of the compilation of the first series of the Letters of Queen Victoria 1837-1861, the volumes that have been most frequently relied upon by biographers and other scholars. Utilizing materials from the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle[6] and Brussels,[7] other archives throughout Europe and the United Kingdom, and scholarly work in secondary sources, it describes the origins of the publication project, the characters and *modus operandi* of the editors and the publisher. Each of these aspects had to be considered in terms of the ideas and values of gentlemen at the turn of the twentieth century. The second section of the thesis will consider how the editors selected, omitted or rejected letters initially in order to craft the image of Queen Victoria, and then to edit that material in order to ensure the King's approval for publishing. The thesis concludes with some observations upon the masculinist template as constructed by Benson and Esher, the impact it has had upon

[6] I wish to acknowledge here the gracious permission of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to research in, and publish extracts from, the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle. I also wish to thank Lady de Bellaigue, Miss Pam Clark and Mrs Jill Kelsey and the staff of the Royal Archives for their expert assistance.

the historiography of Queen Victoria, and the possibilities for a re-evaluation of some aspects of Victoria's life.

Sources for Research: the importance of published materials in the historiography of Queen Victoria.

Biographers and scholars writing on Queen Victoria over the past century have had a variety of sources available to them: these include materials available in the public domain, materials held in Royal Archives and in private hands. Public domain materials include official State papers and family papers which have been deposited in public record offices and university libraries throughout the United Kingdom and Europe. Ever-increasing amounts of primary materials, such as speeches, letters and diaries of the period, have been published and thus become more readily accessible. Newspapers, periodicals and magazines, generated during Victoria's lifetime and since, frequently contained articles on the Royal family. Biographies that contain quotations from previously unpublished material, in effect, bring those excerpts into the public domain, and frequently into the home libraries of subsequent biographers. Materials held in archives are subject to varying access arrangements. Some of these materials are freely accessible; others require formal permission to be sought. Some materials are deemed to be 'private' or 'family' documents for which permission is rarely, if ever, given, or there may be a time embargo in place.

The Royal Archives in Windsor were established in 1912 to house and order the newly-discovered documents from the reign of King George III and avoid the fate of the papers of his son, George IV, which did not survive due to neglect and decay.[8] Materials from the reign of Queen Victoria were rarely available to biographers and scholars prior to the early 1960s. Elizabeth, Lady Longford, was the first biographer to be granted extensive access to Queen Victoria's Journal and other documents for the preparation of her monumental biography Victoria R.I., published in 1964.[9] This

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[7] I am very grateful to Professor Dr Gustaaf Janssens, Archivist of the Royal Palace, Brussels, for the assistance he has given me during my research.

[8] Sheila de Bellaigue, 'The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle', The Court Historian, vol. III, no. 2 (1998), p. 10; see further Robin Mackworth-Young, 'The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle', Archives, vol. XIII, no. 59 (Spring 1978), pp. 115-30.

[9] Elizabeth Longford, Victoria R.I., London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, (1964), 2000. For an account of her challenge to gain entrance to the Royal Archives in the early 1960s, see Elizabeth Longford, The Pebbled Shore, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986, pp. 307-14. As Strachey's Queen Victoria had

biography contains many extracts from Victoria's Journal and has been cited widely by subsequent biographers. It is an excellent example of how inaccessible primary documents can be brought into the public domain. Since 1964, more biographers and scholars have been given access to the collection at Windsor and to the archives of Royal Palaces in Europe, and of various ruling European families. However, David Cannadine's 'fog in the Channel' account of the dearth of researchers of aristocratic Britain consulting European archives[10] could be applied to researchers of Royal subjects; the European archives have been under-utilized by stay-at-home researchers!

There are substantial amounts of materials held in archives which are subject to various types of restrictions. Documents which are deemed to be 'family' and thus 'private' material can only be consulted with permission of designated heads of those families. Such decisions can vary from one generation to another and with the passage of time. When this material is generated by a cabinet minister, for example during his or her time in office, that is as paid, self-nominated servants of the public, the ownership of this material often remains unclear, and the rights of the families to withhold access to documents or demand fees for publication is contentious.[11] The increasingly common practice of archives levying researchers to help cover costs does, in some cases, act as a subtle form of control of access.[12] There is always the possibility of significant documents being unknown or concealed, or of their importance yet to be recognized and some material can be placed under the seal of the Official Secrets Acts and be withheld for certain time periods.[13] Of course, the ultimate decision to withhold material is taken by the family members themselves or their advisers when they decide

done in 1922, Longford's biography of Queen Victoria also won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Literature, in 1964. It has been described as 'the envy and despair of those who venture to follow her', by Giles St. Aubyn, Queen Victoria. A Portrait, London, Sinclair-Stevenson, 1991, p. 623.

[10] David Cannadine, The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1990, Prologue, p. 6.

[11] This became an issue in several archives, for example in relation to the Churchill Papers purchased from the Churchill family and held at the Churchill College Archives, Cambridge, yet during the 1990s there were some disputes concerning payments for the publication of documents written by Winston Churchill by scholars.

[12] For example, Woburn Abbey, seat of the Dukes of Bedford, and the Russell and Beecham families, in 2001, charged £25 per day, as did the John Murray Archives, in Albemarle Street, London; others charge much more.

[13] David Vincent, The Culture of Secrecy, Britain, 1832-1998, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 16. On the increasing tendency toward secrecy and the control of information and the evolution of the Acts throughout the nineteenth century, see Chapter 2.

to destroy particular documents. The availability of source material for writing about Queen Victoria has been affected one way or another by each of these factors.

In the historiography of Queen Victoria, and of Prince Albert, there has been a substantial amount of material available which was published during their lifetimes. For the main aspects of Queen Victoria's life and reign the Annual Register from 1837-1900 has been widely relied upon, along with The Times and Hansard. Queen Victoria's accession in 1837 occurred at a time of an explosion of print media with an ever-increasing number of newspapers, periodicals and books being written and published.[14] The births of Royal babies, for example, were reported in many (arguably, all?) newspapers and in periodicals such as the Lancet.[15] Since 1785 The Times has recorded the Royal family's activities in the 'Court Circular' column.[16] Today it is merely an account of the day's engagements, but during Queen Victoria's reign it reported more extensively upon private and domestic arrangements: her morning activities, her luncheon guests, her afternoon drive and who accompanied her, followed by a list of those who 'had the honour of being invited to dinner with Her Majesty'. Queen Victoria frequently cut these lists from the 'Court Circular' and placed them into her Journal. When the Journals were transcribed by her daughter, some of these little cuttings were retained and can still be found in the Journal today.[17]

There were many books written during Victoria's lifetime which were, not surprisingly, of a rather hagiographic nature. Articles in newspapers and periodicals tended to be more critical. Some reprimanded Queen Victoria's mother for disallowing the then Princess Victoria from attending the coronation of her uncle, King William IV; others published letters concerning the Flora Hastings affair in 1839; some pamphlets criticized Queen Victoria for her seclusion after Albert's death.[18] Albert was even less

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[14] David Vincent, Literacy and Popular Culture, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989. John Feather, A History of British Publishing, London, Croom Helm, 1988, 'Part 3: The First of the Mass Media 1800-1900', pp. 129 ff.

[15] For example, Spectator, 21 November 1840, p. 2; Observer, 21 November 1840, pp. 2-3; Lancet, 28 November 1840, pp. 347-8.

[16] Tim O'Donovan, 'The Court Circular - a Diary of Royal Endeavour', Contemporary Review, vol. 266, no. 1553 (June 1995), pp. 302-5. The Court Circular is currently also published in the Scotsman and the Daily Telegraph.

[17] Royal Archives, Windsor, Queen Victoria's Journal, RA VIC/QVJ.

[18] King William IV's coronation: The Times, 7 September 1831; Flora Hastings' affair: the Examiner, 21 March 1839 and The Times, 24 March 1839; Republican pamphlets, for example, the anonymous 'What does she do with it?' and Charles Bradlaugh, 'George, Prince of Wales. With Recent Contrasts and Coincidences', 'a thinly veiled attack on Queen Victoria', see Dorothy Thompson, Queen Victoria. The

free from personal attack as House of Commons criticism of his proposed income as Prince Consort, and about his possible meddling in public affairs, were widely reported in the daily press.[19] Similarly the various official visits made by the Royal couple and by Albert alone were reported in the newspapers, and both the reports and subsequent histories written can serve as sources.[20]

Following Prince Albert's death in 1861, Queen Victoria sought to have his memory commemorated in many ways.[21] The publications she commissioned served as a valuable resource for scholars for the next one hundred years during which time access to the Royal Library, and later to the Royal Archives, was virtually impossible. The first publication, in 1862, was a compilation of speeches by the Prince edited by Sir Arthur Helps. This was followed in 1867 by The Early Years of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort, compiled by Charles Grey, the Prince Consort's private secretary, under the direction of Her Majesty the Queen.[22] Grey was unable to continue on and complete the whole life, and Queen Victoria commissioned Theodore Martin to write a five-volume biography of Albert, the first volume of which was published in 1875 and the last volume in 1880.[23] These volumes have been useful to scholars, not for their hagiographic tone or their tedious style, but because they contain a detailed chronology of events between 1840 and 1861, as well as letters and memoranda written by the

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Woman, The Monarchy and The People, New York, Pantheon, (published in London, Virago, entitled Queen Victoria: Gender and Power) 1990, p. 106. Another view, see Walter L. Arnstein, The Bradlaugh Case. Atheism, Sex and Politics among the Late Victorians, Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1983, pp. 19-20, for an examination of '[Bradlaugh's] hope that Parliament [will abolish monarchy] at the end of Victoria's reign'. For a detailed analysis see Richard Williams, The Contentious Crown: Public Discussion of the Monarchy in the Reign of Queen Victoria, Aldershot, Scholar Press, 1997, and John Plunkett, Queen Victoria: the First Media Monarch, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003.

[19] For example, debates continued throughout January 1840 concerning the Prince's income and his status. Criticism of Albert's interference in foreign affairs, for example, see Morning Herald, 15 January 1854, p. 1, which occurred amidst a spate of ongoing series of articles which were critical of Albert, despite the relatively recent success of the Great Exhibition and his other enterprises.

[20] Newspaper coverage of some of these visits can be found in Alex Tyrrell with Yvonne Ward, ' "God Bless Her Little Majesty." The Popularising of Monarchy in the 1840s', National Identities, vol. 2, no. 2 (2000), pp. 109-25. See also James Loughlin, 'Allegiance and Illusion: Queen Victoria's Irish Visit of 1849', History, vol. 87, no. 288, (October 2002), pp. 491-513.

[21] For many of these forms and their subsequent proliferation see Elisabeth Darby and Nicola Smith, The Cult of the Prince Consort, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1983. See also Margaret Homans, Royal Representations: Queen Victoria and British Culture, 1837-1876, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1998, Chapter 4 'Queen Victoria's Memorial Arts'.

[22] Sir Arthur Helps, ed., The Principal Speeches and Addresses of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort, London, John Murray, 1862; Charles Grey, The Early Years of the Prince Consort, London, Smith, Elder & Co., (1866), 1867. Originally prepared for private circulation in 1866, then published by Smith, Elder & Co., 1867.

[23] Theodore Martin, The Life of HRH the Prince Consort, 5 vols, London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1875-80.

Prince and the Queen showing their political and social ideas and beliefs. The volumes also include some excerpts from her Journal. These Journal excerpts have allowed scholars to make an assessment of the severe editing which Princess Beatrice carried out on the Queen's Journals in the years following Victoria's death in 1901.[24]

Queen Victoria's own publication, Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands (1868) was an instant success, selling twenty thousand copies, and spawning several subsequent editions and a sequel in 1884.[25] In between these two publications, Baron Stockmar's son edited a two-volume compilation of his father's memoirs,[26] and the first of several editions of the Greville Memoirs was published.[27] There followed several editions of letters and memoirs by family members: the speeches of Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany (1884); letters of Victoria's second daughter, Princess Alice (1885); and memoirs of Albert's brother, Duke Ernest II of Saxe-Coburg (1888).[28]

Collections of correspondence and biographies of politicians and courtiers have also been increasingly available to be used by the Queen's biographers. These include Lord Melbourne, Viscount Palmerston, Sir Robert Peel, Lady Lyttelton, Lord John Russell, Lady Georgiana Bloomfield and Lady Augusta Stanley for the early part of the reign, William Gladstone, Lord Beaconsfield, Marie Mallet, Henry Ponsonby and Archbishop Edward Benson for the later.[29] These ten individuals represent a small percentage of

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[24] Philip Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, London, John Murray, 1964, pp. 461-2.

[25] Queen Victoria, Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands from 1848-1861, (edited by Sir Arthur Helps), London, Smith, Elder & Co., (1868), 1884; More Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands, London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1885. More recently, David Duff, ed., Queen Victoria's Highland Journals, Exeter, Webb and Bower, 1980.

[26] E. Stockmar, ed., Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, 2 vols, London, Longmans, 1872. (English Translation 1892). Baron Stockmar was the adviser and friend of King Leopold of the Belgians, and of Victoria and Albert.

[27] Henry Reeve, ed., The Greville Memoirs, 8 vols, London, Longmans, (1874), 1896. Philip Whitwell Wilson, ed., The Greville Diary including passages hitherto withheld from Publication, 2 vols, London, Heinemann, 1927; Lytton Strachey and Roger Fulford, eds, The Greville Memoirs, 1814-1860, 8 vols, London, Macmillan, 1938. Charles Greville was secretary of the Privy Council from 1821-59.

[28] J. R. Ware, Life and Speeches of His Royal Highness Prince Leopold, London, Diprose and Bateman, 1884, a slim volume of 48 pages, and rarely cited; Princess Alice, Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse, Princess of Great Britain and Ireland: Letters to Her Majesty the Queen, with a Memoir by her H.R.H. Princess Christian, London, John Murray, 1885; Ernest II Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Memoirs, 4 vols, London, Remington, 1888.

[29] W. Torrens, Memoirs of William Lamb, second Viscount Melbourne, London, Minerva edition library, 1890; The Hon Evelyn Ashley, The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston 1846-1865, 2 vols, London, R. Bentley & Son, 1879; Lord McMahon, Memoir of the Rt. Hon Sir Robert Peel, London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1856; Mrs Hugh Wyndham, ed., The Correspondence of Sarah Spencer, Lady Lyttelton, London, John Murray, 1912; G. Bloomfield, Reminiscences of Court and Diplomatic Life, 2 vols, London, Kegan Paul, 1883; Spencer Walpole, The Life of Lord John Russell, 2 vols, London, Longmans, Green, 1889; Albert Baillie, Dean of Windsor & H. Bolitho, eds, Letters of Lady Augusta

those whose lives have been commemorated in this way, and whose correspondence has contributed to the fuller picture of the Queen's reign. They also represent the range in such material: from the great and good of the land to flower girls of the court. The publishing of these memoirs and letters has been an ongoing phenomenon: in some instances memoirs were published during the individual's lifetime, in others collections were published in memory of the authors after their deaths and in yet others by subsequent generations who had discovered the materials amongst family papers in attics or in deposits in archives.

Queen Victoria herself, in her journals and letters, epitomized the prodigious output which, as Strachey described it, so characterised the nineteenth century. It has been estimated, by Giles St Aubyn, that Queen Victoria averaged writing two and a half thousand words in each day of her adult life and that she may have written sixty million words in the course of her reign. 'If she had been a novelist, her complete works would have run into seven hundred volumes, published at the rate of one per month!'[30] The first series of volumes of her correspondence was published in 1907, and reprinted in 1908. It was followed by a second series in the 1920s, and a third in the 1930s.[31] On Christopher Hibbert's calculations, these nine volumes contain 'some two million words, both from the Queen's letters and her journals, extending over five thousand pages; even so they represent but a small proportion of the papers which the Queen methodically collected and had bound for preservation in the Royal Archives in Windsor'.[32] Encouraged by the reception of the first series of Letters, Lord Esher edited Queen Victoria's early journals to the year of 1840 for publication. Previously, the only

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Stanley, London, Howe, 1927; Albert Baillie, Dean of Windsor & H. Bolitho, eds., Later Letters of Lady Augusta Stanley, London, Cape, 1929; John Morley, The Life of William Ewart Gladstone, 2 vols, London, Macmillan, 1903; W.F. Monypenny & George Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, 6 vols, London, John Murray, 1910-20; Victor Mallet, Life with Queen Victoria, London, John Murray, 1968; A. Ponsonby, Henry Ponsonby. His Life from his Letters, London, Macmillan, 1942; Arthur Benson, The Life of Edward White Benson, 2 vols, London, Macmillan, 1899-90.

[30] St Aubyn, Queen Victoria, p. 340.

[31] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, 1907, 1908; George Earle Buckle, The Letters of Queen Victoria. A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence and Journals between the years 1862 and 1885, in three volumes. Second series. Published by the authority of His Majesty the King. London, John Murray, Volumes I & II in 1926; Volume III in 1928; George Earle Buckle, The Letters of Queen Victoria. A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence and Journals between the years 1886 and 1901, in three volumes. Third series. Published by the authority of His Majesty the King. London, John Murray, 1930-32.

[32] Christopher Hibbert, Queen Victoria in her Letters and Journals, Stroud, Sutton Publishing, (1984) 2000, p. 5. The 'method' in the collecting was questioned by Lord Esher as we shall see in the following chapters!

portions of her early journals to be available were small excerpts included in the biographies of Albert, by Grey and Martin. These editions of her journals have been available to scholars since 1912.[33] But the figures calculated by St Aubyn and Hibbert have to be viewed as very conservative estimates. They show no indication of including the many letters to the women of the various courts of Europe, very few of which were included in any of the series of the published letters of Queen Victoria which St Aubyn and Hibbert cited in their volumes and with which they were familiar. The women's letters were not cited as sources in St Aubyn's biography of Queen Victoria. Any estimate of her output would be lacking without some effort to assess the holdings of the various archives in Europe, and even then, only those letters which have survived the upheavals of the twentieth century would be available. Such estimates of Queen Victoria's literary output are useful only in that they convey some sense of her extraordinary epistolary activity.

For various reasons biographers and scholars have relied heavily on published material. By examining the bibliographies and footnotes cited in works on Queen Victoria and her family, dependence can be established. The extent of this reliance can be seen from Table 1:

[33] Viscount Esher, The Girlhood of Queen Victoria, 2 vols, London, John Murray, 1912.

TABLE 1: BIOGRAPHERS' USE OF PUBLISHED MATERIALS AND OF THE ROYAL ARCHIVES, WINDSOR.

ON VICTORIA					
AUTHOR	YEAR	Series 1	Girlhood	Series 2/3	Royal Archives
Strachey	1921	**X**	**X**	n/a	-
Ponsonby	1933	**X**	**X**	**X**	-
Benson	1935	**X**	**X**	**X**	-
Sitwell	1935	**X**	-	**X**	-
Cecil	1953	**X**	**X**	**X**	-
Longford	1964	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Duff	1972	**X**	**X**	**X**	-
Woodham-Smith	1972	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Aronson	1977	**X**	**X**	**X**	-
Warner	1979	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Mullen	1987	**X**	**X**	**X**	-
Weintraub	1987	**X**	**X**	**X**	-
Thompson	1990	**X**	-	-	-
Charlot	1991	**X**	**X**	-	**X**
St. Aubyn	1991	**X**	**X**	-	-
Munich	1996	**X**	**X**	**X**	-
Gardiner	1997	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Hibbert	2000	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Vallone	2001	**X**	**X**	-	**X**
Arnstein	2003	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
ON ALBERT:					
Grey	1869	n/a	n/a	n/a	**X**
Martin	1875	n/a	n/a	n/a	**X**
Fulford	1949	**X**	-	-	**X**
Bolitho	1964	**X**	-	-	Royal Library
Bennett	1977	**X**	**X**	-	-
Rhodes James	1983	**X**	-	-	**X**
Hobhouse	1983	**X**	-	-	-
Weintraub	1997	**X**	**X**	-	-
ON EDWARD VII					
Magnus	1964	**X**	-	**X**	**X**
Middlemas	1972	**X**	-	-	-
St. Aubyn	1979	**X**	-	**X**	-
ON EMPRESS FREDERICK (VICKY)					
Bennett	1971	**X**	-	**X**	-
Pakula	1996	**X**	-	**X**	**X**

LEGEND:
Series 1= A.C. Benson and Lord Esher, (eds), Letters of Queen Victoria (1st Series)
Girlhood = Lord Esher,(ed.), The Girlhood of Queen Victoria 1832-40
Series 2/3 = G. Buckle (ed.), Letters of Queen Victoria (2nd & 3rd Series)
X=material cited
- = material not cited
n/a=not available at that time.

The Table is not exhaustive and it can only show that the volumes were cited once by

each biographer; it cannot reflect the degree of reliance on any volume by the biographers. But it is noteworthy that a greater number of citations were made from the first series of Letters, compared to the subsequent series. One factor may be the heavier concentration on political issues in the second and third series of volumes, whereas the biographers frequently showed a greater interest in the events of the first forty years of the young couple's lives.[34]

Publishers have more frequently published works of Victoria's life and correspondence than that of Albert, but during the 1930s there were two volumes published of the correspondence between Prince Albert and his brother, one in England edited by Hector Bolitho and the other edited by Kurt Jagow in Germany.[35] In his Preface, Jagow declared that:

> it is in essence due to the merits of the German prince, who for less than two decades sat upon or rather stood by, the throne of England as the faithful guardian of the Crown, that today the British monarchy is able to command the power, the prestige and internal strength ... to take rank as a World Power.[36]

When the translator, E.T.S. Dugdale, introduced the work in translation, in a notable, and perhaps unprecedented manner, he explained that:

> Dr Kurt Jagow, in his efforts to portray the Prince Consort as the one man with the brains and the capacity to restore the fallen prestige of the British monarchy, makes certain points which no Englishman who has made any study of the early years of the reign can be expected to accept without some modification.[37]

In order to rectify the matter, Dugdale reassured the readers that the book had been 'subjected to further selection and editing for this English edition'.[38] Presumably that

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[34] A supplementary explanation may well be that by 1930 a significant number of secondary works had appeared or were appearing (such as The Cambridge History Of British Foreign Policy and The Cambridge History of the British Empire) that made use of unpublished documents dealing with the same political matters that Buckle was revealing in the letters to and by the Queen. I am grateful to Professor Walter Arnstein for this suggestion.

[35] Hector Bolitho, ed., The Prince Consort and his Brother: Two Hundred New Letters, London, Cobden-Sanderson, 1933; Kurt Jagow, ed., Letters of the Prince Consort 1831-1861, London, John Murray, 1938, translated by E.T.S. Dugdale. (Date of original German publication unknown).

[36] Jagow, ed., Letters, Editor's Preface, p. vii.

[37] Dugdale, Translator's Note, in Jagow, ed., Letters of the Prince Consort 1831-1861, p. xiii.

[38] ibid., p. xv. The translator, Dugdale, had just had completed his work on German Diplomatic Documents 1871-1914, 4 volumes, selected and translated by E.T.S. Dugdale, with a preface by Sir Rennell Rodd, and an introduction by J.W. Headlam-Morley, New York, Barnes & Noble, over the years of 1928-31. Curiously, the publisher proclaims: 'It contains not only the documents but the German notes printed without comment and without criticism.' Dugdale had just completed this mammoth task when he began the Jagow translations. Perhaps his translator's note reflects this. A further point of interest is the writer of the Introduction. As J.W. Headlam, he had been consulted by Arthur Benson and Lord Esher in 1904. Benson described him thus: 'He is the shining light of Modern History at Cambridge, a nice, quiet,

editing was carried out by Dugdale. Can primary documents still retain their integrity when there is such deliberate 'editing' and 'counter-editing' carried out upon them? Do they perhaps tell researchers more about the editors and their times? Such comments should serve to remind researchers to question idiosyncracies on the part of editors and translators. The comments by Jagow and Dugdale highlight a central finding of this thesis concerning all published letters. Before their contents can be accepted as offering any reliable semblance of evidence of the thought and actions of the correspondents, the editors must be interrogated. This point echoes an exhortation by E.H. Carr that scholars study their historian in order to know 'what bees are in his bonnet'. He later expanded on this point: 'The brain of the brain-washer has itself been washed. The historian, before he begins to write history, is a product of history.'[39] His observation applies similarly to the editors of letters.

Alterations of primary sources of a much greater magnitude were undertaken by Queen Victoria's youngest daughter Beatrice, Princess Henry of Battenberg, who had been named in the Queen's Will as the Queen's Literary Executor.[40] Victoria had commenced her diary when she was thirteen years old, and she maintained it daily with very few exceptions until she died in her eighty-second year, and it filled 122 volumes.[41] Upon Victoria's death, her diaries and papers became the property and responsibility of Princess Beatrice, who was extreme in carrying out her mother's instructions. In one of the worst acts of archival destruction, Princess Beatrice copied out her mother's diaries, which spanned almost seventy years, from 1831-1901, omitting and altering the contents as she went. Each of the original volumes was burnt; the process continued over twenty years. Philip Magnus investigated 'the transcription and the extent of that destruction' by collating and comparing certain passages quoted by Theodore Martin from the original diary, with the Princess's subsequent transcription in the blue copybooks held at Windsor. He stated:

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discreet man, who was at Eton with me.' By 1928 Headlam had hyphenated his name to Headlam-Morley and was European adviser to the Foreign Office.

[39] Carr, What is History? p. 23 and p. 40.

[40] D.N.B. entry for Princess Beatrice, by C.F. Aspinall-Oglander, 1959, reprinted in Frank Prochaska, ed., Royal Lives. Portraits of Past Royals by those in the Know, (Selections from the DNB), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 499-500. Beatrice, already a widow, adopted her pre-marital title of 'Princess Beatrice' after the family name changed to Mountbatten in 1917.

[41] Cecil Woodham-Smith, Queen Victoria. Her Life and Times, vol. I, London, (Hamish Hamilton, 1972), Book Club Assoc, 1973, p. 110. On the positive side, there are now 112 volumes of Queen

> Princess Beatrice felt constrained not merely to destroy, without transcribing, substantial portions of her mother's diary, but also to alter substantially a great many other portions which she did transcribe; and it must be added that posterity has suffered in consequence an incalculable and irreparable loss.[42]

Lord Esher was requested to supply the copybooks from time to time.

> Dear Lord Esher,
> Would you kindly order me two more books for copying my Mother's Journal into. I am working regularly at it and am really making some progress. I sent to Parkins and Gotto but they did not seem to understand, so I must beg you to give the order. They should be without the number of any volume for as I agreed with you, those could be added later.
> Believe me, dear Ld Esher,
> Yrs very sincerely, Beatrice.[43]

King George V and Queen Mary tried to stop the destruction of the invaluable historical record, but failed.[44] The diary exists in its original form only until February 1840, which coincides with the span of the edition of Victoria's Girlhood journal, edited by Lord Esher.[45]

Throughout the twentieth century there continued to be publications of edited letters and memoirs of members of the Royal family and courtiers. The most widely quoted series after the Benson and Esher series is that edited by Roger Fulford, of the correspondence between Queen Victoria and her eldest daughter, Vicky, the Empress Frederick of Prussia. The series was published in six volumes over the years from 1964 through to the last volume in 1990, completed after Fulford's death by Agatha Ramm.[46]

Victoria's Journal written in Beatrice's highly legible handwriting, but the questions of the authenticity of the contents rankle.

[42] Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, p. 461.

[43] Esher Papers, Churchill Archives, Churchill College, Cambridge, 11/3, Princess Beatrice to Esher, 23 October 1904, again on 21 November 1904, 13 November 1905.

[44] Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, p. 461. Also Esher Papers, 6/7, 17 May 1909. Other letters from Queen Mary mentioning the family papers and about Princess Beatrice's actions in relation to the Queen's papers are dated: 19 June 1911, 25 November 1911, 18 November 1912.

[45] Esher, Girlhood. Both Christopher Hibbert and Jerrold Packard maintain that a typescript of the diary up to 1861 was made: Hibbert attributing it to Lord Esher, Christopher Hibbert, Queen Victoria. A Personal History, London, Harper Collins, 2000, p. 503; and Packard to King Edward VII, Jerrold M. Packard, Victoria's Daughters, New York, St. Martin's Griffin, 1998, p. 349. The Journal given to me at Windsor was a typescript which ended on 16 February 1840, and the blue copybooks in Beatrice's handwriting otherwise. I was assured by the Registrar, Lady Sheila de Bellaigue, that the typescript extended no further. For further details on Victoria's early journal see Lynn Vallone, Becoming Victoria, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001, pp. 188-193.

[46] Roger Fulford, ed., Dearest Child; Letters between Queen Victoria and the Princess Royal, 1858-1861, London, Evans Bros, 1964; Dearest Mama: Private Correspondence of Queen Victoria and the Crown Princess of Prussia, 1862-1864, London, Evans Bros, 1968; Your Dear Letter: Private Correspondence of Queen Victoria and the Crown Princess of Prussia, 1865-1871, London, Evans Bros, 1971; Darling Child: Private Correspondence of Queen Victoria and the Crown Princess of Prussia, 1871-1878, London, Evans Bros, 1976; Beloved Mama: Private Correspondence of Queen Victoria and the Crown

These letters contained much more personal material and discussion of family matters. In contrast to the Benson and Esher Letters, the extensive political detail contained in these volumes was frequently overlooked by researchers feasting on Victoria's more private thoughts and opinions which she had shared with her daughter. The first volume of these letters was reprinted within six months of publication and was widely reviewed. Readers for the first time felt they had the opportunity to hear the Queen's deepest and most personal thoughts, and many were surprised and confused by their intrinsic contradictions. One reader wrote to Fulford asking:

> Can you pinpoint her true opinions and beliefs?
> As often as she reiterates the happiness of her marriage, she inveighs against the selfishness of men and their lack of understanding of women, who are nothing but their wretched slaves, etc. ... Girls, the Queen proclaims are much happier single than married, yet she scarcely allows her daughters to obtain puberty before she is husband-looking with single-minded concentration. ... [47]

The combination of the forthright language which Victoria used to Vicky and the very personal nature of their comments provided a great contrast to the images which were derived by biographers and readers from any of the earlier series of published letters. In publications after 1964 these letters were cited frequently, and more recently by feminist writers in relation to Victoria's motherhood experiences.[48] The letters were written twenty or more years after her marriage and first motherhood, and refer retrospectively to her experiences. As will be seen later in this thesis, they provide a great contrast to Victoria's Journal writings of her first years of motherhood.[49]

Although Frederick (Fritz) Ponsonby, a son of Queen Victoria's secretary and godson of Vicky, had edited a selection of Vicky's letters which were published in controversial circumstances in 1928,[50] they were not widely cited until the publication

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Princess of Prussia 1878-1885, London, Evans Bros, 1981; Agatha Ramm, ed., Beloved and Darling Child: Last Letters between Queen Victoria and her Eldest Daughter, 1886-1901, Stroud, Sutton, 1990. Curiously, the Ramm volume is designated on the title page and the dust jacket as being 'in completion of the five volumes edited by the late Roger Fulford', but he actually edited and published the five volumes listed above and this is actually 'in completion of' the six volumes.

[47] Unpublished private letter to Roger Fulford from Ursula (surname unknown), Honeyway House, Petworth, Sussex, 21 August 1964. I am grateful to Lord Shuttleworth for his permission to examine the Fulford Papers in his library at Leck Hall, and for his and Lady Shuttleworth's kindness toward me during my research.

[48] For example, Adrienne Munich, Queen Victoria's Secrets, New York, Columbia University Press, 1996, Chapter 8 *passim*.

[49] Yvonne Ward, 'The Womanly Garb of Queen Victoria's Early Motherhood: 1840-42', Women's History Review, vol. 8, no. 2, June 1999, pp. 277-94.

[50] Frederick Ponsonby, Letters of the Empress Frederick, London, Macmillan, 1928. Ponsonby's explanation of the controversy is given in his Recollections of Three Reigns, London, Eyre &

of both sides of the correspondence from 1964, which perhaps vindicated Ponsonby's actions. Various other correspondences have been published since, ranging from Queen Victoria and one of her granddaughters, to letters of one of Queen Victoria's dressers to her sister and facsimile editions of the private albums of Queen Victoria's governess, Baroness Lehzen.[51] There have also been condensed, single-volume versions of Victoria's correspondence published, taken from the Benson and Esher series, edited by John Raymond in 1963 and by Christopher Hibbert in 1984.[52] With succinct introductory passages and skilful editing, the Hibbert volume, in particular, brings together letters and journal extracts in a readable and reassuring manner. By providing details about how many words Queen Victoria produced in the course of her life, Hibbert alerts the reader to how few are included in this single volume, but his very skill as editor makes the reader far less aware of his innumerable omissions.[53]

Another important source of material has been biographies. Biographies proliferated throughout Victoria's lifetime and these tended to range from the fawning to the adulatory. The first biography to be published following Victoria's death in 1901 was the entry in the Dictionary of National Biography by Sir Sidney Lee, which he expanded into a full-scale biography which was published within the year.[54] Close to fifty subsequent biographies have appeared throughout the twentieth century,[55] the most recent being those of Christopher Hibbert and Walter Arnstein.[56] As can be seen by a glance through the bibliographies of most of the biographies of Queen Victoria and her family, there has developed a serial reliance upon previous biographies. The combined effect of reliance on previous biographies and on published letters has led to some

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Spottiswoode, 1951, prepared for press by Colin Welch. Following this publication, Egon Caesar, Conte Corti's The English Empress: A Study in the Relations between Queen Victoria and her Eldest Daughter, Empress Frederick of Germany, (E. Hodgson, translator), London, Cassell, 1957, originally published in Vienna in 1954 , provides a contrary and critical view of Ponsonby, referring to his 'theft' of the letters.

[51] Richard Hough, ed, Advice to a Grand-daughter. Letters from Queen Victoria to Princess Victoria of Hesse, London, Heinemann, 1975; Benita Stoney and Heinrich C. Weltzien, eds, My Mistress the Queen. The Letters of Frieda Arnold, Dresser to Queen Victoria 1854-9, (translated by Sheila de Bellaigue), London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1994; and Michaela Blankart and Siegfried-H. Hirsch, The Private Album of Queen Victoria's German Governess, Baroness Lehzen, Bamberg, Hirsch-Verlag, 2001. This volume has many charming reproductions of Victoria's drawings and watercolors, and photographs of Lehzen's collection of artifacts of Victoria's early life.

[52] John Raymond, The Early Letters of Queen Victoria, London, Batsford, 1963; Hibbert, Letters, 1984.

[53] Hibbert, Letters, p. 5.

[54] Sidney Lee, Queen Victoria. A Biography, London, Smith Elder, 1902.

[55] See Michael Fassiotto, 'Finding Victorias/Reading Biographies, (Victoria, Queen, Reading)', unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Hawaii, 1992; and Yvonne M. Ward, 'Biographies of Queen Victoria', unpublished Honours Thesis, La Trobe University, 1994.

homogeneity of perception of aspects of Victoria's life and reign; criticism of her lack of education and preparation for sovereignty, her abhorrence of motherhood, and Albert's executive abilities as being superior to those of Victoria. However, individual biographers sought to unearth some extraneous materials in order to highlight their particular interests in the Queen's life and character.

Most often the intellectual environment of academia has not been conducive to investigative approaches to monarchy as an institution.[57] Histories bearing titles such as Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-1875[58] contained only one reference to Victoria herself, and in many other such histories she made no appearance at all. Harold Perkin's groundbreaking and otherwise comprehensive work of social history Origins of Modern English Society contains no reference to the monarchy or monarchs themselves;[59] and histories of the First World War, until recently, have paid little attention to the personalities and relationships of the monarchs of the warring nations.[60] As McLean observed: 'To write the history of a continent in which monarchy was the prevalent form of government without reference to the monarchs themselves represents a distortion of the past.'[61] But the shortcoming was a reflection of the difficulty of access to materials combined with particular contemporary perspectives of historians.

Little was written on the monarchy that was not biography for the first three quarters of the twentieth century. Even with biography there was the problem of decorum and Royal decency that made negative revelations problematic for biographers. Frequently biographers who were interested in seeing the original documents were reluctant to ask. Such a request could be deemed intrusive, unseemly and ungentlemanly, and the attitudes of the courtiers reinforced this perception. This problem was magnified when an authorised biography of a Royal personage was commissioned, as in the case of

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[56] Hibbert, Personal History, 2000; Walter L. Arnstein, Queen Victoria, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2003.
[57] David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the *Invention of Tradition*, c. 1820-1977', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, The Invention of Tradition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, canto edition, 1992, pp. 103-4.
[58] For example, Geoffrey Best, Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-1875, London, (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), Fontana, 1979, and Timothy Parsons, The British Imperial Century, 1815-1914, Lanham, Md., Rowman & Littlefield, 1999, includes no reference to Victoria. Edward Royle, Modern Britain: A Social History 1750-1985, London, Edward Arnold, 1987 makes three minor references to Queen Victoria.
[59] Harold Perkin, Origins of Modern English Society, London, (Routledge 1969), Ark paperback, 1986.
[60] Roderick R. McLean, Royalty and Diplomacy in Europe 1890-1914, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001.
[61] ibid., p. 2.

James Pope-Hennessy's biography of Queen Mary.[62] As Harold Nicolson wrote in 1959: 'It is perfectly respectful; yet one can see the angels smile, and the chuckle of the devils is so subdued that only an ear as acute as [Queen Mary's] own could detect their laughter.'[63] Nicolson himself understood these restrictions very well. In his own authorised biography of King George V, published in 1952, he found he had to gloss over George V's role in abandoning his Russian cousins, Nicholas II and Alexandra. A subsequent biographer, Kenneth Rose, using Nicolson's notes and other archives, was able to piece the story together. Courtiers felt that Rose should be dissuaded, or prevented from publishing the full story, but Queen Elizabeth II gave her permission for the uncensored account to be published in 1983.[64] As the twentieth century drew to a close, royal biography came to be less hagiographic, and in seeking to contextualise the subjects more comprehensively, the works became broader in scope and content. The chasm between 'Biography' and 'History' began to shrink.[65]

The difficulty in accessing the original materials and a faithful acceptance of the integrity of the published material, conveyed by editorial competence, has led to scholars relying on published primary material selected for them authoritatively. Through not visiting archives, they were largely unaware of the huge masses of material rejected, omitted or overlooked by the selectors. Usually no ellipses were used to signify deletions from the published documents, and this added to a false sense of completeness. All told, the overwhelming advantages and comforts of working in one's own environment or library with published materials compared to the challenges and expense of accessing archival materials seem incontrovertible.

A selection of letters, assuming the letters have been transcribed accurately, can be used as evidence that a particular individual said or did a particular thing at a given time. But how reliable are the published letters in alerting the reader to all significant facets of the early life of Queen Victoria and her relations? To what extent were the editors hampered by the constraints of their times, their class and their values, especially

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[62] James Pope-Hennessy, Queen Mary, London, Allen & Unwin, 1959.
[63] Peter Quennell, ed., A Lonely Business. A Self-Portrait of James Pope-Hennessy, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1981, p. xiii.
[64] For full details of this revealing episode, see Robert Lacey, Royal. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, London, Little, Brown, 2002, pp. 60-1.
[65] Walter Arnstein's biography of Queen Victoria, (2003) has been acclaimed as achieving this bridging by David Cannadine, 'From Biography to History: Writing the Modern British Monarchy', Historical Research, vol. LXXVII, no. 197, August 2004, p. 303.

stemming from gender and status? What was the basis for their selections and perhaps more importantly their excisions and rejections? The series of volumes edited by Roger Fulford have been very widely cited by biographers since 1964 in relation to Victoria's motherhood, and would provide a revealing case study of editing royal material. The original letters do exist in the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle and Schloss Fasanerie, Eichenzell, Germany, but in Fulford's papers there exists very little material relating to his experience of that enterprise. Consequently I have chosen to examine the editing work by Lord Esher and Arthur Christopher Benson for the first series of the Letters of Queen Victoria 1837-1861 because those volumes have been available for almost a century and have been extensively cited.

A second reason for selecting the Benson and Esher series was that, during the editing, there was an immense correspondence generated between the editors, their publisher and their assistants, much of which has survived, and is accessible. John Murray IV, the publisher, diligently preserved correspondence from Arthur Benson and Lord Esher, and frequently made copies of his own letters. Much of this correspondence was discovered by John Murray VII and his wife, Virginia Murray, in January 2003 in storage in Grantham.[66] Lord Esher collected, preserved and bound many volumes of the letters of many of his correspondents. They are held at the Churchill Archives, Churchill College, Cambridge.[67] Arthur Benson preserved very little of his correspondence, but his diary of some 181 volumes survives complete (except for one volume) and is held at Magdalene College, Cambridge.[68] Some of Lord Knollys's letters to Lord Esher were made available to me at the Royal Archives at Windsor.

A third reason is that the correspondence of Queen Victoria to her uncle, King Leopold I of the Belgians, comprises a large proportion of the published material and much of that original material has been available to me in the Archives of the Royal Palace, Brussels. A document listing late excisions ordered for Volume II gave me specific evidence of previously selected materials being excised before publication.[69] Through

[66] I am most grateful to Virginia Murray for notifying me of their discovery and offering me access to the documents.
[67] I wish to acknowledge my gratitude to Lord Esher, Oliver Everett, Assistant Keeper of the Royal Archives, and the Master and Fellows of Churchill College, Cambridge for access to the Esher Papers, and for permission to read and quote from them.
[68] I am grateful to the Master and Fellows of Magdalene College for access to the Benson Diary, and for the assistance I have been given by Dr Ronald Hyam and Mrs Aude Fitsimons.
[69] John Murray Archives, CB2, John Murray to Arthur Benson, 26 August 1906.

access to materials at Windsor, Brussels and the Palmerston papers at Southampton University Library I have been able to replace many of the excisions made by the editors for Volume II at least, which has provided some insight into their decision-making. Access to the Belgian Archives has also enabled me to evaluate afresh the influence King Leopold had, or sought to have, not only upon Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in the English Court, but upon their various relatives and friends in Lisbon, Paris, Vienna, Berlin and Coburg.

Although King Leopold died in 1865 his influence persisted in many ways. Leopold's first Minister to the Court of St. James had been Sylvan Van de Weyer. In 1879, the youngest daughter of Van de Weyer married Reginald Brett and Brett later acceded to the title of Lord Esher. His role as joint editor of the first series of the Letters of Queen Victoria 1837-1861 is pivotal to this dissertation. The first section of the thesis sets out Esher's plans for the book, his search for a co-editor and publisher, their personalities, ideas and perceptions, and the shape of the book. The second section examines the processes of selecting materials to construct their image of Queen Victoria, and then the subsequent excising of sections in order to satisfy the King. Esher was the central player in all of this.

Chapter 1

Instigating the Project to Publish Queen Victoria's Letters

1.1 Lord Esher and the Origins of the Project

The eighty-one year old Queen Victoria died at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight on the evening of 22 January 1901. Discussions about suitable memorials began immediately throughout the Empire, but especially among the courtiers. The royal ceremonials for the proclamation of the King and the funeral of the Queen were organized by Lord Esher, who had shown his particular flair in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations.[1] A Memorial Committee was established of which Lord Esher was a member, and he was subsequently made Honorary Secretary.[2] Within three weeks of the Queen's death Esher recorded in his Journal:

> Bigge talked today of an official Life of the Queen. Roland Prothero has been thought of and Arthur Benson. Such a task is impossible during the lifetime of certain persons and until the shadow of passing events grows longer. Justice could not be done to the Queen's character, unless her later years were thrown into strong relief, for it was during her later years that her judgement mellowed, and her influence over her people and over the Empire became so powerful.[3]

Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Bigge had been the Queen's Private Secretary at the time of her death.[4] Roland Prothero was an established biographer, having co-written a life of the Dean of Windsor, Arthur Stanley,[5] and Arthur Benson had written a 'Life and Letters' biography of his father, Archbishop Benson, in 1899.[6]

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[1] Peter Fraser, Lord Esher. A Political Biography, London, Hart-Davis MacGibbon, 1973, pp. 68-71, 80-3; David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: the British Monarchy and the *Invention of Tradition* c.1820-1977', E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds, The Invention of Tradition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 134-5.

[2] Esher Journals, [hereinafter: Esher MSS Journals] Churchill Archives, Churchill College, Cambridge, 9 February 1901. Excerpts from Esher's Journals and some of his letters were published in four volumes edited by his sons: Maurice V. Brett, ed., Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher 1870-1910, vol. I & II, London, Ivor Nicolson and Watson, 1934 and following Maurice's death, by his older brother, Oliver, Viscount Esher, ed., Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher 1910-1930, vol. III & IV, London, Ivor Nicolson and Watson, 1938.

[3] Esher MSS Journals, 10 February 1901.

[4] Bigge, who entered Queen Victoria's Household as Groom-in-waiting in 1880, succeeded Sir Henry Ponsonby as Private Secretary to the Queen in 1895. During King Edward's reign he was Private Secretary to the Prince of Wales, and continued in this role when the Prince acceded the throne as King George V. He worked closely with Lord Knollys during King Edward VII's reign and was created Lord Stamfordham in 1911. Helen Rappaport, Queen Victoria. A Biographical Companion, Santa Barbara, ABC-CLIO, 2003, pp. 64-6; George Buckle, ed., Letters of Queen Victoria, Second series, London, John Murray, 1928, vol. III, p. 52.

[5] Sir Sidney Lee, Queen Victoria. A Biography, London, (Smith Elder, 1902), John Murray, 1904, p. 571. Lee was well known for editing the works of Lord Byron, published by John Murray, 1898.

[6] Arthur C. Benson, The Life of E.W. Benson, sometime Archbishop of Canterbury, 2 Vols, London, Macmillan, 1899. See David Newsome, On the Edge of Paradise, A.C. Benson: the Diarist, London, John Murray, 1980, p. 388 and pp. 15-19.

Sir Leslie Stephen, the joint founding editor of the Dictionary of National Biography, had similar qualms over writing the life of the Queen. He wrote to Sir Sidney Lee, his original co-editor and, by this time, sole editor of the DNB: 'I am glad that I have not to do Victoria!'[7] Lee did 'do' her – an admirable achievement considering it took 93,785 words and it was published within nine months of her death in October, 1901.[8]

In rejecting Stamfordham's suggestion of an official Life, Esher, who maintained an extensive library of biographies,[9] may well have been anxious to avoid the genre of nineteenth-century biography, described fifteen years later in a mixture of rancour and acerbic wit by Lytton Strachey as:

> ... those two fat volumes with which it is our custom to commemorate the dead – Who does not know them, with their ill-digested masses of material, their slipshod style, their tone of tedious panegyric, their lamentable lack of selection, of detachment, of design? They are as familiar as the *cortége* of the undertaker and wear the same air of slow, funereal barbarism. One is tempted to suppose, of some of them, that they are composed by that functionary, as the final item of his job.[10]

With characteristic Strachey wit his critique mimics the dolorous tone and style of the genre which both men sought to avoid.

In considering the various possible ways of commemorating the Queen, Esher had already canvassed the idea of Osborne House being purchased from the King by the Government 'to keep it as a shrine, uncontaminated by domestic uses and to fill it with memorials to the Queen'. Pragmatic as always, he saw it not only as appealing to the masses but that 'it would have a good practical effect on the King's financial position'.[11] Another of his suggestions was to construct a monument in the Mall in front

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[7] Lee Papers, MS, English Misc d180, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Sir Leslie Stephen to Sir Sidney Lee, 1 February 1901.

[8] It was the longest single essay in the entire D.N.B. H.C.G. Matthew, Leslie Stephen and the New Dictionary of Biography, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 24. I am indebted to Professor Walter Arnstein for this reference. The D.N.B. entry was expanded into a 632-page biography, published in the following December: Sidney Lee, Queen Victoria. A Biography, London, Smith, Elder, 1902. A second edition followed in March 1903, then a third later that year, and a cheaper fourth edition was published by John Murray in 1904.

[9] Benson Diary, Old Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge, 20 July 1903, p. 87.

[10] Lytton Strachey, Eminent Victorians, (London, Chatto and Windus, 1918), Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1986, p. 10.

[11] Esher MSS Journals, 10 February 1901. (This sentence was deleted from the published excerpt.)
There had been a steady spate of allegations concerning the state of the King's finances throughout his adult life, some suggesting that he had debts amounting to £600,000. For details see Philip Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, London, John Murray, 1964, pp. 88-9, 217, 257-60. Esher changed his mind over the course of the year, (see Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. I, 5 December 1901, p. 322), possibly because Queen Victoria had bequeathed the house to each of her children in equal shares (Magnus, King Edward

of Buckingham Palace. The monument was eventually completed, to be unveiled by King George V in 1911.[12] This project entailed a major redevelopment of the Mall and the façade of Buckingham Palace, which has subsequently become a stage for Royal events in London.[13]

Esher had yet another idea, totally novel, a publishing 'first': to publish the Queen's correspondence.[14] There had developed a tradition of publishing 'Life and Letters' biographies of Prime Ministers and other important personages throughout the nineteenth century; indeed such publications had been produced, or were planned, for many of the Queen's serving ministers. Although the letters of various monarchs have since been published, this was the first such enterprise. Considering the task, Esher recorded in his Journal that 'the only possible thing to do was to (1) collect and arrange all her papers, (2) print selections from her journals up to a certain date, (3) print correspondence *very fully* up to a certain date'. The main purpose as he saw it at this stage was '*pour servir* the historians of the future'. This he believed would be 'far more interesting than any expurgated biography'. Indeed, 'the truest service to the Queen is to let her speak for herself'.[15]

But he did not share his idea with others immediately. In the manner of the political pragmatist that he was, Esher knew he would have to clear the ground, quite a lot of ground, to ensure there was no opposition from the King's influential sisters, the Princesses Louise, Helena and Beatrice, his brother, Arthur, Duke of Connaught, or from senior courtiers. He needed to establish his credibility within the Court, and with

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the Seventh, p. 289). By February 1902 Esher had persuaded both the King, and his siblings, that Osborne House should be given to the nation on the day of his coronation: one half was to be refurbished as a convalescent home for naval Officers, the other to be kept as a shrine to Queen Victoria. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. I, pp. 322-3 and 325.

[12] James Lees-Milne, The Enigmatic Edwardian. The Life of Reginald, 2nd Viscount Esher, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1986, p. 132.

[13] Robert Lacey, Royal. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, London, Little, Brown, 2002, pp. 45-6. Thus various monarchs have been able to transform many rituals into public spectacles. See Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual', pp. 134-5, and David Starkey, 'The Modern Monarchy: Rituals of Privacy and their Subversion', in Robert Smith and John S. Moore, eds, The Monarchy. Fifteen Hundred Years of Tradition, London, Smith's Peerage, 1998, pp. 255-6.

[14] There was a nineteenth-century publishing enterprise Letters and papers, foreign and domestic, of the reign of Henry VIII: preserved in the Public Record Office, the British Museum, and elsewhere in England, 22 vols, vols 1-4 arr. and cataloged by J.S. Brewer; vols 5-13 arr. and cataloged by J. Gairdner; vols 14-21 arr. and cataloged by J. Gairdner and R.H. Brodie, London, Longman, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1862-1932. The intention, scope and content of this publication was very different to the project of Benson and Esher, according to the Tudor historian, Mrs Judith Richards, La Trobe University. (personal communication).

[15] Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. I, 10 February 1901, p. 284.

each of them personally, to gain their confidence. He waited more than two years before he broached the subject first with the King and then with the Archbishop of Canterbury.

But within weeks of the Queen's death, possibly as a result of access to the papers which he had been given to clarify matters of precedence for her funeral and the forthcoming Coronation, Esher made the observation that her 'papers were not well kept after the Prince Consort's death'. This was, he thought, due to the Queen's insistence on relying only on Prince Albert's German secretary, Maurice Müther, and a cataloguing system, instituted by the Prince, which was incapable of dealing with the subsequent avalanche of papers over the succeeding forty years following the Prince's death.[16] At the end of April Esher wrote that he had, at last, had an opportunity to speak to the King in response to the request that he 'arrange the Queen's papers'.[17]

Esher may have been expecting the request earlier when he had remarked on the disordered state of the papers. The papers at this time would certainly have comprised reports and letters written to Queen Victoria. There was however no systematic practice of making copies of letters written by her. Some families believed it to be customary that these letters should be returned to Windsor upon the death of the recipient or upon the monarch's death, but it was not mandatory.[18] Although the Queen outlived many of these recipients, the Victorian archive does not contain many such collections. Cataloguing had not been completed, so locating the letters in such a 'disordered state' presented huge, ongoing problems for the editors.

The extent of Esher's access is unclear. He seems to have been 'itching' to have greater access to them! This frustration with King Edward VII was expressed in the affable and gentlemanly manner which characterised Esher: 'The King will possibly become less tenacious and secret as time goes on. It is impossible to avoid trusting a private secretary, if a man, King or subject, wishes to be well served.'[19]

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[16] Esher MSS Journals, 1 April 1901. Maurice Müther only left the service of the Hesse family in 1887 to become Queen Victoria's German secretary, so Esher was mistaken to describe him as 'Prince Albert's German Secretary'. I thank Jill Kelsey, Royal Archives, for this correction.
[17] Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. I, 18 April 1901, Esher in a letter to his son, Maurice, p. 292.
[18] Robin Mackworth-Young, 'The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle', Archives, vol. XIII, no. 59, Spring, 1978, pp. 115-130. The evolution of the custom is spelled out, pp. 120-3.
[19] Esher MSS Journals, 1 April 1901. This comment no doubt draws on Esher's experience as a Private Secretary to Lord Hartington from January 1878 - December 1884.

It would seem that the King was soon won over. During the three months following the Queen's death, Esher quickly became a key figure in many of the private, domestic arrangements of the Royal Family. In addition to arranging the funeral and interment of the Queen and the Proclamation of the new King, he was consulted concerning the arranging of the rooms in both Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle. In March he recorded he had spent most days with King Edward and Queen Alexandra 'most intimately, fussing about their private affairs'.[20] Much of the next two years were taken up with such needs of the new King and Queen, including plans for their Coronations, and Esher was also busy with the Queen Victoria Memorial Committee. Both of these projects entailed recourse to precedent.[21] In the process, Esher made himself the obvious man for the job of sorting the Queen's papers. For the first two years following Queen Victoria's death Esher made no mention in his Journal or his letters of the role of the King's youngest sister, Beatrice, the Queen's Literary Executor. The Queen's diaries and papers were her property and her responsibility, although she was extreme in carrying out her mother's wishes. By comparison, whatever Esher did to the letters has to be viewed more favourably than Beatrice's destruction of her Mother's Journal; it must be noted, though, that Esher too carried out an extensive amount of burning in his time as archivist.[22]

Being so often in discussion with the King at Windsor and Buckingham Palace, Esher must have known something of the legal positions. It was not, however, until October 1902 that Princess Beatrice wrote to Lord Esher asking if he could spare some time to assist her: 'I feel I ought finally to go through all that remains for as I have my dear Mother's written instructions to be solely responsible for the arranging and retaining of them in the manner she would have wished, I must not leave it to others...'[23]

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[20] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 130. Letter from Esher to his intimate friend from Eton, Charles 'Chat' Williamson.

[21] ibid., pp. 129-136; 139-41; 142; 150-51. Esher during this time also worked with the War Office and on Army reform, Fraser, Lord Esher, pp. 13-4, and Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 142-8. There had to be two coronations planned because the King developed appendicitis and was operated on two days before the first planned event. (Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, pp. 296-9, and Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 132-3, 139-41). The Coronation Committee comprised the King, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, and Esher. (Benson Diary, vol. 11, March 3 1902, p. 136). As early as February 1901, Esher sent Knollys a memo about the organization of the Committee. (Brett, vol. I, p. 280). For a detailed analysis of the Coronation Committee and planning see William M. Kuhn, Democratic Royalism. The Transformation of the British Monarchy, 1861-1914, London, Macmillan, 1996, p. 125-6.

[22] Sheila de Bellaigue, 'The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle', The Court Historian, vol. III, no. 2, 1998, pp. 10-20; see also Mackworth-Young, 'The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle', pp. 115-130.

[23] Esher Papers, 11/3, Royal Correspondence 1903-1908, 18 October 1902.

From this note it is not clear what the 'it' was that Princess Beatrice believed she 'must not leave to others': What was she responsible for – just her Mother's Journals? – her private papers? – all of the papers? Who were the 'others' to whom she might leave the work – Esher? Her other children? Perhaps the work was to be negotiated, but given the detailed directions Victoria had left concerning her funeral and burial,[24] it would have been uncharacteristic of her. There is no evidence of Esher being certain of this division of labour either. That the King asked him to arrange his mother's papers suggests that Princess Beatrice's responsibilities rested primarily with the Journals and perhaps, that unclear category, 'private, family letters'. The King himself may have been uncertain.

Nevertheless Esher familiarized himself with the papers to hand relatively quickly, formulating his '*pour servir* the historians' idea within a month of the Queen's death; yet his biographer, James Lees-Milne, says the papers amounted to 'millions of words'.[25] Given that in that month he was also very busy with the organization of the Queen's funeral service and burial, and with the domestic arrangements of the new King and Queen, it is surprising that he could assess the papers in that short time. Quite possibly the keys he used to show Arthur Benson and several other Eton friends around Windsor Castle in March 1902[26] had also allowed him to familiarize himself with some of the papers even earlier.

Esher soon realised that to produce the Letters of Queen Victoria 1837-1861[27] for the reading public, he would need assistance from a suitable scholar with a literary background. The person would of course be a man, from the correct social and educational background – a 'Gentleman' with all the values and behaviours of the gentlemanly ethos as it had evolved by the early Edwardian years.[28] This ethos and the way in which each of its aspects influenced the editing of the letters of Queen Victoria will be explored more fully in the next chapters detailing the backgrounds, characters and networks of the co-editors. The process for the selection of the co-editor for the project in many ways exemplified the protocols and constraints of those gentlemanly networks.

[24] See for such details Tony Rennell, The Last Days of Glory: the Death of Queen Victoria, New York, St. Martin's Press, 2001, and Michaela Reid, Ask Sir James, Sir James Reid, Personal Physician to Queen Victoria and Physician-in-Ordinary to Three Monarchs, New York, Penguin Books, 1989.
[25] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 177.
[26] Benson Diary, Magdalene College, Cambridge, vol. 11, 3 March 1902, p. 136. The tone of Benson's diary entry suggests that he thought Esher was flaunting some sort of licence.
[27] A.C. Benson and Viscount Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria 1837-1861, London, John Murray 1907.
[28] For analysis of the ethos see Chapter 4 of this thesis.

1.2 Selecting the Co-editor

Lord Esher had come to know Arthur Benson from his frequent visits to Eton College. Esher's old Housemaster, A.C. Ainger, was still at Eton and had become a close friend of Benson's.[29] Esher knew Benson also for the verses he had written for various Royal occasions throughout the past decade. *Land of Hope and Glory* is the best remembered of these. Benson originally wrote those verses for the Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1 by Sir Edward Elgar as the finale of the *Coronation Ode* for King Edward VII.[30] But Benson was also known to Esher as a published writer and it was due to his acclaimed biography of his father, a former Archbishop of Canterbury, that he was thought of in relation to the editing of Queen Victoria's letters.[31] Esher, after consultation with the King's secretary, Lord Knollys, met with the current Archbishop, Randall Davidson, to discuss publishing the Queen's letters.[32] Esher reported the meeting to Knollys:

> [Davidson agreed] that *memoirs pour servir* in the shape of 'The Correspondence of Queen Victoria from 1837-1861' is what is required, connected more or less by notes and introductory passages, and that in reference to the editorship, ... Arthur Benson would be superior [to the other candidates] – more capable, more suitable and more trustworthy; [and] that it would be desirable, perhaps necessary, that I should be associated with him in the joint editing of the book.[33]

The gentlemanly networks were in full swing. There were deep family and Church inter-connections between the Bensons and the Davidsons,[34] hence, Davidson was able to tell Esher that Benson had become deeply discontented in his work at Eton College as a House Master. Esher then asked Knollys for permission 'to privately ascertain if – <u>in the event of the suggestion being made</u> – Arthur Benson would consent to undertake the task'.[35] The reply came back from Knollys, in Dublin for the State Visit by the King

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[29] One example of such meetings was recorded in Benson's Diary, vol. 11, 3 March 1902, p. 136.

[30] For details on this, see Yvonne M. Ward, ' "Gosh! man I've got a tune in my head!" Edward Elgar, A.C. Benson, and the creation of *Land of Hope and Glory'*, <u>The Court Historian</u>, vol. 7, no. 1, March 2002, pp. 17-41.

[31] A.C. Benson, <u>Life of Edward White Benson.</u>

[32] Brett, <u>Journals and Letters</u>, vol. II, p. 2.

[33] ibid., p. 4.

[34] See Newsome, <u>On the Edge of Paradise</u>, p. 51 and p. 184; N.G. Annan, 'The Intellectual Aristocracy', in J.H. Plumb, ed., <u>Studies in Social History. A Tribute to G.M. Trevelyan</u>, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1955, pp. 243-87; John Tosh, 'Domesticity and Manliness in the Victorian Middle Class. The Family of Edward White Benson,' in Michael Roper and John Tosh, eds, <u>Manful Assertions. Masculinities in Britain since 1800</u>, London and New York, Routledge, 1991, pp. 44-73.

[35] Esher Papers, 11/3, Royal Correspondence, 17 July 1903. This letter contains many examples of the nuances of deferential language employed by all of the men.

and Queen, that the King 'fully approves your sounding [out] Mr Arthur Benson as to whether, together with you he should be willing to undertake the work. Should he be so, you are at liberty to talk the matter over generally with him ... '.[36] Esher wasted no time in summoning Benson to his home, Orchard Lea, in Windsor.

Benson had no inkling of the nature of the visit. He sent his acceptance, but like Eeyore, worried lest it should rain! In his diary he recorded the invitation from Lord Esher: 'the King wished him to speak to me on a matter of importance! It must be that Lord Churchill wants me to take his boy next year...'.[37] Alluding to French history and the official letters ordering people to the *Bastille*, he flippantly added to Esher: 'I am wondering what it can be that H.M. can want to have me spoken to about, as it feels as if I should be arrested by *lettres de cachet* and committed to the Tower!'[38] In effect, he was to be taken captive by '*lettres*' and committed to the Tower, but it was the Round Tower at Windsor rather than the Tower of London!

Benson 'byked' over to Orchard Lea and found his way in.[39] Esher was in the garden reading with his son, Maurice, alongside him. Benson described the garden in full beauty and then found that 'in the whole of the long talk that followed, my thoughts and recollections are curiously knit with the colours and textures of flowers in the beds we paced past'. He clearly had no premonition of the conversation that ensued.

> Esher made me a statement at once, with a kind of smile, yet holding it back for effect. The King was going to bring out Correspondence and letters of Q.V. [Queen Victoria] and would I edit it, with him. (Esher). I was to be sounded and then offered it. He had seen the Abp [Archbishop] who entirely approved.[40]

The opportunity to do the editing work was something of a godsend to Benson, as he confided in his diary:

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[36] ibid., 22 July 1903.
[37] Benson Diary, vol. 35, 24 July 1903, pp. 79-80.
[38] Esher Papers, 11/4, Letter from Benson and Esher, 24 July 1903. So far I have been unable to locate Esher's letters to Benson. Archives and libraries throughout the UK, USA and Canada have been extensively checked, but to no avail. The Librarian of the Old Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge, where the Benson diaries are housed, was most helpful to me with his suggestions.
[39] Benson Diary, vol. 35, 25 July 1903, pp. 81-5. The following account of the meeting is drawn from Benson's reflection upon the event. Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate any detailed account of the meeting by Esher, merely a brief account in a letter to Davidson, in Brett, Journals and Letters, Vol. II, p. 5. A further note on Benson as diarist – he didn't write in his diary each day, but often wrote accounts of a week or two at a time, retrospectively, so chronology of events can be haphazard; however it is unlikely to be so in this case. For further details and discussion see Newsome, Edge of Paradise, Introduction, pp. 1-12.
[40] Benson Diary, vol. 35, 25 July 1903, pp. 81-3.

> Here am I crushed with work at Eton, hardly strong enough to wriggle out and yet no motive to go at any particular minute. Suddenly in the middle of all my discontent and irritability a door is silently and swiftly opened to me. In the middle of this quiet, sunny garden, full of sweet scents and roses, I am suddenly offered the task of writing or editing one of the most interesting books of the day, of the Century. I have waited long for some indication – and was there ever a clearer leading?[41]

The conversation continued through an examination of Esher's collection of biographies, another stroll, tea, listening to opera on a gramophone (a marvellous novelty to Benson) and further talk as Esher walked some of the way back to Eton with Benson. During this walk, Esher told him more interesting snippets which Benson duly recorded in his diary, such as, that Princess Beatrice was 'engaged in copying from the [Queen's] Diary what she thinks of public interest', – which Benson supposed to mean 'the dullest part' – and that 'there are two rooms full of letters and papers at Windsor – to Melbourne, Palmerston &c &c'.[42] Perhaps this gives some suggestion of Esher's position in relation to the papers and to the demarcation of responsibilities; his bland description of her task, omitting any mention of the original journals being burned as she progressed through the rewriting, is very telling. If Benson had been told he would certainly have commented on it – if not to Esher, at least in his diary. Esher appeared not to have known of the incendiary activity at that time.

Esher was very pleased with his efforts and wrote next day to Davidson that 'Benson seemed very captivated by the idea'.[43] Davidson replied that he was sure the decision arrived at 'was a wise one'.[44] Esher wrote a similar message to Knollys, adding that Benson was 'humbly grateful to the King' for his 'gracious proposal'.[45] Benson, for all the thrill he felt at the time, became unsure as darkness fell. He sat through a special committee meeting at Eton to consider fire precautions following a disastrous fire at another Eton house, Kindersley, in the previous month. The performance of the Head Master disillusioned him further about the leadership at Eton.[46] He 'had a bad night –

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[41] ibid., pp. 83-5. 'Leading' here, I think in Benson's mind means specifically a divine intervention. See his recollection of a discussion with Mary Cholmondeley and the sense of God leading individuals in the Benson diaries, vol. 11, Jan-Mar 1902, pp. 118-22. Also in the Preface and Introduction (1906) to Benson's The Thread of Gold, London, John Murray, 1910 (4th edn, 5th reprint) pp. vi and xii, where he discussed similar ideas.
[42] Benson Diary, vol. 35, 25 July 1903, pp. 81-3.
[43] Davidson Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, 520/193, Letter from Esher, 26 July 1903.
[44] Esher Papers, 11/3, 27 July 1903.
[45] ibid., 11/7, 27 July 1903.
[46] To Benson's great distress, (and as would be every Housemaster's nightmare) two boys died in the fire. (Newsome, On the Edge of Paradise, pp. 77-8; on Warre's handling of the matter and Benson's

and no wonder – shirked Chapel, and then wrote two letters – one to Warre [Head Master of Eton] resigning as simply as I could – and one to Esher accepting'.[47]

His formal letter of acceptance to Esher was accompanied by a less formal one which showed some of the personal traits which Esher's biographer, Lees-Milne, says Esher found to be so irritating in Benson. After beginning the letter:

> I don't see why I should keep you waiting any longer for the answer, which is YES. I had not really any doubt when you asked me, but one ought, like Robinson Crusoe, to make a careful list of the cons in a serious matter like this. There are one or two cons, but not to be weighed for a moment against the pros…

He continued:

> I enjoyed my visit to you yesterday very much and thought myself a great fool for not having been before; but I don't think that Fortunate Princes like yourself know the pangs of diffidence suffered by blonde persons of the Walrus type! I want to say elaborately how grateful I am to you, whose kind hand I trace in this matter; but it is all there!
> Yours ever, Arthur C. Benson.[48]

Lees-Milne believed Esher 'looked on Benson as an over-credulous old woman'[49] who fussed over details. Benson's letters were apt to be written as if he was flustered, which was a great contrast to Esher's cool and polished style of expression. For Benson, minor items often preceded more important ones, which were frequently tacked on as afterthoughts or postscripts, the opposite of Esher's *modus operandi*. In the letter of acceptance quoted above, Benson postscripted: 'One other minute point - may I mention in the circular I shall have to write to the parents the cause of my resignation?'

One can almost hear Esher spluttering apoplectically as he reached for his pen and paper to hurriedly provide suitably unrevealing wording for the parents' circular, and to have it sent to Benson posthaste.[50] A Royal appointment was not to be made public through a circular from a Housemaster at Eton to the parents! Public announcements

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increasing frustration with Warre's leadership, pp. 117-8). Part of Benson's criticism could be attributed to an ambivalent inclination to become Head of Eton himself. See his response to the selection of Head in his diary, 6 April 1905; Newsome's analysis of Benson in this, On the Edge of Paradise, p. 180; and that of his brother, Fred, in E.F. Benson, Final Edition An Informal Autobiography, London, Hogarth, 1988, (First published, 1940), p. 20.

[47] Benson Diary, vol. 35, 26 July 1903, p. 91.

[48] Esher Papers, 11/4, 26 July 1903.

[49] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 177.

[50] Esher Papers, 11/4, 29 July 1903. Benson to Esher: 'One line of thanks for your note ... and the wording of the parents' circular…'

from the Court of items of such importance had to be carefully constructed. There must have been some further considerations, as in a later letter Benson wrote to Esher:

> I quite understand about not putting H.M.'s name forward; but it is a great relief to me to be able to speak freely about the work. To say I was leaving and then to nod and wink and jerk the thumb over my shoulder and say I would if I could &c. is not to my taste. Many thanks for making it all square. Very sincerely yours, Arthur C. Benson.[51]

Esher, who had an innately broader view of his actions, reinforced by his experiences in the theatres of the Court and the Empire, was likely to find Benson's myopia irritating.

A public announcement was eventually made through The Times and the Press Association in the last week of September, possibly at the behest of Esher and with pressure from Benson. Benson had written to Esher on 1 August, telling him rather ingenuously, that he 'had told only two or three of my most intimate friends, about the nature of the work I am undertaking, and they are sworn to secrecy, yet it is bound to get out – "a bird of the air will carry the matter" – and that would be a bore ...'.[52] This was not something for which Esher would have wanted to be accountable to the King. On the 15 August Benson wrote to Esher that their mutual friend, Edmund Gosse, told him 'that it was a matter of common knowledge that you [Esher] had had the editing entrusted to you'.[53] Probably adding further to this pressure was a letter received by Esher from the publisher, Frederick Macmillan, reminding him that if a life of Queen Victoria was to be 'done' he, Esher, had promised that Macmillans would be considered.[54] Obviously, a 'little bird' had flown, and flittered freely around the gentlemanly networks!

Esher immediately wrote to King Edward VII's Private Secretary, Lord Knollys, agreeing with Benson and suggesting that a notice to 'dispose of unauthorized rumours' would be a good idea.[55] Almost three weeks after Benson's initial suggestion, Esher gave way. Whilst accompanying the King on a visit to Balmoral, Esher had a letter sent to his secretary, Stanley Quick, in London, with the formal announcement and instructions to: 'Send a copy of the enclosed to The Times before 12 o'clock on

[51] ibid., 11/4, 19 August 1903.
[52] ibid., 11/4, 1 August, 1903.
[53] ibid., 11/4, 15 August, 1903.
[54] Ibid., 11/7, 4 September, 1903.
[55] Royal Archives, Windsor Castle, RA VIC/W 38/113, Esher to Knollys, 6 September 1903.

Saturday morning and to all the principal papers, and to the Press Association so that it appears on Monday.' The message was succinct:

> H.M. the King has commanded the publication of selections from the correspondence of Queen Victoria between the years 1837-1861. The work will be edited by Arthur Christopher Benson M.A. and Viscount Esher K.C.B. and will be published by John Murray.[56]

Given that two and a half years had passed since the Queen's death and his first suggestion of the publication of the Queen's letters, Esher moved very quickly once he had the King's approval. Within three weeks of his meeting with Benson, there was a draft agreement drawn up with the publisher, John Murray, and this was signed within the month. At the Orchard Lea visit, Esher had directed Benson that, if he accepted, he should immediately organize a meeting with Murray. At this meeting, which was held the following week, Murray, by way of further encouragement, brought out ledgers to show the impressionable Benson the profits from previous Royal publications which Benson recorded thus: 'the Speeches of the Prince Consort, had been £1500 and the Life of Princess Alice over £5000. It looks as if this ought not to be less.'[57] The form of the book was also discussed at this meeting. Murray recommended two volumes but three would be possible, but there was no mention of the projected number of pages or word length.[58] The price was recommended by Murray to be 42/-, that was two guineas for two volumes.[59] The contract between which the editors, who were referred to as 'the Authors', and Murray read:

> The entire proceeds of sales shall in the first instance be devoted to the repayment of the cost of the production; if after meeting this liability they yield a surplus all such surplus shall be treated as profit and divided between the Authors and the Publishers in the proportion of 2/3 to the authors and 1/3 to the publisher. If the cost be never covered by the yield, the publisher shall bear the loss.[60]

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[56] Esher Papers, 11/7, 23 September 1903. In the original document the word 'commanded' had previously been changed from 'authorised'.

[57] Benson Diary, vol. 35, 31 July 1903. It is possible that Benson has the wrong title here for the letters of Princess Alice. John Murray published two volumes of letters from Princess Alice to her mother in 1884 and 1885, neither of which had the title Life of Princess Alice. See John van der Kiste, Queen Victoria's Family. A Select Bibliography, Biggleswade, Clover Publications, 1982, p. 42.

[58] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 1 August 1903.

[59] ibid., 4 August 1903.

[60] Ibid., Miscellaneous correspondence, 11/7, 8 August 1903, Clause 3, Extract of Memorandum of Agreement.

This was accepted by Benson on 21 August and forwarded to Esher.[61] There was subsequently, a separate agreement between the editors. Esher proposed to Benson that:

> of our share of the profits you should take the whole up to £1200, and that of the nett profit over and above that amount you should take 2/3 leaving 1/3 at my disposal for any purpose to which I may apply it. Will you let me know if this suggestion meets with your approval, and if not what you would propose...[62]

These terms Benson accepted 'gratefully and unhesitatingly'.[63] But he also understood what this meant – it was not mere generosity on Esher's part. In his diary he reminded himself: 'This means, of course, that I shall have to do all the work.'[64]

[61] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 21 August 1903.
[62] ibid., Miscellaneous correspondence, 11/7, Esher to Benson (copy), 8 August 1903.
[63] ibid., 11/7, Extract Benson to Esher (copy), 8 August 1903.
[64] Benson Diary, vol. 35. Uncertain date but either 12 or 13 August 1903.

Chapter 2

The Characters and Lives of the Editors: Who was the Second Viscount Esher?

Portrait c1900., to be scanned in...

Reginald Baliol Brett, born 1852,

Succeeded to Viscountcy as 2nd Lord Esher in May 1899,

Died 1930.

2.1 His Public Career

Reginald Brett, the second Viscount Esher, was a man of great complexity. During the time of the editing of Queen Victoria's letters, he maintained friendships with men of many political persuasions simultaneously, and in moving ever deeper within royal circles came to be indispensable to King Edward VII. Although his friends, loves and passions were always to dominate his life, he accepted an ever-increasing number of offices and trusteeships: he was Secretary to H.M. Office of Works from 1895 until 1902; from 1901 he was Lieutenant-Governor of Windsor Castle; he was appointed to the South African War Inquiry Commission in 1902; he became a Director of the Royal Opera House from 1903 and was the King's nominee on various bodies including the British Museum, the Wallace Collection, and the Commission of the Exhibition of 1851 and later the London Museum; he was the Chairman of the Committee on War Office Reconstruction from 1904, a committee which produced the Esher report; he was made a Permanent member of the Commission of Imperial Defence from 1905, and he was the Keeper of the King's Archives from 1901 although the position was not made official until 1910.[1] All of these positions were appointments; not one was elected.

In these various positions he had influence and his advice was sought by powerful and seemingly anomalous groups of individuals who were frequently at loggerheads with each other.[2] For example, he 'was influential with three sovereigns of diverse character, [Queen Victoria, King Edward VII and King George V] and on close confidential terms with three very different private secretaries to monarchs, Sir Frederick Ponsonby, Lord Knollys and Sir Arthur Bigge, (later Lord Stamfordham)'.[3] In the various political

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[1] Details collected from Esher Papers, Churchill Archives, Churchill College, Cambridge; Maurice V. Brett, ed., Journals and Letters of Reginald, Viscount Esher, vol. I, 1870-1903, and vol. II, 1903-1910, London, Ivor, Nicholson & Watson, 1934-8; Peter Fraser, Lord Esher. A Political Biography, London, Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1973, pp. 68-200; Paul H. Emden, Behind the Throne, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1934, pp. 307-8; James Lees-Milne, The Enigmatic Edwardian. The Life of Reginald, 2nd Viscount Esher, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1986 *passim*; A.L. Rowse, Homosexuals in History. A Study of Ambivalence in Society, Literature and the Arts, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1977, pp. 220-2.

[2] For example, Esher's report of a Memorial Committee meeting where Rosebery and Chamberlain, 'bickered a good deal. They do not love one another'. M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. I, p. 286.

[3] Fraser, Lord Esher, p. 2. Without wanting to divert attention from the main point, I believe Fraser to have been confused about the Ponsonbys in this instance. He referred to the three sovereigns served by Esher – Victoria, Edward VII and George V – and listed three royal secretaries as Frederick Ponsonby, Knollys and Bigge. Frederick Ponsonby was not a royal secretary. His father, Henry, was Queen Victoria's secretary until 1896. Frederick (Fritz) was an equerry to Victoria. He later assisted both Knollys and Stamfordham. In each of his posts he was in contact with Esher, which in effect serves to

circles he had the ability to be a confidante and adviser to sworn political enemies, such as Lord Rosebery[4] and Lewis (Lou-lou) Harcourt, the ambitious son of Sir William Harcourt.[5] Similarly, he 'impressed Balfour to the extent that as [Conservative] Prime Minister he placed a major task of military reorganisation in his hands', and then 'persuaded Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith to keep him on as military adviser to Haldane and the Liberal government'.[6]

As Secretary of the Office of Works, Esher was involved in the management of an extraordinary series of state occasions: Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee of 1897,[7] the funeral of William Gladstone,[8] the opening of the Victoria and Albert Museum,[9] the funeral of Queen Victoria[10] and the coronation of Edward VII.[11] In contrast to many of his contemporaries, Esher understood that ceremonies and rituals could be more than 'just a surface matter and can convey messages of the deepest identity'.[12] The public success of these Royal occasions and others throughout the twentieth century has been attributed to the theatrical sense of Esher.[13]

To produce such Royal spectacles, Esher had to work with committees of diverse, and often competing, members and interests. There were disagreements between the branches of the armed forces at the funeral of Queen Victoria, and between the Offices

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amplify Fraser's point of the extent of Esher's royal influence! For further details see William M. Kuhn, Henry and Mary Ponsonby. Life at the Court of Queen Victoria, London, Duckworth, 2002, p. 186.

[4] Fraser, Lord Esher, p. 6. For specific details, see Robert Rhodes James, Rosebery. A Biography of Archibald Philip, Fifth Earl of Rosebery, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965, pp. 300-4. For Esher's deft handling of similar incidents see Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 129-73.

[5] Lewis Harcourt was a lifelong friend of Esher's despite trying to seduce his two sons and one of his daughters, Dorothy. He later made advances to a young Eton boy. The boy was the son of Mrs Willie James, one of Edward VII's mistresses. After the scandal broke, Harcourt took his own life rather than face prosecution. Noel Annan, Our Age. Portrait of a Generation, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1990, pp. 103 and 119, and Lees-Milne, The Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 112, 138 and 176.

[6] Fraser, Lord Esher, p. 2. Also on Esher's political progression see Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 141-8. The project was the War Office Reconstruction which led to a major restructuring of the Army.

[7] For details see William M. Kuhn, Democratic Royalism. The Transformation of the British Monarchy 1861-1914, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1998, pp. 62-8.

[8] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 114-5.

[9] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. I, pp. 230-1; Sir Sidney Lee, Queen Victoria. A Biography, London, Smith, Elder, 1902, pp. 540-1.

[10] Kuhn, Royalism, pp. 122-5; Fraser, Lord Esher, pp. 80-1.

[11] Kuhn, Royalism, pp. 71-2, 92-7, 125-8; Fraser, Lord Esher, p. 69.

[12] Robert Lacey, Royal. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, London, Little, Brown, 2002, p. 38.

[13] David Cannadine, ' The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: the British Monarchy and the *Invention of Tradition* c.1820-1977', E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds, The Invention of Tradition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 134-5, and David Starkey, 'The Modern Monarchy: Rituals of Privacy and their Subversion', in Robert Smith and John S. Moore, eds, The Monarchy. Fifteen Hundred Years of Tradition, London, Smith's Peerage, 1998, pp. 255-6.

of the Earl Marshal and the Royal Household over the Coronation, all to be sorted out or smoothed over by Esher.[14] But even the equable Esher was sorely tried as the day of the Jubilee drew near: 'The d____d Jubilee is getting very much on my nerves today, as there has been no alleviations by way of funny incidents.'[15] Whilst Secretary to H.M. Office of Works he achieved a great deal:

> He was responsible for the sweeping changes in the royal palaces made by the new King – the re-establishment of Buckingham Palace, the disposal of Osborne House, and the reorganization of Windsor Castle and Hampton Court Palace. He also chaired the committee which chose the Memorial to Queen Victoria and succeeded in persuading this inter-party body, on which Rosebery squabbled with Chamberlain, to adopt his plan. This resulted in the modern layout of the Mall, the open space before Buckingham Palace and the building of Admiralty Arch.[16]

Yet, this appointment to the Office of Works was accepted by Esher as much from sentiment as from any other motive. It was offered to him by the Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery, who had been an intimate since childhood. In his letter of acceptance Esher confided to his dear friend: 'Motives are very complex things, and mine are no exception, but perhaps some day I may be able to throw light on those which govern this decision.'[17] 'Some day' came soon. Within a week he was again writing to Rosebery on the matter, recollecting their friendship since their days at Eton College:

> From that time onward, you have always been more to me than anyone else in public life – representing something which every other man lacked.
> For this reason, if for no other, I desired to be beholden to you, and to feel this tie in addition to those of private friendship.
> All this may be very sentimental, *mais voilà comme je suis.* You may always command me as before and believe me affectionately yours.
> Esher.[18]

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[14] For examples, Kuhn, Royalism, for details on funeral, pp. 122-5, on coronation, pp.125-8; Fraser, Lord Esher, p. 70; M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. I, p. 204, letter from the Head of the Metropolitan Police Office after the Jubilee, praising Brett and the assistance they have received from Brett's office. Following the Queen's funeral the American filmmaker, Charles Urban, sent Esher a box of fine cigars. Esher's secretary, Stanley Quick, in his letter of thanks concluded with: '… future possibilities need no strengthening.' Urban was given favourable camera positions on subsequent Royal occasions. I am grateful to Richard Brown for this reference from the Urban papers, Imperial College Library, London, URB 1. See further Richard Brown, ' "It is a very wonderful process...". Film and British Royalty, 1896-1902', The Court Historian, vol. 8, No. 1, July 2003, pp. 1-22.

[15] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. I, 21 June 1897, p. 202.

[16] Fraser, Lord Esher, p. 70.

[17] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. I, Letter of 27 May 1895, p. 191.

[18] ibid., Letter of 2 June 1895. As Reginald Brett, Esher published Yoke of Empire: Sketches of the Queen's Prime Ministers, London, Macmillan, 1896, which he dedicated to 'The Queen's Youngest Prime Minister' – Rosebery.

These political episodes in Esher's life, with their romantic, sentimental, homosexual overtones, encapsulate the essence of many of the gentlemanly networks which began at birth, developed during school days, and continued to flourish and be relied upon throughout the men's adult lives.

Throughout the historiography, Esher's rise is shown to have occurred most spectacularly during the reign of Edward VII. According to James Lees-Milne, the King came to see in Esher an '*ex officio* servant and confidential adviser who was utterly dependable, sympathetic and loyal'.[19] Philip Magnus believed Esher's subtlety, combined with a great driving force, and his capacity for inspiring friendship, accounted for his 'acknowledged primacy' in the King's circle,[20] whereas William M. Kuhn attributed it largely to Esher's reputation as an expert on royal ceremony.[21] This was a view which Esher sought to perpetuate. A published excerpt from his diary records an episode early in the reign of Edward VII, on parting, the King touchingly said to Esher: 'You must never leave my service'. Esher bowed and solemnly kissed the King's ring. He recorded the episode in his Journal, poignantly describing himself being moved almost to tears by the King's affectionate display.[22] Soon after this, Esher was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Windsor Castle. The position had traditionally been held by a member of the Royal family, and there was no precedent for the incumbent to become a confidante and adviser to the Sovereign beyond Windsor, let alone to London, Sandringham, Balmoral and throughout the realm, as Esher rapidly became.

Esher was able to advise the King on both political issues and personalities.[23] He could also draw on his wide circle of friends and acquaintances to fill specialist appointments to be made by the King. Frequently these were reciprocal acts of social, political and financial advantage, which reinforced the networks between these gentleman of the Royal circle – a type of patronage but horizontal and circuitous – often based on affection rather than deference. For example, Esher suggested to the King that Lionel Cust, the Director of the National Portrait Gallery, should become Surveyor of the

[19] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 130.
[20] Philip Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, London, John Murray, 1964, pp. 285-6.
[21] Kuhn, Royalism, pp. 57-78.
[22] Esher MSS Journal, Esher Papers, 17 February 1901.
[23] This ability of Esher's has been critically assessed by Simon Heffer, Power and Place. The Political Consequences of King Edward VII, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998, esp. pp. 99-101 and 213-8.

King's Pictures, an important post considering all of the acquisitions of Victoria's reign and the subsequent decision by the King to re-organise the Palaces and Royal residences, but a position which would help Cust financially as well.[24] Cust later played a significant role in King Edward's efforts to bring about the *Entente Cordiale* in 1905.[25] From his large circle of friends and acquaintances Esher was also able to suggest Arthur Benson as co-editor for the Letters of Queen Victoria.

This closeness that evolved between the King and Esher was the product of personal propensities and circumstances. The young Regy Brett was a friend of Albert Grey, son of General Grey, Queen Victoria's first Private Secretary.[26] In the company of Albert Grey, he had been a dinner guest at Marlborough House in the 1870s.[27] In the 1880s Brett may have been brought to the notice of the Prince of Wales through their shared interests in horseracing,[28] but Brett's role in averting a scandal involving the Prince's Equerry and friend, Lord Arthur Somerset, in 1889[29] seems to have been overlooked in the historiography as the foundation of the King's great confidence in Esher's *savoir faire* and discretion.

2.2 His Publications

Esher's earliest publications, published under his birthname, Reginald Brett, were articles in The Times, the Westminster Gazette, the New Statesman, Nineteenth Century, the National Review and the Quarterly Review.[30] Following a brief Parliamentary career, he published eight books in addition to the joint editing of Queen Victoria's letters and he later edited her Girlhood Journals for publication in

[24] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. I, p. 287 and Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 134.
[25] Dana Bentley-Cranch, Edward VII. Image of an Era, London, H.M.S.O., 1992, pp. 141-2.
[26] Albert Grey's father had served as Private Secretary to his Father, Lord Grey, during his term as Prime Minister 1830-4, before becoming private secretary to Prince Albert from 1849-61. After writing the Early Years of the Prince Consort, (London, Smith, Elder & Co, 1869) at Queen Victoria's request, General Grey was gazetted as Queen Victoria's Private Secretary in 1867. He died in 1870. Emden, Behind the Throne, pp. 139-59.
[27] Fraser, Lord Esher, p. 9.
[28] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 57, 76-7.
[29] Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, pp. 214-5; H. Montgomery Hyde, The Cleveland Street Scandal, London, W.H. Allen, 1976.
[30] Many of these were collected by Esher and catalogued with his papers at Churchill College Archives, Cambridge. In the Note[s], verso, of Yoke of Empire: Sketches of the Queen's Prime Ministers, and Cloud Capp'd Towers, London, John Murray, 1927, Reginald Brett listed some of these publications as giving permission for reprinting.

1912.[31] His first book, Footprints of Statesmen, was published in 1892 followed by The Yoke of Empire: Sketches of the Queen's Prime Ministers, published in 1896.[32] In both the Yoke of Empire and the earlier book, Footprints of Statesmen, he sought to highlight the personalities of the men of great public affairs. His 1896 book is of particular interest here as it focussed on Queen Victoria and some of her Prime Ministers. It was published first as a series of essays in the periodical, Nineteenth Century, then collected under the title Yoke of Empire. The overarching theme of the book was the serial reliance of the Queen upon the talented men whom she was fortunate to have had as her Prime Ministers and advisers. This same idea was central to Esher's expressed aims in selecting materials for the Letters of Queen Victoria, to show her development as a monarch.[33] That Brett published the volume during the Queen's lifetime, and included the emotionally-charged subject of Prince Albert and her relationships with both Benjamin Disraeli and William Gladstone, showed the extraordinary discretion of which he was capable. His tact and skill were recognised by one of the subjects of the study, Gladstone, when he wrote:

> Dear Mr Brett,
> I have now read your book with real interest and pleasure. To dispose at once of the part in which I am personally concerned let me say that, were I to raise it absolutely in my own cause, I should issue from the ordeal with less to the Cr. and more to the Dr side than you have liberally awarded me.
> I cannot but regard as the central object of interest in the work the relations between the Queen and Lord Melbourne in the early years of her reign. But elsewhere, I think, as well as there, you have exhibited much care, tact and good taste.[34]

In a postscript, Gladstone, true to character, could not help but correct Brett on a technicality – Brett had declared the Queen to be Head of the Church. An error, according to Gladstone: 'Queen Mary abolished the title which has never been renewed.' Gladstone even wrote to the future King, hoping he would read Brett's book,

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[31] A chronological list of his books: Reginald Brett: Footprints of Statesmen during the Eighteenth Century, London, Macmillan, 1892; Reginald Brett, Yoke of Empire, 1896; with the authorship as Viscount Esher, The Influence of King Edward and other Essays, 1914, a collection of articles; Cloud Capp'd Towers, 1927, which was comprised largely of memoirs of visits to country houses and the people he met there. I have not had access to Extracts from Journals 1872-1881, 2 vols, 1908; After the War, 1918; The Tragedy of Kitchener, 1921; or Ionicus, 1923, but for details of these publications, see Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 323-40, *passim*.

[32] Reginald Brett, The Yoke of Empire. He had contemplated calling the volume The Queen's Legacy, see M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. I, p. 198

[33] See letter from Esher to Arthur Benson, 25 August 1906, in M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, p.101, a particularly illuminating document which will be revisited in a later chapter. A similar ethos was adopted by Lytton Strachey in his biography of Queen Victoria.

(or any book!) but, according to Sir Sidney Lee, there were 'few signs that his anticipation was fulfilled'.[35]

Biographer Peter Fraser, in explaining Brett's tact and discretion, wrote that the vignettes of the Prime Ministers 'were obviously written from the *inside*', drawing on the Queen's own Journal or detailed discussions with the Queen, because, he reasoned, 'it is almost inconceivable that Brett could have produced them while also remaining on the best of terms with the Queen' following their publication.[36] No bibliography or footnotes were included in the Yoke of Empire, but in the book Brett acknowledged quoting lengthy excerpts from published sources including: Theodore Martin's Life of the Prince Consort;[37] the Greville Diaries, which had been published in 1885; from unnamed biographies of Lord Melbourne; the memoirs of Sir Robert Peel; the Highland Journals of the Queen, and letters of the Queen and the Prince Consort. Indeed, if he had relied heavily on the Martin biography for his chapter on Albert, he could not have erred in the Queen's eyes.

It is highly unlikely that Brett had been given access to the Queen's Journal, as Fraser assumed.[38] In 1906 Esher described how he had asked Princess Beatrice, Queen Victoria's youngest daughter and literary executor, for permission to read the Journal for 1838 which contained Victoria's description of her Coronation. He was, at the time, writing a biographical Foreword to the Letters. He made no mention of ever having seen the Journal before – indeed he sprang upon it eagerly: 'Now that I have looked at that I want *all* the volumes to that date,' he wrote to his son, Maurice. 'It is a pity to attempt a biographical notice of those years [which comprises the first thirty-nine pages of the Letters] without having read the most authentic record of them all.'[39] He was eventually able to persuade the Princess to allow the Queen's account of her Coronation to be included in the Letters of Queen Victoria. On this same visit, he recorded that they 'opened, for the first time, all the boxes of the Queen's private correspondence which are in the vaults'. He was excited by '– a great find – the Queen's letters to Lord Melbourne in 1837. No one knew what had become of them'. These descriptions show

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[34] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. I, 2 January 1897, pp. 199-200.
[35] Sidney Lee, King Edward VII. A Biography, London, Macmillan, 1925, p. 569.
[36] Fraser, Lord Esher, p. 69.
[37] Theodore Martin, The Life of HRH Prince Consort, 5 vols, London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1875-80.
[38] Fraser, Lord Esher, p. 69.
[39] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, p. 133.

a novelty of experience; he had not read the Journals before 1906 and certainly not before 1896, as supposed by Fraser. But he had familiarised himself with the available published material of the Prime Ministers of Queen Victoria's reign.

2.3 Multiple 'Eshers': the many intersections of his public and private lives

Throughout his public career, Esher was offered numerous prestigious posts, all of which he declined; he accepted only two modest positions. He was offered posts by both Queen Victoria and King Edward VII which he refused, including the Garter and an earldom,[40] the Governorship of Cape Colony,[41] an Ambassadorship to Paris,[42] to be Permanent Under Secretary of State for the Colonial office,[43] the Secretaryship for the Office of War on several occasions by both Conservative and Liberal Governments,[44] and the Viceroyship of India.[45] He turned down all of these offers of quite exalted posts with the same 'guarded objection' that they would 'hamper his private life and be an obstacle to his personal freedom'.[46] In 1900 when Esher was offered the Governorship of the Cape, he declined at once, recording in his journal, 'Were it not for [my son] Maurice I would go at once. As it is, I cannot'.[47] In 1907, following an offer to enter Cabinet, he told Maurice:

> It is not in my line to go back into politics and become identified with party strife. I can do more good outside, and heavens how much happier the life. Just imagine what the tie would be. I am purely selfish in the matter, and really I do not think I can bring myself to sacrifice all independence, all liberty of action, all my *intime* life for a position which adds nothing to that which I now occupy. Is it not a piece of bad luck that I who loathe 'public life' should be dragged into it? I have walked alone all afternoon in the woods and meditated on our quiet, happy, secluded life. I am sure the War Office would break into the harmony of our lives ... the world is nothing to me compared with your love ... [48]

[40] Starkey, 'The Modern Monarchy', p. 254.
[41] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 125.
[42] Fraser, Lord Esher, p. 364; Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 302.
[43] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 121.
[44] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, 1903, pp. 14-27; 1905, (Conservative) pp. 112-3; 1905, (Liberal) p. 122; Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 123-4, 145, 155, 157.
[45] Lees-Milne, p. 190.
[46] ibid., p. 99.
[47] ibid., p. 125.
[48] Lionel Brett, the fourth Viscount Esher, Our Selves Unknown, London, Victor Gollancz, 1985, p. 30, hereafter referred to as Lionel Esher.

As the historian William Kuhn has observed, his 'private life,' had it been known, would hardly have 'borne the inspection of his friends, let alone the public'.[49]

Esher had been born on 30 June 1852.[50] He came from a long line of small squires with no fixed family seat. His father, Baliol Brett, combined an excellent memory with pertinacity and hard work to rise to the Bar and eventually become one of the Lord Justices of Appeal, and Master of the Rolls. He was made Baron Esher in 1885 and 1st Viscount Esher on resigning from office in 1897.[51] Reginald Baliol Brett acceded to the title 2nd Viscount upon the death of his father in May, 1899.[52] For Regy, his mother had 'always been *difficile* and a bit of a trial'.[53] But Fraser considered that it was through his mother's French ancestry and her influence that Regy spoke French so well, a skill he used throughout his life, especially on his diplomatic missions during the First World War. When he began at school, Regy 'manifested an unusual maturity in outlook and manners' that 'meant he was noticed'. Fraser attributed this also to the cultural milieu of his mother. She attended both the Paris and the London seasons, she was accepted into Bonapartist circles, and the suggestion was that Disraeli took the character of Edith Millbank in Coningsby from her.[54] Her great-grandson believed her to have been 'censorious'.[55] Lees-Milne thought Regy was closer to his father than his mother, describing how the young Regy Brett, at his father's behest, stayed at home until he was eleven. Thus he was academically somewhat behind the other boys when he first arrived at Cheam.[56]

Two years later Regy went to Eton. His father advised him: 'You will make your friends of nice, good, gentlemanly fellows and will not let anyone persuade you to do anything that is wrong...You will at every period of your life be thrown with the boys who are now at Eton with you ...'. Yet he cautioned: 'Remember what I told you that, as you and I were not born Dukes with large estates, we must work'.[57] Certainly

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[49] Kuhn, Royalism, pp. 61-2.
[50] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 4.
[51] ibid., pp. 1-2. The story of Baliol Brett's mother is particularly interesting and well described by Lees-Milne, but Fraser, in Lord Esher, gives a more sympathetic account of her life and her role in Regy's upbringing.
[52] Lees-Milne, p. 119.
[53] ibid., p. 4, citing a letter from Reginald to his eldest son, Oliver Brett, later 3rd Viscount Esher.
[54] Fraser, Lord Esher, p. 7.
[55] Lionel Esher, Our Selves, p. 30.
[56] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 5.
[57] ibid., p. 6.

throughout his life in his various occupations, Esher was supported by friends and contacts from Eton. Cyril Connolly in his memoir, 'A Georgian Boyhood', proposed a theory of 'arrested development – permanent adolescence' to describe the importance of the alumni to the public schoolboy.[58] It equates closely with Esher's experience. His boyhood formed the parameters for the whole of his life and Eton was central to that.[59] As his grandson, Lionel, wrote:

> At Eton his charm, wit and good looks caught the eye of William Johnson, (later, William Cory). This remarkable teacher, who left under a cloud a few years later, implanted in his disciples the two complementary ideals of romantic homosexual love and high-minded service to the Empire. The model was classical Greece, the myth that of Achilles and Patroclus. Floating in a dodger on the silent Thames, then at the height of its elmy beauty, friendships were formed which were to last a political lifetime...[60]

Esher wrote a reminiscent, whimsical history of Eton which was published in 1927.[61]

An examination of the accounts of Johnson and his 'Trap' (his rooms) and the activities which took place there between and among boys and masters, suggests that Newsome's reading of Johnson as 'a profound classical scholar ... yearning for Platonic relationships' is generous.[62] A modern reading would be that Johnson was a paedophile and his rooms were sites for paedophilic procuration, sexual assaults and voyeurism. But there are biographers of contemporaries of Esher who would agree with Newsome – the biographer of J.M. Barrie is a most recent example. He depicted Barrie as a man who believed boyhood to be a perfect, enviable, but tragically, fleeting state, and loved the boys accordingly.[63] The eternal youth of Peter Pan epitomised this for them all. Esher was a great fan of the play *Peter Pan* which opened in London in 1904. He was

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[58] Cyril Connolly, Enemies of Promise, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979, pp. 271-2.

[59] For public schools becoming 'objects of worship' to Old Boys, see J. R. de S. Honey, Tom Brown's Universe, London, Millington Books, 1977, pp. 138-41. There are many examples of Esher's fetishism – M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. I, p. 329, a letter to Maurice, with an account of Esher and Rosebery revisiting Eton in 1902.

[60] Lionel Esher, Our Selves, pp. 27-8. The influence of Johnson on Esher and other boys of his era are detailed in Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 10-8 then ff p. 47; Rhodes James, Rosebery, p. 15; and examined further by David Newsome, Godliness and Good Learning. Four Studies on a Victorian Ideal, London, Cassell, 1961, pp. 85-9. See also Esher's cautious tribute to him, Ionicus.

[61] Esher, Cloud Capp'd Towers, Chapter II, Eton 'in the sixties' and after.

[62] Newsome, Godliness and Good Learning, p.87.

[63] Andrew Birkin, J.M. Barrie and the Lost Boys. The Real Story behind *Peter Pan*, London, Constable, 1979. Birkin describes Barrie's passion for one of the Llewellyn-Davies's boys, George, as being recklessly public in his 1902 book, The Little White Bird, (coincidentally, the same euphemism Johnson used in one of his letters to his boy-loves), but Birkin quotes George's brother as believing Barrie to have been essentially asexual.

most enthusiastic about the production in Manchester in 1906 in which his future daughter-in-law, the actress Zena Dare, played the part of Peter.[64]

Few gentlemen in Esher's circle escaped boarding schools. The school experiences were pivotal in forming the gentlemanly networks but their impact on individual psyches, adult sexuality and homosociality is contested, but not uniformly, by Newsome, Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, Jeffrey Richards and John Tosh.[65] In Esher's case, it was these friendships and the necessity to conceal their nature, which made him 'an enigmatic personality' to many during his lifetime.[66] Esher's grandson, Lionel, had some sense of this too as he recollected: 'His library, darkly panelled and lined with his portentously secret correspondence was out of bounds [to us] at all times.'[67] But it was known by Paul Emden. In his book published in 1934, four years after Esher's death, he examined the influence and characters of many private secretaries and advisers to British monarchs in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Emden knew that Esher had left orders that his private papers were to be sealed up for fifty years. He predicted that 'a future generation alone will receive an explanation from Lord Esher's papers of many things which today are dark, and perhaps it will also get many a surprise'.[68] Peter Fraser did not have access to this sealed material, but he did have access to some of Esher's papers then held at Watlington Park, the home of Esher's son and heir.[69] It was left to Esher's biographer, James Lees-Milne, to make the discoveries.[70]

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[64] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, p. 209. It was her boyish beauty which made her so attractive to Esher – he energetically pursued her and urged his reluctant son, Maurice, to marry her, which he eventually did!

[65] Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, The Public School Phenomenon 597-1977, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977, pp. 203-6; Jeffrey Richards, ' "Passing the Love of Women": Manly Love and Victorian Society', in J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds, Manliness and Morality. Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1940, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, pp. 92-122 and John Tosh, A Man's Place. Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1999. Further discussion of these social and legal aspects of gentlemanliness, as experienced by both Esher and his co-editor, Benson, will follow in Chapter 4.

[66] Benson made several comments of this nature, for example: 'I wonder why people don't like him or trust him,' (Benson Diary, vol. 40, 14 October 1903, pp.11-7). Fritz Ponsonby also marvelled at his mastery and mystery. In the various tributes and obituaries similar thoughts were expressed. Esher Papers, 20/1.

[67] Lionel Esher, Our Selves, p. 26. See also Kuhn, Royalism, p. 74.

[68] Emden, Behind the Throne, p. 294.

[69] Fraser, Lord Esher, Acknowledgments.

[70] James Lees-Milne, himself an Old Etonian, was among the first to access the sealed papers in 1981 for his biography of Esher, and revealed these secrets without sensationalism. See for example Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian: on Esher's boyhood passions, chapters 2 and 3; on his marriage see pp. 46-50; on

After Eton, Regy Brett went to Trinity College, Cambridge and took his degree in 1874, but he had never recovered from having to leave the 'hedonist's paradise' of Eton, even for Cambridge. His grandson recalled: 'Years later, the recollection [of his departure from Eton] reduced him to tears.'[71] Brett spent much of his time after Cambridge trying to recapture those times and feelings of Eton, visiting and corresponding with his former Master, William Johnson, and his friends from those days, taking a house at Brayfield with Julian Sturgis, to befriend and court new Eton boys, such as the future Viceroy of India, George Curzon.[72] Whilst at Cambridge he gave up a term in order to stay with Johnson who was too distressed to be left alone following his shameful resignation from Eton.[73] Regy spent the following summer with his father, whilst Johnson left for the Continent taking two of Regy's closest friends with him. One of the boys died during the trip. On hearing this Regy left his father immediately and went to his friend's rooms at Cambridge to retrieve certain letters which he said if found would have caused pain to the boy's relatives.[74]

In response to criticism from his father of his indolent lifestyle, and without enthusiasm, in January 1878, at the age of twenty-two, he accepted a position as private secretary to the Whig leader, Lord Hartington (the future Duke of Devonshire).[75] Among men of homosexual or homosocial propensities, Neil McKenna has perceived something of a tradition whereby a wealthy aristocrat with political ambitions would invite a young and handsome man to become his private secretary – 'with all the ambiguities that surrounded such an invitation'.[76] Evidence of such ambiguities surfaced at the time of Regy Brett's marriage.

At the time his appointment was welcomed by friends from influential families, such as Albert Grey. To Regy, Albert wrote:

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his male passions and particularly those with his second son, Maurice, pp. 2 ff, esp. p. 100. Fraser had access to some Esher papers for his 1973 publication but he made no mention of Esher's homosexuality, his paedophilia or his homosexual incest. In Lees-Milne's discussions of these aspects of Esher's life, he declined to use terms other than 'romantic friendships', 'homosexual relationships' and 'passions'.

[71] Lionel Esher, Our Selves, p. 28.

[72] Lees-Milne characterised these three years as 'Youth in Disarray', Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 28-43. Esher's father did not agree with Regy's lack of industry and refused to increase his allowance to £400 a year.

[73] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 22.

[74] ibid., p. 23.

[75] ibid., p. 44.

> As my father was Private Secretary for a large part of his life, I know pretty well what this means ... the advantage of the position is this, that so long as you retain the confidence of your Chief, you will be the possessor of a whole host of interesting secrets, but beyond this, you will obtain an influence – the amount of which will be unsuspected from without ... It is the consciousness of this unacknowledged influence in which much that is of the highest importance, that makes the chief and dearest reward of a Private Secretary.[77]

Another friend recognized that Regy had the particular traits of secrecy, diplomacy and discretion to make a success of the position. Alfred Lyttelton wrote from Hawarden Castle, the home of his sister-in-law, Catherine Gladstone and her husband, William:

> You will now have a real opportunity of displaying what is your peculiar genius (for no other word expresses it) the great faculty you have for influencing people, upon a man who will be worth influencing, and this too in matters about which you have special knowledge.[78]

These friends show the network of power and influence he had established during his Eton and Cambridge years. His experience as Hartington's secretary also introduced him to archival work as it involved looking after the papers in Devonshire House. The exposure to Parliament led to a brief career as a member of the House of Commons before he became Secretary to the Office of Works.[79]

During his time as Hartington's secretary, Brett enjoyed forming contacts with influential persons.[80] According to the radical, Charles Dilke, he adopted a particular method of presenting himself, as if he 'held delegated authority from Hartington to represent Hartington's conscience when it would not otherwise have moved, and Hartington's opinion when the Chief had none'.[81] Brett also took it upon himself to open a correspondence with Sir Henry Ponsonby, Queen Victoria's secretary, and before long he was forwarding confidential memoranda he had drafted about India Office matters to the Queen, which she acknowledged.[82] He adopted a similar

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[76] Neil McKenna, The Secret Life of Oscar Wilde, London, Century, 2003, p. 248. McKenna was referring specifically to Lord Rosebery taking on Drumlanrig, the eldest son of the Marquess of Queensberry, but there is reason to believe it pertained to Hartington and Brett as well.
[77] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. 1, 13 January 1878, p. 44.
[78] ibid., p. 45.
[79] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 51-2, 61-69 and 99.
[80] See for example, the journal entries for 1878, M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. I, pp. 44-56; for the political implications of this see Kuhn, Democratic Royalism, pp. 58-9, and Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 44-5.
[81] An observation made by the Radical, Sir Charles Dilke, after meeting Brett, in March 1878. Quoted in Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 45.
[82] ibid., p. 54.

demeanour and mode of expression, as if he were representing the views of the King, toward Arthur Benson during the editing of Queen Victoria's letters.[83]

These characteristics of secrecy, and of seeking control and influence, are not the primary qualities that historians and biographers would wish in the editor of letters that are to comprise their primary sources of information. Yet to be in the receipt of secrets and to revel in the influence such secrets conferred, was second nature to Esher. It recurred throughout his life – in his complicity with William Johnson in his years at Eton, at Cambridge and beyond; in his correspondence with Henry Ponsonby during his employment as Hartington's Secretary; and in his operations 'on the fringes of various homosexual scandals that shook the Establishment'[84] in the 1880s and 1890s. It was in relation to one of those scandals that Esher as Regy Brett came to the notice of the future King Edward VII.

Lord Arthur Somerset was the second son of the Tory magnate, the Duke of Beaufort; he was also an Extra-Equerry to the Prince of Wales and a member of the Prince's intimate circle.[85] He was a Major in the Royal Horse Guards, served as Superintendent of the Prince's stables, was an excellent horseman, an experienced soldier, an accomplished sportsman – seemingly the epitome of virile masculinity. In August and September 1889 Somerset was questioned by police in the course of enquiries into a homosexual and paedophilic brothel in Cleveland Street, London.[86] A large collection of correspondence ensued from this event over the next thirty years which Brett collected and later had bound in a separate volume and kept in his extensive archive.[87]

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[83] For example, Esher Papers, 11/6, 16 August 1906.

[84] Starkey, 'The Modern Monarchy', p. 254. Starkey sets the crucial time frame as 'the aftermath of Oscar Wilde's fall', but the scandals and Esher's involvement began some time before the Wilde trials of mid-1895.

[85] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 78; Magnus, Edward the Seventh, p. 214; Andrew Roberts, Salisbury. Victorian Titan, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999, p. 544.

[86] There were many such establishments in London from the eighteenth century, and various cases of arrests and court proceedings. See Richtor Norton, Mother Clap's Molly House: The Gay Subculture in England 1700-1830, London, Gay Men's Press, 1992; Randolph Trumbach, 'London's Sodomites: Homosexual Behaviour and Western Culture in the Eighteenth Century', Journal of Social History, vol. 11, No. 1, 1977, pp. 1-33; and Netta Murray Goldsmith, The Worst of Crimes. Homosexuality and the Law in Eighteenth Century London, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1998, pp. 4-8. For this specific case see Hyde, Cleveland Street Scandal; Colin Simpson, Lewis Chester and David Leitch, The Cleveland Street Affair, Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1976; Morris B. Kaplan, 'Did "My Lord Gomorra" Smile?: Homosexuality, Class and Prostitution in the Cleveland Street Affair', George Robb and Nancy Erber, eds, Disorder in the Court. Trials and Sexual Conflict at the Turn of the Century, New York, New York University Press, 1999, pp. 78-99; most recently, McKenna, The Secret Life of Oscar Wilde, pp. 139-46

[87] Esher Papers, 12/3, The Case of Lord Arthur Somerset. This volume was bound by Lord Esher and released with his other papers, fifty years after his death.

Brett, who had been at Eton with Somerset, was one of the people to whom he appealed for help.[88] When the Prince of Wales heard of the charges he was incredulous. At first he said: 'I won't believe it, any more than I should if they had accused the Archbishop of Canterbury', and later argued that any man addicted to such vice must be regarded as an 'unfortunate lunatic'.[89]

Indeed, anyone found to have visited male brothels would be ostracised and face criminal charges. As Somerset wrote to Brett: 'A great many people would never speak to me again as it is; but if I went into Court [to clear myself], and told all I knew, *no one* who called himself a man would *ever* speak to me again. Hence my infernal position.'[90] In order to avoid this, it was imperative that Somerset did not stand trial where he might have had to reveal details of the visits and the names of men who had accompanied him, or the boys he met there.[91] The subsequent scandal would have brought the Prince's Household and Somerset's Regiment into disrepute. Various cover-ups were effected, through meetings and interventions ordered by the Prince of Wales.[92] They involve: the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury; the Private Secretary of the Prince of Wales, Lord Knollys; the Comptroller of the Household of the Prince of Wales, Sir Dighton Probyn; officers of the Director of Public Prosecutions; Regy Brett; and Somerset's solicitor.[93] Somerset was able to escape to the Continent, narrowly avoiding arrest, just hours after Probyn had met with Salisbury at London's King's Cross

[88] Esher Papers, 12/3. This correspondence shows that Brett helped Somerset by raising money from August 1889 onwards, through 'seeing' various men and boys who were friends or who were implicated in the case.
[89] Magnus, Edward the Seventh, p. 214.
[90] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 80.
[91] Esher Papers, 12/3, letter from Somerset to Esher, 10 December 1889.
[92] Magnus, Edward the Seventh, pp. 214-5, citing a letter from the Prince of Wales to Prime Minister Salisbury; and Hyde, The Cleveland Street Scandal, p. 90 ff.
[93] For details see Hyde, Cleveland Street Scandal; Simpson, Chester and Leitch, Cleveland Street Affair; McKenna, The Secret Life of Oscar Wilde, pp. 139-46. Although he cites letters from Somerset to Brett, McKenna does not make the connection between the Prince of Wales and Esher.

Station.[94] Due to the requests of the Prince Of Wales, Somerset was able to re-enter the country on two subsequent occasions without being arrested.[95]

Brett used his connections to newspapers,[96] and money[97] in order to help Somerset. Hugh Weguelin, a stockbroker and mutual friend of Somerset and of Brett, suggested that 'others whose names are mentioned in this business' should 'bear some of the heat', by offering loans to Somerset; he listed other friends, such as the wealthy Howard Sturgis, and Lord Salisbury's Private Secretary at the Foreign Office, Eric Barrington, as examples.[98] Due to the criminal implications of the episode, there remained anxieties: 'I despair of a secret [that is] known to many being kept, especially in these days,' wailed Somerset.[99] Earlier in the episode Weguelin wrote that Somerset should return and fight his battles: 'You see, Reggie, ... there is a more distant probability involving an immense stirring up of mud of our being injured.'[100] But all through his life, Esher managed to avoid any such mud. Such was the potency of the case at the time, that 'the most severe penalty in the affair was suffered by a journalist who sought to publicize the events rather than anyone directly involved'.[101]

The warrant for Somerset's arrest was delayed until he had time to resign his army commission honourably and his resignation had been gazetted, while he was safely in Europe.[102] Brett continued to have correspondence with Somerset and with his parents.[103] The Prince of Wales too was in contact with Somerset's parents.[104] Through Probyn and Knollys, and the Duke of Beaufort, the Prince would have known of Regy

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[94] Roberts, Salisbury, pp. 544-5. Salisbury reported to the House of Lords in March 1890, that he had indeed met with Probyn in October 1889 'for a casual interview for which I was in no way prepared, to which I did not attach the slightest degree of importance, and of which I took no notes whatever. The train started very soon afterwards.' However, he admitted telling Probyn that, 'rumours had reached me that further evidence had been obtained, but I didn't know what its character was.' He ended his speech by saying that 'the subject is not one which lends itself to extensive treatment.' Fortunately, as Roberts observed, 'out of general class solidarity', none of the peers in the House wished 'to go into the matter further' either. Roberts, Salisbury, p. 546.
[95] Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, p. 214-5.
[96] See for example, details of Esher's close relationship with W.T. Stead in O.J. Baylen, 'Politics and the "New Journalism": Lord Esher's Use of the Pall Mall Gazette', Victorian Periodicals Review, vol. 20, No. 4, 1987, pp. 126-41.
[97] Hyde, Cleveland Street, p. 42.
[98] ibid., p. 41.
[99] ibid., pp. 44-7, for example.
[100] ibid., p. 42.
[101] See Kaplan, 'Homosexuality, Class and Prostitution in the Cleveland Street Affair', p. 83.
[102] Roberts, Salisbury, p. 546.
[103] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 82.
[104] Hyde, Cleveland Street, p. 97.

Brett's invaluable help to Somerset. It was vital to the monarchy to know that Somerset remained abroad, which he did until he died in 1926, and Brett held that information. As David Starkey mused, Esher always 'emerged smelling of roses, (but not too much)'.[105]

Esher showed similar discretion in his dealings with political leaders. When Lord Rosebery was reaching the depths of despair in March 1895, a coincidence of political mayhem and the beginning of the Oscar Wilde trials,[106] Esher was summonsed on several occasions, in the middle of the night, to comfort the desperate Rosebery.[107] Rosebery's biographer, Robert Rhodes James, attributed the acute insomnia to a breakdown in health due to the persistent grief following his wife's death, and the pressures of being Prime Minister of a relatively new Government 'which had burst into disarray'.[108] David Brooks linked Rosebery's poor health to a 'flu epidemic'.[109] Lees-Milne believed that it was 'not improbable that Rosebery lived in terror of allegations being disclosed about his private life'.[110] Michael Foldy was closer to the mark. He believed that 'a direct correlation can be found between Rosebery's health, especially his mental health, and the events surrounding the Oscar Wilde trials, especially the involvement of the Marquess of Queensberry, the father of Lord [Bosie] Douglas'.[111]

The eldest son and heir of the Marquess of Queensberry, Drumlanrig, had been Rosebery's Private Secretary. Previously, biographers had attributed the source of the Marquess's ire as being due to his son being promoted by Rosebery to the peerage

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[105] Starkey, 'Modern Monarchy', p. 254.
[106] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 92-9.
[107] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. I, pp. 184-8. During these visits to Rosebery, Brett spent some time in conversation with Rosebery's physician, Broadbent, who was staying in the house, cared professionally for many eminent families, and thus was a fount of information for Brett. Broadbent recounted details from January 1892, of 'the death of the Duke of Clarence [eldest son of the Prince of Wales] and his delirium of 18 hours when he talked at the top of his voice, first about the Army and friends, "then he passed in review every public man of eminence in Europe – expressing his views on them. No one knew he had any ideas on these or any other subjects." ... '. Esher MSS Journal, 11 March 1895. The 'other subjects' which caused such surprise were unfortunately never alluded to by Esher. Concerning Rosebery's health, see Rhodes James, Rosebery, p. 370.
[108] Rhodes James's view was directly drawn from Rosebery's grief at the sudden death of his wife, Hannah, in 1890: '... in a sense he never recovered from it; he had come to rely far more on his wife's devotion and sympathy than he had probably ever realized …'. He kept the anniversary of her death sacred for the rest of his life. (p. 229). Concerning the role of Lou-lou Harcourt in the poisoning of political relations, (p. 287).
[109] David Brooks, The Destruction of Lord Rosebery, London, The Historian's Press, 1986, p. 220.
[110] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 98-9.
[111] Michael Foldy, The Trials of Oscar Wilde. Deviance, Morality and Late-Victorian Society, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1997, pp. 22-30.

ahead of himself,[112] which precipitated various episodes in which Rosebery had to deal with the 'lunatic,' Queensberry. For instance, in 1893, the Marquess pursued Rosebery, then the Foreign Secretary, to Bad Homburg, a spa town in Germany. Armed with a horsewhip, he announced his intention of publicly assaulting him. Rosebery wrote of the episode to Queen Victoria: 'It is a material and unpleasant addition to the labours of Your Majesty's service to be pursued by a pugilist of unsound mind.'[113]

The following year, 1894, Drumlanrig was killed in a mysterious shooting accident. His nephew later told the biographer, Montgomery Hyde, that he was 'positive that his uncle Drumlanrig had taken his own life in the shadow of a suppressed scandal'.[114] McKenna maintains that in a state of political or sexual jealousy, Lou-lou Harcourt had told the Marquess of the real nature of the relationship between Rosebery and Drumlanrig.[115] In order to protect Rosebery's political future, Drumlanrig had committed suicide. In the light of all of the evidence collected by Foldy and McKenna,[116] Rosebery was very likely to be grieving for his deceased lover in 1895 rather than over the death of his wife five years earlier; and given his experiences with the Marquess of Queensberry, he had every reason to be anxious about the evidence that might be given at the Oscar Wilde trial.

Brett was able to offer advice and assistance to his friends in these circumstances from the safe haven of his marriage. It has been observed by social researcher and commentator, Brenda Maddox, that, '... for anyone wishing to hide his homosexuality, marriage is the best closet'.[117] In 1877 Regy Brett's mother had written urging him to marry but he declared to her that taking a wife was 'one risk he would not like to

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[112] Foldy, Trials of Oscar Wilde, p. 24.

[113] Rhodes James, Rosebery, p. 287. Rhodes James continued the story:
'The Chief Commissioner of Police announced the removal of the nuisance in the following magnificent communication: "Right Honourable Lord! I take the honour to advertise [sic] you that Marquis of Queensberry, in consequence of the entertainment I had with him, found it advisable to part this morning with the seven o'clock train for Paris. I beg to agree the assurance of the highest consideration of your Lordship's most obedient servant" …'!

[114] H. Montgomery Hyde, Oscar Wilde: A Biography, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975, p. 171.

[115] McKenna, Secret Life, p. 253. Sir William Harcourt had been the main contender for the Prime Ministership against Rosebery. His son, Lou-Lou, (also a friend of Brett's) went to great lengths politically for his father, but sexual jealousy may well have played a part too.

[116] Foldy, Trials of Oscar Wilde, pp. 21-30; McKenna, Secret Life, pp. 313-20.

[117] Brenda Maddox, The Marrying Kind. Homosexuality and Marriage, London, Granada, 1982, p. 14. On this theme see also Chapter 4: 'Husbands, for Better or Worse' and Chapter 5: 'The Understanding Wife'.

take'.[118] However, his Eton mentor, William Johnson, and Rosebery both married in 1878,[119] and Regy had decided by early 1879 that he should take a wife,[120] perceiving it to be 'the icy shroud of matrimony which is creeping nearer and nearer...'.[121] Perhaps he realised, as Christopher Isherwood was to have one of his characters explain: 'Being married does make a lot of things easier, because the world accepts marriage at its face value, without asking what goes on behind the scenes – whereas it is always a bit suspicious of bachelors!'[122] Being married and being a father provided the incontrovertible proofs of nineteenth-century masculinity and respectability. According to historian, John Tosh: 'Without marriage, neither formal majority at 21 nor material self-sufficiency was enough to confer a fully fledged masculine status'.[123]

Young Regy Brett met his future wife, Eleanor Van De Weyer, when she was barely thirteen years old. Nellie was the youngest of the four daughters of the Belgian Minister at the Court of St. James, Sylvain Van De Weyer.[124] In her diary, with some perspicacity, she discussed both his character and her own ideas on marriage.[125] She noted an innate tendency in Brett to offer advice and help to people of influence and power, wishing that the same privileges could be allowed her too, but, 'men were not strong enough' to allow them.[126] He had expressed a reluctance to consider marriage when he left Cambridge, yet in July 1877 he visited the Van De Weyers frequently – during this time he was sharing a house with the popular and athletic Julian Sturgis at

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[118] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. 1, 9 January 1877, p. 39.

[119] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 42; and Rhodes James, Rosebery, pp. 78-88. Rosebery is said to have had three ambitions in his life: to win the Derby, to marry an heiress and to become Prime Minister. He achieved all three but Rhodes James, p. 86, believed Rosebery to be a *poseur* – often given to saying outrageous things to observe their effect on people.

[120] Although Brett seemed to be unenthusiastic about marriage, the age of twenty-seven was not particularly late for marriage in the upper classes in this period. See Michael Mason, The Making of Victorian Sexuality, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 51. Rather surprisingly, Mason's chapter section on Elite and Bourgeois Sexuality does not include any reference to homosexuality.

[121] A phrase used by his friend, George Binning, in reply to a letter of Brett's, quoted in Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 47. The phraseology suggests to me that Binning may have been quoting Brett's words back to him.

[122] Christopher Isherwood, A Meeting by the River, quoted in Maddox, The Marrying Kind, p. 70.

[123] Tosh, A Man's Place, p. 110

[124] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 41-2, 46-9. Van De Weyer had been a close personal friend of Baron Stockmar, adviser to Queen Victoria. When Victoria's uncle, Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, the then bereaved husband of Charlotte, Princess of Wales, was invited to become King of the Belgians, Van De Weyer was a major political figure in Belgium. See Emden, pp. 30-4.

[125] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 48. This excerpt from Nellie's diary contradicts a footnote in M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. 1, p. 47, that a Journal entry by Esher, for 12 June 1878, referring to *'cette âme, soeur de mon âme, helas!'* was written after his first meeting with Nellie. They had met in 1875.

[126] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 48, drawing on Nellie's entry in her diary as a 13-year-old.

Brayfield.[127] Nellie's father had died in 1874.[128] Regy and Nellie eventually married in September 1879, (Nellie was just seventeen,) and they had four children in relatively quick succession – Oliver born in March 1881, Maurice in April, 1882, Dorothy in 1883 and Sylvia in February 1885.[129] As a thirteen-year-old Nellie had declared: 'The greatest praise a husband of mine could give would be to say that he did not feel in the least tied down; or in any way encumbered than when he was a bachelor.'[130]

Brett throughout his lifetime enjoyed a series of affairs with schoolboys, friendships with men of the military, men in journalism and literature, men from both sides of politics, whilst simultaneously maintaining friendships with various aristocratic women and women of the theatre. He had few constraints placed upon him by Nellie.[131] His grandson described her as 'a mousey little Belgian ... just out of the schoolroom.'[132] Lees-Milne observed:

> From the first she worshipped Regy, to the extent of alienating most of her children in years to come. She made allowances for him. She deferred to him without being subservient ... And she thought him to be the cleverest man in the world. She is reported to have once said that a woman's office in life was to make the tea-kettle exciting.[133]

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[127] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. 1, pp. 41-2. Coincidentally, Howard Sturgis, the brother of Julian, was also a lifelong friend of Arthur Benson.

[128] Theodore Martin, Queen Victoria as I Knew Her, Edinburgh and London, William Blackwood, 1908, p. 22, footnote 1. Queen Victoria wrote to tell Martin of her 'terrible loss' with Van De Weyer's death.

[129] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 70. Oliver acceded to the title upon the death of his father, but Maurice inherited all of the Scottish property and was named sole executor. Dorothy, a painter, made a permanent home in New Mexico with D.H. Lawrence and his wife Frieda (see Sean Hignett, Brett: From Bloomsbury to New Mexico: A Biography, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1984; Brenda Maddox, D.H. Lawrence, the Story of a Marriage, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1994, for example, p. 393); Sylvia married and became 'the neglected wife of the uncouth and unfaithful' Vyner Brooke, the last Rajah of Sarawak (Lionel Esher, Our Selves, p. 31). She wrote an account of her life, titled Queen of the Head-Hunters. Esher had or made difficult relations with all of his children, their spouses and grandchildren, except for Maurice and his family. See Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 325-9, and Lionel Esher, Our Selves, p. 24.

[130] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 48.

[131] ibid., pp. 86-7; 90, 136; 85-6; 100; 228; 175; 229.

[132] Lionel Esher, Our Selves, p. 30.

[133] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 49. Lord Rosebery enjoyed similar devotion from his wife: 'I never saw a woman so wholly absorbed in a man,' Edward Hamilton wrote after her [Rosebery's wife, Hannah's] death. 'Everything she did was the object of serving him. If he was in the room, nothing could turn her thoughts or her eyes from him. It was the most touching fidelity I ever saw.' Understandably, Rosebery was often impatient at this perhaps excessive devotion, and there are countless stories – many of them undoubtedly true - of his rudeness to her. He had a cruel gift of mimicry, and had the unattractive habit of scoring off a "butt" and when as occasionally happened, Hannah was the unwitting butt, chance acquaintances were naturally shocked ... One cannot avoid the impression of Hannah Rosebery following nervously in Rosebery's footsteps throughout their married life, utterly devoted but consumed with alarm lest she made some dreadful mistake. Although he often made fun of her – "I am leaving tonight; Hannah and the rest of the heavy baggage will follow later" was one of his alleged *mots*'– his mourning of her death was monumental. Rhodes James, Rosebery, pp. 87-8.

Their relationship was complex. She tolerated his dalliances, even welcoming into the household the various adolescent boys who infatuated him throughout the years of their marriage.[134] Her unquestioning toleration of these boys can perhaps be explained by quoting a speech made by Lord Goring in the Oscar Wilde play, *The Ideal Husband* of 1895: '... no man should have a secret from his own wife. She invariably finds it out. Women have a wonderful instinct about things. They can discover everything except the obvious.'[135] Did Nellie ever discover 'the obvious'? Regy wrote her a letter in July 1879, just after their engagement. Part of it read:

> Why you have thrown yourself away upon one who is the converse of you in all things still remains a mystery. Very sincerely I feel quite unworthy of you, and I think you must be a kind of St. Theresa, a reforming soul. Some day, like [George Eliot's] Romola, you will find me out and you will hate me. Are you prepared for this?
> It astonishes me that I can write to you so easily and in this strain. You are the only girl with whom on writing I have felt on equal terMs I mean that I am sure of your not misunderstanding me and there is no necessity for elaborate detail. Does this please you or not? It is, I am sure, very unusual between a man and a woman who have anything to hide. True confidence is a very heavy burden and very few men and women can bear that of those they love. But you have lead me to think you stronger than most women and I have very little fear for the future.
> Do nothing and say nothing to weaken my faith in you ... Do not, I ask you, start thinking too well of me, for I dread the disenchantment.[136]

Throughout her life, Nellie carried this letter with her in her reticule everywhere she went. It may have been her Credo, something which set out the rules (unclear as they were) as she had agreed to them and upon which she could rely, something which she only understood by degrees as the years went by. But, certainly, it served as Regy's 'ticket of leave', a permission note to spare him any inquisitions about his whereabouts or the amount of time he spent away from the family.

He wrote again, within a week to ask Nellie if she wished to revoke her promise, adding, rather oddly, that the happiest years of his life ended in 1868, referring specifically to his boyhood love of Charles Williamson. On the eve of her wedding,

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[134] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 100. On maintaining old friendships, such as Chat Williamson and Ernlé Johnson, throughout Brett's married life, Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 46, and new passions such as Teddy Seymour, in 1892, Lees-Milne, p. 89, and Lawrence Burgis, in 1910, p. 227 and 229 ff.

[135] Quoted in David Vincent, The Culture of Secrecy. Britain 1832-1998, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 129.

[136] Quoted in Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 49. Because it was disintegrating with age (and use?) Nellie transcribed the document in 1935, five years after Esher's death. This is the copy that survives.

Nellie wrote to Regy: 'Do not think to frighten me with your two-sided character – show me which side you please. I should like you as much when your whole life was laid bare as I do now, when as you say, you humbugged me.'[137] By making such statements alluding to secrets and double-lives, Regy was able to exonerate himself from any subsequent revelations.

In twentieth century studies, women who accepted homosexuality in their husbands have been theorized to have particular traits:

> It is no accident that they choose homosexual men as husbands, unwittingly or not. As a type, they tend to be virgins when they marry or close to it. No critics of performance, but rather nice, plain girls, who want to have a home and children, who are sexually inexperienced and have never wanted sex so much that they could not do without it, and who are prepared to overlook a lot for a nice companionable man who [will not make unreasonable sexual demands upon them].[138]

For whatever reasons, Nellie happily accepted marriage to Regy on his terMs

Upon his marriage, his boss, Lord Hartington, sent him a telegram, expressing condolence rather than congratulations: 'When does your melancholy event come off?'[139] At the commencement of his two-month honeymoon in Paris, Brett wrote as if to reassure Hartington: 'I am pretty well considering; not feeling much worse for the gloomy events of two days ago ... I am beginning to feel that the worst is over ... Marriage is a curious game to play at.'[140] The tone and content of these exchanges carry strong overtones and innuendoes against heterosexuality. They are not characteristic of a relationship of a secretary and to an employer. They are lacking in respect for Nellie, and for the new relationship. They are more typical of adolescent behaviours, than those of an adult.

Brett confided in his Journal: 'It is difficult to describe the past ten days, sown as they have been with conflicting emotions', and later, 'I have written *sub sigillo* [under seal] to my two best friends, an account of this first month of our married life'.[141] During his honeymoon he noted letters received from one of his young paramours, Ernlé Johnson,

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[137] All of these details have been taken from Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 49, as I have not seen the original documents. George Eliot's Romola, was one of several Eliot novels they read together on their honeymoon in Paris.
[138] Maddox, Marrying Kind, p. 64.
[139] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 49.
[140] ibid., p. 50.
[141] ibid..

complaining about his teachers at Oxford.[142] What can be said of these actions after his marriage and his behaviour during the honeymoon, except that it set the pattern for his epistolary activities and his relationships for all of his life?

As one affair with an adolescent languished, he began another.[143] Of longest duration was that with his youngest son, Maurice.[144] It flourished when he became a schoolboy at Eton and continued for the rest of his life. When Esher described to Maurice how he kissed the King's hand on leaving he reassured him that, 'in doing it I only thought how little it all meant including the kiss, compared with a kiss upon another hand, and a few words of affection and appreciation from other lips'.[145] A year later, as a 25-year-old, Maurice received the following letter from his besotted father:

> Dearest,
> I was very much hurt last night by your too obvious boredom, when I fetched you from the station. It was, I suppose, tactless of me, but as you must know, well meant. Whenever you are away, I look forward to your return, perhaps too eagerly, and I suppose I was a little too demonstrative last night...[146]

Esher's obsession with Eton continued – especially in the 1890s whilst Maurice was a pupil there. It seems he had a dual obsession with the boy and the place. For Gladstone's funeral in 1898, Esher wrote in his diary, 'at my instance [sic insistence] the Eton boys came up. The Volunteers. It was one of the pretty episodes of the ceremony'.[147] Eton boys feature in almost every diary entry for this period. A further example of Esher's obsession with Eton boys (and, incidentally, his powers of suggestion over the King) was evident at Queen Victoria's funeral.[148] The Eton historian, Tim Card commented: 'The new King ... insisted that Etonians had a privileged position at the funeral [of his mother]'.[149] Given Esher's obsession with the College, and that he was the prime organizer of the funeral, the idea most likely came from him – perhaps another instance of Esher's long-perceived ventriloquism. In his rooms at Windsor Castle, which he and Maurice called the Nest, one closet was filled

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[142] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. 1, p. 62.
[143] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 32-7, 38-9, 87-91 and 227-9.
[144] Kuhn, Royalism, p. 62; Lees- Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 110-3 ff.
[145] Esher Papers 7/16 - Closed Section- Family Letters, 5 March 1906.
[146] ibid., 22 January 1907.
[147] Esher MSS Journal, Churchill Archives, entry 28 May 1898.
[148] For photographs of this and other Royal occasions showing the Eton boys, see P.S.H. Lawrence, An Eton Camera 1850-1919, Salisbury, Michael Russell, 1980, pp. 70-1, 74-5.
[149] Tim Card, Eton Renewed: A History of Eton from 1860 to the Present Day, London, John Murray, 1994, p.114.

with Eton blazers. In 1902 the King, unexpectedly, asked to be taken to those rooms to see some photographs of Maurice who had just received a commission into the Coldstream Guards. The King, upon opening the closet doors, asked to whom the blazers belonged. 'Fancy,' Regy wrote, conspiratorially, to Maurice, 'if you and the kids had been there, I should have conveniently lost the key.'[150]

Esher wrote many letters to Maurice (for whom he used the pet, feminized name of 'Mollie', which was also a colloquial term for homosexual men of earlier times[151]) of a romantic nature, which quite often contained details of his political and royal activities; indeed many of his comments about the court and politics have survived as a result of the deluge of communications he made to 'Mollie'.[152] During his time at both Cheam and Eton, Regy was assailed by letters from his own father with phrases like, 'My own darling Regy', and 'Darling of my soul', and all ended with 'Your affectionate father'.[153] The extensive correspondence Regy was to have with his son, Maurice, employed similar cloying language.[154] His father took him away on his Court circuits for extended periods of time in his youth, and begged him to accompany him again in later years but Regy refused, preferring to stay with friends.[155] In contemporary studies, it has been found that sexual victimization of children is frequently an 'intergenerationally transmitted phenomenon'.[156] If a boy is a victim of homosexual

[150] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 136. I am unsure to whom 'the kids' refers – in one of his letters to Maurice, Esher referred to the King's grandchildren as 'the kids': 'We had a lively tea last night. The kids were in high spirits, and Prince Edward as composed and clever as ever...' . (M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, p. 139). Esher was especially fond of the future King Edward VIII, but he had also encouraged Maurice to bring his own little friends there. See Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 112.

[151] As alluded to in the title, Mother Clap's Molly House: The Gay Subculture in England 1700-1830, by Richtor Norton.

[152] Esher Papers 7/16 - Closed Section - Family Letters from Reginald Baliol Brett to Maurice Brett. Excerpts of few of these letters are published in the Brett, Journals and Letters, vols. I-IV.

[153] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 5. Current literature on the psychological makeup of homosexual paedophiles and perpetrators of homosexual incest would suggest that Regy's relationships with each of his parents provided the basis for his subsequent sexual propensities. See Dennis Howitt, Paedophiles and Sexual Offences against Children, Chichester, England, (New York, J. Wiley), 1995; Mary de Young, The Sexual Victimization of Children, Jefferson, N.C. and London, McFarland and Coy, 1982, 'Paternal Incest,' pp. 73-5; 'Homosexual Paedophilia,' pp. 141-60.

[154] Esher Papers 7/16 - Closed Section- Family Letters.

[155] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 18.

[156] D.G. Langsley, M.N. Schwartz and R.H. Fairbairn, 'Father-son Incest', in Comparative Psychiatry, vol. 9, 1968, pp. 218-26; J.B. Raybin, 'Homosexual Incest: Report of a Case involving Three Generations of a Family', Journal of Nervous and Mental Disorders, vol. 148, 1969, pp. 105-10.

incest, he is likely to become a perpetrator with his own son.[157] Esher may have been such a victim turned perpetrator; there is no evidence that Maurice behaved similarly.

Esher perceived in boys and men particular needs and desires for which they were justified in seeking gratification; he did not see any legitimacy in similar claims which might have been made by women and girls. His understanding and appreciation of women was restricted to a perception of them as individuals who would lavish affection and charm upon him, and in return seek to be improved by him.[158] He always needed to have several people to heap affection upon and to be admired by, always including a handsome youth. But he had long accepted that there was a place for marriage in a man's life. In March 1907 he wrote to Maurice:

> Dearest,
> ... By the winter you must have found someone to marry. It will fit in well with your new existence ... it will give you an anchor in life, and under conditions, which should leave your great powers (for they are great) untrammelled. You will throw yourself heart and soul into the details of that great profession to which you belong, if you have safe moorings at home, with a quiet harbour in which to lie, untossed by distracting waves, and scattered before the winds that blow round every one of us ...[159]

In January 1911 Maurice finally married one of his father's favourites, the actress Zena Dare, in a Registry Office in London.[160] Esher's grandson saw the marriage of his uncle, Maurice, to Zena as 'bringing the fresh air of generous normality into the family hothouse'.[161] Esher found the elopement to be 'rather romantic' but continued to write nostalgic poems to Maurice with lines such as :

> Back to the sunny days that never more may be,
> Just a little longer let me wreathe your hair,
> Just a little longer let me hold your hand. … [162]

He congratulated himself to Maurice: 'No human relations were ever much more perfect than ours.'[163]

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[157] De Young, Sexual Victimization, p. 74.
[158] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 48 in relation to Nellie; on other women such as Millicent, Duchess of Sutherland, see pp. 85-7, and Zena Dare, pp. 149-50.
[159] Esher Papers, 7/20, 7 March 1907, Esher to Maurice.
[160] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 225-6.
[161] Lionel Esher, Our Selves, p. 30.
[162] Quoted in Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 226.
[163] ibid..

2.4 Public Perceptions of Esher

Despite this personal and private side of his life, which was not secret, gentlemen sang his praises. Fritz Ponsonby, the son of Queen Victoria's former secretary, admired Esher. His assessment was that:

> no mere recital of offices held does justice to this remarkable man. On the one hand he was an intimate friend of Queen Victoria, King Edward VII and King George V; on the other, he was closely in touch with Lord Rosebery, Mr Balfour and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. His advice was greatly valued on both sides. In other fields, his most important work was connected with army reform ... [164]

Within the domain of private enterprise, Esher was offered a partnership in Cassel's financial house in December, 1901, at a salary of £5,000 a year and 10 per cent of any profits. Acceptance of the position necessitated his resigning from the Office of Works. Sir Ernest Cassel was an intimate friend of the King.[165] Although he resigned the position at Cassel's at the end of his second year finding the work not to his taste, he remained on friendly terms with both the Cassel brothers and the King.[166]

But for others, this multiplicity of positions created suspicion or envy.[167] Esher as a man at the heart of Victorian culture and administration where tightly-knit all-male groups, such as 'Milner's kindergarten' and 'Kitchener's cubs,' proliferated,[168] was much discussed. Arthur Benson in his diary quoted a contemporary speaking critically of Esher:

> "What is there he doesn't do?" [Brodrick asked] "He has a great financial position in the city; he spends all his days smoking with the King; he reorganises the army in his intervals of leisure and now he is editing this vast mass of documents ..." [169]

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[164] Frederick Ponsonby, Recollections of Three Reigns, London & New York, Quartet books, 1988, Footnote p. 2. The selections in this volume were made from two earlier publications: Sidelights on Queen Victoria, (1930) and Recollections of Three Reigns, (1951).

[165] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 135. For Ernest Cassel's importance as a member of King Edward's circle, see Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, pp. 258-60, and Emden, Behind the Throne, pp. 294-7.

[166] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 136.

[167] See, for example, a letter complaining about Lord Rosebery giving Brett the Office of Public Works, in Rhodes James, Rosebery, pp. 354-5.

[168] Ronald Hyam, Britain's Imperial Century, London, Batsford, 1976, p. 141.

[169] Benson Diary, Old Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge, vol. 49, 16 March 1904. 'Brodrick' quoted by Benson was the Rt. Hon. St. John Brodrick, Secretary of State for War. He is cited frequently in Esher's journals and letters; see M. Brett, Journals and Letters, pp. 269, 273 and 305, from the years 1900-1903. For Brodrick's criticism of Esher's influence and his lack of formal position, see Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 142. In September 1903 Brodrick had been moved to the India Office, perhaps unhappily. (M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, p. 14). At the end of the year Esher was warning the Prime Minister, A.J. Balfour that Brodrick would be very critical in the Parliament of his proposals for army reform (M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, pp. 32-3, 55-7). Esher by June 1904 was using a

The German Emperor, writing to King Edward VII to refute public comments made by Esher about competing naval shipbuilding, made reference to Esher's former employment at the Office of Works. He asked, sarcastically, 'whether the supervision of the foundations and drains of the Royal Palaces is apt to qualify somebody for the judgement of Naval affairs in general'.[170] There were critics in England who were asking similar questions.

By the time Esher began editing Queen Victoria's letters with Arthur Benson, Esher was established as a court favourite, living at Orchard Lea near Windsor and Eton, and with his own rooms within Windsor Castle. He met frequently with the King and the Queen. He had a house in Mayfair and had built a retreat, Roman Camp, in the Scottish Highlands, near Balmoral. He maintained a huge correspondence and a complex social life with friends from Eton, from Cambridge, from both sides of politics and through his various London club memberships and associations with the military establishments. But his eldest son, Oliver, and his two daughters, Dorothy and Sylvia, enjoyed little attention from their father.[171] Lees-Milne believed Oliver did not discover the truth about his father until he went through his papers after his death, whereupon he wrote a short but bitter book about his father but decided not to publish it.[172] By the time his obsession with Maurice had been weakened by Maurice's affections being diverted towards his wife, it was too late for the other children.[173]

These relationships and all the complexities of Esher's private and public life are revealing of his peculiarities: his perception of men, women and children; his ideas of domestic life; his obsessions with pleasure, influence, beauty, knowledge and secrecy. He relied on his gentlemanly networks to maintain his position, as those in his networks relied on him to maintain theirs. In relation to the editing of Queen Victoria's letters,

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laconic tone in relation to Brodrick which seems to have been matched by the vehemence of Brodrick to Benson and company in 1904.

[170] Quoted in Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, p. 374.

[171] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, for example pp. 136-9, 326-30. See also Lionel Esher's Our Selves, pp. 30-1, for an account of the lives of each of the children. Oliver was Lionel's father.

[172] Michael Bloch, ed., Holy Dread. Diaries (1982-4) of James Lees-Milne, London, John Murray, 2001, p. 35, entry 12 July 1982. It is unlikely that Oliver made the discovery during Maurice's lifetime. Maurice was Literary Executor of Esher's estate and died two years after his father. He had edited the first two volumes of journals and letters and they were published in 1934. It is most likely that Oliver made what would have been a devastating discovery when he decided to complete Maurice's work of compiling and editing their father's journals and letters for publication. Volumes III and IV were edited, selflessly, by Oliver and published four years after the first two, edited by Maurice.

[173] Lionel Esher, Our Selves, p. 30.

and later, her Girlhood Journal, his penchant for secrecy, and the power and influence he wielded in many spheres meant he could not allow the documents to speak for the Queen in their fullness. He had to tailor the selection to convey the image he wished simultaneously to construct and preserve in the public mind. To this end he sought the collaboration of Arthur Benson and directed the editing process.

Chapter 3

The Characters and Lives of the Editors: Arthur Christopher Benson (1862-1925), '... very remarkable.'

Portrait c1900.

Prelude

Arthur Benson had vivid dreams He recorded hundreds of them in his diary, but none was more remarkable than one he recorded in August 1923, two years before he died.

> *I was to have lunch with the King and the Queen, but on coming into a large saloon where I was to meet them, they had gone into lunch. A huge hall with many people. The Q. waved her hand to me, and the K. beckoned me to a small side-table where he had turned down a chair. He said, 'You see I have kept you a place. The Q. wanted to send up to you, but I said we wouldn't disturb your writing.' Then after a little he said, 'Do you ever reflect that I am the only king who ever inherited all the virtues and none of the faults of his ancestors. I have the robustness of the Normans, the activity of the Plantagenets, the romance of the Stewarts and the common sense of the Guelphs.' Then he said, 'I want you to look at the roof of my mouth. That will show you. That is how you tell a well-bred spaniel.' He turned to me, threw his head back and opened his mouth – but I could see nothing except that it was of enormous extent, cavernous and dark. I said I couldn't see, and he called an attendant who brought on electric torch. Then I saw it was as black as jet. I thanked him and he said, 'I particularly wish you to look at the roof of the Queen's mouth – do so afterwards.' I said I could hardly do that, but he said, 'Tell her I wished you to do so.' Events followed which I can't recollect, but I was eventually in a small sitting-room with the Queen, who said, 'Mind, it is only because the King desires it that I show you my mouth.' She threw back her head, and it was an enormous cavity of a dark purple, as if enamelled. I said, 'It's very remarkable,' and she said with a smile, 'You are right. You are about the only person to whom we have ever shown our mouths!' This did not appear strange or ludicrous – only a solemn privilege.*[1]

[1] Arthur Benson, Diary, vol. 176, August 1923. Transcriptions and readings of many of these dreams are given in David Newsome, On the Edge of Paradise. A.C. Benson: the Diarist, London, John Murray, 1980. For this dream see pp. 357-8. When following a line of investigation, using diaries, memoirs, letters and personal accounts of lives as source material, the researcher is sometimes able to make intuitive connections and to draw symbolic inferences from the varied source materials. Finding textual strategies to make these nuances and clues legible to contemporary readers is a complex task. To add dreams (deemed to be a problematic resource in itself by some scholars), to what is already a huge archive of material may be adding fictions to fictions, but any study of Arthur Benson would be deprived of a wealth of material if his dreams were discarded on spurious grounds.

The dream can be read on several levels. A literal interpretation would be that the King was George V and the Queen, Mary, his consort, and the narrative a fantastic conflation of previous meetings and the commission he had recently had from them.[2] It could also be that 'the King' is Edward VII ordering Benson to 'look inside' Queen Victoria, his mother, which he did, metaphorically, by selecting Benson to read her letters. That he should dream of King Edward having an 'unfathomable' mouth and Queen Victoria one that was 'royal' purple, yet coated and thus impermeable and unrevealing of her interiority, could convey something of what he found in editing her letters. In classical symbolism, a king can represent Father and masculinity, and a queen, Mother and femininity. Mouths too can be polysemic as symbols – representing not just points of entry to the body, but also to the mind, words and speech, and the focal point for communication.[3]

The dream may also be read as a reflection of Arthur's paradoxical view of himself and the world: he was socially eligible to be invited to dine with the King and Queen, but was offered a side table, alone; he was recognised as a writer, but not important enough to be left undisturbed; he was deemed to be worthy of engaging in intimacies with the monarchs, yet had to be ordered to do so; even with assistance he could perceive very little and produce no significant insights from the experience, merely a platitudinous remark.

This particular dream, for all its delightful hilarity, is revealing of Arthur's personality, his perceptions of men and women, of monarchy, of his parents, and his sense of himself.

3.1 'Arthur Benson, son of the Archbishop ...'

Arthur Benson was always introduced as the son of his father. Edward White Benson had made the dazzling rise from schoolmaster-priest to Archbishop of Canterbury,

[2] Two months prior to his dream, he had been given the commission to edit The Book of the Queen's Doll's House. Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p. 357.

[3] On feminine and queen symbolism, see Eric Neumann, The Great Mother. An Analysis of the Archetype, Trans. Ralph Manheim, Princeton, Princeton University Press, (1955), 1991, pp. 46-7, 168-171; on symbolism of King and for mouth, see J.E. Circlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, Trans by Jack Sage, London, Routledge, (1962), 1988, pp. 167-9, pp. 221-2; on colour and enamelling of mouths, and on royal personages, see Marie Louise von Franz, Alchemy: An Introduction to the Symbolism and the

despite from the age of sixteen being the orphaned son of a bankrupt chemical manufacturer.[4] Edward had had a short career teaching at Rugby school with Dr Arnold, before being selected as foundation Headmaster of Wellington College. He worked closely with the Prince Consort to establish the College, and Queen Victoria maintained a keen interest in the school after the Prince's death.[5] Edward married Mary Sidgwick whose three brothers all went on to become Oxbridge dons, and one married the sister of a future Prime Minister.[6] Both Mary and Edward developed networks of friends and colleagues as Edward rose through the Church of England and moved through various parts of the country. Thus Arthur lived within the most eminent circles of Victorian and Edwardian England.[7] He later recorded a conversation with Sir Philip Burne-Jones, the son of the famous artist, about 'the difficulty of being sons of famous men, and how it overshadowed one with inevitable comparisons'.[8]

Born in 1862, Arthur was the second son of Edward and Mary's six children.[9] After attending Eton College and King's College in Cambridge, he returned to Eton and was a Housemaster for twenty years. He became a Fellow and later, the Master, of Magdalene College. He was a published writer of prose, poetry, biography and memoir, and his literary fame and friendships brought him membership of the Athenaeum Club, and election to the Royal Society of Literature and the Academy of Letters.[10] In his biographies and in the memoirs of his father, his mother, his brother and his two sisters he aimed to show that a life 'finely lived, with all its

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Psychology, Toronto, Inner City books, 1980, pp. 220-1, pp. 155 & 200-1. I thank Carole Hamilton-Barwick, Mary Symes and Dr Heidi Zogbaum for discussions and references on dreaMs

[4] Biographical details are drawn from Arthur Christopher Benson, The Life of E.W. Benson, sometime Archbishop of Canterbury, 2 vols, London, Macmillan, 1899, vol. I, pp. 1-66.

[5] Edward was mentioned in Queen Victoria's Journals, in 1862 and 1864. The Board conducted the interview for the position in the House of Lords. Present were Prince Albert, Lords Lansdowne and Derby, and Mr Sidney Herbert. Arthur Benson, Archbishop, vol. I, pp. 136-7. See also David Williams, Genesis and Exodus. A Portrait of the Benson Family, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1979, p. 16; David Newsome, Godliness and Good Learning. Four Studies on a Victorian Ideal, London, Cassell, 1961, p. 151. Newsome was a Headmaster of Wellington College.

[6] Arthur Sidgwick and Eleanor Mildred Sidgwick, Henry Sidgwick. A Memoir, London, Macmillan and Co, 1906, p. 3.

[7] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p. 4.

[8] ibid., p. 13. Edward Burne-Jones was a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, along with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, of whom Benson was to write a biography.

[9] Biographical details drawn from Newsome, Edge of Paradise, *passim*.

[10] For Athenaeum membership, see Francis Gledstanes Waugh, Members of the Athenaeum Club from its Foundation, privately printed, London, 1900. Benson gained membership in 1903. For Royal Society and the Academy, see Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p. 275.

shadows and failures ... is a beautiful and engrossing thing'.[11] He was a friend of the Master of the Queen's Music, Sir Walter Parratt, and wrote verses and hymns for Queen Victoria and other royalty. His collaboration with Sir Edward Elgar produced "Land of Hope and Glory" which remains his best known work.[12] He developed an extensive network of friendships of his own making in addition to those from the circles of his parents and his siblings. He had a large correspondence with his readers and was held in high esteem and affection by his past pupils and his colleagues. By 1904 when he began work on editing Queen Victoria's letters, Arthur was unmarried, and forty-two years of age.

Despite these achievements, within the privacy of his diary[13] and to friends, he was extremely self-critical. He came to describe himself as 'a good case of an essentially second rate person who has had every opportunity to be first rate, except the power to do so'.[14] In demeaning himself thus was he being falsely modest? Were there unreasonably high standards set for him? Was he beset with insurmountable constraints on achievement, a confusion of expectations and emotions? Would a truly second rate man have been chosen to edit Queen Victoria's letters? From what basis did he make these judgements?

Arthur's life, his personality and achievements are inextricably linked with those of his family, especially his father. Edward, with his 'prodigious physical energy and intellect, his self-righteousness and domineering personality', had been a 'constant

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[11] Arthur Christopher Benson, 'The Art of the Biographer.' An address given in the last year of his life to the Kingsley Club, Magdalene College, Cambridge, 25 January 1925. In addition to the biography of his father, Arthur wrote memoirs of his mother and of his siblings, Nelly, Hugh and Maggie, see Benson Deposit: Box 12, Bodleian Library, Oxford. Memoirs of Mary Benson, (published 1891), vol. 2, Bound typescript with some additional material in ACB's hand, c. 159 pages quarto. Catalogued as being a memoir of Arthur's mother, but actually a Memoir of Mary Eleanor Benson, his sister, Nelly; Arthur Christopher Benson, Life and Letters of Maggie Benson, London, John Murray, 1917; Arthur Christopher Benson, Hugh. Memoir of a Brother, London, Smith, Elder, 1915; Arthur Christopher Benson's unpublished biography of his mother, Memoir of Mary Benson, 1925, carbon typescript, unpublished, Special Collection 656, Box 2, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles. Fred Benson was Arthur's executor. Arthur's unpublished typescript of his Memoir of Mary Benson is dated 1925, the year of Arthur's death, and the same year as the publication of Fred's biography of their mother. The typescript was only located in 2003, having been previously unknown to Benson scholars. I believe Fred drew extensively on Arthur's Memoir for both his biography Mother, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1925, and his own books of reminiscences: As We Were. A Victorian Peep-Show, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1933, and Final Edition. Informal Autobiography, London, Hogarth Press, 1988.(Longmans, 1940).

[12] See Yvonne Ward, ' "Gosh! man I've got a tune in my head!": Edward Elgar, A.C. Benson and the creation of *Land of Hope and Glory*', The Court Historian, vol. 7, no.1, March 2002, pp. 17-41.

[13] The estimate of four million words is by Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p. 1.

and imposing presence' in the lives of his children.[15] The children were all born whilst their father was at Wellington. The family lived at the school and the children were educated at home for their first ten years. In his diary Arthur wrote: 'Papa was, of course, strict, severe and moody, and believed in anger as the best way of influencing people – and he never knew how terrible his anger was.'[16] He expected his children (and his wife) to be perfect; and they must never let him down. They must be examples of their father's principles in action, and models to the boys in his care. Edward's insistence that all time must be spent in useful and improving occupation, and his autocratic demands for honesty and accuracy, were carried into the home. Arthur recalled the types of books which Edward gave the children to read: no novels, as fiction equated to dishonesty, but 'books like Philosophy in Sport, where the boy cannot even throw a stone without having the principles of the parabola explained to him with odious diagrams'.[17] As a father, he was at ease with his children but since they never knew which innocent remark or act of childish impetuosity might be taken seriously amiss, there was a constant strain upon the children. The eldest son, Martin, came close to achieving perfection in his father's eyes but he died when he was seventeen.[18] The children were 'constantly reminding themselves what a disappointment they must be to their revered, faultless, fierce and dominating father'.[19] (This faultlessness was reflected in the list of personal qualities which the King attributed to himself in Arthur's dream.)

Wellington College was built on a desolate heath with the nearest establishment being the recently constructed criminal lunatic asylum of Broadmoor. Edward spent almost fifteen years at the college before he left in 1873 on a ladder of preferment in the Church of England,[20] going first to Lincoln, then becoming Bishop of Truro and

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[14] ibid., p. 379.
[15] John Tosh, 'Domesticity and Manliness in the Victorian Middle Class: the Family of Edward White Benson', in Michael Roper and John Tosh, eds, Manful Assertions. Masculinities in Britain since 1800, London, Routledge, 1991, pp. 44-73, pp. 45-8, 61-5, and Brian Masters, The Life of E.F. Benson, London, Chatto & Windus, 1991, pp. 25-8.
[16] Benson Diary, vol. 171, p. 15.
[17] See details in Newsome, Godliness and Good Learning, pp. 151-61. This is just one of many revealing, sometimes amusing, examples of EWB selected by Newsome.
[18] For an extensive and detailed account of Martin Benson's life, drawing on the account written by Edward following Martin's death, see Newsome, Godliness and Good Learning, Part III, pp. 148-94. Also see Masters, E.F. Benson, pp. 50-2.
[19] Masters, E.F. Benson, p.27. For Benson's home life, see pp. 25-8.
[20] Arthur Benson, Archbishop, vol. II, pp. 774-7.

building Truro Cathedral, the first cathedral to be built in England since the Reformation.[21] It was at Truro also that, in 1880, Benson devised the now traditional Christmas Eve service of nine lessons and carols which was to be adopted and made famous by King's College, Cambridge from 1918.[22] Edward had forged links with men in the Church, including the Tait and the Davidson families, both of whom occupied Lambeth Palace, and with those in politics and education.[23] Within ten years of leaving Wellington College, and at the age of fifty-two, he received the letter from Queen Victoria inviting him to become Archbishop of Canterbury.[24] He continued to make significant contributions until his death whilst at prayer with Mr Gladstone at Hawarden, in 1896, when Arthur was a Master at Eton.

Arthur's mother, Mary, was the only surviving daughter of the Reverend William Sidgwick, a second cousin to Edward.[25] He had been the headmaster of the Skipton Grammar School in Yorkshire, but he died of consumption in 1841, just two months after Mary's birth.[26] In a state of prolonged bereavement, her mother eventually settled her family in Rugby, to enable her sons, William, Henry and Arthur Sidgwick to attend the school. By now, the Sidgwick household had extended to include: an

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[21] For details of this and the Archbishop's energetic career, see Arthur Christopher Benson, The Trefoil. Wellington, Lincoln and Truro, London, John Murray, 1923.

[22] Arthur Benson, Archbishop, vol. I, p. 484. For Cambridge, see Michael De-La-Noy, Michael Ramsey. A Portrait, London, Collins, 1990, p. 64.

[23] The Tait family had experienced great tragedy in 1856 when, within the space of six weeks, five of Lucy's sisters died from scarlet fever. Only she and one brother survived. Mrs Tait wrote a memoir of the family which was published following the subsequent early death of their only son and her own death in 1879. (Newsome, Godliness and Good Learning, pp. 76-8). One sister, Edith, was born after the 1856 tragedy, and married Randall Davidson, later Archbishop of Canterbury from 1903. Lucy Tait, the daughter of Benson's predecessor, later became part of the Benson household.

[24] For details of his work in Lincoln, see Arthur Benson, Archbishop, vol. I, pp. 364 ff; for Truro, pp. 448 ff; and Canterbury, pp. 544 ff; Queen Victoria's letter, p. 552.

[25] Cousin marriage was not unusual in the nineteenth century; indeed Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were first cousins, the Bensons were second cousins. But by the 1860s scholarly articles were being published suggesting that there may be detrimental effects from consanguinity. For some of these arguments see Nancy Fix Anderson, 'Cousin Marriage in England', Journal of Family History, vol. 11, no. 3, 1986, pp. 285-301. There had evolved a phenomenon of the mid-late nineteenth century between certain middle-class families of inter-marrying and producing children who became teachers and scholars. (See N.G. Annan, 'The Intellectual Aristocracy', in J.H. Plumb, ed., Studies in Social History. A Tribute to G.M. Trevelyan, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1955, pp. 243-87. One of his examples was the Sidgwick-Benson intermarriage, pp. 264-5. See also Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes. Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850, London, Hutchinson, 1987, pp 219-21). Perhaps this was a contributor to, and a result of, the intensifying of the gentlemanly networks.

[26] Arthur Benson, Memoir of Mary Benson, 1925, unpaginated typescript, Chapter 2, and Sidgwick and Sidgwick, Henry Sidgwick, p. 3. Benson's Memoir of his mother contains some interesting details, for example: Charlotte Bronte was governess to the children of one of his great-uncles at Stonegappe 'for a few unhappy months' and this experience was described in Jane Eyre.

aunt; Edward's sister, Ada Benson; a governess who was related to the Tennysons; and the nurse, Beth. Upon his appointment to Rugby school Edward Benson joined his Sidgwick cousin in 1853, and by sheer strength of personality, became head of the household.[27] Mary's education had been conducted at home and it had included a visit to the Tennyson home where, memorably, she met the tall, black-haired Alfred.[28] She maintained a lifelong love of poetry – indeed her pet-name 'Minnie' derived from Minnehaha, the 'laughing water' of Longfellow's *Hiawatha.*[29] From 1853, the education of both Ada and Minnie was directed by Edward, the content of which was later criticised in her Memoir by schoolmaster, Arthur, as totally inappropriate.

Arthur was always much more at his ease with his mother.[30] He had been born in the third year of the marriage, when she was in her twentieth year and his father was thirty-two. In contrast to Edward, her nature had gaiety, light-heartedness, tenderness and sympathy.[31] Arthur's letters from his years as a boy at Eton to his mother are much more expressive than anything he could have written to his father. They show him relating to her more as a peer than as a mother. For example, as a 12-year-old he wrote to her:

> WRETCHED MOTHER
> GRACELESS REPROBATE
> This is from your pining son whose bones are starting through his skin, who can neither eat nor drink for want of
> YOUR LETTERS.
> If the writing is not legible, it is probably owing to the tears which are steeping the paper at this instant.
> Yet though so wasted by not getting your letters, I have managed to
> PASS
> and in the College sweepstakes, I steer a couple of fellows...[32]

At this time, the age gap between himself and his mother was the same as that between his father and his mother. He may have seen himself as a better companion for her than his father, and sought to displace him even in her affections. Arthur later recalled that as children, 'our relations [with her] were perfect. We trusted her, we turned to her for everything; she was the gayest and liveliest, as well as the most perceptive of

[27] Masters, E.F. Benson, p. 19.
[28] Arthur Benson, Memoir of Mary Benson, 1925, unpaginated typescript, chapter 2.
[29] Arthur Benson, Memoir of Mary Benson, 1925, unpaginated typescript, chapter 3.
[30] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p. 15
[31] ibid., p. 14.

companions'.[33] This warmth continued throughout Arthur's life. He was able to describe her friendly and hospitable character in his Memoir of her, but not her deeper feelings. He had memories of Queen Victoria meeting her at Wellington and throughout the Archbishop's term of office. Following the Archbishop's death in 1896, the Queen invited Mrs Benson to Windsor with the express purpose of consoling her and offering her accommodation.[34] This closeness with his mother and her warm relations with Queen Victoria enabled Arthur to feel an empathy with the Queen and her world through her letters which he did not feel with other women.[35]

There was a particular closeness between the children perhaps because of their father's ferocity. None of the children married, and throughout their lives the children gathered together with their mother for weeks at a time, Arthur perhaps more than the others. Martin was born in 1860 and died at the age of eighteen of tubercular meningitis. Arthur was a 16-year-old at Eton at the time, and recalled being in a bewildered and half-terrified state of mind;[36] at intervals he regretted that he was no substitute for Martin in his father's eyes.[37] Mary Eleanor, known as Nelly, (and sometimes spelt 'Nellie') was the third child, born in 1863. She studied at Oxford and had a close, but brief, friendship with the suffragist composer, Ethel Smyth.[38] During an epidemic she

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[32] Benson Deposit, 3/48 Family correspondence, Bodleian Library, Oxford. Letter not dated but following that of 27 September 1874. Transcribed with capitals and spacing as written in the original.

[33] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p. 15.

[34] Arthur Benson, Memoirs of Mary [Eleanor] Benson, (published 1891), vol. 2, Bound typescript:
'In the autumn of 1897 [E.W. Benson died 1896] my mother had a very touching interview with Queen Victoria who had known my father for nearly forty years, and regarded him with much personal affection.
The Queen sent for my mother to Windsor. "I was taken in to see her," my mother said to me, "and I knew it was to be a farewell. She kissed me, and said a few words of sympathy to me through her tears; I knelt down before her and thanked her for all her goodness to your father and for her kindness to myself. Then we talked a little about his last hours and his death. Then she put her arms around me and raised me up and kissed me and said she would always keep me in affectionate remembrance, and that I must try not to let my sorrow spoil my life."

There soon followed the offer of a house in Windsor Park, the Royal Lodge, a curious and inconvenient gothic erection of Geo IV's. But it seemed too expensive and solitary a place, and though Princess Christian who lived quite close by at Cumberland Lodge pressed her to accept it, my mother felt that she must, particularly for my sister's sake, be more in touch with the world. She gratefully refused it as well as a subsequent offer of a house at Hampton Court'.

[35] For example, Benson Diary, vol. 49, 24 March 1904. Sometime later, in the sentiments that Shaw was to give Henry Higgins, Benson wrote: 'I am entirely a person of *male* friendships I don't like "exultations and agonies". I like a friendship where I can say exactly what I like, as much or as little: speak angrily or affectionately and never be misunderstood.' Benson Diary, quoted in Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p. 94.

[36] Arthur Christopher Benson, Memories and Friends, New York and London, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1925, p. 12.

[37] Benson Diary, vol. 3, pp. 152-3.

[38] Masters, E.F. Benson, pp. 88-90.

contracted diphtheria and died at the age of twenty-seven, six years before her father's death.[39] Her father was embroiled in a complicated, ecclesiastical issue, referred to as the Lincoln Judgement, and was affected far less by Nelly's death than by Martin's.[40] Arthur's memoir of her life remained unpublished.[41]

Margaret (Maggie) was born in 1865. Following a stunning undergraduate career at Lady Margaret Hall at Oxford, she immersed herself in two feminine friendships[42] before embarking on the study of Egyptology and an archaeological dig at Luxor. She had assisted Arthur in writing the Archbishop's biography, although there is no acknowledgment of her contribution.[43] Like Arthur, she was afflicted by depression and suffered mental derangement in 1907 from which she never recovered, eventually dying in a nursing home in 1916.[44] Arthur's 'Life and Letters' biography of her was published in 1917. Both Maggie and Nelly, through Ethel Smyth, had been friends with Mary Ponsonby, the wife of Queen Victoria's Private Secretary, and Arthur also became part of the Ponsonby circle.[45]

Edward Frederick (Fred) was born in 1867. He had a very successful career publishing ninety-three novels (his Mapp and Lucia novels were made into a television series in recent years), a biography of Queen Victoria and a prosopography of her daughters, and many biographies and family memoirs.[46] He moved away from the 'ecclesiastical and intellectual ethos of the Benson household into a smart and moneyed set'.[47] He had extensive networks of friends, some of whom overlapped with Arthur's networks. According to his biographers, Fred was 'much less inhibited than his brothers or sisters and thus more likely to have had an adult and consummated homosexual life'.[48] He attended the opening of Lady Windermere's Fan, in London in 1892 with Max

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[39] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p. 13 and Masters, E.F. Benson, pp. 34, 79, 88-91.
[40] Masters, E.F. Benson, p. 91.
[41] Benson Deposit, Bodleian Library, Oxford. Excerpt at Old Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge.
[42] Betty Askwith, Two Victorian Families, London, Chatto & Windus, 1971, p. 208. For her friendships with Nettie Gourlay and Gladys Bevan and excerpts of letters, see Arthur Benson, Maggie Benson. Also Masters, E.F. Benson, has many interesting details of Maggie's life throughout his book.
[43] Maggie's contribution is detailed by Askwith, Two Families, pp. 189, 191, 193, & 195, but no acknowledgment of her work is made in either of the two volumes of Archbishop. See also Masters, E.F. Benson, p. 127 and p. 142.
[44] Arthur Benson, Maggie Benson, p. 410.
[45] Masters, E.F. Benson, pp. 88-90; William M. Kuhn, Henry and Mary Ponsonby. Life at the Court of Queen Victoria, London, Duckworth, 2002, pp. 228-9.
[46] For a listing of Fred Benson's publications see Masters, E.F. Benson, pp. 296-300.
[47] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p. 13.
[48] Geoffrey Palmer and Noel Lloyd, E.F. Benson As He Was, Luton, Lennard Publishing, 1988, p. 52.

Beerbohm wearing the Oscar Wilde trademark green carnation;[49] and travelled up the Nile to Luxor in a gilded barge in the company of Lord Alfred Douglas and four mutual friends just prior to the Oscar Wilde trials.[50] He leased a villa on the Isle of Capri with John Ellingham Brooks from 1895.[51] He was much sought after by Society hostesses and many of his most popular novels depicted their social world.[52] He had an intimate knowledge of the Somerset family, whose son Arthur was connected with the Cleveland Street Brothel Scandal.[53] As a gold medallist in ice-skating, Fred was a member of the committee which organised the first Olympic skating events and he wrote an authoritative textbook on English figure skating to coincide with the Games in London in 1908.[54] Fred's worldliness and hedonism were incompatible with Arthur's own more sober and socially anxious disposition,[55] but Fred's care and kindness to Arthur in his last years moderated Arthur's criticisms[56] Fred, like Arthur, was always close to his mother, and his biography of her was published in the year of Arthur's death.[57] Arthur's typescript memoir of their mother was found in Fred's library.[58] Fred and Arthur shared the lease on Lamb House, previously the home of their friend, Henry James, at Rye. Fred died, the last of the family, in February 1940.[59] Many of Fred's friends were members of the extensive networks of both Arthur and Lord Esher.

The youngest child, Robert Hugh (Hugh) was born in 1871.[60] He was ordained in 1894 – Archbishop Benson was one of the officiating Bishops – but seven years after his

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[49] ibid., p. 32.
[50] Matthew Sturgis, Passionate Attitudes. The English Decadence of the 1890s, London, Macmillan, 1995, p. 170.
[51] Robert Aldrich, The Seduction of the Mediterranean. Writing, Art and Homosexual Fantasy, London and New York, Routledge, 1993, p. 126. This was the year many Englishmen and Europeans went to Capri following the legalisation of homosexuality in Italy.
[52] Masters, E.F. Benson, Chapter 6 'Society's Pet'.
[53] As detailed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, Arthur Somerset was helped by Lord Esher, Prime Minister Rosebery and courtiers of the Prince of Wales to escape to the Continent to avoid prosecution. His older brother, Lord Henry, had earlier escaped to Europe, rather than face charges of sodomy. Lord Henry Somerset had been Comptroller of the Queen's Household, a post he immediately resigned from in 1879. His wife was one of several aristocratic women who sought Fred's company. E.F. Benson, As We Were, pp. 85-103. Also see Timothy D'Arch Smith, Love in Earnest. Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English 'Uranian' Poets from 1889 to 1930, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970, pp. 24-7. It was in a review of Henry Somerset's Uranian poetry that Oscar Wilde famously wrote: 'He has nothing to say and says it'! (Smith, Love in Earnest, p. 27.)
[54] Masters, E.F. Benson, p. 183.
[55] For example, Benson Diary, vol. 72, p. 61.
[56] Masters, E.F. Benson, pp. 243-4; Newsome, Edge of Paradise, pp. 346-52.
[57] E.F. Benson, Mother. See also Masters, E.F. Benson, pp. 27-8; 119-230.
[58] Arthur Benson, Memoir of Mary Benson, 1925. Marked: 'Ex Libris. E.F. Benson'.
[59] Askwith, Two Victorian Families, p. 194.
[60] Arthur Benson, Hugh, pp. 14-74.

father's death, Hugh sought to be received into the Roman Catholic Church, and was ordained in Rome in 1904, the year Arthur began editing Queen Victoria's letters. He was back at Tremans with the family that summer. Arthur had various discussions with him on philosophical matters[61] and was amazed that after eight months in Rome, Hugh knew 'not a word of the language' (but he knew Latin, presumably), and he took delight in dressing in his distinctive 'gown and tippet' and his biretta. He was 'for ever searching out his little server (the son of a humble neighbour) and going off for walks with him, armed with sandwiches'.[62] He rapidly rose to become Monsignor and died soon after the outbreak of the First World War, in 1914.[63] His conversion may have been a conscious, or unconscious, opposition and rebellion to his father who had transposed the hopes he had held for Martin onto Hugh.[64] Hugh became something of a 'superstar' of the Roman Catholic pulpits in both America and Britain.[65] Soon after becoming a Monsignor, Hugh had to seek help through family networks; he unwisely set out to collaborate on a biography of St Thomas of Canterbury with the notorious Frederick Rolfe, who styled himself Baron Corvo, and when living in Venice, 'made ends meet by procuring boys for visiting Englishmen'.[66] The unbalanced and scandal-ridden Corvo 'did his best by a series of ingenious and wicked letters to damage Hugh's character in all directions'. Arthur wrote: 'I myself should have been anxious and despondent at the thought of such evil innuendoes and gross misrepresentations being circulated, and still more at the sort of malignant hatred from which they proceeded.'[67] Scandal was only averted through Rolfe's death, in the year before Hugh's own. Arthur, although the closest of the siblings to Hugh, was scathingly sceptical of the motivation

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[61] For example, Benson Diary, vol. 97, p. 35.
[62] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, pp. 125-6.
[63] An official biography was commissioned: C.C. Martindale, S.J., The Life of Robert Hugh Benson, 2 vols, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1916. Masters comments on it, E.F. Benson, p. 210. For a more recent, but succinct, hagiography, Sr. M. St. R. Monaghan, Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson. His Apostolate and its Message for our Time, Melbourne, Boolarong Publications, 1985.
[64] Askwith, Two Victorian Families, pp. 153 and 196.
[65] Masters, E.F. Benson, pp. 206-7.
[66] ibid., p. 177. Wayne Koestenbaum wrote about this infamous collaboration, mistakenly identifying Hugh as the older brother of Arthur and Fred. Koestenbaum also overlooked the important text, 'The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole: a Romance of Modern Venice', Corvo's account of the failed Benson-Corvo collaboration. Wayne Koestenbaum, Double Talk, The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration, New York and London, Routledge, 1989, p. 162.
[67] Arthur Benson, Hugh, pp. 236-7. For the contextualising of the Benson-Colvo friendship and failed collaboration see Brian Fothergill, 'Rolfe and Benson: A Friendship's Downfall', in Cecil Woolf and Brocard Sewell, eds, New Quests for Colvo, London, Icon Books, (1961), 1965, pp. 46-57.

for Hugh's conversion.[68] He could be charming, but was self-centred, arrogant, petulant – a 'permanent adolescent'.[69]

Being the children of a headmaster, bishop and then Archbishop meant that not only did the children have a particular model of masculinity and authority, but they each felt expectations to achieve. Arthur felt this pressure throughout his life.[70] Again it was most frequently manifested in his dreams[71] Steven Mintz's characterisation of the Victorian family as 'a prison of expectations' encapsulates many aspects of the Benson family experiences.[72] There were advantages too and although Wellington College was a little remote, the Benson children were introduced to networks of educated and influential people. As a child, Arthur's older brother, Martin, recalled visits to Wellington College from Lord Derby, the Prime Minister, and from the second Duke of Wellington 'who seemed to have the astonishing power of making their father look uncomfortable'.[73] Arthur's brother, Fred, reminisced about the rector of the neighbouring parish of Eversley who had frequently visited Wellington College, accompanied by his wife. Her visits were especially welcome, 'for she never forgot her duties as godmother to myself and she gave me an enthralling book called The Water Babies, which her husband had written ... '.[74] Charles Kingsley and his wife became firm friends with the Bensons.[75] Kingsley was a strong advocate of passion within marriage and his views on chivalry and muscular Christianity were widely and publicly known.[76]

On another occasion, Martin recalled:

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[68] Benson Diary, vol. 37, p. 20 and vol. 34, p. 39; Newsome, Edge of Paradise, pp. 125-6.
[69] These adjectives are taken from the various biographies of the Benson family members. Permanent adolescence is from Cyril Connolly, Enemies of Promise, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979, pp. 271-2.
[70] Tosh, 'Domesticity and Manliness', pp. 45-8.
[71] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p. 19.
[72] Steven Mintz, A Prison of Expectations. The Family in Victorian Culture, New York and London, New York University Press, 1983.
[73] Newsome, Godliness and Good Learning, p. 156.
[74] E.F. Benson, As We Were, p. 10.
[75] For Arthur's reminiscences, Trefoil, pp. 35-8; contrasting religious views p. 55. For family friendships see Williams, Genesis and Exodus, pp. 38-43. Whilst in Cambridge in 1861, Kingsley had been selected as tutor to the Prince of Wales by Prince Albert. See details in Dana Bentley-Cranch, Edward VII. Image of an Era, London, H.M.S.O., 1992, pp. 35-6.
[76] For details of the Kingsleys' marriage see Peter Gay, The Tender Passion, New York, Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 297-311; and John Maynard, Victorian Discourses on Sexuality and Religion, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 85-140.

> on a day of taut nerves and bewildering temporary regulations, came a very dignified lady of fresh complexion, dressed in black, and who Beth [the nurse] addressed as 'My Majesty'. Everyone spoke in awed tones until Martin laughed at her funny bonnet and was rewarded, as was Arthur, with a kiss from a pair of royal lips![77]

Other royal connections followed. In addition to Prince Albert's Chairmanship of the selection panel in Edward's appointment to Wellington College, the Queen had laid the foundation stone for the school on 2 June 1856, and she returned there to open the college on 29 January 1859. The occasion remembered by Martin Benson was probably a private visit made by her in the autumn of 1864,[78] one of the few visits she made in the years immediately following the death of Prince Albert.

Arthur was educated at home until the age of ten when he went with his brother to Temple Grove school. From there he won a King's scholarship to Eton in 1874 where he spent the next seven years before going up to King's College, at Cambridge. He read for the Classical Tripos, eventually gaining a modest place within the First Class. At Cambridge he experienced the first onset of mental depression which recurred throughout his life. Deciding against taking Orders, he returned to Eton as an assistant master in 1885 and made his name as an increasingly popular Housemaster over the next twenty years.[79]

Whilst at Eton, he extended the circles of his parents, and built some new friendships of his own: for example, Randall Davidson, Victoria's Dean at Windsor, then Bishop of Winchester and Archbishop of Canterbury from 1903;[80] and the musician, Sir Walter Parratt. Arthur Benson accompanied Parratt to various rehearsals for the coronation of King Edward VII. On one occasion he heard Wagner's *Kaisermarch*, for which he had

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[77] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p. 20.

[78] Sidney Lee, Queen Victoria. A Biography, London, (Smith, Elder, 1902), John Murray, 1904, pp. 266, 305, 354.

[79] This summary of Benson's first forty-three years has drawn on Newsome's Edge of Paradise, ch.1. There is an extensive historiography on the subject of Eton College, and public schools generally. Many of these studies have drawn on A.C. Benson's diary entries: J. R. de S. Honey, Tom Brown's Universe. The Development of the Victorian Public School, London, Millington books, 1977; Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, The Public School Phenomenon 597-1977, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977; Jon Chandos, Boys Together. English Public Schools 1800-1864, London, Hutchinson, 1984; Jeffrey Richards, ' "Passing the Love of Women": Manly Love and Victorian Society,' in J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds, Manliness and Morality. Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1940, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, pp. 92-122; Noel Annan, Our Age. Portrait of a Generation, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990; Tim Card, Eton Renewed: A History of Eton from 1860 to the Present Day, London, John Murray, 1994; Alisdare Hickson, The Poisoned Bowl. Sex and the Public School, London, Duckworth, 1996.

[80] Correspondence between Benson and Davidson, Lambeth Palace Library, Davidson Papers: 520, and details of this friendship throughout Benson's diary.

been asked to provide additional verses, and other music being prepared: 'the Purcell was ravishing'. But he delighted even more in reporting the use of 'stand-ins and tablecloths', the arrival of 'a loathsome party of courtiers all well dressed, easy, unembarrassed, contemptuous people ... Mrs Geo. Keppel [current mistress of the King] among them', and with childish impetuosity, he and the Bishop of Winchester [Davidson] secretly tried on the mitre and cope to be worn by Bishop of Norwich![81] Arthur's social world was that of a gentleman, revolving around Eton, Cambridge, the Athenaeum Club, churchmen, some aristocratic families such as the Lytteltons and friends such as the Donaldsons from Cambridge. Holidays were largely taken up with visits to his family, hiking or bicycling tours and reading holidays with Eton colleagues and visits to parents of boys in his care, some of whom were of such eminence that a visit by them to the College was impossible, such as Queen Victoria's daughter-in-law, the Duchess of Albany, and the Viceroy to Dublin, Lord Cadogan.[82]

In a history of Eton College, Tim Card described Arthur Benson as: 'a good teacher [who] had run a successful House, (despite an aristocratic clientele, which has often proved difficult to manage).'[83] On another occasion Benson despaired, that as a Housemaster he had to be:

> (1) a maître d'hotel,
> (2) a clergyman,
> (3) a lecturer,
> (4) a coach,
> (5) a policeman
> and most of us are athletes too & ... the reforms ... have added to the masters' work and responsibilities.[84]

Throughout his life Arthur was particularly industrious. His day as a schoolmaster began with school at 7.30am and continued with teaching, correcting, or writing letters (on average sixty per week) until a 2.00pm dinner with his boys, after which he took several more lessons before a walk or bicycle ride. The early evening was spent in school work, correction, preparation and supervision. Supper with colleagues or boys

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[81] Benson Diary, vol. 14, 2 June 1902-27 June 1902, pp. 27 and 45. Of the bishop's vestments, he wrote: 'The weight, terrific, and felt like being rolled in carpet. I should faint in ten minutes standing in that weight.'

[82] Accounts of these holidays are given in the Benson diaries and some are published in David Newsome, Edwardian Excursions. From the Diaries of A.C. Benson 1898-1904, London, John Murray, 1981.

[83] Card, Eton Renewed, p. 120.

[84] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p. 67. Here, Newsome gives details of how, during the year 1901, Benson's working day became even more intensive.

was at 8.30pm, followed by visiting the boys individually (as his father had done at Wellington), then meetings, or writing until midnight.[85]

He had published, in Newsome's words, two 'youthful indiscretions' before he brought forth four volumes of poetry, a collection of literary essays, the classic two volume biography of his father, and a compendium of Eton biographies before 1899. In 1902, he produced The Schoolmaster and was working on three other projects all of which came out the following year. 'Had any hard-working schoolmaster ever *three* books in the press at once before?' he asked rhetorically, in March 1903, acknowledging the uniqueness of his position.[86]

This output was maintained even while editing Queen Victoria's letters. In 1905, he recorded in his diary:

> I worked hard all morning ... [writing] letters. ... Then I managed to finish off Vol ii of the Queen's letters & sent it off. And just before lunch, I got my odd book on Leonard sent off too, to R-J S. So I have sent off three books in 2 days; and in the evening I finished off my Thread of Gold proofs! ... I ought to have been pleased to have sent off my books, but I was not. I regretted them, as dear companions, even more than I regretted the V-P [Vice-Provost] & Luxmoore. They are nearer my heart, I fear![87]

Overall his literary output was prodigious – over sixty volumes. Consequently, he was occasionally made the brunt of satire by his family, which he took in good part. On one occasion his sister, Maggie, wrote to their brother, Hugh, in December 1906:

> Did you see 'Signs of the Times' in Punch?
> 'Self-denial week. Mr A.C. Benson refrains from publishing a book'![88]

In his public, professional and literary world, Benson showed little effects of the characteristics which made him so self-critical.

3.2 Private Worlds and Writing

[85] Card, Eton Renewed, p. 108. Benson recorded these details in the winter of 1899.
[86] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, pp. 85-6.
[87] Benson Diary, vol. 73, 31 August 1905. In January 1906, Benson travelled to London to see John Murray. The journey was uneventful, 'except a determined lady got in at Oxted and read Thread of Gold with compressed lips and corrugated brow'. Benson longed for some more heartening response, but received none. (vol. 77, p. 37).
[88] Quoted in Arthur Benson, Maggie Benson, p. 378, no doubt accompanied by a wry grin by the editor himself who bore the brunt of the quip!

In adulthood, all three of the Benson brothers found themselves to be most comfortable in predominantly homosocial surroundings. To assume the role of paterfamilias as discharged by their father was inconceivable to them. They could see no connection between their perception of love and satisfying the emotional and material demands of women.[89] In their youth they all experienced romantic friendships with their contemporaries and with older men; as adults they maintained many of these friendships but constantly looked for new companions, increasingly with younger men. Some of these are described by Arthur in his diaries; others appear in published letters, such as those of Hugh Walpole.[90] By the age of thirty-five Arthur had already discounted himself from being able to continue the Benson line, and thought it lost unless Fred could be persuaded to marry, but Fred never gave marriage a thought.[91] In Tosh's view, each of them sought to replace the warm relations denied to them by their father in romantic male friendships.[92] Only homosocial worlds could provide the Bensons with opportunities for this quality of company and emotional comfort. Hugh sought it in ecclesiastical circles; Fred in literature and leisure; and Arthur in public schools, universities and in literature.

Writing was a crucial outlet for Arthur Benson and for each of his brothers.[93] In addition to his many publications, the biographies of his family and family memoirs, he maintained his diary for almost thirty years. It comprises 180 volumes and more than four million words. But seven years after the commencement of the diary he confessed:

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[89] John Tosh, A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home, New Haven, Conn., and London, Yale University Press, 1999, pp. 190-4.

[90] Walpole's relations with Benson are described in Rupert Hart-Davis, Hugh Walpole. A Biography, London, Macmillan & Co., 1952, pp. 32 *passim*, but without having had access to Benson's diary. Thirty years later, Newsome was able to give a more detailed account of their friendship, see Newsome, Edge of Paradise, pp. 176-7, 203-13 *passim*. See also Henry James's correspondence with Benson, Benson Deposit 3/53, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, and Percy Lubbock, ed., Letters of Henry James, New York, Octagon Books, (1920), 1970. Benson introduced the young Walpole to Henry James, who encouraged and inspired his writing, and led to the development of their having a 'close, romantic friendship'. Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p. 233.

[91] Masters, E.F. Benson, p. 132.

[92] Tosh, A Man's Place, p. 194.

[93] Palmer and Lloyd, E.F. Benson, p. 14.

> I reflect that, intimate in some ways as this diary is, there are at least two thoughts often with me, that really affect my life, to which I never allude here. I suppose people's ideas of privacy differ very much. ... I don't think my sense of privacy is very general – but it is very strong about one or two things – and I have a carefully locked and guarded strong room. Anyone might think they could get a good picture of my life from these pages but it is not so.[94]

One aspect of Arthur's life which he did not mention in his diary, but which he first wrote about in the biography of his father, was his parents' marriage and his childhood. As an episode it conveys to us a great deal of the dynamics and the tensions in the household during the children's formative years, and goes some distance in explaining their inability to find lifetime partners and their reluctance to marry. More significantly, Arthur's description of the marriage shows his strategy of dealing with issues of intimacy and emotion.

Edward Benson, at the age of twenty-three, had fallen 'hopelessly and devotedly in love' with Minnie, when she was just a child eleven-years-old; 'a fine and beautiful bud now' he described her rather pruriently in his diary.[95] Then, according to Fred Benson's transcription of the diary, the manuscript took 'refuge in cipher' before his father's account of the episode continued:

> It is not strange that I should have thought first of the possibility that some day dear little Minnie might become my wife.
> Whether such an idea ever struck the guileless little thing herself I cannot tell. I should think it most unlikely.[96]

When Edward came to live in the Sidgwick household in the following year, he was twenty-four. He was studying to take Orders, and thus was only required to teach one hour each day at Rugby. He 'desired Minnie's company constantly, was never happy away from her and dreamed of nothing else but of some day making her his wife'.[97] It created tension within the household as he tutored her and wanted her to accompany him on his frequent horse-rides and walks. But he waited a year before he asked her

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[94] Benson Diary, vol. 25, March 1903, p. 59.
[95] Masters, E.F. Benson, p. 17.
[96] E.F. Benson, As We Were, pp. 60-3.
[97] Arthur Benson, Memoir of Mary Benson, 1925, unpaginated typescript, Ch 3. There seems to be some confusion or obfuscation, on Arthur's part, when it is compared with the account of his father, which Arthur must have read in the course of writing the biography of his father. See full transcript of Edward White Benson's powerfully written account from his diary entry, in E.F. Benson, As We Were, pp. 60-3. The whole episode is well described by Masters, E.F. Benson, pp. 16-20, and by John Tosh, in 'Domesticity and Manliness', pp. 48-59, who in writing a sympathetic account of the Benson marriage places it in its historical context.

mother if he could speak to Minnie on 'The Subject'.[98] In his diary, Edward described the proposal in lengthy detail:

> Let me try to recall each circumstance: the arm-chair in which I sat, how she sat as usual on my knee, a little fair girl with her earnest look, ... and then [I] got quietly to the thing, and asked if she thought it would ever come to pass that we should be married. Instantly without a word, a rush of tears fell down her cheeks, and I really for a moment was afraid. I told her that it was often in my thoughts, and that I believed that I should never love anyone so much as I should love her if she grew up as it seemed likely ... [Accepting Edward's handkerchief] she made no attempt to promise, and said nothing silly or childish, but affected me very much by quietly laying the ends of my handkerchief together and tying them in a knot, and quietly putting them into my hand.[99]

The idea of ambitious young men fashioning by education 'young girls to adorn the blessed position of their future wives'[100] was not unusual, but only rarely were the girls this young.[101] Queen Victoria's eldest daughter was chosen at the age of ten, and engaged, unofficially, at fourteen to a man nine years her senior on the proviso that they should not marry until she was seventeen.[102] Programs of learning were embarked upon for both girls: Minnie was given lists of 'improving' reading in architectural style, poetic metre and liturgical doctrine, and recitation exercises by her very exacting *fiance*-tutor. She was hit by an avalanche of lectures about her shortcomings, especially her 'thoughtlessness', and made to feel that everything Edward decreed was in fact God's Will and God's Word; and that she must comply, gratefully.[103]

Whilst away from Rugby, he even wrote to his aunt complaining rather pathetically: 'Minnie is a most affectionate creature but from her letters one could scarcely think so ... I don't mean that I would wish her for one moment to write love-letters, but one

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[98] Askwith, Two Victorian Families, p. 122. Askwith uses the word 'bulldozed' to describe Edward's approach to Mrs Sidgwick in order to secure his engagement to Minnie.
[99] E.F. Benson, As We Were, pp. 63-4.
[100] Askwith, Two Victorian Families, p. 121. Pat Jalland and John Hooper, Women from Birth to Death: The Female Life Cycle in Britain, 1830-1914, Brighton, Harvester, 1986, pp. 124-30.
[101] In less than 23 per cent of marriages of a census sample was the husband more than five years older than his wife. (Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p. 323). Ronald Pearsall, rather bizarrely lists Minnie Benson among his 'Predatory Women.' Pearsall, The Worm in the Bud. The World of Victorian Sexuality, London, Pimlico, 1969, pp. 90-2.
[102] Elizabeth Longford, Victoria R.I., London, (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964), Abacus books, 2000, parental discussions, p. 244; proposal, p. 280; education as preparation for marriage, p. 285. Prince Frederick of Prussia had been hopeful of winning the young Princess since he first met her at the Great Exhibition. His chance of success was greatly enhanced by the fact that the marriage symbolized the Anglo-German dynastic union that Albert was so eager to foster. The two marriages, coincidentally, took place within eighteen months of each other.
[103] Masters, E.F. Benson, pp. 18-9, and E.F. Benson, Mother, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1925, p. 11.

would suppose that she would say something friendly to an affectionate friend.'[104] Later, Minnie felt a guilt-laden responsibility for the forbidden kisses that she had allowed Edward in the garden, and that weighed heavily on her, 'for it must have somehow been her fault'.[105] Courtship was hugely trying, but she could not confide her uncertainties or anxieties to her hopeful mother, or to anyone else. Minnie Sidgwick had few of the emotional supports of the young Princess Royal.[106]

After three years at Rugby, Edward suffered 'neuralgia and general nervous prostration' and he was advised to leave.[107] His pent-up emotions may well have contributed to this 'prostration', such was his passionate make-up. He did not take up an offered position at Cambridge, because it would have meant the indefinite deferment of marriage to Mary as University Fellows at that time were not permitted to marry.[108] But he happily accepted the position of Headmaster at the new Wellington College.

There have been many detailed readings of this courtship and its repercussions for the marriage and the fraught emotions in the home environment.[109] Minnie later recorded that, amongst other things, Edward had used this betrothal 'to preserve himself from errant feelings of love'.[110] This was but one instance of Edward's needs overriding all other considerations, extreme even for the hegemony of masculinist ideas of the time.[111] As Arthur's brother, Fred, observed: '[My father] ... had no ... notions of self-surrender ... He never imagined himself fused in her; he saw her fused in him.'[112] It was unlikely he could ever see things from her point of view, or even contemplate that she had a

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[104] Newsome, Godliness and Good Learning, p. 153. Unfortunately, no date was given by Newsome for this letter.
[105] E.F. Benson, As We Were, pp. 65-6. This was Fred Benson's paraphrasing of his mother's diary.
[106] For instance, Queen Victoria was insistent that it should be a love-match like her own, (Longford, Victoria R.I., p. 281), which contrasted with the pragmatic Mrs Sidgwick, as described in Williams, Genesis and Exodus, p. 19.
[107] Arthur Benson, Archbishop, vol. I, p. 129.
[108] Honey, Tom Brown's Universe, p. 304, *passim*; Arthur Benson, Archbishop, vol. I, pp. 134-5. This was the case at least between 1845 and 1884.
[109] Williams, Genesis and Exodus, pp. 10-22; Askwith, Two Victorian Families, pp. 121-9; Tosh, 'Domesticity and Manliness,' pp. 53-9.
[110] Tosh, A Man's Place, p. 69, quoting from Mary's diary. Edward admitted as much in his diary as transcribed in E.F. Benson, As We Were, p. 63: '[I] who am fond (if not too fond) of little endearments, and who also know my weakness for falling suddenly in love, in the common sense of the word, and have already gone too far more than once in these things and have therefore reason to fear that I might on some sudden occasion be led. ...'
[111] Michael Brander, The English Gentleman, London, Gordon Cremonesi, 1975, pp. 115-7, cites the Benson marriage as the epitome of early Victorian marriages, where women were elevated as romantically and chivalrously helpless creatures, yet treated as 'lesser beings'.
[112] E.F Benson, Mother, p. 11.

different perspective on most things. Did he still see her as a child when they married? She certainly expressed that view in her memoir.[113] After marriage he continued to take her on his lap, particularly when he was finding fault with her. Yet, confusingly, he also sought emotional refuge in her from the earliest months of their marriage. In his black depressions, he needed to 'lay my head on your breast and be comforted' as he might do to a mature, wifely/motherly figure, the 'angel of the house' of the Coventry Patmore poems; such responses were far beyond the capabilities of a bewildered girl/wife.[114] The physical context for all of these difficulties was in a new house in the grounds of a new school where the obsessive Edward White Benson, an inexperienced school Headmaster, was trying to establish an ethos in staff and boys to meet the exacting standards of the Prince Consort, whilst his young wife dealt with servants, budgets, sex, pregnancies and babies!

Arthur had read his father's diary entries in preparation for the biography, but he declared them 'too sacred for quotation'.[115] In the two-volume biography, he took just one paragraph to describe the seven-year courtship and the marriage, thus:

> And here I must touch, however gently, upon what was the central fact of my father's life – the companionship of my mother. From the time when he was at the University, and played with her as a little child, he desired some day to make her his wife. When he came to live with the Sidgwick household at Rugby, and, in the intervals of his schoolwork, found time to teach her, this desire was formulated not only to himself but to others. Before he began his first independent work, when she was just eighteen, they were married, and the camaraderie of the Rugby household was exchanged for the close companionship of married life among the wild and heathery solitudes of Wellington. Thus her life was bound up with his in a way which is seldom possible to a wife. There was not a single thought or plan or feeling which he did not share with her: and from first to last her whole life and energies were devoted to him. For many years she was his sole secretary. He consulted her about everything, depended on her judgement in a most unusual way, and wrote little for public utterance which he did not submit to her criticism. My father had an intense need of loving and being loved; his moods of depression, of dark discouragement, required a buoyant vitality in his immediate circle. One cannot constantly recur to the fundamental facts of life, but without a knowledge of this it would be impossible to understand my father's character and career.[116]

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[113] Askwith, Two Victorian Families, pp. 127-32.
[114] For examples from Edward's letters of his reliance on Minnie see Tosh, 'Domesticity and Manliness', pp. 54 and 55.
[115] Arthur Benson, Archbishop, p. 116, perhaps in deference to his mother's feelings.
[116] Arthur Benson, Archbishop, p. 144.

The passage demonstrates Arthur's limited and rather adolescent understanding of adult heterosexual relationships, as shown in his simplistic belief that there 'was not a single thought or plan or feeling which he did not share with her: and from first to last her whole life and energies were devoted to him'. Arthur glossed over and perhaps did not comprehend the suffocating effect of the childhood courtship, and the inherent loneliness, for Mary, of 'the close companionship of married life among the wild and heathery solitudes of Wellington'. What was he to make of the young Queen Victoria's passion for Albert? Or her need for companionship and love? Or her 'bad nerves' after the birth of her second baby? Or even Albert's sense of isolation? (In these respects, Mary Benson's life had parallels with those of both Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.)

Brian Masters observed that Arthur had a particular ability to conceal emotionally-laden episodes in a passage of writing 'which is bland, truthful but completely locked against the inquisitive'.[117] This particular skill he employed throughout the Archbishop's biography, in his biographies of homosexuals and pederasts, and in the editing of Queen Victoria's letters.

Whilst writing his father's biography, Arthur had no knowledge of his mother's diary. It contained her anguished and retrospective account of the courtship and the marriage, and the emotional pain within the household. In the diary she revealed her sense of entrapment from such an early age. (Could this equate to the enamelled throat of the Queen in Arthur's dream?) She believed it stifled the growth of any genuine feelings of affection for Edward and her ability to express any such feelings. She longed to satisfy her masterful and demanding husband but her lack of heterosexual feelings, and her duty to her mother, tore at her.[118] Her descriptions of the honeymoon in France and Switzerland, recorded in a fractured style, poignantly express the complexities as she sought to make sense of the events, her emotions, Edward's feelings and her anxiety about her new roles:

> Wedding night – Folkstone (sic) – crossing – Oh how my heart sank – I daren't let it – no wonder – an utter child ... danced and sang into matrimony, with a loving but exacting, a believing and therefore expecting spirit. 12 years older, much stronger, much more passionate! And whom I didn't really love – I wonder I didn't go more wrong ...

[117] Masters, E.F. Benson, p. 29.
[118] E.F. Benson, As We Were, pp. 65-6.

> Paris – the first hard word about the washing – But let me think how hard it was for Ed.
> He restrained his passionate nature for 7 years and then got *me*! this unloving childish, weak, unstable child! Ah God, pity him! Misery – knowing that I felt nothing of what I knew people ought to feel. Knowing how disappointed he was – trying to be rapturous – not succeeding – feeling so inexpressibly lonely and young, but *how* hard for him! Full of all religious and emotional thoughts and yearnings – they had never woke in me. I have learnt about love through friendship. How I cried at Paris! Poor lonely child, having lived in the present only, living in the present still. The nights! I can't think how I lived.[119]

Although the diary was begun seventeen years later, the emotion in the writing was still palpable. One sentence she could write in full was: 'I have learnt about love through friendship'. Perhaps this was because the diary was begun as a cathartic self-examination, on the advice of a new woman friend, Mrs Mylne; the one thing Mary was certain of was her emotional debt to other women.[120]

By her twenty-second year, her son, Fred, believed that 'her own private self' was 'hermetically bottled',[121] but even that did not afford her psyche sufficient protection from the mental onslaughts of her demanding husband. The children were born in quick succession: five children over seven years, before her twenty-fifth birthday, and the sixth child four years later. She experienced periods of great spiritual and psychological despair on several occasions following childbirth, and in order to recuperate she went away. After Hugh's birth in 1871, when Arthur was nine, she suffered her most severe nervous breakdown. She went away for almost a year – from her home, her children and from her husband – to Scotland, the south of England and to Wiesbaden.[122] At each of these places, she established passionate relationships with women of high spirituality.[123] After one such break away from home, Mary wrote:

> Hastings – Oh that sweet time with Emily! How we drew together! Lord it was Thou teaching me how to love – 'friend of my married life' – how I loved her! And so it came to an end and we went home and my husband took me on his knee, and blessed God and prayed and I remember my heart sank within me and became as stone – for duties stared me in the face.[124]

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[119] Askwith, Two Victorian Families, p. 128.
[120] Masters, E.F. Benson, pp. 41-2.
[121] E.F. Benson, Mother, p. 19.
[122] Palmer and Lloyd, E.F. Benson, p. 11. Masters, E.F. Benson, pp. 28-33.
[123] Askwith, Two Victorian Families, pp. 133 ff; 184 and 187 ff
[124] Askwith, Two Victorian Families, p. 134.

These episodes were incontrovertibly linked to the necessity of 'accommodating' herself to her husband,[125] which had been forced upon her from such a young age.

Although Tosh categorised Mary's relationships as 'lesbian',[126] Masters contextualised them as being within the type of female companionship which was pervasive throughout the nineteenth century, '[which] though sexless, were often more total and complete than the love a woman dutifully bore for her husband'.[127] These two assessments fit within the views of female friendships derived from the historiography.[128] Askwith listed many of the women about whom Mary wrote in her diary, concluding that they probably were not physical relationships but were certainly 'deep emotional contacts'. Lucy Tait was the daughter of Benson's predecessor at Lambeth Palace. She joined the Benson household and shared Mary's bed after Edward's death. She had spent some time with Mary in 1878, and Mary had written:

> Once more and with shame, O Lord, grant that all carnal affection may die in me, and that all things belonging to the spirit may live and grow in me. Lord look down on Lucy and me, and bring to pass the union we have both so blindly, each in our own region of mistake, continually desired.[129]

Given the antipathy to sexual expression of any kind, it would have been astonishing if any carnal, physical relations could have been carried out free of guilt. Lillian Faderman argues that the strength of the spiritual dimension of the love was the most important aspect for the women within female friendships.[130] Mary Benson's accounts of these love affairs are strikingly prayerful and spiritual – not prose narratives.

In a comprehensive view of female intimacies, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg suggested that the sexual and emotional impulses of nineteenth century females should be seen as part of a continuum or spectrum of 'affect gradations' – at one end lay committed

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[125] Masters, E.F. Benson, pp. 28 and 42.
[126] Tosh, 'Domesticity and Manliness', p. 59, and A Man's Place, pp. 69-70.
[127] Masters, E.F. Benson, pp. 126-9.
[128] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, 'The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth Century America', Signs, vol. 1, no. 1, Autumn 1975, pp. 1-32; Lillian Faderman, Surpassing the Love of Men, New York, William Morrow and Co. 1981, for nineteenth century, pp. 145-294; Sheila Jeffereys, The Spinster and her Enemies. Feminism and Sexuality, 1880-1930, (London, 1985), Melbourne, Spinifex Press, 1997, Chapter 6; Martha Vicinus, 'Distance and Desire: English Boarding School Friendships, 1870-1920', Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncy Jnr, eds, Hidden from History. Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past, New York, NAL books, 1989, pp. 212-29; and Becky Butler, Ceremonies of the Heart. Celebrating Lesbian Unions, Seattle, Seal Press, (1990), 1997 Part One.
[129] Askwith, Two Victorian Families, p. 192. Also see Masters, E.F. Benson, pp. 30 and 40
[130] Faderman, Surpassing the Love of Men, p. 208.

heterosexuality and the other uncompromising homosexuality; in between, there was a wide latitude of emotions and sexual feelings, where individuals were permitted to move with a great deal of freedom.[131] Thus, Mary Benson's ability to survive as a wife and mother sustained by her female intimacies may readily be understood.

Mary's friendships seemed to present no dilemmas for her children. Arthur's sister, Maggie Benson, did resent Lucy Tait's assertiveness in the household, but most of these incidents occurred in Maggie's adult life, when her mental condition had become increasingly unstable.[132] When the family lived in Truro, Arthur recalled Mary's friendship with Mrs Mylne, who was 'greatly beloved by us all for her fresh charm, beautiful smile, and a quiet unaffected dignity and self-possession ... She exerted a quiet and tranquillising effect' on Mary, from which everyone benefited.[133] Perhaps this was another of Arthur's bland concealments of her true feelings. Later in his adult life, Arthur did record in his diary some complaints about visiting his mother at her house, Tremans, in Horsted Keynes, Sussex. He recorded how he was kept awake late into the night by his mother and Lucy Tait with their Bible readings, devotions and talk in the room on one side of him, and then, rather bizarrely, being jolted from sleep by his brother, Hugh, 'celebrating early morning Mass with a tinkling bell and the high pitched interjections from his little boy server in the room on the other side'![134] Mary's and Lucy's discussions into the night may have disturbed Arthur's sleep but they did not dissuade him from visiting Tremans for weeks at a time, several times each year.

Arthur and his brother, Fred, read their mother's diaries together in August 1923, as they sorted her papers following her death in 1918. 'She was afraid of Papa (I don't wonder),' wrote Arthur, 'and it must have been terrible to be so near him and his constant displeasure. ... In fact this little record changes my whole view of their relations. ... probably they should never have married'.[135] The tensions within the household brought about by the father's unrequited passions, his obsessions with order and control, his self-righteousness, and Minnie's constant but failing efforts to please or placate him, are crucial to understanding the formative influences on Arthur Benson's

[131] Smith-Rosenberg, 'Female World of Love and Ritual', p. 29.
[132] Masters, E.F. Benson, pp. 127, 164 and 192.
[133] Arthur Benson, Trefoil, p. 130.
[134] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, pp. 126.
[135] Benson Diary, vol. 171, pp. 15-6.

character and personality, and the perception he brought to the reading of Victoria's letters.

These anxieties surfaced in Arthur's seeking of solitude, in his dreams with sometimes ferocious intensity, in his distrust of personal intimacy.[136] They are also evident in the veil he maintained over his sympathy to homosexuality by championing a view of masculinity which was not heterosexual. His favoured means was through the telling of men's life stories whereby emotions of and between males were recognised with a minimum of secrecy. His ability to be 'bland, truthful and completely locked against the inquisitive' was applied paradoxically in these instances.

In his volumes of poetry, prose, biography and on education, the influence of the nineteenth-century revival in chivalry[137] and its inherent critique of manliness, is discernible in both subject and content. These ideals were apparent in the extensive links Benson had with *litérateurs* and art *connoisseurs*, for example, Henry James, Edmund Gosse, Hugh Walpole, and the art collector, Charles Fairfax Murray.[138] His biographies of artists, his biographies of writers, his books of verse and prose he always wrote with some purpose, usually didactic and instructive. Through introductory essays to collections of poems and in biographies of various artists and men of letters he embarked on a kind of crusade; he engaged his Uranian, homosexual sensibilities,[139] whilst living out his own proclivities, albeit vicariously.

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[136] On solitude, Newsome, Edge of Paradise, pp. 20-2; on dreams pp. 17-9, 236-42; on intimacy, pp. 144-52, and Benson Diary, for example, vol. 138, p. 33 ff.

[137] Debra Mancoff, The Return of King Arthur. The Legend through Victorian Eyes, New York, Abrams, 1995; Mark Girouard, The Return to Camelot. Chivalry and the English Gentleman, New York and London, Yale University Press, 1981.

[138] See for example his correspondence with Henry James, Benson Deposit 3/53, Bodleian Library, and Percy Lubbock, ed., Letters of Henry James; with Edmund Gosse, see correspondence in the Brotherham Library, Leeds University, and Ann Thwaites, Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape 1849-1928, London, Secker & Warburg, 1984; only a little of Benson's correspondence with Hugh Walpole survives, see Hart-Davis, Hugh Walpole, p. 32 *passim* and Newsome, Edge of Paradise; with art collector Charles Fairfax Murray, John Rylands Library, English MSS 1281/46-88, University of Manchester; in correspondence with the publisher, John Murray at John Murray Archives, Albemarle St, London; and Arthur Benson recorded visits from Henry James in his Diary, vol. 4, May 1900, for example, and a visit to Algernon Swinburne in vol. 27, April 1903.

[139] Benson's homosexual predilections were subtly recognised by him, and by his contemporaries. Homosexual activity, under the euphemism of 'acts of gross indecency', had been outlawed in 1885. See F.B.Smith, 'Labouchère's Amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment Bill', Historical Studies, vol. 17, no. 67, 1976, pp. 165-73. For the origins and development of the term, 'Uranian' see D'Arch Smith, Love in Earnest, and Brian Reade, ed., Sexual Heretics. Male Homosexuality in English Literature from 1850-1900. An Anthology, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970. For the legal background and history see Jeffrey Weeks, Sex, Politics and Society. The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800, London, Longman, 1981. Further definitions and discussion follow in Chapter 4.

During the ten years after 1892, Arthur published on average one book a year and during the following decade his rate of publication more than doubled.[140] During these years he produced his avuncular little prose books, with their gentle descriptions of nature, sunsets and philosophical themes, which sold well particularly amongst women readers. But another branch of his writing took on the character of a campaign as he wrote about individual men's lives, their characters and achievements. The men he chose were exceptional, mostly unmarried, or men for whom marriage was 'a closet'. He became something of a publicist for homosexual, or heterosexually-ambivalent, men. In the year before his death, Arthur recorded a conversation he had with his brother, Fred:

> We discussed the homo sexual [sic] question. It does seem to me out of joint that marriage should be a sort of virtuous duty, honourable, beautiful and praiseworthy – but that all irregular sexual expression should be the bestial and unmentionable. The concurrence of the soul should be the test surely?[141]

The novelty of the word 'homosexual' is evident in Arthur's writing of it as two separate words. His belief was that men should be judged according to depth of feeling not to social convention and legal relationship. It was especially apparent in his earlier biographical writings, and in his championing of the lives of men, many of whom he knew to be of 'irregular sexual expression'. Arthur's critique of the age has been picked up by current gender theorists, in particular Adrienne Rich and Richard Dellamora, who refer to the 'compulsory heterosexuality' of the 1890s.[142] In questioning this conventional wisdom, Benson sought to influence boys and young men particularly. It was something of a moral crusade for him.[143] Its relevance for the editing of Queen Victoria's letters is that it connects him directly with networks of men who relied on secrecy; recognised amongst them at the time, but not by others. It brought Benson into

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[140] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, pp. 397-9.
[141] ibid., p. 195.
[142] Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', Signs, 5, 1980, pp. 631-60; Richard Dellamora, Masculine Desire. The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 1990, pp. 193-217.
[143] Ronald Hyam in Empire and Sexuality, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1990, p.13, has argued that Benson was 'a-sexual', that is 'unresponsive to sexual stimulus, attach little importance to sex and find little hardship in abstinence'. In recent personal communication with me, he took an even more extreme line, that Benson's relationships were 'parergal', that is 'subsidiary to the main business of life'. From my reading of Benson's Diary and letters there were too many instances of Benson's agonising over unreciprocated feelings and disappointing interactions to support Hyam's argument. Benson felt and cared for others, perhaps too deeply and, frequently, uneasily.

contact with some of the men of Esher's private world, albeit behind the safety of the printed word.

The books were published with neither fanfare nor secrecy, but sympathisers could identify the encoded messages. Arthur's first publication, published under the pseudonym of Christopher Carr, with the title, Memoirs of Arthur Hamilton, B.A. of Trinity College, Cambridge, extracted from his letters and diaries, with reminiscences of his conversation by his friend Christopher Carr of the same College, completed and published after Benson's return to Eton, was rapidly identified as Benson's writing.[144] The memoir was an account of a love affair between two Eton boys. Such friendships, he wrote:

> are truly chivalrous and absolutely pure, are above all other loves, noble, refining, true; passion at white heat without taint, confidence of so intimate a kind as cannot even exist between husband and wife, trust as cannot be shadowed, are its characteristics.[145]

But the affair painfully disintegrated when the boys were reunited at Cambridge. Hamilton's grief was then compounded by guilt, and a crisis of faith. With admirable scholarship, Newsome has compared the Memoirs of Arthur Hamilton with Benson's diary entries that recollected two incidents, one of a sexual nature and the other religious, that were more than likely to have been experienced by Benson, and led to a period of bleak despair, possibly a mental breakdown, in his second year at Cambridge.[146] In his House of Quiet, Benson described the Revivalist meeting and the aftermath for him, spiritually and emotionally.[147] As Brian Masters has sympathetically observed, as a son of the Archbishop, refuge in a spiritual crisis may have been impossible to find; and Arthur was genetically predisposed to suffer psychotic illness.[148] If this was so, how much more difficult would a crisis of homosexual love, with its illegality and secrecy, be for an 18-year-old boy to deal with?

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[144] The book was published under the pseudonym, Christopher Carr, Memoirs of Arthur Hamilton, B.A. of Trinity College, Cambridge, extracted from his letters and diaries, with reminiscences of his conversation by his friend Christopher Carr of the same College, London, K. Paul, Trench & Co, 1886, 44 pages. At the time of publication it was accepted as a genuine book of memoirs, but Benson later admitted to publisher, John Murray IV, in a letter June 8 1902, that he had used the pseudonym 'Christopher Carr'. He adopted another pseudonym, 'John Tait', for the publication of The House of Quiet, in 1904 and Thread of Gold in 1905, but, as in the case of 'Carr', this too was rapidly detected by his friends. Benson's correspondence relating to these publications is held at John Murray Archives.
[145] Arthur Benson, Memoirs of Arthur Hamilton, an excerpt included in Reade, Sexual Heretics, p. 201.
[146] For an extensive discussion of the incidents see Newsome, Edge of Paradise, pp. 36-43.
[147] Arthur Christopher Benson, House of Quiet, London, John Murray, (1904), 1907, pp. 54-8.
[148] Masters, E.F. Benson, p. 78.

Benson's second publication was a collection of biographical sketches called Men of Might. Studies of Great Characters[149] written in collaboration with his lifetime friend and Eton colleague, Herbert Tatham and published in 1892. This volume was written as a teaching aid, aiming to supply schoolmasters with 'lectures on men of various eras and denominations for boys 15-18 years old'.[150] The subjects chosen were: Socrates, Mahomet [sic], St Bernard, Savonarola, Michael Angelo [sic], Carlo Borromeo, Fenelon, John Wesley, George Washington, Henry Martyn, Dr Arnold, David Livingstone, General Gordon, and Father Damien, the leper priest of Molokai.[151] Benson's and Tatham's mission for this project was an example of the ethos of masculinity identified by Jeffrey Richards.[152] It was to instil in their boys at their most impressionable age (and any other readers), a sense of glory in manhood; of the faith men could have in each other; of the love and moral strength they could give to each other; and to establish these ideals in their youthful readers. Benson's and Tatham's collaboration stemmed from a quintessentially homosocial friendship from boyhood which lasted for thirty-five years before Tatham died in a fall in the Alps in 1909.[153]

In 1897 Benson and Lord Esher were two of the twenty-three subscribers to the publication of the Journals of William Cory[154] (formerly the Eton Master William Johnson, who had left Eton in 1872 in ambiguous circumstances),[155] seeking to make Cory's accounts of his romances available to a later group of men and boys. It prompted Esher to send Benson four large volumes of Cory's letters to read in 1902. Benson wrote in his diary:

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[149] Arthur Christopher Benson and H.F.W. Tatham, Men of Might. Studies of Great Characters, London, Edward Arnold, (1892), 1911.
[150] Benson and Tatham, Men of Might, Preface.
[151] Koestenbaum, Double Talk, p. 161, sought to include Benson and Tatham in his study on the erotics of male literary collaboration, arguing that by including Michelangelo as a subject, the writers 'made room for sexual ambiguity and foreignness,' because Michelangelo was 'a maybe man: a perhapser,' whatever he may mean by that. Koestenbaum discussed no other subject from Men of Might, and his comments on Michelangelo make little sense in the context of the book; most of the subjects were foreign, ie non-British, and others may have been, or were known to have been, homosexual. In Koestenbaum's six line entry on Benson and Tatham, he tells us nothing about Tatham, although contrary to the title page, he is listed by Kostenbaum as first author. Koestenbaum does tell us that Benson's brother went up the Nile with Lord Alfred Douglas and that 'both Bensons were homosexual'. Therefore, he concludes that it was a homoerotic collaboration. Koestenbaum also mentioned that Benson edited Queen Victoria's letters but Lord Esher's collaborative role escaped his notice.
[152] Richards, 'Passing the Love of Women', p.102.
[153] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p. 234.
[154] Francis Warre Cornish, ed., Extracts from the Letters and Journals of William Cory, Oxford, Printed for subscribers, 1897. Reading the published Journals inspired Benson to begin keeping his own diary consistently. Newsome, Edge of Paradise, pp. 1-2.

> They are deeply, wonderfully, moving and fascinating. The extraordinary mixture of shrewdness, knowledge, & dryness with abundant passion and sentiment. The high estimation in which he held the intellect – and yet ... The letters about the boyfriendships are very touching. It is odd to be surrounded, as we still are, by all this charm and not to feel it. But those lost and haunting *purences* of whom he writes – those boys with serene eyes. ... with low voices full of the fall of evening. ... they stand in these pages in a magic light of which no mortal would ever have for me ... I almost wish it were not so; if one could passionately idealise, like Newman, how much happiness ... how much pain ... and no one sees the dangers more clearly than I do.[156]

Benson too had published poetry on the themes of the beauty of boys and of boys' friendships, in the lyrical phrases he used in this diary entry, but almost always in a tone of sad recollection, such as this refrain from the poem, *A Song of Sweet Things that have an End:*

Heart speaketh to heart
Friend is glad with friend;
The golden hours depart,
Sweet things have an end.[157]

Benson was asked subsequently to write an Introduction to a reprinted collection of Cory's poems, where he further demonstrated his ability to be 'bland, truthful but completely locked against the inquisitive.' Of Cory he wrote:

> There are many men alive who trace the fruit and flower of their intellectual life to his generous and free-handed sowing. But in spite of the fact that the work of a teacher of boys was intensely congenial to him, that he loved generous boyhood and tender souls, and awakening minds with all his heart, he was not wholly in the right place as an instructor of youth.
> ... He began to feel his strength unequal to the demands made upon it; and he made the sudden resolution to retire from his Eton work ... [158]

Cory's diminishing strength was not so much a physical trait as a mental and moral one; such favouritisms and intimacies with individual boys which he had enjoyed and encouraged when Esher was an Eton boy were being challenged by the moral standards of a later generation. Benson was conscious of this, and demonstrated his awareness of the occupational hazards of the profession, when he added:

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[155] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, pp. 80-2.
[156] Benson Diary, 13 October 1902, vol. 19, p. 66, Benson's italics.
[157] Arthur Christopher Benson, Selected Poems, London, John Lane The Bodley Head, 1924, p. 168, largely collected from earlier publications.
[158] William Cory, Ionicus, (with biographical introduction by Arthur C. Benson), London, George Allen and Unwin, 1905, pp. xx-xxi.

> with William Cory the qualities of both heart and head were over-developed. There resulted a want of balance, of moral force; he was impetuous where he should have been calm, impulsive where he should have been discreet.[159]

Yet, Cory's verses for the 'Eton Boating Song' were vigorously sung by the boys at Eton, and still are. For Benson the verses of Cory's poems conveyed a belief in the ardours and passions of humanity. In this Introduction, Benson tended toward a hagiography of Cory. Despite his own moral view, he did not evince any anachronistic critique of Cory's relationships with the boys. But by linking his own name with the Cory poems, Benson did much to bring them to a new audience and to popularise them. The poems provided inspiration to *affionadoes* who themselves became Uranian poets,[160] many of whom had been Eton boys themselves.

While Benson was editing this volume, he had been working with Esher for three years on the editing of Queen Victoria's letters. He asked Esher for his comments on his Introduction seeing as he had known Cory intimately and Benson had never met him. Benson recorded in his diary:

> [Esher] gave me no advice on the points I wanted advice – the desirability of biographising – but an abundance of criticisms upon the importance to the work of the Schoolmaster, which he thought I underestimated, the characters of Socrates and Plato, the nature of the verse of Cory, which I called Tennysonian & he objected. It was a very slipshod dilettante affair; he said at the end, 'After all, you know more about these things than I do.' I do indeed!! For Esher to discuss the philosophy of schoolmastering & the Tennysonian or non-Tennysonian character of verse to me is as if I [gave] advice on horses or finance to him ... [161]

Benson did know something about Alfred, Lord Tennyson – before he began work on Queen Victoria's letters he had completed a biography of Tennyson which was published in 1904.[162] The life and poetry of Tennyson was another interest shared by Benson and Esher, as well as by Benson and his mother. Christopher Craft has argued that Tennyson came to an acceptance of his 'inverted' [ie homosexual] sexual tensions through 'a method of self-restraint and self-culture without self-repression' and depicted it in his poem *In Memoriam*.[163] Tennyson's notions of the sublime love, and of

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[159] ibid., p. xxix.
[160] Smith, Love in Earnest, p. 7. Many of these men remained in, or became linked into, Benson's and Esher's Eton and Cambridge networks, which will be discussed further in the next chapter.
[161] Benson Diary, vol. 73, 30 August 1905, p. 60.
[162] Arthur Christopher Benson, The Life of Lord Tennyson, London, Methuen, 1904.
[163] Christopher Craft, ' "Descend, and Touch, and Enter": Tennyson's Strange Manner of Address', Genders, vol. 1, Spring 1988, p. 98.

restraint and active surrogation as a means of enduring impossible fulfilment are exactly what Benson imposed upon himself. Benson addressed these feelings in one of his poems, *My Friend*, which like *In Memoriam* recognises the depth of feelings after death, and seems to express them for the first time, when temptation has passed. Again, intimacy from a safe distance.[164] Benson repressed his inclinations for love and friendship, which meant that, as David Newsome has succinctly characterised Benson's life, he always lived 'on the edge of paradise'.

In this same year Benson published a book which was both biography and literary criticism of Edward FitzGerald, the author of Euphranor. The Dialogue on Youth, better known as the translator of The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.[165] In Euphranor, FitzGerald popularized Kenelm Digby's treatise on the re-creation of noble medieval values in England, 'Godefridus', the first part of The Broadstone of Honour, as a Platonic dialogue.[166] He argued for the need to re-establish public schools and universities in the spirit of the Greek *gymnasia*, in which he equated Greek athletic heroes and medieval knights. He saw 'fellowship,' as he called manly love, as an essential ingredient.'[167] But underpinning his argument was the 'grace, gallantry and beauty of young men whose bodies are not warped to feed their minds.'[168] Benson's interest in men and their dilemmas in recognizing and expressing their feelings for other men after death recurs again in his life of FitzGerald, although FitzGerald was far more overt than Benson could ever hope to be. FitzGerald's failed marriage and his 'irregular sexual expression' through his relationship with the herring fisherman, Posh Fletcher, was tactfully described by Benson, again, blandly expressive, but with no sense of inquisition.

Earlier in 1906 whilst he continued editing the Queen's letters, Benson had published his biography of Walter Pater and a book of reflections, From a College Window.[169] The Pater biography attracted a good deal of attention largely due to many men of

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[164] Benson, Selected Poems, pp. 61-3.
[165] Arthur Christopher Benson, The Upton Letters, London, Smith, Elder, 1904; Peace and Other Poems, London, John Lane, 1904; Edward FitzGerald, London, Macmillan, English Men of Letters series, 1904.
[166] Edward FitzGerald, Euphranor. A Dialogue of Youth, London, John Lane, 1906, first published anonymously in 1851.
[167] Richards, 'Passing the Love of Women', p. 102.
[168] Robert Bernard Martin, With Friends Possessed. A Life of Edward FitzGerald, London, Faber and Faber, 1985, p. 165.
[169] Arthur Christopher Benson, Walter Pater, London, Macmillan, English Men of Letters Series, 1906; From a College Window, London, Smith, Elder and Co.,1906.

Benson's circle having known Pater at Oxford, Edmund Gosse and Oscar Browning amongst them.[170] Benson's editing ability is shown in this passage deep within the final chapter, but still thirty-two pages from the end:

> He [Pater] was condemned by temperament to a certain isolation; he was outside the world and not of it. A happy marriage might have brought him more into line with humanity; but his genius was for friendship rather than for love, and his circumstances and environment were favourable to celibacy; and thus he passed through life in a certain mystery, though the secret is told for those who can read it in his writings.[171]

This type of writing has been commented upon by subsequent biographers of Pater, for example, Michael Levey, who wrote:

> Even Benson's tactful little monograph did not fail to hint even while protesting in lip-smacking phrase that there was in Pater no luxurious yielding to the lower satisfactions, that the secret of his temperamental isolation, struggles and mystery was told in his writings for those who could read it.[172]

During the writing of the Pater biography Benson made one of his much quoted comments on classics education and its impact on the sexuality of boys:

> We talked [at Cambridge] long and late about the Aesthetic Movement, Symonds, Pater, Jowett and others. Rather a dark place, I am afraid. But if we give boys Greek books to read and hold up the Greek spirit and the Greek life as a model, it is very difficult to slice out one portion, which was a perfectly normal part of Greek life, and to say that it is abominable etc etc. A strongly sensuous nature – such as Pater or Symonds – with a strong instinct for beauty, and brought up at an English public school, will almost certainly go wrong, in thought if not in act.[173]

Although Benson wanted to have boys comprehend these higher levels of manliness, he was still ambivalent about its expression. Richard Dellamora's observation of Tennyson pertains equally to Benson: 'When [writers] celebrate male friendship, they make careful choices about how to delimit it.'[174]

Tim Card, the historian of Eton College described Arthur Benson as being 'like all the members of his gifted family, a depressive and a homosexual ... yet during his time at Eton he kept pederasty and depression at bay'.[175] But it was not without difficulty. In his diary Arthur recounted that whilst doing his 'nightly rounds' to speak to each of the

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[170] Gosse was mentioned in Benson Diary, November 1904, and Browning, Benson Diary, January 1905.
[171] Arthur Benson, Walter Pater, p. 121.
[172] Michael Levey, The Case of Walter Pater, London, Thames and Hudson, 1978.
[173] Benson Diary, vol. 72, May 1905.
[174] Dellamora, Masculine Desire, p. 24.
[175] Card, Eton Renewed, p. 120.

boys, he stood unnoticed watching the maid tucking one of the boys up. 'The boy was prattling away with intense amusement and interest ... I envied the boy's maid' he wrote.[176] Benson poignantly expressed this sensation as 'heart-hunger'. Newsome emphasised that it was an unrequited love:

> 'heart-hunger', a complex of emotions, embracing all the pathos of the loneliness of the sensitive man set by nature or circumstance to guide and live among boys with whom he can never attain anything more than ephemeral intimacy and from whom he is bound to stand professionally aloof ...
> In a group Arthur always gravitated, by a sort of invisible, unconscious propulsion, towards *the boy* – if boy there were ... but [he] had inhibitions ... [and] he could find no means of responding [to these impulses] ... [177]

His diary entries often have the character of the subject observing himself. He frequently recorded regret: 'My own real failing is that I have never been in vital touch with anyone – never either fought with anyone or kissed anyone! ... not out of principle, but out of a timid and rather fastidious solitariness.'[178]

He knew himself to be longing for love but incapable of intimacy. He had been scarred by the emotional climate of the household especially the excessive demands of his father, his rages and his depressions, and Arthur's own depressions. His writing was a means of bridging this abyss. Through his writing of biography he could bring a life into the public domain, and engage with his deceased subjects in a pseudo-intimacy, but without the emotional risks of real life. Reading the Queen's letters brought forth a very particular sort of intimacy for him, as he showed in his dream; a trespass-by-invitation, to a life that was already publicly known; but one-sided, in which he tried to reconcile his views of royal personages and his limited experience of women. These difficulties surfaced in his dreams as had those with his father. His family members, his early life and his writing of them are revealing of his sensitivities and the personal quirks and foibles of the man as he began the editing of Queen Victoria's letters.

3.3 Contact with Royalty

[176] Incident quoted in Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p. 82. Newsome spends fifty pages examining Benson's career as a Tutor and housemaster at Eton with great insight, no doubt drawing on his own experience in his teaching career and his appointment as headmaster at Wellington College.
[177] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, pp. 81-2.
[178] Benson Diary, vol. 138, p. 33, Summer of 1913, in his 52nd year.

Four days before Queen Victoria's death in January 1901, Arthur Benson had joined a huge crowd outside the Mansion House reading the Bulletins of her illness.

Taking recourse to the language of chivalry he wrote in his diary:

> It is curious how personally affecting it is. The thought of my dear *liege* lying waiting for death is a background for all my thoughts – and it gives me the same sort of anxiety that I feel for a near and dear relation.[179]

It is not surprising that Arthur should allude to the feudal relationship of lord and servant, or that he should have felt the Queen's decline so acutely. She had always been a presence in his life: at Wellington and whilst his father was Archbishop; he had written words for hymns at her request; he had dined with her; his family had received condolences from her; and she had shown great kindness to his mother.

But he had some particular experiences of his own. On the occasion of the Queen's birthday in 1899, the Eton boys sang to the Queen outside her breakfast room from a courtyard at Windsor Castle and their program included a verse specially written by Benson. Afterwards he was presented to the Queen, an experience which he found surprisingly moving:

> ... I appeared bowing and drew as near as I dared.
> 'I must thank you for having written such a beautiful verse,' she said. 'It has been a great pleasure to me!'
> I bowed and withdrew rather clumsily, as I had forgotten the backward walk and only remembered it after a moment – however I did not quite turn my back on the Queen I think...
> But what was an <u>entire</u> surprise to me & will remain with me as long as I live was her voice. It was so slow and sweet – some extraordinary <u>simplicity</u> about it – much higher than I imagined it & with nothing cracked or imperious or (as imitations misled me into thinking) wobbly. It was like the voice of a very young tranquil woman. The phrases sounded a little like a learnt lesson – but the <u>tone</u> was so beautiful – a peculiar genuineness about it; I felt as if I really <u>had</u> given pleasure ... Tho' if I had had the <u>choice</u> I wld [sic] not have dared to go, I am now thankful to have seen her and had speech from her. And is it absurd to say that I would cut off my hand to please her.[180]

This deep emotional connection with the Queen remained with him as editor of her letters.

Another of these Royal connections had occurred when he attended a dinner at Windsor Castle where Queen Victoria spoke to him about the Duke of Albany's being at Eton in

[179] Benson Diary, vol. 5, 19 January 1901. I am grateful to Professor Walter Arnstein for suggesting to me that Benson's use of *Liege* could be seen as more than a Benson linguistic idiosyncrasy.

Benson's house. Prince Charles, the Duke of Albany, was the son (born posthumously) of Prince Leopold, Queen Victoria's youngest son who had died from the effects of haemophilia. Upon the death of Prince Albert's brother, Ernest, it was decided that the young Duke should be the successor to his uncle Alfred as 'Duke of Coburg' and that his education should be continued in Germany.[181] Although he was at Eton for just a little more than one year, he had established a particular rapport with Benson, as had his mother, the Duchess of Albany. Arthur had prepared 'the little Duke' for confirmation before he left and had attended the special service in Windsor Chapel conducted by Randall Davidson, then Bishop of Winchester. The 'leave-taking was emotional', he wrote.[182] Another instance of heart-hunger, perhaps? When Prince Charles returned briefly for the New Year in 1904 and 1905, Benson was invited to Claremont for both of these visits.[183]

But Benson was not enamoured with royalty, *per se*. He could be scathingly critical of the personages and the practices in the Royal Court, especially that of King Edward VII. On an occasion of attending a play at Windsor Castle, Benson commented:

> The Windsor Uniforms are silly looking things. And the pussy cat manners of the men in waiting [some of whom had been his Eton and Cambridge friends] all rather feeble.
> ... The royals came at length. The King with the 'irresistible bonhomie' look which I so particularly dislike. The Q. of Italy very disappointing – a coarsening Albanian!
> The King like a little dwarf. Our Queen very beautiful but a little haggard. My Duchess marched in, looking plumper and more matronly than ever; a crowd of nonentities, like Lorne [husband of Queen Victoria's daughter, Louise]. (What a figure!)[184]

Just prior to his dream, King George V and Queen Mary had commissioned him to write The Book of the Queen's Doll's House, in collaboration with the editor of Punch, intended as a guide-book to explain and promote the nation-wide exhibition of Lutyen's elaborate miniature creation. Arthur thought the whole scheme 'ineradicably silly', but it was his first royal commission for a long time and he did not refuse it.[185] In frequenting the Royal circles Benson recognised that he had been given opportunities

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[180] Benson Diary, vol. 3, entry for 24 May 1899.
[181] Albert's brother, Ernest, produced no legitimate heirs, thus it was decided that Albert's second son, Alfred, should become Duke of Coburg. When Alfred's only son died in 1899, it was decided that Prince Leopold's son should succeed to the Dukedom.
[182] Benson Diary, vol. 63, pp. 45-78.
[183] ibid., vol. 64, pp. 1-9.
[184] Benson Diary, vol. 42, 20 November 1903, p.14.
[185] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p. 357.

that few people had. In editing Queen Victoria's letters he was given a chance to produce something first rate, a unique opportunity to gain insight, an invitation to Royal intimacy. In his dream he could not reconcile the inappropriateness of the invitation, and the indecency of the transgression, with the privilege. In reality, he was anxious that he should produce something special; a work that would be commended and hailed with more enthusiam and feeling than that bland climax of his dream: 'It's very remarkable.'

Chapter 4

Gentlemanly Networks, Homosociality and Secrecy

Introduction

Arthur Benson and Lord Esher moved within overlapping circles and intersecting networks of gentlemen.[1] The men who comprised these networks had been contemporaries at Eton College, and at King's and Trinity Colleges, Cambridge. As Benson and Esher met other men in their daily life, through writing and publishing, and at the Royal Court, networks touched, and were connected, reinforced or extended. Esher developed networks with men from both sides of politics, from the worlds of horse racing, the military and the theatre. Benson was introduced to various networks through the church, at the Athenaeum Club and through Magdalene College at Cambridge. All the men from these networks would have considered themselves 'gentlemen'. The category of gentleman has been deemed by historians to be problematic because it cannot be precisely defined.[2] Yet it was rarely misunderstood by people who used the term because the assumptions concerning ideas and behaviours surrounding it were applied simply as 'an ideal of conduct that was widely admired'.[3]

Individual men began their definitions with themselves, and extended them outwards and upwards to include their family, friends and other men whom they admired or to whom they deferred, to the rigorous exclusion of others. Lord Palmerston, in a speech to Parliament in 1852 appealing for unity, said: 'We are here an assembly of gentlemen; and we who are gentlemen on this side of the House should remember that we are dealing with gentlemen on the other side.'[4] In 1906, Prince Albert's use of the adjective, 'ungentlemanly', in describing the 'conduct of the Radicals' in 1851 was ordered to be excised from the Letters of Queen Victoria because it was deemed to be

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[1] John Tosh's article, 'What should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain', History Workshop Journal, vol. 38, 1994, pp. 179-202, was very influential on my research for this chapter on nineteenth-century masculinity and the ensuing male networks.

[2] Michael Brander, The English Gentleman, London, Gordon Cremonesi, 1975; Angus McLaren, The Trials of Masculinity. Policing Sexual Boundaries. 1870-1930, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1977, Chapter 4; Philip Mason, The English Gentleman: the Rise and Fall of an Ideal, London, Deutsch, 1982, pp. 9-14; David Castronovo, The English Gentleman. Images and Ideals in Literature and Society, New York, Ungar, 1987; Noel Annan, Our Age. Portrait of a Generation, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990, Chapter 2; David Vincent, The Culture of Secrecy. Britain 1832-1998, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 36 ff; David Kuchta, The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity: England 1550-1850, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002, pp. 91-178 *passim*.

[3] Mason, The English Gentleman, pp. 9-14.

[4] Quoted from Hansard, November 1852, in Jasper Ridley, Lord Palmerston, London, Constable, 1970, p. 404.

malicious.[5] Although the term was coming to be seen as old-fashioned by some at the beginning of the twentieth century, the expectations concerning behaviour, values and friendship remained as strong as ever. For our purposes, the category 'gentleman' and 'gentlemanliness' is a useful tool in understanding the worlds of Benson and Esher.

The dynamics of the term 'gentleman' can be shown most easily by application. In seeking people eligible for the task of editing the letters of Queen Victoria, there was never any consideration of a woman for the work; only men with a particular set of qualifications were considered competent or appropriate.[6] The qualifications in this case had a universality about them, from both the King's and the courtiers' worldview, and from the expectations of the society – shared definitions 'from above and from below,' as it were.

To work on editing the Queen's letters the men must have been born into the upper middle class or above; their fathers would have to be of a professional, if not aristocratic, background and members of the Church of England; the man himself would have attended one of the public schools and perhaps university or military college. Within each of these institutions he would have inculcated the revived ideals of chivalry, through the various avenues of literature, sport, Christianity and the expansion of the Empire.[7] He would have learnt, by example and by experience, the parameters of acceptable conduct. His worldview would have been totally circumscribed by the culture of the gentlemanly world and maintained through the established networks. His sexuality also would have been formed by his experiences, proclivities and opportunities within that culture. His view about the place of men and of women in the world would constantly reinforce his perception of his own place in this select world, where admission should have been based on decency and respectability but in reality depended on position and perspective/outlook. Double standards[8] pervaded every aspect

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[5] Arthur Christopher Benson and Viscount Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, London, John Murray (1907), 1908, vol. II, memo of Prince Albert, 22 February 1851. Word omitted from memo first paragraph but no ellipses were used. At the time of the removal of the offensive word, Esher reminded Benson: 'The principle for excisions all along has been to avoid giving pain to living servants …'. Esher Papers, Churchill Archives, Cambridge, 11/5, Esher to Benson, 17 November 1906.

[6] This was also the case with the editing of the Dictionary Of National Biography, albeit during the twenty years prior. See Gillian Fenwick, Women and the Dictionary Of National Biography, Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1994, p. 2.

[7] Mark Girouard, The Return to Camelot. Chivalry and the English Gentleman, New York and London, Yale University Press, 1981.

[8] Keith Thomas, 'The Double Standard', Journal of History of Ideas, vol. XX, 1959, pp. 195-216.

of the gentlemanly world. As W.L. Burn succinctly expressed it, gentleman as a category 'was rigid to those on the outside and elastic to those on the inside'.[9]

The most reliable way to recruit men for any appointment was to work through the gentlemanly networks, because the networks dynamically classified individuals, and reclassified them many times over, hence the search could be immediately refined. When Lord Esher, Archbishop Randall Davidson and Lord Stamfordham were considering a list of potential co-editors for the Letters of Queen Victoria, the list was immediately drawn from known Eton and Oxbridge associates, which meant there was no need to vet the candidates; their background confirmed gentlemanly status which was sufficient guarantee of ability, decorum and *savoir faire*.[10] When Benson was looking for assistance with his work in the editing of the letters, he drew on old friends with expertise from Eton and from Cambridge, in consultation with his friends from the Church. This idea of recruitment through the gentlemanly networks persisted until well into the twentieth century, and it was certainly central to the ethos of the gentleman as it had evolved by the early Edwardian years.[11]

Public life was dominated by men, to the exclusion of women; men revelled in these all-male environments, within which powerful networks were formed and maintained. Within these networks individuals developed relationships which ranged in intensity from casual acquaintances to platonic, homosocial friendships, to full-blown homosexual love affairs. At a time when male sexual behaviour was under the scrutiny of the legislature and the judiciary, knowledge and secrecy took on a new potency. Within the ideals of gentlemanliness there was an expectation of a particular manner in dealing with all of these aspects, which in turn created a unique culture and worldview.

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[9] W.L. Burns, The Age of Equipoise, London, Allen and Unwin, 1964, p. 259, cited in Vincent, The Culture of Secrecy, p. 37.

[10] Vincent, The Culture of Secrecy, p. 36. Vincent shows that similar ideas had been applied in the civil service in 1855: for example, being a gentleman meant that persons occupied a significant social position, thus giving a 'collateral guarantee for good conduct'.

[11] For an example of this, and gentlemanliness in its various applications in the civil service, see Anthony Kirk-Greene, ' "Not quite a gentleman": the Desk Diaries of the Assistant Private Secretary (Appointments) to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1899-1915', English History Review, June 2002, vol. 117, no. 472, pp. 622-74, and Gillian Fenwick, 'The Athenaeum and the Dictionary of National Biography', Victorian Periodicals Review, vol. XXIII, no. 4, Winter 1990, pp. 180-8. See for further analyses on the gendered aspects, Trev Lynn Broughton, Men of Letters, Writing Lives. Masculinity and Literary Auto/Biography in the Late Victorian Period, London, Routledge, 1999, pp. 29-32, and Chapter 1.

Lord Esher and Arthur Benson, the courtiers and even the King, were constrained by this complex and dynamic ethos of gentlemanliness.

4.1 The Ethos of the Gentleman, his Networks and his World Views c.1900

The gentlemanly ethos and the networks were inherited by boys from the circles of their parents, but as they moved through educational institutions and into the public adult world the networks were developed according to their own efforts, abilities and notorieties. In Lord Esher's case, he relied less on family networks and more on networks of his school and University world in his adult life whereas Arthur Benson revelled in and built upon his family networks. It was through Benson's family links with the Church that he knew Archbishop Randall Davidson, and that Benson could be considered for the editing of the letters. Through the extensive networks emanating from Eton College and the Royal Court at Windsor, with which they both had multiple ties, Lord Esher had met Benson.[12] The Eton Bridge was not just a conduit for vehicular traffic to Windsor – information and gossip was constantly passing over too!

From an early age boys moved into predominantly male worlds, in which cultures of homosociality developed, and from which some men never wished to leave.[13] Arthur Benson's homosocial world began at the age of ten when he went to boarding school, as it did for Lord Esher before him, and for most other boys of his class and time. They left homes where women had occupied a central place, and went to the world of Tom Brown's Schooldays,[14] a male-dominated world where for up to forty weeks of the year classmates substituted for siblings and Housemasters substituted

[12] I have not been able to ascertain when Benson and Esher first met. They certainly knew of each other from their Eton and Cambridge days. Benson, in his Diary, vol. 11, March 3 1902, p. 136, recorded meeting Esher at the home of the Eton master, A.C. Ainger. Prior to 1902 the Eton boys participated in various ceremonies at Windsor Castle during Queen Victoria's lifetime. Esher attended as an organiser of many of those events, as did Benson. For example he recorded in his Diary, vol. 3, that he attended her birthday celebrations with the Eton boys at Windsor on 24 May1899.

[13] John Tosh, 'Domesticity and Manliness in the Victorian Middle Class. The Family of Edward White Benson', in Michael Roper and John Tosh, eds, Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1900, London, Routledge, 1991, pp. 44-73, 66. For a broader view of the field see also Tosh, A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-class Home in Victorian England, New Haven, Conn., London, Yale University Press, 1999.

[14] Thomas Hughes, Tom Brown's Schooldays, London, Macmillan, 1979, (Facsimile 1889 edition).

for mothers and fathers.[15] Fagging was central to all of these schools and discipline was handled by prefects or headmasters, frequently in cruel and harsh ways, and masters rarely interfered.[16] Lord Melbourne, an Etonian, described to Queen Victoria the 'immense' power of the head boy: how 'a look of his is like the law to another boy'; how the head boy who would never think of obeying; 'and many tyrannize amazingly.'[17]

For these boys, the only women in their lives were nurses, cooks, matrons or dames (managers of the boarding houses) – all subservient to the boys. In Christopher Hollis's recollection, 'from the beginning of term, or half, to the end the boy for all intents and purposes never set eyes on any woman except the matron and perhaps the housemaster's wife'.[18] At the time, Dr Arnold expressed misgivings about boarding schools and 'the alienation of the boys from home influences'; and some sixty years later, Edward Carpenter, writer of Sexual Inversions, drew attention to the emotional immaturity of the public-school educated gentleman who in not being called upon to 'help his parents or his brothers or his sisters', could not develop 'a fair capacity of sympathy and affection' and instead had a 'rather dreary cynicism'.[19] Even school holidays were spent with other men: on hiking or bicycling tours; and in reading parties with other students, with masters from Eton and dons from Cambridge.[20] In his adult life these circles extended to include not only Old Boys but men who had become connected with the Church of England, the Royal Court and Clubs. Fresh blood was introduced by the recruitment of younger males, often gifted or beautiful,

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[15] Exploring this theme, although in a later period, see Peter M. Lewis, 'Mummy, Matron and the Maids: Feminine Presence and Absence in Male Institutions, 1934-63', in Roper and Tosh, eds, Manful Assertions, pp. 168-189.

[16] David Newsome, Godliness and Good Learning. Four Studies on a Victorian Ideal, London, Cassell, 1961, p. 175. Also for the culture of fagging and for public school experience in its many facets, see J.R. de S. Honey, Tom Brown's Universe. The Development of the Victorian Public School, London, Millington books, 1977; Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, The Public School Phenomenon 597-1977, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977; Jon Chandos, Boys Together. English Public Schools 1800-1864, London, Hutchinson, 1984.

[17] Lord Esher, ed., The Girlhood of Queen Victoria, 1832-1840, London, John Murray, 1912, vol. II, p. 38.

[18] Alisdare Hickson, The Poisoned Bowl. Sex and the Public School, London, Duckworth, (1995), 1996, p. 12.

[19] Both Arnold and Carpenter were cited by Peter Cominos, 'Late Victorian Sexual Respectability and the Social System', International Review of Social History, vol. 8, 1963, pp. 26-7.

[20] Accounts of these holidays are given in the Benson diary, Magdalene College, Cambridge and in David Newsome's selections in, Edwardian Excursions: From the Diaries of A.C. Benson, 1898-1904, London, John Murray, 1981.

or both. The activities remained much the same, but always in the company of men, most of whom remained within 'institutionalised homosociality'.[21]

Within these homosocial environments, there were a range of sexual experiences and relations. Boys removed from home and family, into the frequently cold, lonely and hungry life of boarding school by necessity sought and accepted warmth and kindness, affection and love from other boys.[22] Before long they would be compelled to ask themselves what forms of behaviour were appropriate and even admirable as opposed to others that might be deemed immoral or even criminal. According to Hollis, 'immorality such as it was, was exclusively homosexual'.[23] Loyalty and trust became interlinked with secrecy and knowledge, and boys soon learned how empowering knowledge can be. Through their family networks, their social networks, their occupations, sports and religion these men tended to keep in touch. They knew about each other; they had lived together at boarding schools and university. They gathered together in country houses and city clubs. They gossiped, especially after the passing of the Criminal Amendment Act in 1885[24] and the various sex scandals in the news and the lawcourts in the 1890s.[25] They reminisced and wrote,[26] but discretion was *de rigueur*.

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[21] Elaine Showalter, Sexual Anarchy. Gender and Culture at the *Fin de Siècle*, New York, Viking Penguin, 1990, p. 25.

[22] Lord Esher was comforted through his years at Eton by the love of various boys, fostered in the paedophilic haven of Greek love provided by William Cory, (Johnson). James Lees-Milne, The Enigmatic Edwardian. The Life of Reginald 2nd Viscount Esher, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1986, pp. 12-26.

[23] Hickson, The Poisoned Bowl, p. 12. The supposition *ipso facto*, from our perspective, must be that heterosexual activities would not be deemed immoral.

[24] F.B. Smith, 'Labouchère's Amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment Bill', Historical Studies, vol. 17, no. 67, 1976, pp. 165-73; Jeffrey Weeks, Sex, Politics and Society. The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800, London and New York, Longman, (1981), 1989, p. 87.

[25] For example, see Ronald Pearsall, The Worm in the Bud, The World of Victorian Sexuality, London, Pimlico Press, (1965), 1993, Chapter 10 "Against the Norm – the Cleveland Street Scandal, the Oscar Wilde trials". More recently, Graham Robb has argued that the 1885 Amendment proved to be 'a statistical non-event'. He argued that 'melodramatic historians' have fashioned 'a weapon of sexual oppression out of a jumble of laws that were often casually enacted, sporadically applied and aimed primarily at acts of violence'. (Graham Robb, Strangers. Homosexual Love in the Nineteenth Century, London, Picador, 2003, quoted from a review by Richard Davenport-Hines in Times Literary Supplement, 9 January 2004, pp. 9-10).

[26] Pearsall, The Worm in the Bud, p.448, estimated that between 1898 and 1908 more than 1,000 works on homosexuality were published, but added that such statistics are unreliable. Brian Reade ed.,, Sexual Heretics. Male Homosexuality in English Literature from 1850-1900. An Anthology, London, Routledge, & Kegan Paul, 1970, p. 1, argues: '... it was really quite difficult to find any serious author ... who was not involved in homosexuality one way or another'. 'An efflorescence of pederasty' has been identified as occurring during the years 1880-1930 by Timothy D'Arch Smith, Love in Earnest. Some Notes on the

The illegality of homosexual acts – specifically, 'the commission in public or private, by a male person with another male person, of any act of gross indecency' as euphemistically described by the Labouchère Amendment to the Criminal Code in 1885 – frequently created tensions within the gentlemanly world.[27] Sodomy had been punishable by death until 1828; the death penalty was replaced by a minimum imprisonment of ten years in 1861.[28] But as Michel Foucault has famously noted, sodomy was an 'utterly confused category',[29] a point to which we shall return. However, the possibility of criminal charges being brought added a layer of tension within that gentlemanly group. It gave particular value to knowledge and secrecy, and to trust and loyalty, consequently underpinning a culture of secrecy on one hand and a sense of exclusivity on the other.

There is no direct evidence that sexuality was a consideration that affected the selection criteria of the editor or the co-editor, but it was a substantial part of their gentlemanly world and of their networks. Lord Esher's biographer, James Lees-Milne, expressed the view that sexuality was important. He believed that it was appropriate that courtiers should be chosen from people who were closely connected to each other, often with a clandestine interest in their own sex. Dealing with the secret side of their lives provided a unique training in, and test of, their discretion.[30]

Lives and Writings of English 'Uranian' Poets from 1889-1930, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970, p. xxi.

[27] John Addington Symonds, A Problem in Modern Ethics, London, 1896, p. 135, cited in Jeffrey Meyers, Homosexuality and Literature 1890-1930, London, Athlone Press, 1977, p. 5.

[28] H. Montgomery Hyde, The Love that Dares not Speak its Name, Boston, Little, Brown and Co, 1970, pp. 90-2.

[29] Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality. An Introduction, vol. 1, New York, Vintage Books, (1978), 1990, p. 101. For the theological definition of sodomy and its link with definitions of pederasty, see Gert Hekma, 'Sodomites, Platonic Lovers, Contrary Lovers: The Backgrounds of the Modern Homosexual', in Kent Gerard, and Gert Hekma, eds, The Pursuit of Sodomy: Male Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe, New York, Harrington Press, 1988, p. 434. For the classical origins of pederasty, see William Armstrong Percy III, Pederasty and Pedagogy in Archaic Greece, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1996, pp. 1-11, *passim*. On various understandings of sodomy and pederasty, see Richard Dellamora, Masculine Desire. The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1990, pp. 1-12; David Halperin, How to do the History of Homosexuality, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002, p.110; Jonathan Goldberg, Sodometries. Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1992, pp. 18-20.

[30] Personal correspondence with Michael Bloch, Lees-Milne's literary executor and friend, currently writing a biography of Lees-Milne. The Queen Mother had a slightly different take on things. When homophobia was raging in the press in the early 1980s, the Queen Mother whispered to a friend before a Palace dinner: 'We think they're marvellous. And besides, if we didn't have any here, we'd have to go self-service.' (Thomas Blaikie, 'You look awfully like the Queen.' Wit and Wisdom from the House of Windsor, London, Fourth Estate, 2002, p. 35.)

This exclusivity manifested itself in politics and throughout the civil service. David Vincent contends that there was a widely held belief that only gentlemen could understand and deal with certain information and knowledge. For lower-class men and all women, knowledge had to be moderated and regulated.[31] The masses could not be expected to think and make judgements in scale beyond their immediate environs. Hence the ideal of 'honourable secrecy' made perfect sense to them.[32] Not only could this belief be maintained but it could be diffused widely throughout the society. The ideas that emanated from Tom Paine's Rights of Man, from the Reform Acts and the growth of democracy in the nineteenth century, had little measurable impact on most gentlemen except to cause alarm. They felt themselves to be more in agreement with Robert Lowe's plea 'for government by the educated against government by the masses'.[33]

After a brief dalliance in the 1880s with quasi-democratic ideals, Esher drew back and expressed the view that the general populace was not to be trusted with knowledge or decision-making.[34] This same idea was used by Randall Davidson, as Dean of Windsor, desperately hoping to dissuade Queen Victoria from publishing a memorial to her highland servant, John Brown, in 1884. Davidson wrote a subtle and masterly letter outlining the responses of the various classes to such a panegyric, emphasizing that 'I should be deceiving Your Majesty were I not to admit that there are, especially among the humbler classes, some, (perhaps it would be true to say *many*) who do not shew themselves worthy of these confidences ...'.[35] (The argument may be said to have worked as the memoir was not published, but the Queen refused to speak to Davidson for many weeks after she received the letter.) Clive Ponting, in arguing against the culture of secrecy still pervading government

[31] Vincent, Culture of Secrecy, Chapters 2 and 3.
[32] Catherine Hall in 'Men and their Histories: Civilizing Subjects', History Workshop Journal, vol. 52, Autumn 2001, p. 53 & 64, has written of the nineteenth century: 'History was in itself intended to be a civilizing subject …', forming knowledge according to particular notions and ideas, and disseminating it to 'improve the reading public, ... as British subjects of nation and empire'. See also on this theme, John Carey, The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1934, London, Faber and Faber, 1992.
[33] Asa Briggs, Victorian People, Penguin, Harmondsworth, (1955), 1975, p. 240.
[34] For details see William M. Kuhn, Democratic Royalism. The Transformation of the British Monarchy, 1861-1914, London, Macmillan Press, 1996, pp. 58 and 61 especially for a perceptive explication of the evolution of Esher's political views.
[35] Davidson Papers, Folio 520, Lambeth Palace library. For the published text of this letter and the fallout from it, see G.K.A. Bell, Randall Davidson: Archbishop of Canterbury, London, Oxford University Press, 1938, pp. 92-4.

today, believes that the idea began in the nineteenth century by the 'elite group of politicians and administrators, who had a common interest in treating the conduct of public affairs as an essentially private matter'.[36] The editors of the Queen's letters understood their task on each of these levels. Their task was to moderate information that was in some ways private for 'the public'. The definition of 'the public' came from the worldview[37] of the gentlemen of the nineteenth century. It had little to do with individuals of lower classes, but everything to do with the power of knowledge and the custodianship of information as determined by homosocial men from within their networks.

4.2 The Category 'Homosocial'

The word 'homosocial' I apply in Linda Dowling's sense – 'a reciprocal system of bonds facilitating the interchange of masculine affection, interest, advantage, and obligation'.[38] This definition simplifies the more comprehensive view initially proposed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Sedgwick was emphatic about the centrality of 'desire' in the name and the definition:

> Male homosocial 'desire' should be seen as a continuum between male homosexuality and male friendship which recognises the potentially erotic bases for relationships, where 'desire' is understood as analogous to 'libido', that is, as an 'affective' or social force.[39]

In Sedgwick's view the structure of the continuum is often causally bound up with other social changes – which was very much the case in late nineteenth-century England – such as 'the emerging patterns of male friendship, mentorship, entitlement, rivalry, and hetero – and homosexuality' as they occur in an intimate and shifting relation to class. But she is insistent that 'no element of these patterns can be understood outside of their relation to women and the gender system as a whole'.[40]

Jonathon Goldberg sought to simplify this by proffering the view that 'homosociality suggests a continuum of male-male relations, one capable of being sexualized, though

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[36] Clive Ponting, Secrecy in Britain, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990, p. 1.
[37] Term used in the sense defined by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman, The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge, Garden City, N.Y, Doubleday, 1967.
[38] Linda Dowling, Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1994, p. 81.
[39] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Between Men. English Literature and Homosocial Desire, New York, Columbia University Press, 1985, pp. 1-5.
[40] Kosofsky Sedgwick, Between Men, p. 1.

where and how such sexualization occurs cannot be assumed *a priori*'.[41] But, in focussing on male-male desire, he made insufficient allowance for male-female desire in homosocial men. The biographers of Benson and Esher, David Newsome and James Lees-Milne, describe large numbers of men from Benson's and Esher's circles who were homosocial, married men, sometimes fathers, who felt great love and affection for their wives; or to express it conversely, there was a large number of married men who loved their wives but desired, or were impelled to seek, male company. The term 'homosocial', in this usage, is a descriptively useful term for categorising men who prefer the company of men as homosocial, without the legal and sexual connotations of 'homosexual'.

This may be seen as a limitation on the term but it seems to be an accurate representation of the emotional lives of men like Esher, and his biographer, James Lees-Milne,[42] for example. In some individuals it is possible to see evidence of John Tosh's 'flight from domesticity' thesis, and in others Cyril Connolly's concept of 'Permanent Adolescence',[43] both of which include factors such as the increase in male leisure time, and gentlemen's preference for the exclusion of women from so many social arenas. A modified continuum in accommodating heterosexual and homosexual love can be seen as a masculine version of Smith-Rosenberg's spectrum of female intimacies, previously referred to in connection with Mary Benson.[44] In this form it fits comfortably with the ethos and structure of the gentlemanly networks and strengthens the term 'homosocial' by recognizing that these individuals can have both heterosexual and homosexual desires and predilections, or like Benson, express no heterosexual component and varying emotional and sexual connections with males. For most of the boys there was the initial experience of friendship whilst boarding at school, and many of their friendships carried on into University, some boys developing a homosexuality, others a heterosexuality. But the long periods of time spent together in those early years was an influential and formative experience to these boys.

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[41] Goldberg, Sodometries, as discussed in Hans Turley, Rum, Sodomy and the Lash. Piracy, Sexuality and Masculine Identity, New York, New York University Press, 1999, p. 5.
[42] This is evident in all of Lees-Milne's published diaries: A Mingled Measure, Diaries from 1953-72, London, John Murray, 1994; and those published posthumously, edited by Michael Bloch: Deep Romantic Chasm, Diaries, 1979-81, London, John Murray, 2000; and Holy Dread, Diaries, 1982-4, London, John Murray, 2001.
[43] Cyril Connolly, Enemies of Promise, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979, pp. 271-2.

4.3 The Networks from Eton and Cambridge, and Secrecy

As Lord Esher's father sagely advised him, his friendships from school would last a lifetime, and this was the case for many other boys and men too. Arthur Benson spent his time at Eton (1874-81) relatively peacefully, establishing long-lasting friendships with boys such as Hugh Childers, and others such as the writer of ghost stories, M.R. (Monty) James,[45] building on the gentlemanly networks of his family and beginning new ones for himself. Arthur's second fagmaster at Eton was the kindly Reginald Smith, who was later to publish several of Arthur's books, including a best-seller, The Upton Letters, in 1905.[46] Academically, Arthur showed promise, but was not brilliant. He had his first experience of romantic relationships with boys in his last two years at Eton.[47]

The friendship was described in Beside Still Waters,[48] but without identification of the boy. In his diary, paraphrased by Newsome, Arthur described

> 'a depth of sacred emotion, too sacred to be spoken of to anyone, even to be expressed to myself.' It transformed him as a person ... it made him realise for the first time in his life, that 'it was indeed possible to hold something dearer than oneself'... his soul was endowed with a new elasticity. He seemed to leap, to run, to climb, with a freshness and vigour that he had never before so much as guessed at.[49]

Newsome goes to some lengths to explain the particularity of relationships of that time, as particular 'romantic friendships' within exclusively male communities, arguing that they are very alien to our post-Freudian understandings:

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[44] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, 'The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth Century America', Signs, vol. 1, no. 1, Autumn 1975, pp. 1-32.

[45] David Newsome, On the Edge of Paradise. A.C. Benson: the Diarist, London, John Murray, 1980. p. 30 and Brian Masters, The Life of E.F. Benson, London, Chatto & Windus, 1991, p. 54; E.H. Ryle, ed., Arthur Christopher Benson, as seen by some Friends, London, G. Bell and Sons, 1925, Chapter 1: 'Reminiscence by M.R. James, Provost of Eton.'

[46] Reginald Smith died in 1916. A tribute to him was included in Arthur Christopher Benson, Memories and Friends, New York and London, G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1924, pp. 331-45. His father had been George Smith, the founder of the DNB. The publishing house, Smith, Elder and Co. was subsequently purchased by John Murray.

[47] The extent of homosexual activity at schools was the subject of Hickson's The Poisoned Bowl. For recollections of Old Etonians see pp. 132-40.

[48] Arthur Christopher Benson, Beside Still Waters, London, Smith, Elder, 1907.

[49] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p. 31.

> In the nineteenth century, the normality of both men and women forming highly emotional relationships with those of their own sex, of the same age or sometimes older or younger, as the case may be, was neither questioned as necessarily unwholesome nor felt to inhibit the same relationship with the opposite sex leading to perfectly happy marriage.[50]

Newsome here concurs with Lillian Faderman's views on female friendships[51] and this same emphasis on a spiritual quality is the central tenet of Jeffrey Richards's understanding of nineteenth-century male friendships. In Richards's view they comprised a form of spiritual brotherhood, involving notions of service and sacrifice, drawn from Classical Greece, Christianity and the ideals of chivalry, which for those men was 'higher than and different from, rather than a substitute for, the love of women'.[52]

The nineteenth century revival of chivalry[53] and its adoption by and popularity with leaders, in religion, politics, education and the arts was very significant to boys and men. Walter Scott's popular novel, Ivanhoe, and Kenhelm Digby's Broadstone of Honour or Rules for the Gentlemen of England, were written in the 1820s and increased in popularity throughout the century. Alfred, Lord Tennyson's Idylls of the King, published in 1859 may have even inspired the naming of 'Arthur' Benson in 1862. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, of which Dante Gabriel Rossetti was a central figure, produced many works of art based on medieval and chivalric themes.

The Reverend Charles Kingsley, friend of the Bensons, was also one of the proponents of these ideals. He was one of the most popular writers, preachers and lecturers in England mid-century, and he was also one of Queen Victoria's favourite preachers. In 1865 at Windsor he expressed the sentiment that, 'The age of chivalry is never past, so

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[50] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, pp. 39-40. Newsome was Master of Wellington College in 1984 when James Lees-Milne began the Esher biography, having published the Benson Edge of Paradise biography in 1980. As part of his initial research, Lees-Milne contacted Arthur Benson's biographer, David Newsome, about Esher. Newsome wrote: 'I'm delighted you are taking up the gigantic project of Lord Esher's life. Michael Howard [military historian] gave it up after a few years as you know. There was a suggestion that I should tackle it (for my interest in William Cory) but I could not contemplate such a massive piece of research in my present appointment. But if I can help you, I shall be very happy.' David Newsome, Wellington College, 20 April 1984, James Lees-Milne Papers, Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Yale University, Box 21, Folder 910.

[51] Lillian Faderman, Surpassing the Love of Men, New York, William Morrow and Co. 1981.

[52] Jeffrey Richards, ' "Passing the Love of Women": Manly Love and Victorian Society,' in J. A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds, Manliness and Morality. Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1940, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p. 93.

[53] For an overview on chivalry, Girouard, The Return to Camelot, and Debra N. Mancoff, The Return of King Arthur. The Legend through Victorian Eyes, New York, Harry N. Abrams, 1995.

long as there is a wrong left unredressed on earth ... '.[54] He belonged to a small but highly influential group, the members of which were trying to live up to a concept of chivalry as a code of conduct for gentlemen.[55] In 1848-9 Kingsley and his fellow proponents of 'muscular chivalry', such as Thomas Carlyle, formed the Christian Socialists, which included such men as Thomas Hughes, Frederick Maurice and E.V. Neale.[56] Although the movement collapsed they did establish the Working Men's College in Red Lion Square, London (now at St Pancras) which attracted gentlemen teachers such as Lord Goderich, later Viceroy of India, George Grove the musician, John Ruskin, and artists D.G. Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones and Ford Madox Brown. The benefits were to be twofold: for the working men to learn, and the gentlemen to be 'improved and enriched' through friendship with working men. William Cory (Johnson) the Eton Master, was also a member of the group. Many of these men had connections with Benson or Esher, either personally or through writing.

The difference between the views of the male world, and those of the female world is the direct link made by men with Ancient Greece and chivalry. From the 1870s to 1930s there was an unusually large number of books written on both subjects.[57] Many of the writers featured in these volumes were members of Benson's Eton and Cambridge circles. Others he came to know later through the Athenaeum Club or the literary networks around Edmund Gosse and Henry James. Arthur Benson was one of the very active proponents of the ideals of chivalry and non-heterosexual romance, and love, in literature. Many of these publications acknowledged the influence of the Eton Master, William Cory (Johnson) both for his teaching and for his writing.[58] This efflorescence of the literature both stemmed from and enhanced the growth of the cult of homosexuality, as depicted by Noel Annan, who named both Arthur Benson and Lord Esher for their notable rôles.[59] Late Victorian London has frequently been depicted as a 'crucial site for the emergence of an ethos of individuality and of a milieu

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[54] Girouard, The Return to Camelot, p. 130.
[55] ibid., p. 174.
[56] ibid., pp. 130-44. Girouard uses the term, 'muscular chivalry' for this group. In 1857, an anonymous reviewer of a Kingsley book, Two Years Ago used the more widely-used phrase, 'muscular Christianity'. Kingsley eventually responded to this in 1865, in his Cambridge sermons delivered whilst Regius Professor of History, and the term came to be synonymous with his theology.
[57] For a survey of this period see Meyers, Homosexuality and Literature, D'Arch Smith, Love in Earnest, and Reade, ed., Sexual Heretics.
[58] D'Arch Smith, Love in Earnest, p. 7; and Reade, Sexual Heretics, pp. 10-7, 20-4, 36, 47-8.
[59] Annan, Our Age: on Esher, pp. 99 & 101; on Benson, pp. 101 and 108.

hospitable to male same-sex desire'.[60] The extent of Classics scholarship and Hellenic interest at public schools such as Eton and the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, especially the ideals of 'Greek Love', must be seen to have both influenced and enhanced the spread of the ideals.[61]

The views of Newsome and Richards are in direct contradiction with those of Ronald Pearsall's account of same-sex friendships within universities and public schools in the second half of the nineteenth century, and more recently in accounts by Old Boys of homosexual experiences at public schools collected by Alisdare Hickson – both studies give evidence of much more active, physical, sexual behaviour.[62] Edward Benson's directions at Wellington College that matrons were to police the dormitories as the boys were undressing, and his suggestions for nailing wire mesh over the tops of each boy's cubicle to stop them sharing beds at night[63] have frequently been cited as evidence for active immorality, or an awareness and fear of it. Raymond Asquith, the sixteen year old son of the future Prime Minister, writing from Winchester College in 1897, sardonically reported to a friend on a lecture given by the Headmaster about the 'disadvantages' of sodomy:

> He spoke to us in hushed accents of the abominable crime and exhorted us with passionate fervour to prefer every known form of prostitution and bestiality to the sin of Sodom. He told us that the Headmasters, in league with the Government, were proposing to increase the legal penalty from two to fourteen years; whereat a perceptible shudder ran through the audience, of whom some 85 per cent – by the lowest estimate – were liable for incarceration on that charge. The bolder spirits muttered that the law was not altered yet, and registered a mental vow to make the most of the lucid interspace.[64]

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[60] Morris B. Kaplan, 'Who's Afraid of John Saul? Urban Culture and the Politics of Desire in Late Victorian London', GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, vol. 5, no. 3, 1999, pp. 267-314, and Jeffrey Weeks, Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present, (London, 1977), New York, Longman, 1989, chapters 2, 5 and 6. Matthew Sturgis, Passionate Attitudes. The English Decadence of the 1890s, London, Macmillan, 1995, focussed on the decadence of the 1890s and the build-up to it in the previous decades, including the work of Walter Pater and Edward FitzGerald. Benson was to write a biography of both of them.

[61] Newsome, Godliness and Good Learning, pp. 61-72. Both Johnson and Browning were named by Dowling, Hellenism and Homosexuality, (pp. 68, 86-7, 115,) as inspired teachers of Greek literature at Eton, who influenced large numbers of boys. Johnson's poem, *Ionica*, is frequently cited by writers.

[62] Pearsall, The Worm in the Bud, pp. 448-60; Hickson, historical background, pp. 22-88, and reminiscences of particular schools, for example, Eton, pp. 132-44.

[63] Newsome, Godliness and Good Learning, pp. 44-5

[64] John Jolliffe, ed., Raymond Asquith: Life and Letters, London, Century Books, (1980), 1987, p. 24, letter, 26 February 1897.

Is this bravado or can it be taken as truth? Annan asked the same question: 'What are we to make of these romantic friendships and the Hellenistic dons and schoolmasters who were so frank about their loves? Did they or didn't they?'[65]

Sodomy at this time was defined not just as anal intercourse, but could include any sexual activity which was not conducive to procreation. Hence masturbation, intercrural intercourse and even heterosexual *coitus interruptus* could equally be consigned to the same category as buggery,[66] and Asquith's account of the Headmaster's lecture shows this confusion. Foucault believed that such confusion led to the appearance in 'psychiatry, jurisprudence and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and "psychic hermaphrodism" ... [which in turn] made possible a strong advance for social controls into this area of perversity'.[67] This was exemplified by the concern of both Headmasters and Governments. Conversely, 'it also made possible the formation of a "reverse" discourse; homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand its legitimacy or "naturality" be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified'.[68] Theo Aronson, himself a homosexual, wryly wondered whether 'the majority of undergraduates who practised Greek love concerned themselves with the finer philosophical points of the theory ... Greek love gave practising homosexuals the perfect framework in which to conduct their less cerebral affairs'.[69]

Whatever the actual practices, same-sex love, lust, friendship and romance have to be recognised as a widely-shared ethos of the gentlemanly circles developed at Eton and Cambridge, of Arthur Benson and of Lord Esher. The members of some of those circles exemplify the depth and breadth of the connections. Prince Albert Victor, the eldest son of the Prince of Wales and second in line to the throne, known as Prince Eddy, was at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1882-4, the same time as Arthur Benson was at King's College and they frequented the same circles. Theo Aronson, in describing the men in these circles, extensively detailed the peccadilloes and characters of dons and students

[65] Annan, Our Age, p. 102.
[66] Gert Hekma, 'Sodomites', p. 434.
[67] Foucault, History of Sexuality, p. 101.
[68] Foucault, History of Sexuality, p.101.
[69] Theo Aronson, Prince Eddy and the Homosexual Underworld, London, John Murray, 1994, p. 69.

of Trinity and King's and their intricate gentlemanly networks.[70] Central to the Prince's circle was Archbishop Benson's Truro assistant, Canon Dalton, who had served as Prince Eddy's part-tutor, part-companion long before, in 1871. (Dalton's very intimate, lifelong friend, Edward Carpenter, had previously declined the position.[71]) A new graduate, J.K. Stephen had been selected as Prince Eddy's Cambridge tutor in preference to Oscar Browning who was then a Fellow at King's after being sacked from Eton. Browning was bitterly disappointed not to have been made the Prince's tutor. Many of the Prince's other companions were members of the Cambridge semi-secret society, the Apostles.[72] (Young Regy Brett, in the company of Albert Grey had been admitted to the society of the Apostles, but 'only as strayed revellers' Brett claimed.[73]) For the Apostles the philosophy of 'Greek Love' was known as 'Higher Sodomy', a love that was simultaneously physical, spiritual and intellectual, a combination that for the adherents put it in a different class from heterosexual love.[74] Stephen, now retired from the Apostles, was made an 'Angel', a lifelong member.[75] Aronson listed Arthur Benson as a frequent visitor to the Prince's rooms, 'as he had always been such a favourite of Canon Dalton'.[76]

When Arthur went up to Cambridge in 1881, in addition to Canon Dalton and the Prince's circle, he met up with many of his old friends from Eton.[77] In addition to Monty James, and Hugh Childers who was to work as Benson's assistant on Queen Victoria's letters, Newsome lists many boys who were to gain eminence in their adult lives and remain lifelong friends with Arthur. Some of these included: the Greek scholar and historian, Walter Headlam, who was acknowledged by Benson and Esher for his assistance in writing the prolegomena in Letters of Queen Victoria;[78] Lionel

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[70] ibid., Chapter 5 'The Student Prince'.
[71] ibid., p. 48.
[72] W.C. Lubenow, The Cambridge Apostles, 1820-1914. Liberalism, Imagination and Friendship in British Intellectual and Professional Life, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998. Although Arthur Benson was not elected to the Apostles, so many of his friends were that Lubenow uses his diary frequently for descriptions of individuals and events. This study fleshes out many of the gentlemanly networks central to Benson and Esher, and to John Murray through the Athenaeum Club.
[73] Reginald, Viscount Esher, Cloud Capp'd Towers, London, John Murray, 1927, p. 37. Esher dedicated this book to the son of John Murray IV.
[74] Annan, Our Age, pp. 84-5.
[75] Aronson, Prince Eddy, p. 70.
[76] ibid., p. 71. Benson mentioned these visits in his diary.
[77] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, pp. 32-5 *passim*.
[78] A.D. Knox, ed., Mimiambi. English & Greek or The Mimes and Fragments of Herodas (with notes by Walter Headlam), Salem, Ayer, 1988.

Ford, later a master at Eton; Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, who in 1896 published The Greek View of Life,[79] and many subsequent volumes on political and historical topics; and journalist, Leo Maxse. Other friends showed promise but failed one way or another in adult life, included Harry Cust, who may have been Benson's unnamed love in Beside Still Waters: '... but, oh dear me, my heart beats no longer at the sight of him, as it would have long ago. He is nothing but a crumpled rose leaf or a singed gnat…,' he wrote in 1903.[80]

Another promising young Eton friend was the tutor of Prince Eddy, J.K. Stephen, (Leslie Stephen's nephew and Virginia Woolf's cousin) a brilliant all-rounder at Cambridge where he gained the most coveted honours, and enchanted dons and undergraduates alike.[81] Aronson described him as having great beauty, being socially ambitious but an inveterate misogynist.[82] Stephen suffered a severe blow to the head in 1886 and whether the cause was the blow or an inherited mental instability, from that time his behaviour became increasingly erratic. Stephen was believed by Michael Harrison to have been Jack the Ripper, committing the murders out of his 'love' for the young prince throughout 1888.[83] Stephen was later committed to an asylum. The Prince died of pneumonia on 14 January 1892. From this date Stephen refused to take any nourishment and died twenty days later.[84]

Oscar Browning was a very active, and predatory, frequenter of these circles.[85] He was a former Eton Master who had been dismissed after parental complaints to the Headmaster over his closeness to a boy, George Curzon, later Viceroy to India. Despite this disgrace, the gentlemanly networks promptly came to Browning's rescue. One of Browning's Cambridge friends was Arthur Benson's uncle, the influential Cambridge Don, Henry Sidgwick. Sidgwick helped arrange a History lectureship at King's College where Browning already held a Life-Fellowship, and Browning remained there for

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[79] Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, The Greek View of Life, London, Methuen, 1896.
[80] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, pp. 31-2 and 43.
[81] Arthur Benson, Memories and Friends, p. 335; also see Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p. 35.
[82] Aronson, Prince Eddy, pp. 64-6.
[83] Michael Harrison, Clarence, the Life of H.R.H. the Duke of Clarence and Avondale, (1864-1892) London, W. H. Allen, 1972. The gruesome details are given sparingly in Aronson. He summarized and showed the flaws in Harrison's argument in Chapter 8 'Ripping for the Prince.'(!)
[84] Aronson, Prince Eddy, p. 105.
[85] For an extensive portrait of Browning, see E.F. Benson, As We Were: A Victorian Peep-Show, London, Longmans, green and Co., 1933, pp. 129-33, 141-2.

thirty calamitous years.[86] In his diaries Arthur Benson was especially critical of Browning's leering manner and lecherous behaviour,[87] and in this he was not alone. David Newsome was Master of Wellington College in 1984 when James Lees-Milne began the Esher biography, having published the Benson Paradise biography in 1980. Lees-Milne met with Newsome to discuss Benson and Esher, and 'romantic friendships' between Victorian boys. As if in accordance with their biographical subjects they 'agreed that they both disliked Oscar Browning who was lecherous, and liked William Cory who was romantic'.[88]

Browning was famous for his Sunday evenings where, before an unconventional mixture of guests, he would regale the visitors with Mozart's *Voi che sapete* with immense gusto; or with the slightest excuse would plunge into one of his famous masturbation lectures.[89] Arthur's brother, Fred Benson, wrote of Browning's insatiable appetite for 'intercourse with the eminent'. This was tested when Browning took the chance to shake the hand of the reclusive Lord Tennyson. The poet seemed not to recognise him, so he introduced himself by saying:

> 'I am Browning.'
> 'No, you're not,' Tennyson replied and seemed disinclined to listen to any explanations![90]

Like Newsome and Lees-Milne, Aronson was also critical of Browning's lechery and described him as one in whom 'snobbery went hand in hand with sodomy'.[91] After a tumultuous professional and personal life, Browning retired to Rome where he died in 1923.[92]

Another variation of the development of networks can be seen in the Sturgis family. Howard Sturgis had been at Eton with Regy Brett. His brother Julian was a lifelong friend of Arthur Benson. The three sons of Julian Sturgis were all boarders in Arthur Benson's house at Eton through the 1890s and into the Edwardian era. Mark Sturgis,

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[86] See Hickson, The Poisoned Bowl, pp. 58-61, for a generous reading of Browning's behaviour. Arthur Benson, in Memories and Friends, pp. 143-63, presents Browning's good and bad points more gently than in his diary entries.
[87] Benson Diary, vol. 63, January 1905 and vol. 79, February 1906.
[88] Bloch, ed., Holy Dread, p. 179.
[89] Aronson, Prince Eddy, pp. 72-3.
[90] E.F. Benson, As We Were, p. 115. Tennyson must have thought he was impersonating Robert Browning.
[91] Aronson, Prince Eddy, p. 71.
[92] An unreliable and unsourced account of Browning's life is given in Rupert Croft-Cooke, Feasting with Panthers. A New Consideration of some Late Victorian Writers, London, W.H. Allen, 1967, pp. 111-8.

the eldest son, attracted a huge fascination from Benson, which Newsome described as a poignant 'heart hunger' on Benson's part.[93] Later as Sir Mark, he wrote a tribute to Arthur Benson in 1925 which was published in Arthur Christopher Benson, as seen by some friends.[94] These friendships were much more in the spirit of Newsome's and Richards's characterisation of male-male relationships that were a unique product of the nineteenth century, homosocial, rather than homosexual.

As Newsome and Richards have both argued, the world of these men of the nineteenth century was unique and for the purposes of the thesis it is essential to provide some detail concerning the men who filled the worlds from which Benson and Esher came as they began the editing. It was a world where men set women on pedestals, paradoxically elevating them beyond the earthly world of men, but in practice deeming them to be unworthy of men's time or energies. The more serious matters of the world, cerebral, practical and technical affairs, items of intellectual, political, legal and international significance deserved their attention, in consultation with their fellow men, of course. These shared interests led to the formation of many, ever-expanding, interlocking and overlapping networks of friends, colleagues and acquaintances. This aspect of gentlemanliness is crucial to this thesis in two ways: the masculinist judgments made by the men as they judged the importance of each item of the Queen's correspondence, and how they valued knowledge and utilised secrecy.

4.4 Gentlemen and the Task of Editing the Queen's Letters

The influences and the effects of the ethos of the gentleman of the nineteenth century has been neatly summarised by Michael Brander. It accurately encapsulates the gentlemanly socialization of both Arthur Benson and Lord Esher.

[93] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, pp. 58, 82, 84.
[94] Ryle, Arthur Christopher Benson. I am grateful to Penelope Hatfield, Archivist of the Eton College, for drawing my attention to this volume. The Sturgis family also feature in A.C. Benson's recollection Memories and Friends, published in 1924.

> [In the nineteenth century] individualism may not have been completely suppressed, but inevitably the individual learned to live within the rules of society and to understand the general standards of gentlemanly conduct which were expected of him. The result at times was an almost schizophrenic division between the actions of an individual in his private life when following his repressed instincts and desires and his behaviour in public dictated by the rules of society. The ability to equate the two when they were conflicting without disturbing the equilibrium of either was not supreme hypocrisy, but the effect of early training. Whether in the process he developed a guilt complex depended very much on the individual.[95]

The training Benson and Esher received in order to live within the rules of society, with the additional refinements necessary for 'gentlemanliness', as we have seen, resulted in them making divisions between their public and private lives. Their individual propensities to maintain a balance between the two depended on the varying supports they had available to them. Esher armed himself with the carapace of marriage; Benson was much more constrained by his personality and by his conscience, and rarely ventured outside the safety and shelter he had sought in homosocial environments.

One aspect which is crucial to the editing of Queen Victoria's letters and journals, which Brander may be said to have overlooked, is that of secrecy. Within each of the networks of which Benson and Esher found themselves members, there had evolved a culture of knowledge and a subsequent culture of secrecy. This culture, with its codes and its boundaries, was intrinsic to networks stemming from the family circle, and expanded exponentially through the networks from public school life, university, then through networks formed within occupations, club membership, through the institutions of the military, the church, the arts and the Royal Court.

As he walked up to the Round Tower to edit Queen Victoria's letters, Benson brought with him his unique attributes of individuality, tempered by his family, his school, university, and the church, from a world of literature, poetry, Uranian sensibilities, chivalric ideals and homosociability. Esher too was a product of these institutions, but they were not so burdensome as for Benson. The editors' image of Queen Victoria was formed within the parameters of the worldviews of 'gentlemen' of that era. They employed a masculinist gaze, a very particular perception about the place of men and women, not just in terms of social, economic and political status and action but, in this instance, of knowledge and information.

[95] Brander, The English Gentleman, p. 20.

What were they to make of the letters of a young woman, heterosexual, a young wife in love, a new mother, a friend of other young women, with subsequent problematic relationships with men because of gender and status inversions – a young woman whom they had known all their lives as a matron, matriarch and Queen? How did they go about selecting documents to portray her?

Chapter 5

Modus Operandi *of the Gentlemen Editors, the Courtiers and the King*

Prelude

Queen Victoria reached her eighty-first birthday in 1900. As she grew older there were concerns that the new century and, possibly a new monarch, would bring in new ideas and new values with undue haste. Esher alluded to these in his publications of the 1880s and the 1890s, and in his Journal.[1] When Victoria became ill in January 1901 anxiety about imminent change became more widespread.[2] Arthur Benson felt anxious too: 'It is like a roof being off a house to think of an England Queenless … ' and he was surprised at 'how personally affecting it is ... people talk of nothing else'.[3] When the news of her death came on 22 January 1901, he was lost for words:

> I have just been standing in the Hall [of the Athenaeum Club] watching the telegraph tape tick out the Queen's death. The thoughts that rise are not very easily written down – & it is difficult to analyse the sense of personal loss & sorrow – very real & true however.[4]

He carefully drew a thick, black border around his text and painstakingly coloured it in with his pen and black ink. These four lines were the only entry he made for that day.

More words soon came to him however. Four days later the Spectator published a poem by Arthur Benson, which was subsequently published in the Eton College Chronicle. It comprised seven verses. The opening verse conveyed none of the depth of the emotion Benson captured in his diary:

> O pure and true, O faithful heart,
> Dear mother of our myriad race,
> The Father claims thee, – His thou art –
> Far hence in some serener place.
> To taste, in that diviner air,
> The love that thou hast garnered there.[5]

Yet again it was the public voice of Benson, appropriate and truthful, but bland.

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[1] Esher MSS Journals, Churchill Archives, Churchill College, Cambridge, 4 February 1901.

[2] There are numerous examples of anxious, individual responses to these events. For example, Virginia Woolf and E.E. Kellett (whose memoirs were published in 1936) in David Newsome, The Victorian World Picture. Perceptions and Introspections in an Age of Change, New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 1997, p. 246; see also Tony Rennell, Last Days of Glory. The Death of Queen Victoria, London, Viking Books, 2000, pp. 2-3 and 63;Elaine Showalter, Sexual Anarchy. Gender and Culture at the *Fin de Siècle*, New York, Viking Penguin, 1990, pp. 3-4 *passim*; and Asa Briggs, 'Britain 1900', History Today, vol. 50 (December 2000), p. 31 ff.

[3] Benson Diary, Magdalene College Library, Cambridge, vol. 5, 1900-01, 19 January 1901. For examples of others' reactions, see Rennell, Last Days, pp. 73, 80 ff, 148 ff.

[4] Benson Diary, vol. 5, 22 January 1901. Benson even noted the time of this entry: 7.00pm.

As the death of the old Queen had been unsettling for Arthur Benson, so the new court was initially something of an anxiety and a disappointment for Esher: 'So ends the reign of the Queen – and now I feel for the first time that the new regime – though full of anxieties for England – has begun.'[6] After dining at Windsor Castle for the first time under the 'new regime' of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, in April 1901, Esher's worst fears were confirmed. It was 'just like an ordinary party. None of the "hush" of the Queen's dinners' and he lamented the disappearance of 'the mystery and awe of the old Court'.[7] Under such changes, the holders of the old beliefs felt the need to bolster them. Benson and Esher were men who were passionately convinced of the supremacy of the Victorian age. They believed that the hegemony of their gentlemanly values and ideas was in danger of being eroded. They sought to maintain the image of the old Queen, her Court and her society and all its strengths. They wanted these strengths to be enshrined safely for future generations and they planned to do it through the images and the documents they selected for the writers and historians.

A particular structure had to be provided upon which the popular memory of the Queen could be constructed, and from which the image could be perpetuated. Lord Esher had various discussions with Randall Davidson, formerly Dean of Windsor and personal chaplain to Queen Victoria, now the Archbishop of Canterbury, with Lord Knollys, secretary of King Edward VII, and with the King himself about the publishing idea.[8] In preparation for the editing work, Benson consulted various colleagues: M.H. Hewlett (the essayist), George Prothero (Benson's old Cambridge tutor and by this time an eminent historian), and Randall Davidson.[9] According to Benson's brother, he saw the work as an opportunity to produce 'a book that was bound to be indispensable to historians in the future ... a resource that they would turn to again and again'.[10] Esher's view was more specific and limited:

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[5] Eton College Chronicle, 9 February 1901, p. 968. See also Rennell, Last Days, for a fascinating collection of reactions to her death from the length and breadth of the Empire, Chapters 3, 9 and 11 and Index entries, p. 325.

[6] George Plumpetre, Edward VII, London, Pavilion Books, 1995, p.115, quoting from Esher's Journal after the Queen's interment, February 1901.

[7] Maurice V. Brett, ed., Journals and Letters of Reginald, Viscount Esher, vol. I, 1870-1903, London, Ivor, Nicholson & Watson, 1934-8, pp. 291-2

[8] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, letter of Esher to Davidson, 27 July 1903, pp. 4-6.

[9] Benson Diary, vol. 35, July/Aug 1903, p. 132; Esher Papers, 11/4, letters of 21 August 1903 and September 14 1903.

[10] E.F. Benson, Final Edition, London, Hogarth, 1988, p. 20.

> For the purposes of statesmanship, the useful historian is not the man of encyclopaedic mind, who can array vast masses of fact in proper order and sequence, but he who is able to open a lattice in the closed door of the past and let a ray of light illuminate some problem or some character of today.[11]

As historian William Kuhn observed: 'For Esher historical research was less a matter of finding out what happened in the past than a political tool in the present.'[12] Esher saw his role as that of providing a set of materials which in combination could provide a template within which people could construct an image of Queen Victoria, to reassure them about their past and to serve as a model for their future. These differences of perspective, although not great, were significant. There were no firm guidelines written down for the initial selecting of materials, nor for the form of the book, although Esher and the Archbishop did discuss a scheme for the book comprising two volumes, of 'copious extracts tacked together by notes or explanations' taking Lockart's Life of Scott as a model.[13] The first written account of the format for the book did not emerge for two more years.[14] Consequently, there were some disagreements, and these were dealt with in a gentlemanly manner, using cultural understandings of inclusiveness and exclusiveness, social status and decency, all with great subtlety, as practised within the gentlemanly networks of the nineteenth century.

5.1 Preparing the Ground and Clearing the Air

Both Benson and Esher came to the editing work as published authors, but their ideas about research and their experience of it differed significantly. Before they had even commenced work on the editing, the ideas and practices of gentlemanly scholars and writers came into collision with the protocols of the Court. Benson came to realise that Esher was first and foremost a courtier, and the editorship was secondary.

Esher had established some familiarity with published and unpublished correspondence between the Queen and some of her Ministers in writing the book,

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[11] Reginald M. Brett, Footprints of Statesmen, London, Macmillan, 1892, p. 17.
[12] William Kuhn, Democratic Royalism. The Transformation of the British Monarchy 1861-1914, London, Macmillan Press, 1996, p. 72. Kuhn also quotes the Esher point of view above.
[13] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, letter of Esher to Davidson, 27 July 1903, pp. 5-6.
[14] Esher Papers, Churchill Archives, Churchill College, Cambridge, 11/4, Esher to Benson (copy), 25 August 1905. Published in full in M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, pp. 101-2.

The Yoke of Empire.[15] Benson's experience of writing the 'Life and Letters' biography of his father, biographies of other people, and from his conversations with various writers, made him aware of the many problems and questions associated with locating the materials. When George Prothero told him that there were a large number of letters written by Queen Victoria to Lord Panmure in private hands,[16] it occurred to him that the letters written by Queen Victoria at the Royal Library at Windsor Castle may only be a small proportion of the total, as many others could similarly have been retained by the recipients and their families. Although there was a tradition that letters from the monarch should be returned upon the death of the addressee,[17] many were retained as family treasures and in family papers. Benson may have even remembered some held by his own family,[18] so he reasoned there must be many more throughout Britain and the empire.

With this in mind, Benson made a tentative suggestion to Esher that perhaps some efforts should be made to locate and inspect such letters.[19] Benson consciously sought to present as much of the Queen's personality and life experiences as possible through the documents, more so than Esher. He was hopeful of being able to show many sides of the Queen – the more facets that could be presented, the more complete the perception of the whole.[20] At this stage, he aimed to provide as full a picture of the Queen as possible, by assembling an extensive archive upon which to draw.[21]

Esher apparently gave a negative response to Benson's suggestion which provoked a spirited defence from Benson. His letter shows not only the language of deference he employed in addressing Esher, but also the passion with which Benson approached the work. It is quoted in full:

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[15] R. Brett, The Yoke of Empire. See reference to this in a letter from W.E. Gladstone to Esher, 2 January 1907, in M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. I, pp. 199-200.
[16] Esher Papers, 11/4, Letters from A.C. Benson to Lord Esher, September 14 1903.
[17] Sheila de Bellaigue, 'The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle', The Court Historian, vol. III, no. 2 (1998), p. 16.
[18] Benson Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, London, and Benson Deposit, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
[19] Esher Papers, 11/4, Letter from A.C. Benson to Esher, 14 September 1903.
[20] Metaphor of prisms and facets is taken from Barbara Tuchman, 'Biography as a Prism of History', in S. B. Oates, ed., Biography as High Adventure, Boston, University of Massachusetts Press, 1986, pp. 93-103.
[21] The Royal Archives were not yet established at this time. Prince Albert had instigated a scheme of cataloguing correspondence, but the Volume of material produced in the forty years since his death had

> Eton,
> Sept 17, 1903.
> My dear Esher,
> Many thanks for your letter. Of course it would be absolutely impossible for direct application to be made, as from the King, to the holders of the letters, thus risking a refusal. But I should have thought that a notice in the papers couched in general terms would have avoided that contingency, and at the same time given the possessors of interesting and valuable letters the chance of putting them at the disposal of the Editors. The notice I mean might run as from you or even myself and say that the Editors would be much obliged if anyone possessing letters or papers bearing directly upon the period would communicate with &c ...
> It would be a great pity if people who were willing to lend interesting documents – and there must be many in existence – were not invited to do so. I do not myself see any strong objection to this course. It commits no one to anything, it is in no way undignified and it risks nothing while at the same time it gives possessors of valuable documents a chance of putting them at our disposal.
> It also safeguards those who are responsible from the criticism of incompleteness which may be made if no opportunity is given to people, who would have been quite willing to do so, to send in such documents. But I say all this merely from the point of view of a biographer, who is anxious to let all possible material [be admitted] – and I would add that the national and historical importance of the book justifies even more care than usual in this respect.
> But I need hardly say that I shall entirely acquiesce in the wisdom of whatever the King decided.
> Ever yours,
> Arthur Benson.[22]

Benson's diary entry concerning this incident moved from a tone of confession, to rage, then self-consolation:

> I have made a small *faux pas* by suggesting that we should insert a notice to ask for letters. Of course it is the only thing to do if you want to get a good biography – but he [the King] won't hear of it, says Esher ... the idiotic pomposity of monarchs! I must not forget that Esher though very pleasant & a real friend to me, will not hesitate to sacrifice me & throw me over at any moment. He cannot play except for his own hand; & I may be quite sure that if there are any disagreeable responsibilities to take or any harsh things to say, I shall be represented as saying them – I don't think I mind.[23]

On the same day he wrote to Esher: 'I quite understand. My suggestion was made simply from the point of view of a professional biographer, anxious to lay hands on all available material. But I quite realise that there are other considerations of

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overwhelmed his system. For details see Robin Mackworth-Young, 'The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle', Archives, vol. XIII, no. 59 (Spring 1978), pp. 115-30, and de Bellaigue, 'The Royal Archives'.

[22] Esher Papers, 11/4, 17 September 1903.

[23] Benson Diary, vol. 39, 25 September 1903.

counterbalancing importance.'[24] This combination of gentlemanly acknowledgment of form, deference, self-criticism, professional pride and a tacit acceptance of their relative positions of status and age, became the foundation for the working relationship over the duration of the publishing of Queen Victoria's letters. But from time to time, Benson was impelled to test these established boundaries and usually he found that very little of the elasticity used in judging gentlemanly behaviour was available when court protocols were being challenged, even by gentlemen.

5.2 Recruiting the 'Typewriter' and the Other Technocrats

Benson expected the work to commence promptly but this was not the case, so, in October 1903, in order to move things along a little, albeit subtly, he asked Esher to organize a visit to the Round Tower at Windsor Castle where many of the papers were housed. [25] From his first visit he was fascinated.[26] Already it looked to be 'an enormous collection' but he was dismayed at seeing 'a great deal of German ... Fancy such things as all the love letters to the Prince Consort in one volume', he wrote in his diary. He was instantly seduced by the sentimental and historical associations of the material and by the setting of working in the Round Tower. On this same visit he and Esher chose workrooms and furniture, and then Esher took Benson to see the Prince Consort's bedroom – 'all his things – uniforms, walking sticks, the bed he died in; which the Queen kept in a room next to her own, which no one else visited. A strange mausoleum ... even the palms laid on his coffin, and casts of his hand and foot...'. After this visit to the Castle, Benson felt a connectedness with the task: 'I hope and pray that I may be allowed to do the work there and do it well ... and that I may be serene and patient.'[27] His prayer for serenity and patience was needed – he was delayed from starting the work for four more months, and he did not bear the unsettled interlude well.

During this time Benson was invited to social events at the Castle on several occasions. He was never a simpering Royalist; but always an astute observer. He was

[24] Esher Papers, 11/4, 25 September, 1903.
[25] ibid., 9 October 1903.
[26] Benson Diary, vol. 40, 14 October 1903.
[27] ibid.

pleased to be greeted by Esher as 'Dear Colleague', and relished the 'courtesy and kindness shown to me by many, particularly Sir A. Bigge', formerly Private Secretary to Queen Victoria.[28] Benson instinctively began building networks with the courtiers. He visited the Castle on several other occasions when 'summoned' by Esher. After one such visit, he railed in his diary: 'I am not, by the way, going to pose as the humble hack – only let me get my foot in ...' The entry then described his long wait for Esher (in the company of Esher's adolescent son, Maurice). Whilst he waited he had a conversation with Fritz Ponsonby, son of the former Private secretary to Queen Victoria, which Esher later cautioned him over. 'I don't quite understand the politics of this visit', Benson mused, alluding to his growing awareness of Esher's propensity for powerplay.

During this visit Benson also had a discussion with Lord Knollys, the King's secretary, which was interrupted by the first telephone call Benson had ever witnessed. Benson included in this diary entry a vivid account of the telephone conversation between Lord Knollys and a gentleman at the Foreign Office, including pauses for the inaudible responses! The account is remarkable in that it shows how acutely Benson observed and recorded such interactions.[29] But Benson frequently described a sense of unease when he found himself in a social situation such as this one, eavesdropping on a conversation or intruding on some intimacy and subsequently in his reading of the Queen's letters. Even when the situation was not of his own making, such as being present when the telephone rang, he immediately felt that he may have been in some way responsible. There are some resonances from his childhood of his father's unfair blaming of him, and these same feelings of guilt surfaced in his dreams, such as in the examination of the royal mouths.

During this interval, Benson recruited staff to assist with the editing tasks. He negotiated the services of a Miss Bertha Williams, whom he quaintly referred to as 'the typewriter',[30] who could copy 'from 6,000 – 10,000 words a day' and would 'give us all her time for £100 for the year'. She was, he told Esher, 'good at copying

[28] Benson Diary, vol. 42, 20 November 1903. At this time Arthur Bigge was Equerry to King Edward VII and Private Secretary to the Duke of York, later King George V. Paul H. Emden, The Power behind the Throne, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1934, p. 214-5.
[29] Benson Diary, vol. 42, 22 November 1903.

really difficult work and moreover is quite discreet'.[31] This estimate, which may have been made by either Benson or by Miss Williams herself, sounds optimistic, given the logistics of the typist having to decipher handwriting of various persons, held in tightly bound volumes!

In the interim, Benson read widely on the nineteenth century and met with scholars and writers.[32] Precisely what he read was not detailed by him, but two published texts were mentioned during the editing of Queen Victoria's letters: the first was the five volume 'Life and Letters' biography of the Prince Consort, by Theodore Martin, [33] and the second was Sidney Lee's 1902 biography of Queen Victoria, based on Lee's 111-page entry for the Dictionary of National Biography, which was published just nine months after her death.[34] Benson did not state expressly that he had read either, although he criticised Theodore Martin's work for its length and its readability. Esher visited the elderly but robust Martin at his home in Windsor in 1908. They discussed both Martin's biography and the corroboration given it by the Benson and Esher volume.[35] Martin's biography had been published by Smith, Elder and Co.. George Smith had initiated and financed the publication of the DNB, in 1885 which was edited by Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, then a recent graduate of Baliol College, Oxford. Lee was known to both Benson and Esher. He was a member of the Athenaeum Club and his work as editor of the DNB would have ensured that he was known to both editors.[36] It would be surprising if Benson and Esher had not read his biography of Queen Victoria and it would be highly unlikely if they did not use it as a source for the chronological details of the Queen's life, but again there is no specific record to serve as proof.

Before the work began in earnest in February 1904, and in consultation with Lord Goschen, the Bishop of Hereford and others, Benson engaged the services of Dr

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[30] This may have been a more generally used term. It was used in reference to the typist employed for the Dictionary of National Biography, ten years earlier. Gillian Fenwick, Women and the Dictionary Of National Biography, Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1994, p. 4.
[31] Esher Papers, 11/4, 21 October 1903.
[32] For example, Benson described having several conversations with Maurice Hewlett, the historian. Benson Diary, vol. 35, July/Aug 1903, p. 132.
[33] Theodore Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, 5 vols, London, Smith, Elder & Co, 1875 ff.
[34] Sidney Lee, Queen Victoria. A Biography, London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1902.
[35] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, Esher Journal, 5 March 1908, pp. 291-2.
[36] Gillian Fenwick, 'The Athenaeum and the Dictionary of National Biography', Victorian Periodicals Review, vol. XXIII, no. 4, Winter 1990, pp. 180-8; see also Fenwick, Women and the DNB, p. 3.

Eugene Oswald, as a researcher. But, he told Esher, on first meeting, although he found Oswald to be 'discreet, cautious and competent ... I think he is rather an old slow-coach. However, I will spur him on'.[37] But after a fortnight he wrote in his diary: 'Dr O. is my bugbear just now. What I want is a rapid searcher who will frisk out a few salient extracts; but he goes fumbling along.'[38] Later, Benson also sought the services of German and French language experts, Mr C.C. Perry and Mr G Hua,[39] and of the 'shining light of Modern History at Cambridge', J.W. Headlam, to check all the 'historical statements'.[40] Each of these appointments had subsequently to be authorised by the King.

In February, before the editing began, Benson visited Lord Esher in London where they decided the thing to do was 'simply to attack the papers and find out what they are'. The next day, Benson was taken to Windsor and given a key to the safe.[41] But no firm decisions were recorded by either of them concerning topics for inclusion or exclusion. Over the next days, Benson's spirit dipped and soared. February was to be a difficult month for him. He began to feel some regret at accepting the editing task because he seemed 'more tied down than ever', but part of the problem was that he had left Cambridge to come to Windsor to commence the work, but for reasons not of his making he was unable to begin. 'I am (not unnaturally) rather depressed & miserable just now ... I want to get settled into regular ways ... I seem to have no end of small ailments.'[42] This is very much a combination of Benson's anxious personality, his hypochondria, his dislike of uncertainty and loss of routine.

Three days later his enthusiasm was restored. He went to the Castle and found the room which had been prepared for him. He was captivated by the 'quaint' interior of the Tower –

[37] Esher Papers, 11/4, 10 November 1903; 10 January 1904.
[38] Benson Diary, vol. 47, 20 February 1904.
[39] Esher Papers, 11/4, 21 October 1903. Esher papers, 11/5, 16 July 1906.
[40] ibid., 20 March 1904. Walter Headlam, then at King's College, Cambridge, had been Benson's Junior at Eton.
[41] Benson Diary, vol. 47, 9 February 1904.
[42] ibid.

> ... odd passages with oak arches and an area of open space in the centre ... My own room is a big room hung with Hogarth engravings and good furniture – a white chair with pink satin on wheels was used by the Queen. I did not use [the room] today as it was not ready, but worked in the strong room and went through an interesting volume of Melbourne's letters – beginning with one on the morning of the Accession. His writing is very hard to read. It was odd to sit in this big room, all surrounded with shelves, with the deep embrasure filled with ferns ... The wind roared and the rain lashed the windows. I was amused and happy.[43]

Although the next day was Saturday, he returned to read more of Melbourne's letters. However Sunday brought:

> a very bad hour of despair on waking, about the book. I had roughly catalogued the volumes on Saturday and found that there were about 460! and out of this we are to make quite a little book. *Que faire!* And how am I to know what is interesting and what is not – However my course is at present: to go ploughing on with the papers & then decide – So dear Parratt said to me today.[44]

Sir Walter Parratt was Master of the King's Music and organist of St. George's Chapel, Windsor. He had composed the music for one of the Mausoleum verses written by Benson, and was a great friend and mentor to Benson.

Benson found himself enjoying the view of the Long Walk from the Tower, with its row of elms, and he included a drawing of it in his diary.[45] He even felt that he began to 'see the light – to issue a volume at a time, and to cut out a definite subject. It is the thing to do. Hope returns'.[46] Benson's mood swings from confusion to despair and then resolve were in direct contrast to Esher's character. Frequently the resolution arrived at by Benson had little chance of success, being ill-formed and premature – and doomed to lead to further despair. Throughout the editing process, Benson seemed to 'get a rush of blood' that the task was nearing completion, only to be confronted with some other obstacle to be overcome, for example, when bundles and boxes of letters surfaced from among other materials in the Royal Library or from scattered rooms throughout the Castle. But at least by mid-February Benson was relieved to be able to record something resembling a daily routine in his diary, and perhaps he felt a little 'Royal' himself!

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[43] Benson Diary, 12 February 1904. That Benson found Lord Melbourne's handwriting difficult to read will be comforting to those who similarly have struggled to decipher the script themselves!
[44] Benson Diary, vol. 47, 13 and 14 February 1904.
[45] The elm trees suffered from the Dutch elm disease and had to be cut down in 1945. They were replaced with horsechestnuts and a row of deciduous trees. Henry Farrar, Windsor Town and Castle, Chicester, Phillimore & Co., 1990, p. 114.
[46] Benson Diary, vol. 47, 15 and 16 February 1904.

> I get to the Castle by 10.30 and I am let in by one of my faithful henchmen. It astonishes me to find how pleasant the Castle servants all are. Then I go to the Strong room to select a few volumes for upstairs; see what Miss Williams is doing: and then begin work. I write a letter or two, and then just read and select. The work is very interesting and time flies past...lunch...walk...tea at 5.00, work till 8.00 reading and writing. I suppose I do about 6 hours work a day, but very concentrated work. I see a glimmer of light with regard to the book now. One must have a brief introduction & plunge into the letters at once – There is certainly no lack – & plenty of good footnotes must be appended to explain people. I have written a sketch of much of my Introduction already.[47]

But despite this report Benson was far from settled. He was lodging at 'Mustians', the home of A.C. Ainger, in Eton,[48] and Benson had 'the strange experience of mingling with old friends who were no longer colleagues, of meeting daily boys over whom he no longer had any responsibility, and of living the life of a *revenant* ...'.[49] Ainger had tutored young Regy Brett at Eton and remained his scholastic guide and mentor throughout his adult life, and Esher had sent his two sons to Ainger's house upon their entry into Eton, in the 1880s and 1890s.[50] Ainger was a link in the gentlemanly networks of Benson and Esher. As February went on, Benson felt much worse: 'I have not had such an acute attack of depression since I was at Cambridge, in 1882. It dogs me all day – though I can work and read it is all without savour or intellect.'[51] James Lees-Milne stated baldly that Benson was a hypochondriac; Newsome was more sympathetic referring to his mental condition as manic depression; for Benson it was a 'neuralgia of the soul'.[52]

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[47] ibid., 20 February 1904.

[48] ibid. 'We generally dine out or have some people here; then two or three colleagues [from Eton] drop in, but alas! to play billiards! Conversation is impossible; so I sit in a chair and read by the fire ... how I hate the game. I go to bed about 11.30 but do not sleep well. I suppose it is all rather a strain.'

[49] David Newsome, On the Edge of Paradise. A.C. Benson: the Diarist, London, John Murray, 1980, p. 136. Benson Diary, vol. 47, 9 February 1904. Newsome, pp. 137-142, expounds very perceptively on the unsettling aspects of this arrangement for Arthur, especially in relation to the boys of his old house and the return of his 'heart-hunger'. The detailing of his new 'routine' above shows his relief in re-establishing an ordered way of life, although any routine is apt to be disrupted.

[50] James Lees-Milne, The Enigmatic Edwardian. The Life of Reginald, 2nd Viscount Esher, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1986, p .6.

[51] Benson Diary, vol. 47, 23 February 1904.

[52] Lees-Milne, Enigmatic Edwardian, p. 177; Newsome, Edge of Paradise, pp. 6-11, viewed Benson's complaints within the burden of manic depression, which amongst many other things intensified feelings 'of infirmity and loss', and induced an ultrasensitivity to all manner of sensations and perceptions. Benson's description was given in Newsome, Edge of Paradise, p.10.

On finding the large number of volumes of letters to be gone through, Benson soon realised that he would need an assistant.[53] His old Eton friend, Hugh Childers, offered to work for him for £100 per year and to be at Windsor four days per week.[54] Through Esher, Benson was relieved to obtain the King's approval of Childers's appointment,[55] as he knew that Esher favoured a soldier being appointed. Childers, as well as being a close friend, was 'a good worker' and knew political history well.[56] He had been at Eton with Benson in the 1870s, and was the son of Hugh Culling Eardley Childers. In the 1840s Childers Senior had gone to the newly established colonial outpost of Melbourne; he was instrumental in founding the University of Melbourne in 1853 and was its first Vice-Chancellor.[57] Upon his return to England in 1858, he contested the seat of Pontefract in Yorkshire and was in the House of Commons for twenty-five years, serving in the first Gladstone Ministry as First Lord of the Admiralty (1868-71) and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1872-3). During the second Gladstone Ministry he was Secretary of State for War (1880-2) and Chancellor of the Exchequer (1882-5) and during the third Ministry, was Home Secretary (1886).[58] Hugh junior was one of four children born after the family's return to England.[59] In the Editorial Note to the first volume of the Letters of Queen Victoria, Hugh Childers is recognized for his 'ungrudging help in the preparation of the Introductory annual summaries, and in the political and historical annotation, as well as for his invaluable co-operation at every stage of the work'.[60] He supported Benson as a friend and they holidayed together in 1905.[61] Childers proved to be reliable and efficient.[62]

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[53] Davidson Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, 520/195, Letter from Benson to Archbishop Davidson, 19 February 1903 [sic 1904]. This letter is, I believe, wrongly dated '1903'. It should be '1904'. The context for this letter, drawing on Benson's diary entries for 12 March 1903 and 12 March 1904, confirms this.
[54] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 2 March 1904.
[55] ibid., 4 March 1904.
[56] ibid., 10 November 1903; Benson diaries, vol. 48, 3 March 1904. Hugh Childers always had an interest in obscure cases of criminal jurisprudence. At Benson's suggestion he compiled these cases into a volume which was published posthumously Hugh Childers, Romantic Trials of Three Centuries, London, Lane, 1913. The book was inscribed to Benson.
[57] Jean Uhl, A Woman of Importance. Emily Childers in Melbourne, 1850-1856, Melbourne, self-published, 1992, p. 82.
[58] Chris Cook and John Stevenson, eds, The Longman Handbook of Modern British History 1714-1987, London, Longman, 1988, pp. 50-60.
[59] Uhl, Emily Childers, p. 293.
[60] Arthur C. Benson and Viscount Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, 3 vols, London, John Murray (1907) 1908, vol. I, p. v.
[61] Benson Diary, vol. 74, September 1905.
[62] ibid., vol. 49, March 1904.

It is possible that in suggesting a soldier for the position of assistant, Esher was hoping to have his son, Maurice, appointed. Maurice, by this time, had served in the Coldstream Guards for twenty months during which time his father was 'pulling every string for his advancement' and was still obsessive in seeking Maurice's company.[63] In Lees-Milne's assessment, Esher had an inflated view of Maurice's abilities. Considering the broad range of tasks undertaken by Childers, had Maurice been Benson's assistant, the book may never have been published. Benson had described Maurice as 'stolid and rosy'[64] and the tone of the editors' correspondence on this issue of an assistant suggests some coolness, although later Esher complimented Benson on Childers and the progress of the work.[65]

Benson agonised over the accommodation for everyone and their work conditions. He worried that some of the rooms had insufficient light for long hours of reading.[66] There were logistical problems concerning keys and access to the Round Tower. On one occasion, he found himself locked in and he had 'a ten minute walk around the whole Castle' in order to find someone to let him out![67] Further, there were major interruptions to the work when the King visited Windsor. Benson discovered that the work rooms they were using were required to accommodate the King's retinue.[68] However, Benson was relieved when the work had begun: 'I hear the typewriter clicking next door', he reported with satisfaction.[69]

5.3 'Are there any more letters...?'

For the process of editing it was necessary to have as much of the material as possible to hand at the outset. As there was no one repository for materials aside from the limited storage space in the Royal Library (there was no Royal Archive at that time) they soon realised that ascertaining what material was available was going

[63] Esher Papers, 7/16, Esher to Maurice Brett, Closed family letters. Also see Lees-Milne, The Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 148-9, pp. 152-3.
[64] Benson Diary, vol. 47, entry for 27 February 1904.
[65] ibid., vol. 65, 11 February 1905.
[66] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 14 January 1904; 24 March 1904.
[67] ibid., 15 February 1904.
[68] ibid., 21 October 1903; 10 January 1904; 14 January 1904; 2 February 1904.
[69] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 15 February 1904. Miss Williams was busy 'copying' the Melbourne letters. Benson claimed to Esher that Melbourne spelt his name without the 'o' – 'Melburne'. This spelling wasn't adopted for the Volumes and I've seen no other mention of it.

to be difficult to achieve comprehensively. In addition to the 460 volumes which Benson had 'roughly catalogued' on that first day, additional boxes of letters were continually being turned up: Benson reported to Esher that Mr Vaughan, the bookbinder, found letters of Queen Victoria's eldest daughter, Empress Frederick in a box on the landing by his window; and other boxes were discovered in a stone vault under the Grand Staircase.[70] The Staircase is situated in the Upper Ward of Windsor Castle,[71] an adjacent building, not even in the Round Tower itself. There were other such instances. More letters of Queen Victoria's uncle, King Leopold of the Belgians, arrived for Benson just as he was getting the earlier letters straight which was 'rather a ghastly business. Are there any more papers among those which came out of the Library which concern us?' he asked Esher.[72] The problems of incorporating recently located materials were already so acute that by the first week of March, 1904, Benson readily conceded, 'I am very grateful now the King vetoed applying for private papers'.[73] Thus, even at this early stage, there was little hope of any previously unknown material being included in the published volumes, but that did not mean that no more materials were going to surface.

Initially, the editors made other decisions such as to ignore 'a very large series of volumes entitled GERMANY, which we decided would be foreign to our purpose', and, rather strangely, the papers of the Prince Consort. Later Benson had second thoughts and 'glanced through 2 or 3 volumes and found some very important and interesting things ... so [he told Esher] I am working through them'.[74] Following this discovery, Benson suggested that although it would cause some delay, they must also go through the Prince Consort's papers, 'as it seems he annexed drafts and letters [of Queen Victoria's correspondence] for his collection. Both editors admired Prince Albert's 'industry and intelligence'.[75] There is no evidence in the diaries and letters of the editors indicating that they requested materials from other archives or European Courts at any time or that they even thought of doing so. They had a demonstrably Anglo-centric perspective.

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[70] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 29 February 1904.
[71] Owen Morshead, Windsor Castle, London, Phaidon Press, 1951, pp. 42-3. Morshead was Librarian to King George VI.
[72] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 12 March 1903 [sic 1904- see footnote 53].
[73] Benson Diary, vol. 48, 3 March 1904.
[74] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 5 October 1904.

There were logistical problems concerning access to materials. Vaughan, in addition to being the bookbinder in the Library, was the custodian of keys to various locked volumes of letters which he would only hand over to Benson on Esher's express orders. Benson had to ask Esher's intervention with the 'incorruptible Vaughan' on several occasions. For example:

> Would you kindly authorise Vaughan to let me have the series of the Queen's letters to the King of the Belgians, of which I already have 7 vols? ... Also would you instruct him just to see that there are no papers dating back earlier than 1844. We shall soon have the material made up; and it would be a bore if a new lot were to be plumped on the scales![76]

This was not the solution to these problems. The availability and accessibility of new material, and the discovery of other collections of letters, were to recur all the way through the enterprise. A further obstacle was the uncertainty of the role of Princess Beatrice as literary executor of Queen Victoria's estate, and consequently of material which was known only to her. Access to the Queen's Journal was an additional issue for the editors to consider.

5.4 The Editing Procedures

After the bound volumes and unbound packs of letters were located, they were catalogued, and then Benson made selections from the letters. These selections were typed, or 'copied' as Benson called it, and assembled into chronological order. From these typed copies Benson and later, Childers, had to identify the individuals mentioned and to contextualise the contents of the letters in order to judge their significance.[77] Benson then made selections and excisions, before they were retyped to be sent to Esher for further editing.[78] Following Esher's scrutinising of the letters, Benson agreed to 'go through the whole thing again very carefully and follow your

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[75] ibid..

[76] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 5 March 1904. No letters of correspondence between Victoria and her half-brother, Charles were printed. The extent or existence of that correspondence is unknown to me.

[77] Hugh Childers was responsible for a large amount of this important work of identification and led directly to the 'Royal Pedigrees' episode described in the next chapter.

[78] This process I have discerned from the correspondence which I have to hand between all of the parties. It becomes apparent at a later stage that Hugh Childers was also doing many of the tasks Benson was doing in the early stages. See Esher Papers, 11/7, Miscellaneous Correspondence, Letters from Hugh Childers, 30 June 1905, 27 July 1905, 1 August 1905 concerning vol. III, and from recently discovered files in the John Murray Archives, Albemarle St. London, CB 1, 2 and 3. Esher sought Childers

directions'[79] before the letters were retyped as necessary and sent to John Murray for printing. These proofs were later made available to Rt Hon. John Morley (after 1st Viscount Morley of Blackburn) and Lord Stamfordham in preparation for the King's eye and a final editing before publishing.

During the preparation of the letters for publication, Benson, Esher and John Murray the publisher, referred to the whole project, the first series comprising three volumes, as 'the book', and to each volume – I, II & III – as individual parts of the book. The time frame for the book of 1837-61 was established from the start, but the final schema of dates for each volume had to be altered several times. When published, Volume I began with an introductory section on the origins of the Houses of Hanover and Coburg and details on Victoria's early life and family members, followed by correspondence from 1821 to1843; Volume II contained correspondence from 1844 to 1853; and Volume III 1854 to 1861.

A major constraint which had to be ascertained as early as possible was the space available to the editors. In the early stages some edited sheets were sent to John Murray to be typeset and printed in order to 'estimate' the number of words to a page and to indicate how much further editing was required. For example, in March 1904, the prolegomena and letters up to May 1838 were estimated to take up 357 pages, which was 'in great excess of our space'.[80] In the published work, May 1838 is reached by page 113 in Volume I, which means that the original editing in this case was further reduced by almost 70 per cent. It may have been reduced by an even greater percentage if the thirty pages of introductory material were not included in the original estimate requested by Benson. These tabulations of years and pages at this early stage, did not prevent later shuffling of material between the volumes. This practice of having the edited material printed was invaluable not only with regard to space allocation but also for page setting and size and choice of typeface. The 'small print of the Creevey page was not at all agreeable' to Benson, and he discussed with Esher the size of the page and typeface from specimens sent by Murray.[81] The editors needed to be able to add footnotes; they had to consider the huge process of

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assistance in the editing of the volumes of Queen Victoria's Girlhood Journals, which were published in 1912.

[79] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 17 May1904.

[80] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 31 March 1904.

constructing the index; and to have some idea of how the volumes were evolving toward the complete book.

Most of the footnotes were researched and added by Hugh Childers; he also contributed some of the introductory passages outlining the major political events of each year, which Benson referred to as the Prolegomena. It was this Introductory writing that Benson wanted to submit to J.W. Headlam at Cambridge for his expert opinion. When Esher expressed surprise at the suggestion, Benson placated him, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, by writing: 'It is essential that this part should be impeccable, and I have therefore arranged that he should criticise ... such an arrangement is necessary, even for such gifted amateurs as ourselves!'[82] Esher and Knollys always became anxious whenever 'outsiders' were to be given any access to royal material, such was the importance which they placed upon knowledge and secrecy.

5.5 Should or Could Queen Victoria's Journal be Included?

Within a week of commencing work in the Round Tower, Benson had realised that being able to include excerpts from Queen Victoria's Journals would 'infinitely strengthen and enrich' the book, and he consulted Esher to this effect. Esher suggested Benson ask Randall Davidson, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to approach Princess Beatrice. Benson sought excerpts from Queen Victoria's Journal to be included, but what he would find even more helpful would be to have access to the diary in order to aid his contextualising of the letters, 'as sometimes a single sentence from an entry which [even if it] cannot be published may make a situation clear'.[83] Esher did not ask Beatrice himself, but advised Benson to consult Davidson. In a letter marked 'Private and Confidential' and displaying his typical tact, Davidson replied:

[81] ibid.
[82] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 24 March 1904.
[83] Davidson Papers, 520/195, Benson to Davidson, 19 February 1904.

> I have seen Sir Fleetwood Edwards. I find that the books in question are to the best of his belief under the unfettered and personal control of the Princess Beatrice and of her alone. He is, after his wont, so cautious that I am afraid that whatever influence he has would not be exercised in favour of letting any other eyes than those of the Princess herself rest upon the pages of those Diaries. But when the Princess comes back from Egypt I shall hope to see her and to talk the matter over, and you may rely upon my doing what I can.[84]

Edwards had been Extra Equerry and Keeper of the Privy Purse to Queen Victoria in the years before her death in 1901, and he and Beatrice's brother, Arthur, Duke of Connaught, were co-executors of Queen Victoria's will; Beatrice was her Literary executor.[85] Edwards's duties as Assistant Private Secretary to the Queen, from 1878-95, and Beatrice's secretarial duties on behalf of her mother during those same years, would have meant a close working association between them, especially in relation to the Queen's papers. Rather surprisingly, within two days of receipt of Davidson's letter, the editors had decided to construct the book on the supposition that the diaries would not be forthcoming.[86]

It would seem at this point that Esher had not actually read any of the diaries. In 1906, he described to his son, Maurice, a visit of Princess Beatrice to Windsor when 'for the first time, all the boxes of the Queen's private correspondence' were opened. He requested permission to read the Queen's Journal of 1837, her accession year, and of 1838, containing her account of the coronation. 'Now that I have looked at them I want *all* the volumes to that date. There are about 25 of them to 1838 ... It is a pity to attempt a biographical notice of those years without having read the most authentic record of them.'[87] Only two extracts from Queen Victoria's Journal were subsequently included describing the days of her accession, and of her coronation.[88] A 'reminiscence' written by the Queen in 1872 was also permitted to be incorporated into the introductory chapters describing her life in her pre-journal years.[89] It is a pity Esher did not support Benson more vigorously in March 1904 when he sought access to Queen Victoria's Journal, as together they may have had some success; they may even have prevented

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[84] ibid., 520/199, Davidson to Arthur Benson, 27 February 1904. Sir Fleetwood Edwards in 1904 was Sergeant-at-Arms, House of Lords and Extra Equerry to His Majesty, King Edward VII, Who Was Who, 1897-1916.
[85] Jerrold Packard, Victoria's Daughters, New York, St. Martin's Griffin, 1998, p. 316.
[86] Davidson Papers, 520/200, Benson to Davidson, 29 February 1904.
[87] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. 2, Letter to Maurice M. Brett, 3 January 1906, p. 133. This comment was, it seems to me, pertinent to the whole enterprise, not just of the early years.
[88] Benson & Esher, vol. I, 20 June 1837, pp. 75-6; 28 June 1838, pp. 120-5.
[89] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. 1, pp. 10-6.

the burning of the original diary by Princess Beatrice. There is no indication of Benson or even Esher ever having been given the opportunity to peruse the Journal *in extenso*.

5.6 Benson's Editing Ethos: 'There should be a little spice of triviality preserved to give a hint of humanity.'[90]

The process of editing was in place: Benson would do the preliminary selecting and editing of the letters, then have them typed by Miss WilliaMs These sheets were sent to Esher who would mark them for further editing by Benson. They would be retyped to ensure that no unsuitable material would be seen by the publisher, John Murray, or be seen by the typesetters.[91] In some instances this retyped material was looked at again by Esher, to be cut further, and sometimes he discussed material with Lord Knollys.[92] Given that each volume amounted to more than five hundred printed pages, it was something of a logistical nightmare for Benson and Murray to keep track of typescripts and edited typescripts and edited proofs.

Esher frequently sought to 'pull rank' over Benson. When there were French or German passages or phrases to be translated, Benson asked Hua to verify phrases in the proofs. Esher forcefully directed Benson that the proofs must not be given to Hua without his approval.[93] This seems to have been unnecessarily cautious. Hua had previously been employed by the Royal family to instruct the two sons of the Prince of Wales, Princes Eddy and George (later King George V) in French. In 1883 he had accompanied them on a trip to France and Switzerland.[94] Perhaps Esher was not aware of this.

Benson was astounded at the rapidity with which Esher did his editorial work. On the first such occasion, Esher had collected 'all of their work to date' on Friday

[90] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 16 May1904, upon receipt of Esher's first suggested excisions.
[91] On one occasion a telegram was sent to Murray to locate material which contained deletions which was inadvertently sent to the printers in Edinburgh and had to be retrieved. On another occasion one part of vol. I was accidentally retained with vol. II and proved difficult to locate. John Murray Archive, CB 2, 17 August 1906.
[92] Esher Papers, 10/49, Esher to Knollys, 1906-7, for example,18 August 1906: 'I am on the eve of finishing the proofs of the 2nd vol. Shall I send them to you or direct to Bigge? When will those of the 3rd Volume be ready?'
[93] Esher Papers, 11/5, 16 July 1906.
[94] Theo Aronson, Prince Eddy and the Homosexual Underworld, London, John Murray, 1994, p. 60.

afternoon.[95] Benson's diary entry conveyed some resentment but concluded tongue-in-cheek:

> Went up to the Castle & got there very hot. Esher came in as if he had nothing in the world to do – cool, graceful, charming. I showed him our materials and he carried it all off in a tin box. What a luxury to have had none of the work of selecting &c but to read all this interesting stuff through merely excising and omitting. He is a very fortunate prince![96]

On Monday when Benson returned to the Castle he found that Esher had already returned the box. He was flabbergasted! Benson's diary entry continued: 'so we [Childers and Benson] determined to take it up to Town [to John Murray to be estimated] ... As we drove up to the Albemarle St. door, I said to Childers, "This is very nearly historical."' [97] But there was an anticlimax – Murray was at lunch, so Benson went off and had his haircut. History had to wait and be made a little later in the afternoon!

As Archbishop Benson's son, Arthur could not have a minute of idle time: on their way up to Town in the train, he examined Esher's editing changes. He wrote to Esher that same day: 'I quite agree with your suggestions except in one or two very minute points. There should be a little spice of triviality I think preserved to give a hint of humanity. This applies to about three harmless excisions...'.[98] There was to be much more debate about excisions before publication.

5.7 The King's Anxieties

Esher's response to Benson's plea must have conveyed the suggestion that the excisions were far from 'harmless' and even that they were based on the King's objections. 'Why has H.M. become alarmed?' Benson asked Esher. 'Has anyone been talking? There is plenty to omit, but I don't want it to become a colourless and official book. That would be losing a great opportunity.'[99] Esher was much more cautious about what should be available to the public. Benson already felt a certain vexation on this point. Such angst was to intensify periodically throughout the

[95] Benson Diary, vol. 52, 14 May 1904.
[96] ibid., 16 May 1904.
[97] ibid., 14 May 1904.
[98] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 16 May 1904.
[99] ibid., 17 May 1904.

publishing enterprise. At this time Benson recorded in his diary: 'The King seems to have taken fright, according to Esher; has been cautioning him that there is to be nothing private, nothing scandalous, nothing *intime*, nothing malicious.'[100] If there had been a document of guidelines for the selecting and editing of his mother's letters, some of the King's anxieties could have been assuaged. But his concerns about scandal and malice continued, as did those of Esher. During the following weekend, Esher visited Benson:

> [Esher] ... said that he must warn me once more, & I must warn Childers against any indiscretion – that we had better not say anything even about having seen private papers – speak of State Documents only. He thinks the King nervous and fussy about it all. – I expect someone has been talking. He says he has not told the King how private some of the papers are. I was able to reassure E on that point. I said, 'They are private – but they are not confidential exactly as a rule – there is nothing of which, if I were an unscrupulous man I can make any use of to exploit blackmail.' [sic] Esher said that he had formed a favourable opinion of Childers & his discretion from the interview. Then he, in talking about other matters said a thing which surprised me: 'I hate scandal,' he said, 'and unkindness – I think one of the greatest sins there [is,] is to speak as people do about other people & give pain – We must set an example in this respect in the book.' This was said with a vehemence which surprised me in Esher. I should have thought that he would have been rather of the opinion of the man who said that he didn't see how scandal could be condemned because it was built up on one of the most sacred of things – TRUTH – and built up by the most beautiful of things – IMAGINATION.[101]

There is a sense of defiance in Benson's account of the conversation. His clever witticism quoted at the end of the entry suggests that he knows of some scandal about Esher and about King Edward and some of the irregularities in their lives and is surprised at the vehemence of their responses.

Meanwhile, the editing proceeded. Benson frequently used agricultural metaphors describing himself at the tasks of editing: 'ploughing'; 'hewing'; 'slashing and hacking'; 'bright sun, westerly wind worked at Castle ... I worked savagely, cutting like a backwoodsman.'[102] (Was there a resonance of A.E. Houseman's *A Shropshire Lad*?)

The typed drafts were sent between the editors and to the publisher, but keeping track of the various parts of the manuscripts of the three volumes continued to have its

[100] Benson Diary, vol. 52, 17 May 1904.
[101] Benson Diary, vol. 52, entry for 23 May, 1904. The incident occurred on 22 May.
[102] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 4 June 1905; Benson Diary, vol. 52, entry for 22 May 1904, occurred on 19 May 1904, p. 40.

challenges.[103] Esher moved between his three addresses – Windsor, London and the Highlands, as well as frequently accompanying the King; Benson moved between Eton, Cambridge, and his mother's home in Sussex; Childers and Murray were a little more predictable, but material was sent to them whilst on holidays. As the editing moved along, especially in 1906-7, there were more sets of documents in varying stages of editing being sent to designated addresses, only to find the designated recipient had moved to another abode. The King's readers were also having copies sent to them, and Benson and Murray were anxiously awaiting the return of them. Much of the correspondence between the editors and Murray during 1906 and 1907[104] was related to trying to track down corrected typescripts, trying to identify corrections and editing marks, and then to gain the King's permission to allow printing to proceed. Occasionally there was some despair at keeping track of the paper chase.

During the time of the editing, Esher maintained many other positions and was active on various committees. All of these committees involved not only scheduled meetings but many conversations, letter-writing and report reading and writing. Benson was often surprised with the rapidity with which Esher read the proofs of the edited letters, making recommendations for further excisions. On one such occasion Benson wrote, somewhat disingenuously: 'What a wonderful person you are to be able to do so much so quickly.'[105] Due to the plethora of activities and commitments, it is not surprising to find that Esher's Journals have few details of the editing of Queen Victoria's letters.

Benson's main distractions, apart from his hypochondria and the other books he published during this period, were his Fellowship at Magdalene College (to which he had been elected on 8 October 1904), his unsuccessful nomination to the Provostship of King's College, Cambridge in January 1905 and the decision of whether to apply for the Headmaster's position at Eton. In the aftermath he was still unsure what was his 'work' in life.[106] The Queen's letters did take a large portion of his time and energy and he relied on scholars and friends to bolster his spirits and confidence. Once when Lord Goschen, Bishop of Hereford, visited for Sunday lunch and Benson took him up to the Castle:

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[103] Esher Papers, 11/4, 13 November 1905.
[104] ibid., 11/5; Benson diaries vol. 81, 82 ff; Correspondence re. Queen Victoria's Letters, John Murray Archives, Files CB2, CB3, CB4.
[105] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 16 May 1904.

> We went to the Round Tower; his delight and interest were very inspiring – 'Holy Ground – the inner shrine of an empire's history,' he said in the Muniment room. He seemed to like everything – and his enthusiasm inspired me afresh with a wish to do this great work nobly. It did me real good to talk to so wise & tender & ardent a spirit ...
> I think I was beginning to look upon this great book too much in the light of a mere bit of literature. It is more than that; & I feel that my talk with the Bishop has thrown a new light upon it. His emotion in the presence of the records gave me the right kind of thrill.[107]

Benson's reflections in his diary and letters are an invaluable source for tracking both the partnership and their work procedures. Benson's biographer, David Newsome, characterised the editing as 'uncongenial work', 'tedious work', and 'going no distance towards satisfying his immediate literary ambitions'.[108] Perhaps he has accurately characterised Benson's feelings. At different times Benson did refer to the task as tiresome. For example, in a letter to Edward Horner in October 1905 he wrote: '... and the Queen's letters will be a very heavy business for sometime to come…'.[109] But in a large collection of reflections in his diary and letters, this was the strength of negative comment on the editing work. In his correspondence with Murray and Esher, Benson was frequently enthusiastic and delighted by the work, but true to character, this varied.

During the whole process of the selecting and editing, John Murray was frequently consulted by Esher, Benson and Childers. He frequently gave very perceptive advice and played a vital part in the production and quality of the volumes. In the year of 1892, John Murray assumed the reins of the company upon the death of his father. He moved his family from their large Wimbledon home, Newstead, (now the site of the Wimbledon Centre Court), to 50 Albemarle Street.[110] Arthur Benson visited him many times throughout the four years in which the book, Letters of Queen Victoria, was in production.

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[106] Benson Diary, vol. 67, 6 April 1905.
[107] ibid., vol. 49, 28 March 1904 .
[108] Newsome, Edge of Paradise, pp. 4, 86.
[109] Benson Deposit, Family Correspondence, Bodleian Library, Benson 3/55, Letters from ACB to Edward Horner 19 November 1904 - 13 August 1908, 17 October 1905.
[110] Detail taken from Chapter 16 of Humphrey Carpenter's forthcoming commissioned history of the John Murray publishing company. I am grateful to Humphrey for sharing the delights of Murray research with me.

Chapter 6

<u>The Letters of Queen Victoria</u> (1907, 1908): John Murray, the Publisher and the Production of the Book

John Murray IV, seated, and his brother, Hallam c. 1900.

Picture courtesy of John Murray, Albemarle Street, London.

6.1 The Publisher – John Murray

By the early twentieth century, the publishing firm of John Murray was well established in London. It was founded in 1768 after John MacMurray purchased the Fleet Street business of William Sandby.[1] His son, John Murray II, succeeded him in the business, and in addition to running the business very successfully, he presided over a literary circle in the drawing room of 50 Albemarle St., which became famous. He established the Quarterly Review, and published such notables as Madame de Staël, Jane Austen, Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott.[2] The publishing house continued to thrive, and its direction was overseen by another generation of Murrays – John Murray III who in 1836 produced the first of the famous Handbooks for travellers, some of which have remained in print. In one of publishing's serendipitous moments, John Murray III published the first editions of Charles Darwin's On the Origins of Species and Samuel Smiles's Self-Help on the same day in 1859.[3] However, when John Murray IV succeeded his father in 1895, the company was not in such robust shape.

John Murray IV was born 8 December 1851,[4] just six months before Lord Esher's birth. His mother was the daughter of an Edinburgh banker. He was educated at Eton and at Magdalen College, Oxford, and he maintained connections with both of these institutions. His son followed him to Eton and it may have been through this link that Arthur Benson first came to know John Murray.[5] Murray was a member of the Athenaeum Club in Pall Mall of which his grandfather had been a founding member.[6]

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[1] Colin Clair, A Chronology of Printing, London, Cassell, 1969, p. 115. Clair believed that he dropped the 'Mac' due to the unpopularity of Scots in England at the time.

[2] Ben Harris McClary, ed., Washington Irving and the House of Murray: Geoffrey Crayon Charms the British, 1817-1856, Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1969, pp. xxxix-xliv.

[3] Ian Norrie, ed., Mumby's Publishing and Bookselling in the Twentieth Century (6th Edition), London, Bell & Hyman, (1930), 1982, p. 29.

[4] Obituary, The Times, 1 December 1928, no page number, John Murray Archives, 50 Albemarle St., London.

[5] See Benson's letters of 12 and 13 May 1898, 17 April 1902, 10 November 1902, 7 March 1903. Benson's letters to Murray are held at John Murray Archives. To this point in time I have been unable to locate Murray's letters to Benson, but fortunately, letterbook copies exist of many letters which have recently been found and are available in the John Murray Archives.

[6] Francis Gledstanes Waugh, Members of the Athenaeum Club from its Foundation, Privately printed, 1900, p. 99. Murray's grandfather offered the complete range of all his publications to the Club to form a library. The library was further developed by the policy of members being invited to present their own publications to the library (p. 65). Under Rule II of the Club men who gained a special reputation in their fields could be invited to become members, writers included (p. 165). F.R. Cowell, The Athenaeum. Club and Social Life in London, 1824-1974, London, Heinemann, 1975, p. 90, quoted one defender of the rule saying: 'The philistines may be assured that the present cash value of the books in the Library ... now

Arthur Benson was elected a member in December 1903, and some of the meetings concerning the editing of the Queen's letters took place at the Athenaeum.[7] Murray was an active philanthropist of various institutions in London: the Hospital for Sick Children in Great Ormond Street where he served on the committee for more than forty years; various committees and professional organisations to do with publishing and printing; of literary and geographic societies; and of Eton College and Oxford University. He was a magistrate and a Freeman of the City of London. He built and maintained an extensive network of gentlemanly links, which involved a massive daily correspondence.[8]

When John Murray IV took over the firm he made a point of including in his lists 'a judicious selection of new novels' and a range of paperbacks aimed at attracting the ever-increasing number of railway travellers.[9] In such innovations and by the introduction of new methods of book production Murray 'infused the firm with new spirit' and in the ten years between 1898 and 1908, a time which coincided with the publication of the first series of the Letters of Queen Victoria, the business doubled.[10] He published Benson's very successful The Schoolmaster – A Commentary on the Aims and Methods of an Assistant-Master in a Public School in 1902. Throughout this year there had been both social visits to Eton by John Murray and his wife, and a spirited correspondence between Benson and Murray.[11] Following the success of The Schoolmaster, Benson offered his store of manuscripts to Murray. Many were refused, but several were subsequently published including The House of Quiet and later, Thread of Gold.[12]

The buoyant atmosphere in the publishing house was picked up by Benson during his first visit to Albemarle St. to discuss the Queen's Letters:

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exceeds that of all the other assets of the Club put together: the building, the furniture, the investment pool of stocks and shares, and the wine and spirits in the cellars.'

[7] David Newsome, On the Edge of Paradise. A.C. Benson: Diarist, London, John Murray, 1980, p. 123.

[8] Although there exists an extensive archive of his papers, there has been no substantial biography written on John Murray IV to date. Personal communication from Virginia Murray, Archivist, John Murray Archives.

[9] Frank Arthur Mumby, Publishing and Bookselling, London, Jonathan Cape, (1930) 1934, p. 363.

[10] ibid..

[11] See for example Benson's letters of 17 April 1902, 10 November 1902, 7 March 1903, and those in the John Murray Archives.

[12] The House of Quiet (London, John Murray, 1904) was published under the pseudonym of John Tait, and the correspondence from Benson was written in the third person, sometimes rather glibly, as if

> I went off to see Murray ... He was evidently both touched and pleased at my coming to him ... I liked sitting in his big, dingy panelled room; and being treated with the respect due to a distinguished author, Mr Justice Kekevitch being kept waiting until I was done.'[13]

This was the first time in history that the letters of a sovereign of England had been offered to the general public; it was an important publishing event.[14]

John Murray was influential on all aspects of the book production – the size of book, the page size, the typeface, line spacing and cover design. His brother, Hallam, was responsible for the illustrations. John Murray even made suggestions to the editors concerning content or oversights, some of which were adopted. One instance was as early as six months into the selection process. Murray observed to Benson that there had been no letters from the Prince Consort included in the initial selections sent for printing, which included the material from the period of Albert and Victoria's courtship and marriage. John Murray felt the omission of Albert's letters suggested 'a want of cordiality and reciprocity' on his part.[15] The Prince Consort's papers were subsequently included in the selecting process, and by Christmas 1904, Benson could report to Esher that he had been through all of those papers up to December 1861.[16] However, none of the letters written by Albert during this period were included, only some later memoranda.

There are several possible reasons for this. Perhaps they expected readers to consult the five-volume biography of Albert by Theodore Martin or Grey's one-volume Early Life of the Prince Consort,[17] however these volumes contained letters from other people about Albert but surprisingly few letters written by him.[18] Another possibility is to do with the standard of English Benson and Esher required in the letters. When Esher suggested to Benson that a letter of the Belgian Minister to St. James, Sylvain Van De

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Benson was passing on the requests of Mr Tait! Thread of Gold (London, John Murray) was published in 1905. Both had several reprints.

[13] Benson Diary, vol. 35, 31 July 1903.

[14] From a brochure published by John Murray in 1996 containing a brief history of the company. No author given, p. 7.

[15] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 11 July 1904.

[16] ibid., 13 December 1904.

[17] Lieut-General the Hon. C. Grey, The Early Years of HRH the Prince Consort, London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1867; Sir Theodore Martin, The Life of HRH the Prince Consort, 5 vols, London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1875-80.

[18] One excerpt is given in Martin, vol. I, p. 46. When Albert travelled to Coburg in 1844 following the death of his father, he wrote daily to Victoria, see Martin, vol. I, pp. 206-12. None of these were included by Benson and Esher.

Weyer, (coincidentally, Esher's father-in-law) should be included, Benson replied: 'It is an interesting letter – ... [but] the English is not impeccable. For these reasons I think we had better not include it.'[19] It is unlikely that Albert's letters were rejected on the same grounds. The letters from Victoria to Albert, throughout the courtship period, were written in a mixture of German and English. In the Letters, a system of italics for the English portions and standard type for the German portion was adopted.[20] This system could have similarly been applied to Albert's letters. So it would seem that the exclusion was a reflection of contemporary political anxieties, and Murray's criticism of imbalance in the Letters was justified.

As publisher, Murray had to keep the project on course and bring it to completion. There were many difficulties and constraints, some due to printing processes, others to do with the changing dynamics of the project, and yet others to do with the King having the power of veto. The technical problems and the costs from late changes to the manuscripts were particularly worrying to Murray. But the pride and prestige attached to the enterprise of publishing the Queen's letters cannot be understated. Throughout the life of the project, there was great enthusiasm between the editors and John Murray, as well as anxieties.

6.2 Illustrations for the Volumes

By the end of the nineteenth century there had been a rapid development of the technologies not only of printing but of reprography, the art of pictorial reproduction.[21] In his essay, 'The Philosophy of the Eye', Asa Briggs describes the growth of photography throughout the century,[22] although without direct reference to photographic reproductions for books. There was increased enthusiasm for visuals in everyday life – in newspapers and illustrated magazines.[23] The Royal Collection of photographs and photographic equipment was begun by Queen Victoria and Prince

[19] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 30 October 1906.
[20] See A.C. Benson and Viscount Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, London, John Murray, note on p. 195 of the 1908 edition, p. 247 of 1907 edition.
[21] See Clair, A Chronology of Printing, pp. 129-67; John Feather, A History of British Publishing, London, Croom Helm, 1988, p. 134; Geoffrey Wakeman, Victorian Book Illustration. The Technical Revolution, Detroit, Gale Research Company, 1973, especially Chapters 4-7.
[22] Asa Briggs, Victorian Things, London, B.T. Batsford, 1988, Chapter 3, especially pp.116-41.

Albert in the 1840s. This enthusiasm is very evident in the correspondence between Benson, Esher and the Murrays, about the importance of plates and the quality of the reproductions in such a publication as Queen Victoria's letters. Careful consideration was given to the illustrations to be included in the volumes. As early as March 1904, Benson and Hallam Murray had drawn up an 'exhaustive list of all possible illustrations for Vol 1 – people mentioned in letters &c &c'.[24] Hallam Murray was keen to have photographs made of the portraits promptly as he was exploring various new technologies to maintain the quality of the printing and the reprography. Over the course of the project he was eagerly seeking out new technologies for both printing and book production and especially, for producing plates that would maintain the quality of the print for five thousand copies. Benson wrote to Esher:

> Saw Hallam Murray ... He showed me some new copperplates, by a new process. He is going very carefully into the question as to whether it will be well to use it. It is much more expeditious & much less expensive than the old – and the pictures he showed me are admirable. He is going however to get more specimens, & I will submit them to you ... .[25]

But more exuberantly in his diary for the same day, Benson recorded: 'Hallam showed me a new copperplate process. It has always before needed to be inked and pressed by hand. This does it by machinery. He told me that if they would adopt it, it would save £4000 in this book alone!!! That shows what a scale we shall work on ...'.[26] The men were all most impressed by the varying tints that were becoming available, ranging from 'old browns' to warm browns to 'hotter browns'.[27] In a climate of rapid development and improvements in the technologies of printing and reprography possibilities seemed to be endless.[28]

Efforts were made to choose paintings and photographs less well known to the public. The initial list of subjects made by Benson included Leopold, King of Belgians, Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, Lord Melbourne, Sir Robert Peel, The Duke of Wellington, Lord Aberdeen, Lord John Russell, Viscount Palmerston and Lord

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[23] See for example, David Vincent, Literacy and Popular Culture, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989.
[24] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 20 March 1904.
[25] For example, ibid., 11 September 1905.
[26] Benson Diary, vol. 74, 11 September 1905.
[27] Esher Papers, 11/6, John Murray to Lord Esher, 20 October 1905.
[28] For some examples of the developments for the ten years prior to publication of the Letters, see Clair, Chronology of Printing, pp. 165-70. For commentary on the climate of the new age, see Norrie, Mumby's Publishing and Bookselling, pp. 9-85, esp 15-6, and of the Murrays in particular, pp. 2-30.

Clarendon, as the people who were featured in the correspondence. The list was added to by Esher – another of the Queen, Lord Derby, Viscount Canning, Lord Dalhousie, Lord Raglan, Baron Stockmar, Duchess of Sutherland, Princess Royal and the Prince of Wales.[29] Photographers were dispatched to Windsor Castle, Buckingham Palace and other places beyond, such as Woburn Abbey, where the Duke of Bedford offered other portraits to the Murrays which they photographed as additional options for the book.[30]

Decisions had to be made concerning the pictures and captions to accompany them.[31] In the 1907 edition, there was a total of forty plates dispersed through the three volumes. In the cheaper 1908 edition, there were only sixteen plates. It may have been expected that the portraits chosen would have featured the *dramatis personnae* of the letters, and to a large extent this occurred. Some surprising omissions from the 1908 edition were Lord Melbourne and King Leopold, whose letters appear most frequently and who were of such significance to Victoria. Queen Louise of the Belgians was similarly excluded. Some of the selections would have been surprising to readers even one hundred years ago. For example, in the 1907 edition, Sylvain Van De Weyer, whose portrait was included in the third volume of the series, would not have been well known and there were none of his letters in the selection. He was the Belgian Minister to the Court of St James in the early years of Victoria's reign, and a close associate of Leopold and Stockmar, but perhaps his inclusion rested more on his being Esher's father-in-law![32] It can hardly be assumed that Benson was unaware that Van De Weyer's daughter was Esher's wife. Benson had exchanged books of poetry with Lady Esher. Perhaps it was an act of defiance on Benson's part to omit Van De Weyer's letter, and a counter act by Esher to have the King choose to include a portrait of his father-in-law.

There were three portraits of the Prince of Wales: alone, in a family group with three of his sisters and his brother, Alfred, and at his marriage. Curiously, there were no portraits selected of his three youngest siblings all of whom were born during the time span of the book. Both the Belgian Queen Louise's mother, Marie Amelie, the Queen of the French (in a portrait made in 1828), and Eugenie, Empress of France after 1849, were included. However, Feodore, Queen Victoria's half-sister, Dona Maria, Queen of Portugal, and Alexandrine, Duchess of Coburg, who all had a long correspondences with Victoria were not. The prominence given to the French Royal women is

[29] Benson Diary, vol. 74, 8 September, 1905.
[30] Esher Papers, 11/6, 28 December 1905.
[31] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 10 November 1905; 11/6, John Murray to Esher, 20 November 1905. All have some concerns with the selection of lettering on the plates.
[32] It is unlikely that Esher ever met his father-in-law. Van De Weyer is not mentioned in Esher's correspondence. Van De Weyer died in 1874, and Esher first met his daughter, Nellie, in 1875.

interesting. They were both very glamorous and would have appealed to Esher's ideals of beauty. The choices and the exclusions of the German women may reflect his preference for French culture. He had paid little attention to the female correspondence and so may have been unaware of its scope and its importance to Queen Victoria.

The portraits selected of Palmerston, Melbourne and of the Duke of Wellington were of handsome, young men. In an earlier publication of Esher's about Victoria and her Prime Ministers, the portrait he selected of Lord Melbourne was, unsurprisingly, of a beautiful adolescent boy, in high collar and smooth skin, reflecting Esher's pederastic, aesthetic taste.[33] It would have been more appropriate to have featured portraits made during their time as Ministers to the Queen in order to enable the readers to realise the contrast of youth and experience.

The process of the selection of the plates brought to the surface some underlying tensions concerning lines of demarcation. After consulting Esher, Benson sent to Lionel Cust, keeper of the King's pictures and also the Director of the National Portrait Gallery, a list of possible subjects, asking his advice as to 'which were the best pictures',[34] before the King's permission was sought for the portraits to be photographed. Unbeknown to Benson, Hallam Murray had suggested to Cust that Benson should be shown some of the portraits, hung in the private sitting rooms at Buckingham Palace and Windsor, with a view to a list being prepared for the King.[35] Cust sought permission to conduct Benson through the private apartments from Lord Knollys, the King's secretary.[36] Knollys 'consents, not very graciously' Benson recorded in his diary.[37] Trying to smooth things over, Benson wrote to Esher:

> Cust is very anxious that he should not be thought to have interfered. As matters stand he is at present engaged to take me to Buckingham Palace some day soon at 10 am ...
> Will you put this right on Monday? There is no necessity to visit Buckingham Palace in this solemn way, as if we were going to value for probate.[38]

Knollys complained to Esher of 'Cust's interference', and Esher summoned Benson to his room, managing to insinuate that it was His Majesty who was annoyed.

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[33] Reginald Brett, Yoke of Empire, London, Macmillan, 1896, p. 3, verso.
[34] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 20 March 1904.
[35] ibid., 11/7, Lionel Cust to Lord Esher, 20 March 1904.
[36] ibid..
[37] Benson Diary, vol. 48, 19 March 1904.
[38] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Lord Esher, 20 March 1904.

In a waspish manner, Esher referred to Cust as an 'awful meddler, always asking for things', and then artfully linking Benson with obviously inept Cust, he dispensed some advice: ' "No greater mistake," said E. smiling, "than to ask for anything in this world unless you are nearly sure to get it."'[39] Whereupon, Benson, having to distance himself from Cust, told Esher 'the whole story', conscious of his own shortcomings in managing to 'fall foul' of 'H.M ... thrice times already',[40] in the first six weeks of the editing work. Benson seemed to imagine that the King was actually consulted in these matters, but it is quite possible that this matter went no further than Knollys. Courtiers, especially Esher and Knollys, relied on this artful blend of language and demeanour. It ensured that Benson and such others were both increasingly unsure of protocols and unquestioning in their compliance, a climate perfectly suited for courtiers to conduct the life of the court.

The outcome of this affair was of substantial importance to the partnership. Immediately after their conversation, Esher, in an elegant display of power and *savoir faire,* airily conducted Benson down to the King's private rooms 'to see what pictures there were ...'. Benson soon forgot his discomfiture and was captivated:

> There are some lovely things. There is a little audience chamber of QV's fitted up so by Prince Albert with pictures and miniatures – very Victorian but such treasures. A row of heads of George III's children by Gainsborough. So strange to see those fussy, absurd, big, voluble men as graceful boys with low collars. The Dukes of Cambridge and Sussex are simply charming. Then to the Queen's rooms – such exquisite things and to the King's room where there is a Winterhalter of Queen Victoria with an unbound tress of hair – such a touching, *intime* thing – and a ludicrous Landseer where Prince Albert sits in a drawing room in shooting clothes, with the ribbon of the Garter and a table covered with hares, ducks and kingfishers. It is high day, but the Queen stands beside him dressed for dinner.[41]

The details of this visit are most revealing. It was important for Benson to see these very personal portraits at this early stage of the editing process. It is possible that he had seen very few, if any, portraits of Victoria as a young woman. His analysis of the 'ludicrous Landseer' is interesting for his critique of the dynamics between the young couple. He did not remark upon Vicky, the little Princess Royal, in the foreground of the picture happily playing with the dead birds shot by her father!

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[39] Benson Diary, vol. 48, 19 March 1904.
[40] ibid..
[41] Benson Diary, vol. 48, 19 March 1904.

The Winterhalter painting Benson described was the beguiling portrait of the young Queen with her hair down, her head tilted back, exposing her bare neck and shoulders. This portrait was commissioned in secret by Victoria for Albert as a surprise birthday present in 1843, in the fourth year of their marriage.[42] Seeing those portraits of the young Queen would have provided a sharp contrast to his memory of the little old lady in her widow's weeds and deep black bonnet. As on other visits to the Castle, Benson was struck by 'the heaping together of all this State and this treasure of beautiful and delicate things for the very bourgeois and unintellectual family that inhabits it. What is the use of the Queen [Alexandra] having the 10 best Gainsboroughs in the world in her sitting room. She would be quite contented with photographs', he snobbishly complained.[43]

In this episode Esher had firmly delineated their respective places in the Court, in what was a valuable experience for Benson in many ways. On an earlier occasion, whilst waiting to meet with Esher in November 1903, Benson had discussed with Lord Knollys and Fritz Ponsonby 'the shape of the book and its form', whereupon Esher had given Benson to understand he was not to undertake any discussions with such personages without his permission. Such were the anxieties about propriety and protocol, even these seemingly innocuous, gentlemanly conversations led Benson to understand that he 'mustn't do this kind of thing' without Esher's direction.[44] On the day of Esher's summons and Benson's viewing of the portraits, Benson, in a very human bid to restore his faith in himself, and his position in the grand scheme of things, concluded his day with: 'Wrote a snappish note to Cust ...'.[45]

The portraits had to be approved by the King, the captions verified as correct, and the engraving of the captions with name, title and artist completed.[46] Hallam and John

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[42] Queen Victoria's Journal, Royal Archives, Windsor, RA VIC/QVJ, 26 August 1843: 'I cannot say how delighted my beloved Albert was … the surprise was so great and he thought it so like, and so beautifully painted.'

[43] Benson Diary, vol. 48, 19 March 1904. Here he is referring to Queen Alexandra who was not known to be an art connoisseur, but was a very keen photographer.

[44] Benson Diary, vol. 42, 22 November 1903, pp. 19-23.

[45] ibid., p. 23.

[46] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, on Murray's behalf, 26 August 1906; 11/6 Murray to Esher, 25 November 1905; 28 August 1906; 8 November 1906. The album, or 'scrapbook' as Murray referred to it, is a very finely produced volume, with some annotations by King Edward VII in the margins. It is currently held in the John Murray Archives and I was delighted to have it shown to me by Virginia Murray.

Murray produced a fine album of photographs for the King's consideration,[47] which they despaired of ever having returned. In January 1906 Murray wrote to Esher:

> May I remind you that we have never received back the three photogravures, which were sent you to show the lettering which it was proposed to print beneath them? I think you were going to show the King. If we could have them back approved soon, I should feel greatly obliged, as I want to be getting on with the printing.[48]

They were very anxious to complete this portion of the printing. They had hoped to have the plates produced well before the final pressured stages of the publication of the book. However, even as late as July 1907 Murray was writing to Esher; the publication date was 26 October 1907!

6.3 The Curious Episode of the 'Royal Pedigrees'

John Murray was insistent that writers, recipients and named subjects within letters must be accurately identified by the editors. Hugh Childers, as assistant to Arthur Benson, performed this invaluable task. He drew heavily on his own political knowledge and on the networks of Benson and Esher. Trying to ascertain the identity of individual recipients, senders, or those mentioned in the letters was frequently difficult given that so many names were used repeatedly down the generations and amongst siblings' families. Identities were the central aspect of making sense of the letters. The editors, the readers and the King needed to understand who the writer was, who the recipient was, and the significance of others mentioned in the letter in order to decide whether it was of any particular importance in the life of the Queen, for political or personal issues. Without this knowledge, the task would be meaningless, and they would have no way to judge material to be intimate, irrelevant, peripheral, or to be potentially scandalous.

By 1904 the *dramatis personae* comprised an immense assembly. Victoria lived for eighty-one years, from 1819-1901. The subjects, recipients and writers of the letters comprised Royal family members, courtiers and aristocratic members of the Royal Household. They could also have been from every other walk of life within Britain and the Empire: people from all institutions – politics, churches, education, military, the universities and fields of the arts; from manufacturers and magnates to chartists

[47] ibid., Murray to Esher, 17 October 1906.

and from Lords to the lowliest villagers. In any material considered for inclusion, identification was necessary, but frequently impossible. Even though the decision was taken that the material for the selections was limited to that written before the death of the Prince Consort in December, 1861, this did not limit the implications of the letters to only those generations. Victoria and others referred to members of earlier generations and their contemporaries, and the descendants of those individuals might have been offended by the comments, or the information. The editors and the publisher needed to have a thorough knowledge of who was who.[49]

Even the identification of Royal family members was not readily achieved due to geographical distance and incomplete records. Although Victoria and Albert shared one branch of their family tree, that of the Saxe-Coburg family, there had been seven children, all of whom married and produced children and by 1904, there were five generations who could need to be identified in the letters. On Victoria's Hanover branch of the family, there had been fifteen children, only five of whom had produced children, but by 1904 there were seven generations to consider. Although Victoria herself had something of an encyclopedic knowledge not only of her own genealogy, but also of most of the royal families of Europe and of the British and European aristocracy, it was soon made apparent to the editors that few members of the Royal family, like most other families, knew the names of their many great-uncles and great-aunts, or of their cousins. The correct identification was full of challenges and Hugh Childers's efforts unearthed a curious episode.

In July 1904 Childers submitted a list of names to Lord Knollys to ask for some Royal assistance in verifying spellings, titles, relations and dates.[50] He duly received a reply, via Esher, at Cowes with the King and his brother, Arthur, for the Regatta week:

> My dear Esher,
> I have asked both the King and [his brother] the Duke of Connaught who has been staying here if they could answer any of these questions, but practically neither of them have been able to do so.
> Knollys[51]

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[48] ibid., 10 January 1906.
[49] The proliferation of 'Life and Letters' biographies in the nineteenth century added to the impetus for the production of the Dictionary of National Biography, which was first published in 1882.
[50] Esher Papers, 11/7, Miscellaneous correspondence, 15 and 16 July 1904.
[51] ibid., 11/3, Royal correspondence, 2 August 1904.

Perhaps they were otherwise engaged.

No genealogical charts were available to the editors. In trying to identify all of the people mentioned in the letters Childers constructed some charts of his own and again, in January, 1905, asked for 'someone in the Royal Family to look at them', to help identify some individuals or note omissions.[52] He then intended to have them corrected and 'verified by the King' but neither the King, nor Esher on his behalf, made a response.[53] Twelve months later in an admirable show of patience, diplomacy and tact, Childers wrote again to Esher expressing the hope that 'the pedigrees submitted a year ago to the King have not been lost sight of',[54] and he received the response that neither the King nor his two brothers could help. Whether John Murray envisaged including the charts in the book from the outset, or if it was a decision made as the complexities became apparent to everyone connected with the book, there is no documentation to show. At this point Esher came to think that the verification of the details was too difficult to enable such a chart to be included in the published volumes. Benson disagreed, arguing that although 'the relationships are very complicated ... there are a good many people who would be interested'.[55]

John Murray insisted that the pedigrees needed to be 'authoritatively verified' to enable them to be printed.[56] Childers was sent off to seek the advice of the College of ArMs The College comprises thirteen members of the Royal Household, twelve Heralds and their head, Garter, King-at-ArMs They are appointed by the Sovereign to be responsible for 'armorial, genealogical, ceremonial and other similar matters, [who are each] ... entitled to conduct a private heraldic and genealogical practice'.[57] After his visit Childers reported to Esher that Garter, Sir Alfred Scott-Gatty, 'deplored very much that the Royal Pedigrees had never been rended [sic] at the College of Arms since Geo III's time; a thing that could be done for about £10 or £15'. Childers expressed surprise that no official pedigree had been preserved. According to Garter, King George II had instructed the Herald to produce one, at the cost of £2000 but died before it was completed. King George III disavowed the debt and the Herald became bankrupt.

[52] ibid., 11/4, Benson to Esher, 8 January 1905.
[53] ibid., 11/7, Miscellaneous correspondence, 3 February 1905.
[54] ibid., 12 January 1906.
[55] ibid., 11/5, Benson to Esher, 21 February 1906.
[56] ibid., 11/7, Miscellaneous correspondence, 8 May 1906.
[57] Ronald Allison and Sarah Riddell, eds, The Royal Encyclopedia, London, Macmillan, 1991, p. 106.

Childers was shown the work of that Herald and was very impressed with its size and intricacy. This volume remains at the College of Arms in its splendid cover of velvet with gilt edging and binding, vellum pages, gold leaf painting and exquisite calligraphy.[58] Childers left the three pedigrees he had drawn up at the College and was told it would take a month to go into them.[59] Esher, upon having this story recounted to him by Childers, was extremely anxious about the possible cost, and even more concerned about the King finally authorizing such an arrangement. But within a week, in an ironic twist, Garter wrote: 'As to fees, of course, there will be none charged as we look upon it as a privilege to fulfil Royal commands free of all cost.'[60]

The record of the creation of the George III pedigree, now known as The Bath Book and held at the College of Arms, differs in some ways from the account given to Childers by Garter. The Herald, Sir George Nayler, was born in 1764, joined the College in 1792 and died in 1824. King George II died in 1760, so it was impossible that Nayler was commissioned to create the pedigree. It may have been commissioned by George III and disavowed by his son, George IV. There is even reason to question whether any sovereign actually 'commissioned' the chart. Upon joining the College, Nayler quickly developed the reputation within the College as an 'opportunist' and may have initiated the project himself.[61] But the document has been signed by King George III, his consort, Charlotte, and some of his children, so they must have known that the document was being produced – they are unlikely to have signed it if there was some dispute about payment. Alternatively, the dispute over the debt may have been during the Regency of George IV. There is no evidence of Nayler being declared bankrupt. One possible scenario is that Nayler commenced the work, showed it in progress to the King who signed it, but either he or his son, George IV, disavowed the debt when it was completed. As the debt was not paid, The Bath Book devolved to Nayler's daughter. She gave it to her brother-in-law, who later donated it to the College of Arms in 1964.[62]

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[58] I am very grateful to the archivist of the College of Arms, Mr Robert Yorke, for allowing me to have access to this sumptuous work of art and for assisting me in my research at the College.
[59] Esher Papers, 11/7, Childers to Esher, 16 May 1906.
[60] ibid., Garter to Esher, 31 May 1906.
[61] See Sir Anthony Wagner, Heralds of England: A History of the Office of the College of Arms, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1967, pp. 432-5; and The College of Arms, London Survey Committee, Monograph 16, 1963, pp. 63-5.
[62] The College of Arms, monograph, p. 64.

Unfortunately, the College has no documentation relating to these genealogical charts being verified or produced for publication in the Letters of Queen Victoria.[63] Nor is there any correspondence relating to the matter in the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle,[64] and the College of Arms contribution was not acknowledged by the editors in the publication. John Murray was happy to include four fold-out genealogical charts in the 1907 edition, but not in the cheaper 1908 edition. Some of the details of the Saxe-Coburg family were still being sought as late as May 1907, such as the clarification of names of people who were first cousins of Victoria. An example of this is a letter from Arthur Mensdorff, the son of Queen Victoria's and Prince Albert's cousin of the same name:

> My dear Esher,
> With reference to your letter of the 27 May I enclose here the dates of birth and death of my grandparents and my father and uncles. The two you asked for were Hager and Arthur Mensdorff. I marked their names with blue pencil. Alexander afterwards Prince of Diedrichstein was my father and the title of Diedrichstein is my eldest brother's now.
> My Grandmother Sophie was the sister of the Duchess of Kent and as such Aunt to Queen Victoria.
> Yours, Arthur Mensdorff[65]

Such were the complications for the English editors. Not all of their inquiries were quite so fruitful: several times Childers went to great lengths to ascertain the identity of a named subject in correspondence, only to discover the name referred to a pet!

6.4 John Murray's Many Rôles

The selecting, copying and cutting of the letters proceeded throughout 1905, 1906 and 1907. In their efforts to gain more space the editors decided to try to avoid including letters already published in the various 'Life and Times' biographies of Prince Albert, and those of the Prime Ministers, such as Palmerston, Russell and Peel.[66] At first they allowed more space between the lines of the Queen's letters than the others so that they would look distinctive. But in consultation with Murray, and in order to conserve space, they made all the line spacing uniform. Fortunately, this decision was taken relatively early in the process as it incurred the time and expense of all of the Queen's letters

[63] Ascertained by the Archivist, Mr Robert Yorke.
[64] Personal correspondence from the Registrar, Miss Pam Clark, Royal Archives, Windsor, 8 November 2001.
[65] Autograph Collection – Brett Family, Sydney Jones Library Special Collection, University of Liverpool, MS 2.89 (109). Letter from Queen Victoria's and Prince Albert's second cousin, Arthur Mensdorff (who worked in the Austro-Hungarian Embassy in London), 4 June 1907.

having to be re-set in type.[67] At this time they also opted to cut out a lot of introductory matter and to try to restrict themselves to a single-page summary of the year at the beginning of each chapter; and as time progressed, and space became even more constrained, they urged each other that the excisions must be 'fierce and stringent'.[68]

Murray's work in keeping the project moving along toward completion was very difficult. The progress of the publication was held up many times as the various proofs and 'revises' circulated between Benson, Esher, Childers, the typist, Murray and the printers, and on occasions, some sheets even disappeared. They tried to establish and then maintain a system where each individual used pencils of a particular colour on all sets of proofs for identification of excisions or restorations, but this was by no means foolproof. As Benson observed: '... in dealing with these papers which are now very complicated, it is not always easy to avoid some mistakes. ...'[69]

Murray oversaw the work of Benson and Esher as they sought to have the Queen tell her life which they had crafted through their selections, omitting and excluding topics and passages which were too private, potentially scandalous, trivial or malicious. The longest portion of time delays occurred when the proofs were sent to the King for permission to print. In November 1905, the revised proofs of Volumes I were first 'sent to the King', or rather taken to him by Esher, and Esher told Murray and Benson that he expected approval would take about a week.[70] From a logistical and commercial point of view Murray was already stretched. In Edinburgh he had the first two volumes set in type, comprising over twelve hundred pages; and although he had purchased extra type, there was still insufficient type to allow the third volume to be set up. They had to wait until the first volume was approved by the King to allow it to be stereotyped. Then that type could be broken up and re-used to set the third volume.[71] Volume II was in revised proofs but was still being worked on before being sent to Esher in July 1906. The third volume would still have to be edited down to the five hundred pages allocated for it

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[66] Decisions taken in letters: Esher Papers, 11/7, Childers to Esher, 30 June 1905; 11/4, Benson to Esher, 28 October 1905.
[67] ibid., 11/4, Benson to Esher, 19 September 1905; 26 September 1905.
[68] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 26 September 1905; 28 October 1905.
[69] ibid., 11/5, Benson to Esher, 14 January 1906.
[70] John Murray Archives, CB2, Esher to Murray, 10 November 1905.
[71] ibid., Murray to Benson, 10 November 1905; Esher Papers 11/6, Murray to Esher, 6 September 1906. These had been the circumstances which had exercised Murray since Volume I was first submitted for the King's approval in November 1905. He and Benson had been through the details many times. At this late stage, he was trying to both placate and assuage Esher in his characteristically, gentlemanly manner.

when it was printed into proofs, and then be submitted to the King for his approval. The King also had to make the final selection of the portraits, and to give his permission for them and for the captions.

For Murray, these delays produced several flow-on effects with regard to the Index and the foreign editions. The exacting and time-consuming task of constructing the Index could only be completed when the three volumes were paginated. Each change to the text meant a great deal of work to ensure that the Index was still accurate, and the Index entries for the third volume, at the beginning of 1906, remained to be done.[72] The American edition was scheduled to be published simultaneously with the British edition. Consequently the American publishers needed the corrected proofs before they could begin production; in order to fulfil copyright regulations the book had to be reset in America to qualify as an American edition.[73] The German and French editions had to be translated and typeset for simultaneous publication.

As the New Year came and went with no approval from the King, the whole enterprise was coming to have the characteristics of a nightmare for Murray. Benson's vivid and troubling dreams continued throughout these years, but he recorded some in this period specifically.[74] Murray and Benson both felt these delays acutely, as they marked time, month by month throughout 1906, waiting for the King's approval of Volume I, the portraits, and by mid-year, Volume II was awaiting his approval too.[75]

Obtaining the King's approval for Volume I was not the straightforward process Esher had led Murray and Benson to expect it to be. The King's approval rested very much on his perception of the contents of the volumes, and how those contents would impact on the Crown, the Royal Family, individual people and the politics of the day. Murray had to bear the brunt of the professional and financial anxiety whilst having very little influence on the contributing factors: the process of persuading the King to give his approval was shrouded in protocol and secrecy. The decisions about the inclusion and exclusion of materials were the domain of the editors, Benson and Esher.

[72] Esher Papers, 11/6, Murray to Esher, 26 August 1906.
[73] ibid., 29 August 1906.
[74] One example was Benson Diary, vol. 77, 22 December 1905.
[75] Correspondence between Murray and Benson throughout 1905-6 conveys their concerns repeatedly.

Chapter 7

The Scale and Content of the Book: 'The central figure moving through it all is that of the Queen herself.'

7.1 The Scale and Content of the Book from the Perspective of the Gentlemanly Gaze

Although Esher never intended that the book[1] would span Victoria's whole life, the format was based on the traditional 'Life and Letters' biographies which had become so popular in the nineteenth century, some of which had been published by John Murray. The 'Life and Letters' genre of biography was later to be pilloried by Lytton Strachey and other proponents of the 'new biography' of the early twentieth century,[2] before being appreciated anew by the end of the century.[3] David Cannadine, in a recent lecture in London, maintained that Queen Victoria herself, had 'effectively ... defined the genre' by initiating the five volume biography of Prince Albert which was published between 1875 and 1880.[4] The compilation of letters and autobiographical fragments, from which the author 'abdicated' to allow the subject to portray themselves with minimal intervention from the biographer,[5] was deemed to be the purest form of biography. This was exactly the type of book Esher aimed to produce when he wrote that he intended to let the Queen 'speak for herself'.[6] George Buckle, Disraeli's biographer who was later to edit the subsequent six volumes of Queen Victoria's letters, and John Morley, Gladstone's biographer and one of the King's censors for the Benson and Esher edition, have both been cited in recent studies as the foremost exponents of this type of biography.[7]

But this essential aspect of the definition, of allowing the subjects to speak for themselves, signalled some of the challenges of the genre: the 'voice' may have belonged to the subject, in this case the Queen, but the 'speeches' were chosen and

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[1] A.C. Benson and Viscount Esher, The Letters of Queen Victoria. A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837-1861, London, John Murray, (1907), 1908.

[2] Lytton Strachey, Eminent Victorians (Chatto and Windus, London, 1918), Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1986, Introduction.

[3] Christopher Ricks, Essays in Appreciation, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996, p. 201.

[4] Quoted from an edited version of David Cannadine's inaugural lecture as Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Professor of British History at the University of London, Times Literary Supplement, 23 January 2004, p. 11. Later published as 'From Biography to History: Writing the Modern British Monarchy', Historical Research, vol. LXXVII, no. 197 (August 2004), pp. 294-5.

[5] A.O.J. Cockshut, Truth in Life: The Art of Biography in the Nineteenth Century, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974, p. 17-8.

[6] Maurice V. Brett, ed., Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher 1870-1910, London, Ivor Nicolson and Watson, 1934, vol. I, p. 284.

[7] In his Foreword to Ruth Hoberman, Modernizing Lives. Experiments in English Biography 1918-1939, Carbondale, Ill., Southern Illinois University Press, 1984, A.O.J. Cockshut cites Buckle's biography of

edited by others. The editors did the selecting from an already restricted collection – from the material to hand, which their subject had either written or elicited, and which had survived.[8] Decisions about which items were initially consigned to paper, which documents were kept, the safety of their keeping, and their requisition or acquisition, could have been directed by the Queen, but were all dependent on the people who oversaw each of these 'offices' within the Court and within the holdings of families who had received letters from the Queen or her ministers. Benson's and Esher's selections for the book comprised yet another layer of exclusions and eliminations following all of these previous ones.

In keeping with the ideas of their times, Benson and Esher considered that the historical data when set out chronologically would dictate, or make self-evident, the shape and tone of the book.[9] This formula had been used by Benson earlier in his biography of his father. Conversely, it may explain why so many biographies depicted their predominantly male subjects, in Virginia Woolf's words, as 'very much overworked, very serious, very joyless;'[10] the main material of the 'Life and Letters' were the important, and thus, serious documents which they produced in the course of their positions in their occupations. One of the criticisms that came to be levelled at this format subsequently was that 'childhood tended to be neglected in such works', and the unconscious was 'totally ignored'.[11] This was an obvious shortcoming at a time when both childhood and the inner life were coming to be recognised as formative influences upon biographical subjects. Given biographers' reliance upon documents and the relatively few documents produced in childhood, or of an introspective nature produced in public life in adulthood, biographers began to realise they needed to cast their nets wider. Further, in collections of papers, there was a strong predilection towards the retention of materials written for particular purposes or particular events in the subject's life. These were deemed to be the most important in the eyes of the nineteenth-century

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Disraeli, comprising 6 volumes, and Morley's biography of Gladstone, comprising 3 volumes, as examples of this form of biography, which he referred to as 'mediated biography'.

[8] For accounts of documents and survival in Royal Archives, Windsor, see Sheila de Bellaigue, 'The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle', The Court Historian, vol. III, no. 2, 1998, pp. 10-20; see also Robin Mackworth-Young, 'The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle', Archives, vol. XIII, no. 59, Spring 1978, pp 115-30.

[9] This view is derived from a discussion by Hoberman, Modernizing Lives, pp. 16-8.

[10] Virginia Woolf's critique quoted in Hoberman, p. 3.

[11] Paraphrased from Cockshut, Truth in Life, pp. 17-8.

gentlemen: such documents were created to be preserved, and hence, more likely to be available to biographers.[12]

Victoria Clendinning argues that the sins in biographies of the nineteenth century tend to be ones of omission – what went into the biographies was severely censored by the authors, hence, 'the dreariest of these kinds of works read like an extended tombstone inscription ... '.[13] This hagiographic element was compounded by the fact that frequently literary sons, sons-in-law, nephews, admirers and intellectual protégés, and more rarely but increasingly, daughters, wives and nieces produced biographies as part of the fabric of social obligation, and as a way of profiting from the Life. [14] Certainly, Arthur Benson was always conscious of his writing being a way of increasing his income.[15] In addition to the author and the materials, the time in which the biography is written, or when the materials were assembled for a 'Life and Letters' biography influenced both the final product, and the questions the biographers and editors pursued.[16] This has been the case for the writing of biographies of Queen Victoria[17] and in the editing of her letters for publication.

The 'Life and Letters' as a genre within biography is 'now thoughtlessly underrated and misrepresented,' argues the literary critic Christopher Ricks.[18] These biographies (including that of Queen Victoria as edited by Benson and Esher, although this book could be said to be more 'Letters' than 'Life'), have served a valuable purpose: they put into the public domain vast numbers of historical documents, correspondence and memoirs which would otherwise have remained inaccessible for decades. Asa Briggs, in his essay on Robert Lowe, criticised A.P. Martin's 'official life' biography as ponderous and one-sided but he was grateful that Martin had included Lowe's

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[12] Cockshut, Truth in Life, pp.16-7.
[13] Victoria Glendinning, 'Lies and Silences', in Eric Homberger and John Charmley, eds, The Troubled Face of Biography, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1988, p. 55.
[14] Trev Lynn Broughton, Men of Letters, Writing Lives: Masculinity and Literary Auto/Biography in the Late Victorian Period, London, Routledge, 1999, p. 11.
[15] In 1905 he earned £391 from his books, though not all from his family biographies, and in the following year they rose astronomically to £3300. David Newsome, On the Edge of Paradise. A.C. Benson: the Diarist, London, John Murray, 1980, pp. 175 and 191.
[16] Paula R. Backscheider, Reflections on Biography, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 70.
[17] This was the conclusion of my Honours Thesis, 'The Biographies of Queen Victoria', LaTrobe University, 1993, unpublished.
[18] Ricks, Essays, p. 201.

'Memoir' in its entirety,[19] as this essential document had not previously been readily available to scholars and the reading public. Similarly, Briggs found that Benson's and Esher's selection of Queen Victoria's letters in Volume II gave 'the best overall picture of religion and politics of 1851' in a field for which, in 1954, 'there were few good studies available'.[20]

Although it is generally conceded that the weighty tomes of the genre made for heavy reading, the industriousness of the gentlemen editors, their large-scale accumulation and classifying of information and their fastidious attention to detail has been a godsend to scholars. Paul Kendell lists various series of biographies produced during this time (not all of which were of the 'Life and Letters' genre, for example, John Morley's English Men of Letters series,) and suggests that such industry 'had never been known before'.[21] Beyond the work of these editors and biographers there had to be a willingness of publishers to support these enterprises financially. This has rarely been addressed by historians, the exceptions being the subject of George Smith and his financing of the Dictionary of National Biography[22] and more recently, the commissioning of Humphrey Carpenter to write the history of the John Murray publishing house.[23]

Philip Horne recently reverted to the 'Life and Letters' format for his 1999 biography of Henry James, rather optimistically justifying his decision thus:

> The form, ... can offer the reader constant suggestive openings for interest in unobtrusive patterns of juxtaposition, recurrence and contrast, out of which fresh, unpredictable understandings may emerge. Above all, perhaps, it is to be valued as giving the first place to the writer's own words ... .[24]

In terms of the historiography of Queen Victoria, the Letters did allow some of these advantages, and the book was unique in its time – previously biographers had relied upon newspaper reports, the Court Circular, and earlier biographies. But an editor's

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[19] Asa Briggs, Victorian People. A Reassessment of People and Themes, 1851-67, Harmondsworth, Penguin (1954), 1975, p. 312.
[20] Briggs, Victorian People, p. 308.
[21] Paul M. Kendell, The Art of Biography, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1965, p. 109. Arthur Benson contributed a biography on D.G. Rossetti to this series. Benson Diary, vol. 25, 1 March 1903.
[22] Michael Erben, 'The Dictionary of National Biography and Aristo's Swans', Auto/Biography, vol. 2, No. 2 (1993), pp. 121-5. See also Gillian Fenwick, Women and the Dictionary Of National Biography, Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1994, p. 2.
[23] Personal communication from Virginia Murray, archivist at John Murray, and subsequent communications from Humphrey Carpenter.
[24] Philip Horne, ed., Henry James. A Life in Letters, London, Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1999, p. xvi.

work should not be 'unobtrusive'; it should indicate the gaps and silences in the materials otherwise readers are lulled into a false sense of comprehensiveness and wholeness. The systematic use of ellipses would be an obvious option, but there would be disadvantages. As Esher told Knollys: 'Few of the letters were published in their entirety.'[25] so the pages would have been peppered with ellipses, destroying the readers' confidence completely. Horne provided italicised comments and footnotes on almost every page to help the reader sustain the narrative, but by avoiding the replication of letters previously published, he necessarily increased the gaps. As Benson pointed out to Esher, if that was to be the case for them, he predicted that the editors would be forced to offer more of their own comments to make the letters comprehendible.[26] On the other hand, although the Letters of Queen Victoria was restricted to the first twenty-four years of her reign, by 1907 there were many volumes of letters of her Ministers (all published by different publishers).[27] Yet there is only one piece of evidence that any selected materials (in this case a Memorandum written by Prince Albert), were omitted because any of it had been previously published (in Martin's Life), and this seemed to have been discovered not through systematic checking but by a recollection on the part of Hugh Childers. [28]

For the Benson and Esher book, a chronological order of chapters with one year assigned per chapter was decided upon, in consultation with Murray. In keeping with the genre format Queen Victoria's childhood, comprising her first seventeen years, was compressed into fifty-five pages in the 1908 edition, (seventy-one in the 1907 edition), and this included many pages of details of her parents' families and their backgrounds. The following twenty-four years, from her accession in 1837 until Albert's death in 1861, occupied the bulk of around fifteen hundred pages. The dates in the title of the book, 1837-61, make no promise of any space being allotted to childhood at all. But the Preface does state that the book will provide:

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[25] RA VIC/W 30/131, Esher to Knollys, 30 December 1905.
[26] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 5 April 1904.
[27] In several letters the editors mentioned their intention to avoid replication: Esher Papers, 11/7, Childers to Esher, 30 June 1905; 11/4, Benson to Esher, 28 October 1905. Some of the publications included: the Hon Evelyn Ashley, The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston 1846-1865, 2 vols, London, R. Bentley & Son, 1879; Lord McMahon, Memoir of the Rt. Hon Sir Robert Peel, London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1856; Spencer Walpole, The Life of Lord John Russell, 2 vols, London, Longmans, Green, 1889; W. Torrens, Memoirs of William Lamb, Second Viscount Melbourne, London, Minerva edition library, 1890; G. Bloomfield, Reminiscences of Court and Diplomatic Life, 2 vols, London, Kegan Paul, 1883. The popularity of the genre, and the marketplace competition, is reflected in the range of publishers.

> just sufficient comment to enable an ordinary reader, without special knowledge of the period, to follow the course of events, and to realise the circumstances under which the Queen's childhood was passed, the position of affairs at the time of her accession, and the personalities of those who had influenced her in her early years, or by whom she was surrounded.[29]

The other chapters varied from forty to one hundred and ten pages in length. Each chapter was preceded by an Introduction which provided the reader with a summary of the political events of that year, although not all of those events were featured in the letters. To guide the reader, the editors provided a detailed Table of Contents, an Index and footnotes which identified people and events. James Lees-Milne, Esher's biographer and editor of several volumes of his own diary also published by John Murray, praised the editing work by commenting that the volumes were 'faultlessly edited' and 'the explanatory notes all that could be desired'.[30]

7.2 How Many Volumes?

Neither a schema for the book nor the criteria for selection were set out in writing at the beginning of the project, although some of these ideas would certainly have been discussed by Benson and Esher in their early conversations.[31] Such was the potency of the gentlemanly ethos, there was an unspoken expectation of mutual understanding of what should and should not be included. These crucial aspects of content only came to be articulated and written down in the course of the debate over what became a vexed issue, that of how many volumes the book should comprise.

The original idea, as discussed by Esher and Benson, was to publish letters written up to the time of the death of the Prince Consort in two or perhaps, three volumes.[32] When John Murray was consulted, he agreed, adding that, 'the materials should afford a general guide and be allowed to shape themselves ... to the best advantage'.[33] Two or three volumes would be readable by a general audience and hence, marketable, and as

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[28] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 6 March 1907.
[29] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, 1907 edition, p. viii; 1908 edition, p. iv.
[30] James Lees-Milne, The Enigmatic Edwardian. The Life of Reginald, 2nd Viscount Esher, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1986, pp. 178-9.
[31] Benson Diary, Old Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge, first discussion with Esher, vol. 35, 1 August 1903; & later for example, vol. 39, 25 September 1903; vol. 40, 14 October 1903; vol. 47, 9 February 1904; vol. 47, 27 February 1904.
[32] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher after his first visit with John Murray, 1 August 1903.
[33] John Murray Archive, CB1, Murray to Benson, 4 August 1904.

Benson said frequently: 'I so want the book to be read!'[34] But there was no discrepancy perceived by any of the men that the letters from Prince Albert's life of forty-one years should have filled five volumes, yet Victoria's correspondence for that same time period and as Queen Regnant, should be done in only half that number of volumes. Although it may have been Queen Victoria who insisted that five volumes could barely do justice to Albert's great works, there was no shortage of material to fill a similar number in her case. Indeed, it is more than likely that there was an even greater amount of material for these gentlemen editors to consider.

Benson frequently agonised over whether the series should be expanded, and although Murray did not feature in any of the subsequent discussions, both the King and Murray would have had to be persuaded about any additional volumes. But when Benson made his first visit to the Round Tower and counted over four hundred volumes of bound material from which selections were to be made, already two or three volumes had seemed to be too limiting.[35] He knew that in order to restrict the publication to even three volumes, would mean a large amount of interesting material would have to be rejected. After reading King Leopold's correspondence with the Queen for the first time, Benson described it as 'a tremendous acquisition – I really think that if I had been *au fait* with the whole thing I should have simply advised the publication of [this] correspondence ... It quite goes to my heart to dock it'.[36] A month later he again despaired of the huge amount of material which would have to be omitted if the 'two or three volumes' was the final decision.[37] At this time, Esher wrote to Lord Knollys (but not to Benson!) expressing the same anxiety, but he was still hopeful that the selection could be 'compressed' into three volumes.[38]

Benson, working at the Windsor coalface, felt impelled to submit an argument for the expansion of the project to four volumes. His letter to Esher spelled out several of his own ideas about the book and the editing processes to produce it, only two months since the commencement of the work proper:

> My dear Esher,

[34] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 13 January 1905.
[35] Benson Diary, vol. 47, 13 and 14 February 1904.
[36] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 12 March 1903 [sic 1904].
[37] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 5 April 1904.
[38] RA VIC/W39/41, Esher to Knollys, 3 April 1904.

> ... It will be a real disaster if the book is curtailed. I think it could be done in four volumes; but you will remember that [at the outset] I was very strong for two volumes. Since I have seen the collection I feel quite differently. I have no doubt that the interest aroused by the book will be very great indeed, and I think it can be averred that for each volume we produce, at least two could be produced without any diminution of interest.
> It might be respectfully submitted to His Majesty
> 1. That the interest of the book to a great extent depends upon the additional and vivid detail which it gives the historical and social events and the sidelights which it throws. To truncate the letters too much or to omit letters will be to deprive these episodes of much of their interest. One can't omit the important letters; but the events narrated by them are not always familiar, and it is by taking the letters all together that the interest of the book will be produced.
> 2. By producing the book volume by volume the grave objection to the 4-volume form is removed. People would find a 4 volume book, all of which appeared simultaneously, rather too solid, it is true – but not when the volumes came out one by one. I will answer for it that no reader of volume one, will be disappointed, or will not look forward with anything but intense interest to volume two.
> 3. It must be remembered that the letters are not like literary letters, where the style is the main attraction – the simplicity, the frankness, the good sense of many of these letters are a great charm – but the wide range of affairs and the inner knowledge of politics are the great points – & such characteristics can only be brought out by full reflections.
> If the smaller number of volumes is decided upon, the only way will be to give up any idea of [the correspondence giving] a connected history of the years – if that were done in 2 volumes, the letters would merely be a few frigid extracts – & we must instead just choose a few episodes arbitrarily and give them in full.
> It must be remembered that this is after all biographical material. If such a book as the Life of Mr G.[Gladstone] takes three volumes, what would an issue of illustrative letters have occupied.
> One other point – as it stands the letters to a great extent form their own comment; but if the book is made a short one, long introduction & notes will be absolutely necessary to explain the letters – & this in my opinion would be wholly a mistake. My idea is that we should efface ourselves as much as possible, only just giving enough explanation & comment for an ordinary reader to understand.
> This letter needs no immediate answer. But please let me know as soon as possible what is decided. ... In fact I simply don't think it can be done more briefly, though I quite appreciate the advisability of brevity.
> Ever yours, ACB.[39]

Benson referred to the book as comprising 'biographical material' and he seemed to be speaking very much as a professional biographer. He was overwhelmed by the size of the archive, and his biographer's imperatives were focussed on a public figure engaged

[39] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 5 April 1904 – one of the many times that one feels a great regret that the correspondence of Esher to Benson has not been located and was probably destroyed.

in 'historical and social events'. But he speaks as if he was without any personal engagement with Victoria 'the woman'; detached even, from 'the person' at this stage.

Esher began the project from a much more pragmatic and political standpoint – the need for a memorial, but not of monumental proportions! Initially, he thought, or hoped, that two volumes would suffice for 'the portion of the Queen's life with which we should deal',[40] and was reluctant to consider more than one further volume. By contrast, Benson, in his usual manner, vacillated – he did not always seek to have the series expanded. In January 1905 when the material for Volume I sent to Murray amounted to about sixteen hundred pages and Benson calculated at least a third of that material had to be cut, Benson's initial reaction was to expand to four volumes, but he followed this suggestion by saying: 'But I am myself strongly against this. The book will then become a standard work, a work of reference not a book to be read...'.[41] Yet six months later, Benson estimated the still prodigious amount of cutting necessary for each of the three volumes, then added, 'unless we do run to four vols'.[42] Every time a new collection of letters was found, Benson despaired of having to do still more cutting to those in their possession: 'vol iii must be reduced – by throwing out whole episodes, not by simply starving episodes or omitting detail...'.[43] At various points of time, he again questioned the decision to opt for three volumes rather than four, or even five volumes![44]

Such seeming inconsistency may have been a source of annoyance and frustration to Esher. On the 2 August 1905, and again on the 5 August, Benson reiterated to Esher his view that there would be too much cutting to condense the remaining material into Volume III, and suggested a fourth volume.[45] Esher may have chosen not to respond to yet another Benson letter on this point which led to Benson writing directly to the King on the 9 August 1905, asking for a fourth volume.[46] As Esher's friend and confidante, Lord Knollys alerted Esher to Benson's request:

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[40] Esher Papers, 11/3, Esher to Archbishop Davidson (copy), 26 July 1903.
[41] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 13 January 1905.
[42] ibid., 11/4, Benson to Esher, 2 August 1905; also 9 June 1905 and 8 July 1905.
[43] ibid., 11/5, Benson to Esher, 4 January 1906.
[44] For example, ibid., 11/4, Benson to Esher, 12 March 1903 [sic– 1904].
[45] ibid., 11/4, Benson to Esher, 2 August 1905; 5 August 1905.
[46] Reference was made in a letter from Knollys to Esher of a letter written by Benson on 3 August, a copy of which he enclosed to Esher. Esher Papers, 11/3, Knollys to Esher, 9 August 1905. Unfortunately, no

> It is evident from Benson's letter that if there are only three [volumes] much matter of interest will have to be omitted and this H.M. thinks would be a pity.
> ... I think the King was shaken about by Benson – I don't however think he [the King] has any strong views on the subject, and if you saw him, I have no doubt you would bring him over to your way of thinking – at the same time – if you do not consider that 4 volumes will be actually injurious to the sale of the work perhaps it had better be four, unless you like to wait and go through the material again.[47]

Lord Esher replied to Lord Knollys, setting out quite simply his view for the book:

> I want the letters to tell their own story.
> This they do.
> They exhibit:
> (a) the early training of the Queen by Melbourne and Peel
> (b) the 'coming of the Prince Consort'
> (c) the influence over him of the King of the Belgians and Stockmar
> (d) the growth of their [the Queen's and Prince's] powers
> (e) the change in the relations of the Crown to the Ministers after the retirement of Aberdeen [January 1855]
> (f) the culmination of the Prince Consort's rule 1859-1861.[48]

This list in effect constitutes a summary of the first series of the Letters of Queen Victoria, giving a slender narrative outline of her life during those years, differing very little from that used by Sidney Lee in his entry for the Dictionary of National Biography or the biography he published in 1902.[49] Knollys replied to Esher:

> ... If Benson is only inclined to have 4 Vols in order to insert short biographical sketches and accounts of political questions, I more than agree with you that there should only be three. Cannot you write me a letter which I can forward to the King of the same purport as that which you have sent to me. I feel pretty sure that if you give the reasons which induce Benson to wish for 4 Vols as you have done to me, that H.M. will come into agreement with you on the subject.[50]

Esher, being a master polemicist, may not have put Benson's arguments quite accurately to Knollys. Benson's earlier point had been not that he wanted to provide 'short biographical sketches and accounts of political questions' but that if only short excerpts from the letters were given there would necessarily have to be more extensive notes of explanation to contextualise the letters for the readers.

Three days later Esher took Knollys's advice and wrote to the King, attaching a copy of the letter he had written to Benson. He reiterated to the King that it would still be

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copy of the Benson letter has been included in the bound collection at Churchill Archives, nor was a copy located within Lord Knollys's Papers at the Royal Archives, Windsor.

[47] Esher Papers, 10/48, Knollys to Esher, 18 August 1905.

[48] RA VIC/W 39/105, Lord Esher to Lord Knollys, 20 August 1905.

[49] Sidney Lee, Queen Victoria. A Biography, London, Smith, Elder & Co, 1902.

possible, 'to get into three volumes everything which is necessary towards exhibiting in its fullness, the development of the Queen's character between 1837-1861, as well as the working of the Monarchical system under the Queen and the Prince Consort'.[51] A reply came from Marienbad, Austria, where the King had gone to take the waters, saying that His Majesty 'thinks three volumes should meet the case and be preferable to four'.[52] The message was conveyed to Benson and he recorded in his diary: 'The King decides for 3 vols. This is a relief!'[53] Yet, the issue was brought up by Benson several more times before the volumes were published. When another portion of the correspondence between Queen Victoria and Lord Melbourne surfaced in January 1906, 'I suppose it will not involve a fourth volume?' Benson asked![54] When more letters of John Russell were found in May, [55] he was hugely exasperated. He requested that a note be inserted in the Preface stating that the correspondence was found too late to be included.[56]

This ongoing debate about the number of volumes had one positive outcome. In order to convince both Benson and the King of the strength of his opinion and his command over the project, Esher set down the parameters for the book and for the enterprise in its entirety, elaborating on the summary he had sent to Knollys on 20 August 1905:

> My dear ACB,
> I quite realize the difficulties, but I am SURE that we shall do wisely to stick to three volumes.
> The great thing is to get in our minds what we want to do. The main object, almost the sole object, is to exhibit the true relation between the character of the Queen and the government of her people.
> (a) the formation of her character
> (b) the early experience of power
> (c) her schooling in the art of government
> (1) Melbourne
> (2) King Leopold
> (3) Prince Consort
> (d) her method of government
> (e) her sense of 'Kingship'

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[50] Esher Papers, 10/48, Knollys to Esher, 21 August 1905.
[51] Esher Papers, 11/3, Esher to King Edward VII, 28 August 1905.
[52] ibid., 11/3, Fritz Ponsonby, (Acting Private Secretary to the King) to Esher, 5 September 1905.
[53] Benson Diary, vol. 74, 9 September 1905.
[54] Esher Papers, 11/5, 4 January 1906.
[55] ibid., 11/5, Benson to Esher, 2 May 1906; Benson Diary, vol. 81, 4 May 1906.
[56] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, Preface, 1907, p. vi; 1908, p. iii. The footnote is oddly placed, perhaps in error by the printers. It follows a comment about the correspondence with King Leopold. I suspect it should have been placed on the next line, following the sentence about the correspondence between Queen Victoria and Lord Melbourne, which also surfaced relatively late in the project.

(f) her motherly view of her people
(g) her guiding principles
(h) the controlling Power of the Sovereign
It is impossible for us to give full accounts of political and historical episodes and personages.
They come in partly as
(a) illustrations
(b) scenery and *dramatis personae*
The central figure moving through it all is that of the Queen herself.
All of the work in these three volumes is preparatory, to the other volumes which some day will follow – WHEN THE QUEEN IS ALONE.
The book must be dramatic, or rather possess a dramatic note.
If we keep these main ideas in view, (and if you agree with them), all cutting must be subordinate to them.
I am roughly working along these lines.
Of course I am making mistakes, but we can correct them together.
Yours ever,
Esher.[57]

This document sets out Esher's goals for the project in a form and language which would both appeal to the King, and be persuasive of Benson. Yet eighteen months of selecting, rejecting, incorporating and cutting had taken place before this time. In February 1904, when Benson had started reading and selecting, he asked the question of himself: 'And how am I to know what is interesting and what is not?' He resolved, 'to go ploughing on with the papers and then decide ...'.[58] The numerous discussions Benson mentioned in his diaries[59] no doubt gave rise to some undocumented conversation about guidelines. In this schema it is impossible to ascertain whether Esher was simply re-stating previous decisions or whether it was the first time he had perceived the parameters so clearly, and to what extent he was drawing on a biographical outline derived from Lee's biography. Esher wrote with a conspiratorial bravado to Knollys: 'As you say, Arthur Benson is undecided as to what the general purpose of the book is to be. I am quite clear that it ought to be what I have said...'.[60] Even so, Esher made a copy of his letter of the 20 August 1905 for his own records, which he rarely did. It reflects the significance Esher attached to this letter.

Benson was pleased to have such a succinct summary of the book. He replied to Esher:

3 vols!!

[57] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, p. 101 ff, Esher to Benson, 20 August 1905.
[58] Benson Diary, 14 February 1904.
[59] Such meetings took place from August 1903 and throughout the project.
[60] RA VIC/W 39/104, 15 August 1905.

> Your analysis of the object of the book is masterly; I will, if I may, embody your points in the introduction. I wholly and entirely concur, ... but to aim at bringing out her character and not illustrating history that is the exact aim.
> When I go through the second vol again, which I shall do in the next few days, I shall ask myself not 'Is this important?' but 'Is this characteristic?'
> At the same time, as you say, it must be dramatic.[61]

Esher's schema for the content of the book in effect gave Benson a framework which served as a checklist against which he could judge the relevance of each letter, and justify its inclusion. Decisions on exclusions could also be taken against this framework but many additional factors came into play.

Esher from time to time expressed to Benson concern, as if coming from the King, that there must be no hint of scandal, nothing that could create ill-feeling, and nothing that was malicious.[62] Early in the process, Benson reiterated to Esher: 'There is no difficulty about scandal. I can honestly say that that element has been rigidly excluded in my selections.' He added, most perceptively: 'As to ill-natured references, it is of course a more difficult matter because there are certain people who consider everything ill-natured that is not adulatory, when applied to deceased persons.'[63] The difficulties faced by the editors were even recognized by their staff at Windsor. Miles, whom Benson referred to as 'the Inspector', greeted Benson one morning saying: 'This must be a difficult task, Mr Benson – a great deal of care necessary not to give offence.'[64] There certainly were many people, from the King down, who could take offence at the least provocation.

[61] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 9 August 1905. I believe this letter has been wrongly dated by Benson. The content and the terminology of the letter pre-empts Esher's letter to Benson of the 25 August 1905. This letter is more likely to have been written on the 29 August (or even on 9 September), upon receipt of the Esher letter.
[62] Benson Diary, vol. 52, p. 36. Account of meeting with Esher, 17 May 1904.
[63] Esher Papers, 11/4, 17 May 1904.
[64] Benson Diaries, vol. 55, entry for 5 July 1904.

Chapter 8

To Craft an Image of the Queen: The Editors' Selections and Exclusions to show the Queen as a Naive Girl, an Assertive Young Woman, then a Wife.

An Overview of the Book, the Editing and the multiple images of the Queen

Not to give offence and not to create scandal, but to make each of the three volumes of the book dramatic: these were the aims of the editors. Benson thought he grasped their dilemma early in the process: 'We are between the devil and the deep blue sea. The King will be furious if we violate confidence and displeased if the book is dull.'[1] The task of creating the book was made even more difficult because Benson and Esher were not depicting the authoritative, older woman they had both known; instead they had to portray a much younger Queen Victoria, in her first forty-two years.

They sought to generate drama by producing a romantic idealization of Victoria's life – of a young girl, pure, petite and innocent under some duress, then her awakening to Queenship in which she flowered into a constitutional monarch, being fortunate to enjoy the tutelage of particular and gifted gentlemen. To highlight this process, Victoria's girlhood was portrayed as one of feminine isolation and a spiritedness held under restraint. Her Queenship they depicted as one of youthful vitality and a keenness to learn from older men. Queenship brought with it liberation from her mother's control but this independence was soon to be overtaken by marriage and a husband's influence. Episodes which could have added drama to the book were sacrificed by the editors in order to avoid scandal and the King's displeasure. Knowledge and particularly sharp or terse opinions which the Queen held were downplayed so that she might seem feminine and innocent. Her female correspondence was omitted in order to avoid triviality. Her European correspondence was minimized to moderate any perception of foreign influences upon her. Mention of her children was minimized. The editors' handling of each of these aspects will form the core of the next two chapters.

During the course of her reign, various crises arose and subsided. Each crisis generated correspondence through which an image of Victoria could be revealed showing the dynamics of power and the subtle methods of persuasion employed by all players. These included such incidents as the Flora Hastings affair; Victoria's clash with Prime Minister designate, Sir Robert Peel, in 1839 over the Ladies of her Bedchamber; the political agitations of the 1840s; and more extensively with Prime Minister, John

[1] Benson Diary, Old Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge, vol. 52, 17 May 1904.

Russell and his Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Palmerston.[2] An examination of Queen Victoria and her circle of men in these crises allows us some insight into the complexities of Victoria's political life and, at the same time, the multi-layered processes of the editing of her Letters.

Initially there were topics which Benson and Esher had deemed, euphemistically, to be 'not of general interest', that is private or potentially scandalous, dangerous or malicious, as judged according to the gentlemanly values of the King and of society, at that time. Before Benson had actually begun work, John Murray wrote to him:

> There is a rumour abroad that the King has excluded all private correspondence, but I hope that this is not the case. Of course the most private could not go in – but 'private' as distinguished from public or official has a wide connotation.[3]

At the start of the project the breadth of these 'connotations' drew on the taken-for-granted understandings of decency and 'good form' held by gentlemen: no formal stipulations were necessary. Such topics were tacitly omitted from the publication; others were deleted after subsequent cutting of materials to conform to the various constraints on the book.

Working on the assumption that the book would comprise three volumes, the agreed time period of 1837-61 had been divided into three sections: 1837-43; 1844-52; and 1853-61, with approximately five hundred pages allocated to each volume. Particular people and well known incidents, which had been set out so clearly and placed in the public domain by Sidney Lee's biography Queen Victoria (1902) and Martin's Life of the Prince Consort (1875) were destined for the appropriate volumes.[4] Some items asserted their own claims to be included because of their importance; others could be excluded to avoid duplication or omitted on the basis of the constraints of space. It was

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[2] Elizabeth Longford, Victoria R.I., London (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964), Abacus books, 2000, Chapters VIII-XXII for a full account; Walter Arnstein, Queen Victoria, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, Chapters 5 and 6 give a succinct but comprehensive account events of the 1840s and 1850s,Victoria's role in them and Albert's rapid progress toward being an omnipotent influence upon Victoria.

[3] John Murray Archive, Albermarle Street, London, Correspondence re. Letters of Queen Victoria, CB 1, John Murray to Arthur Benson, 11 November 1903.

[4] There is no direct evidence of the editors referring to these two texts in this specific manner, but Murray and Benson discussed the Martin book in correspondence of 30 December 1903, Murray Archive CB 1, and Benson mentioned seeing Lee at the Athenaeum, Benson Diary, vol. 52, 14 May 1904. Murray, Benson, Lee and Childers were all members of the Athenaeum Club and met there frequently. In 1908 Esher described visiting Martin, by then a man of ninety-two years old, and discussing the Queen's letters. Maurice V. Brett, Journal and Letters of Reginald, Viscount Esher, London, Ivor, Nicolson and Watson, 1934, vol. II, pp. 292-3.

not until eighteen months into the work that Esher had formally identified the themes for inclusion and set them out in his schemas for the book. This occurred in the course of their debate about 'How many volumes?' the book should comprise.

The earliest documentary evidence that some subjects and themes were excluded from the start dates from June 1904. Benson described a visit from Esher who had talked to him about topics requiring discretion and the King's anxiety about who saw original material. Esher told Benson that:

> the King was very uncertain, going backwards and forwards according to what the last person said. Sometimes utterly regretting that he had ever allowed the letters to be published. Esher said, 'All the old scandals, the Duke of Kent's debts, the Conroy business, the Lady Flora Hastings business & so on – the King has never heard of them. He doesn't read memoirs & of course no one dares talk to him of such things – so that when he hears about them, or gathers that there is anything about them in the letters, he is first of all horribly concerned at the thought that even you [Benson] should see them – and upset at the bare idea that ordinary people should read about them – it is no good telling him that everybody who knows anything knows far more about them than he does himself; & that they won't arouse comment simply because they are so stale ...'[5]

Esher understood the King's lack of this knowledge in comparison with the general, literate community. Indeed it reflects Gladstone's comments to the Queen that the heir to the throne must be made to read;[6] it also shows the nature and functioning of 'Court' circles, and their efforts to protect Royal sensibilities. The exchange between Esher and Benson shows that from the outset they had discussed some of the King's anxieties and listed some of the items that needed to be excluded.

The crafting of the image of the Queen began with the very first selections. In the first volume there were portions of 35 letters from Queen Victoria to Lord Melbourne published; by contrast, excerpts from 139 of Lord Melbourne's letters to the Queen were included. There is no reason to suppose that there was any attempt to represent the original materials proportionally. In most of the published letters, Melbourne acknowledged the receipt of a letter, and frequently of more than one, from Victoria. Benson and Esher shared an admiration for Lord Melbourne. In 1904 Benson wrote to Esher: 'I am so glad that you like Lord M. I adore him – the delicious mixture of the man of the world, the chivalrous man of sentiment, the wit, the soft-hearted cynic

[5] Benson Diary, vol. 54, 25 June 1904.
[6] Philip Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, London, John Murray, 1964, p. 123.

appeals to me extraordinarily.'[7] The imbalance in the selection reflects this delight they shared in his letters. They even included excerpts from letters written by other men, praising those characteristics of Lord Melbourne which they found to be so endearing. For example, they quoted King Leopold as he enthused with Victoria:

> Lord Melbourne ... is so feeling and kind-hearted that he, much more than most men who have lived so much in the *grand monde,* has preserved a certain warmth and freshness of feeling ... .[8]

Benson and Esher, having already opted to include as many Melbourne letters as possible, continued this procedure with the last bundle which were found, the letters of 1837 – six of Melbourne's were published compared to four of Queen Victoria's. In 1837 Victoria did not meet Lord Melbourne until the day of her accession, the 22 June, and five of these ten letters were from the last days of the year when the Queen was at Windsor and Melbourne had stayed in Town dealing with government business to do with Canada, Army administration and Sir John Conroy's retirement claiMs[9] However, of the 1838 letters, only three of her letters and her account of her Coronation were included compared to twenty of Lord Melbourne's letters. In some sections of the volume the letters of Lord Melbourne run consecutively, with her replies not being included. The title, Letters of Queen Victoria, seems questionable at least for 1838! However, the balance was redressed in 1839. Victoria's voice dominated, especially after her betrothal, with a total of fifty-one letter excerpts and two Journal entries, compared to nineteen excerpts from Melbourne's letters, nine from Leopold and thirteen others. Eleven of Victoria's letters were to Albert, but none of his replies were included.

The personal and intimate nature of the letters of Queen Victoria and Lord Melbourne provided the editors with some of the dramatic tension which they sought for the book. From their selection of letters emerged a young, spirited girl, ripe for love and marriage, misdirecting her passions. Through the political crises of 1839, and Melbourne's role in these (including the Flora Hastings Affair), the editors could show the girl-monarch's

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[7] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 12 July 1904.

[8] Arthur Benson and Lord Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, London, John Murray, vol. I, King Leopold of the Belgians to Queen Victoria, 18 January 1839. To enable references to be located in both the 1907 edition and the 1908, references will be given for both editions as page numbers or as letter dates when applicable to both editions.

[9] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, 1907: pp. 127-30; 1908: pp. 98-101. Given the excited response of the editors when they were found in January 1906, it is surprising that so few of the letters of 1837 and 1838 were included.

vulnerability, and allude to the Queen's need for a Consort. A procession of eligible cousins and other bachelors had visited London throughout 1839 and Victoria described each of these visitors in her letters to her Uncle Leopold and to Melbourne, seeming to be charmed and infatuated time and again.[10] But these selections were interwoven with her correspondence with Lord Melbourne, asking his advice about the visit of the step-mother of Dona Maria II of Portugal, sending him little gifts, checking whether he will be joining her for dinner and even begging him to dine, and always the enquiries after his health and the exchanges of political news.[11] Melbourne met Prince Albert and his brother, Prince Ernest of Saxe-Coburg, when they visited in 1839, and Victoria consulted him about her marriage.[12]

In these first two years on the throne, Victoria was enjoying her independence from her mother, and a social life of dinners and dancing – a freedom of sorts. Throughout 1839, her Uncle Leopold had been urging Victoria to invite her cousins, Ernest and Albert, to visit England. In agreeing to the visit, she directed Leopold in July 1839, to ensure that Albert understood that 'there is *no engagement* between us' and that 'any such event could not take place till two or three years hence'.[13] Benson and Esher added drama to the proposed visit of Albert and his brother in October 1839, by including her letter to Leopold in the book preceded by a very handsome portrait of Albert! When Albert and his brother arrived, Victoria immediately found him to be 'most striking,' and 'fascinating'.[14] Three days later she proposed marriage to him and he accepted. She wrote to Leopold to tell him the exciting news and to Melbourne. The reply from Melbourne is printed, but not her letter. [15]

From this point on, the private and emotional spilled into the public and the political, and this was reflected in the letters. The marriage of a reigning queen had all manner of

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[10] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I,12 May 1839, visit from the Hereditary Grand Duke of Russia; 4 August 1839, visit from Grand Duke of Weimar; 26 August 1839, visit from her Mensdorff cousins. Much more detail about these visits was recorded by Victoria in her Journal. Esher was able to include more of her descriptions when he edited her journals for publication. Viscount Esher, The Girlhood of Queen Victoria. A Selection from Her Majesty's Diary between the years 1832 and 1840, 2 vols, London, John Murray, 1912. (Hereafter, Girlhood Journal.)

[11] ibid., 25 July 1839, advice about the Duchess of Braganza; 7 October 1839, gift of a charm for his keys; 12 May 1839, 26 August 1839, dinner arrangements; and almost every letter has some political content.

[12] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, Victoria to Leopold, 15 October 1839.

[13] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria , vol. I, Victoria to Leopold, 15 July 1839.

[14] ibid., Victoria to Leopold, 12 October 1839.

legal as well as personal implications. The sole applicable precedent involved Queen Anne, but she had married Prince George of Denmark prior to her accession rather than afterwards. Decisions concerning Prince Albert's rank, his naturalization, his allowance, and assurances that his religion was in keeping with the Act of Settlement (1701), involved Parliamentary ratification. Plans for the wedding ceremony, Albert's Household, and the honeymoon were passed on by letter to Albert as he travelled throughout Germany making his farewells, and to Uncle Leopold in Belgium, through Victoria's letters.[16] For whatever reason, Benson and Esher only published Victoria's letters, and some of Leopold's; again they omitted Albert's replies. This was one of the imbalances from their selections to which Murray drew their attention.[17]

Victoria had a tendency towards blunt, even trenchant language in her descriptions of people and things. Sometimes it was humorous and colourful. But occasionally the gentlemanly editors felt compelled to remove or to moderate some of Victoria's more strident assessments in order to present an appropriately queenly and feminine image. For example, Victoria had written to King Leopold in 1847 that compared to the singer, Jenny Lind, Giulia Grisi who had been her great favourite for so long, 'now seems vulgar and *passée*'; in the list of excisions for Volume II, 'vulgar' was listed to be removed, but *passée* remained.[18] When she used the word 'singular' in describing individuals, it was not a commendation.

Victoria was very particular about correct spelling but variable in her application of her principles. When she wrote the word 'shocking', she always spelt it 'schocking', often underlined, and often with an exclamation mark mid-sentence, which gave it an idiosyncratic emphasis! Benson, after reading through the letters from Victoria's half-sister, Feodore, the Princess Leiningen, observed: 'It amuses me that she spells feel "feal" and naughty "noughty" many hundreds of times & is never corrected by the

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[15] ibid., Victoria to Leopold, 15 October 1839, and 24 October 1839, Leopold's reply, pp. 189-90. Melbourne reply, 16 October 1839.

[16] ibid., vol. I, 1908, pp. 190-217; 1907, pp. 242-273. Esher had many of these same items to deal with when he edited the Girlhood Journal, Volume II. Victoria wrote much more vividly and in more detail in her Journal after her accession, probably because the Journal was no longer under her mother's scrutiny.

[17] Esher papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 11 July 1904. I have been unable to find any satisfactory explanation for this important omission.

[18] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, Victoria to Leopold, 12 June 1847. Excisions list: John Murray Archives, CB2, 26 August 1906. See Longford, Victoria R. I., p. 48, for a description of Victoria's adulation of Grisi in her teenage years, drawn from Victoria's Journal.

Queen.'[19] Feodore was, after all, Victoria's older sister, which may explain her reluctance to correct her. With her own children, Victoria was especially pedantic. Her eldest child, Vicky, the Princess Royal, lived in Prussia after her marriage in 1857, and Victoria carried on a mammoth correspondence with her over the next forty years. She bore the brunt of many of Victoria's anxieties and was constantly corrected for her spelling.[20]

Salutations, comments on the weather, and some details of a personal or obscure nature, were deleted from the letters. There were some materials which the editors did not know about or that were located too late to be included, such as the letters which surfaced late in 1906 and elicited the cavalier, 'Napoleonic', response from Esher. Victoria's correspondence with her various female cousins and friends were frequently not tracked down, and when they were available, failed to excite the editors' masculine sensibilities. In these ways the image of the Queen produced by the editors was formed by documents which survived and were available to them, by the omissions resulting from the loss or oversight of other documents, and then more finely honed by the inclusions and deletions from their initial selections as the editing proceeded.

8.1 The Image of the Young and Innocent Queen Victoria in the Letters and the omitted Flora Hastings Affair

> Alexandrina Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland and Empress of India, was born on Monday 24th May 1819, at Kensington Palace.[21]

Like this quote, the first ninety pages of Benson's and Esher's Volume I comprise biographical, genealogical and historical details of Victoria's life before her accession, selected and written by the editors. The narrative reads as a comprehensive account of her life and, in that respect, is reassuring about the remainder of the book; indeed there

[19] Benson Diary, vol. 29, 21 March 1904.

[20] For example, see Roger Fulford, ed., Dearest Child; Letters between Queen Victoria and the Princess Royal, 1858-1861, London, Evans Bros, 1964; Dearest Mama: Private Correspondence of Queen Victoria and the Crown Princess of Prussia, 1862-1864, London, Evans Bros, 1968; Your Dear Letter: Private Correspondence of Queen Victoria and the Crown Princess of Prussia, 1865-1871, London, Evans Bros, 1971; Darling Child: Private Correspondence of Queen Victoria and the Crown Princess of Prussia, 1871-1878, London, Evans Bros, 1976; Beloved Mama: Private Correspondence of Queen Victoria and the Crown Princess of Prussia 1878-1885, London, Evans Bros, 1981; Agatha Ramm ed, Beloved and Darling Child: Last Letters between Queen Victoria and her Eldest Daughter, 1886-1901, Stroud, Sutton, 1990.

is no sense of information being withheld, but some painful episodes of Victoria's childhood were excluded from the Letters, as was the Flora Hastings affair.

Benson's and Esher's discussion about the King's ignorance of episodes in the Queen's life and the controlling of 'private' or 'scandalous' material stemmed from an earlier account of the King's response upon learning about the Flora Hastings affair.[22] As Esher began sorting Queen Victoria's papers in 1904, he had given the King 'all those curious papers about Lady Flora Hastings, and strongly advised that they shall be burnt'. The King was 'astonished at the precocious knowledge shown by the Queen (aged nineteen) and the outspokenness of Lord Melbourne'.[23]

Lady Flora Hastings had been Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Victoria's mother, the Duchess of Kent, in the years prior to Victoria's accession until her death in 1839. In 1838 Lady Flora developed an abdominal swelling which Lord Melbourne and Queen Victoria attributed to pregnancy; they cast their suspicions upon Sir John Conroy, who as Comptroller to the Duchess of Kent was a member of her Household.[24] (Flora and Conroy were flirtatious and had shared a long coach journey several months prior which had created some Court gossip.) Queen Victoria's doctor, Sir James Clark, was consulted and as rumours continued to fly around the Court, Lady Flora was persuaded to agree to a medical examination which certified that she was a virgin. The doctors were puzzled, and met with Lord Melbourne who passed their reports on to the Queen: '... though she is a virgin ... there was an enlargement in the womb like a child,' Victoria told an incredulous Duchess of Kent.[25] Victoria and Melbourne were criticised by the Hastings family in the press for casting such scurrilous aspersions on Flora's reputation, and even further by insisting on subjecting a lady to the indignity of such an

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[21] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, 1907, pp. 1-97; 1908, pp. 1-74.

[22] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, pp. 49-50, Esher to Maurice Brett, 13 March 1904. This could be another instance where Esher had discussed this matter with the King at this time, but conveyed it to Benson several weeks later as if it were a recent dictum of the King.

[23] ibid.. Esher's propensity to burn papers has been documented by Sheila de Bellaigue, 'The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle', The Court Historian, vol. III, no. 2 (1998), pp. 10-20; see also Robin Mackworth-Young, 'The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle', Archives, vol. XIII, no. 59 (Spring 1978), pp. 115-30.

[24] Katherine Hudson, A Royal Conflict. Sir John Conroy and the Young Victoria, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1994, pp. 151-8, gives the fullest account of these incidents, following earlier exhaustive research on Conroy's role in Victoria's early life by Dormer Creston, The Youthful Queen Victoria, London, Macmillan, 1952.

[25] Longford, Victoria R.I., 2000, p. 105. Victoria to the Duchess of Kent. A specialist in women's diseases, Sir Charles Clarke, was also present for the examination.

examination.[26] Lady Flora died several months later from a liver tumour.[27] Because of the prominence of the Hastings family and because of the Press criticism of Victoria and Melbourne at the time, the incident was well known[28] and mentioned by diarists and memoirists.

The origins of this episode stemmed from the dynamics of the household in which Victoria was raised.[29] Her father, Edward, Duke of Kent, had died suddenly when she was eight months old. On his deathbed he had asked his equerry, John Conroy, to care for his widow and child. The Duchess of Kent had very limited English and even more limited funds. Her husband had died leaving her with an income of £6000 per year and debts of £50,000. Her brother, Leopold, later to be named King of the Belgians, provided her with some financial assistance and she managed to have her brother-in-law, King George IV, allow her some rooms at Kensington Palace. The Conroy family lived nearby and their children were frequent companions of Victoria's. Sir John came to be Comptroller of the affairs of Victoria's two unmarried aunts who also lived at Kensington Palace. Conroy was a very ambitious man, and as Victoria moved closer to the throne, he insinuated himself further into her mother's dependence. When her half-sister, Feodore, left England to marry the Prince of Hohenlohe-Langenburg, Victoria was more isolated and came to be more reliant on her governess, Louise Lehzen. Conroy sought to wield his influence over Victoria's education and to influence public perception that she had various infirmities which would preclude her ruling alone. To this end he organised tours through the provinces to 'show her to the people', where she was stood on platforms and podiums, but allowed to say nothing; her mother spoke on her behalf. Many years later, she vividly described her abhorrence of being 'a spectacle'

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[26] The importance of this aspect needs to be seen in the context of nineteenth-century medical practice and its gendered constraints. See Regina Morantz, 'The Lady and her Physician', in Mary Hartman and Lois W. Banner, eds, Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women, New York, Harper & Row, 1974, pp. 38-54; and Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, Complaints and Disorder. The Sexual Politics of Sickness, London, Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative, 1973.

[27] Longford, Victoria R.I., p. 130.

[28] ibid., Chapters VIII & IX. Longford does a masterly analysis not only of the personalities involved, but of the social and political intricacies of the affair. Public responses to the affair ranged from hissing and calling out, 'Mrs Melbourne,' as Victoria and Lord Melbourne rode down the straight at Ascot; articles in The Lancet concerning Sir James's professional ineptitude; and the five thousand people who assembled for Lady Flora's funeral in London. Michael Diamond, Victorian Sensation. Or, the Spectacular, the Shocking and the Scandalous in Nineteenth-Century Britain, London, Anthem Press, 2003, p. 13, mentions the Flora Hastings affair as one of the 'Sensations' but a report he cited as appearing in the Sunday Times, 13 June 1840, was more likely to have been from 1839.

to be 'gazed at, without delicacy or feeling ...' in a letter to Lord John Russell.[30] Being 'on display' was something Victoria disliked for the rest of her life.[31]

The division within the household was increased when Lady Flora became her mother's Lady of the Bedchamber, and colluded with Conroy and her mother in pursuing Conroy's aims which came to be known as the 'Kensington system'. Thus developed two factions within the household: her mother and her allies versus Victoria and Lehzen. The factions were irrevocably established by the time Victoria was sixteen. Whilst on holiday at Ramsgate that year, Victoria contracted an illness, suggested by some to have been typhoid fever,[32] but others attribute it to the psychological warfare in the household.[33] During her illness Conroy tried to persuade her to sign a statement that asked that her mother rule as regent until Victoria was twenty-one and guaranteeing that he would be given the post of Private Secretary when she acceded the Throne.[34] With

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[29] The following summary of Victoria's childhood household is drawn from Katherine Hudson, A Royal Conflict, and Longford, Victoria R.I..

[30] George Buckle, ed., The Letters of Queen Victoria, Second series, vol. I, 1862-9, London, John Murray, 1926, pp. 295-6.

[31] Some would say that Victoria turned this dislike into an art-form after Albert's death, see Christopher Hibbert, Queen Victoria. A Personal History, London, Harper Collins, 2000, Chapter 40, 'The Recluse', pp. 307-14.

[32] Longford, Victoria R. I., p. 52. Cecil Woodham-Smith believed it was more likely tonsillitis. Queen Victoria. Her Life and Times, vol. I, London (Hamish Hamilton, 1972), Book Club Associates, 1973, p. 133.

[33] Stanley Weintraub, Victoria. Biography of a Queen, London, Unwin Hyman, 1987, p. 86.

[34] At her birth Victoria was sixth in line of succession after her Grandfather, King George III, who since 1810 had been prevented from ruling due to bouts of madness now attributed to porphyria. His *heir apparent* was his eldest son, George, who served as Regent. The line of succession continued down King George III's family to his second son, Frederick, Duke of York, then to his third son, William, Duke of Clarence, who later reigned as William IV (1830-7), then Victoria's father, Edward. Victoria then took her place, followed by George III's fifth, sixth and seventh sons. It was possible that George IV could remarry and produce an heir, who would usurp all claimants in the line of succession, though it was deemed unlikely given his age, his health and his prodigious girth.

However, Victoria's position in the line of succession was to change rapidly. When she was eight months old her father suddenly caught cold, was treated by cupping and bleeding, and subsequently died. Within a fortnight, his father, King George III also died, and his eldest son and Regent acceded as King George IV. The Duke of York developed dropsy and died of heart failure in 1827. The Duke of Clarence married Princess Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen and they had two children, one born just prior to Victoria's birth, but neither survived. In terms of succession, it was still possible until after King William's death in 1837, that a child could survive and supplant Victoria's claim. Thus, during her childhood, acceding to the throne was a possibility, but it was not until 1830, that she was deemed to be '*heir apparent*'. As the health of King William IV was in decline, a Regency Bill was passed allowing for the Duchess of Kent, Victoria's mother, to rule on her behalf should she accede the throne before her eighteenth birthday. This provision was welcomed by her mother and her Comptroller, Sir John Conroy, but they endeavoured to have the age qualification extended to include her twenty-first year. Roger Fulford, Royal Dukes. Queen Victoria's Father and her 'Wicked Uncles', London, Pan Books, 1933. Prior to the King's death there was concern as to 'what steps ought to be taken to ascertain whether the Queen [Adelaide] is with child ... they [the politicians] had forgotten that the case had been provided for in the Regency Bill, and that in the event of the King's death without children, the Queen [Victoria] is to

Lehzen's help Victoria resisted his badgering and bullying, but the episode remained with her. Her steely resolve against Conroy, Flora Hastings and her mother was forged at this time.

The situation persisted for the next two years. In the months before Victoria's eighteenth birthday, the reigning monarch, her uncle King William IV, made her an offer of financial support to establish her own Household. It was made quite possibly in an attempt to relieve her of the influence of Conroy. There is a series of letters which passed between Queen Adelaide, Victoria's half-sister, Feodore, and her official governess, the Duchess of Northumberland[35] expressing their grave concerns over Victoria's mental and physical well-being at this time, which shows they knew about Conroy's 'Kensington System.' In 1836, Feodore wrote to the Duchess of Northumberland, enclosing the letter in one she wrote to Queen Adelaide, sent in the care of a private citizen, to ensure it would be hand delivered and not risk being intercepted by Conroy. In that letter she urged the Duchess to try to ascertain Victoria's 'health and spirits'; she 'has suffered a good deal, as you will know ... her caracter [sic] might be completely spoiled by this continual warfare'.[36] It may have been on the basis of such sources of information that the King made his offer.

By late 1836 or by early 1837 Uncle Leopold also had become conversant with the 'Kensington System' and in his letters he discussed the possibility and logistics of a separate household for the princess.[37] But the King's health was deteriorating, and less than a month after Victoria's eighteenth birthday, the King died and Victoria acceded the throne. The early years of the Queen's accession need to be seen within this context. The Flora Hastings affair has little meaning without it. Similarly, some of Queen Victoria's subsequent actions and enduring attitudes are more readily understood when this important episode is known.

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be proclaimed, but the oath of allegiance taken with a saving of the rights of any posthumous child to King William'. Philip Whitwell Wilson, ed., The Greville Diary including passages hitherto withheld from Publication, 2 vols, London, Heinemann, 1927, vol. I, p. 526.

[35] Northumberland papers, Flintshire Record Office, Hawarden, Wales, Bryn-Y-Pys MSS D/BP/1113 (iii); D/BP/1111 (ix); D/BP/1114.

[36] ibid., MSS D/BP/1113 (iii).

[37] Archives of the Royal Palace, Brussels. Document page numbers only. King Leopold to Princess Victoria, 60444, 60445, 11 April 1837. Part of this letter was published by Benson and Esher, vol. I, p. 65.

Readers in 1907 would have had access to various publications which had described some of the early life of the young Queen. One such book, to which Esher referred when he spoke to Benson, was the memoirs of Charles Greville. Greville's diaries had been edited by Henry Reeve and the first three volumes were first published in 1874; a second series was brought out in 1885.[38] Charles Greville was well-known to Queen Victoria as the Clerk of the Privy Council from 1821-59, and as a leading figure in London society.[39] When Greville's memoirs were first published, Victoria herself initially enjoyed them, though, characteristically, she declared them to be both 'very exaggerated' but nevertheless 'full of truth'![40] During one of their sojourns at Balmoral, Victoria's secretary, Sir Henry Ponsonby, some of Victoria's Ladies, and Benjamin Disraeli, all commented on having read them,[41] and no doubt discussed them at length, but Edward, Prince of Wales did not.

Coincidentally, the first volume of Victoria's commissioned Life of the Prince Consort[42] was published one year after Greville, in 1875. Some of Victoria's children were critical of her publishing so much detail which they deemed to be private and personal. She defended her decision in a letter to her second daughter, Alice:

> … you must also remember, that endless false and untrue things have been written and said about us, public and private, and that in these days people will write and know; therefore the only way to counteract this is to let the real, full truth be known, and as much be told as can be told with prudence and discretion, then no harm but good, will be done ... .[43]

This was taken up as a defence by the editors of Stockmar's memoirs and letters, and Greville's Memoirs, both of which included material about the Queen and her family.[44]

The second series of the Greville Memoirs, which followed eleven years later in 1885, covered the years of 1837-52. In this instance, according to Elizabeth Longford,

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[38] Henry Reeve, ed., The Greville Memoirs: a journal of the reigns of King George IV, King William IV and Queen Victoria, First series, 5 vols, 1874, covers years 1816-37; Second series, 3 vols, 1885, covers years 1837-52; Reprinted, 8 vols, London, Longmans, Green, & Co, 1896-8.
[39] Giles St Aubyn, Queen Victoria. A Portrait, London, Sinclair-Stephenson, 1991, p. 625.
[40] Queen Victoria writing to her eldest daughter, in 1874, cited by Longford, Victoria R.I., p. 434.
[41] ibid., p. 435.
[42] Theodore Martin, The Life of His Royal Highness The Prince Consort, vol. 1, London, Smith, Elder Co, (1875), 1880.
[43] Roger Fulford, The Prince Consort, (London, Macmillan, 1949), New York, St. Martin's Press, 1966, p. x, quoting from a letter from Queen Victoria to her second daughter, Alice, Grand-Duchess of Hesse-Darmstadt. Some of Queen Victoria's children remained unconvinced. The issue was comprehensively discussed in the correspondence between Queen Victoria and her eldest daughter, Vicky, as given by de Bellaigue, 'The Royal Archives', pp. 14-6.
[44] Longford, Victoria R.I., p. 435.

Victoria was much less enthusiastic, describing them as 'dreadful, scandalous, abominable', and Victoria particularly resented Reeve's excuse for publication: that she would 'shine against her Uncles' blackness'.[45] Victoria had felt a great affection for her 'Uncle Kings' and would not have sought to have them judged unfavourably by comparison; but she would have been understandably nervous of how events in her own reign had been depicted by Greville's sharp pen.

The published excerpts of Greville's account of the Flora Hastings affair were severely limited by Reeve, who, in quoting Greville's comment that 'it is not easy to ascertain what and how much is true', implicitly suggested to the readers that there was much more to be fleshed out than this one page account, dated 2 March 1839. Even at this early stage in the saga Greville was critical of Melbourne's role accusing him of advising the Queen badly: 'There may be objections to Melbourne's extraordinary domiciliation in the palace; but the compensation ought to be found in his good sense and experience preventing the possibility of such transactions and *tracasseries* as these.'[46] Flora Hastings was not mentioned by Reeve again until the July entry, in which Greville recorded her death. Of the many events concerning the affair which occurred in the intervening period none of Greville's entries were printed by Reeve.[47] In a footnote on the Hastings matter, Reeve apologised for inserting this 'painful transaction which had better be consigned to oblivion' but argued that he did so 'because it contains nothing which is not to be found in the most ordinary books of reference; but I shall not enter further on this matter'.[48]

Sir Sidney Lee's biography of Queen Victoria was published sixteen years after Greville's Memoirs and five years before Benson's and Esher's Letters of Queen Victoria. In the first five chapters of the biography Lee had described the early death of Victoria's father, her constrained childhood, the household in which she grew up and her subsequent repayment of her father's debts. Lee also mentioned Victoria's intense

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[45] ibid..
[46] Reeve, Greville Memoirs, 1896 edn., vol. IV, p. 179.
[47] That there were many explicit details in the unpublished version from which Reeve took his excerpts has been shown in subsequent editions. See Wilson, ed., The Greville Diary, vol. II, pp. 44-52. Wilson has selected excerpts from both published and unpublished Greville entries of the affair to reconstruct the unhappy episode. Roger Fulford and Lytton Strachey jointly edited a complete edition of the Greville Memoirs, which was published by Macmillan in 1938, but through oversight, I have not accessed it.
[48] Reeve, Greville Memoirs, 1885 edn, vol. I (1837-41), p. 172; also see 1896 edn, vol. IV (1837-41), p. 178. Reeve included just one further entry, on 7 July, when Greville noted that Lady Flora had died.

aversion to Sir John Conroy but constrained himself to such gentlemanly phrases as 'cordially disliked' and 'whom she never liked'. He called attention to the division within the Household between her mother, Conroy, and Flora Hastings on one side, and Victoria and her governess, Baroness Lehzen, on the other. He devoted three pages to the demise of Lady Flora Hastings and the subsequent widespread hostility towards Victoria's Court. Lee, reputed to be one of the most influential and fastidious of biographers, cited the Greville Memoirs as one of his sources and declared them to be, 'outspoken but in the main trustworthy'.[49] He divided the blame for the Flora Hastings's Affair between the Queen's 'youth and inexperience' and the malice of Lehzen (who still cared for Victoria after her accession), rather than on Melbourne as Greville had done.[50] In 1902 Lee sent the recently crowned King Edward VII a copy of his Queen Victoria, and Lord Knollys replied on the King's behalf: 'The King thanks Sir Sidney for the copy of the Life of Queen Victoria. He admires very much the binding of the volume. His Majesty feels sure that he shall read your history of the late reign with great interest.'[51] The King had obviously not got past the binding!

The decision by Benson and Esher to leave out the topic of the relationship of Queen Victoria's mother with Sir John Conroy, reflected not only the King's presumed wishes but also their own gentlemanly senses of propriety. In March 1904 Benson came across a Memorandum and some correspondence from Conroy's daughter to Queen Victoria and was afforded a useful insight into the Queen's character and to the whole affair. He wrote his own account of the Memorandum in his diary:

> Worked at Windsor – found & read an extraordinary long correspondence & memorandum from M.H. Conroy (Daughter of Sir J. Conroy), for the Queen, with the hope of reinstating the family in favour. Sir J.C. was a really mischievous, unscrupulous, intriguing man. He established such an ascendancy over the Dss of Kent that he was thought to be her lover. He embezzled her money, and he hoped that when the Queen came to the Throne, he would rise too & be all-powerful. He re-invented the idea of the Duke of Cumberland wishing to poison the Queen in order to increase the idea of his own fidelity.

[49] Sir Sidney Lee, Queen Victoria. A Biography, London, Smith, Elder and Co., 1902, p. 567.
[50] Lee, Queen Victoria: on Victoria's father's debts, pp. 15 and 81; Lady Flora pp. 92-5; Conroy, pp. 15 and 64.
[51] Correspondence of Sidney Lee, MS English Misc. d 178, Bodleian Library, Oxford, 17 December 1902.

> The Queen had a perfect horror of him; as soon as she came to the Throne she gave him a baronetcy and a pension of £3000 a year – & refused ever to see him. The horror of him appears (tho' this is very mysterious) to date from a time when the Duke of Cumberland with characteristic brutality said before her, when she was just a girl, that Conroy was her mother's lover.
> This memorandum was placed in the Queen's hand. She read it with great disgust & made the frankest comments in pencil all through, 'Certainly untrue', 'never', 'a shameful lie', 'we had good reason to think he stole mother's money', and so forth. It is one of the most curious papers I have seen. The document itself is a clever one trying to make out C. to have been an old, faithful, pathetic and slighted servant whose only reward was the consciousness of his good service.[52]

Subsequent research by Dormer Creston (1952)[53] and Katherine Hudson (1994) has borne out the details given in this account, but the details would not have been found by people relying on the Benson and Esher edition of Queen Victoria's Letters. Conroy was mentioned only once, in a letter from Victoria to Lord Melbourne, in which she crisply commended Melbourne's course of action, and in a related footnote the editors mentioned that Conroy had made certain claims which 'it was not considered expedient to grant'. However, Conroy did receive a baronetcy and a pension.[54] But Benson and Esher did include a reference to the Conroy family in an earlier footnote, which had been left untranslated in its original French: an observation made by a visitor to the Court in July 1837, that the Duchess of Kent was present at dinner but the Conroy family were banned from the Palace ['*n'approche pas du Palais*'].[55] Lady Flora Hastings was not mentioned in the book at all.

When Esher edited Victoria's diary for publication in 1912, he was in a dilemma as to how to deal with Conroy and Flora Hastings as they were both members of Victoria's Household in her childhood, and their families were involved socially with her. He

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[52] Benson Diary, vol. 48, 14 March 1904.

[53] Creston, Youthful Queen Victoria, 1952 and Hudson, A Royal Conflict, 1994. Dormer Creston was a pseudonym for Dorothy Colston Baynes. She died in 1973 at the age of ninety-two. An obituary for Dorothy Colston Baynes, comprising two lines, was published in A.B. Bookman's Weekly, 30 July 1973, p. 342. In Creston's list of acknowledgements in her Youthful Queen, she thanked Roger Fulford, beyond her use of two of his earlier publications, and his edition of the Greville Memoirs of 1938. Fulford published two biographies of Queen Victoria, one in 1951 (London, Collins) and another in 1960 (Glasgow, Batsford,). In the earlier one, he had little detail of Victoria's childhood beyond that available in the Benson and Esher Letters. In the second biography he had extensive details of the difficult circumstances of Victoria's life before her accession, which he could not have derived from the sources he cites, yet there was no acknowledgment of Dormer Creston. The only publication dealing with this material between 1951 and 1960 that I have been able to trace was her book. Her anonymity extended beyond her name.

[54] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, p. 99.

[55] ibid., footnote, p. 85.

acknowledged her dislike of Conroy and his family and her actions when as Queen she refused to allow Conroy to come into her presence.[56] Throughout her diary both Conroy and Flora Hastings are mentioned as accompanying herself and her mother, but there is no mention of Lady Flora's illness, or of her death, or Conroy's departure. Esher wrote in his Introduction to the entries for 1839, of Victoria enjoying Lord Melbourne's 'congenial society', and then euphemistically, about Flora Hastings:

> Trouble, however, there was, and owing to the incaution and want of prudent reserve shown by some of those about the Court, a false accusation made against one of the Duchess of Kent's ladies caused a strong private and public resentment, which very unfairly reacted against the young Queen. For a time her popularity suffered.[57]

In concluding his summary of the year, Esher referred to 'the young Queen's horizon' being 'darkened by the Lady Flora Hastings "incident" and the prospect of losing Lord Melbourne'. He then cleverly introduced the possibility of marriage to Prince Albert, in the same sentence. Consequently, the reader is distracted and left with no inclination to interrogate the 'incident' as it is cleverly enmeshed with new issues of special and dramatic interest.

Esher still had to deal with the ongoing enmity between Victoria and her mother which had led to further discussions of her dilemma with Melbourne and Leopold. Victoria's only chance to divest herself of her mother (and consequently of Conroy and Flora Hastings) was to marry – a 'schocking alternative' she thought.[58] However, she discussed it with Lord Melbourne. She saw the awful possibility of her marrying only to find her husband siding with her mother![59] As Victoria's account of the discussion is continued, Esher made the following excision which I have transcribed in **bold** type:

> I said, Why need I marry at all for 3 or 4 years? Did he [Lord Melbourne] see the necessity? ***I did not think so, still this & certainly the present state is dreadful: always as he says on the verge of a quarrell [sic];*** I said I dreaded the thought of marrying that I was so accustomed to have my own way, that I thought it was 10 to 1 that I shouldn't agree with anybody. Lord M. said, 'Oh! But you would have it still', (my own way).[60]

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[56] Esher, Girlhood Journal, vol. I, p. 32. For her dislike of him, edited by Esher, see pp. 13 and 28, for examples.
[57] ibid., vol. II, p. 88.
[58] Longford, Victoria R.I., p. 112. Although Victoria was assiduous about accurate spelling, she had some idiosyncratic mis-spellings of words which added particular character to her expression – 'schocking'!
[59] ibid., p. 113.
[60] The quote is taken from Esher, Girlhood Journal, p. 154. The italicised section is reinstated from Longford, Victoria R.I., p. 113.

Esher has edited the discussion, without ellipses. There is a vitality in the discussion as he has edited it, but to remove this crucial element of the relations between Victoria and her mother is to portray Victoria as a spoilt child with a frivolous view of marriage, who cares only about having her own way. As Longford pointed out, it is questionable whether such a policy of exclusion has really enhanced the Queen's reputation,[61] but it served Esher's purpose.

Whether King Edward would have allowed the mention of Conroy or Hastings in the Girlhood Journal is hypothetical; Edward had died in 1910. Esher was, deftly, able to sidestep the issue of withheld permission when he began his letter to Princess Beatrice, Queen Victoria's youngest daughter and Literary Executor, with: 'Your Royal Highness will remember that King Edward had instructed me to prepare the extracts for publication', adding that Edward's son, King George V, 'had confirmed his father's consent'.[62] This made any refusal on her part rather difficult, and we see another instance of Esher's ventriloquism. He speaks as if conveying the wishes of the monarch. This is not to argue that Esher had any wish to tell the whole story, merely that he wished to have control over the dissemination of the details.

The Girlhood of Queen Victoria was published under the authority of King George V. His wife, Queen Mary, had shown much interest in the documents and historical artifacts,[63] and she and Esher had corresponded and shared the reading of Royal Papers even before her husband's accession.[64] Queen Mary read the book in installments as they came from the printer, and shared them with her husband, prompting John Murray to quip that he had never had royal proof-readers before![65] King George thought Esher had been 'a little severe on the Duchess of Kent' in his Introduction, not that it was not true, but his 'aunts may be hurt'.[66] However, his aunts approved the proofs.[67]

When Lytton Strachey wrote his biography of Victoria in 1921 he created great drama from both Conroy's presence in Victoria's life and the Flora Hastings affair, using the

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[61] Longford, Victoria R.I., p. 113, Footnote *.
[62] Esher Papers, 11/8, Esher to Princess Beatrice, 24 January 1912.
[63] Esher Papers, 6/7, Queen Mary to Lord Esher, 17 June 1910. In this letter, Mary asked that Esher continue to 'take charge of the family papers' as before, and she urged him to 'write to me from time to time.'
[64] ibid., Letters from Queen Mary, 17 May 1909. Esher had many letters from Mary about the family papers and about Princess Beatrice's actions in relation to the Queen's papers.
[65] ibid., 11/8, Murray to Esher, 14 May 1912.
[66] ibid., 11/8, King George V to Esher, 30 April 1912.

Greville diaries as his source, drawing on both the published and unpublished sections.[68] Benson and Esher sought to incorporate drama into their own volumes but they forfeited a great deal of it by excluding Conroy. In the letters of King Leopold to Victoria before her accession and after, there was an immense amount of commiseration with Victoria and some advice about dealing with Conroy. From March to June 1837 there was much correspondence concerning the establishment of Victoria's own Household, as suggested by King William IV and supported by Leopold. It is not clear who initiated the idea of separate establishments for Victoria and her mother – there certainly were precedents by male heirs to the throne – as both Leopold and the King wrote about it,[69] and there was a precedent in Charlotte, Princess of Wales, which Leopold referred to in detail,[70] but it would seem that the exclusion of Conroy was the impetus for the proposal. Benson and Esher did include excerpts of Leopold's correspondence, but not the following:

> I am sorry to learn in the interior [at home] your poor Mother still acts under the direction of Sir John. There has been I find a row with [Dr] Clark about Lady Flora which seems strange. It is lamentable to think how your mother has been misguided by that man who rules over her with a degree of power which in times of old, one would have thought to proceed from witchcraft.[71]

In this sad affair Victoria had been guided by Lord Melbourne. Greville was hugely critical of Melbourne's role accusing him of advising the Queen badly: 'It is inconceivable how Melbourne can have permitted this disgraceful and mischievous scandal ...'.[72] Esher wanted to keep both Victoria's and Melbourne's reputations

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[67] ibid., Princess Helena to Esher, 1 June 1912; Princess Beatrice to Esher, 6 June 1912.

[68] Lytton Strachey, Queen Victoria, London, Chatto & Windus, (1921), 1937, p. 38 and pp. 70-2. Although Strachey only cites Greville as his source on these pages, he very likely used Lee as well. As John Sutherland has shown in 'Strachey, Gentleman Burglar', The Times Literary Supplement, 5 September 2003, p. 13, Strachey in his book Eminent Victorians, (1918), exhibited plagiarism which he had 'developed as an art', that is, he took the essence of a chosen work, for example Edward Cook's biography of Florence Nightingale, and enhanced it. Sutherland's work has persuaded me to investigate Strachey's Queen Victoria, in comparison with Sidney Lee's biography as a future project. But one example can be given already: Lee politely described Conroy as an 'energetic director' of Victoria's tours of the 1830s, (p. 38), but Strachey, with his usual flair, described him as, 'bustling and ridiculous ... mingling the rôles of major-domo with Prime Minister,'(p. 35).

[69] Benson and Esher, Letters, vol I, p. 64, King Leopold to Victoria, 11 April 1837; Footnote 1, p. 68, referring to King William IV's letter of offer to Victoria.

[70] Archives of the Royal Palace, Brussels, Correspondence between Leopold I and Queen Victoria, 60444, 11 April 1837.

[71] Archives of the Royal Palace, Brussels, Leopold to Victoria, 60955, 12 March 1839; another excluded reference to the influence of Conroy upon the Duchess of Kent was 60589, 1 October 1837.

[72] Reeve, Greville Memoirs, vol. IV, 1896 edn, p. 179.

unsullied. From the deeper recesses of his memory, he may have recalled a letter from his old Eton tutor and lifetime mentor, William Cory (Johnson), in 1875, who wrote:

> Great politicians must be judged with much latitude. It is quite certain that Melbourne is one of the few public men who have not had justice done to them. The Queen can, no doubt, help greatly towards making his claims known; ... But it must be remembered that the ghost of Lady Flora haunts that part of her memory.[73]

For Esher, the safest way was to conceal it. At stake was the reputation of the great favourite of the editors, Lord Melbourne. The editors' concerns extended further than the image and reputation of the Queen.

It is questionable whether the policy of exclusion protected anyone's reputation. What it served to do was to hide Victoria's knowledge of sex and her decisive dealings with Conroy. It masked her difficult and fraught adolescence and gave the impression of her first years of Queenship and her relationship with Melbourne as one of a spoilt, attention-seeking child who had come to young adulthood unscathed. But this was untrue. Conroy's influence on her mother was lessened when he left the Duchess's service soon after Flora Hastings's death in 1839, but he continued to exert pressure, trying to obtain additional concessions. Over the next years with the help of the Duke of Wellington, Lord Melbourne, and later Prince Albert, mother and daughter came to be reconciled and at the time of Sir John's death in 1854 they exchanged poignant letters on the matter.[74] Lord Esher's approach that 'old world scandals, out of which no one concerned came out well, had better be put behind the fire,'[75] complied with what Esher believed was the will of the King. His actions did not add to the picture of the 'full development of the Queen's character' but rather were redolent of the culture of secrecy.

8.2 The Assertive Young Queen Victoria, then the Queen becomes a Wife

Each August, after the Regatta at Cowes, King Edward VII travelled abroad to various places and to take the waters at Marienbad, returning to England in

[73] Francis Warre Cornish, ed., Journals and Letters of William Cory, Privately published, Eton, 1897, Letter to Reginald Brett, 22 February 1875, p. 376.
[74] Longford, Victoria R.I., pp. 124-8.
[75] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, p. 49.

September before spending October in Scotland.[76] Consequently, Lord Knollys took his annual holiday, usually in the Highlands, in August, although he returned there often throughout the autumn, as did Lord Esher. In 1905 and 1906 Knollys and Esher spent some of their holidays reading through the proofs of the Letters, Volumes I and II. One topic from the letters which dove-tailed with their current concerns was relations between the sovereign and government ministers. During the 1840s and 1850s, Victoria and Albert, urged on by Stockmar and to a lesser extent by Leopold, maintained pressure on Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, and Foreign Minister, Lord Palmerston, arguing that the Queen must be able to read Despatches to foreign powers before Palmerston sent them. Esher and Knollys were fascinated by these tussles, and frequently discussed Victoria's and Albert's methods of governance.[77]

The discussions had been stimulated by the political machinations that Esher was currently engaged in,[78] and his reading of the proofs and an additional set of letters, from a collection recently found by Princess Beatrice of the ministers of King George IV to their sovereign, dating from the 1820s.[79] Esher, citing this sixty year background knowledge on the subject, had been deeply impressed by the early years of Victoria's reign. He saw it as a time when 'immense care' was taken by individual ministers, namely Peel and Aberdeen, and even those as 'headstrong as Palmerston or as truculent as Russell', not only 'to keep the Sovereign informed' but to ask the Sovereign's advice 'before final decisions were reached in Cabinet upon all questions of substance'.[80] It was, Esher claimed, 'a system of Government which was brought almost to perfection in the middle of the last century'.[81]

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[76] This had long been a fixture in the calendar of King Edward VII which varied little. Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, pp. 274-5.

[77] M. Brett, Journals and Letters of Viscount Esher, vol. II, pp. 103-7, August – Sept 1905, Esher to Knollys; Esher Papers, 10/48, Knollys to Esher, 29 August 1905.

[78] Some of these are detailed in James Lees-Milne, The Enigmatic Edwardian. The Life of Reginald, 2nd Viscount Esher, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1986, p. 152. Also Brett M., Journals and Letters, vol. II, pp. 71 ff. The South African War Committee of which Esher was a member was chaired by Lord Elgin. It preceded the War Office Reform Committee and the Committee of Imperial Defence. Esher was the principal author of the report of the War Office Reform Committee. For the complicated processes of appointments to Committees see Lees-Milne, pp. 122-4, 150-1.

[79] The two sets of correspondence were mentioned in Esher's letters to his son, Maurice, and to Knollys, M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, pp. 97, 99, 103, 106.

[80] ibid., pp. 103-4, Esher to Knollys, 28 August 1905.

[81] ibid., p. 107, Esher to Knollys, 2 September 1905.

This was somewhat fanciful on Esher's part. Throughout the 1840s and 1850s there were many Cabinet changes and consequently no uniform methods of operation between the Sovereign and her Ministers could be maintained; it was largely a matter of convention. These conventions were based on precedents set by Kings influenced by gentlemanly codes of conduct. Having a sovereign who was both young and female gave the gentlemen cause to rethink the *modus operandi* of constitutional government. In the weeks before her accession Greville picked up on uncertainties expressed by politicians and the populace generally:

> What renders speculation so easy and events uncertain, is the absolute ignorance of everybody, without exception, of the character, disposition, and capacity of the Princess. She has been kept in such jealous seclusion by her mother ... It is therefore no difficult matter to form and utter conjectures which nobody can contradict or gainsay but by other conjectures equally uncertain or fallacious.[82]

An anonymous pamphleteer in the year of her Coronation called the attention of the Queen and her subjects to his claim that:

> Royalty has never before been exposed to so severe a trial. Yes, madam, the monarchical principle is exposed to a new and rude trial of its strength in your person ... [whereby] all the powers of executive government are intrusted [sic] to a woman, and that woman a child ...[83]

The new codes had their first constitutional challenge when the Melbourne government resigned. The elderly Duke of Wellington refused the Queen's offer to form a new government, so she had to turn to Sir Robert Peel. He insisted that there had to be a change to the personnel of Victoria's Household. They had been chosen by Victoria on Lord Melbourne's advice and thus were predominantly Whig Ladies-of-the-Bedchamber with no Conservative connections and sympathies.[84] Benson and Esher used this episode of the Queen's early years for drama and to show her assertiveness and her youth. They included extracts from Victoria's Journal, Memoranda by Albert and his secretary, Anson, Cabinet Minutes, and letters of Victoria and her Ministers, Melbourne, Peel and Russell, and King Leopold.[85]

This was a wider range of materials than for most other topics. They showed Peel to have had none of Melbourne's ability in persuading the young Queen, and the Queen to

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[82] Wilson, Greville Diary, vol. II, 16 June 1837, pp. 6-7.
[83] Quoted in Dorothy Thompson, Queen Victoria: Gender and Power, London, Virago, 1990, p. 23. According to Thompson, the author of the pamphlet may have been Lord Brougham.
[84] For details, see Arnstein, Queen Victoria, pp. 44-5 and Longford, Victoria R.I., pp. 115-32.
[85] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, 7-17 May 1839, over twenty pages.

have no intention of relinquishing her Premier if she could apply pressure to prevent it. There is room for debate on this point – did she try to hold to a political principle? Did she feel a particular attachment to her Ladies? Or did she realise that she might be able to bring about the return of Lord Melbourne's Ministry to power? The documents in the Letters, especially her Journal account where, midway through the crisis, she used the phrase, 'Lord Melbourne said we might be beat. I said I never would yield...' gives a sense of her putting pressure on Peel and fighting for the Melbourne Ministry.[86] Over the following days of discussion between the young Queen and Peel, Peel declared he could not form a Government. These meetings produced a torrent of memoranda and letters between Victoria and Melbourne, which Benson and Esher, through proficient editing, depicted very dramatically.

Melbourne resumed the Premiership, but the codes were barely back in place when the social equation was altered again: the Queen became a wife.[87] Although Victoria was Queen, she took her vows very seriously, insisting that the word 'obey' be retained in the marriage vows.[88] This raised questions of propriety in all matters, including political ones: as a wife she would have been subject to her husband's control but as a Queen, Albert was legally and constitutionally her subject, and in the last resort all obedience had to be pledged to her. Palmerston recognised the dilemma of the young couple. He wrote to Melbourne about it: 'It seems impossible that the husband can have over his wife those common and ordinary rights of authority.'[89]

In the domestic sphere, Victoria attempted to establish Albert, unequivocally, as the Head of the family and the Household, and Albert and his family expected this.[90] According to the contemporary doctrine of separate spheres for men and women, if Albert was not accorded this status, Victoria's femininity and his masculinity would both be undermined. In the letters of Albert's brother, Ernest, to their uncle, King Leopold in the week following the marriage he gave reports on Albert's 'progress'. For example, the 21 year old, Ernest, reported to Leopold proudly, that Albert had done the

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[86] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, 10 May 1839.
[87] Some of the material for this section of this chapter has been drawn from my article: 'The Womanly Garb of Queen Victoria's Early Motherhood: 1840-42,' Women's History Review, vol. 8, no. 2 (June, 1999), pp. 277-94.
[88] Martin, The Prince Consort, vol. 1, p. 72.
[89] Quoted in Woodham-Smith, Queen Victoria, p. 252.
[90] C. Grey, The Early Years of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort, London, Smith, Elder, 1869, pp. 293-4.

'correct thing' by not hesitating to speak his opinion on everything. This had led to all orders within the Household and stables being directed through him and thus he had become 'the great channel through whom the Queen's will' was expressed.[91] And yet the status, wealth and property, the defining icons of nineteenth-century masculinity,[92] belonged to the Queen rather than to her husband.

The delineation between being womanly and being a reigning monarch was rarely clear and had to be constantly renegotiated by Victoria herself. The question was raised by her in January 1840: 'What was a Queen anyway, if she had to reverse the laws of nature and put her husband below herself?'[93] Even after reigning for fifteen years, she still sought, unsuccessfully, to reconcile her Queenly self to her perception of womanliness:

> We women are not made for governing – and if we are good women, we must dislike these masculine occupations; but there are times which force one to take interest in them *mal gré bon gré* [sic 'whether one likes it or not'] and I do, of course, intensely.[94]

Like other women of the day, she found that the prescriptive teaching was not based on the facts of real life, and hence, the situation remained unresolved for her. If we read 'women' to mean 'wives', that is: 'We wives are not made for governing – and if we are good wives, we must dislike these masculine occupations,' one aspect of her meaning becomes clearer, but there is a definite admission of her strong inclination to do this unfeminine work. In response to Albert's suggestion that the honeymoon should be longer than three days, Victoria reminded him sternly: 'You forget, my dearest Love, that I am the Sovereign and that business can stop and wait for nothing...' [95]

Although Benson and Esher cited these writings by Victoria, there is no suggestion that they perceived the dilemma she felt. They included the letters and Memoranda of Albert as charting the natural progression of a man with a wife, as he assumed more and more of the public roles of the wife on behalf of the marital unit, as if the wife's interests and energies would necessarily devolve to the domestic. This was even more natural where

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[91] Unpublished Letter Prince Ernest of Saxe-Coburg to King Leopold of the Belgians, 17 February 1840, Coburg Archives 567/WE22:76. I am grateful to Mrs Ingrid Barker for translating these unpublished letters of Prince Ernest.
[92] John Tosh, 'What should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth Century Britain,' History Workshop, vol. 38 (1994), p. 184.
[93] RA VIC/QVJ, 27 January 1840.
[94] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, 3 February 1852, Victoria to Leopold. The French phrase is usually written '*bon gré mal gré*'.

the husband had both talent and youth, and the wife's activities were so frequently to be curtailed by childbearing.

What was a consort to a Queen? In formulating a role for himself, in some respects Albert had a *tabula rasa* as there had been no immediate or acceptable precedent; both Albert and Victoria agreed that Queen Anne and that 'stupid Prince George of Denmark' could hardly serve as precedents.[96] Lord Melbourne wryly observed to Victoria that the consort of a queen was 'an anomalous animal,'[97] neatly encapsulating both the social irregularity of the position and its breeding aspect. As a man of his age, Albert would be much more than a male version of a queen consort. By 1850 he could explain to the Duke of Wellington that to be the consort of the Queen,

> requires that the husband should entirely sink his own individual existence into that of his wife – that he should aim at no power by himself or for himself – should shun all contention – assume no separate responsibility before the public, but make his position entirely a part of hers – to fill up every gap which, as a woman, she would naturally leave in the exercise of her regal functions – continually and anxiously to watch every part of the public business, in order to be able to advise and assist her in any moment in any of the multifarious and difficult questions brought before her, political, or social, or personal. As the natural head of her family, superintendent of her household, manager of her private affairs, sole confidential adviser in politics and only assistant in her communications with her officers of the Government, he is, besides, the husband of the Queen, the tutor of the royal children, the private secretary of the sovereign and her permanent minister.[98]

In Coburg and Hanover, Salic law pertained, which barred women from reigning. That Albert and his advisers were not confident of Victoria's ability to fulfil her duties as sovereign may have stemmed from this. He expected not only domestic ascendancy, but to be a political player too. Despite the aspersions Victoria had cast upon Queen Anne's consort, she was relieved when Lord Melbourne was able to draw on that precedent to achieve Victoria's own wishes, for example to have Albert ride with her for the

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[95] ibid., vol. 1, 31 January 1840, Victoria to Albert.

[96] 'stupid George', from Queen Victoria's Journal, cited by Longford, Victoria R.I., p. 146. Queen Anne's consort, George of Denmark was the most recent precedent but the situations were hardly comparable as the roles of monarchs varied even more than those of their consorts throughout and after the Early Modern period. Also Prince George had his own Royal title as Prince of Denmark; Albert did not have a Royal title.

[97] RA VIC/QVJ, Queen Victoria's Journal, 27 January 1840.

[98] Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, vol. I, p. 74.

Prorogation of Parliament, and to sit by her side during the ceremony.[99] From the outset Albert expected to exercise 'personal power unparalleled by any Consort'.[100]

King Leopold had always proffered advice to Victoria, and to Albert, but she had begun to resent this as intrusive. Benson and Esher published a letter written before her marriage in which she complained to Albert: 'He [Uncle Leopold] appears to me to be nettled because I no longer ask his advice, but dear Uncle is given to believe that he must rule the roast [roost] everywhere.'[101] Albert and his party had stayed in Brussels for five days before he left the Continent for his wedding, and Leopold told the Queen: 'I have already had some conversation with him, and mean to talk *à fond* to him tomorrow. My wish is to see you both happy and thoroughly united and of one mind.'[102] Leopold later told Anson that he had urged that Albert 'ought in business as in everything to be necessary to the Queen, ... a walking dictionary for reference on any point ... [and there] should be no concealment from him on any subject'.[103] Whether Leopold or Albert recounted these ideas to the Queen at this time is not verifiable, but considering the emotional climate in this week before their reunion and their wedding, it is quite unlikely.

Ernest reported that despite Albert's inroads into the domestic power arena, he had achieved no political role for himself in the three months following the marriage. Victoria as a wife, he reported, had created 'a quiet, happy but an inglorious and dull life for him [Albert] ... As queen she moves on another level'.[104] But Albert had begun to engineer changes. Some of these moves by him were documented in Memoranda and excerpts of these documents were included by Benson and Esher. For example, in May 1840, Albert requested that his secretary, George Anson, ask Lord Melbourne to speak to the Queen, and Benson and Esher included this in Volume I.[105] In this Memorandum, Victoria was quoted as confirming that the Prince had complained that she did not

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[99] Longford, Victoria R. I,, p. 163.
[100] Robert Rhodes James, Albert, Prince Consort: A Biography, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1983, p. 111. Inasmuch as Robert Rhodes James's implicit comparison was with queen consorts, who were expected to play no formal role in government at all, it tells us little.
[101] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, Victoria to Albert, 8 December 1839.
[102] ibid., Leopold to Victoria, 1 February 1840.
[103] RA VIC/Y, 54/8, 15 August 1840. Memorandum by Mr George Anson after discussion with King Leopold on Prince Albert's role, not included by Benson and Esher.
[104] Unpublished Letter, Prince Ernest to King Leopold, Dated 1 May 1840, Coburg Archives, 567/WE22:66.
[105] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. 1, 28 May 1840, Memorandum by Mr Anson.

confide in him on 'trivial matters and on all matters connected with the politics of the country', which Lord Melbourne advised her she should do. At the same meeting, Leopold's mentor and adviser to Albert, Baron Stockmar, agreed that the 'Queen had not started upon a right principle' by not including the Prince in her meetings with her Ministers, but he did warn that 'there is danger in his [Albert] wishing it all at once'.[106] It seems unthinkable that men of such experience should imagine that Victoria, who during her adolescence, had withstood an attempt to impose a Regency upon her, and the year previously had stood up to the in-coming Prime Minister Peel during the Bedchamber crisis, who spoke often of enjoying Queenship, would relinquish a position for which she believed she had been ordained by God, to comply with the gendered expectations and allow Albert to rule as King. Stockmar continued that 'she should by degrees impart everything' to Albert.[107] Whether he meant 'to give' or 'to communicate' is less important than the qualifier that it should include 'everything'.

Benson thought the Anson Memoranda 'interesting enough of the early married days',[108] but showed no interest in interrogating Albert's progress. Later biographers have been equally accepting of the Benson and Esher perspective. Hector Bolitho in 1932 wrote philosophically on this issue: 'When a woman is in love, her desire for power becomes less and less.'[109] But later biographers have been struck by the baldness of Albert's aspirations during his first months of marriage, and the following years, as shown through the Anson Memoranda. Monica Charlot in 1991 observed that: 'For Albert there was no doubt that a Queen reigning in her own right was something of an anomaly.'[110]

However, it was Victoria's first pregnancy rather than her husband's political aspirations that bolstered Albert's position – and not just by affirming his masculinity. By Easter it was known Victoria was with child. In June 1840, the first assassination attempt on Victoria's life was made.[111] Following this attempt on the Queen, and with

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[106] ibid..
[107] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, 27 July 1841, Memorandum by Mr Anson.
[108] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 5 January 1906.
[109] Hector Bolitho, Albert the Good, London, Cobden-Sanderson, 1932, p. 86.
[110] Monica Charlot, Victoria The Young Queen, Oxford, Blackwells, 1991, p. 191. See also Chapters 11 and 12.
[111] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, Palmerston to Victoria, 10 June 1840; letters from the King of the French, and Lord Melbourne, 11 June 1840; from King Leopold, 13 June 1840. For assassination attempts: Grey, The Early Years, pp. 316-8, gives Albert's version of the first attempt; see also F.B. Smith, 'Lights and Shadows in the Life of John Freeman', Victorian Studies, vol. 30, no. 4

all parties being cognisant of the perils of childbirth,[112] in July 1840 an Act was passed through the Parliament naming Albert as Regent in the event of Victoria's death preceding her heir's attainment of eighteen years of age. Benson and Esher did not include any documents of this important event, but it is explained in Martin's biography as a great achievement by Albert. Albert was ecstatic as he wrote to his brother:

> I am to be Regent – alone – Regent without a council. You will understand the importance of this matter and that it gives my position here in the country a fresh significance.[113]

Albert was not yet twenty-one years old, and although he had been naturalised before his marriage, he did not own property, yet Stockmar, Melbourne, Peel, Wellington and Anson had worked behind the scenes to steer the Bill through Parliament and grant him authority over the heir. Melbourne raised the matter with the expectant mother – a delicate issue which she recorded *verbatim* in her Journal – saying to her:

> 'There is a subject I must mention, which is of great importance, & one of great emergency; perhaps you may anticipate what I mean;' (which I answered I did not), 'it is about having a Bill for a Regency'...[114]

(1987), pp. 459-73; and Trevor Turner, 'Erotomania and Queen Victoria: or Love among the Assassins?' Psychiatric Bulletin, vol. 14 (1990), pp. 224-7, lists each of the seven assassination attempts and analyses them.

[112] In the 1840s the mortality rate was conservatively estimated to be five maternal deaths per thousand live births. Pat Jalland, Death in the Victorian Family, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 46. There were several tragedies associated with childbirth which Victoria was familiar with:

In 1816, Leopold, as Prince of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, had married Princess Charlotte, the Princess of Wales, the only legitimate grandchild of King George III and Queen Charlotte. After suffering several miscarriages she died at the age of twenty-two, after the difficult delivery of a stillborn son. Such was the public awareness, there was a huge outpouring of grief upon her death, monuments were erected in her memory, and one of her physicians committed suicide three months later. Linda Colley, Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837, London, BCA, 1992, pp. 220-1, 270-2 and Longford, Victoria R.I., pp. 150-1.

Baron Stockmar had been present at Charlotte's death, and although this had occurred two years before Victoria's own birth, she knew about Charlotte's demise, and the dangers of childbirth. She recorded a discussion with Lord Melbourne in 1838, concerning Princess Charlotte, her life, her happiness with Leopold, and her tragic death. See Longford, Victoria R. I., p. 150, and Esher, Girlhood Journal, p.278. It is now believed that Charlotte may have suffered a form of the disease, porphyria, inherited from her grandfather, George III, which would have made her very susceptible to complications in childbirth. Ida McAlpine and Richard Hunter, George III and the Mad-Business, London, Pimlico (1969), 1995, pp. 241-6.

In 1839 Princess Marie of Württemberg, merely six years older than Victoria, had died of tuberculosis several months after the birth of a son. Princess Marie was a sister of King Leopold's second wife, Louise, and had married Prince Alexander, one of Leopold's nephews. There is no direct mention of the cause of her death in Benson and Esher, but Leopold wrote to Victoria that Alexander's position 'puts me in mind of my own in 1817'. Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, 11 and 18 January 1839.

[113] Hector Bolitho ed., The Prince Consort and his Brother: Two Hundred New Letters, London, Cobden-Sanderson, 1933, p. 21, Albert to Ernest, 17 July 1840.

[114] Quoted in Longford, Victoria R.I, p. 163. The Bill was passed on the 13 July 1840.

A Queen Consort, especially of Albert's age, would not have been accorded those same Regency provisions. Victoria's mother had been declared Regent in 1820 to Victoria, heir presumptive. At that time she was a mature woman who had previously acted as Regent for her son in Leiningen for several years during her first widowhood. In Albert's case this Regency was for the heir apparent. As Monica Charlot observed: 'The spirit of the age certainly was on Albert's side.'[115] Albert expressed this idea himself just before the birth of their first child, the Princess Royal, when he wrote to his brother:

> I wish you could see us here and see in us a couple united in love and unanimity. Now Victoria is also ready to give up something for my sake, I everything for her sake ... Do not think I lead a submissive life. On the contrary, here, where the lawful position of the man is so, I have formed a *prize life* for myself.[116]

During her confinement in the six weeks following the birth, Albert conducted Privy Council meetings and met with her Ministers, a point which Benson and Esher did not include in their selections, but which Victoria noted in her Journal and Albert related to his brother.[117]

Albert's progress over the next year was steady. Many of the published letters and Memoranda bearing Victoria's name were drafted by Albert and the editors had to establish a format which set this out clearly. Benson wrote to Esher:

> A point of considerable difficulty has turned up. In the documents referring to the formation of the 1855 Govt there are a good many memoranda signed Victoria R. These are sometimes in the first person singular 'I' and sometimes in the first person plural 'we'.
> But when they are in the first person singular, the word 'I' always stands for Prince Albert.
> This will cause great confusion.[118]

They established Albert was 'I'; in Cabinet correspondence Victoria's use of the third person singular – she – throughout was retained for her letters. 'We' may have been used by the Queen more frequently in verbal exchanges, but in written Memoranda by Albert it applies to Victoria and Albert.[119] In Memoranda signed by the Queen but written by Albert (where the pronoun 'I' was used), a footnote was occasionally given

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[115] Charlot, Victoria. The Young Queen, p. 189.
[116] Bolitho, The Prince Consort and his Brother, p. 31. no day, September 1840.
[117] RA VIC/QVJ: 1 December 1840, and Bolitho, The Prince Consort and his Brother, pp. 34 and 24 November 1840.
[118] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 4 March 1907.
[119] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, 27 February 1851, Memorandum. 'Lord Stanley arrived at half past five o'clock. We were struck by the change of his countenance ...'

explaining the authorship, but frequently this was inconsistent which suggests that the editors may have been unsure sometimes. Benson and Esher also offered an explanation of the complexities of attribution in their Introduction.[120] Benson was correct in alerting Esher to the confusion.

Benson and Esher included many examples of Albert's 'progress' toward a shared monarchy. For example, in what appears today to be a major piece of manipulation by Albert, Anson reported having been sent to see Lord Melbourne in May 1841:

> Told Lord Melbourne that the Prince wished him to impress upon the Queen's mind not to act upon the approaching crisis without the Prince, because she would not be able to go through the difficulties herself, and the Prince would not be able to help her when he was ignorant of the considerations which had influenced her actions. He would wish Lord Melbourne when with the Queen to call in the Prince, in order that they might both be set right about Lord Melbourne's opinions, that he might express in the presence of the other his views, in order that he should not convey different impressions by speaking to them separately, so that they might act in concert.
> The Prince says the Queen always sees what is right at a glance, but if her feelings run contrary she avoids the Prince's arguments, which she feels sure agree with her own, and seeks arguments to support her wishes against her convictions from other people.[121]

The 'impending crisis' to which Albert was alluding was a change of Government which he feared would mean that the subject of the Ladies of the Bedchamber would arise again, and Albert and Lord Melbourne wanted to avoid a Constitutional crisis like that of 1839.[122] Benson and Esher included some of the Memoranda in constructing their image of the Queen and her reign. Benson enthused: 'Really he was an amazing man; his industry and intelligence almost preternatural!'[123] It was in accordance with their own perceptions of gendered roles: even if a Queen Consort had Albert's abilities, she would not have been lauded by them or the community at large, had she undertaken this type of work to assist the King.

At the time of the 1841 Parliamentary crisis, Queen Victoria was in the early difficult part of her second pregnancy, following too closely after her first; the first two babies being born a mere fifty weeks apart.[124] What is not revealed by Benson and Esher is

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[120] ibid., vol. I, Introduction, 1907, pp. 37-9; 1908, pp. 28-9.
[121] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. 1, 5 May 1841.
[122] Martin, Prince Consort, vol. I, pp. 104-5.
[123] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 5 October 1904.
[124] For details see Fulford, Dearest Child, p. 147, Victoria to Vicky, 27 November 1858, on the regrettable closeness of childbirths; Ward, 'Womanly Garb', pp. 285-6. For a medical discussion of

that Victoria did not know Albert and Melbourne had had discussions about how to avert a second Bedchamber Crisis, or that they had sent Anson, before the 10 May 1841, to meet with Sir Robert Peel to 'prepare the ground' for the change of government.[125] Following those meetings and others of the 10 May, Victoria signed a Memorandum directing that the Prime Minister should appoint those members of the Household who are in Parliament. It retained for the Queen the right to appoint her Ladies of the Bedchamber; however, the Prime Minister could object to particular individuals 'in case he would deem their appointment injurious to the Government, when the Queen would probably not appoint the Lady'.[126] There were still some upsetting scenes in the Court which suggests that Victoria was not happy with the situation.[127] This in turn would suggest that the Memorandum was drafted by Albert. Many letters written after the date of the Memorandum were included by Benson and Esher. These were mostly between Victoria and Melbourne, all seeking to soothe the transition for everyone. In the end only three women, the Duchess of Sutherland, the Duchess of Bedford and Lady Normanby ultimately were asked to resign.[128] Melbourne declared that the time in Victoria's service was 'the proudest as well as the happiest part of his life'.[129] Sir Robert Peel and his Cabinet were finally sworn into Office in September 1841, and Albert was made Chairman of the Arts Commission for the rebuilding of Parliament.[130]

That the editors selected material time and again that showed clearly the influence of Albert reinforced the underlying ethos of the editors – that the actions of the consort of the sovereign did not need to be interrogated if the consort was a man. Very different attitudes were displayed when Queen Adelaide, consort of Victoria's uncle, King William IV, was believed to have asserted some influence upon the King during the reform agitation. On one occasion, her carriage was assailed by an angry mob in London, and on a second occasion, upon the dismissal of the Whig ministry of Lord Melbourne in 1834 banners of The Times newspaper declared: 'The Queen has done it

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pregnancy and lactation, see 'If Queen Victoria had known about LAM', Lancet, vol. 337, no. 8743 (March 1991), p. 703-5.

[125] Longford, Victoria R. I., pp. 168-70. Charlot, Victoria, p. 199, suggests that Longford is wrong in this, but her argument is flawed. Anson and Albert had begun their machinations in March, not May.

[126] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. 1, 11 May 1841.

[127] Charlot, Victoria, pp. 199-204.

[128] Longford, Victoria R.I., p. 169.

[129] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. 1, Melbourne to Victoria, 31 August 1841.

all' and were placarded all over London.[131] The inclusion of so much of Albert's material signifies the acceptability to the editors of the intervention by a male consort, less than twenty years after the accusations against Queen Adelaide. The values, and double standards, persisted into the 1900s.

No wonder that by August 1841 Albert believed that the 'Court from highest to lowest' has been brought 'to a proper sense of the position of the Queen's husband'.[132] At the time, senior statesmen like Melbourne and Palmerston were non-plussed by, but also admiring of, Albert's fervour. As Charlot observed: the two Whig statesmen were 'caricatures of English aristocrats' – gregarious, displaying an air of indolence, epicures accomplished in the art of witty exchanges after dinner and fond of the company of women – whereas Albert was the opposite – 'Germanic, solitary, intolerant, finding social life time wasting, and women of little interest'.[133] Albert was thirty years their junior, with values and ideas they could recognise but of which they were sceptical. Despite these differences, they were admiring of his qualities, but Albert remained critical of them. The two senior statesmen were in their fifties, with many years of Cabinet experience between them; in August 1841, Albert was approaching his twenty-second birthday.

8.3 The Queen, the Prince and her Dealings with her Ministers

Lord Esher was hugely admiring of Queen Victoria's and the Prince's industriousness and their executive abilities: 'Certainly the work done by her and the P. Consort was amazing ... it was in their heyday of youth and prosperity.'[134] The editors may have been further influenced by William Gladstone's comments made in 1876:

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[130] Martin, Prince Consort, vol. I, pp. 118-9.
[131] D.N.B. entry for Queen Adelaide, (1855), re-printed in Frank Prochaska, Royal Lives. Portraits of Past Royals by those in the Know, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 116-8.
[132] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. 1, 27 July 1841, Memorandum by Mr Anson.
[133] Charlot, Victoria, pp. 203-4.
[134] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, p. 97.

> It was a matter of course that the Queen's husband should be more or less her political adviser. It would have been nothing less than a violence done to nature if, with his great powers and congenial will, any limits had been placed upon the relations of confidence between the two, with respect to any public affairs whatever ...[135]

Esher believed that the abilities Victoria had developed by the end of the reign, and with which he was familiar and admiring, had developed smoothly under the tutelage of King Leopold and his *eminence grise*, Baron Stockmar, Lord Melbourne, and then Prince Albert. Neither Esher nor Benson felt any imperative to interrogate the contestation of executive prerogatives which had taken place in the early years of her marriage. Criticism towards Albert was never based on his position as consort.

Victoria's methods and practices became for Esher a blueprint for the dealings between subsequent Sovereigns and Ministers. In August 1905, he set out his ideas in a long letter to Lord Knollys:

> I can only tell you, that after studying now, with great completeness, the history of the relation of the Crown to different Administrations, extending over sixty years, ... that the monarchical system as understood by Sir Robert Peel, Lord Aberdeen, Lord Palmerston and Lord Derby, and as worked by them in conjunction with the Queen, was of immense value to the State and to the people of this country ... the Sovereign's interferences and tenacity, both of which were very remarkable, had on several very vital occasions stayed the action of a Minister, when such action involved risks and perils which reflection convinced him and his colleagues they were not justified in incurring.
> There is one very notable example, which is the action of the Sovereign in restraining Lord John Russell in 1859, when, but for the tenacity of the Crown, England would have been mixed up in the Austro-Italian war ...
> It would only waste your time if I were to amplify examples ... [but they] are object lessons which, if the dignity of High Office under the Crown is to be maintained, the present Prime Minister and his successor ought to take them seriously to heart.[136]

As Esher conceded, the development of Queen Victoria's executive abilities evolved from her accession until Albert's death in 1861 and continued to evolve for the rest of her life,[137] but he could not see that during all of that time she continued to grapple with the unresolved paradoxes of female sovereignty. The most difficult of these was the Queen and wife paradox, which emanated from Albert's position in the Court. The altercations between Victoria and Lord Palmerston, culminating in his dismissal in

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[135] Quoted in J.A. Marriott, Queen Victoria and her Ministers, London, John Murray, 1933, p. 46. Gladstone's comments were made in reference to attacks which had been made upon the Prince Consort on the eve of the Crimean War.
[136] M. Brett, Journals and Letters of Lord Esher, vol. II, 28 August 1905, pp. 103-6.

1851, and the editors' perceptions of Victoria's executive style, are both depicted through the selections of their correspondence in the Letters. Albert's role is not interrogated in any of these issues. His increased assertiveness is taken for granted, in much the same vein as Theodore Martin had done in his biography of Albert.

The quality of Victoria's relations with Lord Palmerston varied enormously over the years of 1837-65, the years in common between Palmerston's career and Victoria's reign.[138] Albert exerted much influence upon this relationship. By Victoria's accession in 1837, Palmerston had become a major figure in international politics, having been instrumental in securing the independence of the Belgian throne with Leopold at its head.[139] Palmerston had also assisted Dona Maria II in Portugal and Queen Isabella in Spain, been involved in Greece and Turkey, and resisted Russian encroachments in the Middle East. He came to be cordially detested by absolutist monarchs and their ministers, and he remained ever suspicious of French expansionist intentions which he thwarted at every opportunity. His relations with Victoria began with an initial friendly and congenial period during the years of the Melbourne Ministry, before her marriage.[140] During Victoria's first years as Queen, Palmerston was frequently at Court at the same time as Lord Melbourne, and Lord Melbourne's sister, Lady Cowper. He advised Victoria in much the same avuncular tone and manner[141] as did Melbourne, and frequently with gentlemanly humour, which Benson and Esher appreciated:

> Viscount Palmerston ... begs to state that he has reason to believe, from what Count Pollon [Sardinian Minister to England] said to him in conversation two days ago, that the Duke of Lucca [an independent Italian state] has a notion that Sovereign Princes who have had the honour of dining with your Majesty, have been invited by note not by card. If that should be so, and if your Majesty should invite the Duke of Lucca to dine at the Palace before his departure, perhaps the invitation should be made by note instead of card, as it was when the Duke last dined at the Palace. Your Majesty may think this is a small matter, but the Duke is a small Sovereign.[142]

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[137] M. Brett, Journals and Letters of Lord Esher, 2 September 1905, pp. 106-8.

[138] Much of the following detail is drawn from Brian Connell, Regina vs Palmerston. The Private Correspondence between Queen Victoria and her Foreign Minister, 1837-1865, New York, Doubleday, 1961, and Arnstein, Queen Victoria, pp. 87-96. See Connell, Regina vs Palmerston, p. 23.

[139] See the correspondence between King Leopold and Palmerston from 1831– 65 in the Archives of the Royal Palace, Brussels and Palmerston Papers, Hartley Library Archives and Manuscripts, Southampton University.

[140] Esher, Girlhood Journal, vol. II, for example, pp. 223-9, describing a visit to Windsor by Palmerston, Melbourne and others, including horse-riding, reading Despatches and evening entertainments.

[141] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, for example, 22 July 1837 and 25 February 1838, Palmerston to Victoria.

[142] ibid., Palmerston to Victoria, 5 March 1839.

After her marriage, Victoria began to display stronger notions about foreign policy. These changes became more obvious after May 1840, when Albert had invoked Melbourne's and Stockmar's help to persuade or even force Victoria to allow him to have access to the Ministerial papers. Some of these changes were picked up by Benson and Esher, when they included Victoria's comment to Leopold in September 1840, that 'Albert, who sends his love, is much occupied with the Eastern Affairs',[143] and the long closely argued reply to Palmerston's letter of 11 November 1840 which sounds much more like Albert than Victoria.[144] Other episodes of Albert's interference, however, were overlooked: One letter that Benson and Esher did not include was from Queen Victoria to Melbourne in September 1840, asking if she might 'show these drafts to the Prince?' reassuring him that Lord Melbourne would have them by half past three 'at latest'.[145] This was an early indication of the Prince's intentions of ensuring that he was involved. The letters selected by Benson and Esher for all three volumes reflect the ever-increasing circles of influence and endeavour of the Prince.

In 1848, as the Chartist threats were growing in England and the revolutionaries were expanding their causes throughout Europe, Prime Minister Lord John Russell informed Prince Albert of the strategies in place for an orderly march.[146] Albert replied that he anticipated that the Kennington Common meeting would not create the unrest and its aftermath experienced in Europe, and some measures to restore order through employment should be embarked upon immediately. He suggested that the government look at resuming some schemes to assist the large number of unemployed men in London, as soon as possible. Many of the men had been laid-off due to the suspension of government works as economic measures.[147] Such commonsense suggestions were included by Benson and Esher, and show how creatively Albert could approach social problems.

The Prince and Victoria contested many of Palmerston's actions as Foreign Minister during the 1846-51 period, which led to a prolonged series of battles with Lord Palmerston. Some of their expressions were not in accord with Esher's and Benson's image of Queenliness, or the political landscapes of Edwardian England. Many

[143] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, 26 September 1840.
[144] ibid., 11 November 1840.
[145] Connell, Regina vs Palmerston, p. 247.
[146] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, Russell to Albert, 9 April 1848.

passages of criticism of Palmerston by Victoria, Albert and Leopold were ordered to be excised, but not until immediately prior to printing,[148] most likely in deference to King Edward. One category of the excisions was the use of *Pilgerstein* as a disparaging nickname for Palmerston, long used by Victoria, Albert and Leopold. It was derived from a German version of his name *Pilger*, being German for a palmer, someone who returned from the Holy Land with a palm frond, a pilgrim: 'No doubt they got a sardonic kick out of visualizing [Palmerston, who they had come to see as] the devil's son, disguised as a holy man with staff and scrip ... inflaming foreign nationalists, establishing constitutional governments, picking quarrels with despots.'[149] The *Pilgerstein* nicknames were not excised from the proofs until August 1906, in preparation of the proofs for King Edward's approval.[150]

When Victoria first came to the throne, Palmerston was a man of fifty-three. He was still handsome and vigorous, with the nickname 'Cupid' remaining from his University days, but Victoria only heard of his nocturnal wanderings at Windsor Castle after her marriage.[151] Just prior to Victoria's marriage to Albert, Palmerston married his paramour of thirty years, Emily Cowper, a now widowed lady-in-waiting to Victoria. As a pair of twenty-year-olds, Victoria and Albert were amused since the 'elderly lovers' were in their fifties: 'I am sure it will make you smile,' Victoria wrote to Albert.[152] 'They make up a century between them,' Albert quipped.[153] According to Longford Victoria never approved of widows marrying, and under Albert's influence she came to see Palmerston's urbanity as rakish. After 1841 Palmerston was out of office and had little to do with the Court. They dealt with Aberdeen who was seen to be more malleable to the wishes of the Royal couple. It was most likely their personal judgement against Palmerston combined with Albert's intention to become active in politics that led to the antagonisms of the next period of Palmerston's Foreign Ministership.

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[147] ibid., 10 April 1848, Albert to John Russell.
[148] John Murray Archives, CB 2, 26 August 1906.
[149] Longford, Victoria R.I., pp. 224-5.
[150] Further discussion of the significance of these excisions and the timing of them is provided in the following chapter.
[151] Longford, Victoria R.I., p. 201.
[152] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol.. I, Victoria to Albert, 8 December1839.
[153] Daphne Bennett, A King without a Crown. Albert, Prince Consort of England 1819-1861, London, Century, 1977, p. 86.

Upon his return to the Cabinet as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, between 1846 and 1851, relations grew increasingly hostile. When Victoria's and Albert's expectations differed from those of their Minister there was discord which in turn led to a constant badgering of Lord Palmerston and Lord Russell, by Victoria and Albert, on the issues of consultation and the approval of despatches. The Queen and Prince Albert frequently complained to Palmerston, and to the Prime Minister, John Russell, about not being informed in advance of decisions that Palmerston took and of the communications he sent to foreign governments. Many of these letters were published in Volume II.[154] Very few of the letters carry Albert's name, although from 1843 he wrote summaries of every interview the Queen held, penned Memoranda and even gradually began to draft many of the Queen's official letters.[155] Given the congenial relationship Victoria had with Palmerston in the early years of her reign, Albert's influence upon her was very marked.

Indeed Victoria's and Albert's letters of complaint from that period were so numerous that Benson could make only a representative selection. In August 1850, Victoria had written a letter to John Russell directing him to pass it on to Palmerston.[156]

> With reference to the conversation about Lord Palmerston which the Queen had with Lord John Russell the other day, and Lord Palmerston's disavowal that he ever intended any disrespect to her by the various neglects of which she has had so long and so often to complain, she thinks it right, in order *to prevent any mistakes in the future*, shortly to explain *what she expects of her Foreign Secretary*. She requires: (1) That he will distinctly state what he proposes in a given case, in order that the Queen may know as distinctly to *what* she has given her Royal sanction; (2) Having *once given* her sanction to a measure, that it may not be arbitrarily altered or modified by the Minister; such an act she must consider as failing in sincerity towards the Crown, and justly to be visited by the exercise of her Constitutional right of dismissing that Minister. She expects to be kept informed of what passes between him and the Foreign Ministers before important decisions are taken based on that intercourse; to receive Foreign Despatches in good time, and to have the drafts for approval sent to her in sufficient time to make herself acquainted with their contents before they must be sent off. The Queen thinks it best that Lord John Russell should show this letter to Lord Palmerston.[157]

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[154] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, Memorandum by Mr Anson, of Minutes of Conversations with Lord Melbourne and Baron Stockmar, 28 May 1840.

[155] See the Prince's view of his role, given in a letter from the Prince to the Duke of Wellington, quoted in Martin, Prince Consort, vol. I, p. 74, and Martin's comments, (and hence the Queen's) pp. 69-75. See also Brian Connell, Regina vs Palmerston, p. 74.

[156] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, A Memo from Baron Stockmar, 12 March 1850, formed the basis for Victoria's letter to John Russell of 12 August 1850. Both were included by Benson.

[157] ibid.,12 August 1850.

Documents like this one show how assertive Victoria and Albert had become with their ministers, and their role in developing managerial procedures of constitutional monarchy.[158] This document had some notoriety at the time. Russell had, ill-advisedly, read it out in Parliament in 1851, after the forced resignation of Palmerston, for the purpose of exonerating his own decision by reading the Queen's criticism of Palmerston.

Six months later, in March 1851 the Queen reminded Lord Russell that he too 'must keep her constantly informed of what is going on and of the temper of the parties in and out of the Parliament'.[159] Russell was in a difficult position. He was not confident of the Queen's good opinion of him, and this was especially apparent to his wife.[160] He did not want to displease the Queen; he did not entirely approve of Palmerston's conduct but he could not afford to offend his Radical and Liberal MPs who admired Palmerston and on whose support his government relied.[161] Throughout the year Victoria was bothered by Palmerston's continued attempts to assert his judgements on matters which she believed could put her at conflict with her Government.[162] In October 1851, there ensued weeks of correspondence between the Queen, Russell and Palmerston on the visit of one of the severest critics of Austria and Russia, the Hungarian patriot, Lajos Kossuth.[163] Only three years earlier, in 1848, Kossuth had sought, but ultimately failed, to overthrow the Austrian monarchy by force. Victoria and Albert looked upon the young Franz Josef of Austria as a respected fellow European monarch. Palmerston tried to evade official censure by planning to entertain him in his own home, as a private citizen. For Palmerston to entertain Kossuth (officially or privately) in 1851 might be

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[158] It also fits with the burgeoning of procedural reforms within the civil service. Gillian Sutherland, ed. Studies in the Growth of Nineteenth-century Government, London, Routledge, Kegan & Paul, 1972, Introduction. As with various other aspects of Victoria's and Albert's lives, their actions here invite the question: Did they follow trends or set them in motion? For example, in relation to fashions and consumer products, see Thomas Richards, The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1990; on the popularity of the Scottish Highlands, tartans and 'Balmorality', see Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, The Invention of Tradition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (1983), 2000, pp. 38 and 39.
[159] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, 4 March 1851.
[160] John Prest, Lord John Russell, London, Macmillan, 1972, pp. 360-1.
[161] Jasper Ridley, Lord Palmerston, London, Constable, 1970, p. 394.
[162] See Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, vol. II, pp. 301 ff for the Queen's view of this period. Connell, Regina vs Palmerston, pp. 125-162, provides details and extended excerpts of correspondence on all of the contentious issues of 1850-1.

compared to Foreign Secretary Jack Straw in the London of 2004 entertaining Osama bin Laden. Victoria declared that if he did she would sack him; he backed down.[164] But within ten days Palmerston had resumed his antagonistic attitude, by receiving a Radical deputation from Finsbury and Islington, which congratulated him on receiving Kossuth, thereby attacking Tsar Nicholas and the Emperor Franz Josef.[165] Greville thought this the worst thing Palmerston had ever done.[166] But there was more to come in the Palmerston altercations and Benson and Esher used this episode to emphasise even more strongly how assertive Albert and Victoria had become.

On the anniversary of the battle of Austerlitz and of the coronation of Napoleon I Louis Napoleon dissolved the National Assembly in Paris and arrested the leaders. By these actions he staged a *coup d'état*, effectively making himself President for life, (he declared himself Emperor Napoleon III in 1852).[167] The English Ambassador, Lord Normanby had been ordered to remain neutral,[168] but Palmerston congratulated the French Ambassador, Count Walewski, telling him he approved of the *coup*.[169] When Normanby told the French Foreign Minister in Paris that England was remaining neutral, he was hugely embarrassed to be told that Palmerston's warm approval had already been received.[170]

In the published Letters, between these two letters of Queen Victoria's to John Russell, are two others They are from the Marchioness of Normanby, who had written to Lord Normanby's brother, Colonel Phipps, who was an equerry to Prince Albert. She detailed the difficult and dangerous diplomatic situation her husband found himself in, asking her brother-in-law what was the general feeling in England,[171] and how should

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[163] Kossuth is given various forenames: 'Louis' by Benson and Esher, Index; 'Lajos' by Connell, p. 157; 'Ferencz' by Longford, p. 221; and 'Lajos' in Alan Palmer, Dictionary of Modern History 1789-1945, London, Penguin, p. 165.

[164] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, 24 October 1851 – 3 November 1851. The toughness of the battle between Victoria and Palmerston has been well depicted by the skilful editing of Benson and Esher. For background see Introductory Notes for 1849 and 1851, Benson and Esher; also Longford, Victoria R.I., pp. 221-2; and for greater detail, Connell, Regina vs Palmerston, pp. 157-8.

[165] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, Victoria to John Russell, 20 November 1851.

[166] Longford, Victoria R. I., p. 222.

[167] Ridley, Palmerston, pp. 397-8.

[168] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, Victoria to John Russell 4 December 1851.

[169] Ridley, Palmerston, pp. 397-9. Count Walewski was the illegitimate son of Napoleon I and Marie Walewska.

[170] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, Victoria to John Russell, 13 December 1851.

[171] ibid., Marchioness of Normanby to Colonel Phipps, 7 December 1851.

they prepare for the consequences ...?[172] The second letter was submitted to the Queen, and in this way she was alerted to Palmerston's 'double-crossing' of Normanby.[173] Russell called on Palmerston to give up the seals of the Foreign Office.[174] The evolution of ministerial dealings was in practice chaotic and unpredictable. However Victoria was able to be shown by the editors, to be assertive, exacting and insistent, whilst being fully supported in this critical surveillance upon Palmerston and Russell by Albert, and by Stockmar and Leopold. The political actions of 1848-51 added to the drama of the Letters.

This episode did not end the Queen's dealings with Palmerston or with John Russell, but a somewhat friendlier atmosphere returned during the next few years when Palmerston became Prime Minister, with the high point of cordiality coming c.1856-7 at the end of the Crimean War and immediately thereafter. There were however more hostilities between 1859 and 1865 though never so severe as they had been in the years 1848-51, during Palmerston's term as Foreign Secretary. When reading the letters of 1859, Esher observed:

> The Prince Consort was taking a stronger hold than ever of the helm of State and there were constant battles between him and the Ministers. He, acting in the Queen's name. Although he was nearly always right, that there was friction is beyond doubt. Had he lived, his tenacity might have hardened into obstinacy, and the relations between him and a Government founded – like ours – on democratic institutions, would have become very strained.
> Also there were signs of incipient trouble between him and the P. of Wales, young as the Prince was. So that perhaps his early death was no great misfortune. Probably his mission was fulfilled, and his work done, in the training which he gave the Queen. He lived long enough to sow the seed but not to see the ear ripen. Perhaps it was as well.[175]

This conclusion has been reached by various biographers of Albert subsequently, but not always expressed so bluntly.[176] Esher was expressing this opinion in a private letter written to his son, not to Knollys or Benson. There were no letters included which were signed as having been written by Albert, but Esher must have known (from the

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[172] ibid., 9 December 1851.

[173] Victoria recorded her meeting with Colonel Phipps in her Journal, 11 December 1851. The transcriptions of her Journal entries in Connell, Regina vs Palmerston, pp. 158-9, mention letters from Lord Normanby rather than his wife. The important part played by the Marchioness is not mentioned in Martin's account of Palmerston's dismissal in Prince Consort, vol. II, pp. 411-8.

[174] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, 19 December 1851, John Russell to Victoria; and 23 December 1851, Victoria to John Russell.

[175] M. Brett, Journal and Letters, letter to Maurice from Esher, 18 August 1905.

[176] Stanley Weintraub, Albert, Uncrowned King, London, John Murray, 1997, pp. 441-3; Fulford, The Prince Consort, pp. 180-1 and Chapter 10.

handwriting or the tone) or have assumed that many of the letters to do with the Reform Bill, and the international disagreements between Austria and France over Sardinia and other states of the Italian peninsula, came from Albert. There are no letters included in the selection that even hint at the 'signs of insipient trouble' between Albert and the Prince of Wales picked up by Esher. Perhaps the King had related some detail of the visit to Cherbourg made by the Prince in the company of Victoria and Albert,[177] or during their visit to Ireland where Bertie marched past with his company.[178] Or perhaps it was an example of Esher indulging in some exhibitionism toward his son. One point his letter does emphasise is that Esher still believed in 1905 that Albert's mission was fulfilled 'in the training which he gave the Queen'.

Through skilful editing, Benson and Esher were able to show the assertion of Victoria's powers and her achievements in terms of influencing political outcomes, albeit, with a taken for granted attitude towards Albert's ever-increasing dominance as her husband. They could see no importance for the women's correspondence and they sought to downplay the Coburg influence.

[177] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. III, footnote to letter of Leopold to Victoria, 16 July 1858.
[178] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. III, Victoria to Leopold, 26 August 1861. Victoria was pleased and relieved that Bertie 'did not look at all so very small'.

Chapter 9

The Images underplayed by the Editors: The Feminine, Maternal and Family-Oriented Side of Victoria

9.1 The Coburg Family Influences

On the Nursery landing at Osborne House, on the Isle of Wight, hangs a collection of framed portraits of the Coburg uncles and aunts of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. They are not of the massive, door-sized dimensions of the portraits of her father's family, the Hanoverian men, in the Waterloo room at Windsor Castle, but are smaller and domestic in character, hung at eye-level. The portraits fit the space perfectly, and are displayed in matching frames. One could assume they were painted specifically for the new and, in Victoria's and Albert's eyes, their first, family home. There is no equivalent display of the Hanoverian relatives in the house. (Perhaps, the young parents felt there were sufficient renderings of these at Windsor Castle.) It was important to Victoria, as a young mother, that her children recognise and know their Coburg ancestors and cousins, and follow the example of their 'dearest Papa'. Victoria wrote to Leopold following the birth of her first son: 'I hope and pray he may be like his dearest Papa. He is to be called Albert and Edward is to be his second name.'[1] He must not be like her 'wicked' Hanoverian Uncles.[2] Only selected details of their biographies were given by Benson and Esher in the opening chapter of Volume I.

The contesting influences of the Coburg and Hanoverian families epitomised in such displays of paintings and words are redolent of the tensions and the pervasive influences relating to the upbringing of Victoria, to that of her children, and further, to her public and private conduct as monarch, wife and mother. As Benson and Esher set out even-handedly in their opening chapter, both families lay claim to long and illustrious histories. Victoria's Hanoverian Uncles may have sought to influence her from time to time, but as she wrote to her daughter, Vicky in 1858, there was little chance of that happening:

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[1] Arthur Benson and Lord Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, London, John Murray, vol. I, Victoria to Leopold, 29 November 1841. Edward was the name of Victoria's father, the Duke of Kent: 'a good English appellation' was Lord Melbourne's opinion, Melbourne to Victoria, 1 December 1841.

[2] Roger Fulford, Royal Dukes. Queen Victoria's Father and her 'Wicked Uncles', London, Pan Books, 1933, and Christopher Hibbert, Queen Victoria. A Personal History, London, Harper Collins, 2000, pp. 3-24, describes the Hanoverian family, their excesses and Victoria's early life. Victoria may not have used the term 'wicked' but during her conversations throughout 1837-9, Lord Melbourne regaled her with stories of her Uncles whom she knew mostly only through reputation. Viscount Esher, The Girlhood of Queen Victoria. A Selection from Her Majesty's Diary between the years 1832 and 1840, 2 vols, London, John Murray, 1912. (Hereafter, Girlhood Journal), *passim*.

> All you say about [your in-laws, the Prussian Royal] family reminds me so much of what I was always used to as a child. Always on pins and needles, with the whole [Hanoverian] family hardly on speaking terMs I (as a mere child) between two fires – trying to be civil and then scolded at home! Oh! It was dreadful … and then after I married, they behaved *schockingly* to dearest Papa – that I was always in a state of feud about it … [3]

In the Girlhood Journal, Esher gives Victoria's account of her memories of her Hanoverian uncles. Throughout her childhood her Uncle Sussex was depicted as a 'boogey man' who lived next door; she remembered her Uncle York as being kind and generous to her; her recollections of George IV were of dinner, and a ride in a phaeton with the King and his sister, the Duchess of Gloucester around Virginia Water ('Mamma was much frightened'), and the open dispute of her Uncle King William IV with her mother.[4] These recollections were included by Benson and Esher in the opening pages of Volume I, but of her Hanoverian relations, Benson and Esher selected only one letter, that which Victoria wrote to her Uncle, the Duke of Sussex, announcing her marriage.[5] However, several letters were included between Victoria and Queen Adelaide, wife of King William IV and her aunt by marriage.[6]

The strongest influence on Victoria and Albert for the whole of their lives was Uncle Leopold, the 'invited' King of the Belgians, and youngest member of the Saxe-Coburg family of Albert's father and Victoria's mother. Victoria's and Albert's surviving parents, the Duchess of Kent and the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, had both encouraged, accepted and even depended upon Leopold's influence on their children. In order to temper some of this Germanic or otherwise, 'foreign', influences for their audience of 1907, Benson and Esher wrote in their introductory chapter that the Queen 'instinctively formed an independent judgment on any questions that concerned her ... [and her advisers] opinions were in no case allowed to do more than modify her own penetrating and clear-sighted judgment'.[7] At various opportunities throughout the volumes they emphasised the point by quoting Prince Albert's opinion given in a

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[3] Roger Fulford, ed., Dearest Child; Letters between Queen Victoria and the Princess Royal, 1858-1861, London, Evans Bros, 1964, Victoria to Vicky, 9 March 1858, p. 72.
[4] Esher, Girlhood Journal,vol I, pp. 11-9.
[5] Included in Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, Chapter 2, 'Memoir of Queen Victoria's Early Years'.
[6] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, to the Duke of Sussex on 14 November 1839; to her Aunt Queen Adelaide, variously – several from Victoria's childhood; upon Victoria's accession 23 June 1837; her coronation 28 June 1838; 4 January 1842; and after the second assassination attempt upon Victoria, 31 May 1842.
[7] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, last paragraph of Chapter 1.

memorandum: 'The Queen sees what is right at a glance ...'[8] The picture that emerges from the selected letters is not so clear cut. Time and again it is evident from the published letters that Leopold, Albert, Stockmar, Melbourne and her Ministers were not convinced that what the Queen saw was free of the need for their modification. They constantly sought to influence her decisions. The exchanges between Victoria and Leopold, as shown by Benson and Esher, were constant and continued until Leopold's death in 1865. They ranged over topics from the past, the present and the future, and the selections while downplaying some aspects, highlighted others.

Although when reading the Letters of Queen Victoria there is a very strong sense of the influence and affection Leopold showered upon Victoria, less than one tenth of the original and available correspondence was published,[9] and the full character of the relationship is obscured. Similarly, as observed by John Murray, very few of Albert's letters were included in the book, especially during the period of their engagement, from which so many of Victoria's letters were published.[10] Various reasons have been posited for this but no incontrovertible answers can be found. There were no letters published from Albert's father, Ernest I, Duke of Coburg and Victoria's uncle, or from his successor, Ernest II, or her half-brother, Prince Charles of Leiningen, or her cousin, Ferdinand, who became King of Portugal.[11] They had all visited Victoria in England during the 1830s and they continued to visit throughout Victoria's reign and some to correspond regularly. Victoria's half-brother, Charles, had sided with her mother and Conroy prior to her accession, and the absence of his letters may be part of the downplaying of the 'Kensington System' episode. But for a politically-anxious, British readership in the first decade of the twentieth century, one aspect which was not to be

[8] ibid., 5 May 1841. Memo by Anson. These were subjective judgements made for specific purposes; Benson and Esher wanted to downplay the perception of foreign influences upon Victoria; Albert's comment was part of his claim that Victoria should seek his counsel more often!

[9] This is a subjective estimate, based on the correspondence in the Archives of the Royal Palace, Brussels.

[10] Esher papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 30 October 1906.

[11] Correspondence between Victoria and each of these people can be found at the Royal Archives, Windsor Castle; Casa Real, Institute dos Arquivos Nacionais, Torre do Tombo, in Lisbon, for example, [hereafter Torre do Tombo], Caixa 7324, Victoria to King Ferdinand; at the Staatsachiv, Coburg, for example, StACo, LA A 6979, Victoria to Ernest II. I have not located correspondence with her half-brother, Prince Charles of Leiningen. He was entrusted with the Department of Foreign Affairs for the Frankfort Assembly following the 1848 revolution and died in 1856. See also for example, Staatsarchiv Coburg, LAA Nr. 6970 – 1 (1840-3), Letters of Prince Albert to his brother Ernest.

emphasized was Victoria's close and influential links with her European relatives,[12] although it may well have comprised the largest component of her archive.

The bound volumes of the Leopold-Victoria correspondence were among the first Benson read. He immediately recognised the richness of it and suggested that it could have been published on its own.[13] Leopold and Victoria corresponded on a weekly basis, using both official and private messengers. They alerted each other when they were able to use private messengers as this enabled them to write more candidly and openly, and they often requested replies which could be delivered by the return of the same messenger. Other letters went through the Foreign Office mail systems of each country, and privacy was not assured. These procedures were continued after Victoria became Queen.[14] The correspondence between Victoria and Leopold was one of the few that continued beyond the duration of the three volumes. Benson and Esher were able to use it to give continuity to the book and to show Victoria's maturation, from girlhood to matriarchy. Due to the familiarity between Victoria and Leopold the letters provided a vehicle which could convey not only her assertiveness and her occasional unfeminine language and opinions, but also her feminine feelings, the arrival of her babies and a glimpse of a motherly image of Victoria.

Benson and Esher included many of their letters which expressed the bonds of love and affection between Victoria and Leopold: 'I was much moved with the expressions of truly felt affection which it [your last letter] contains ...'; 'We were so *happy* [being] with you, and the stay was *so delightful*, but so painfully short! It was such a joy for me to be once again under the roof of one who has ever been a father to me! I was very sad when you left us ...'; 'I have ever had the care and affection of a real father for you.'[15] Leopold frequently reminded Victoria that he was the one who went to her mother's aid

[12] The closeness of the Coburg siblings and cousins and their penetration into the major Royal Houses of Europe has been explored by Theo Aronson, The Coburgs of Belgium, London, Cassell, 1968, and Dulcie Ashdown, Victoria and the Coburgs, London, Robert Hale, 1981.
[13] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 12 March 1904.
[14] One of these sets of procedures which Leopold was trying implement he related to Victoria in October 1837. Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, 9 October 1837, pp. 92-3. In this letter he also described to Victoria a method he used to bring about 'leaks' of information to foreign powers, for example, Prussia, via the mail service.
[15] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, 1 June 1838, Leopold to Victoria; 21 September, 1843, Victoria to Leopold; vol. II, 3 May 1844, Leopold to Victoria.

at Sidmouth when her father died suddenly in 1820.[16] In 1853 when Victoria named her fourth son, Leopold, she wrote touchingly to her uncle:

> It is a mark of love and affection which I hope you will not disapprove. It is the name which is dearest to me after Albert, and one which recalls the almost *only* happy days of my sad childhood; to hear 'Prince Leopold' again, will make me think of all those days.[17]

The correspondence was only ended by the death of King Leopold in December 1865, just four days before the fourth anniversary of the death of Prince Albert.[18]

Benson and Esher subtly used the correspondence with Leopold to illustrate Victoria's political acumen. His advice to her often bordered on the intrusive. Benson and Esher through their editing skills, took the opportunity to show Victoria's assertiveness in fending the intrusion off. For example on 2 June 1838, Leopold wrote to Victoria complaining that England had not supported Belgium in their struggles against Holland to settle the Treaty of November 1831, negotiations for which had dragged on for over eight years.[19] Benson and Esher followed this with Victoria's reply, in which she quoted the opinions of Lords Melbourne and Palmerston, and setting out that England could not support him. Indeed she chastised Leopold:

> Independent of my feelings of affection for you, my beloved Uncle, you must be aware that the ancient and hereditary policy of this country with respect to Belgium must make me most anxious that my Government not <u>only</u> should not be parties [sic party] to any measure that would be prejudicial to Belgium, but that my Ministers should, as far as may not conflict with this country, do <u>everything</u> in their power to promote prosperity and welfare of your Kingdom.[20]

She urged him to use his 'great influence' over the leading men of Belgium to 'mitigate discontent and calm irritation' over the conditions of the Treaty, which at this stage 'were inevitable'.

In this instance Leopold served Benson's and Esher's purpose of 'the hostile other' as set out by Linda Colley.[21] They used this incident to show how Victoria embodied the

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[16] ibid., 1908 edn, p. 9, for the editors' account of the Duke's death; pp. 22-3 and p. 27 for Leopold's role in her early life; Leopold's reminiscences, 22 January 1841.
[17] ibid., vol. II, Victoria to Leopold, 18 April 1853.
[18] Joanna Richardson, <u>My Dearest Uncle. Leopold I of the Belgians</u>, London, Jonathan Cape, 1961, p. 215. Lord Palmerston had died just two months earlier. Leopold may well have wondered why he had to wait until the fourth son to be so honoured.
[19] Benson and Esher, <u>Letters of Queen Victoria</u>, vol. II, Leopold to Victoria, 2 June 1838.
[20] ibid., Victoria to Leopold, 10 June 1838. Benson and Esher deleted the opening section of the letter which dealt with the current difficult circumstances of Victoria's half-sister Feodore, see Archives of the Royal Palace, Brussels, Correspondence Leopold I and Queen Victoria, 60750-1.
[21] Linda Colley, <u>Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837</u>, London, BCA, 1992, p. 5.

British political position, its strengths, its fairness and its honour on issues of the 1840s and 1850s in a way which was compatible with the political world circa 1900. Even though the letter was full of affirmations of the affection Victoria felt for Leopold, Victoria asserted it to be her right and responsibility to put British interests first. The exchanges through the letters continued into the next year, with Leopold writing that he was pleased to have 'extracted some spark of politics from your dear Majesty'. Victoria curtly advised him that he should not persist as her 'political sparks ... might finally take fire ... as this is one subject on which they cannot agree.'[22] To show the importance of the exchange, Benson and Esher published another letter from Leopold written several years later, where he reminded Victoria about her chastisement of him in 1838.[23]

Throughout Victoria's childhood, as it became more likely that she would become queen, Leopold tutored her in the arts of sovereignty. Leopold wrote to her about 'what a Queen ought not to be'; she asked him to tell her what a 'Queen ought to be' but no specific reply was published.[24] However, he continued to advise Victoria throughout the year on the procedure to be followed immediately after the death of the King, and had sent his old mentor, Stockmar, to be on hand to guide her. He exhorted her to take all advice from Lord Melbourne, her Prime Minister, which she dutifully did. All of these steps were set out by Benson and Esher, either through selected letters or in their introductory narratives.

One item which, not surprisingly, was not touched upon by Benson and Esher was the paradoxical favouring of the Coburg family over the Hanoverians by Victoria. The Coburg family's reputation in Britain, especially that of Albert's father, was arguably much worse than that of any of the Hanoverians, and Albert's brother pursued the same course.[25] During his visit to London for the wedding, the Duke plagued the Queen's ladies with his lecherous attentions.[26] Giles St Aubyn put the Saxe-Coburg Dukes' behaviour and reputations succinctly: 'Albert's father, to look no further, was notoriously licentious, and there were few deviations from morality or convention he

[22] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, Leopold to Victoria, 19 April 1839; Victoria to Leopold, 30 April 1839,.
[23] ibid., vol II, Leopold to Victoria, 3 May 1844.
[24] ibid., vol. I, Victoria to Leopold, 19 November 1834.
[25] Longford, Victoria R.I., on Ernest I, pp. 137-9, 158, 186; on Ernest II, p. 157.
[26] Monica Charlot, Victoria The Young Queen, Oxford, Blackwells, 1991, p. 216.

had not pioneered.'[27] As Longford wrote, Albert's father was 'an unmitigated disaster'; his licentiousness had broken up Albert's home; he badgered Victoria, through Albert, to settle on him a huge allowance and savaged them both by letter for not calling their eldest son after him.[28] Even Stockmar wondered how the Prince Consort could have had so fine a character, 'with such a father and such a brother, both equally unprincipled'.[29] There was palpable relief when Ernest married in 1842, and the following year, Victoria wrote of his improvement, as he now liked 'to live quietly'.[30] When the Duke of Coburg died in 1844, Albert and Victoria wept and wailed, and wrote of their 'great loss', and Benson and Esher included several letters of her lamentations.[31] But they excluded many letters in which Victoria and Leopold were critical of Albert's father and brother.[32] Indeed they sought in the opening chapter to distance Victoria safely from any suggestion of German or Coburg political influence: 'But it must be borne in mind that her [the Queen's] connection with Germany always remained a personal and family matter, not a political one.'[33] Yet, the influences of Leopold, Stockmar and Albert pepper the pages of the volumes.

Following the death of his father Albert had to visit Coburg to settle affairs with his brother, now Duke Ernest II. It was the first time Victoria had been separated from him since their marriage in 1840, but none of the correspondence between the royal couple was included by Benson and Esher, perhaps because only one had been included in Martin's biography under the auspices of the Queen herself. Lytton Strachey, in his biography Queen Victoria which drew heavily on the Benson and Esher letters and Martin, was able to write: 'He was not in love with her ...' and 'The husband was not so happy as the wife ...'.[34] Elizabeth Longford, in 1964, quoted some of their letters to

[27] Giles St Aubyn, Edward VII. Prince and King, London, Collins, 1979, p. 19.
[28] Elizabeth Longford, Victoria R.I., London (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964), Abacus books, 2000, p.186.
[29] Roger Fulford, The Prince Consort, (London, Macmillan, 1949), New York, St Martin's Press, 1966, p. 22.
[30] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, Victoria to Leopold, 10 January 1843.
[31] ibid., Victoria to Leopold, 6 February 1844 ff.
[32] For example, Ernest stayed on in England for six weeks after Albert's marriage, during which time Victoria complained to Leopold of his behaviour. Leopold replied: 'That poor Ernest really and truly will end by doing himself serious harm. You must tell Albert to speak to him. He over fatigues himself more than his health can bear, and I always fear some accident besides.' Archives of the Royal Palace, Brussels, 61223– 61224, Correspondence of Leopold I and Queen Victoria, 27 March 1840.
[33] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I (1907), p. 5; (1908), p. 4
[34] Lytton Strachey, Queen Victoria, London, Chatto & Windus, (1921), 1937, pp. 91 and 113.

show that Albert did express tender and loving feelings toward Victoria.[35] Not surprisingly, Strachey's book, which has been in print constantly since 1921 and is so quotable, has been the most frequently cited throughout the historiography. More recently, scholars have interrogated Albert's attitudes, his behaviour and the social contexts, resulting in a more complex, portrait of their relationship.[36]

Time and again, it has been observed by biographers how unlike his father Albert was. He was: 'a stranger within a family where his father was repulsively dissolute, his mother sadly unfaithful and banished, and his brother destined to be heir to all their follies'.[37] In many ways Albert was more like his Uncle Leopold. The possibility that Albert was not the son of Duke Ernest was not mentioned by Benson and Esher, but David Duff has made a persuasive argument that Albert was conceived during Leopold's sad visit to Coburg in December 1818.[38] Leopold's first wife, Charlotte, Princess of Wales, had died following the stillbirth of her firstborn child, a son, in November 1817.[39] Leopold was devastated. The following Christmas, 1818, Leopold was in Coburg visiting the already unhappy menage of his older brother with his young wife and little son: It hurt him 'almost beyond endurance'.[40] Duke Ernest's wife, Louise, wrote home about Leopold, and described his kindliness to her, and his handsome appearance. Cognizant of both his sadness and his sensibility she wrote: 'He still feels with fervour, what it means to be happy and loved.'[41] Albert was born in August 1819. Theodore Martin, with Queen Victoria's imprimatur, quoted Albert's mother, Duchess Louise, as writing of the special connection she perceived between her second baby, Albert, and Leopold on his subsequent visits: 'Albert adores his Uncle Leopold, and doesn't leave him for a moment, he looks at him lovingly, kisses him all

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[35] Longford, Victoria R.I., pp. 186-7.

[36] Charlot, Victoria, Chapter 9 ff; Stanley Weintraub, Victoria. Biography of a Queen, London, Unwin Hyman, 1987, Chapter VI ff; Stanley Weintraub, Albert, Uncrowned King, London, John Murray, 1997; Christopher Hibbert, Queen Victoria, A Personal History, Chapter 13 ff; Adrienne Munich, Queen Victoria's Secrets, New York, Columbia University Press, 1996, *passim*; Giles St Aubyn, Queen Victoria. A Portrait, London, Sinclair-Stephenson, 1991, Chapters 3 and 4; Walter Arnstein, Queen Victoria, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, Chapters 4 and 5; Dorothy Thompson, Queen Victoria: Gender and Power, London, Virago, 1990, Chapter 3.

[37] Hector Bolitho, Albert Prince Consort, London, David Bruce and Watson, (1964), Revised edition, 1970, p. 19.

[38] David Duff, Victoria and Albert, London, (Frederick Muller, 1972), Victorian and Modern History Book Club edition, 1973, pp. 28-32, 66.

[39] Jack Dewhurst, Royal Confinements, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980, pp. 108-32; Colley, Britons, pp. 270-2, 220-1.

[40] Joanna Richardson, My Dearest Uncle. Leopold I of the Belgians, London, Jonathon Cape, 1961, p. 71.

the time and is only happy when he is near him.'[42] 'The attraction was reciprocal, and deepened with advancing years,' wrote Martin.

The Duke and Duchess divorced when he was five years old and the Duke made a second marriage, to his much younger niece. The marriage 'soon broke under the shadows of spite and infidelity. Nor did the stepmother bring any strength or happiness to the young princes ...' according to Hector Bolitho.[43] The only women with whom Albert had any significant contact, were the Dowager Duchess of Coburg, who died in 1831, and his maternal step-grandmother. From the age of five Prince Albert saw his father only occasionally and came to depend on his brother, Ernest, and three caring males for his emotional and physical needs – his tutor, Herr Florschütz, King Leopold and Baron Stockmar.

Although Leopold was the youngest member of his family, he was very much a champion of their influence, reputation and wealth.[44] He negotiated many of the marriages of his nephews and nieces into the major Royal houses of Europe and beyond, and conducted correspondences with various Foreign Ministers.[45] Even within the French Royal family of his wife, Leopold saw himself as a leader – citing himself as *ce qu'on appelle la loi et les prophètes.* [One whose word was law].[46] He saw himself as the peacemaker of Europe, something after Metternich, and maintained a huge correspondence himself in order to keep up with dynastic and political events throughout Europe, and much of this information he filtered through to Victoria, and to Albert. But Leopold's influence and machinations were shown quite selectively by Benson and Esher.

The correspondence between Victoria and Leopold frequently contained criticism of French politics, especially leading up to and following the 1848 Revolution when the

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[41] Correspondence cited by Duff, Victoria and Albert, p. 57.
[42] Theodore Martin, The Life of His Royal Highness The Prince Consort, vol. 1, London, Smith, Elder Co, (1875), 1880, p.3. The quotation is given in French in Martin: '*Albert adore son oncle Leopold, ne le quitte pas un instant, lui fait des yeux doux, l'embrasse a chaque moment, et ne se sent pas d'aise que lorsqu'il peut etre aupres de lui.*' English translation from Charlot, Victoria, p. 153.
[43] Hector Bolitho, Albert, Prince Consort,London, David Bruce and Watson (1964) ,1970, p. 20.
[44] Theo Aronson, The Coburgs of Belgium, London, Cassell, 1968; and Dulcie Ashdown, Victoria and the Coburgs, London, Robert Hale, 1981.
[45] See for example, King Leopold to Lord Palmerston, Archives of the Royal Palace, Brussels, RC/M/122-177, 1835-6.
[46] Archives of the Royal Palace, Brussels, Correspondence of Leopold I and Queen Victoria, 60844, Leopold to Victoria, 19 October 1838. Translation made by Dr Janssens.

French Royal family, the parents of his wife, Louise, were forced to abdicate the throne and seek sanctuary in England.[47] Victoria and Leopold agreed on the 'faithless conduct of the French' of their times, and the 'wickedness and savageness' of the French mob in the time of Louis XVI,[48] but both of these phrases were excised from Volume II late in the editing process. Victoria hoped that peace would return to Europe when 'this madness is over' in France. (The specific reference 'in France' was deleted from the published letter.)[49] In 1848, she wrote to Leopold: 'In France, really things go on dreadfully, & for the sake of morality there ought to be some great catastrophe at Paris for that is the hothouse of Iniquity from wherein all the mischief comes.'[50] This sentence was also removed from the published letters.

Victoria's criticisms of the French were not restricted to Leopold's eyes and ears: 'Some well-informed say that nothing could have prevented the catastrophe in France and that the French would never continue quiet for any number of years. The Queen must say she thinks that there is some truth in this.'[51] Such comments were frequently removed or tempered by the editors, by Esher in particular, in his enthusiasm for France and to avoid jeopardising the Double Entente with France which was eventually signed in 1904,[52] and the Triple Entente which was to include Russia in 1907. Yet in Volume I, various passages where Victoria criticised the French as being 'very war-like' and Leopold feared the possibility of a 'violent revolution' in France in 1840 remained.[53] Benson despaired at some of the excisions made to Volume II when as he rightly argued: 'Stronger terms are used below [and elsewhere]. The Queen's inclination had long been known – the gap will be more suggestive than the excised term.'[54] But Benson's protests were in vain.

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[47] For context of the abdication, see Longford, Victoria R.I., pp. 209-10, and Arnstein, Queen Victoria, pp. 87-90.
[48] Both phrases excised from Victoria's letters to Leopold, Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, 7 September 1846, (original, Royal Archives, Windsor Castle, RA VIC/Y 92/47) and 11 March 1848, (original, RA VIC/Y 93/23).
[49] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, Victoria to Leopold, 6 February 1849.
[50] RA VIC/Y 93/ 28, Victoria to Leopold, 18 April 1848.
[51] RA VIC/A 19/176, Queen Victoria to John Russell, 16 April 1848.
[52] The Entente with France see J.A.S. Grenville, 'Foreign Policy and the Coming of War', in Donald Read, ed., Edwardian England, London, Croom Helm, 1982, p. 172.
[53] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, Victoria to Leopold, 26 September 1840; Leopold to Albert, 26 November 1840.
[54] Benson's list of protests against the ordered excisions of Volume II, Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 12 November 1906. These excisions are the subject of the next chapter.

Victoria and Albert conducted a regular correspondence with one of their Coburg cousins, Ferdinand, who had been married to the Portuguese Queen, Dona Maria II in 1836.[55] All four of these young people were students of Leopold's 'school' of constitutional monarchy. To Dona Maria, King Leopold wrote:

> It will do well, my dear Niece, to permit me from time to time to offer You services for which my sufficiently long experience in political affairs qualifies me perhaps more than anyone else.
> Your Government will have a very difficult task, the unfortunate position of Spain complicates it moreover in a rather annoying way. The first and most urgent need [Your] State has is a capable ministry which can gain not only the confidence of Portugal but also [that of] the rest of Europe, public prestige rests on this confidence. The finances of the kingdom require quite particular care to be taken by the Government, the welfare of the monarchy may depend on it at some time. If the army and public service are not paid regularly, it will be difficult to count on their loyalty, and this loyalty is put in doubt, especially the army, the whole/overall security of the government ceases, and from one moment to the next may be overthrown.[56]

Leopold, who prided himself on his scientific understanding of monarchy, government, and women, had also written a three-part Treatise for Ferdinand on constitutional monarchy.

In 1836 Victoria mentioned that Ferdinand brought her a copy of a document which Uncle Leopold had made especially for her, when he passed through London on his way to marry Dona Maria in Lisbon.[57] Victoria referred to several sections of the document, one of which 'is divided in headings of all the departments of Government', and another called, 'Observations Générales'.[58] One section of this document reads:

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[55] Torre do Tombo, Lisbon, CX 7324, Queen Victoria to King Ferdinand, 1837-47. I have not accessed Ferdinand's letters to Victoria and Albert which I believe are held at the Royal Archives, Windsor.

[56] Upon Maria's marriage to Ferdinand, Leopold wrote to her, offering his advice and assistance. Torre do Tombo, Caixa 7321, K. Leopold I (1836-1847), Caixa 7321/9/141-1, 4 February 1836, and Caixa 7321/9/141-2, 21 March 1836. Translated by Ingrid Barker.

[57] Esher, Girlhood Journals, vol. I, pp. 154-6, 196.

[58] After much searching in Lisbon I found two portions of an untitled document which contained a list of government ministries and another page is headed 'Observations Générales', at the Ajuda Palace archives, the Biblioteca da Ajuda, COR 1337, 54-XI-5 (7) & (8) and 54-XI-22, (114) I believe these to be part of the Treatise. Unfortunately Victoria's copy has not been found in the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle, which could have verified the provenance. In the opinion of the Registrar of the Royal Archives, Windsor Castle, this was probably because it was created before Victoria's accession and before her materials were systematically preserved.

> In days of old there existed a quite severe etiquette/formality in Lisbon approaching a great deal that of the Spanish. Modern customs have brought about some modifications in it but I believe that where a well established etiquette conforms to the country's habits and customs, it is indispensable. It can become a means for the government of a country where, according to ancient traditions, one fiercely holds on to status and court favours. A rank quite clearly defined has the happy result of avoiding confusion of position in society which more or less dissatisfies everybody. In England where everybody's status is fixed/determined, this never raises these disagreeable disputes which often are the cause of lively hostilities, and I advise that the same system be followed in Portugal. That can be a little tiresome and even embarrassing sometimes: but these barriers are indispensable in a country where they have always existed and where familiarity/informality could well lead to a lack of respect.[59]

The document is filled with very direct, textbook-style directives and advice on government.

During Ferdinand's visit to England, Victoria was very impressed with him and wrote long accounts in her journal of each of the days of his visit from the 17 March to 1 April 1836: 'I think Ferdinand handsomer than [his younger brother] Augustus, his eyes are so beautiful, and he has such a lively, clever expression ... when he speaks and when he smiles ...'[60] He seemed so grown up and knowledgable to the sixteen year old Victoria, who had been starved of the company of people near her own age. The correspondence between Victoria and Ferdinand began from this time but the frequency varied over time. Benson and Esher have included none of the letters of Ferdinand from this correspondence in the published volumes, in keeping with the decision to limit the Coburg correspondence.[61] This same policy was applied to the Coburg women ...

9.2 Victoria's Women's Network, and shared experiences of Motherhood, Wifeliness and that Anomaly: Female Sovereignty

Benson found women's letters to be 'very tiresome'.[62] Consequently very few of the thousands of letters Victoria exchanged with her various female relations and friends have been included. She conducted correspondence with each of the following women: her half-sister, Princess Feodore of Hohenloe-Langenburg; her aunt, Louise,

[59] Biblioteca da Ajuda, Lisbon, COR 133754-XI-5, (8) and 54-XI-22, (114), 'Observations générales'. Translated by Ingid Barker.
[60] Esher, Girlhood Journals, vol. I, pp. 150-6, 153.
[61] More of the Coburg correspondence was published throughout the 5 vols of Martin, but mostly Albert's.

Queen of the Belgians and daughter of King Louis-Philippe of France; her cousin, Victoire, Duchess of Nemours, and sister of Ferdinand; her sister-in-law, Alexandrine, Duchess of Saxe-Coburg from 1842; and Dona Maria, Queen of Portugal. But the dearth of women's letters in the published volumes cannot be attributed to the editors' ignorance of their existence. As early as March 1904, Benson described a set of letters from Princess Feodore, the Queen's half sister as 'simple family letters, full of detail, such as the Queen loved. But the writing is troublesome ... They would be interesting enough just to skim through if they were printed'.[63] It should be noted that, by general consensus, Feodore's writing is far easier to decipher than Lord Melbourne's! But Benson was willing to struggle with Melbourne's hieroglyphics. Excerpts from four of Feodore's letters were published, but there survive hundreds more, in the Royal Archives at Windsor and at the Hohenlohe-Zentral Archiv, Neuenstein Archiv Langenburg, Germany.

Another entry in Benson's diary confirms that women's letters were available: '... finished the last vol. of documents – the letters of Q. Louise [of the Belgians] up to the end of 1841...'.[64] Esher and Knollys discussed the location of Victoria's correspondence with Alexandrine in 1905.[65] Esher also knew that there were letters from Victoria's official governess, the Duchess of Northumberland and Victoria's half-sister, Feodore, and Queen Adelaide,[66] concerning Victoria's welfare under the onslaughts of Conroy and her mother.[67] These were not included because they were not drawn to the editor's attention until mid-1907. Even if they had been found earlier, it is unlikely that they would have been included because of their subject matter.

When Benson sent off the first 'instalment' of the 'MSS' in March 1904 to John Murray for printing, Murray admitted that he could not resist spending the evening reading through the selections:

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[62] Benson Diary, Old Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge, vol. 49, 22 March 1904.
[63] Benson Diary, vol. 49, 22 March 1904.
[64] ibid., 26 March 1904.
[65] Esher Papers, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge, 10/48, 7 January 1905. This was in response to a German proposal to publish the letters of the Duchess of Coburg.
[66] Esher Papers, 10/49, Esher to Knollys, 20 January 1907.
[67] I located this correspondence within the Northumberland papers, Flintshire Record Office, Hawarden, Wales, Bryn-Y-Pys MSS D/BP/1113 (iii); D/BP/1111 (ix); D/BP/1114. I am planning to do further work on these letters as they shed important light on King William's actions in the months prior to his death in 1837.

> ... many of the letters are of the greatest importance. I am struck by some of those from the Queen to her mother. Her position was a most delicate one in regard to the Duchess of Kent both shortly before and after her Coronation, and these letters display much firmness of character and sense of justice.[68]

But within two months, Benson was asking Murray to return those MSS sections as he had just been directed by Esher that 'certain matter' had to be eliminated.[69] There was no further mention of any letters between Victoria and the Duchess of Kent from 1837, and there were none published. Even though she travelled to the Continent on several occasions,[70] none of her letters were selected or permitted for inclusion.

The Queen of Portugal's monthly letters to Queen Victoria, written in a very idiosyncratic French with little or no punctuation, are held in the Royal Archives, Windsor.[71] In Victoria's letterbook of January 1840, she recorded writing to Dona Maria on the 1st, and to Ferdinand on the 2nd, to Leopold, Louise, Feodore and Victoire throughout the month.[72] Unfortunately the letterbooks only survive for a short period and contain only her private family correspondence, and not necessarily all of that. In the letters between Victoria and Maria, they often mentioned issues or topics which they expected that their husbands would have mentioned or discussed. One letter from the correspondence was included by Benson and Esher from Dona Maria congratulating Victoria on her engagement,[73] but many others were written over the next thirteen years. There is no reason to believe that only one letter was available in 1904. Only six of Queen Victoria's letters to Dona Maria II have been located to date in Lisbon and finding more is unlikely – as Maria confessed to Victoria: 'I have the rather bad habit of tearing up letters after I have replied to them.'[74]

At the start of their correspondence, the letters were short and Maria mentioned Ferdinand only rarely – in relation to her two little boys bearing a resemblance to him,

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[68] John Murray Archives, Albemarle Street, London, CB 2, Murray to Benson, 22 March 1904.
[69] ibid., Benson to Murray, 17 May 1904.
[70] For example, Leopold told Victoria of the Duchess's arrival in Belgium, Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, 31 May 1841.
[71] RA VIC/Y 32, (1837-1853). For further discussion, see Yvonne M. Ward 'Queen Victoria and Queen Dona Maria II da Gloria of Portugal: Marriage, Motherhood and Sovereignty in the Lives of Young Queens Regnant (1828-1853),' Lilith, vol. 11 (November 2002), pp. 117-30.
[72] RA VIC/QVLB 98.
[73] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, p. 200.
[74] RA VIC/Y 32/79, 26 February 1843: '*Malheureusement aujourd'hui je ne pourrai pas vous envoyer tout ce que vous desirez car j'ai une assez mauvaise habitude que c'est de dechirer les lettres au moins presque toutes après que j'y ai repondu ...*'

and their mutual 'passion for horses'.[75] This may have been in deference to Victoria still being a single girl. After Victoria's marriage, and especially after her first child was born, the comments become much more personal and familiar. Victoria was impressed by Maria's devotion, almost fealty, to Ferdinand. In a letter to King Leopold before her accession in 1837, Victoria wrote of Maria: 'One good quality, however, she has, which is her excessive fondness for and real obedience to Ferdinand.'[76] After Victoria's wedding day, Maria wrote to Victoria:

> I cannot stop myself from writing you two little words of felicitation on your marriage. I assure you that I have thought of you much during the 10th. In truth a wedding day is a day quite solemn and quite disagreeable to pass. This always happens, even for anybody who loves such occasions a lot, but once this is over, one is entirely at one's ease. I have read in the newspapers [about] the whole ceremony. It must have been quite beautiful, and I am certain that Albert has made a great impression and that he was much praised. Also I have much admired your enormous composure throughout the ceremony. I assure you that I was much more embarrassed than you. I hope that God will grant my wishes and you will be the happiest of women. I also hope that soon, too, you will give me little cousins whom I shall love with all my heart.[77]

In her letters to Victoria in the following years, Maria spoke glowingly of Ferdinand, masking any disappointment or anguish, as did Victoria in her turn.[78]

In the social climate of 1905, published letters of any women would not include references to mothering and personal health, so it is not surprising to find that Benson and Esher omitted nearly all of those letters of the Queen and her friends that included any mention of these matters. The editors' notion of showing the 'full development of the character of the Queen' reflected their own narrow perceptions of female character and it remains today a reflection of their times. These omissions were unfortunate in that they certainly would have modified some perceptions of Victoria.

The two young women as Queens regnant, shared an unusual position, constitutionally.[79] For them both pregnancy, childbirth and recovery occupied a large

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[75] RA VIC/Y 32/7, 23 October 1837.

[76] Quoted in English in José Teixeira, D. Fernando II: Rei-artista, Artista-rei, Lisbon, Fundação da Casa de Bragança, 1986, p. 86. Victoria may have written this opinion from her correspondence with Maria, or she may have been writing a pro-Coburg 'line' to obtain Leopold's approval.

[77] RA VIC/Y 32/33, 1 March 1840.

[78] For an exploration of 'masking' in motherhood, see Susan Maushart, The Mask of Motherhood: How Mothering Changes Everything and Why We Pretend it Doesn't, Sydney, Vintage books, 1997.

[79] I am fortunate to have had discussions with excellent scholars on female sovereigns which has alerted me to some of these issues: on Tudor Queens, Judith M. Richards, ' "To Promote a Woman to Beare Rule": Talking of Queens in Mid-Tudor England', Sixteenth Century Journal, vol. XXVIII, no. 1, 1997,

proportion of their time during the early years of their reigns and of their marriages – Queen Victoria gave birth to nine children during the twenty-one years of her marriage, and all of them survived into adulthood. During the first five years of marriage, or sixty months, of her marriage Victoria was either pregnant or recovering from childbirth for all but sixteen of those months. Dona Maria had thirteen children, two of whom died in infancy, and a third died as the result of birth complications to which Maria also succumbed at the age of 34. She had been married twice before her seventeenth birthday.[80]

However, the figures, stated baldly hardly show the impact these pregnancies and births had on the Queens' public lives or their private lives. Particular aspects of pregnancy and childbirth such as anxiety about beginning each new pregnancy, the various physiological ailments of nausea and morning sickness, abnormal bleeding, excessive tiredness and changes in appetite, and the spectrum of medical possibilities during birth and the post-partum recovery, cannot be readily accommodated into a public life of Levées, Soirées, official visits, political crises and the Proroguing of Parliaments. Rather dramatically, a major military challenge to Dona Maria's power coincided with the onset of labour with her first child and remained unresolved for several weeks.[81] Victoria's arrival into Edinburgh in September 1842 could be another example of such a collision.[82] Her third child, Princess Alice was born 25 April 1843. Calculating back from this date the forty weeks of gestation, (plus or minus two weeks), shows that Alice was conceived in mid-July, and Victoria's arrival in Edinburgh in the first week of September would have coincided with the onset of symptoms of early pregnancy – nausea and fatigue, and may explain her reluctance to process through the City when

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pp. 101-21; 'Mary Tudor as "Sole Queen"?: Gendering Tudor Monarchy', The Historical Journal, vol. 40, no. 4, 1997, pp. 895-924; 'Love and a Female Monarch: The Case of Elizabeth Tudor', Journal of British Studies, vol. 38, no. 2, 1999, pp. 133-60. On Queen Anne, see Toni Bowers, The Politics of Motherhood: British Writing and Culture 1680-1760, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, especially the section on 'Symbolic Maternity and Practical Politics in Queen Anne's England'. On the Hanoverian Queens, see Clarissa Campbell-Orr, ed., Queenship in England 1660-1837: Royal Patronage, Court Culture and Dynastic Politics, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002; Lynn Vallone, Becoming Victoria, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001; Linda Colley's work on 'Womanpower', Britons, p. 272, Chapter 6, was also most instructive.

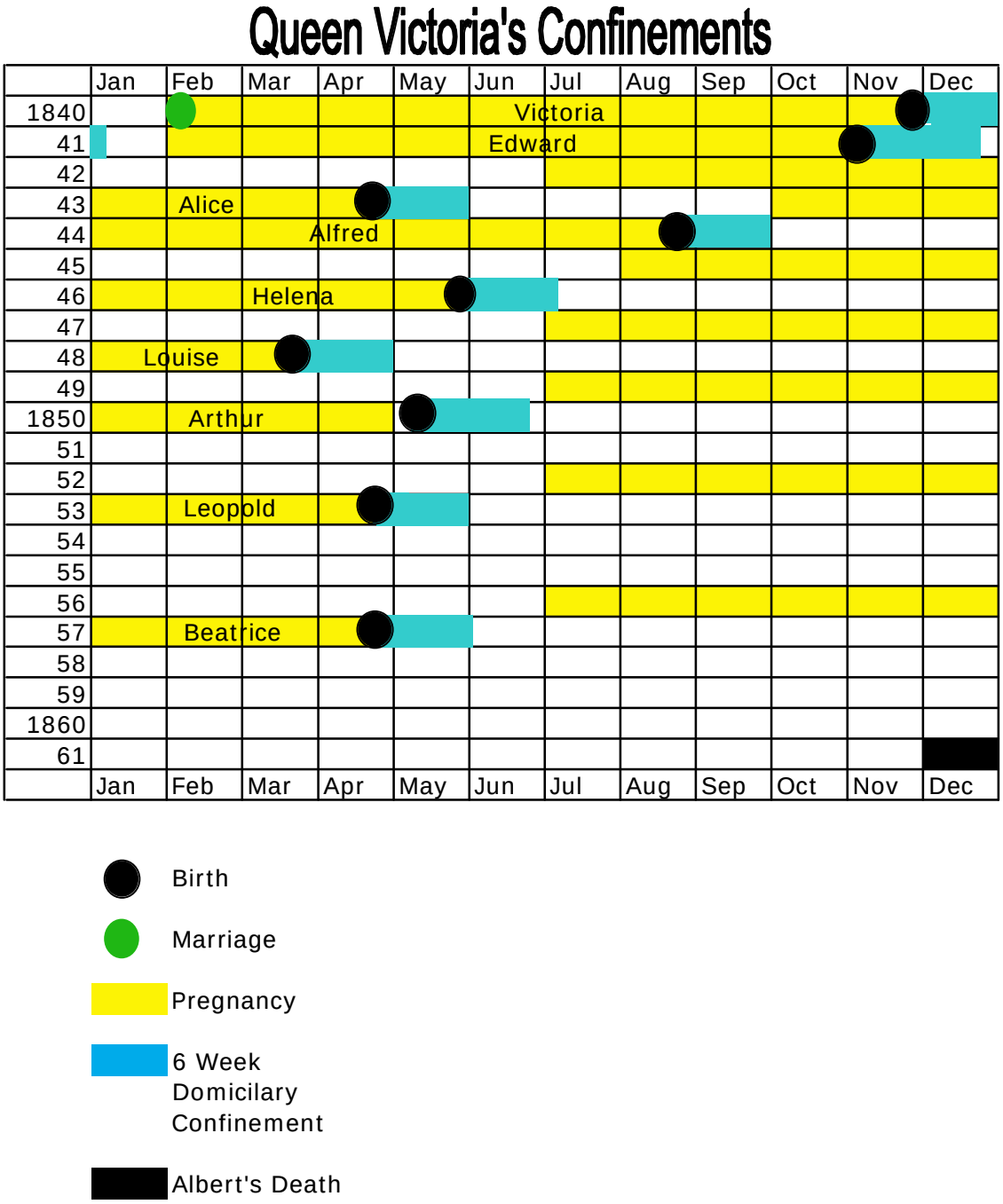
[80] For the details of Dona Maria's difficult marimonial history see my article 'Queen Victoria and Queen Dona Maria', Lilith, pp. 120-1.

[81] See my 'Queen Victoria and Dona Maria', p. 22.

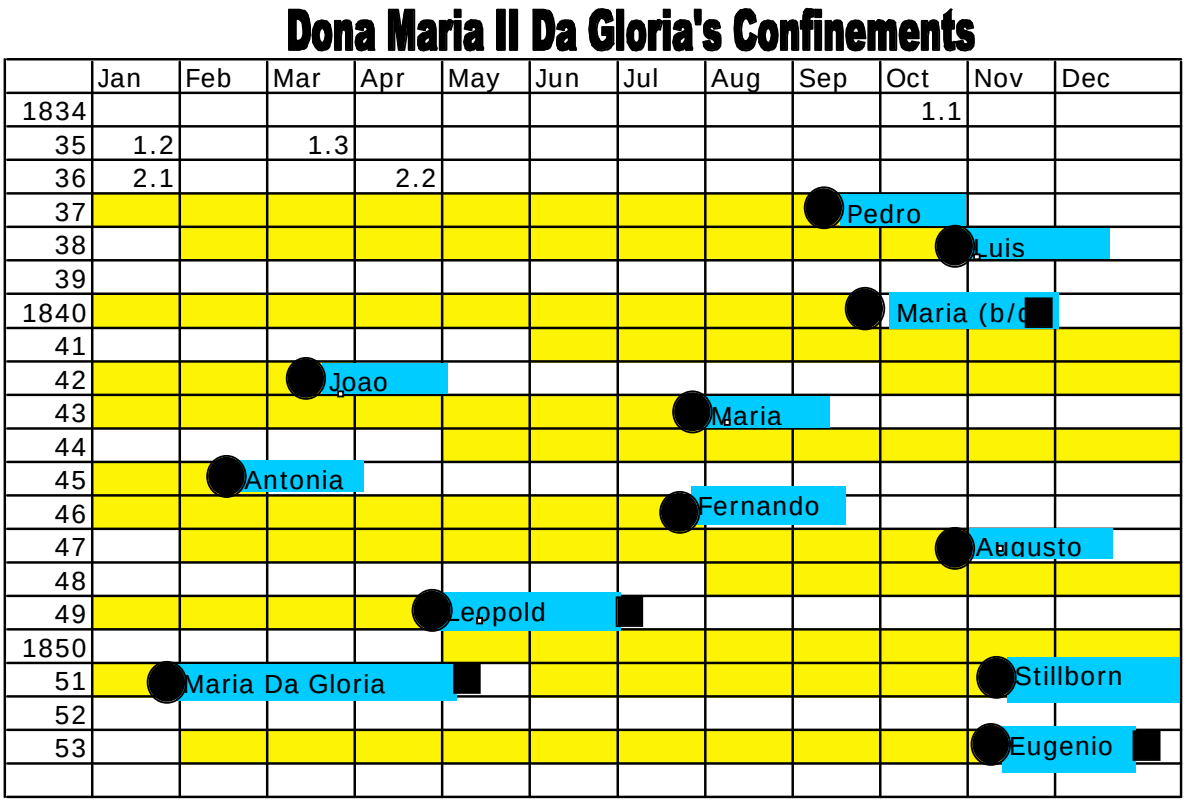
[82] For a social and political analysis of this visit, see Alex Tyrrell, with Yvonne Ward, 'God Bless Her Little Majesty.' The Popularising of Monarchy in the 1840s, National Identities, vol. 2, no. 2 (2000), pp. 111-14.

she arrived at Granton Harbour, early that September morning in 1842. She may well have felt better later in the day, and able to drive through the streets in procession. A graphic depiction of Victoria's pregnancies is shown below:

The information is shown on the following charts:



A chart showing Maria's pregnancies can be found on the following page.



Note Dona Maria died the same day as Eugenio (15 Nov 1853)

Key

Duration of pregnancy = Birthday - 40 weeks [+/- 2 weeks]
Child's Name + Post Partum 6 weeks
1.1 First marriage by proxy on 5-10-1843
1.2 First marriage in person on 26-1-1835
1.3 First husband died on 28-3-1835
2.1 Second marriage by proxy on 1-1-1836
2.2 Second marriage in person on 9-4-1836
infant died

Despite these women's privileged living conditions, rank and wealth in the nineteenth century provided no guarantee against the ravages of opportunistic diseases and infections, nor against poor sanitation, poor nutrition or other elements of health and happiness.[83] The letters between these two royal mothers in particular, show not only the frequency of their pregnancies but the many anxieties they felt concerning their own health and that of their children: the need for smallpox inoculations, wet nurses, weaning, teething; and of their husbands: health and the dangers of hunting.[84] As

[83] See Judith Schneid Lewis, In the Family Way. Childbearing in the British Aristocracy 1760-1860, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1986; and Pat Jalland, Women, Marriage and Politics 1860-1914, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988.
[84] RA VIC/Y, Maria II to Victoria, for example: the need for smallpox inoculations, 32/10; wet nurses, weaning, 32/15; pregnancies 'in your condition', 32/39; the dangers of hunting, 32/37.

Queen, wife and mother, each role had its inherent dangers: these women experienced assassination attempts,[85] epidemics of scarlet fever,[86] and of cholera and typhoid[87]; the high incidence of tuberculosis[88]; the childbirth fatalities, such as Charlotte, Princess of Wales, which had occurred within her family circle,[89] and the consequent anxiety surrounding childbirth. In addition, they each had to carry out public duties in public arenas with little allowance for their anxieties or discomforts. Each woman in seeking to offset her own anxieties realised that these anxieties were shared by many women, royal and aristocratic, and their correspondence was vital in this. It served to alleviate social isolation as the women gave each other support through shared information, 'gossip'[90] and the subsequent development of empathic relationships.

There was a delicate and poignant occasion in October 1840, just weeks before Queen Victoria's first confinement. Dona Maria had given birth to her third child and first daughter, who was stillborn. Ferdinand wrote to Victoria and Albert to tell them the news before Maria wrote to Victoria a month later. In seeking to alleviate any alarm she might have felt, Maria reverted to a more light-hearted style:

> My dear Victoria
> Well, for quite a long time that I have not been able to have the great pleasure of writing to you but you know the reason for that quite well from all of Ferdinand's letters. I hope that my affair will not have affected you too much, for in your state it is necessary to try and avoid this if that is possible. It hardly ever happens; but I am convinced now that you will be quite safe and that you will present us with a very beautiful and very bonny, little male Cousin ...[91]

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[85] On Maria's escape: Torre do Tombo, Caixa 7324 CR/200-10: 'It makes me shudder to think how narrowly you have escaped such great danger on the day of the riot', Victoria to Maria, 16 May 1847. On Victoria's escape: RA VIC/Y 32/39 & 32/41. Maria to Victoria, 5 July 1840; C. Grey, The Early Years of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort, London, Smith, Elder, 1869, pp. 316-8, gives Albert's version of the first attempt on Victoria's life; Trevor Turner, 'Erotomania and Queen Victoria: or Love among the Assassins?' Psychiatric Bulletin, vol. 14 (1990), pp. 224-7.

[86] LAA NR 8646 Staatsarchiv Coburg, Coburg, Germany, Victoria to Duchess Alexandrine of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, 18 November 1842; RA VIC/Y 32/76, Dona Maria to Victoria, 6 November 1842.

[87] Longford, p. 52. Dona Maria's son, Pedro V, died of typhoid fever after reigning for eight years.

[88] Maria knew of the incidence of tuberculosis, having lost her father to the disease. For Britain, see Judith Lewis, ' "Tis a Misfortune to be a Great Ladie". Maternal Mortality in the British Aristocracy 1558-1959', Journal of British Studies, vol. 37, no. 1 (1998), pp. 26-53. Ferdinand's and Victoria's cousin, Marie of Württemberg, had died of tuberculosis six months after the birth of her baby in 1839. RA VIC/Y 32/9, 32/11 & 32/18, 1838, Dona Maria acknowledged news of Marie's misfortune.

[89] For details see my Yvonne Ward, 'The Womanly Garb of Queen Victoria's Early Motherhood: 1840-42,' Women's History Review, vol. 8, no. 2 (June, 1999), pp. 284-5.

[90] Phyllis Rose, Parallel Lives. Five Victorian Marriages, New York, Vintage books, 1984, p. 9, for an insightful discussion of 'gossip' as moral inquiry.

[91] RA VIC/Y 32/47, 1 November 1840. Sarah, Lady Lyttelton, a Lady of the Bedchamber at this time, recalled the upsetting news, especially as felt by the Duchess of Kent. 'I had to go over so many

Dona Maria was to experience the premature deaths of her last four babies. She gave birth to thirteen children before she died in her thirty-fourth year following the birth of a stillborn child in 1853.[92]

Their correspondence is of constitutional interest in relation to their experiences of female sovereignty. Dona Maria and Queen Victoria had much in common in this respect. They both held an absolute adherence to the idea of patriarchy,[93] and with their husbands sought to implement it in their domestic lives. In reply to Maria's letter of 8 May 1842, Victoria wrote:

> All that you tell me in your letter of 8th in reference to your position has interested me greatly, and I assure you that I share entirely your opinion, the husband should always be first; I'm doing everything in order that it be thus – and I am always saddened that he must be below me in rank; for it pains me to be Queen and he merely the Prince; but in my heart, and in my house, he comes first and is the master and head ... [94]

Maria in 1847 had praised Ferdinand and his executive abilities in a letter to Victoria who concurred in her reply:

> You have spoken to me with quite some warmth about your concern that Ferdinand be known to the world for ... his great experience and his knowledge of political matters, as well as for his strong and noble character ... In Ferdinand you have foremost a man superior to those around him, and a soul who will share all your sentiments; – I can therefore only give you the good advice to continue to ensure his place in your counsels, which is due to him and which he will always employ with much success for you as Queen, as Wife and as Mother.[95]

When both women expressed such strong views on monarchy and gender, it is surprising that they were not proponents of the Salic law! Or perhaps they had both inculcated the anomalies of being 'Queens Regnant' in patriarchal societies.

The inclusion of such letters would have added to the fullness of the Benson and Esher image of Victoria. For these young women being monarchs and mothers was challenging, but being monarchs and wives was even more challenging. The 'natural' state of conjugal life, 'be one Queen or not',[96] was that the husband must be head of the

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commonplace matronly consolations ... when she sent for me.' Quoted from Mrs Hugh Wyndham, ed., The Correspondence of Sarah Spencer, Lady Lyttelton, 1787-1870, London, John Murray, 1912, p. 305.

[92] Report on Death of Dona Maria II, 1853, Papers of Dona Maria, MSS 218, no. 84, Biblioteca Nacional, Campo Grande, Lisbon, Portugal.

[93] Marina Warner, Queen Victoria's Sketchbook, London, Macmillan, 1979, p. 137.

[94] Torre do Tombo, Caixa 7322/CR150-1, Victoria to Maria, 2 June 1842.

[95] ibid., Victoria to Maria, 17 February 1847.

[96] RA VIC/Y 32/68, 8 May 1842.

family. Hence the unresolved dilemma – how could the rightful place of a husband and 'gentleman' be achieved by a young man of foreign birth, without rank or wealth, who was always to be a subject of his wife, the Queen Regnant? Ferdinand's title of King, conferred upon him with the birth of a male heir,[97] overcame some of these probleMs The title 'Prince Consort' was only conferred upon Albert by a Letters Patent decree, seventeen years after his marriage, a situation which had rankled both Victoria and Albert.[98] As Victoria wrote to Ferdinand in 1847: 'Our positions, yours and Albert's, and Maria's and mine, are so similar, that we understand each other thoroughly.'[99] And this understanding she described along gendered lines.

Susan Maushart's idea of motherhood being a mask is well worth applying here.[100] In their expressions of their motherhood, the two women hid, indeed were expected to hide, their true feelings and anxieties both negative and positive: their fears of pain, of failure, and of death, and their knowledge of the experiences and their delight. They found, as Sara Ruddick has observed, that motherhood taught them ways of engaging with and understanding the world which allowed them to express, with humility and cheerfulness, any anxiety they perceived,[101] and this is particularly evident in Dona Maria's writing. Maria lifted the mask a little when she wrote to Victoria about the forthcoming confinement of Ferdinand's sister, Victoire, the Duchess of Nemours:

> Victoire has written me a letter which has given us very great pleasure for she announces that she will present us a nephew or niece; she desires very much a boy, may God grant her that; she or he will be born at the same time as mine which I find very agreeable for us both; I wished that that were already over for her for I find that the first is a terrible event.[102]

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[97] I am grateful to Dr Sally Godwin-Austen for alerting me to this provision regarding Ferdinand's title, drawn from advice given by Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne to Queen Victoria in September 1837. See also Ashdown, Victoria and the Coburgs, p. 85. These provisions may have been finalised after the Treaty was signed, as they are not mentioned in any of the Treaty documents. When Maria produced a male heir Ferdinand's annual allowance was to be doubled and his title changed to 'King Consort'.

[98] Queen Victoria had broached the subject of Albert's rank with several of her Prime Ministers: Lord Melbourne, Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, 21 November 1839; Lord Aberdeen, see Aberdeen papers, British Library Add. Mss, 43048, ff 203, Memorandum, 23 November 1850; Add. Mss, 43048, ff 209-23, 2 January 1854; Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, vol. I, pp. 257-9, *passim*; Lord Derby, Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria vol. II, Memorandum of Queen Victoria May 1856; Earl of Derby to Victoria, 28 June 1856, footnote.

[99] Torre do Tombo, Caixa 7324/CR/200-10, Victoria to Ferdinand, 16 March 1847.

[100] Maushart, Mask, pp. 19-66.

[101] Sara Ruddick, Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace, London, The Women's Press, 1990, pp. 13-28.

[102] RA VIC/Y 32/59, 31 October 1841.

When she wrote of her own confinements, even the stillbirths, Maria was unable to express the anxieties that she can here express concerning a third person. Victoria was unable to lift her mask in letters until she wrote to her newly pregnant eldest daughter, Vicky. In this correspondence she frequently raged against pregnancy and childbirth:

> I think much more of our being like a cow or a dog at such moments; when our poor nature becomes so very animal and unecstatic – but for you, dear, if you are sensible and reasonable and not in ecstasy nor spending your day with nurses and wet nurses, which is the ruin of many a refined and intellectual young lady, without adding to her real maternal duties, a child will be a great resource. Above all, dear girl, do remember never to lose the modesty of a young girl towards others (without being prude); though you are married don't become a matron to whom everything can be said and who minds saying nothing herself – I remained to a particular degree (indeed feel so now) and often feel shocked at the confidences of other married ladies. I fear abroad they are very indelicate about these things... .[103]

These letters are in direct contrast to her (surviving) Journal entries of those early mothering years, and her letters to her women friends, as my research on Victoria's early motherhood showed.[104] Neither do such feelings have any resonances with the letters published by Benson and Esher. The frequent pregnancies of the two queens, and their desire to be a shining examples of wifeliness, allowed their husbands to assume many of their public roles. This gendered dilemma, of being both a public personage as Queen and having both private and public roles as wife and mother, sometimes compromised their ability to carry out their duties as sovereigns; concomitantly those royal positions impinged on their duty to be submissive as wives. Their correspondence helped them to contextualise their situations and to offset to some extent their sense of social isolation.

Even people within the British Court may not have been aware of the extent of Queen Victoria's European correspondence. This is exemplified by Charles Greville's surprise in 1853 that 'the Queen was [so much] afflicted by the Queen of Portugal's death, though they never saw each other but once when they were children'.[105] They had in

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[103] Fulford, Dearest Child, p. 115. Other examples p. 94 and pp. 77-8. See also Elizabeth K. Helsinger, 'Queen Victoria and the "shadow side" of marriage,' in Elizabeth K. Helsinger, Robin Lauterbach Sheets and William Veeder, eds, The Woman Question: Defining Voices, 1837-1883, vol. I, New York, Garland, 1983, pp. 63-77.

[104] Ward, 'Womanly Garb,'.

[105] Philip Whitwell Wilson, ed., The Greville Diary including passages hitherto withheld from Publication, 2 vols, London, Heinemann, 1927, vol. I, p. 406. Greville believed, erroneously, that the two Queens had met only on one occasion, in 1829, whereas there is a later occasion mentioned in Esher Girlhood Journal, vol. I, p. 86.

fact met twice and had been corresponding at least on a monthly basis throughout the years, until Maria's death in childbirth in 1853.[106] Charles Greville, as secretary to the Privy Council, had frequent dealings with the Queen, the politicians and the courtiers, and even at this level there was a great deal of correspondence between the British and Portuguese governments, between Prince Albert and King Ferdinand and between Dona Maria and Victoria.[107]

There were other topics omitted from the volumes of the Queen's correspondence: Victoria's knowledge of some of the marriage negotiations taking place in the 1830s; and King Leopold's constant stream of advice on all political affairs. In order to make the book 'dramatic' Benson and Esher had crafted an image of the Queen based on a pre-determined narrative thread. They wanted the young Queen to seem naive and they may even have believed her to be so, prior to her engagement to Prince Albert. But since her accession, King Leopold had discussed several possible marital unions that were being brokered between various families in Europe: between Princess Clementine of France and various suitors, and between his niece, Victoire, sister of Ferdinand, with the Duke of Nemours; even between Augusta Cambridge and Albert's brother, Ernest.[108] The intricacies of marriage treaty negotiations were not unknown to Victoria, yet they are not included nor were the detailed and frequent discussions of European politics and especially of Portugal, Spain and France. Such knowledge would affect the dramatics of the book. It would also be a distraction to highlight the foreign influences on the young Queen when they were choosing to focus on her relationship with Lord Melbourne.

Other topics which were sparingly included in the excerpts from the Queen's correspondence concerned parenting, the births of children, news of the children and

[106] Ward, 'Queen Victoria and Queen Dona Maria', p. 119.

[107] Benson and Esher published letters in which Portugal and Portuguese affairs were mentioned, but none of the direct correspondence. Victoria's correspondence with Ferdinand: Torre do Tombo, CX 7324, for 1843-4. There is no reason to believe his return correspondence, or copies Victoria may have made of her letters, were not available to the editors in 1904-7.

[108] Archives of the Royal Palace, Brussels, Correspondence of Leopold I and Queen Victoria: 60699, Leopold to Victoria, 15 March 1838, described the machinations of the Electress of Bavaria to bring about a match between the Crown Prince with Clementine of France; 60718, the possibility of Victoria's cousin, Victoire, and the Duke of Nemours, 13 April 1838; 60706, Leopold to Victoria, 27 March 1838, news of a possible match between Ernest of Wurttemburg with Clementine – she was eventually married, with Leopold's brokering, to Augustus of Saxe-Coburg, brother of Ferdinand of Portugal, and Victoire; 61187, Augusta of Cambridge and Ernest of Saxe-Coburg 4 February 1840 – excerpts of this letter were published by Benson and Esher, but this section was deleted.

other family events and the Queen's anxieties about the children, but they occurred frequently in her letters. Most surprisingly, the birth of the Prince of Wales is noted only in a footnote, several pages after its chronological place. Four weeks later a letter from the Queen to Leopold, mentioned: 'Our little boy is a wonderfully strong and large child.'[109] Many of these omissions are a reflection of the ideas of the times rather than the particular ideas of Benson and Esher. They may also reflect specific directions by King Edward VII concerning 'personal and private' material. Also such items would cause the Queen to seem preoccupied with humdrum matters, and destroy the mystique of monarchy.[110] Some people, including her own children and her courtiers, already felt that the Queen's own publication, Leaves of our Life in the Highlands went too far in that direction. Had biographers been able to read her Journals, they would have discovered just how mundane much of her daily life was; but they would have been staggered to realise the extent of her daily written output in letters. Despite Benson arguing that 'there should be a little spice of triviality I think preserved to give a hint of humanity...',[111] he found he had to give way to the pragmatics of the enterprise.

Initially, some correspondence between Victoria and her mother had been included by Benson which was read by Murray: 'I am most struck by some of those [letters] from the Queen to her mother. Her position was a most delicate one in regard to the Duchess of Kent both shortly before and after her Coronation, and these letters display much firmness of character and sense of justice.'[112] But by July, Benson told Murray, 'I fear that the Dss of Kent Correspondence will have to disappear – it seems to be a particularly sensitive point. It cuts out a sidelight, of course, but that can't be helped ...'.[113] Benson sought to console Murray, and possibly himself, by writing: 'You may take it for granted that we have got hold of all that is most interesting.'[114] Benson had not felt like this two months earlier, when he despaired that the restrictions were 'born to take the colour out' of the book. But Esher maintained that:

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[109] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, 29 November 1841.
[110] Robert Lacey, Royal, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, London, Little, Brown, 2002, pp. 24-6; Linda Colley, Britons, p. 232; Tom Nairn, The Enchanted Glass: Britain and the Monachy, London, Vintage, 1994.
[111] Esher Papers, 11/4, Benson to Esher, 16 May 1904.
[112] John Murray Archive, CB 1, Murray to Benson, 22 March 1904.
[113] John Murray Archive, CB 1, Benson to Murray, 7 July 1904.
[114] ibid., Benson to Murray,13 July 1904.

> The principle all along has been to avoid giving pain to living servants or friends of the King, or umbrage to foreign states.
> I am sure you will feel that this is the right view, even if the book should suffer, which in my judgment it will not.
> yours always, E.[115]

There certainly still was a large amount of interesting and colourful material remaining despite the excisions and omissions. Leopold was always very pessimistic about the Flemish weather. Benson and Esher opened the year of 1839 with Victoria's letter to Leopold: 'I don't like your croaking so about damp climates; if a niece may venture to say such a thing, I might almost say it is ungrateful to your faithful and attached Belgians.'[116]

Victoria's 'straight-talking' was too forceful for some people, and some other of her more expressive letters or comments were removed. Her prejudices against Republicans and French socialists was running high in 1848. She wrote to Palmerston, when he was still Foreign Minister:

> The Queen has the strongest objection against having an ambassador of the Republic at her Court, at the head of London Society who may possibly be a very awkward character. To make objections against a person selected might be very difficult and injudicious.[117]

Benson protested that this excision referred to an earlier French Republic, not the present one, but the excision was made nevertheless.[118]

The portrait painted by Benson and Esher was predetermined in that it was constrained by their notions of gender and of constitutional monarchy. It was impeded by the necessity to avoid unnecessary conflict with contemporary foreign affairs. This led to the exclusion of aspects of her character, of events of her time, and a restricted view of her circle – all of which there is abundant evidence in the unpublished materials. Because of the difficulties in accessing these materials, the Benson and Esher image and themes were to remain transcendent for at least the first half of the twentieth century.

9.3 Crafting the Image of the Queen and Gaining the King's Approval

[115] Esher papers, 11/5, Esher to Benson, 17 November 1906.
[116] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, Victoria to Leopold, 1 January 1839.
[117] Deleted from a letter from Victoria to Palmerston, in Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, Vol II, 8 August 1848, at ellipses; original document, Palmerston Papers, PP/RC/F/382/1.
[118] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 15 November 1906.

The image of the Queen was being crafted not just by the editors, but inadvertently by all of the gentlemen of influence throughout the gentlemanly networks. At work was a complex process of memory and honour, albeit through omission and scant inclusion. But it was the Queen's reliance upon men which was the most obvious and true characteristic in the editors' perceptions. As they wrote in the introductory narrative of her life: 'Confident, in a sense, as she was, she had the feminine instinct strongly developed of dependence upon some manly adviser.'[119]

In order to secure the King's approval for stereotyping the volumes, Benson, Esher, Arthur Bigge, John Morley and Lord Knollys all worked through each page of proofs first with the Queen's image in their minds, and then with the question, 'Would the King approve of this?' When this exercise was carried out it resulted in extensive excisions which proved to be expensive, time-consuming and, in the end, to affect further the comprehensiveness of the Letters.

[119] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, 1907, p. 27; 1908, p. 20.

Chapter 10

Stumbling Blocks to Publication: Excising to gain the King's Approval

Introduction

That King Edward VII could be persuaded to commemorate his mother's life by publishing her letters so near to her lifetime was surprising. Succinct and detailed accounts of her life had joined the plethora of hagiographies already in the public domain. In the short interval since her death, the multi-volumed Dictionary of National Biography had been published in which Sidney Lee's entry for her life carried the distinction of being the longest single entry.[1] Lee's spinoff biography had also been published and promptly reprinted.[2] The publishing of the correspondence of men in public life had developed throughout the nineteenth century to become something of a commonplace, but there were fewer collections of the correspondence of women published, and none of recent monarchs.[3]

Although the material for this book was restricted to that of more than forty years earlier, some of those writers and recipients were still alive, as were many of their descendants and those of Queen Victoria. King Edward was not a bibliophile, but he was exacting about form and style. Consequently, the volumes were a comprehendible form of commemorative for him – the formal, red and gold binding without, and the orderly presentation of the documents within. Although it is doubtful whether he read more than a few selected letters from the first two volumes, the editors and publishers had to work as if he was going to read each of the letters in each of the volumes.

Some of Queen Victoria's assessments of foreign affairs and her opinions of individuals were found by her editors to be incompatible with the social and political landscapes of the Edwardian era. They also proved to have the potential to clash with her successor's diplomatic aspirations, his particular affinities, and his perception of himself as a monarch. Yet, despite Lord Esher's increasingly intimate knowledge of the King and his personality, he never assumed that he could anticipate the King's responses in such matters. As early as 1904 he reminded Benson that the King was 'very difficult to manage'.[4] Throughout the project Esher remained wary of incurring the King's wrath.

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[1] H.C.G. Matthew, Leslie Stephen and the New Dictionary of National Biography, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 24.
[2] Sidney Lee, Queen Victoria. A Biography, London, Smith, Elder & Co, (1902), 1904.
[3] One of the great multi-volume publishing phenomena of the late Victorian era had been The Letters And Papers Of King Henry VIII, described in Chapter 1 of this thesis.
[4] Benson Diary, Old Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge, vol. 54, 25 June 1904.

These factors were to the forefront of Esher's mind in the later stages of the editing of Victoria's letters, especially immediately prior to offering them for the King's approval.

10.1 Submitting the Proofs to the King and Delays

In creating the three volumes comprising the book, the editors' aim was to create an image of Queen Victoria and show how she governed, her character and her development as a monarch. Materials were selected for this purpose, and crafted to appeal to a broad readership. From the start of the project it was stipulated that the King would see the book in proof form to give his approval for publishing.[5] The editors, particularly Lord Esher, became very nervous at this point. During the course of the reign, although Esher had become an intimate friend of the King, nothing could be taken for granted. In relating episodes to Arthur Benson, Esher confided to him that the King is a 'touchy person'.[6] If Esher was to incur the King's disapproval, it would exact an enormous price personally, socially and financially.[7] As the King's appointed editor and his personal friend, he stood to lose a great amount of credibility with the King, his court and his ministers if the King should be dissatisfied with his work. Consequently, before he gave the proofs to the King, he read them again, as if through the King's eyes, circa 1906. This was quite a different perspective to that needed for his original purpose, to fashion a readable portrait of the Queen. To bridge these divergent perspectives, he contrived various processes to avoid any possibility of a showdown with the King.

From the publisher's point of view, any changes to the text in typeset were time-consuming and expensive, but technically, it was the last opportunity for alterations prior to stereotyping. It was at this point that the King's approval to proceed was sought. Given that Lord Esher had advised John Murray and Arthur Benson in November 1905 that the King's approval for Volume I would take about a week,

[5] Royal Archives, Windsor, RA VIC/W 39/41, Lord Esher to Lord Knollys, 3 April 1904. King Edward VII attached a specific note to this letter on the 5 April 1904, agreeing to the publication, but 'not without my sanction and having looked over it'. See also Esher Papers, 11/4, Churchill Archives, Cambridge, A.C. Benson to Lord Esher, 4 March 1904.
[6] Benson Diary, vol. 65, 11 February 1905.
[7] See James Lees-Milne, The Enigmatic Edwardian. The Life of Reginald, 2nd Viscount Esher, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1986, pp. 79-81, 150-2, and 154 ff, for descriptions and analyses of the relationships between Esher, Knollys and the King.

they were justified in expecting to hear from Esher at least before Christmas. Just before New Year's Eve Knollys was able to inform Esher that the King approved 'these' letters,[8] suggesting only a portion of the whole had been shown to the King; others had yet to be looked at. Both Murray and Benson were constantly writing to Esher throughout the next year in reference to the pedigrees, the plates, the Preface, the Prospectus, the translation of French and German passages, about Volumes II and III, for any reason almost; but in doing so, their prime concern was to speed Volume I to publication.

There were various reasons why Esher took so many months to achieve what he had predicted would take one week. From the last months of 1905 and the early months of 1906 he was busily involved in the War Office Territorial Committee, and in the establishment and chairing of the Army Review Committee,[9] but this also meant that he was in frequent, often daily, contact with the King,[10] which one would expect would serve to facilitate the process of approval. The delays were exacerbated by the combined effects of important new material being found by Esher and an overpowering anxiety, on the part of both Esher and Knollys,[11] of the risk of incurring the King's displeasure.

10.1.1 Dealing with New Materials

Early in the New Year of 1906, Princess Beatrice, in her capacity as Queen Victoria's literary executor, asked Lord Esher to help her, as she intended to open the vaults which contained 'all of the boxes of the Queen's correspondence'.[12] Beatrice knew of the publishing enterprise so it was curious that she had not offered to open them before. It would seem that this was the first Esher knew of 'the vaults'. He was staggered by what they found – early volumes of Queen Victoria's journal and a large collection of the correspondence between Queen Victoria and Lord Melbourne from the year of the Queen's accession, 1837. No

[8] Esher Papers, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge, 10/48, Knollys to Esher, 29 December 1905.
[9] Maurice V. Brett, ed., Journal and Letters of Reginald, Viscount Esher, vol. II, London, Ivor, Nicolson and Watson, 1934, pp. 155 ff.
[10] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, p. 119 ff.
[11] For example, Esher Papers, 10/49, Knollys to Esher, 25 August 1906.

one had known what had become of the letters; they had long been presumed lost. 'It is a vast pity that I had not got them earlier ... ' Esher wrote to his son.[13]

After a hurried consultation with Benson and Murray, it was decided that given the importance of the letters, Esher was to select letters for inclusion and send them to Miss Williams who would type them and place them chronologically within Volume I. The additions would then be sent to John Murray to be printed and the newly printed proofs could be sent to the King. 'This is awfully upsetting just when Vol. I was practically done,' Benson wrote in his diary.[14] He initially hoped it might mean an additional volume rather than cutting more from Volume I.[15] When these new letters were incorporated into the proofs, Benson was surprised to learn that the volume had yet to be submitted to the King – thus confirming his anxiety that almost nothing had been achieved since November and there were now certain to be further delays and excisions. The revised proofs were sent to Esher on the 29 April 1906[16] and again the wait for the King's approval began.

Much to the chagrin of the editors, 'many hundreds of letters' of Lord Melbourne and those of another of her Prime Ministers, Lord John Russell, 'with the Queen's replies', surfaced early in May: 'This is really dreadful,' Benson wrote, '... [but] Esher, most Napoleonically, says he is not even going to look at them, which is probably the best way'.[17] At the same time Benson was conscious that future historians might find that the material had been overlooked in this way, and at his instigation an explanatory footnote was added to the Preface.[18]

10.1.2 Benson and Murray left in the Dark …

As time passed, John Murray was hugely frustrated by the delays, due to the cost involved in having so much type sitting idle and because he wanted to get the

[12] Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, 3 January 1906, p. 133.
[13] ibid..
[14] Benson Diary, vol. 77, 4 January 1906.
[15] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 4 January 1906.
[16] Benson Diary, vol. 81, 29 April 1906.
[17] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 2 May 1906; Benson Diary, vol. 81, 4 May 1906.
[18] Arthur Benson and Viscount Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria 1837-61, London, John Murray (1907), 1908, vol. I, see footnote on the second page of the Preface.

book published. Both he and Arthur Benson diplomatically urged Esher along, reiterating time and again the problems of the type being 'tied up' and their inability to proceed with the editing of Volume III until it could be set. They always employed a gentlemanly and deferential turn of phrase: 'This is not to hurry you in any way, but only to explain exactly how we are situated', Benson wrote to Esher in June,[19] and as a gentlemanly apologia from Murray: '... I hope my remarks have not given the wrong impression. I can assure you that I realise to the full the unique importance of this work, and it was mainly on this account that I wrote as I did ...'.[20]

Esher was reluctant to submit the volumes to the King. By mid-year Volume II was also ready. At some point, most likely in consultation with Lord Knollys, he decided to find other men to look at the volumes before submitting them to the King.[21] Esher's actions over the ensuing months of the summer confirm that this decision had been taken, but there is no evidence that he discussed the idea with Benson or Murray.[22] Benson and Murray had become so anxious that they shared with each other the smallest shreds of information about the progress of the volumes. On 14 July, Benson wrote to Murray that he had heard that 'the reason why we are now stuck is that the King wishes to read all the proofs himself and has annexed Vols [I & II] for that purpose'.[23] Several days later they learned that Queen Victoria's last Private Secretary, Arthur Bigge, also had been given copies.[24] The information about Bigge's role was given to Benson as 'absolutely

[19] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 25 June 1906 and throughout the copious amount of correspondence for the months of May, June, July and August 1906.
[20] ibid., Murray to Esher, 31 August 1906.
[21] Knollys and Esher both had roles in the Arthur Somerset case, and this may have been their initial meeting. See Lees-Milne, The Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 79-81, for description and analysis of the relationship between Esher and Knollys. Throughout King Edward's reign they had more contact with each other and became intimate friends sharing confidences concerning several of the King's Ministers and political intrigues.
[22] I have been unable to find written evidence of Esher making the decision initially, but Knollys wrote that he thought it an 'excellent plan' to ask John Morley to look at the proofs. Esher Papers, 10/49, 22 August 1906. Esher had already asked Morley 5 days earlier! M. Brett, Journals and Letters,vol. II, p. 176.
[23] John Murray Archives, Albemarle St., London, Correspondence re Letters of Queen Victoria, CB2, 14 July 1906, letter marked Private.
[24] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 16 July 1906.

confidential information', he told Murray.[25] By the 26 July Benson had heard some rumour of the King's decision, but nothing official, and he and Murray continued to speculate on the outcome over the next weeks. In their minds, the longer the delay the more likely it was that major changes would be required: 'H.M. must be brooding over them...'.[26] Benson wrote several more letters to Esher over the delays, impressing upon him the increasingly urgent need for Volume I to be approved for stereotyping.[27]

As summer continued on there was no news from Esher about Volume I. When the King left England to visit Germany and Austria on the 14 August,[28] Esher and Knollys adjourned to their respective retreats in the Scottish Highlands, whilst Murray and Benson waited down south for royal approval to proceed and the return of the proofs. Benson was hot and bothered. After receiving yet another distressing, and by then tiresome, letter from Murray and having a frustrating day himself, Benson shot back a reply to Murray marked, 'Private':

> As to the Queen's letters, I can well understand your feeling ... I will tell you frankly and confidentially that I am meditating a final coup – withdrawing from the Editorship. If much objection is taken to what we have done, and if much rearrangement &c becomes necessary, I think I shall say plainly that I will have nothing more to do with it. Of course it would mean throwing away some money &c but it will give you some idea of how these delays irritate one. Royalties [generally, and the King, specifically] have no conception how much trouble they give and no one ever tells them. It is not want of consideration so much as the deplorable kind of education they receive.
> I have mentioned this as yet to no one but yourself; but if I can't get things to move, I shall write to Esher in the same sense shortly. Please regard this as wholly confidential.
> Ever yours, ACB[29]

But Benson in this instance was disingenuous. He, like Esher, could play games when it suited his purpose – he was merely trying to assuage Murray. In his diary entry for the same day he wrote: 'Irritable letter from Murray ... but I took the wind out of his sails

[25] John Murray Archives, CB2, 19 July 1906. This information may well have been passed to Benson by Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was a good friend of Benson and of Bigge. See D.N.B., 1949, Arthur Bigge entry, by Owen Morshead, Librarian of Windsor Castle.
[26] John Murray Archives, CB2, Benson to Murray, 31 July 1906.
[27] For example, Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 8 August 1906.
[28] The Times, 15 August 1906, p. 7. Daily reports were given on p. 7, until the King's return on 10 September 1906.
[29] John Murray Archives, Benson to Murray, 12 August 1906.

by telling him quite frankly that I was thinking of giving up the editorship myself!'[30] But Benson, so conscious of his financial position, never seriously intended to carry out his threat.

Meanwhile Esher cast his eye around his gentlemanly circle, seeking readers of the proofs who could act as censors. For Esher, these men would serve as buffers between the King and himself as editor by confirming judgements, and validating the selections. In all of his enterprises and projects Esher worked by committee and consensus, always mindful to avoid being solely responsible or individually judged. Characteristically, Esher did not consult Benson or Murray about this or even inform them of this idea, and the time it might take.

10.2 Censoring for the King and more Delays

Esher and Knollys had many reasons to be nervous: counting Edward VII himself, there were still five of Queen Victoria's children alive, and many of their spouses and children, any or all of whom could be critical of the selections.[31] Even during Queen Victoria's lifetime her children and courtiers were divided in their opinions as to the appropriateness of the Queen's publications. They had expressed anxiety about public opinion and the public response to her personal publications.[32] Queen Victoria's daughters, Helena and Beatrice, were particularly protective toward family and monarchy, even trying to dissuade the Queen from giving her permission for the publication of a Jubilee photograph of herself smiling, which they deemed to be undignified, but which Victoria thought, 'very like'![33]

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[30] Benson Diary, vol. 84, p. 46, 12 August 1906. Benson wrote proudly on the 1 August (vol. 84, p. 13), that he had earned £1400 from his writing, but reminded himself that, 'it is only a vogue of course, and I must husband the money'.

[31] The censoring of biography by custodians of family respectability has been examined by many biographers and literary theorists. See in particular, Robert Skidelsky, John Maynard Keynes. Hopes Betrayed. 1882-1920, London, Macmillan, 1983, Introduction, esp. pp. xxii-iii, where he refers to relatives 'casting shadows' and the genre of 'widows' biographies'. In relation to Royal biography, see David Cannadine, 'From Reverence to Rigour. Writing the History of the Modern British Monarchy', Times Literary Supplement, 23 January 2004, pp. 11-13.

[32] Elizabeth Longford, Victoria R.I., London, (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964), Abacus, 2000, pp. 408-9, and 494-9

[33] Alan Hardy, Queen Victoria was Amused, London, John Murray, 1976, p. 148, quoted from Viscount Esher extracts of The Girlhood of Queen Victoria, 2 Vols, London, John Murray, 1912, p. 273.

Additionally, for each of the gentlemen involved, trying to please the King, and more importantly, trying to ensure he was not displeased, was of the utmost importance. The difficulties revolved around dealing with King Edward VII as a man, as a son and as a king. All of the men were conscious of this, and the anxiety was neatly encapsulated by Knollys, writing to Esher as they grappled with the proofs, offering a consolation but sounding a warning:

> Let me, as a friend remind you of one point in connection with the publication of the letters though doubtless you have already thought of it – if when the work appears anything in it strikes the King as inappropriate or in bad taste, or if any of our good-natured friends puts that idea into his head, the first person he will blame and fall foul of will be you, then Benson while I shall probably make a bad third.
> Yours ever, K[34]

The possibility of provoking the King's displeasure was oppressive and affected each of the gentlemen involved in the project.

With such thoughts as these in his mind, Esher chose two particular men to check the revised proofs: the first was Arthur Bigge, an interested and conservative critic chosen because of his long and close association with Queen Victoria and his current position in the Royal Household, and the second was John Morley, a Gladstonian Liberal, a Member of Parliament and cabinet member, who had also achieved success in literature and in journalism. It may have been felt by Esher and Knollys that it was safer to have Bigge involved in the editing of the Letters than to run the risk of his giving sympathy to any disaffected members of the Royal Family and being destructively critical of the book afterwards. The editors and their coterie were all conscious of these possibilities.

10.2.1 Arthur Bigge

Arthur Bigge had joined the Royal Household in 1879 when as an Army Lieutenant he was appointed Assistant Private Secretary to Sir Henry Ponsonby and Assistant Keeper of the Privy Purse. He served under the strong and influential personality of Ponsonby for fifteen years, before he assumed the position of Private Secretary upon Ponsonby's resignation and subsequent death in 1895.[35] Following Victoria's death, he was

[34] Esher Papers, 10/49, Knollys to Esher, 25 August 1906.
[35] Paul Emden, The Power Behind the Throne, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1934, pp. 199-210. In the Birthday Honours of 1910 he was awarded a KCB and the title Lord Stamfordham, by King George V. In 1906 he signed his letters 'Bigge' and was referred to as such by Knollys and Esher.

appointed Extra Equerry to the new monarch, Edward VII, and Private Secretary to his heir.[36] Subsequently, as Lord Stamfordham he served as Private Secretary to King George V until his own death in 1931.[37] Bigge's assistance was not acknowledged in the Benson and Esher edition of the Letters (an oversight, or perhaps at his own request) but he received a generous recognition in the Buckle editions.[38] In the summer of 1906, proofs of Volume I of the letters were sent to him for his opinion.[39]

Bigge wrote to Esher saying he disagreed with the publishing of any letters or Journal extracts of the late Queen, and claimed Esher concurred with him in this matter: 'I am glad that you and I agree in deprecating in the publishing of any letters and journals: however the King, I suppose, has well considered this particular case.'[40] Perhaps this was one of those episodes in Esher's life, where he was 'all things to all people'. Alternatively, Esher may well have disapproved of the publication on the grounds of privacy and from the gentlemanly perspective of knowledge and secrecy, but if it was to be done, he much preferred to have an influential role in the outcome. Bigge was under the mistaken belief that the version he was reviewing had already been passed by the King. Some of the Queen's early letters 'referring to family matters' had been looked at by the King,[41] but certainly not all of the volume. Consequently, at the time, he excused himself, lest he seem presumptuous in questioning the King's judgement by submitting that a further amount should be cut out.[42] Why Knollys and Esher should collude in such deception is not readily explainable, unless they hoped to achieve a minimum of objections, and excisions, from Bigge.

Bigge's strongest objection was to the publication of some of the letters between Lord Melbourne and Queen Victoria before her marriage: 'There is a good deal in there

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[36] Kenneth Rose, King George V, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1983, pp. 47-9.
[37] Emden, Behind the Throne, pp. 212-3. For an enlightened discussion of the way Bigge developed his role within the Courts, see Robert Lacey, Royal. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, London, Little, Brown, 2002, pp. 57-9, 61-4.
[38] George Buckle, Letters of Queen Victoria 1862-1878, Second Series, vol. I, London, John Murray, 1926, p. xvi.
[39] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 16 July 1906; John Murray Archives, CB2, Benson to Murray, 17 July 1906; Esher Papers, 10/49, Knollys to Esher, 15 August 1906, enclosing a letter from Bigge written after reading vol. I, dated 9 August 1906.
[40] ibid., 11/3, Bigge to Esher, 22 August 1906.
[41] ibid., 11/3, Royal Correspondence, Knollys to Esher, 9 August 1905: 'I have shown the enclosed letter [Benson 3 August 1905] to the King and he desires me to say he will certainly look over the letters, referring to family matters, to which you allude.'
[42] Esher Papers, 10/49, Copy of Bigge's letter to Knollys, 9 August 1906; Knollys to Esher, 18 August 1906.

which I cannot help thinking was never intended for publication; which is of no importance historically and would only supply matter for gossip and possibly ill-natured criticism.'[43] The detail of his objections convey much about the courtier's mindset: protective toward the image of the Queen and to her memory; submissive toward the present King; anxious that material he deemed to be 'private' was being disseminated into the public domain, and the subsequent loss of control over it. Bigge's list of objections which he sent to Knollys illustrated all of these concerns:

> -In the extract from the Queen's Journal describing the events of the CORONATION p. 153 there are passages especially referring to Lord Melbourne and to the Queen's conversation after the ceremony which strike me as unsuitable for publication.[44]

The extract to which he referred was printed in its entirety and it included passages such as:

> My excellent Lord Melbourne, who stood very close to me throughout the whole ceremony, was completely overcome ... when [he] knelt down and kissed my hand, he pressed my hand, and I grasped his with all my heart, at which he looked up with his eyes filled with tears and seemed much touched ... [45]

After the ceremony, Victoria recorded many personal comments made by Melbourne: 'He asked kindly if I was tired; and said the Sword he carried, (the first, Sword of State) was excessively heavy. I said that the Crown hurt me a good deal. He was very much amused ...'.[46] The personal and intimate nature of these comments may have concerned Bigge. Melbourne congratulated Victoria, 'again and again', she recorded, throughout the evening. At one point, 'with tears in his eyes ... he said, "You did it so well – excellent! ... It's a thing that you can't give a person advice upon; it must be left to the person"...'[47] Perhaps it was such demonstrations of emotional connectedness which Bigge found to be 'unsuitable', as he also objected to:

> – letters to Lord Lansdowne pp. 222 & 225 in which the Queen is 'sadly disappointed' at Lord M's not coming to dine especially 'as she felt so happy at the thought of his <u>not</u> dining elsewhere and <u>her</u> having him to dinner'.

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[43] ibid., 11/3, Bigge to Esher, 16 August 1906.
[44] ibid., 10/49, Bigge to Knollys, 9 August 1906.
[45] Benson and Esher, <u>Letters of Queen Victoria</u>, vol. I, Entry from Queen Victoria's Journal, 28 June 1838.
[46] ibid..
[47] ibid., Entry from Queen Victoria's Journal, 28 June 1838.

> – [letters to Lord Melbourne] ... 'The Queen anxiously hopes Lord M. has slept well ... it was very wrong of him not to wish her goodnight ... When did he get home? ... It was a great pleasure that he came last night &c'.[48]

Bigge continued:

> These are examples – I will not trouble you with others. Of course one realises that the Queen was only a girl of 20 [sic actually 18-19 years] and these letters were written to a man whom she regarded in the light of a father, but still she was Queen and he Prime Minister.
> Depend upon it, Her Majesty would never have consented to the publication of these very intimate, may I say, childlike communications – and I repeat again – *cui bono*? [49]

Knollys disagreed:

> Dear Bigge,
> At first I was of the same opinion as you in regard to the publication of Lord Melbourne's letters, but when I found that she was 'carrying on ' most of the time with Prince Albert, I thought it would seem that her expressions of affection to the former were simply those of a daughter to one whom she evidently looked upon as a sort of parent. – One of her most affectionate letters to Lord M. was written a few days before she told him of her engagement and when she was violently 'in love' with Prince Albert.
> I cannot help thinking you are mistaken in supposing that the letters which passed between the Queen and Lord M. will not interest people. – I confess to having been much interested in them myself.[50]

In some of this detail, Knollys was mistaken. As can be ascertained from Volume I of the Letters, Victoria was only 'carrying on' with Albert after his second visit in October 1839, and they were married four months later, in February 1840. Most of the material to which Bigge was objecting had been written before that time: for example, the coronation memoir was from 1838. Other letters were written by Victoria to Lord Melbourne throughout July and August of 1839, with similar wording and sentiments to those written to Lord Lansdowne, and were included for publication.

After sending this reply off to Bigge, Knollys conspiratorially wrote to Esher:

> I hold the same opinion [as Bigge] respecting the publication of Lord M.'s letters, but what do you say to the usual way of getting out of a difficulty – a compromise – the compromise being that if Bigge has any particular feelings about any special letters up to 3 or 4 in number, they ought to be omitted.[51]

A compromise was made by allowing one of Bigge's objections and omitting the letters to Lord Lansdowne – there are none of Victoria's letters to Lord Lansdowne written in

[48] The letters to Lord Melbourne remained in the book. Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, p. 178.
[49] Esher Papers, 10/49, Bigge to Knollys, 9 August 1906.
[50] Esher Papers, 10/49, copy of letter of Knollys to Bigge, 15 August 1906.

1839, in the volumes – but none of the other contentious entries cited by Bigge were altered. The Lansdowne omissions had little effect on the overall picture of the warmth, and emotional complexities of the relationship between Victoria and Lord Melbourne. It was strongly conveyed in the remaining letters.

The practice of having material put into type before it was revised was also criticised by Bigge. From the proofs he could see that Benson had sent material to the printers containing the observation that the Duchess of Kent was 'so much pleasanter to deal with now that that man was got rid of' (referring to Sir John Conroy). Although the passage had been marked to be deleted, Bigge thought it highly improper that such sensitive material should ever have been seen by the printers.[52] He was a deeply cautious man and argued against any 'intimate material' being printed:

> I always imagined that it was the political correspondence that would be given to the public – for instance all the Prime Ministers' letters, reports of Cabinet meetings, &c tho' of course some of these are included in the papers now under discussion.
> I quite see your comparisons of the intervals which separate us from Melbourne and that between James I and Queen Anne, and between Geo II and Queen Victoria. But on the other hand, Queen Victoria has not been dead 6 years – Her memory is loved and venerated by all English-speaking people; in India it is positively a worship – and if I were the King, both from the point of view of son and Mother and also for the sake of the monarchical idea and 'Culte' I would publish nothing which could tend to shake the position of Queen Victoria in the minds of her subjects.[53]

Bigge's comments and criticisms opened up the very large and complex issues of 'personal vs public' that were contentious for Benson and Esher, and remain so still. In a later letter to Esher, Knollys rather perceptively reminded him that the Queen herself had authorised the publication of many of the Prince Consort's letters in Martin's biography: 'With respect to Bigge's objections, I wonder what the Prince Consort would have said to the publication of his letters and diaries in Martin's Life, which remember was brought out under the direct authority of Queen Victoria ...'.[54] No doubt, he was intending to ease some of the pressure of Bigge's criticism. Knollys obviously thought this was remarkable, but reading Martin today, one is struck by how little of the Prince's voice is heard and how few of his personal letters or Journal extracts are

[51] ibid., Knollys to Esher, 18 August 1906.
[52] ibid., 11/3, Royal Correspondence, Bigge to Esher, 16 August 1906.
[53] Esher Papers, 11/3, Royal Correspondence, Bigge to Esher, 22 August 1906.
[54] ibid.,, 10/49, Knollys to Esher, 24 August 1906.

included.[55] Much of the material comprises letters written by others about the Prince, and some were written by Victoria.

When Benson first visited the Round Tower at Windsor, he remarked on seeing all of the 'love letters' to the Prince bound into one volume.[56] But, he told Murray that he believed Martin had not had access to the original letters – that a selection had been made for him by someone within the Royal circle.[57] This can be confirmed by Queen Victoria's directive to Martin before he began the work: 'The copying and *sifting* of papers, and the responsibility for what should be put in or omitted, would rest with the Queen, General Grey and Mr Helps ...'. [58] Grey had been Private Secretary to the Prince Consort and Arthur Helps was his aptly named assistant. In 1844 Albert had gone to Coburg for ten days whilst Victoria remained in England. Martin included a letter Albert wrote to Victoria from Dover Harbour, but he preceded it with: 'From the Prince's letters to the Queen during his absence we are enabled to present the following extract ...', clearly showing that the Queen had directed that this letter be included. (It has been abbreviated for our purposes here.)

> My own darling,
> ... I have been here an hour and I regret the lost time which I might have spent with you. Poor child! You will, while I write, be getting ready for luncheon, and you will find a place vacant where I sat yesterday. In your heart, however, I hope my place will not be vacant. I at least have you on board with me in spirit. ...
> Thirteen more [days] and I am again within your arMs[59]

The letter is pertinent because of the personal and intimate material, but not every letter of Albert's contained such endearments – they were more usually written in an impersonal, business-like tone. Victoria had similarly selected material for Charles Grey who wrote The Early Years of the Prince Consort.[60] In both cases she selected materials for the men to arrange into a narrative. Generally, very few of the Prince's personal letters were included in either publication. Memoranda of life with the Prince

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[55] Theodore Martin, Life of H.R.H. the Prince Consort, London, Smith, Elder, 1875, vol. I, pp. 46 and 48 for two examples of letters from the period of their betrothal through their first year of marriage.
[56] Benson Diary, vol. 40, 14 October 1903, when he had written: '... Fancy such things as all the love letters to the Prince Consort in one volume …'
[57] John Murray Archives, CB1, Benson to Murray, 30 December 1903.
[58] Theodore Martin, Queen Victoria As I Knew Her, Edinburgh and London, William Blackwood, 1908, (previously privately printed in1902), p. 12. Victoria had recruited Helps to edit her own publications, Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands (1848-61), London, Smith, Elder, (1868) 1877, and More Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands (1862-1882), London, Smith, Elder, (1884), 1885.
[59] Martin, Life of Prince Consort, vol. I, pp. 206-7.

written by the Queen comprised the greatest part of the Grey book. In effect, she was co-author and co-editor of both volumes. But Knollys's point holds true, perhaps doubly true: the Queen had 'authorised' the publication of the Prince's letters and Journal excerpts.

The Queen had firm views on family papers, as shown by Sheila de Bellaigue of the Royal Archives.[61]

> When her eldest daughter, then Crown Princess of Prussia, wrote to [Victoria] in 1874 seeking authorization to burn all the Queen's letters to her because, 'the idea is *dreadful* to me that anyone *else* should read or meddle with them in the event of my death!' Queen Victoria's response was forthright. 'I am not for burning them except any of a nature to affect any of the family painfully & which are of no real importance & they should be destroyed at once. But all the papers and letters *I* have are secured [against unauthorised publication] ... I am much against destroying important letters as I every day see the necessity for reference.'[62]

Consequently Queen Victoria's correspondence from her daughter survives, comprising sixty volumes, and her own writings amount to almost twice that number: 'They were apparently seen and certainly not used by the editors of Queen Victoria's letters – possibly because they were regarded as too personal,' suggested their editor, Roger Fulford, in 1964. [63] It may have also been that there were too many! Bigge's criticism of the selections in general, and the Melbourne ones in particular, served Esher's purpose in having questions asked and justifications made. It is a pity that Bigge did not make a similar criticism as Murray had concerning the dearth of letters from Prince Albert – we may have had an explanation available to us today.

Whilst simultaneously dealing with Bigge's criticisms and his own various Committee and Parliamentary negotiations, Esher privately sounded out John Morley as a second possible reader:

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[60] Lt-Gen Charles Grey, The Early Years of H.R.H. the Prince Consort, London, Smith, Elder, 1869.
[61] Sheila de Bellaigue, 'The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle', The Court Historian, vol. III, No. 2 (July 1998), pp. 10-20.
[62] de Bellaigue, 'Royal Archives', p. 14.
[63] Roger Fulford, ed., Dearest Child, Letters between Queen Victoria and the Princess Royal, 1858-1861, London, Evans Bros, 1964, statistics, p. 7; quotation, p. 3. The whereabouts of the Queen's letters to Vicky may have been uncertain during the years 1904-7. See Frederick Ponsonby, ed., Letters of the Empress Frederick, London, Macmillan, 1928, for his account of the movement of the letters between England and Germany. Ponsonby's account was disputed, see Egon Caesar Conte Corti, The English Empress: A Study in the Relations between Queen Victoria and her Eldest Daughter, Empress Frederick of Germany, London, Cassell, 1957.

> I have finished Vol I and Vol II of *Queen Victoria's Correspondence*, the penultimate revise. It has been difficult work, as, since the book is to be issued by the direct authority of the King, much care must be taken not to allow anything to slip in which can give pain or offence. The latter term in its most catholic sense. Between ourselves, the King wishes you to look through the final proofs. Will you, when asked, consent?[64]

There is no proof that Esher actually consulted the King before making this request to Morley.

On that same day he wrote to John Murray, saying: 'I return the proofs of Volume I. The King has gone through them and by H.M.'s directions I have cut out certain passages.'[65] The excisions were more extensive than the two Lansdowne letters of Bigge's list. They included the long excision from a letter from King Leopold criticising The Times, and an excision to the Introductory chapter.[66] Murray replied: 'From the editorial point of view the excisions seem to be not serious. From the printer's point of view I fear they will be very serious...'.[67] Murray sent a similar message to Benson who was at his mother's home at Horsted Keynes. In his diary he recorded his reaction:

> 20 Aug 1906
> Woke feeling better then opened letter from Murray which had arrived on Sat – not new proofs but the King's copy!! Many omissions, some very serious – long serious letter from Murray. Went up to Town to see Murray – went solidly through [it all].[68]

The excisions at this stage were a technical nightmare. The material to be excised had to be located in the trays of type and that type removed. A decision had then to be made as to whether the type was to be physically moved up to fill the gaps, or whether alternative material of the same length, and chronologically compatible, should be found as a replacement. Either alternative was time-consuming and expensive, and would have repercussions for the publication dates of the book.[69] It also meant additional work for the Indexers as the Index for Volume I (and for Volume II) was almost completed at this time. After spending half a day with Murray Benson wrote to Esher:

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[64] M. Brett, ed, Journals and Letters, vol. II, p. 176, Esher to Morley, 17 August 1906.
[65] John Murray Archives, CB2, Esher to Murray, 17 August 1906.
[66] ibid., Murray to Benson, 18 August 1906 contains some details of the excisions: p. 8; pp. 81-2, 219, 329, 335, 398, 409 and 418.
[67] Esher Papers, 11/6, John Murray to Esher, 18 August 1906.
[68] Benson Diary, vol. 84, 20 August 1906.
[69] Esher Papers, 11/6, Murray to Esher, 29 August 1906.

> I have just been through the proofs with Murray. There are three serious omissions. If these omissions are met simply by closing up the pages, the whole pagination of the book will have to be altered, and the index thrown out of gear. It will mean breaking up every page [of type] from the point of the first alteration [p. 8] to the end of the book – this will waste time and be of course very expensive.
> What I would suggest is that we should find some unemphatic passages of letters of a purely historical kind to fill up the gaps – It will be quite easy to do this out of the cancelled proofs or the MSS. The introductions [replacement material] need not come chronologically exactly where the omissions come, but a few pages earlier or later; and thus only a few pages need be disarranged ... – but you can trust me to find absolutely colourless passages.[70]

The idea to fill the gaps, although claimed by Benson, may have been Murray's, derived from his previous experience. Benson set about collecting lines of 'unemphatic' and 'absolutely colourless' text to fill the gaps left by what he believed to be 'the King's excisions', but really were those of Bigge. Benson was hopeful that the first volume would soon be ready for press, thus alleviating the frustration he and Murray had felt throughout the summer. Considering the agony he had felt at having to delete and excise so much interesting material in the early stages of the selecting work, he must have felt a huge frustration at this point but his pragmatism came to the fore; he took Esher at his word and believed these changes constituted the King's approval. Believing that the volume would be ready for the final printing he set to work to fill the gaps as quickly as he could.

Benson did not know that Esher and Knollys still had deep anxieties about the publication, sensing potential critics, including the King, ready to pounce from all quarters. Esher had written to Morley and 'sounded him out' about acting as a censor for the King.[71]

10.2.2 John Morley

On the face of it, Morley was a surprising choice. An active politician, he was at the time Secretary of State for India, having been a parliamentarian since 1883. He had been editor of the Fortnightly Review for fifteen years before he edited the Pall Mall Gazette from 1880-83. Amongst other works, he had written a three-

[70] Esher Papers 11/5, Benson to Esher, 20 August 1906.
[71] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, letter to John Morley, 17 August 1906, pp. 175-6.

volume life of William Gladstone, which was published in 1903.[72] He was a friend of Esher's,[73] and Benson had been a contributing biographer to his 'Men of Letters' series. Morley had a reputation of 'being by no means tender toward monarchical personages'.[74] Part of Esher's strategy was to have Morley's approval which would serve to refute any charges of political partisanship and, being a Gladstonian Liberal, bring political balance to the enterprise.

Morley had risen from being the son of a Lancashire doctor, to become a distinguished lawyer and historian. In 1902, the King had enthusiastically promoted Morley for the position of Regius Professor of History at Oxford, but Prime Minister Balfour turned down the application, possibly because of Morley's Gladstonian enthusiasMs However, the King compensated Morley by making him a founder member of his Order of Merit that year. Later, despite registering his opposition to some of Morley's reforms in India, the King gave his consent and their personal relations were not impaired at all.[75]

Esher had known Morley from at least April 1881, as he recorded in his journal: 'This morning John Morley called here' at Esher's London home.[76] Morley visited him again in January 1882. During the political upheavals of 1905-6,[77] Morley again became a Cabinet Minister; he had previously served as a member of Gladstone's third and fourth Cabinets. From December 1905, Esher 'obtained frequently from Morley, on the King's behalf, information which had not been provided by the Prime Minister, [Henry Campbell-Bannerman,] and he drew Morley very close to the King'.[78] It was not until late in 1906 that Esher visited Morley's home in Wimbledon. On the day following the visit, he wrote a letter thanking Morley for his hospitality and adding afterthoughts to the discussions of the previous day. He wrote to the King, describing the visit (and the house) and

[72] Magnus Magnusson, ed., Chambers Biographical Dictionary, Chambers, Edinburgh, 1990, p. 1042. See also D. A. Hamer, John Morley: Liberal Intellectual in Politics, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968.
[73] Esher had asked Morley, as a friend, to take on his eldest son, Oliver, as an assistant secretary in December 1905, and Morley did. Lees-Milne, An Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 153-4.
[74] Roger Fulford, The Prince Consort, (London, Macmillan, 1949), New York, St. Martin's Press, 1966, p. xi.
[75] Details drawn from George Plumpetre, Edward VII, London, Pavilion books, 1995, pp. 230-1.
[76] M. Brett, ed. Journals and Letters, vol. I, 22 April 1881, p. 82.
[77] Walter Arnstein, 'Edwardian Politics: Turbulent Spring or Indian Summer?' in Alan O'Day, The Edwardian Age: Conflict and Stability 1900-1914, London, Macmillan, 1979, pp. 67-70; A.J.P. Taylor, 'Prologue: the Year 1906', Donald Read, ed., Edwardian England, London, Croom Helm, 1982, pp. 1-14.

gave him some details of their political discussions, and then he wrote to the Secretary of State for War, Haldane, about Morley's disappointments and hurts. In conclusion he gave a detailed, waspish, account to his favoured son, Maurice, marvelling at the incongruity of Morley's 'commonplace villa' and his great power; that someone who 'inherited neither position nor wealth' should have power given him by his fellow-countrymen. Esher obviously felt himself to be socially superior to Morley, though in awe of his knowledge, his high standards and achievements.[79] With Morley's letter of approval, Esher knew that the King would be reassured. Hopefully, he would readily consent to the volume being printed and not even find it necessary to check the volume any further himself.

Neither Murray nor Benson were aware that there was to be yet another round of excisions, this time at the behest of Morley, or that the proofs had not yet been before the King for a final vetting.[80] Benson worked feverishly to fill the gaps made by the ordered excisions, (Bigge's) preparing the script for publication. The printers had made the alterations and incorporated Benson's substitutions. Benson was double-checking the proofs for minute errors whilst battling a painful bout of conjunctivitis.[81] They were daily expecting royal approval to allow Volume I to be stereotyped, when Murray received a telegram from Esher: 'The King wishes to see another revise of Vol I. When the excisions have been made it should be sent to me here. Esher.'[82]

This would be the fourth set of revised proofs to be printed! Murray was flabbergasted! But he politely replied to Esher, acknowledging the telegram and promising to send the revises as soon as possible, expressing the hope that 'no more excisions are to be made, as this will involve a second re-adjustment of the Index as well as the proofs'.[83] He also wrote to Benson giving him the content of the telegram, and asking for the 'stop-gap' pieces so as to have the proofs ready

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[78] Philip Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, London, John Murray, 1964, pp. 348-9.
[79] Details of their meetings as given in M. Brett, Journal and Letters, vol. II, pp. 210-4. John Murray IV had also lived in Wimbledon, but had moved into Albemarle St. premises adjoining the office in 50 Albemarle St. before 1902. Humphrey Carpenter, Draft of commissioned history of the Murray family publishing company, forthcoming 2005, made available to me by H. Carpenter, October 2004.
[80] Esher Papers, 11/6, Murray to Esher, 28 and 29 August 1906.
[81] ibid., 11/5, Benson to Esher, 26 August 1906.
[82] John Murray Archives, CB2, Telegram from Esher to Murray, 28 August 1906.
[83] Esher Papers, 11/6, Murray to Esher, 28 August 1906.

for Esher as soon as possible.[84] The following day, another telegram was sent to Murray from Esher:

> Impossible to guarantee Volume one as it now stands. Would you prefer sending it back once more in its present form or wait new revise? Please telegraph reply. Volume two will be sent in a few days. Revision much more definite and complete. Esher.[85]

Murray replied:

> I am much distressed to learn that there is a possibility of further excisions ... I have telegraphed the printer to have the proofs returned to you as it is of utmost importance to get all of the alterations made at once. ... Indeed as matters now stand, I don't know if we shall be able to publish next Spring as everything is absolutely at a standstill till Vol I is returned for press.[86]

Esher must have chastised Murray, for two days later, Murray wrote:

> I can assure you that I realise to the full the unique importance of this work, and it was mainly on this account that I wrote as I did. ... I have so often been blamed ... for the delays for which I was in no way responsible that I began to feel nervous on account of the very importance of it [the work].
> If this is clearly understood, however, I have only to say that I shall continue to do my best to expedite matters as I have done in the past.[87]

Despite sounding out Morley as a potential reader of Volume I in August, Esher only sought the King's permission formally to request his services in September[88] and the proofs of Volume I were not sent to Morley until mid-October.[89] Murray and Benson were again not informed and greatly frustrated by the delays.

In an earlier letter to Morley, Esher had made the point that, 'the sons of all the people [mentioned in the Letters] are alive, and an unkind reflection on the part of a colleague does not matter much, but coming from Queen Victoria, it leaves a sting and there is no point in causing unnecessary pain.'[90] He added that Benson felt he had expunged too freely.[91] In his letter accompanying the proofs, Esher requested that Morley excise passages which:

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[84] John Murray Archives, CB2, Murray to Benson, 28 August 1906.
[85] John Murray Archives, CB2, Telegram from Esher to Murray, 29 August 1906.
[86] Esher Papers, 11/6, Murray to Esher, 29 August 1906.
[87] ibid., 11/6, Murray to Esher, 31 August 1906.
[88] RA VIC/W 40/52, Esher to King Edward VII, 4 September 1906.
[89] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, pp. 193-4.
[90] ibid., p. 181, Esher to Morley, 5 September 1906.
[91] ibid..

> could directly or indirectly injure the State or the Crown. He [the King] has also specially commanded that all passages which could inflict pain upon the near relatives of persons mentioned should be excised.
> I have been many times over the proofs but you know how treacherous the eye becomes from familiarity with the pages of a book.
> I am not enamoured of the Preface, which requires largely rewriting. Any suggestion would be very welcome. E.[92]

Within two weeks Morley returned the checked proofs to Esher, writing:

My dear Esher,

I have read it all with the utmost interest and gratification. Success in biography obviously depends on three things – subject, material and handling.

As for subject, Queen Victoria stands in the first place, for not only was her rank and station illustrious, but her personality was extraordinary – in its vigour, tenacity, integrity, and in the union of all these stubborn qualities with the suppleness and adaptability required from a Sovereign in a Constitutional system.

Second, your material was evidently rich and copious, and I cannot think but that the King was right not to pinch you. I hope the same liberal spirit will help future volumes.

Thirdly, I thoroughly applaud your plan. A biography of the three-decker stamp, filled out with dead history, would have been, I believe a great mistake. I always thought Theodore Martin went too far in that direction. What people want to know, and will always want to know, about Queen Victoria, is her character, her ways in public business, her relations with her Ministers and her times.

You give quite enough in your excellent introduction to the chapters, to let people know where they are; and if they seek more, there are plenty of books already where they can find it.

I have kept a keen look-out, as you wished me to do, for references or quotations that might touch sore places. I find none such. The air of the whole book is good-natured as it should be and I see nothing to give pain to anybody. It will doubtless be harder to walk quite safely as you come nearer our own day. Meanwhile I feel pretty sure about you. Of course, I do not overlook the responsibility that falls in a special

[92] Esher Papers, 11/7, Esher to John Morley, 6 October 1906.

degree upon the King. So far, I do not hesitate to say, if I am any judge, that there is not a line with which from this point of view anybody can quarrel.

The industry and exactitude with which the elucidating notes etc., have been prepared, command my real admiration. I know well how much pain is meant by these things. I have jotted down on a separate piece of paper one or two most minute and trivial points that struck me.

One word I should like to add, though it is not within my commission: don't publish one volume by itself. I am sure, and my publishers agree, that one distinct element in the success of my *Gladstone* was that people sat down to the whole meal at once. You may choose, or may not be able, to do as much as this. But pray try to approach my counsel of perfection, if and in so far as you can.

I congratulate you, dear Esher, on your associations with a book that all the world one day will read, study, admire and greatly like, (which is more than admiring) as now does,

Yours most sincerely,
John Morley.[93]

Morley's 'one or two most minute and trivial points' included the suggestion that the phrase, 'wretched creature' be deleted as it was 'needlessly violent'.[94] The phrase had been used by Benson in his Prolegomenum for 1840. Benson had gently plagiarised Theodore Martin's description[95] of the mentally deficient Edward Oxford, Queen Victoria's first would-be assassin.[96] As Victoria wrote much of those volumes, it would be ironical if they were actually Victoria's words that Morley rejected; they sound like the language favoured by Victoria! However, the phrase was omitted. Morley's other recommendations were errors in names and titles. Benson was very grateful to have

[93] Esher Papers, 11/7, Morley to Esher, 20 October 1906. In Esher's reply to Morley he generously asked that Morley write a letter congratulating Arthur Benson on his efforts,(Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, pp. 199-200). Benson was thrilled with the compliments from Morley, (Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 26 October 1906).
[94] Esher Papers, 11/7, Miscellaneous Papers.
[95] Martin, Prince Consort, vol. I, p. 88. It may also have been Queen Victoria's description considering her *de facto* role in editing the materials for this book. For evidence of Victoria's co-editing, see Walter Arnstein, Queen Victoria, London, Palgrave, 2003, p. 2.
[96] Grey, The Early Years of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort, pp. 316-8, gives Albert's version of the first attempt. See also Trevor Turner, 'Erotomania and Queen Victoria: or Love among the Assassins?', Psychiatric Bulletin, vol. 14 (1990), pp. 224-7. Edward Oxford, with the new name of

Morley's imprimatur. He hoped Morley would be able to read Volumes II and III: 'If we have Morley behind us we can afford to deride other criticisMs I quite agree that we cannot be too careful. And therefore I hope very much that he will look through ... [Volume II] as well as Volume III.'[97] In his memoirs Morley did not mention the publication of Queen Victoria's letters, nor did he mention his part in the process.[98]

With Morley's seal of approval, Esher felt he could confidently proceed. He promptly sent Morley's letter to the King, and told Benson that he would inform the King that 'there is nothing to trouble about' in Volume I and suggested that he recommend the volume going to press.[99] The King complied, giving his full approval, albeit briefly:

> Mr Morley's letter is a most cheering and complimentary one. His advice should also be followed and not produce one volume by itself. It is likely to be a great success.
> Edward R.I.[100]

Having Morley as a reader was Esher's trump card. King Edward, despite being claustrophobically surrounded by intellectuals and learned men in his boyhood, maintained an admiration for some men of learning all his life; William Gladstone was one such man,[101] and John Morley was another. Finally, on the 24 October 1906, after both Benson and Murray checked it through one more time, the first volume went to be stereotyped,[102] almost one year after it was initially submitted. While Volume I was being printed, most of Volume III was yet to be set into type, and Volume II still awaited the King's approval.

10.3 Lord Knollys and Lord Esher

Freeman, migrated to Melbourne at the completion of his prison sentence. See F.B. Smith, 'Lights and Shadows in the Life of John Freeman', Victorian Studies, vol. 30, no. 4 (1987), pp. 459-73.

[97] Esher Papers, 11/5, 20 April 1907, Benson to Esher. On the same issue see Benson to Esher, 13 April 1907, 17 April 1907, 22 April 1907.

[98] John Viscount Morley, Recollections, 2 vols, London, Macmillan, 1917.

[99] Esher Papers, 11/7, Esher to Benson, 22 October 1906, (copy kept by Esher).

[100] RA VIC/W 40/64, Esher to King Edward VII, 22 October 1906. This was not the formal response of the King, but notes written by the King on the back of Esher's letter to enable his Private Secretary to reply to Esher on his behalf.

[101] Whereas Victoria had been hostile to Gladstone, Edward VII was not. He had served as one of Gladstone's pallbearers in 1898 and as of 1901, he saw merit in both major political parties. See Arnstein, Queen Victoria, pp. 189-90 for examples of Victoria and Gladstone *passim*; Philip Guedalla, The Queen and Mr Gladstone, New York, Doubleday, Doran and Coy, 1934, and Longford, Victoria R.I., pp. 601-2, *passim*.

[102] Esher Papers, 11/6, Murray to Esher, 24 October 1906.

Knollys and Esher played a somewhat clandestine role in the editing process. Throughout the work on the Letters, Esher, true to character, maintained an aloofness from Benson and Murray. He continued to communicate views to them, and even to Knollys, as if directly from the King, as he had done earlier in his career on behalf of Lord Hartington as his secretary. It was known to Benson, Murray and Knollys that Esher had the ear of the King, frequently breakfasting with him, corresponding with him and being summoned to meet privately.[103] Esher had an ability to give an opinion or a reply for which there would be every possibility that it complied with something the King could be convinced about and thus ring true to the listener. But there was no guarantee that the King had been approached specifically or recently on that matter. The editing activities during the month of August 1906 warrant a re-examination in order to reveal the complex and devious manner in which Esher worked.

During the prolonged procedures of exchanging the proofs of Volume I prior to gaining the King's approval to stereotype that volume, Volume II proofs with excisions marked were sent to Murray and on to Benson in the last days of August. The excisions were 'much more definite and complete' according to Esher.[104] But Benson, overwhelmed by the repair work on Volume I, set them aside.[105] The source of these excisions for Volume II warrants examination.

Throughout August, Esher and Knollys had corresponded and on the 16 August, Esher joined Knollys in Edinburgh, dining with him and staying overnight at the Caledonian Hotel.[106] It seems that neither Benson nor Murray knew that the King had left England for Germany on the 14 August 1906 on a visit for three weeks.[107] Knollys and Esher kept up the pretence of the King's presence, even to Morley. On the night they were in Edinburgh, Knollys and Esher spent some time in double-checking the excisions of Volume I and deciding to check through Volume II in consultation with each other, because on the following day Esher wrote his letter of

[103] Lees- Milne, The Enigmatic Edwardian, pp. 150-1, and throughout chapters 7 and 8.
[104] John Murray Archive, Telegram from Esher to Murray, 29 August 1906.
[105] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 5 September 1906. 'I think we should get vol. I out of the way...'.
[106] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, 17 August 1906, p. 175.
[107] The Times, 15 August 1906, p. 7, column e.

request to Morley to be one of the readers of Volume I,[108] and he returned the proofs of Volume I to Murray with their latest excisions marked. He apologised: '... The last part of Volume I is missing. I think the King has accidentally retained it with Vol. II – but you shall have it as soon as I can get hold of it.'[109] Esher's letters were sent from Roman Camp, his Highland retreat in Scotland. The 'King' who 'retained the pages' was actually Knollys – two days later, he returned the sheets to Esher which thereby confirmed that they had been working on the two sets of proofs together in Edinburgh: 'I enclose you the missing sheets which got mixed up with the proofs of the second volume. I am sorry that this should have happened.'[110] Neither Esher's nor Knollys's letters were sent from Germany!

Not until the work on Volume I was completed did Benson begin to work on Volume II but he had misplaced the list of excisions which the censors had ordered, so Murray wrote out another. Today the list survives in two forms: as an addendum in a volume of Esher Papers, Volume 11/6, on Albermarle Street letterhead, typed and undated, and as a hand-written list.[111] Both documents are headed: 'Excisions for Volume II'. They contain the page number, the line number, the first word of the excision, a set of ellipses, and the last word to be deleted. The hand-written list comprising nine foolscap pages, was most likely copied from the one typed up by Murray from the excisions made to the proofs by Esher and Knollys during their time in Scotland. Following their meeting in Edinburgh, Esher took Volume I to send to Murray, Knollys went through Volume II, and returned it to Esher on 24 August.[112] Esher wrote reassuringly to Knollys five days later:

> My dear Francis,
> I have most carefully gone through Vol II. I don't think there is an objectionable or doubtful passage left in. Even your slightest queries (where for instance, Disraeli, says a smart thing at the expense of a political opponent) have been cut out. So the most sensitive spirit should be ungalled ...[113]

[108] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. II, 17 August 1906, p. 175.
[109] John Murray Archives, CB2, Esher to Murray, 17 August 1906.
[110] Esher Papers, 11/49, Knollys to Esher, 19 August 1906.
[111] Esher Papers, 11/6, last document in volume, on Albermarle St Letterhead, typed and undated. Hand-written list, John Murray Archives, CB2, 26 August 1906.
[112] Esher Papers, 10/49, Knollys to Esher, 24 August 1906.
[113] RA VIC/W 40/50, Esher to Knollys, 29 August 1906.

Thus satisfied, Esher returned the proofs to Murray.[114] From these excisions Murray made the list for Benson. Benson and Murray in London referred to them as 'H.M.'s excisions';[115] yet Knollys, in Scotland, and thoroughly engaged in the proofs, had confidentially told Esher that, 'The King hasn't seen them ... I'm on the eve of finishing the proofs for the second volume. ... When will those of the 3rd Volume be ready?'[116]

Benson worked long and hard to complete the work on Volume I, finding replacement material, checking translations and titles, wanting to have it perfect, without error. John Murray lamented to his brother, Hallam: 'I have done my best to save some of the passages but I fear it is no use. Fortunately, there is plenty of good stuff left ...'.[117] On the 29 August Esher returned the proofs of Volume II with the marked excisions to Murray saying: 'I think that Vol II is all right, and that nothing [more] of importance will have to be struck out hereafter.' He added a proviso: 'But remember that this book is unlike any others and that the King insists on the utmost care.'[118]

Although the excisions were presumed by Benson and Murray to have been ordered by the King, Knollys in his letters to Esher later referred to them as 'our' excisions.[119] The King was in 'Cronberg' from the 15 August 1906,[120] having left England to make his annual pilgrimage to take the waters in Marienbad, and, on this occasion, to visit the Austrian Emperor, Franz Joseph.[121] He did not return to England until 10 September,[122] by which time the excisions list had been made and sent to Benson. It is very likely that Esher and Knollys made the excisions from Volume II on the King's behalf, whilst he was in Germany, but the evidence as I have shown is only circumstantial. There is no signed or dated documentary proof, but Esher and Knollys certainly showed a familiarity with the excisions when they discussed Benson's spirited responses to the excisions list.

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[114] John Murray Archives, CB2, Esher to Murray, 29 August 1906.
[115] ibid., CB 3, Benson to Murray, 1 September 1906.
[116] Esher Papers, 10/49, Knollys to Esher, 18 August 1906.
[117] John Murray Archives, CB 3, John to Hallam Murray, 4 September 1906.
[118] ibid., CB2, Esher to Murray, 29 August 1906.
[119] Esher Papers, 10/49, Knollys to Esher, 6 October 1906.
[120] The Times, 15 August 1906, p. 7, col. e, report that the King left England for Cronberg on 14 August. (The usual spelling now is Kronberg.)
[121] Magnus, Edward the Seventh, p. 380.
[122] The Times, 10 September 1906, p. 7, col. e.

When Benson resumed work on Volume II, he was shocked and dismayed by the number and size of the excisions to be made.[123] There were eleven letters to be totally omitted. Although he was disappointed at their removal they could be replaced with 'unemphatic material' as had been done with Volume I. It was a far greater problem to deal with the many excisions of only single words or phrases, or material comprising just two or three lines. These omissions meant that the type had to be moved on each page until, as larger gaps accumulated, chronologically compatible substitute material could be introduced to fill those gaps. But all of this would be an expensive and time-consuming task and to what end? Not surprisingly, Benson protested about these excisions for Volume II. It was in the course of Benson's contestation of these late excisions that the specific, contemporary issues of excising to please the King, emerged.

[123] John Murray constructed the list from the proofs returned to him by Esher in August, probably to assist the typesetter. A handwritten copy of this document, on plain paper, now in the John Murray Archives, CB 2, 28 August 1906, is headed 'Excisions in vol. II'. It was most likely the one made for Benson. It has been possible to locate many of these excisions in original documents, as many of the page numbers match those in the 1907 edition of the Letters. Unfortunately, no similar list survives for Volumes I or III.

Chapter 11

The Power of the King's Veto: The Editors, King Edward VII and the Spectre of his Mother

11.1. The King, His Mother and the Publication of the Book

Lord Esher and Lord Knollys were both anxious to protect the interests of their master for whom they shared a warm admiration. Those interests were most obvious in the King's public appearances,[1] but his dealings with his Ministers and the Parliament were more important to his advisers. The public events, although subject to the vagaries of newspaper coverage and current and previous scandals in the King's personal life, were by and large manageable for the courtiers. However, the King's dealings with his ministers had greater repercussions for the monarchy, the government and the stability of the country, but they were apt to be fraught, and the outcomes were often nebulous and less controllable. The ministers, through their experiences of the evolution from a constitutional monarchy to an electorally-invigorated cabinet-centred government of 1906,[2] found that any previous guidelines for their dealings with the monarch were no longer to be assumed as appropriate. For the ministers, the patterns of Queen Victoria's reign were now out-moded, but for Esher these were 'Precedents' to be followed, against which the ministers of King Edward VII must be judged. He discounted any previous ministerial aberrations, choosing to portray the 1850s as the halcyon days of Constitutional Monarchy:

> I have been finishing off the years of 1853-56 of the Queen's letters. It is wonderfully good reading; and the work done by her and the Prince Consort was amazing. Certainly her influence over events was most remarkable.
> *They* were the real Ministers of the Crown, and even Palmerston, now and then, had to take a back seat. It was in the hey-day of their youth and prosperity. In five years he [Albert] was dead, and her life entirely changed. Yet reading these letters they seemed to stand only on the threshold.[3]

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[1] Although Esher, with his particular admiration of youth, despaired of how to create the necessary 'sensation' when planning the coronation of King Edward VII: 'Only young boys and girls should be crowned monarchs ... after 20 no one should be allowed to come to the throne! Then romance would hold her sway. Imagine the sensation of the people when Queen Victoria – so small and so young and so fair – walked up the Abbey to be crowned. Next June, we can hardly expect a sensation. It will all be so very middle aged and unheroic.' Esher Papers, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge, 7/14, Lord Esher to his son, Maurice Brett, 23 October 1901. This description shows shallowness on Esher's part – his consciousness of appearance. Alternatively, Esher could be seen as being disloyal and insincere toward the King in his efforts to impress his paramour/son.

[2] George Plumpetre, Edward VII, London, Pavilion books, 1995, p. 229, and Chapter 13 'Monarchy in Democracy' in which Plumpetre argued that the Liberal electoral victory in 1906 propelled these ideas further.

[3] Maurice V. Brett, ed., Journal and Letters of Reginald, Viscount Esher, London, Ivor, Nicolson and Watson, 1934, vol. II, p. 97, Esher to Maurice Brett, 9 August 1905.

His observation that '*They* were the real Ministers of the Crown' is somewhat oddly expressed. From the remainder of this letter, and other letters which he wrote at the time to Lord Knollys,[4] his meaning was that Victoria and Albert were 'real exemplars of monarchy', the executives of government, showing that ministers should be directed to execute policies that were not contrary to the Sovereign's wishes. Esher hoped accounts of Victoria's and Albert's assertions with ministers like Russell and Palmerston would serve as a model to urge upon the King and thus would encourage him to insist upon similar ministerial compliance.

But there was no indication from the King that he wished to follow his parents' style. As first-born son of a monarch, Albert Edward inherited the title Duke of Cornwall, which, when he came of age, enabled him to sit in the House of Lords.[5] This he did at the first sitting of Parliament in 1863, and he continued to do as a 'regular attender and occasional speaker', contrary to his mother's wishes; his chief mentors at the time were Lord Palmerston and Lord Granville.[6] Granville was Lord President of the Council and Victoria's favourite in the House of Lords,[7] although he incurred her ire by his Press indiscretions in 1859.[8] Palmerston was Prime Minister, and although in increasingly easier relations with the Queen, would not have been deemed the ideal mentor for her heir.

However, Palmerston and young Bertie found themselves with the same political sympathies over the Prusso-Danish conflict as it developed throughout 1863-4, which were in direct opposition to the Queen's pro-Prussian stance.[9] From Albert Edward's sixteenth birthday, Victoria and Albert had been consulting Vicky, now Crown Empress of Prussia, about a wife for him. Princess Alexandra of Denmark was found to be the best candidate, except for her unfortunate Danish (and hence anti-Prussian) ancestry.[10]

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[4] Esher Papers, 10/48, Knollys/Esher correspondence, for example, August -September 1905.
[5] Ronald Allison and Sarah Riddell, The Royal Encyclopedia, London, Macmillan, 1991, pp. 120-1. The titles Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester are conferred by the monarch by Letters Patent decree. In Albert Edward's case the titles were conferred upon him when he was one month old.
[6] Simon Heffer, Power and Place, The Political Consequences of King Edward VII, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998, p. 10.
[7] Brian Connell, Regina vs Palmerston, New York, Doubleday, 1961, p. 360.
[8] Arthur C. Benson and Viscount Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, London, John Murray, (1907), 1908, vol. III, 13 June 1859, Victoria to Earl Granville, and Granville's apology in reply.
[9] Jasper Ridley, Lord Palmerston, London, Constable, 1970, p. 570.
[10] St Aubyn described the machinations involved in the selection process, and the seemingly absurd responses of Victoria and Albert throughout! Giles St Aubyn, Edward VII: Prince and King, London, Collins, 1979, pp. 63 ff.

In the year before Prince Albert's death, Victoria was shown a photograph of the Princess, and asked Albert's opinion: 'From that photograph, I should marry her at once,' he was quoted as saying.[11] A meeting was contrived at the Cathedral of Speyer in September 1861 for the young couple. Bertie was again deemed a failure in his parents' eyes when he did not fall in love with her immediately. Rather than talk the matter over with the boy, Prince Albert resorted to his favourite device; he wrote his son a memorandum. St Aubyn summarised the episode thus: 'Bertie's behaviour was ungrateful and unreasonable. After so much trouble was taken to find him a wife, the least he could do was to fall in love...'.[12]

Fortunately, Bertie did fall in love at their second meeting at King Leopold's country estate at Laeken, twelve months later – an enterprise Victoria, in her now bereaved state, had taken upon herself. It was, she told Vicky, 'her sacred duty' as the marriage had been Albert's wish.[13] Bertie and Alix were married in March 1863, and their first child, Albert Victor was born in January 1864. He was born two months premature, weighing less than four pounds.[14] The view was expressed at the time that the birth had been brought on by the Princess's deep distress over the Prusso-Danish war.[15] By mid-summer, when Alix had recovered from the birth and the baby was stronger, Bertie asked the Queen's permission to take his wife and new baby to visit her parents in Copenhagen.

The Queen was reluctant, partly from pique and partly due to the enmity between Denmark and Prussia over the Schleswig-Holstein affair, so she made various provisos: that they travel incognito; that a visit to Germany to visit his sister, the Crown Princess Vicky, be included in the itinerary; and that the baby was to be sent home after three weeks. [16] Palmerston, as Prime Minister, spoke to the Queen in support of the young couple for which the Prince was very grateful:

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[11] ibid., quoted from the memoirs of Vicky's Lady-in-waiting, Lady Walpurga Paget, p. 66.
[12] ibid., p. 68.
[13] Roger Fulford, Dearest Mama, Private Correspondence of Queen Victoria and the Crown Princess of Prussia, 1861-64, London, Evans Bros, 1964, p. 38.
[14] St Aubyn, Edward VII, p. 95.
[15] Elizabeth Longford, Victoria R. I., London, (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964), Abacus books, 2000, p. 347.
[16] Philip Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, London, John Murray, 1964, p. 85.

> I have to thank you for your letter of the 28th and feel much obliged to you for having told the Queen that you thought the expression of my feelings and opinions on the late recent and sad events in Denmark would be tempered with due discretion.
> I sincerely trust that nothing I may say during our visit to Copenhagen, would give annoyance to the Queen or H.M.'s Government.
> We start from Dundee on the 3rd and hope to reach our destination on the 6th.
> With kind regards to Lady Palmerston,
> Believe me,
> Very sincerely yours,
> Albert Edward.[17]

Lord Palmerston exchanged other letters with Edward – all of a warm and congenial tone – upon the death of the Prince Consort, upon his marriage, the birth of his first child and a series to do with a proposed visit to Ireland to open the Dublin Exhibition in 1864, and on some Church appointments.[18] There is no evidence that the Prince of Wales solicited Palmerston's intervention with the Queen; indeed, the tone of the correspondence suggests that it was spontaneous on Palmerston's part. It is most likely that Palmerston felt sympathy for the Prince in the treatment he had received from both his mother and his father. For a young man often at odds with his parents over emotional issues, having the warm support and understanding of a man like Palmerston would have made a deep impact on Edward. Consequently his opinion of Palmerston was very different from that which had been held by Prince Albert and the Queen. Edward could not see himself assuming the monarch's role within the scenario of 'Regina vs Palmerston'. Even if Esher and Knollys hoped to show Edward that his mother's dealings with Palmerston were an example of proper monarchical behaviour, given the history, it is surprising that Esher and Knollys should have chosen Palmerston as their example of ministerial excellence for the King. What he may have seen in the example was the possibility of an assertive sovereign misunderstanding and maligning a minister of feeling and ability.

Esher and Knollys were acutely conscious of not wanting King Edward to be seen in an inferior light to that of his mother.[19] Indeed, Philip Magnus went so far as to state that

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[17] Palmerston Papers, Southampton University Library Archives and Manuscripts, RC/L/40, Prince of Wales to Palmerston, 1 September 1964. An excerpt of the letter of Palmerston to the Prince can be found in St Aubyn, Edward VII, p. 95.

[18] Palmerston Papers, RC/L/37-46, Prince of Wales to Palmerston; and one from Palmerston to the Prince, RC/L/47, in December 1861, a thoughtful letter to the Prince following the initial exchange of condolence letters.

[19] Esher Papers, 10/47, 10/48 and 10/49, Knollys to Esher, including some copies of Esher's replies.

Esher 'persuaded King Edward to allow him to edit Queen Victoria's letters for publication' with 'the object in mind' of showing to the world 'the relations which had existed half a century earlier between Queen Victoria and her [ministers]'.[20] During the project they may have seen the opportunities to attempt this, but my research into the origins of the project shows Magnus to be incorrect. The decision to prepare the letters for publication had taken place two years before Esher showed concern about Edward and his ministers and shared the exchange with Knollys on the issue. Esher's interest in the subject was shown in his book published in 1896, Yoke of Empire, which provided sketches of Queen Victoria's Prime Ministers, but Esher had no reason to believe that the King would have read either that book or the volumes of his mother's letters. Esher did want to record the methods of governance of Queen Victoria and believed it would be instructive for everyone, not just her son. He had not welcomed the changes in the tone of the Court in 1902,[21] but he soon warmed to the King's charm, as he succumbed to his own need to be close to the King. Certainly, by 1905, Esher and Knollys believed the King was not being 'kept informed' as he should have been by his ministers,[22] but the impetus to embark on the project came from broader needs to commemorate the Queen's life and had been taken long before.

Given Esher's concern about the ministers, it was ironical that St John Brodrick, Secretary of State for War at the beginning of Edward's reign, held that one of the greatest impediments to open ministerial consultation with the King was Esher's closeness to the King and his presence on two important committees, the South African War Committee and then the War Office Reconstitution Committee. In his memoirs Brodrick recalled:

> Before long it became clear that by the time any decision had come to the point when Cabinet could lay it before the Sovereign, the issue had been largely pre-judged, on the incomplete premises of an observer who had no official status. In other words, Esher, whether intentionally or not, had constituted himself the unofficial adviser of the Crown, and his ambition to control what he termed 'the hornet's nest' [the War Office] from the outside became for a moment the ruling passion of his life.[23]

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[20] Magnus, Edward the Seventh, p. 283.
[21] M. Brett, Journals and Letters, vol. I, Esher to M. Brett, 6 February 1901, pp. 279-80.
[22] ibid., vol. II, Esher to Knollys, 28 August 1905, and 2 September 1905, pp. 103-7.
[23] Plumpetre, Edward VII. Brodrick's account given in his memoirs is quoted p. 143. See Plumpetre's critique of Esher and his behind the scenes activities, pp. 134 ff, especially 139. Arthur Benson also heard Brodrick make these complaints: Benson Diary, Old Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge, vol. 49, 16 March 1904.

Esher had been critical of the neglect of the King's present ministers 'in not keeping His Majesty informed', as Victoria and Albert had been able to insist that their ministers must. Magnus argued that it was for this reason that Knollys, as the King's secretary, 'regretted the publication of Victoria's letters'; he thought Edward would appear weak in comparison. Knollys was concerned 'solely and rightly with what he thought best, empirically, for his master'.[24]

But Edward knew himself to be different from his mother. Never before in English history had an heir-apparent to the Crown had so many years in which to contemplate his destiny.[25] A few hours before Victoria's death, the Lord President of the Council, the Duke of Devonshire, who was responsible for the immediate formalities, was notified of the King's intention to be called 'Edward VII', not King Albert I as Victoria had expected at his christening,[26] and as she reiterated upon the birth of his first child.[27] Lord President queried a detail of the proposed declaration, to which Edward replied, (in the third person): 'The Queen's declaration came from the lips of a young girl while his would come from a man of mature age.'[28] He already saw himself fulfilling his sovereignty in his own way, as his own person and vastly different from his mother, in politics as well as in age and gender. Edward described himself by the motto: *Mon métier à moi d'être Roi.* [My profession/my trade is to be King.] [29] He saw himself as ruler, but was not intending to interfere merely to be seen as assertive. One important contribution Edward made to the institution of monarchy was to ensure that the Hanoverian legacy of enmity between sovereign and heir, which in his lifetime had been augmented by the Saxe-Coburg birch-rod and an inhumane regimen of study, was not passed on to his sons.[30]

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[24] Magnus, Edward the Seventh, p. 283.
[25] Sir Sidney Lee, King Edward VII, A Biography: The Reign, vol. II, London, Macmillan, 1927, p. 2. If Prince Charles accedes to the Throne anytime after January, 2008, he will qualify for this mantle!
[26] He had been christened 'Albert Edward' and known as 'Bertie' within the family. Longford, Victoria R.I., p. 183.
[27] Magnus, Edward the Seventh, p. 85. Victoria had insisted that the child be called, Albert Victor, and not any of his Danish ancestral names. She also took the opportunity of explaining her wishes that all Albert Edward's descendants should bear the names of Albert or Victoria until the end of time, and that the Prince of Wales be known as King Albert Edward. The Prince carefully avoided making any such promise, whilst observing that no English sovereign had yet borne a double name.
[28] Plumpetre, Edward VII, p. 135, quoting from Devonshire Papers.
[29] Lee, Edward VII, vol. II, p. 273.
[30] Sandra Simpson-Smith, 'Relationships between Sovereigns and Heirs as a Factor in the Evolution of the Modern British Monarchy with special attention to the House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, 1840-1917', University of Queensland, 1997, PhD thesis, unpublished. See Chapter 2: 'The Princes of Wales and the

Albert Edward's training as a sovereign was severe and impossibly high standards were frequently applied. Consequently, his relationship with his parents was always fraught with his failures. As Lee diplomatically put it: 'The conscientious scrupulosity which the father investigated the theory and practice of princely education tended to confuse the aim.'[31] His parents had felt a huge responsibility to prepare him for his future station, but they followed the claims of science rather than putting their hopes in his human qualities. The education of their children was an important issue, discussed frequently by Albert and Victoria, and in letters to King Leopold and various cousins, but Benson and Esher excluded most of these details from the Letters. The editors may have been constrained in this in any, or all, of three ways: by the King himself wanting to have as little detail of himself in the book as possible, hence his own birth being announced in the Letters in a footnote; by the insistence on a fostering of the mystique of Royalty especially in regard to issues of domestic and family life; and the editors' interests and their perceptions of the interests of their anticipated readership.

The announcement of the Prince's birth was attached to a letter dated the 29 November in which after discussing her health and the weather, Victoria mentioned 'our boy' and prompted the footnote by the editors stating the birth date of the Prince: 9 November 1841. But in terms of the published letters, he had been born twenty days before, (i.e. several pages previously in the book).[32] In the volume, during that interlude, an older issue was aired by the editors. Queen Victoria and Lord Melbourne had continued to correspond even after Peel became Prime Minister. Benson and Esher had included some of these letters from Victoria of family news and others seeking Melbourne's advice on public and political matters, and replies from Melbourne of a friendly and avuncular nature. Stockmar and Albert thought that irrespective of the content, this correspondence was highly improper and disloyal to Peel, and throughout 1841 had tried to make them desist; Benson and Esher included examples of their efforts during October.[33] Throughout November, many more excerpts of the Victoria-Melbourne

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Alternative Courts of the Hanoverian Era', and subsequent chapters on Victoria and Edward and their varying approaches as parents. Unfortunately, King George V was not equal to the task of continuing his father's efforts in this regard.

[31] Lee, Edward VII. A Biography: From Birth to Accession, vol. I, London, Macmillan, 1927, p. 26.

[32] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, footnote to letter Victoria to Leopold, 29 November 1841.

[33] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, Memorandum by Baron Stockmar, 6 October 1841.

correspondence were included by Benson and Esher. This correspondence elicited an earnest and closely argued Memorandum written by Stockmar, criticising this continuance. It was featured by Benson and Esher[34] and added some drama to the volume. Upon receiving the Memorandum, Melbourne replied immediately in a congenial tone, to Stockmar's long homily, seemingly oblivious to the great importance which Albert and Stockmar placed upon the issue. Carefully noting the time, 'half past 10 P.M.' Melbourne wrote:

> My dear Baron,
> I have just received your letter; I think it unnecessary to detain your messenger. I will write to you on the subject and send it through Anson.
> Yours faithfully,
> Melbourne.[35]

Benson and Esher, hugely admiring of Melbourne as they were and by skilful editing, brought the episode to a culmination in the form of a 'points victory' to Lord Melbourne. Despite this unfolding drama, the birth of the first male heir born to a Queen regnant warranted more than a footnote.

After almost sixty years as the Queen's heir and King-in-waiting, always judged by his mother to be wanting in so many areas of his personality, appearance, intellect, actions and morals, it is perhaps understandable that King Edward wanted to have as little personal detail as possible included in her published letters.[36] The only documented evidence for the King not wanting details of himself in the book came late in the project. Benson wrote to John Murray, in October 1907, just prior to publication: 'The King objects to any reference to him further than that he has authorised the publication ...'.[37] This was in reference to the order form being prepared by Murrays for booksellers, and may only pertain to that, but as there is so little reference to the children throughout the volumes, and only one of the children's letters (written by Vicky at the time of her marriage) was included, it is possible that the same rule was conveyed verbally much earlier on. If this was the policy for the editors, it fits in with

[34] ibid., vol. I, Melbourne to Victoria, 1–7 November 1841; Stockmar to Melbourne, 23 November. It is a curious anomaly that Albert continued to correspond regularly with Sir Robert Peel after he was no longer Prime Minister, Walter Arnstein, Queen Victoria, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p. 76. Stockmar was not adverse to these political discussions.
[35] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, Melbourne to Stockmar, 23 November 1841.
[36] John Murray Archives, CB3, Benson to Murray, 7 October 1907.
[37] John Murray Archives, CB3, Benson to Murray, 7 October 1907.

the other constraints to do with the readership and the view that exposure of the domestic life of monarchs would be disrespectful.[38]

Lord Esher found it 'almost painful to look back upon the days and nights of worry and anxiety spent by the Queen and the Prince over the minutest details of the physical, intellectual and moral training ... of their eldest son. Nothing – not the smallest thing was left to chance,' he wrote in an essay published after the death of King Edward VII.[39] The concerns of the young parents were documented in Victoria's Journal, in reports from Nursery staff, the governesses and governors of the Royal children, and in various Memoranda written by Albert and others, such as the fifteen hundred word treatise, 'On the education of the Royal Children' written by the *eminence grise*, Baron Stockmar for the young parents, three months after the birth of the Prince of Wales.[40] But little of this collection made its way into the Letters, except for comments and reports to King Leopold, and several letters from Lord Melbourne.[41]

It had been Victoria's greatest hope, frequently reiterated, that Edward 'may be like his dearest Papa,' and that her heir would resemble his 'angelic dearest Father in every, every respect, both body and mind'.[42] But in all ways, the parents had unrealistically high expectations of their children's achievements, physically and intellectually, and wanted them to be superior to others. Victoria even went so far as to seek age-height

[38] This belief was being challenged at the time, in ways ranging from Bagehot's observation that people would rather watch a royal wedding than read a political policy, to the growing market for scurrilous books on Royalty written by 'knowing insiders'.

[39] Lord Esher, The Influence of King Edward and Essays on other Subjects, London, John Murray, 1915, p. 7; St. Aubyn, Edward VII, p. 22.

[40] RA VIC/M 12/14, Memorandum by Baron Christian Stockmar, 6 March 1842. Drawing on the precedent of George III as an example of a Royal parent who ' either didn't understand his duties as a parent or neglected them', Stockmar set about convincing Victoria and Albert of the difficulties of the task due to their youth and high rank. It urged the parents to be, in twentieth-century parlance, 'pro-active', in regard to the education of their children, but then consoled them that they probably weren't up to such a daunting task – they needed to seek guidance (and heed it) from those few people who were wise enough to give it; namely, the author himself. (It contained no such trivial or mundane items as daily regimens or curricula.) It was a carefully contrived homily, in which Stockmar sketched out for himself an on-going role as the mentor of the immature parents. It was a masterful piece of control and manipulation upon which the young parents based their regime. These ideas were not so difficult, intellectually and emotionally, for his older sister, Vicky, but for Edward, the regime was stifling, inappropriate and cruel.

[41] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, to and from Leopold, *passim*; Melbourne to Victoria, for example, 1 December 1841, 13 February 1843.

[42] Benson and Esher, Letters to Queen Victoria, vol. I, Victoria to Leopold, 29 November 1841 and 7 December 1841.

comparisons between her children and the grandchildren of Lady Lyttelton.[43] Not only did Bertie never live up to that model, but when compared to the precocious Vicky and later to his younger siblings, he was found wanting, time and again, by his demanding parents.[44] Sarah, Lady Lyttelton, took charge of the Royal Nursery in February 1842. Two years later she described the then twenty-seven-month-old Prince of Wales and his three-year-old sister, the Princess Royal, thus:

> The Prince of Wales talks much more English than he did, though he is not articulate like his sister, but rather babyish in accent. He understands a little French and says a few words, but is altogether backward in language, very intelligent, and generous and good-tempered, but with a few passions and *stampings* occasionally; most exemplary in politeness and manner, bows and offers his hand beautifully, besides saluting *à la militaire* – all unbidden. He is very handsome, but still very small in every way.
> Princessy (the Princess Royal) gets on very well. Her lessons are better than I had looked for, but much is still to be done before she can read ...[45]

Even for their times, these expectations of language and reading skills, and behaviour were excessive on the part of the parents, and consequently their staff.[46] In her first years of motherhood, Victoria could show some enjoyment of her position,[47] but as the children grew up, her aims for the children influenced, by Albert and Stockmar, continued to be excessive and their execution, frequently cruel. As Giles St Aubyn quipped, Vicky and Bertie were expected to maintain so rigorous a system of learning, which so overtaxed them, 'even the infant J.S. Mill might have quailed ...'.[48]

Bertie's slower progress toward language acquisition, his tantrums and his stammer were agonised over by the parents, and they sought advice from many quarters

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[43] Lyttelton Papers, Hagley Hall, Worcestershire, Box 6, 3 January 1850: 'My dearest Mary, I am desired by the Queen to send you the enclosed accounts of her children's heights, and to beg for an answer stating the heights of yours. I enclose a [list] ... Please measure them against a flat wall or door, exactly as to ascertain their heights ... by a foot rule.' Victoria was always hopeful that her children would be tall for their age.

[44] Cecil Woodham-Smith, Queen Victoria Her Life and Times 1819-1861, vol. I, London, (Hamish Hamilton, 1972), reprinted Book Club Associates, 1973, p. 317.

[45] Mrs Hugh Wyndham, ed., Correspondence of Sarah Spencer, Lady Lyttelton, 1787-1870, London, John Murray, 1912, 16 February1844, p. 340.

[46] St. Aubyn, Edward VII, pp. 15-62; Hannah Pakula, An Uncommon Woman. The Empress Frederick, Daughter of Queen Victoria, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1996, pp. 37-44; Charlotte Zeepvat, Prince Leopold. The Untold Story of the Queen's Youngest Son, Stroud, Sutton Publishers, 1998, Chapters 1 and 2. Zeepvat, through her subject, the haemophiliac, Leopold, reveals many details of Victoria's and Albert's expectations and perceptions of their children; Longford, Victoria R.I., pp. 185, 234-6, 297-301.

[47] Yvonne M. Ward, 'The Womanly Garb of Queen Victoria's Early Motherhood: 1840-42', Women's History Review, vol. 8, no. 2 (June 1999), pp. 277-94.

[48] St. Aubyn, Edward VII, p. 34.

including the phrenologist, Dr George Combe.[49] Combe found the brain of the two-year-old Prince 'in some respects defective and more particularly in the region in which the phrenological organ of form or configuration is situated', and he recommended 'dry bracing air, … long drives in an open carriage, … cold bathing, light plain nourishing diet and pure air during the night, and avoiding soft pillows'.[50] Albert prescribed regimented days of applied book learning in socially isolated environments, always finding Bertie's efforts wanting.[51] Lady Lyttelton, as head of the Nursery, may well have been young Bertie's saviour. The tone in which she wrote to her daughters, relating incidents in the Nursery, noting the commendable qualities of the Prince of Wales, without directly criticising the young parents, showed his kind and caring nature, and how she tried to redress the emotional deficits and imbalances.[52] She recognised his particular talents. After cruising with his parents to Cornwall, Lady Lyttelton was astonished at the Prince who was not yet five years old:

> He has the strongest taste for scenery and views for such a baby; and was quite sorry to come away from St. Michael's Mount: 'this beautiful plan' and takes notice of many sights and effects overlooked by most other children.[53]

Meanwhile Vicky, the Princess Royal, had become fluent in three languages, quoting French poetry, and Benson and Esher selected a delightful anecdote of Victoria's illustrating this.[54] But Lady Lyttelton still sought to restore the balance by writing that Vicky was already 'making conversation as if from a seventeen year old', but 'the Prince of Wales continues most promising for kindness and nobleness of mind'.[55] Unfortunately, the parents were blind to these attributes, but he never bore his parents any rancour despite their constant barrages against him.

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[49] RA VIC/M 12 /40 and 12/41. Memoranda by Stockmar. Phrenology in childrearing was seen not just to verify that a child would have certain abilities and qualities, but that through various practices, the skull could be changed which would prove efficacious. George Combe's brother, Andrew, had been physician to Leopold, King of the Belgians. George Combe's reports are contained within Memos written by Baron Stockmar. Combe was consulted on several occasions in 1843 and 1846 concerning the apparent backwardness and temper tantrums of the Prince of Wales.

[50] RA VIC/M 12/41.

[51] Each of his biographers and those of Victoria have examined Edward's education in detail. Also see Simpson-Smith, 'Relationships between Sovereigns and Heirs,' Chapter 3, and Dana Bentley-Cranch, Edward VII. Image of an Era, London, H.M.S.O., 1992, Chapter 1.

[52] Correspondence of Lady Lyttelton, Lyttelton Papers, Hagley Hall, Box 6, Sarah to her daughter-in-law, Mary Lyttelton, 1845-6.

[53] Lyttelton Papers, Box 6, 16 September 1846.

[54] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, 9 January 1844, Victoria to Leopold. Vicky had described the countryside from horseback as *'le tableau se déroule à mes pieds'* [the picture that unfolds at my feet] quoting the romantic poet, Alphonse de Lamartine.

[55] Wyndham, Correspondence of Sarah Spencer, Lady Lyttelton, p. 342.

Paradoxically, the more successful was Vicky's learning and her intellectual achievements under their regimen, the more apparent it became to the parents that the fault was with Bertie and not with their methods. He was referred to simply as a 'stupid boy' by Victoria, and 'the most thorough and cunning lazybones' by his father,[56] and they persisted with the same policy for the next twenty years. Arthur Benson's brother, E.F. Benson, wrote a biography of King Edward VII. In depicting Bertie's time as a student at Oxford where he was 'safely' isolated from the influences of other students, Benson described the ideas of the Prince Consort on the useful pursuits in life; cricket and football were games then becoming popular among the young men at Oxford, but not with Prince Albert. In this account, possibly fictitious, Benson captured the spirit of Albert's philosophy of life and his view of useful activities for the Prince of Wales:

> Such games were forbidden: they were too sociable and too democratic. Who knew what vapid conversation the waiting members of an eleven, [a team], of idle fellows, brought together on no principle of moral or intellectual selection, would not indulge in as they lounged in a pavilion, some even smoking? The Prince Consort had watched cricket in the playing fields at Eton, and noticed how a boy had stood practically idle in the field for two or three hours, just throwing the ball back when it came to him, and lounging from one station to another. A terrible waste of time ... It was no wonder that cricket was unknown in Germany. ...[57]

There were similarities between Prince Albert's principles of education and leisure, and those of Benson's father – this description is reminiscent of the Benson boys' recollection of throwing stones into a pond, but not before having the 'Principles of the Parabola' explained to them and being required to recite the same back to their father! Fred Benson was able to write of the King's childhood and education drawing on similar experiences, firsthand.[58]

With the death of his father just after Bertie's twentieth birthday it could have been possible for Victoria to have shared the burden of her executive work with him, especially the public work of monarchy, of which she complained so frequently. But,

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[56] Arnstein, Queen Victoria, p. 59.

[57] E.F. Benson, King Edward VII, An Appreciation, London, Longmans, 1933, pp. 31-2. I believe it was 'possibly fictitious' because Prince Albert would never have stood watching 'idleness' for long enough to ascertain that it continued on 'two or three hours'!

[58] Benson's father had inculcated similar ideas when he visited various educational establishments in Germany at the insistence of the Prince Consort, before he took up his position as Head of Wellington College, and he had similar ideas about games. David Newsome, Godliness and Good Learning, London, Cassell, pp. 79-82, 159-61.

> Queen Victoria had made no attempt at any time to initiate her heir into the nature of the sovereign's duties or into the mysteries of statecraft; and King Edward who had loved and reverenced his parents had received from neither the sympathy and understanding which his nature craved.[59]

This criticism is made similarly by biographers of Queen Victoria: for example Giles St. Aubyn, Walter Arnstein and Elizabeth Longford.[60]

Edward was interested in politics, but his mother's thwarting of his access to the Red Boxes was seen by many as a great mistake. At twenty, she herself had been Queen for two years and Bertie had already shown himself to be a competent performer on the royal stage during a tour of Canada and the United States, as a mere eighteen-year-old, but his parents continued to measure his achievements solely by intellectual, rather than social, yardsticks.[61] He had been a great success on his tour, but to his father and mother he had acquired 'a regrettable notion of his own importance ... he had taken as a personal tribute to himself [which was so obviously meant as] the loyal demonstration of Canada toward the Crown and the adulation of the States ...'.[62] Had his parents been able to see the positive aspects of his achievements, his mother, after the death of her husband in 1861, could have shared her work with him; indeed her Prime Ministers and family urged her to do so, but she resisted for the ensuing forty years.[63]

When Lord Palmerston suggested to the Queen that the Prince of Wales could take up some of the positions previously held by the Prince Consort, for example, the office of the Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, the Queen directed her Private Secretary, Sir Charles Phipps, to reply:

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[59] Magnus, Edward the Seventh, p. 278. See also Giles St. Aubyn, Edward VII, p. 22, *passim*.

[60] Giles St Aubyn, Queen Victoria. A Portrait, London, Sinclair-Stevenson, 1991, pp. 400-4; Arnstein, Queen Victoria, pp. 58-60, 114-7, 124; Longford, Victoria R.I., 2000, pp. 234-5, 297-300, 397-8, 427, 592.

[61] Magnus, Edward the Seventh, pp. 32-40. For fascinating details on this visit: see Dana Bentley-Cranch, Edward VII, pp. 20-35, but she overlooks his parents' negative comments, focussing on the few positive ones; Walter Arnstein, 'Queen Victoria and the United States', in Fred M. Leventhal and Roland Quinault, eds, Anglo-American Attitudes: From Revolution to Partnership, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2000, pp. 91-106.

[62] E.F. Benson, King Edward VII, pp. 37-41. Prince Charles received a similarly unappreciative reception from his parents upon his return from his first tour of Wales after his investiture as Prince in 1969. See details in Robert Lacey, Royal. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, London, Little, Brown, 2002, p. 261.

[63] Heffer, Power and Place, pp. 19-27; 33-4; 50-3, gives details of the many possibilities put to the Queen by Palmerston, Disraeli, and Gladstone.

> ... that she, as well as the Prince of Wales himself, has a great objection to His Royal Highness being put, for some years, into any position lately held by the Prince Consort, in which either there are important functions to be performed, or in which H.R.H. would be prominently brought forward to make speeches or to take on a responsible part.
> ... the objection of Her Majesty was not therefore, limited to the period of the Prince's coming of age, which would involve only an interval of a few months, but was dependent upon the Prince of Wales becoming sufficiently matured to make his appointment not appear merely a tribute of rank, without consideration of other qualifications.
> This Office was last filled, in succession by the Duke of Wellington and the Prince Consort, and some of the most important speeches of the latter were made, as you are aware, to the annual dinners of this corporation.
> The Prince of Wales was most anxious that he should not at his age be selected for posts that would induce such comparisons, and spoke to me frequently and earnestly before he went abroad ...[64]

Given what is now known to have been the Prince's attitude to wanting a more useful life, Victoria was certainly stretching the truth here.

As a result of the Queen's reluctance to perform many of her public duties after the death of Prince Albert, there was a growing criticism of her, of the institution of monarchy, and of her 'unemployed son'.[65] Walter Bagehot, writing between 1865 and 1867, reflected such criticism in his The English Constitution. It seems unlikely that Edward read it extensively, if at all, but Esher certainly did.[66] Bagehot, as editor of The Economist from 1860-77, believed the Queen had done 'almost as much injury to the popularity of the monarchy by her long retirement from public life as the most unworthy of her predecessors did by his profligacy and frivolity'.[67] Later research has shown Bagehot to have been wrong. Following Albert's death the Queen did withdraw from most of her public duties for several years, but there was only a very short interval before she began to read her dispatch boxes and to meet her ministers in person. Her ministers reported to her daily when Parliament was in session, and she saw them at Windsor regularly. When she traveled to Balmoral or Osborne, at least one cabinet minister was always in attendance.

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[64] Connell, Regina vs Palmerston, pp. 364-5. Written in the summer of 1862.
[65] Dorothy Thompson, Queen Victoria. Gender and Power, London, Virago, 1990, Chapter 6, 'The Republican Alternative (2) 1861-1901,' pp. 104-119.
[66] William M Kuhn, Democratic Royalism. The Transformation of the British Monarchy, 1861-1914, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1996, pp. 61 and 78. In his preparation to accede the Throne, the future George V read it during his tutelage under the Cambridge historian, J.R. Tanner. Harold Nicholson, King George V, London, Constable, 1952, pp. 61-3.
[67] Quoted in Lacey, Royal, p. 24.

Bagehot had set out his principles of the English Constitution which recognised the increased role of the Cabinet and Prime Minister in what he termed the 'efficient' part of government, and for the Crown, a reduced role, a 'dignified' function, which included just three 'efficient' elements: 'the right to be consulted, the right to encourage and the right to warn.'[68] Peter Clarke believed that Bagehot's descriptions of the 1860s monarchy became a prescription for the Edwardians: 'Bagehot became authoritative when nature imitated art.'[69] But a closer analysis of Bagehot and the actualities of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century politics by David Cannadine, and by Simon Heffer, point to further discrepancies between Bagehot's theory and the various practices of Victoria and Albert, Victoria alone and later King Edward.[70] As Cannadine has argued Bagehot's remarks can be seen to be 'confused and contradictory': if the crown had a duty to 'watch and control ministers', then in regard to the 1840s and 1850s the Queen and Albert had played an 'active and generally beneficent part' in ministerial politics, although she did much more than encourage and warn her ministers. But the Queen never saw herself as sovereign of a Bagehotian democratic monarchy.[71]

Victoria was ever wary of the spread of democratic and parliamentary powers. In 1850 she wrote to King Leopold: 'The House of Commons are becoming very unmanageable & troublesome, **and try to take the powers entirely into their own hands.**'[72] The phrase in **bold** was deleted prior to being shown to the King to permit publishing to proceed. At the time, Arthur Benson protested its excision, arguing that it was of 'Great historical value – 60 years on!'[73] But the excision was made. It could have been omitted from the start if the editors had believed that it reflected poorly upon the Queen; other such comments made by her or Lord Melbourne were included in Volume I: for

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[68] Walter Bagehot, The English Constitution, London, Fontana, (First published 1867), 1977. This version follows the text in Mrs R. Barrington, ed., The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot, London, Longmans, 1915, the two functions, p. 61; the three rights, p. 111.

[69] Peter Clarke, 'The Edwardians and the Constitution', in Donald Read, ed., Edwardian England, London, Croom Helm, 1972, p. 41. The great changes, social, political and constitutional have been succinctly summarised by Arnstein in Queen Victoria, Introduction, pp. 11-12; Bentley-Cranch, Edward VII, pp. 121-4.

[70] David Cannadine, 'Constitutional Monarchy,' in Cannadine, ed., History in our Time, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1998, pp. 19-24; and Heffer, Power and Place, pp. 86-97.

[71] Vernon Bogdanor, 'The Monarchy and the Constitution', Parliamentary Affairs, vol. 49, no. 3 (July, 1996), p. 4, quoting from a letter by Queen Victoria to W.E. Forster in 1880.

[72] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, Victoria to Leopold, 2 July 1850. Section in bold type, RA VIC/Y 95/19, Victoria to Leopold. Excision was ordered in the document: John Murray Archives, CB 2, 28 August 1906, headed, 'Excisions in vol. II'.

example, Lord Melbourne's promise to try to 'discourage and restrain factious and vexatious opposition' during the next Parliamentary session, but he feared he would achieve very little. Opposition Parties, he observed, were like snakes, 'guided, not by their heads, but by their tails.'[74] This comment remained. The late excisions were made because the comments were not in keeping with the political climate or the King's ideals of democracy circa 1905.

Edward, as Prince of Wales, was more at ease with democratic reforms than Victoria. He welcomed the Third Reform Act, and even contrived to witness a reform procession in London in 1884 from the balcony of the home of his friend, Lord Carrington. The crowd halted upon seeing the Prince, the Princess and their daughters, and the marchers sang, *God Bless the Prince of Wales*. There was some criticism of his witnessing the march from Conservatives, which the Prince resisted, saying it had been instructive and that he had enjoyed the experience.[75] The Queen however, was not enthusiastic for the democratic reforms of the Third Reform Act, which she believed would be destabilizing. She was anxious 'to avert serious dangers so much desired by Radicals and Republicans'. From behind the scenes, Longford described how she worked to bring together 'an informal coalition of party leaders under the supervision of the Crown. The teeth of democracy would thus be gently and painlessly drawn'.[76] In this instance it may have been instructive for Edward to be privy to her discussions and correspondences to learn how the monarch could put her secretaries and the parliamentary leaders to work. This was certainly what Esher and Knollys wanted to achieve with their sovereign, but it is not at all clear that Edward ever envisaged himself being as assertive. In earlier episodes, Victoria put her interventions in terms of seeking to help her government ministers to avoid 'mistakes' or the 'most awkward embarrassments'.[77] Victoria was apt to predict such outcomes and actions if they were not in accordance with her own views!

In comparison with Esher and Knollys, Benson felt no such affinity for Edward as a person or as a monarch. On the weekend before Edward VII's coronation, Benson had

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[73] Benson's response to the 'Excisions in vol. II', Esher papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 12 November 1906.
[74] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, Melbourne to Victoria, 6 April 1842.
[75] Magnus, Edward the Seventh, pp. 182-3.
[76] Longford, Victoria R.I., pp. 512-5.
[77] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, Victoria to John Russell, 27 April 1850.

been riding his bicycle, from Eton to Cookham and Cliveden. He arrived back to the 'dreadful news'. The King, after being ill for more than a week, was diagnosed with appendicitis which led to the cancellation and rescheduling of his Coronation, and consequently, to the delayed Gala premiere of the *Coronation Ode* written by Benson and Edward Elgar. Benson despaired: 'the horrible operation, the King sinking – everything put off – all leave cancelled.' He agonised: 'Was there ever a man in such a tragic position?' But, he continued:

> The fact that the King has no personal dignity or romance about him heightens the horror. This bourgeois, ungraceful, small-minded, gross, kindly man with the cup (which he made no picture of not enjoying) dashed from his lips. The danger in which he lies give him one touch of dignity – and the courage with which I hear he took it. I have no hope of his life, or very little.[78]

Benson's anxiety about the possibility of the King's dying was widely felt. Such operations were then regarded as risky, and recovery, miraculous.[79] But even this did not soften his criticism of Edward's shortcomings. He later described him as having 'that "irresistible bonhomie" look which I so particularly dislike ... [and looking] like a little dwarf ... (What a figure!)'.[80] Two and a half years later, as Benson and Murray waited for the King's approval for the stereotyping of Volume I, Benson's exasperation with the delays, which he had been led to believe were due to the King, came to the surface in a letter he wrote to Murray. However he strenuously blacked out the two offensive lines in the letter, ruefully admitting to Murray that he had been 'a little indiscreet'![81]

Benson's editing strength was in his conscious shaping of the book to create an image of the Queen. He, somewhat naively, showed little awareness of the impact the book might have on the King as a person or on the public perception of him as monarch. Esher's aims to achieve publication became more complex, as over the course of the editing he developed a sense of protectiveness towards his master and King as well as a heightened awareness of the vulnerability of his own social well-being. As the editing progressed he made excisions to this end, not so much to craft the image of the Queen

[78] Benson Diary, vol. 14, p. 48.
[79] Magnus, Edward the Seventh, p. 298.
[80] Benson Diary, vol. 42, 20 November 1903, p. 14.
[81] John Murray Archives, CB2, Benson to Murray, 17 July 1906.

but to ensure that, if the King should read the book, he would not be offended by the content or displeased with the work of the editors.

11.1 Excising for the King

The initial parameters for material to be selected or rejected drew on the taken-for-granted understandings of decency and 'good form' held by gentlemen: no formal stipulations were necessary. As the editors approached the time for the proofs to be submitted to the King, these understandings were shown to be nebulous and varying. Esher shed his role as editor of the Queen and became courtier to the King. Material which had been carefully selected by Benson and himself in their roles as gentlemanly biographers and editors at the start of the project, suddenly seemed to be diplomatically inappropriate and socially dangerous to Esher in 1906 and 1907.

The surviving list of excisions for Volume II, referred to by Benson and Murray as the 'King's excisions', can now be thought of as excisions 'for the King' rather than excisions made 'by the King', but of course, this was not Benson's understanding in 1906. Consequently Benson gently contended to Esher that many of the King's excisions for Volume II were, 'quite unnecessary & even pointless & to garble some of the letters very much. I suppose there is no appeal?'[82] Esher sent Benson's protest letter to Knollys who haughtily replied:

> ... I return Benson's letters. Literary recluses are not always the best judges of what is good taste in these matters and I think we have been very indulgent in our excisions. I shall be curious to know to what particular ones he objects to as 'pointless'. He forgets that the work will be published under the direct auspices of the King.[83]

Esher's response to Benson has not been located, but it was persuasive enough for Benson to acquiesce: 'I quite see your point about H.M.'s position in the matter.'[84]

However upon his return from holiday, Benson had second thoughts. He tried again to have Esher reconsider the excisions. He put specific arguments against some of the ordered excisions, this time filling a foolscap page with the list of the excisions and his objections. For example, some excisions he contended were, by 1906, 'historical facts'; others changed the meanings or intent of the Queen's comments; in yet another: 'The

[82] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 5 October 1906.
[83] ibid., 10/49, Knollys to Esher, 6 October 1906.

Queen's feeling is quite well known.'[85] In reply to these protests, Esher responded quite forcefully, (but the content, for us, is not without humour):

> My dear ACB,
> I have gone very carefully through your suggested restorations of the original text and have spoken to the King about them.
> H.M. says that it is not a question of 'well known historical facts' or the 'great historical value' of passages. The point is that this book is published under the King's authority.
> Take for instance your suggestion in regard to page 17. You would not feel that the King would be justified in allowing a passage to be printed in which his mother characterises a living sovereign, one of the most respected and a great personal friend of the King, as an 'utter nullity'.
> The same class of objection holds good in all cases where excisions have been made.
> The principle all along has been to avoid giving pain to living servants or friends of the King, or umbrage to foreign states.
> I am sure you will feel that this is the right view, even if the book should suffer, which in my judgment it will not.
> Yours always, E.[86]

The following sentence, which I have transcribed in bold type, was listed to be deleted: **'He [referring to Tsar Nicholas I] is very much alarmed about the East & about Austria from the utter nullity of the Sovereign'**.[87] Benson's claim that the description, 'an utter nullity', was a 'perfectly well-known historical fact' was justified on several counts. The reference was not, as Esher thought, to Emperor Franz Josef, who was indeed a 'great, personal friend' of King Edward VII. It referred to his elderly uncle, Emperor Ferdinand I, who became emperor in 1835 and who was compelled to abdicate during the Revolution of 1848 (to be succeeded by Franz Joseph) though he lived on until 1875. He was 'weak-minded and incapable'.[88] At this time, 1906, Franz Joseph was still on the throne, and Edward VII visited him on several occasions, including August 1906, the time these excisions were being made.[89] So Esher was incorrect in saying that it described a 'living Sovereign'; this also suggests that Esher

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[84] ibid., Benson to Esher, 8 October 1906.
[85] ibid., Benson to Esher, 12 November 1906.
[86] ibid., Esher to Benson, 17 November 1906, (copy kept by Esher). This letter was followed two days later with another from Esher, praising Benson's recently published book, The Upton Letters. Benson recorded Esher's praise in his Diary: 'It was one of the most beautiful and charming books [Esher] has ever read in his life & that it has moved him to tears!' (Benson Diary, vol. 87, p. 26, 14 November 1906.) Benson subsequently devalued the praise, but was moved by it just the same: 'Esher is a sentimentalist, but it is a sentiment which is most delicately adjusted to worldly conventions.' Esher again showed himself to be an adept appeaser.
[87] RA VIC/Y 91/53, Queen Victoria to Leopold, 11 June 1844. The letter excerpt is in Benson and Esher Letters of Queen Victoria, 1908, vol. II, at ellipses, p.15, (1907, vol. II, at ellipses, p. 17).
[88] William L. Langer, ed., An Encyclopedia of World History, Boston, 1948, p. 671.
[89] Heffer, Power and Place, pp. 69, 168, 258-61.

had not 'spoken to the King about them.' King Edward VII, for all his failings, was pedantic about such personal details and would have corrected Esher on this point – he once sent an equerry to correct Esher's son, Maurice, after Maurice (within the King's earshot) had referred to Nicholas II as 'the Russian Emperor' instead of 'The Emperor of Russia'.[90]

The excised sentence had been written by Queen Victoria, who was repeating to King Leopold an opinion of Tsar Nicholas I. Presumably it was shared by Victoria, Albert and possibly Leopold too, but it was Nicholas's characterisation, not Victoria's. So Esher was wrong on that account too, but Benson had no further recourse, and the sentence was omitted. This can be seen as one instance of several where Victoria's use of strident language to describe individuals or actions was watered-down. The excision was made by Esher most likely because of the King's recent visit, his ongoing friendship with the Austrian royal family and his aspirations for maintaining political peace in Europe.[91] It remains unclear why Esher could not have justified the excision to Benson simply on the grounds of European diplomacy.

The excisions ordered from Volume II fall into several categories: those based on political considerations especially as they may have impacted upon King Edward's ministers and his reign; those which showed Victoria to have been excessively assertive, unfeminine or insulting; and those which show political bias. Some excisions which were part of Benson's and Esher's 'crafting' of Victoria have already been discussed. Particular excisions stemmed directly from Edward's reign and personal friendships, (as with the Austrian example above), but there is much overlapping of the categories. For example, one of the ordered excisions was from Victoria's description of the Irish people during her visit to Dublin in 1849. She described the reception by the Irish crowds to Leopold:

> The most perfect order was maintained in spite of the immense mass of people assembled and a more good-humoured crowd I never saw, but noisy and excitable beyond belief, talking, jumping and shrieking instead of cheering …

[90] James Lees-Milne, The Enigmatic Edwardian. The Life of Reginald, Second Viscount Esher, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1986, p. 151.

[91] Roderick R. McLean, Royalty and Diplomacy in Europe 1890-1914, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 120-1, 132, and more generally, Chapter 3 'King Edward VII and British Diplomacy, 1902-1910'.

> You see **dirtier,** more ragged & wretched people here than I ever saw anywhere else.[92]

The word 'dirtier' was ordered to be excised. Benson contested it: 'Why erase?'[93] Other descriptive, but not particularly kind, words remained in the description of the people – 'ragged' and 'wretched'. Later she also described the women as 'handsome', with their 'beautiful black eyes and hair' and 'fine colours [of their hair] and fine ... teeth'. Victoria was sympathetic and admiring of the people, and in post-famine Ireland probably accurate, but perhaps 'dirtier' was too blunt for the political climate of 1906. Whether the editors excised it because it was offensive to the Irish people or whether Victoria's language needed to be tempered and feminised are unanswerable questions. A failure to wash may have been less excusable than being 'ragged' or 'wretched'!

King Edward and Queen Alexandra had made two visits to Ireland as sovereigns, in 1903 and 1904, and the King visited alone in 1907. The great enthusiasm with which they were received raised temporary hopes that, even in an era of ardent Irish nationalism, the monarchy might continue to bind the United Kingdom together.[94] Benson and Esher had already made omissions on Victoria's and Albert's views on Ireland, although some material which was included is sometimes puzzling to our sensibilities today. One such item which remained and was not considered for excision was written in January 1843, by Lord Melbourne to Victoria: 'Hallam is, in Lord Melbourne's opinion, right about Ireland. Her advocates are very loud in their outcry, but she has not really much to complain of.'[95] In 1848 Victoria was writing frequently to Leopold, about the growing unrest throughout Europe and the actions of the Chartists in England, and the Young Ireland movement. But, she maintained:

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[92] RA VIC/Y 94/38, Victoria to Leopold, 6 August 1849. Printed in Benson & Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, 1908, vol. II, no ellipses, p. 225; (1907, vol. II, p. 267). Following this visit, Edward was created Earl of Dublin. Benson & Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, 1908, p. 224; Victoria to John Russell, 19 July 1849.

[93] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 12 November 1906.

[94] Heffer, Power and Place, p. 131. For details of Edward's particular interest in Irish people and politics, see Lee, King Edward VII, vol. II, pp. 161-72; 472-4. Victoria's visits had similar aims, and as much enthusiasm on the part of the Irish. See Alex Tyrrell with Yvonne Ward, ' "God Bless Her Little Majesty!" The Popularising of Monarchy in the 1840s', National Identities, vol. 2, no. 2 (2000), pp. 120-1.

[95] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, Melbourne to Victoria, 25 January 1843.

> There are ample means of crushing the rebellion in Ireland, I think it is now very likely to go off without any contest **which people (and I think with right) rather regret. The Irish shd receive a good lesson or they will begin again.**[96]

The bold type are the words that were deleted as another of the 'King's excisions'; the normal type they retained. In the early twentieth century the Act of Union was still very much in existence, and the editors may well have decided that Victoria's belief in 1848 that the Irish 'deserved a good lesson' (meaning 'a good spanking') by having a rebellion visibly put down, might appropriately be left out of the published volume. But it would seem that even the satisfaction in her report that they had 'ample means of crushing the rebellion' was unnecessarily assertive, even brutal. But the views obviously were not offensive to the gentlemanly, English editors, nor expected to be so to the King.

From the year before her accession and onwards, King Leopold repeatedly complained to Victoria of the 'scurrilous abuse [heaped] on the Coburg family' by the Press in England ever since his marriage to Princess Charlotte of Wales, and commended Victoria's principle of not minding what the newspapers said.[97] Arthur Bigge had been critical of Benson's and Esher's sanitising of a letter for Volume I, written by King Leopold of the Belgians just prior to Victoria's accession where in seeking to instruct her about the power of the press, he had, in Benson's and Esher's view, launched an unwarranted attack upon The Times. The letter contained a very idiosyncratic but perceptive account of the editorial swings which the paper took during the Peninsular campaign, the passage of the Reform Acts in 1831-2 through Parliament, and its occasional criticisms of Leopold himself.[98] In relation to this letter, Benson and Esher must have attached a footnote of criticism of King Leopold, with which Bigge disagreed. Bigge thought that Leopold's 'severe strictures ... [were] more or less historical' and unobjectionable as they are 'those of a foreign onlooker'.[99] The editors

[96] RA VIC/Y 93/42, Victoria to Leopold, 1 August 1848. Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, 1 August 1848.
[97] From a letter from Leopold to Victoria before her accession. Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, 18 November 1836.
[98] For the full text of the letter see Correspondence of Leopold I and Princess Victoria, Archives of the Royal Palace, Brussels, 18 November 1836, 60439-44.
[99] Esher Papers, 10/49, Stamfordham to Knollys, 9 August 1906.

did not agree with him, and only one paragraph of this well-written, interesting six-page letter was published.[100] In that excerpt The Times was not named.

John Murray may have advised that the name of the newspaper be omitted – the Editor of The Times was publishing anonymous articles, critical of the production and pricing of the Letters of Queen Victoria and made claims that Murray was seeking exorbitant profits. [101] John Murray launched a libel action against Mr Moberly Bell, the editor, and The Times, which was finally concluded in Murray's favour in May 1908.[102] A similar instance of the title of The Times being removed occurred in relation to a letter of Victoria's written in 1851. She wrote: 'That abuse of the poor Orleans family in our papers, **at least in The Times,** is abominable.'[103] The Orleans family had previously been the Royal family of France. When the King was forced to abdicate in 1848 they had sought refuge in England, and were given the use of the Surrey home of their son-in-law, King Leopold.

In this instance, Victoria was defensive of the French, at least of the Royal Family, and Benson and Esher showed some of this concern in the selection of letters from the start of 1848, when the family was first faced with a bereavement, then were forced to abdicate and seek to escape from France to the relative safety of England.[104] Edward was to be very fond of French people and institutions, all his life.[105] More frequently the Queen was critical of French politics, monarchical and republican, and there were excisions ordered in Volume II in order to offset some of her venom. In 1846 contrary to a pledge given to Victoria by the King of the French, he pursued what he saw as a diplomatic coup concerning the marriage of his son to the younger sister of the Queen of Spain. Victoria referred to this '**faithless conduct of the French**' in a letter to

[100] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, Leopold to Victoria, 18 November 1836.
[101] Benson refers to a conversation he had with Murray on the previous day on the subject in a letter of 20 November 1906. Benson to Murray, John Murray Archives, Albermarle St., London.
[102] Court case and outcome were reported in Daily Mirror, 7 May 1908 (no page available); Truth, 13 May 1908, p. 1206-7; Bystander, 13 May 1908, p. 324. In the two-column obituary published in The Times, 1 December 1928, there was no mention of Murray having published the Letters of Queen Victoria, neither the First series 1907, or the Second series which, having been published in 1926-8 (with the third volume in 1928), were current.
[103] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, Victoria to Leopold, 22 September 1851. List of deletions John Murray Archive, CB2, 25 August 1906.
[104] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, January 1848
[105] Heffer, Power and Place, pp. 5, 12-19, 89, 155-8.

Leopold, and it was ordered to be excised.[106] Benson again argued that there were 'stronger terms used below: The Queen's inclination had long been known – the gap will be more suggestive than the excised term.'[107] Over the next sequence of selected letters Victoria raged over the King's behaviour, using words like: 'infamous', 'not the way to keep up the *entente*' and even accused him of behaving 'very dishonest[ly]'.[108] Benson was right: there were 'stronger terms' used later.

In 1848 she could understand, if not approve of, King Louis-Philippe's flight from Paris: 'Still the recollection of Louis XVI **and the wickedness and savageness of the French mob** is enough to justify all and everybody will admit that.'[109] The words in the bold type were deleted, though Benson protested: 'No cause for excision.' As the political temperature rose further during the next months, she was again discussing the French with Leopold: 'In France, things go on dreadfully **& for the sake of morality there ought to be some great catastrophe at Paris for that is the hothouse of Iniquity from wherein all the mischief comes.'**[110] Later, upon hearing of the *coup d'état* by Louis Napoleon, Victoria's letter to Leopold, heavy with irony, began with: 'I must write a line to ask what you say to the *wonderful* proceedings at Paris, which is really like a *story* in a book or a play! What is to be the result of it all?'[111] The vehemence and scorn of Victoria's words and ideas would have been intolerable, and even dangerous, in a climate of bloc alliances: the *Entente Cordiale* between France and England (and the hope of a Triple Entente including Russia, which was to be achieved in 1907) with the Triple Alliance having been forged between Germany, Austria and Italy.[112] So although all of Victoria's comments did refer to earlier regimes in France, they may still have been regarded as offensive to French people, and to her Francophile son.

Some excisions were made of material which showed Edward's sense of professional linkage and guildsmanship with other monarchs and leaders, or concern for their living

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[106] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, 7 September 1846; List of deletions John Murray Archives, CB2, 25 August 1906.
[107] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 12 November 1906.
[108] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, 7 September 1846 and 14 September 1846.
[109] Original letter, RA VIC/Y 93/23, Victoria to Leopold, 11 March 1848; in Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, 11 March 1848.
[110] Original letter, RA VIC/Y 93/28, Victoria to Leopold, 18 April 1848; in Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, 18 April 1848.
[111] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, Victoria to Leopold, 4 December 1851.
[112] Heffer, Power and Place, p. 132 ff.

relatives. For example, in 1852, the unmarried Emperor Louis Napoleon III was wishing to achieve a marriage which would bring him into some alliance of friendship with England.[113] One candidate was Princess Adelaide, the daughter of Queen Victoria's sister, Feodore. Ada was currently visiting Albert and Victoria in England. Feodore and Victoria were both against the marriage and the letter outlined aspects of the Emperor's past history which the sisters found distasteful and unacceptable in a prospective husband. Late in the editing process, Benson suggested that these particular details should be omitted because of the hurt this might produce for Napoleon III's widow, Empress Eugenie, who was still alive.[114] This letter had been approved by Esher several times. It remained in the volume, but there is one set of ellipses in the edited letter.[115]

King Leopold bore an ongoing distrust of the Emperor of Russia, Nicholas I, the great-grandfather of the current Tsar, Nicholas II, stemming from the negotiations at the time of the establishment of the constitution for an independent Belgian state.[116] In 1844, the Tsar had just undertaken a very successful visit to the young couple at Windsor, and Benson and Esher have included some delightful letters of Victoria's – which show her anxiety about the visit, and then her motherly triumph. A visit from the elderly King of Saxony was already scheduled for June, but in the first week of May, she wrote in her Journal: '... We are still threatened with a visit from the Emperor of Russia which alarms me somewhat ...'.[117] On 30 May 1844 she continued:

> [Foreign Secretary] Lord Aberdeen came immediately after luncheon and told Albert that <u>after all</u> the Emperor of Russia <u>is</u> coming and may be here on the 3rd! This rather upset me for I so dread the fatigue & hate appearing in my present condition. But it cannot be helped, disagreeable as it is. He will only remain a week.[118]

At the time Victoria was heavily pregnant with her fourth child, a fact which the gentlemen editors allowed to remain concealed by euphemism in the text.

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[113] Benson and Esher, <u>Letters of Queen Victoria</u>, vol. II, several letters between the Earl of Malmsbury and Victoria from 8 December 1852, 16 December 1852 and 23 December 1852.
[114] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 20 November 1906.
[115] Benson and Esher, <u>Letters of Queen Victoria</u>, vol. II, Princess Hohenlohe to Victoria, 30 December 1852.
[116] Correspondence of Leopold I to Queen Victoria, Archives of the Royal Palace, Brussels, 28 June 1844, 62159.
[117] RA VIC/QVJ, 7 May 1844.
[118] ibid., 30 May 1844.

Thus began the State Visit from Tsar Nicholas I of Russia. The two distinguished visitors joined the Royal Family, at this time comprising Vicky aged three and a half, Albert Edward aged two and a half, and Alice, fourteen months, for breakfast each day. Writing to her Uncle Leopold Victoria described the Tsar as being a 'striking man' of large physique, with an expression of the eyes that was 'quite fearful' and 'unlike anything I ever saw before'. He seldom smiled, she said, and when he did 'his expression was *not* a happy one'. Yet, she continued:

> The children are much admired by the *Sovereigns* – (how *grand* this sounds!) – and Alice allowed the Emperor to take her in his arms, and kissed him *de son propre accord*. [sic] We are always so thankful that they are *not shy*.[119]

On a political level, she wrote:

> If the French are angry at this visit, let their dear King and Princes come; they will be sure of a truly affectionate reception on our part. The one which Emperor Nicholas has received is cordial and civil, *mais ne vient pas du coeur* [but it doesn't come from the heart].[120]

Leopold in responding to Victoria at the conclusion of the visit sounded a warning: 'Concerning great Nick, I must express myself with great care, as I can see that my opinion may be judged as the result of some pique.' It is not surprising that this comment was listed to be deleted,[121] although some parts of the rest of his long letter were printed. He proceeded into a diatribe, the following section of which was omitted from the initial selections by Benson and Esher. But in the published letter, only one set of ellipses are given (at the 'Concerning great Nick ...' sentence), so the reader has no sense of the large omissions that were made. In the omitted section of the letter, Leopold accused the Emperor of not fulfilling his promises and,

> **of displaying great inconsistency in his conduct towards us, for so powerful a Prince ... having consented to the arrangement, [of Belgian sovereignty by] four ratifications in his own handwriting, the hostility with which we have been treated is not to be explained.**

[119] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, Victoria to Leopold, 4 June 1844. Italics, as given in this source, would have been underlinings in the original correspondence.
[120] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, Victoria to Leopold, 4 June 1844.
[121] John Murray Archives, CB2, 26 August 1906. Original from Archives of the Royal Palace, Brussels, Correspondence of Leopold I to Queen Victoria, 28 June 1844, 62159.

> **Secondary states may be forced to swallow unpleasant things from weakness; Constitutional Sovereigns of great countries may be forced by their Parliaments and may make a personal distinction and say officially I must deal with these people, but personally, I will avoid it as much as possible ... But the most powerful Autocrat must either frankly refuse at first, or having consented to the arrangements, must keep up decent form ... The Emperor has refused all and every acknowledgment of political existence to me and this country. The Polish affair is of so trifling a nature that it excuses nothing.**
> **Without France going with England, Austria cannot move. But enough of politics. I should not have mentioned them but I think it wise to be on the most friendly terms with Russia, without losing sight of what is going on in the immense sphere of action where the Russians already move as Masters. If Maria Theresa had been told that Moldavia Walackia and Servia [sic] would be governed by the Russians, who at the same time would have nearly the whole of Poland, she would have been astonished in good earnest [with good reason].**[122]

It is a moot question, whether, given the political climates of 1844 and 1906, the omissions were for economy of space or in deference to the King's rule, delivered by Esher, that the editors were 'to avoid giving pain to living servants or friends of the King, or umbrage to foreign states'.[123]

Throughout Victoria's life, King Leopold had always been keen to educate her in history and royal precedent. In Volume I of the Letters, the editors had included several letters reflecting this. He was also fond of referring to the history of his first wife, Charlotte, Princess of Wales, with whom he had lived at Claremont before her death in childbirth. In a letter written to Victoria to accompany a portrait of Charlotte which he was giving to her, he described many aspects of Charlotte's difficult life and her attributes. Three sentences were ordered for excision: one was critical not just of her father, King George IV, and his family, but also of her grandmother and namesake, Queen Charlotte:

> **The power my wishes and arguments had on her [Princess Charlotte] was remarkable; the greatest sacrifice on her part was to be civil to the old Queen and to her father, [King George IV]. She knew him but too well; he was very jealous of her, and she feared him without feeling any esteem for him. What you have seen of the remnant of the Royal family may give you a clue of what it was when they were all alive, and still in vigorous dispositions for every descriptions of mischief.**[124]

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[122] Archives of the Royal Palace, Brussels, Correspondence of Leopold I to Queen Victoria, 28 June 1844, 62161, 62164.
[123] Esher Papers, 11/5, 17 November 1906, Esher to Benson.
[124] Original letter see Correspondence of Leopold I to Queen Victoria, Archives of the Royal Palace, Brussels, 21 May 1845, 62375; Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, 21 May 1845.

Leopold had never been welcomed into the family, so his outpouring should not be surprising. Already in Volume I, was a letter of Leopold's recollection of the events (given here with the editors' ellipses and italics,) following the death of Victoria's father in Sidmouth. One aspect was the reprehensible behaviour of King George IV:

> His [Your Father's] affairs were so deranged that your Mother would have had no means even of leaving Sidmouth if I had not taken all this under my care and management. That dreary journey, undertaken, I think on the 26th January, in bitter cold and damp weather, I shall not easily forget. I looked very sharp after the poor little baby, [Victoria] then about eight months old. Arrived in London we were very unkindly treated by George IV., *whose great wish was to get you and your Mamma out of the country* and I must say without *my* assistance you could not have remained. ... I state these facts because it is useful to remember through what *difficulties* and *hardships* one had to struggle.[125]

This passage remained safe in Volume I, but the material in Volume II seemed to come under much closer and more critical reading, a point that possibly provided the catalyst for Benson to protest some of the excisions.

One further excision was ordered in which monarchs and princes were involved. Victoria criticised her half-brother Charles, who had received the appointment of the Foreign Affairs secretary in the new federation of German states. She wrote to Leopold:

> I do not think the fate of the Minor Princes of Germany is so completely decided as Charles, **(whose conduct rather reminds me of the Egalité in the old French Revolution)** is so anxious to make one believe.[126]

She believed Charles to be siding, with indecent enthusiasm, with the revolutionary Frankfort Assembly of 1848, whose more radical members wished to dispossess altogether the minor princes of Germany such as Victoria's brother-in-law, Duke Ernest II of Coburg. She was comparing her half-brother with Philip Egalité, the relation of King Louis XVI who, during the French Revolution, championed (for a time) the cause of the revolutionaries who eventually executed the Bourbon king; he was also the father of Louis Philippe who had just sought refuge in Britain. Why was this comment believed to be sensitive?

Perhaps because the reference is to King Edward VII's own uncle, or perhaps because he was expected to be uncomfortable with the notion of a king or a prince so closely

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[125] Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. I, Leopold to Victoria, 22 January 1842.
[126] RA VIC/Y 93/42, Victoria to Leopold, 1 August 1848; Benson and Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, Victoria to Leopold, 1 August 1848.

related to him being referred to publicly as a revolutionary. Sidney Lee claims that the six-year-old Bertie was alert enough to grasp the threats to other European thrones of the events of 1848. Simon Heffer believes this to be 'far-fetched', but then he conceded that if this was the case, 'it might indicate that the ultra-careful regard the Prince had for monarchy went deeper into the soul than simple self-interest ever could'.[127] If this was so, it explains how Esher knew that any insulting or demeaning comment made upon a royal personage should be removed. During the five years of the editing, Esher had come to know King Edward far more intimately than he did at the outset in 1903.

Although the editors' prime aim with the book was to construct an image of Victoria, they were willing to sacrifice aspects of it – Benson albeit reluctantly – in order to ensure that they accommodated the idiosyncracies of her son, such were their instincts toward self-preservation and anxiety to have the book published.

11.2 Completing the book, Gentlemanly Perceptions and the Power of the King's Veto

Throughout 1907, material for Volume III still had to be selected and put into type, ready for editing. Decisions had to be made to cut out hundreds of pages, as there was far more material available for those years than could be included. The editors and Murray decided to extend Volume II to take in 1852, which eased some of the pressure. But given that Volume III had to be able to accommodate the Index, the appendices and the genealogical charts, even more cutting was necessary.[128] The decision was taken that as much deleting should be done before the proofs were paged to avoid the costly and time-consuming exercises of adjusting the type of the first two volumes. (Unfortunately, it was done quicker and there were far fewer discussions by letter.) Benson was continually urging Esher to 'slash it as vigorously as possible'.[129] It is uncertain whether any other volumes were submitted to Bigge, but Benson hoped that both Volumes II and III would be given to Morley for his consideration, but Morley was too busy at one time when he was asked[130] and there

[127] Heffer, Power and Place, p. 5.
[128] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 10 January 1907; 20 January 1907; 6 February 1907; 12 February 1907; throughout March and through until the middle of August.
[129] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 2 February 1907.
[130] ibid., 22 April 1907 and *passim*.

is no documentary evidence that he did look through them at all. Volume III was eventually sent for printing in several sections throughout July and August of 1907.

Benson and Murray worked frantically in these final months before their deadline of October 1907 in order to have the book published on time. Benson still referred to 'corrections which you sent me from the King' as late as July 1907, yet the King again had been away, this time he had been making his first official tour wholly by car, to Wales, before sailing to Dublin to visit the International Exhibition in that month.[131] Esher too was doing some touring by car: from London, visiting Leicester, Warwick, Kenilworth, Alnwick, seat of the Duke of Northumberland in Northumbria, and on to his Highlands retreat, the Roman Camp, where he stayed until the end of August.[132] Work of a reading and editing nature was frequently done by Esher, *en route*. No record can be found that he had any meetings with the King, or that the proofs were sent to the King during this time. At the beginning of August, the King made his annual pilgrimage to Marienbad – a journey which included a politically significant, week-long visit to his nephew, the Kaiser, in Cassel, and a much more enjoyable stay at Ischl, a mountain spa resort, with the congenial Austrian Emperor Franz Josef – which accounted for all of August.[133] Again, Esher was being duplicitous toward Benson and Murray about the King's involvement. Benson noted that there were 'far fewer excisions to make for Volume III' than he had expected.[134] The increasingly strained international relations between the European powers throughout 1907, and the King's hopes that through personal diplomacy some of the difficulties could be peaceably overcome, consumed the energies of Esher, Knollys and the King.

Esher always praised the King's efforts in peacemaking. Following the King's death in 1910, Esher wrote a tribute, applauding the King's aim to maintain the *status quo* in Europe as a 'wholly pacific idea of the grouping of great Powers for the purpose of mutually guaranteeing to each other, and to the smaller States of Europe, their territorial integrity'. Esher just stopped short of claiming the achievement of the *Triple Entente* for the King:

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[131] Magnus, Edward the Seventh, p. 394.
[132] M. Brett, ed., Journals and Letters of Lord Esher, vol. II, pp. 244-8.
[133] Magnus, Edward the Seventh, p. 394.
[134] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 17 July 1907.

> With this policy, liberal, progressive, and yet eminently conservative, and noble because of its pacific tendencies, its unselfish aspects, and its aspirations for the future of mankind, must ever be connected the name of King Edward VII of Great Britain and Ireland, who presided, if not over its inception, over its partial triumph.[135]

Esher understood the political importance of the King's visits to the Continent. It was not a time to be asking him to read proofs of his mother's letters – another reason why it was highly unlikely that the King read the whole of any of the volumes of the Letters of Queen Victoria.

As Prince of Wales his lack of interest in reading was well known to the point that William Gladstone, the Prime Minister in 1872, suggested to the Queen that the Prince should be induced to read as part of his training for 'Royal and Public duty'. The Queen had replied that the Prince had '*never* been fond of reading and that from his earliest years it was *impossible* to get him to do so. Newspapers and *very rarely* a novel, are all he ever reads'.[136] As if to exemplify her assessment, Edward complained to his mother that his name was not even mentioned in her second book, More Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands. His mother pointed out to him that he appeared five times and suggested he read it properly![137]

Edward's disinclination to read may also have been in evidence when Knollys presented him with the first portion of the letters of Volume I, which included a letter written by Victoria to Uncle Leopold on the day after her wedding. Although the King had approved the letter, Knollys felt he had to surreptitiously have the letter removed, so he wrote to Esher:

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[135] Lord Esher, 'The King and Foreign Affairs', The Influence of King Edward, p. 60. First published in the Deutsche Revue. Not everyone felt so enthusiastic of Edward's abilities. For example, Sir George Arthur at the age of 84, in the penultimate year of his life, was greatly affected by the events of the Second World War and decided to write a biographical essay on Victoria and her son. (Sir George Arthur, Concerning Queen Victoria and Her Son, London, The Right Book Club, 1945.) George Arthur had been a private secretary to Lord Kitchener, and an equerry to the Duchess of Teck, and later wrote biographies of Kitchener, King George V, Queen Mary, Queen Alexandra and Winston Churchill. He had childhood memories of seeing Queen Victoria at Windsor during his school days at Eton. As Equerry to the Duchess of Teck, one of Queen Victoria's favourites in her later years, Sir George had particular and unique insights into Queen Victoria's European networks especially in her later years. In his slim volume he extolled Victoria's strength in diplomacy and described how she alone could, 'shape and stabilize a policy which would prevail among the varying, and often conflicting, views of the statesmen ... I do not say that she was entirely consistent ... but always she was working for what she believed to be the ultimate good of her country'(p. 6). There was a tone of despair in Arthur's work and his view of her role in European politics was not unique. Arthur was a courtier and a contemporary of Esher and Benson, but his views reflected a much more critical appreciation of King Edward VII than did those of Esher.

[136] Magnus, Edward the Seventh, p. 123.

[137] John Van der Kiste, Queen Victoria's Family, A Select Bibliography, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, Cloverleaf publications, 1982, p. 9.

> My dear Esher,
> The King approves of the publication of these letters in the book.
> I think myself it will be a mistake to publish the one written on the day after the wedding – it will only open the door to ribald jests being made on Prince Albert lying on the sofa from fatigue etc etc.
> I should have thought that the Queen herself would have been horrified at this letter appearing in print.[138]

The published letters of Victoria to Leopold from 11 February, full of the glow of love and adoration, do not mention Albert's fatigue.

Given the evidence from Queen Victoria, Gladstone and Lord Knollys, it is unlikely that Edward read many of the books presented to him, including Lee's biography of his mother,[139] or these volumes of her letters in proof. Knollys did read each of the volumes of Queen Victoria's Letters, during their preparation.[140] It is possible that he drew the King's attention to some excerpts with recommendations for excisions but there is no reliable, documentary proof of this. In September 1906, Benson wrote to Murray saying that he had come to suspect that Bigge and Knollys were the only 'excisers and the critics' who had 'put off doing it till their holidays began'.[141] What Benson and Murray had not realised was that it was Esher who had most consistently played the 'censor for the King' role.

Throughout 1906-7 John Murray was greatly worried. Although the production of the text was the biggest component of the work, the selection of the illustrations and the provision of genealogical charts and photographs took a great deal of effort and expense. The final portrait, of the Duchess of Sutherland, was not acquired until July 1907, due to a mistake by Lord Esher.[142] Waiting for the King's approval of the first volume of letters, and then the second volume, tested the patience of Benson and Murray. Maintaining the King's good opinion was crucial for Esher, Knollys and Bigge. But throughout the whole enterprise, for the gentlemanly editors and the publisher, it was always possible that the King could veto the whole project, or at the least, make it untenably difficult to complete. Initially, their task was to create an image

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[138] Esher Papers, 10/48, Knollys to Esher, 29 December 1905.

[139] Correspondence of Sidney Lee, MS English Misc. d 178, Bodleian Library, Oxford, 17 December 1902. In 1908 Esher described visiting Prince Albert's biographer, Theodore Martin, by then a man of 92 years but 'hale and hearty'. Martin described King Edward VII as 'not a reading man, but full of natural ability, and with a sound head and warm heart'. M. Brett, Journal and Letters of Viscount Esher, vol. II, pp. 292-3

[140] Esher Papers, 10/49, Esher to Knollys, 1906-7, e.g. 18 August 1906: 'I am on the eve of finishing the proofs of the 2nd Vol. … shall I send them to you? When will those of the 3rd volume be ready?'

[141] John Murray Archives, CB 3, Benson to Murray, 7 September 1906.

of the Queen for the reading public, but in the last resort, the power of the King's veto overshadowed every other consideration in the production of the book. The deletions, omissions and excisions were largely the result of this pressure to avoid incurring the King's displeasure.

The impetus to complete the job and get the book published became so urgent, that Benson's pragmatism came to the fore. His earlier scruples about the comprehensiveness of the selection and authenticity of the emergent images were worn down under the combined forces of publishing deadlines and his developing depression. Murray was extremely anxious to ensure that the publication deadlines in the U.K. and for the foreign publishers were met. Hence, all other matters paled.

11.3 Postscript

John Murray and Arthur Benson had been hopeful of publishing the three volumes in 1906, but as time wore on, they had to modify this expectation several times,[143] due to the courtiers' prevarications and perhaps, the King's. By 2 September 1907 all three of the volumes were at press and Benson checked the proofs of the Preface, 'tho the depression lurks in the background, moving dimly like a figure in a mist'.[144] The volumes were eventually in the hands of the booksellers on the 16 October 1907 ready for sale, at the price of three guineas, on the 17th.[145] Murray told Benson, happily, and with some relief, that five thousand copies of the book had been despatched.[146] Through his own strenuous efforts, Murray managed to have editions published simultaneously in America, and in translation in France and Germany on the 17 October.[147]

At the end of the process Benson had a nervous breakdown and was finally admitted into a clinic in Mayfair in November.[148] Esher went on to establish the Royal Archives,[149] and he published extracts of Victoria's girlhood journal in 1912. Both the

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[142] John Murray Archives, CB 3, Murray to Esher, 29 June 1907.
[143] John Murray, CB 3, John Murray to Lord Esher, 30 August 1906.
[144] Benson Diary, vol. 96, 2 September 1907.
[145] Esher Papers, 11/6, Murray to Esher, 7 October 1907.
[146] ibid., 11/5, Benson to Esher, 13 October 1907.
[147] His efforts in this regard are obvious through his correspondence of 1903-7. John Murray Archives, CB2 & CB3.
[148] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 6 November 1907; David Newsome, On the Edge of Paradise, A.C. Benson: the Diarist, London, John Murray, 1980, pp. 224-5.
[149] Lord Esher's Journal, Churchill Archives, Cambridge, 16 November 1907. Sheila de Bellaigue, 'The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle', The Court Historian, Vol. III, No 2 (1998), p. 16.

Letters and the Girlhood of Queen Victoria received complimentary reviews.[150] When Esher seized the economic opportunity to publish extracts of the girlhood journal, Benson was still recovering from his depression. Benson suggested to Esher that Hugh Childers should assist. Childers did, as did John Murray's son, Jack, but Childers died suddenly, on 31 August 1912, just prior to publication.[151]

The Letters of Queen Victoria was reviewed very widely in the following months and Esher collected thirty-seven reviews of the book from U.K. publications, mostly favourable, throughout October and November, which he then had bound for his archive.[152] If any celebratory letters were exchanged between Benson, Murray and Lord Esher they have not survived. Arthur Benson, battling the onset of depression, made a few desultory comments about the reception of the book in his diary: he was pleased by reviews which praised the editing; but he was hurt and disappointed that among the many letters of congratulations he received after publication, none was from his 'attached friends of Eton'.[153] Discussions began about reprinting immediately, and a cheaper edition was produced and published in 1908, selling for the price of one guinea.[154] This 1908 edition with its small page format and red cloth cover, with only thirteen plates compared to the thirty-nine plates of the 1907 edition, but without the four genealogical charts, is the one most widely found in libraries today.

[150] Davidson Papers, 134/142-9, Lambeth Palace Library, London.
[151] The Times Annual Index, 1912, p. 276.
[152] Esher Papers, 23/9.
[153] Benson Diaries, vol. 97, pp. 36, 38, 44.
[154] Esher Papers, 11/5, Benson to Esher, 19 October 1907.

Conclusion:The Benson and Esher Template of Queen Victoria

Our picture has been preselected and predetermined for us, not so much
by accident as by people who were consciously or unconsciously imbued
with a particular view
and thought the facts which supported that view worth preserving.
E.H.Carr, What is History?[1]

Biographers of Queen Victoria, the Prince Consort and their children, and other writers on nineteenth-century life, have drawn on these volumes of published letters of the Queen as primary sources, as representative and comprehensive sets of documents from which to write the Royal lives. The letters have formed a framework from which Victoria's life has been drawn. This has led to some serial misrepresentations, in particular of their early domestic lives, the importance of Victoria's female network of correspondents, of her Sovereignty and of a determined reluctance to interrogate Prince Albert's acquisition of authority and power. Lytton Strachey's biography of Queen Victoria[2] which has remained in print since its publication in 1921,[3] is an example of the influence of the template of Benson and Esher – of the young, innocent girl and Queen, then wife and mother, with the greatest emphasis being placed on the strengths and personalities of the men surrounding her. Six of Strachey's ten chapters focus on the men; four of them give their names to the chapters. His perception of the Queen in relation to the rise and fall of the power of the Crown could equally apply to the biography: 'Victoria in effect was a mere accessory.'[4]

While Queen Victoria's own writing and behaviour in her widowhood could be said to have contributed to these misrepresentations the difficulty for scholars of access to original documents also contributed. The influence of her daughter, Beatrice, as literary executor of the estate, and various courtiers ensured that the *status quo* prevailed for

[1] E.H. Carr, What is History? Harmondsworth, Penguin, (1961) 1974, p.13
[2] Lytton Strachey, Queen Victoria, London, Chatto and Windus, (1921), 1937.
[3] Yvonne Ward, 'In Search of Queen Victoria', (review of the 'Victoria Herself' session, 'Locating the Victorians' Conference, Science Museum, London, 12-14 July 2001), published in The Court Historian, vol. 6, no. 3 (December 2001), p. 244.
[4] Strachey, Queen Victoria, p. 125.

almost six decades following Victoria's death. Elizabeth Longford likened the Royal Archives in the 1960s as being 'hedged about like a sleeping princess with ways of keeping you out'![5] These factors all contributed to the reliance upon published materials, but can serve as only partial excuses now.

However the published volumes of Victoria's letters must not be considered simply as 'published primary sources'. They must be seen as artefacts of their times. The constraints on the editors and publishers were many: the personalities of the editors, the influences of their gentlemanly worlds and their intellectual, social and political perceptions of the task; the all-pervasive inter-generational influences; royal protocols to be observed; the overbearing consciousness of the Royal veto; consideration towards living relatives; saleability to the public; and the need to avoid controversy. Each of these variables compounded upon each other to this result.

The men who edited and published the volumes, and the courtiers who facilitated the work, all conformed to the ideas and values of nineteenth-century gentlemen. They employed a masculinist gaze, a very particular perspective, through which ideas were held about men and women, not just in terms of social, economic and political status and action, but in terms of knowledge. It is not surprising that they made only brief mention, sometimes only in footnotes, of pregnancies, the births of babies, or of domestic details because these matters were seen simultaneously as being mundane and trivial, and intrusive and disrespectful of everybody, not only Royal personages. This imperative was shared broadly throughout the society, and maintained by men of the gentlemanly class, irrespective of sexual predilection. Benson and Esher, from their particular perspectives of the power of knowledge and secrecy, were preparing information about Queen Victoria from this perspective, for historians and for the reading public.

Arthur Benson and Lord Esher were men of idiosyncratic natures. As the editors of the first series of the Letters, they provided the blueprint for the subsequent series and a template for portraits of Queen Victoria in biographies. It has been suggested that perhaps as homosexuals in Victorian England, Benson and Esher would be well placed to empathise with the monarchical dilemma of maintaining a public life of unimpeachable virtue while attempting to pursue a private life of passion, especially as

[5] Elizabeth Longford, The Pebbled Shore, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986, p. 307.

expressed in private letters and diaries.[6] Their sexuality was not the crucial aspect that affected their selection criteria, but the secrecy surrounding it was substantial. My argument is that their image of Queen Victoria was formed within the parameters of the ideas, understandings and worldviews of gentlemen, particular gentlemen in the late Victorian-Edwardian era; from within these parameters, they made their selections.

Benson's and Esher's sexuality impinged on the project in two ways: One was that they prioritized the voices of men. Queen Victoria's letters comprise barely forty per cent of the three volumes. Benson and Esher could 'hear' the men's voices more clearly, and could feel the importance of them more readily, especially of Lord Melbourne. No one would deny Lord Melbourne's importance to Victoria, but at the same time, there was a huge correspondence taking place between King Leopold of the Belgians, proportionally little of which was included, because of the unwelcome image (both in the 1900s and of the 1830s and 1840s) of foreign influence on the British Queen, and they wanted to portray her as politically naive. The image that made most sense to Benson and Esher was that of the elderly teaching the young. They wanted to spin the romantic story of Lord Melbourne and the girl queen, which, of course, they could readily understand: the senior statesmen, experienced in the world guiding the youthful queen with love and wisdom – flirtatiousness on her part merely confirmed Lord Melbourne's effect on her (Eros). Although the gender is different, it follows that classical Greek model of pedagogy of which they were both enthusiasts.

For all of this attention to the men surrounding Victoria, misogyny is not part of my argument. The editors' relationships and perceptions of women were many-layered and complex, but neither man sought women for the satisfaction of their emotional needs. Because both men conducted extensive courses of correspondence with women – Esher with Millicent, the Duchess of Sutherland, and Benson with his mother, his sister and a huge correspondence with the readers of his avuncular little prose works, who were predominantly female – they had placed a value upon women's correspondence. However, compared to the valency they placed upon their correspondence, friendships and love affairs with boys and men, their relationships with women were inferior.

[6] This theme is broached by William M. Kuhn, Democratic Royalism. The Transformation of the British Monarchy 1861-1914, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1998, pp. 73-4, comparing masculine and feminine personality traits. This thesis has sought to give greater depth to this idea by incorporating the ideas of

Hence, the editors could readily deem the women's letters to Queen Victoria trivial. But this was not driven by misogyny; it was the male gaze, the masculinist, gentlemanly view of all things, which dominated.

Their sexuality impinged on the editing in another way that was directly related to the tensions resulting from the illegality of homosexual acts. Knowledge and secrecy, trust and a sort of loyalty, were at the base of it. From school, university and clubs they knew about each other, gossiped about reputations, especially with the scandals in the news in the 1890s, but discretion was essential. Secrecy added a layer of tension within that gentlemanly group for Esher who was active and Benson who was probably inactive but sympathetic. Secrecy was so natural to them that there was a taken-for-grantedness about keeping aspects of Victoria's life secret. They recognised these dilemmas within each other. It gave them a feeling of connectedness, but also a particular isolation from some other gentlemen in society. Things became more complicated by individual judgements about qualities of character – lecherous behaviour as opposed to romantic love; boy love as opposed to incest. Although there was some empathy between the editors, their working relationships were complicated. Benson came to question Esher's virtues but displayed no potency. Esher exercised authority over Benson through his seniority, his style and his higher social status, a combination of his personal elegance, money, marital status and fatherhood. Esher's knowledge of so many people and their affairs, and having the ear of the King, meant that he won out in all of the editing contretemps.

The publishing enterprise can be summarised as a series of binaries: the men all sought to commemorate a Queen they admired, but they wanted to create and manifest a particular image of her; they wanted to bring the letters to the public, but not to expose the monarchy to vulgar revelations; they wanted to make money and not to lose it; they wanted some fame for themselves, and at all costs avoid bringing any discredit upon themselves or their families or class; they wanted to share the riches of the archive but also to control access to it; and they did not take any risks of incurring the King's displeasure; they had to ensure that they pleased him.

David Vincent in The Culture of Secrecy, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998. I thank Martin Hunt for our discussions into this aspect of the thesis.

For all of these reasons the volumes should not be considered to be an exhaustive or even a comprehensive selection from the archive. The editors were constrained by the power of the Sovereign's veto, by Royal protocols, and by the ideals of their time and class. Additionally, Viscount Esher and Arthur Benson treasured personal associations with the 'old Queen' forged during their years as schoolboys at Eton and subsequently in their adult lives. These early meetings with the Queen influenced both of them powerfully and they may well have experienced difficulties in moving beyond this persona to 'imagine' her first as a young girl queen of eighteen, then as an exuberant twenty-year-old experiencing love for the first time, and as a young wife and mother. Biographers and historians who have relied on these published materials have not acknowledged these gaps; many have not been aware of them.

The work of Benson and Esher adds another layer of selectivity to the picture given by E.H. Carr. Like the compilers of records and the custodians of documents to whom Carr alludes, the two editors were, both consciously and unconsciously, imbued with a particular view and thought the facts which supported that view worth preserving. The editions of the Letters of Queen Victoria, for all the riches contained within their covers, bear scars of those constraints and as such must be seen not, as claimed by the editors of the first series, as documents which unequivocally 'bring out the development of the Queen's character and disposition'[7] but rather as products of the industry and perspective of their age.

[7] Arthur Benson and Viscount Esher, Letters of Queen Victoria (1837-1861), London, John Murray, vol. I, (1907, p.vii), 1908, p. iv.

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