

ELEVEN

Kaiserliche und Königliche Hoheit Marie, Herzogin von Sachsen-Coburg und Gotha

Coburg and Gotha – Three Weddings and a Funeral – Tsar Nikolai II – ‘He has slept away!’ – The Queen is Dead

1893 to 1901

~ Coburg and Gotha ~

The medieval town of Coburg lies almost in the centre of Germany, virtually equidistant from the three points of a triangle formed by Gotha fifty miles to the north, Bayreuth forty miles to the southeast, and Bad Kissingen forty miles to the west. It is situated on a rising spur with wide valleys on either side, and the railway enters on the eastern edge of the town parallel to the Itz river (a tributary of the Main) flowing between the line and the town.

Coburg grew organically around two central squares: the medieval market place and the later *Schlossplatz* northeast of it. The market place was chosen as the location for the 1865 Albert Memorial, sculpted by Londoner William Theed ‘the Younger’. Below this square lies the late medieval *Rathaus* and early modern *Gymnasium*, north of which is the Morizkirche. To the north of the church lies the vast Ehrenburg, converted from a Benedictine monastic site in 1547, whose open courtyard faces out onto the vast Schloss-Platz, chosen as the location for the statue of Ernst I by the Munich-based sculptor Franz Schwanthaler. Opposite the Ehrenburg, on the other side of the square, stands the *Hoftheater*, and opposite this, on the way to Rosenau, the Palais Edinburgh. Marie may have taken some time to adjust to Coburg court life, but with the town itself there was no such delay. ‘Coburg, from the first day of my arrival, made a charming impression on me’, she wrote in the summer of 1874, ‘and I am almost sure I will like this place very much. The pretty old German town, the goodnatured people ... all seemed to me a good beginning for our new German home’.¹

Gotha, also medieval but perhaps a century older than Coburg, lies on the northern edge of the Thuringian forest. It also boasts a medieval *Rathaus*, a *Gymnasium*, and the Margarethenkirche, all older than their Coburg cousins. The ducal palace (the official winter residence) was the Schloss Friedenstein, a seventeenth-century pile erected on the *Schlossberg* just outside the town, replacing an earlier palace that had burnt down. And then of course there was the nearby Schloss Reinhardsbrunn, with which Marie was ‘quite enchanted’.²

Gotha was celebrated as the home of the publisher of the *Almanach de Gotha*, but more recently it had acquired fame of a very different kind. From 22 to 27 May 1875, the Eisenachers and the Lassalleans (the Social Democratic Workers’ Party and the General German Workers’ Association) had held a conference there to combine as the Socialist Workers’ Party, demanding a democratic political system in Germany through legal, non-violent means. Ironically, then, the movement that would eventually annihilate Marie’s status in Germany and effectively oblige her to leave the country had its political origins in her own duchy.

The Edinburgh family met at Coburg in December 1893 for a traditional German Christmas. All the children were there, including Missy who by now had a baby son with her. In the New Year, Missy returned to Romania as the rest of the family prepared for the grand entrance into the Gotha *Bahnhof* (a major railway junction), and it was there on the afternoon of Wednesday 31 January 1894 that Affie and Marie formally arrived to succeed to the duchy, and where the welcoming celebrations were suitably lavish. All the public and private buildings through which the ducal couple would process had been decorated and lined with triumphal arches designed by the best-known Gotha architect, Hugo Mairich, who was there to greet them.

An interesting exercise in musical diplomacy was played as they entered the station. 'God Save the Queen' had become the official national anthem of the Second Reich, with the words 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz' by Heinrich Harries in place of the English original. However, on this occasion, the words had been modified to 'Heil Dir, O Königssohn' for Affie's benefit. Also modified were the words to Josef Haydn's Austrian anthem *Kaiserhymne*, whose original text beginning 'Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser' had been changed for use in Germany by Hoffmann von Fallersleben to 'Deutschland, Deutschland über alles' from a medieval poem by Walther von der Vogelweide. This had become Germany's unofficial anthem, but it was considered impolitic to sing it with these words in front of Affie, so they were altered to 'Deutschen Herzens, deutschen Sinnes'.

The Gotha burgomeister, Otto Liebtrau, who was also president of the *Gothaischen Landtags*, welcomed Affie and Marie with a dignified, if pompous and conventional, address to which Affie responded with a dignity and colour worthy of it. The couple then processed to Schloss Friedenstein to prepare for the further celebrations to be held in the evening. These included a torchlight procession by the public, and full illumination of the town throughout the night, achieved not only with torchlight and gaslight but also electric lighting, recently introduced to run the first Gotha electrified trams scheduled to start service in May. Affie was also given an address of thanks from the not insubstantial English community of the duchy for having begun the refurbishment of the English chapel in the garden of Friedenstein – completed in the following year – in which an Anglican chaplain would be permanently installed.

Gotha was the musical capital of the duchy. Ernst I had built his new *Hoftheater* in 1840, inaugurated with a performance of Meyerbeer's grand historical five-act opera *Robert le diable*. Fourteen years later, Liszt conducted Ernst II's chorale *Santa Chiara* there, and the same year witnessed a performance of *Tannhäuser* less than nine years after its Dresden début – a short time considering the difficulty of staging Wagner, and the general opprobrium then still attached to his name. The *Schlosskirche*, whose consecration in 1646 was the prelude to seven days of music-making in Gotha, supported a choral music school. Two local choirs were amalgamated in 1875 to form the *Wanderslebscher Gesangverein*, a noted choral ensemble able enough to undertake national tours.

In recognisance of this and the ducal couple's passion and talent for music, a quantity of musical tributes were composed for Affie and Marie on their accession, all of it performed at the *Hoftheater* in Gotha, conducted by Heinrich von Ruxleben, who was also the ducal *Oberhofmarschall* at Gotha. Affie was already an honorary general in the 84th 'Kaiserlich und Königlich' Prussian infantry regiment (less formally known in his honour as the 'Herzog Alfred von Sachsen-Coburg und Gotha'), whose bandmaster was the noted Czech composer Karel Komzák, many of whose marshal pieces were written for Affie and performed on his arrival. Andreas Trommer, a minor local musician, wrote a *Herzog Alfred Marsch* for the accession celebrations.

Edmund Kleinstuber, principal staff oboist in the 95th Thuringian infantry regiment, attempted to compose an official hymn for Affie that began with the somewhat sententious words 'Hail, duke, to you; hail duke to you, / for you, our ruler, we cheer'. Understandably, perhaps, the hymn never became popular, and Affie's immeasurably superior *Galatea Valse* became, in practice, the ducal 'hymn without words'. Kleinstuber also composed another *Herzog Alfred Marsch*, and also a *Herzogin Marie Marsch*, which were both rather more successful than his hymn.

There were musical tributes from England as well. Maude Benham wrote a *Grand March Militaire* in the autumn of 1893 that was 'most respectfully dedicated' to Affie and published in London in the following spring. It enjoyed considerable popularity, being performed by George Mount in one of the Royal Amateur Orchestral Society concerts (the A.O.S. had been granted a royal charter in 1880), and by August Manns at one of his popular Saturday afternoon Crystal Palace Band performances. It was also conducted by Arditì to mark the twentieth anniversary of his having conducted at Affie and Marie's wedding. Another tribute came from fellow orchestral violinist and composer (and Edinburgh-born) Alexander Mackenzie, since 1888 principal at the Royal Academy of Music. His orchestral overture *Britannia*, subtitled 'A Nautical Overture', was dedicated to Affie and first performed before him and Marie at the *Hoftheater* in 1895, after its London première but prior to publication.

In one of Missy's characteristically absurd statements, she turned Marie into an imperious caricature of Offenbach's *La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein*:

Mamma found real independence at Coburg; there she was sole arbiter of her own fate, no tribunal sat over her, weighing all she did or left undone. There she was her own mistress; it was a small kingdom perhaps, but her will was undiscussed, she took her orders from no one, and could live as she wished.³

However, the former constitutional ducal structure altered under Wilhelmine autocracy only in so far as Affie and Marie became increasingly answerable to the emperor rather than to the ducal diet. Meanwhile, the diet had become increasingly subject to the autocratic centralization of authority imposed by Wilhelm after his dismissal of Bismarck in 1890.

The duties of a reigning duke and duchess were, by 1893, therefore little more than theatrical in practice, even if the theory was still questionable and often questioned. The 1871 imperial constitution was entirely Prusso-centric, finally and for all time eliminating independent action by any ruling Germanic prince. The structure was in theory a simple one: one prince, one minister of state (*Staatsminister*), two diets (*Landtag*) and two administrations (including four prefects, three rural and seven urban commissioners), each with its own president. Originally, Gotha had been represented by nineteen deputies and Coburg by eleven, out of which a combined diet of twenty-one members (seven from Coburg and fourteen from Gotha) met for decisions affecting the combined duchies. An alteration in 1873 meant that all thirty deputies would subsequently meet for such purposes. Members of both diets were elected every four years by universal male suffrage of those taxpayers aged twenty-five years and upwards. The combined duchy had one vote in the Imperial Federal Council (*Bundesrat*), sending two representatives (one from Gotha and one from Coburg) to the Imperial Diet (*Reichstag*).

Affie's duties were therefore twofold: to administer the finances of the duchy – a matter in practice delegated to the diet and civic functionaries ever since the scandal with Ernst II – and to express loyalty to Berlin through public pomp and circumstance. No decision of the reigning prince could be put into effect without ministerial sanction. The annual civil list was fixed at the sterling equivalent of

£15,000, but Affie also had the right to half the income accrued from the Coburg and Gotha crown land revenue – which Ernst I and Ernst II had built up – after a tax on this, payable to the Wilhelmine state.

Affie of course reckoned matters somewhat differently at first, before his succession. Flexing his muscles in order to impress his mother, he rather sententiously and naïvely wrote Queen Victoria that ‘with regard to the method of government I have distinctly given them [the *Coburgische und Gothaische Landtage*] to understand that they will only hold their positions so long as they enjoy the confidence of the people as well as myself’.⁴ They were, of course, an elected body.

In theory, however, Affie could dismiss any ducal minister who had breached the law, provided that he went through the correct channels. In practice, this meant complaining to the emperor, who would pass the matter on to his imperial chancellor who would then submit the plea for adjudication by the legal offices of the ministry of the interior. This was not an easy process, as Affie soon discovered. Almost immediately on his succession, he found himself in the middle of a bitter quarrel between Karl Friedrich von Streng, *Staatsminister* at the *Herzoglich Sächsisches Staatsministerium* in Gotha since 1 December 1891, and the combined duchy over the administration of crown land. The struggle lasted for six years before it was agreed to place the entire matter before Affie, who resolved it in the duchy’s favour on 31 January 1900. Meanwhile, a second row had developed in June 1897 when the combined duchies strongly resisted the state’s attempt to have ducal elections reduced from four years to two. There were many other high-profile quarrels during Affie’s time concerning such diverse matters as the setting up of jury courts in Gotha and the reforming of gaming and forestry laws.

Marie’s duties were those expected of any good German *Hausfrau*. In her case, however, the house was a duchy and so it was also her business to keep the ducal family in a state fit to represent the central authority of *Der Kaiser*, and to perhaps also help supervise the *Kultur* of the duchy as the window-dressing of *Der Reich*. The corporations funded by the ducal court managed both the finance and presentation of the ducal theatres, and these were therefore never Marie’s obligations. Nevertheless, even after the accession of Duke Karl, she continued to be an active and influential patron of both theatres, an activity she maintained with interest until the Great War.

Even so, the principal æsthetic business of the duchy was to promote German art, and this it almost invariably did. Italian and French music was occasionally performed, but a more typical musical programme (January 1895) comprised works by Wagner, Händel, Meyerbeer, Emile Waldteufel, and Karl Zeller, who were all essentially Germans (Meyerbeer and Zeller had been born in or near Berlin, while Waldteufel, who was from Alsace-Lorraine, had a mother from Bavaria). Moreover, also included in this programme was *Sang und Ægir* by the emperor himself, a ‘Dichtung und Komposition’ in praise of Ægea, legendary queen of the Amazons. This was available in numerous versions for choirs, orchestra, or accompanied singers, most of them produced by the accomplished court musician Albert Becker.

Shakespeare was staged occasionally, but Schiller and Goethe were the most often performed dramatists. *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*, *Eine romantische Tragödie*, a blank-verse drama with music in which Joan of Arc falls for an Englishman before falling in battle, and *Die Räuber*, a Trauerspiel of the Sturm und Drang school telling the story of two rival brothers, were the Schiller plays most often staged. Goethe’s five-act prose tragedy *Egmont* and the biographical verse play *Torquato Tasso* were Schiller’s principal rivals. Most of the singers and actors were German, with the ducal favourite being the baritone Maximilian Büttner (descended from a celebrated

Thuringian musical family) known for his Wagnerian roles, in particular the town clerk Sixtus Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. The artistic quality was therefore without doubt invariably high, even if some of the performances may have been tainted by provincial inexperience. However, cultural life in Coburg and Gotha was more insular and considerably less cosmopolitan than it had been for Marie in London. Nevertheless, she thought the Coburg theatre ‘good, both opera and plays’, but was disappointed that, like its superior cousin in Gotha, it was seasonable and closed for the entire summer.⁵

The quality of the Coburg theatre company under Marie’s keen eye may be accurately judged from the first tour it undertook outside Germany, visiting London from 17 June to 13 July 1895. It is true that several members from the companies of Kassel and Munich had been called in to support it, but the bulk of the fifty-strong cast was from the duchy, while several members were genuine locals. The company opened the tour with Zeller’s recent highly theatrical Viennese-style three-act operetta *Der Vogelhändler* (1891), which *The Times* on the following day reckoned displayed a standard that was ‘decidedly high’. This light operetta was succeeded by another: Strauss’s evergreen three-act *Die Fledermaus*. A musical version of *Hansel und Gretel* was given on 24 June, followed by a complete contrast five days later with an afternoon performance of *Fidelio*. The last opera performed was Weber’s romantic drama *Der Freischütz*. All these were well received by the press.

Equally well received were the dramatic productions given between the operas and operettas. These were chiefly works by Hermann Sudermann, the leading exponent of the new *Naturalismus* movement. Two of his works were staged, *Die Ehre* (1889) and *Heimat* (1893). The first explored the relations between the occupants of neighbouring apartments in Berlin, one wealthy and the other poor; the second the relationship between an Italian *prima donna* and her German father in a small provincial town in Germany much like Coburg. These two plays were famous, and subsequently Sarah Bernhardt would play Magda in *Heimat*. But, if the Coburg company could not boast a Bernhardt, it nevertheless contained a number of quality artistes such as the sopranos Ilka von Palmay and Virginia Naumann-Gungl, the mezzo-soprano Emanuela Frank, the tenor Gottfried Mahling, and the bass-baritone Richard Richardi, all of whom Marie heard in Coburg. Büttner (Missy’s favourite, apparently) joined the cast for *Hansel und Gretel* and also took parts in *Fidelio* and *Der Freischütz*. Palmay, an undoubted star who had been a hit in *Der Vogelhändler*, would return the following season to take a part in *The Grand Duke*, Gilbert and Sullivan’s last collaboration, which opened at the Savoy Theatre on 7 March 1896. The musical association between Coburg and London was further consolidated on 30 April 1895 when Affie honoured August Manns (naturalized British the previous year) following on from his 70th birthday celebrations (12 March) at the Crystal Palace under the auspices of Sir George Grove. Affie spoke at length on Manns’s contribution to English musical life before bestowing on him the highest Coburg artistic honour for *Kunst und Wissenschaft*.

In one respect, however, Marie’s new life did not change, writing Jennie confessing that she found the formal dinners and society of Coburg as much of a bore as those elsewhere. Because the theatres closed for the summer, her *ennui* was often relieved only by visits from friends and relations, or travelling to see them. In one sense only was Missy’s statement anywhere near the truth: Marie was at least somewhat relieved of the formal constraints imposed on her by being part of the royal society in England; in Coburg and Gotha her free time was indeed her own. She once explained to Jennie how her favourite pastime in Coburg was racing through the countryside on one of her

many pony-traps, astonishing the locals who considered her extraordinarily brave. This is not something she could have done in England, where she was constantly frustrated by the dull routine of Queen Victoria's very pedestrian daily trots. Another habit that amused her, she said, was to actually talk back casually and in a friendly manner to the duchy's inhabitants when they formally greeted her in public (an informality as rare in Germany as in England), thus astonishing them still further.

Whenever conventional society bored Marie, she adapted novel forms of entertainment to suit her social needs. On Malta, she had developed her Saturday afternoon 'naval teas' from the English habit of taking 'five o'clock tea', first made fashionable by the duchess of Bedford in the 1840s. At Gotha, she adapted to German taste the recent English fashion for afternoon dances, incorporating them with 'five o'clock tea' to become the 'tea dance'. Marie may or may not have been the originator of this form of entertainment, but, if not, she was certainly the first to formally transfer this very English habit to the Continent, and for a very sound financial reason.

That formidable *doyenne* of late-Victorian mores and manners known to the world simply as 'A Member of the Aristocracy', had devoted the entire second chapter of her *Party-Giving on Every Scale* (1880) to the afternoon dance. The authoress was especially concerned to detail the art of party-giving where the 'lady' would be 'paying attention' to her expenses, something Affie and Marie were obliged to do for their entire regnal period in Germany. Thus the afternoon dance had become popular with the upwardly mobile middle classes (for whose benefit the 'Member of the Aristocracy' had written her book) since they were less expensive, less formal, and altogether less trouble than evening balls, and no doubt this is why Marie had selected them as the principal social functions in her duchy. Marie's tea dances were held on Sunday or Wednesday afternoons in the garden at Schloss Friedenstein during the winter (weather permitting), or within the forecourt at Schloss Ehrenburg in the summer.

~ Three Weddings and a Funeral ~

Marie was Russian by birth, by disposition, and by inclination. She remained Russian in her heart and soul throughout her life. But above all she was a pragmatist, and the reality of Edinburgh life in the 1890s was that they were no longer Edinburgh but Saxe-Coburg Gotha; they were Germans whether they liked it or not. Had the family remained in England, many of Marie's subsequent actions may have been different.

Unlike Affie, Marie gave considerable thought to their inevitable succession well in advance of Duke Ernst's death. As early as 1881 she was insisting that Affie make himself more familiar with Coburg: 'Alfred would much prefer going to Scotland ... but I think that we positively ought to go every year to Germany, and the sooner Alfred sees it, the better ... he knows that I am very fond of Germany'.⁶ Marie may have admired Germany, but the very sound practical reason for her complaint was that Ernst could die at any time, with Affie finding himself translated to Coburg barely knowing how to find his way around the town.

Quite naturally this also affected the matter of religion, indicating again that Marie was devoid of that irrational religiosity subsequently ascribed to her. All her children had been born into the Anglican faith because she had been at the time duchess of Edinburgh and this had been a clause in the marriage contract; but, as the family progressed towards becoming a German ducal one, and then became such, it was preferable that they should adopt the Lutheran faith. For Affie and Marie, such a conversion no longer made any practical sense, but with the children it was quite another matter. If they did not marry before the accession (and this date was of course not known), they would all be destined to mature and marry in Germany as subjects of the German emperor. All of Marie's children were therefore instructed in Lutheranism at Coburg by a local pastor, gradually confirmed into the faith: Prince Alfred in 1889, Missy and Ducky (together) in 1890, Sandra in 1894, and Baby Bee in 1899.

Marie was certainly deeply involved in this. 'I am nearly always present at their religious instruction and find great pleasure ... in listening to the very good lessons of the old Pastor Müller, whose teaching is thoroughly Christian and not a bit narrow-minded'.⁷ Sandra's confirmation she thought 'a very pretty and touching ceremony'.⁸ Missy recalled Dr Müller as 'a fine old minister, deeply learned and a magnificent preacher', but (and as usual speaking on behalf of her silent sisters) she admitted how inadequate she was to the spiritual task he had set for her:

Our assenting silence led him to believe that we were absorbing all his teachings, whilst in reality he was confusing our conceptions, even to a degree sowing the seeds of doubt in our souls. We venerated him, we admired him, but we never digested his lessons, and I remember how in instinctive self-defence I would allow my brain to become protectingly hazy and safely unreceptive; all unconsciously trying to save my old landmarks, subconsciously understanding that my mind was not yet ready for his deeper teachings which were expounded in a language beyond our years ... We tried to feel and realize the solemnity of the act [confirmation] ... But ... I had the shocked sensation of not having felt the full thrill of its mystic importance.⁹

Marie and Missy were not destined to enjoy a happy relationship for the simple reason that they were fundamentally different in character, satisfying respectively the established traits of the Apollonian and Dionysian. Of a perpetually theatrical nature, Missy's histrionics during and after her marriage coloured subsequent interpretation of Marie's actions before and during her betrothal. In common with all romantics, each of Missy's serial emotional attachments in her life was destined to be brief. As a juvenile, she had met Georgie on Malta and nurtured a crush on him that perhaps he at

twenty-two should have known better than to encourage. A series of impassioned letters followed in which the most embarrassing declarations were made; meanwhile, the self-appointed meddling matchmakers within the British royal family who observed this infatuation between a young naval officer and a pre-pubescent girl set in motion the idea that Georgie might eventually marry Missy.

Georgie himself certainly contemplated the possibility of a future union, but sensibly realizing that he would have to wait a number of years should they both turn out to be serious about it. Alix agreed, taking up that unjust Germanophobic position she shared with Minny that entirely misread Marie's position in Coburg. '*Entre nous*', she wrote her son, 'talking about *her!* [Marie] it is a pity those children shld be entirely brought up as Germans ... [it] is a great pity as after all they are English'.¹⁰ Of course, Marie's children were at this time (1891) no more English as they prepared for the inevitable succession than Alix was Danish while married to the heir to the British throne. Queen Victoria supported her grandson in this prospective union, and Alix's Germanophobia did not spare the queen either, as she wrote Georgie in April 1891:

Well & now about yr Matrimonial prospects ... You are *quite* right to think Grandmamma [Victoria] has gone mad on the subject – & it is too *ridiculous* ... the girl [Missy] being a perfect baby yet – altho Aunt Marie ... does *all* she can to make her *old before her time* ... and what do you say to Aunt Marie having *hurried* on the *two girls* confirmation – & in Germany too so that now they won't *even know* that they have ever been English – particularly as they have been confirmed in the German church.¹¹

This intemperate and confused letter does at least reveal that both mother and son continued to believe that a marriage at this stage would be too soon. There were no formal announcements made, nor any betrothal as might have been arranged had Georgie and Missy been entirely serious; it may be conjectured that they were not.

In the meantime, and probably unknown to Georgie, Missy had met Winston Churchill. She first saw him at Eastwell Park in 1886, but it was not until the following summer on the Isle of Wight that she got to know him better and tried to establish the same juvenile attachment with him over the following two years that she was contriving with Georgie. According to her, Churchill 'admitted his preference for me, declaring before witnesses that when he was grown up he would marry me!'¹² At the same time, she did not conceal that there were other boys (friends of her brother) to whom she had taken an immediate fancy.

There is no doubt that it was largely Marie who arranged what she considered to be a rational union for her irrational daughter with Crown Prince Ferdinand of Romania ('Nando'), Wilhelm II's cousin of the historically more senior but non-ruling Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen branch of the Prussian imperial family. It is possible too that her own experience of romantic love – which had singularly failed to deliver on its early promise – helped prompt her into taking a matriarchal position with the daughter who was showing every indication of becoming a perpetual flirt. In any event, if Missy was indeed as unhappy as she claimed, she did not demonstrate one fraction of the determination to oppose her mother that Marie had exhibited two decades earlier when her own mother had raised objections to a marriage with Affie.

Missy and Nando were engaged in the spring of 1892 at Potsdam, to the consternation of many in England who took a superior view of their nation's European position and were horrified at Missy's translation to what they considered to be a semi-barbarous country. But of course this prejudicial and even xenophobic concentration on the country was to ignore the international status of the royal family

into which Missy was marrying, and no doubt this was more important for Marie than the geographical location of her new home.

Queen Victoria gave her royal assent to the marriage on 27 June, and Nando and Missy were married in the church adjacent to Schloss Hohenzollern at Sigmaringen in the kingdom of Württemberg at 4:30 in the afternoon of Tuesday 10 January 1893. Wilhelm II, the duke of Connaught, and Aleksei appeared as witnesses, with Affie's English chaplain from Gotha performing the Anglican ceremony. On 14 January, Victoria announced her full approval of the proceedings to all 'Foreign Sovereigns and Princes' – eighteen sovereigns, twelve ruling princes, and sixteen ministers or presidents of republics.

The location had been a compromise suggested by Wilhelm, since Marie had wanted the wedding to take place in Coburg while Victoria wished for it to take place at Windsor Castle. Coburg, however, was considered unacceptable to many while the priapic duke still lived and romped there, and the double ceremony that would be required (Nando was of course a Roman Catholic) prevented marriage in St George's Chapel when neither side agreed to give precedence to the other.

Ostensibly, the wedding went well for Missy. Also present were Edward Malet, who had arrived on 25 November/7 December, Ralph Milbanke, who had arrived with Marie, and Charles Hardinge, the British representative at Bucharest. All reported favourably on what they saw, with Malet being particularly unrestrained in what must be the first post-marital expression in Missy's life of the primitive human need among many for the adoration of Disney-style 'beautiful princesses':

I cannot close this despatch without mentioning the effect which the great beauty of the Bride, and the charm of her manner, produced upon all who saw her ... [she] took the hearts of her future countrymen by storm. The ministers and the ladies who had come with the King of Roumania spoke to me in the most rapturous terms ... and said that they were all completely under her fascination.¹³

On 23 January/4 February, Nando and Missy were received as heirs-apparent in Bucharest, and shortly afterwards Marie visited the newlyweds where she found that although Missy 'has naturally some sad moments of homesickness [*Heimweh*]', she 'adores her husband and feels extremely happy in her *intérieur*'.¹⁴

Marie's penultimate remark requires analysis. Naturally, for Missy there was the understandable sorrow of leaving her homeland, England, just as there had been for Marie on leaving Russia when she had married Affie, and as there was for countless thousands who marry foreign nationals. The passages in Missy's memoirs labouring this emotion, as though she alone had ever experienced it, border on the histrionic (and indeed cloyingly hysterical). In them can be read the bitter feeling that she had been rudely thrown out of her homeland to take an almost Disraelian 'leap in the dark' at a young age with a man whom she barely knew. Worse still, underlying this sentiment is the suggestion that Marie had been the chief architect of Missy's leap.

However, some important light can be shed on this subsequent manipulation of Missy's readers' emotions by recalling that Nando was a Roman Catholic. It was immediately clear to those in authority under Gladstone's last administration that Nando's Catholicism would cause some considerable constitutional difficulties under the Act of Settlement (12 & 13 Will. III c.2 [36]) of 1700 and the Succession to the Crown (6 Ann. c.41) of 1706. According to Article IX of the first of these, it was considered 'inconsistent with the safety and welfare of this Protestant Kingdom' that any of its royal heirs should marry 'a Papist' or any foreign person holding communion 'with the See or Church of Rome', or professing 'the Popish religion'. If so, they should be forever excluded utterly from all rights to the government of

Britain and Ireland and its dominions. This was first brought to the attention of Gladstone's administration for serious consideration on 13 September 1892.

One week later, the Foreign Office ventilated its belief that the duchess of Connaught (a Prussian princess by birth) had signed a separate personal renunciation document in addition to the renunciation clause in her marriage treaty. Lord Herschell, lord high chancellor for the second time since 18 August, was consulted as to whether Missy should be obliged to do the same either for herself alone or for herself and her descendants, who were to be raised in the Orthodox Church according to the same principal that had ensured Missy had been raised Anglican in England. Herschell supported the concept of a separate renunciation.

However, both Queen Victoria and Salisbury (ousted from power on 18 August 1892) were initially of the opinion that the marriage treaty alone should contain the renunciation. This was thought particularly necessary since as late as 11 September no papal consent to the marriage had yet been given, but King Karol had made it clear that the marriage would proceed with or without the consent of Rome. A publicly proclaimed renunciation might expedite papal approval, while Salisbury wished to prevent any possibility that Romania and Britain might share the same head of state.

Gladstone was of a different opinion altogether. He wondered whether the Act of Settlement and the Succession to the Crown even applied in this case, as he reasoned to Henry Ponsonby:

You will see that I do not feel absolutely certain of the directive 'must be Protestants' except in the one meaning that they cannot be in communion with the Church of Rome. Is there any other legal sense of the word Protestant than that [of] non-communion? If there is, I should like to know it.¹⁵

For Gladstone, the fact that the Orthodox Church was not in communion with Rome rendered Missy a Protestant. It is inconceivable that Gladstone did not know that the Orthodox Church was also technically not in communion with Canterbury, and it is obvious that Marie's Grand Old Man and idol had contrived this sophism to help her and her family out of a fix..

In a cabinet memorandum (19 October), Gladstone could not see how a separate renunciation in addition to one included within the marriage treaty would make any legal difference to the Act of Settlement, but that if Missy wished she could sign one, with Victoria's permission, provided that the marriage treaty simply made a note to that effect. He thought it would be 'more gracious, becoming, and dignified' that Missy should 'by a spontaneous act surrender her contingent title to the Crown', and he did not therefore agree with the current proposed text to the renunciation clause in the treaty.¹⁶ Victoria now agreed with her prime minister: 'The Queen thinks, with Mr Gladstone, that it would be more graceful if Princess Marie were voluntarily to renounce the Crown ... instead of being ruled out of it. Does such renunciation form part of the treaty or would it be a separate document?'¹⁷

Meanwhile, there was another problem to resolve. On 19 October, having acquainted himself with Gladstone's reasoning, Salisbury had written Ponsonby outlining the problem inherent in the Act of Settlement in that, if Gladstone's interpretation were to be accepted, it excluded Missy and Nando but did not exclude her children if they were indeed to be raised as Orthodox but regarded as Protestants. In other words, the rather obvious potential flaw, or trap, in Gladstone's notion was that if Orthodoxy were made synonymous with Protestantism here and now for the sake of expediency, in the future Missy's children would be similarly legally Protestant and could therefore stand to inherit the Crown of Britain, thus placing a Romanian Orthodox on the throne.

Still motivated by a desire that the two crowns should never be thus conjoined, Salisbury, while now also agreeing that the renunciation should be a purely personal one, believed that Missy should also sign away all future rights for her unborn children. Queen Victoria was of the same view, but another legal question arose as to whether Missy could do this in the name of offspring not yet born. The new lord high chancellor, Lord Halsbury, would adjudicate. In any event, on 8 November, the Foreign Office under Rosebery announced that the renunciation would be by separate document to be merely noted in the treaty.

But this is not what happened. The revised draft of the treaty was completed on 14 November, Article IV confirming any future offspring as Orthodox, with Article V settling the dowry. Article VI blatantly excluded Missy and her offspring from her succession rights in Britain rather than, as agreed, simply stating that a personal document to that effect had been signed. The next revised draft (29 November) removed Article V when it was agreed that the dowry should be resolved by a personal agreement between Queen Victoria and King Karol. The exclusion article remained as the new Article III. When the final draft treaty arrived at Bucharest on 23 November/5 December 1892, with its private arrangement of £6,000 a year to Missy should Nando predecease her (based on the agreement between Affie and Marie), Hardinge was concerned that this would not be binding on any future Romanian government, who could repeal it at will. Article III, however, remained, and it was still in place when final alterations were made to the treaty one week later. Karol gave his royal approval on 2/14 December, and the treaty was signed on the following morning, ratified on 11/23 December with the ratifications exchanged four days later.

Meanwhile, on 10 December 1892, Missy had been obliged to sign her personal declaration whereby after her marriage she would 'renounce for ever all hereditary rights of succession to the Crown and Government of Great Britain and Ireland and the Dominions thereunto belonging, or any part of the same'.¹⁸ Following Halsbury's ruling, Missy's future children were not included, Gladstone's lopsided reasoning not having acquired general conviction. Queen Victoria was furious at what was now considered to be a superfluous and insulting document – everything, in fact, that it had intended to avoid becoming in the treaty, which now made no mention at all of any personal renunciation. There was nothing she could do, as the treaty had already been signed, but Ponsonby wrote to Gladstone's private secretary stating that the separate declaration now 'means nothing ... the Act of Settlement and the Marriage Treaty are quite sufficient to exclude Princess Marie from the throne of G. Britain & Ireland'.¹⁹ From Missy's perspective, it must have appeared as though events were conspiring to rid England of her in no uncertain and ungracious manner. Sympathy here must rest entirely with Missy, but none of this had been her mother's doing.

Marie was again in Romania for the birth of Missy's first child, a son born at the imperial residence at Sinaia on 4/16 October 1893. Before this, she had had a minor quarrel with the Romanian court over the issue of a midwife and physician accoucheur that occasioned a correspondence with Queen Victoria. The queen had wanted Mrs Hill to attend to Missy: 'I had terrible fights with Granny dear about [her] ... but will not give up the admirable one I have already engaged ... instead of the old gossip Granny wants you to have'.²⁰ For their part, the Romanians were insisting on a Romanian court physician, while Marie insisted on engaging her friend Playfair, who graciously agreed to attend in spite of the long journey involved. Since Playfair would be happy to administer chloroform to Missy, whereas the Romanian doctor was not, Victoria (a keen supporter of palliatives during births) raised no objection to this appointment.

Marie remained with Missy for several weeks, passing on to her the benefit of her considerable experience of an event Missy grew to loathe as much as her mother had. Marie persuaded Missy to breast feed her son: '[She] is nursing it entirely herself ... I advised her to go on for about 5 or 6 weeks until she can go about again'.²¹ Marie also became concerned that her daughter was being suffocated by the primitive court etiquette in Romania, replying to a letter in which Missy had revealed that she was at last being allowed to attend entertainments: 'You will teach Uncle that there are in this world *gay young people* ... that the Roumanian constitution will not suffer from your going to balls and even dancing with young officers instead of old ministers'.²²

Marie used her pony-traps either to travel between Coburg and Rosenau or, as she herself put it, to race about for the pleasure of frightening the locals. Official journeys, or those undertaken with the family, whether in the duchy or beyond either it or Germany, were undertaken in what was known as 'Der herzogliche Salonwagen'. This was a stately railway carriage manufactured in 1889 for Ernst II and restructured in 1893 for Affie and Marie. At over thirty feet in length, sporting the new ducal crest on the doors, it was capable of carrying them in style and comfort as far afield as Romania and England. It was in this that Marie had travelled to Sinaia, and it was also in this that Affie and Marie travelled down to Coburg at the beginning of March 1894 for Ducky's wedding.

Ducky's marriage presented Marie with very different problems. The regal grandchild on this occasion was Prince Ernst von Hessen-Darmstadt und bei Rhein ('Ernie'), only surviving son of Alice and Grand Duke Ludwig IV. Ernie and Ducky had met at Balmoral in October 1891, at which time Queen Victoria noticed an affinity between them and began to explore the possibility of a match. Marie did not oppose the idea other than on the grounds that there may be hæmophilia in the Hesse family, a fear dispelled by Sir William Jenner in May 1892. Ernie and Ducky were also first cousins, but, contrary to popular misconception, the Orthodox Church does not absolutely forbid such a marriage, although it does try to discourage it.

The greater problem (and one that Marie recognized) was that between Ernie and Ducky themselves, who were not quite as enthusiastic about their own marriage as were their elders. On 24 September 1893, Victoria wrote Ernie's sister relating Marie's suspicion that he no longer wished the marriage to go ahead, although Ernie himself wrote back to Victoria on 6 October telling her that his clearly only modest enthusiasm had not diminished. So modest was it, in fact, that if it had diminished any further it would have amounted to an abandonment of the betrothal. As it was, this took place on 7 January 1894, and Affie immediately telegraphed Gladstone informing him that Ernie had proposed to Ducky. Two days later, he telegraphed Victoria to say that Ducky had accepted. With Ludwig IV having died two years earlier, Ernie was now able to marry as Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig I. Just two days before the engagement, Marie had written: 'I sincerely hope and trust, that Ducky really cares for him, she seemed quite pleased last time she was here'.²³ It was not indicative of either great enthusiasm by the daughter or a ringing endorsement by the mother.

Now that Duke Ernst and his happy hormones were dead and buried, the wedding could be celebrated at Coburg in the company of most of Europe's royals, including Queen Victoria and of course Emperor Wilhelm. Also present were Dowager Duchess Alexandrine, Princess Beatrice, Liko, Ella, Vova, Miechen, Bertie, Vicky, Missy, Nando, Niki, Minny, the duke of Connaught, Sergei, Pavl, and Ella's youngest sister Princess Alexandra von Hessen-Darmstadt und bei Rhein ('Alik'i'). However, this vast party of international royals had not been planned, and their presence at Coburg for

the wedding rather upset Victoria. Marie, whom the queen wished to blame, went to some pains to explain to her that ‘nearly all of them announced themselves’, pacifying Victoria by explaining that she had installed a new electric lift at the Palais Edinburgh for her benefit: ‘a great help as the staircase is very high and tiring’.²⁴

Queen Victoria arrived on the afternoon of Tuesday 17, bringing with her a bad temper and the Munshi, who was now *persona non grata* in the family for his wilful interference in matters of state. The assembled royalty (one of the largest such assemblages on record) was photographed by a number of professionals and amateurs in the courtyard behind the Palais Edinburgh on the morning of Saturday 21. However, it was Eduard Uhlenhuth, the founder of an optics and photographic business who had been engaged to take many of the royal photographs during the wedding, who took the most notable photographs. A lasting image would be his portrait of Niki and Aiki at the Rosenau on the morning of Friday 20 after their official engagement. There was also now an Orthodox chapel at the Ehrenburg where a moleben was served for Niki’s engagement soon after it had been announced. Niki had arrived at Coburg on Monday 16 April, leaving sixteen days later.

The wedding between Ernie and Ducky was celebrated in the Lutheran ducal chapel on the morning of Wednesday 19 April. Affie refused to allow the Munshi to attend the marriage service, and although he was eventually permitted to watch from the gallery, the queen was not at all amused. Shortly after the wedding, Ernie and Ducky retired to Darmstadt, and the grand royal assembly dispersed. Affie and Marie also left, travelling to England and Clarence House where they would stay for almost three months. At the beginning of July, Marie threw a large party in their former family home for nearly 500 guests. Clarence House could not of course accommodate that many persons, so Marie petitioned Victoria for permission to open up the connection with St James’s Palace for the event. On Monday 11 June, Marie accompanied Affie to the duke and duchess of Connaught at Bagshot Park for Ascot week – Marie’s first visit there for nearly a decade. She was back in Coburg by the middle of July to spend August at Reinhardsbrunn before returning to Coburg.

Christmas 1894 was spent at Coburg as usual, and on 15 January 1895, the family moved up to Gotha for the rest of the winter. On 11 March, Ducky gave birth to a daughter at Darmstadt. Marie had arrived a fortnight earlier following another dispute over the physician accoucheur. This time it was Ernie who insisted on a German doctor and Ducky on an English one. And once again it was Marie who triumphed by engaging Playfair, who seemed to enjoy the sensation of being called to distant lands to perform his duties. In one respect, however, his services were not required. At Marie’s advice, Ducky also nursed her baby herself, ‘with great success’ Marie noted, also describing how Ducky had taken ‘no chloroform and was very brave’.²⁵ Ducky’s father and siblings missed the birth, arriving on 22 March for the early christening, which took place in the chapel at Darmstadt palace. Queen Victoria arrived on 23 April for one week, but by then Marie had already returned to Coburg.

Sandra’s marital union would not present her mother with any difficulties; nor would there be any objections from Victoria, since Sandra’s choice, Prince Ernst von Hohenlohe-Langenburg, was the grandson of her half-sister Feodora von Hohenlohe-Langenburg. Ernst was the long-serving attaché at the German consulate at 9 Carlton House Terrace, and Marie knew him slightly from various diplomatic functions she had attended. Curiously, however, Ernst had never met Sandra in London, and he did not meet her abroad until a Gotha shooting-party at Reinhardsbrunn in the autumn of 1894 where they became immediately romantically attracted to each other. ‘[He] is

really very nice and so well educated and pleasant', wrote Marie on first meeting him less formally. 'I had seen him very little in London and hardly knew him'.²⁶

Marie raised no objections to this sudden attraction; but clearly this was not quite the case with Affie:

If ever there was a case of real love, it is his ... I first remarked then [at Renhardsbrunn] that he was greatly taken by Sandra ... Alfred ... did not think this marriage a very brilliant one for her. But we both agreed that there could not be a nicer young man ... I [asked Sandra] if she thought she could really care for him as much as he does for her. She always says yes and that she thinks him quite charming. He is devoted to her heart and soul ... I think that he is the nicest young man I have met yet.²⁷

Ernst and Sandra were betrothed at the Rosenau on 9 September 1895, with Queen Victoria giving her royal seal of approval on 12 December.

'It is hard parting with my daughters so soon', she wrote wistfully to Jennie prior to the marriage, 'but then lovers will never wait!' When Marie wrote this she was in London, having spent Christmas in Coburg and the end of January in Gotha, arriving in England at the end of February. Unlike with Missy and Ducky, Marie selected and purchased Sandra's trousseau in London where she was also trying to buy something fashionable for herself for the coming coronation of Niki and Aliko in Russia. There was unfortunately no time for Marie to see her old friend as Jennie was ill, while Marie had to return 'to look after all the preparations for the wedding and the many "exalted" persons who will honour us with their presence'. But she again described Ernst and Sandra as 'a very happy pair indeed, he is a most charming man and very *sympathique*: he simply worships her'.²⁸

Ernst and Sandra were married at the ducal chapel in the Ehrenberg on Monday 20 April 1896. The single incident causing remark by the many who witnessed it was the curious fact that Sandra and Baby Bee burst into tears simultaneously during Dr Müller's worthy sermon, while all about had their solemn gazes fixed on the pious man in the pulpit. It was not a bad omen, however, and Ernst and Sandra subsequently lived a largely uneventful and quite contented domestic life together at Schloss Langenburg in the kingdom of Württemberg. For one royal marriage out of four to prove effective for life was as excellent a record as any royal family has been able to concede with honesty.

Prince Alfred had been a difficult child even from a very early age, being petulant and hyperactive with a disturbing tendency towards bullying that worried his mother. These periods of uncontrollable misbehaviour would alternate with periods of unusual gentleness, or even apathy. Tsaritsa Marie, when she first saw Alfred in Russia in 1875, was 'quite astonished at his good temper and excellent behaviour'.²⁹ But a year later, Marie was complaining that a photograph of Alfred had to be abandoned 'for he would not keep quiet one moment, he is getting so lively'.³⁰ But then again one month later: 'Alfred ... [is] as good-natured as he was when quite a baby'.³¹

Unfortunately, these were not the captured moments of extraordinary circumstances but the symptoms of a behavioural disorder that were beginning to establish a regular pattern. Marie naturally welcomed those occasions when Alfred appeared to calm down and pursue his early studies, perhaps indicating that some permanent change had come about. 'It is the boy who is "most improved"', she noted in 1879. 'He is really very sweet now, loses his temper rarely, loves his sisters, and hardly ever teases them'.³² But moments such as these were rare, and over the next decade Alfred showed himself to be increasingly irascible, fickle, and indolent.

Alfred was destined for the dukedom whether he liked it or not; that was the way the world in which he had been born operated, and all the more so in his case as he was an only son. This concerned Duke Ernst as much as it did Affie and Marie, and it was he who appointed Dr Rolfs as Alfred's tutor early in 1883, made known to him at the Eastwell Park 'Servants' Ball' on 22 January, to which he had been invited. It took less than six months for Marie to realize – as Missy correctly recalled – that Rolfs was an abominable man:

I am expecting dreadful scenes there [Coburg], as I have had bad reports of our German tutor ... [who] mismanages our boy ... He has been another thorn in my existence and made himself thoroughly disagreeable ... [to] everybody except the Duke and his wife ... I saw with my usual common sense, how bad his plan [for an] education was and I have been very unhappy about it ... This tutor is a clever man and has taken a firm hold over the Duke ... Now my only hope is that he will be so disgusted with my letter that he will ask to leave ... [he is a] perfectly worthless creature ... Now I am decided either to lure him out of the house, or to have him entirely under my thumb ... to obtain this result, I have to undergo a real martyrdom, but I will win my point and fight till the last for our poor boy's sake, whose happy young life has been made miserable by the mismanagement of his tutor ... they [the children] are all made miserable by this one man.³³

Marie found that although Rolfs could of course resign if persuaded to do so through subterfuge, she had no authority to dismiss him as he had been appointed by Duke Ernst and was ultimately answerable only to him (a point that 'escaped' Missy). Her only alternative was to hope that her severe letter would have some effect, and that if Rolfs were to remain (he was at least an excellent if misguided tutor) he should at least submit to her authority. Two weeks later she was in Coburg and could report her complete success: 'I was brave and had ... a very satisfactory interview with the tutor, who looked very humble and listened to all I had to say ... the Duke took it also much better than I ever expected ... I am rather pleased with myself'.³⁴

From this moment on Rolfs naturally enough improved considerably, although Marie was still reluctant for Alfred to spend much time with him when he was not studying, as she explained in 1884 with still more common sense remarks on where the duties of a future duke lay:

As to little Alfred, I infinitely prefer his going to sea with his Papa, than staying alone here with his tutor ... it was entirely my own idea ... [and] might have some very good results both for father and son ... As to his becoming a sailor, it is quite out of the question: another stay at Coburg and the constant sight of soldiers will quite put all naval ideas out of his head, and Alfred knows perfectly well, that his son is not to make a naval career, it would be quite absurd.³⁵

In January 1886, Marie explained the difficulties of achieving a successful transition to Germany while in England:

At Coburg I want little Alfred at last to have some good tutors and that he will begin a German education that will prepare him for his future position ... Here it is almost impossible to have private tutors at home – the entire education system is completely different from those in the rest of Europe. The category of 'master specialist' does not exist, and for the sake of economy, in schools the same teacher instructs on a number of different subjects. All boys, as wealthy as they are well-bred, enter school from the age of seven or eight and learn remarkably little ... mostly sent away to special schools so that they would be able to pass their entrance examinations for the armed services instead of making them go to college. Living like this in the country, the matter becomes still more complicated, and I am often in despair at the thought of so much precious time being lost for the boy at an age when a coherent system and good tutors would make all the difference, and make intellectual effort easier and less of a chore. Rolfs takes all the trouble in the world with this, but it is not enough.³⁶

Marie was critical of the egalitarian upheaval created in the wake of Forster's Elementary Education Bill of 1870, which over the following decade established the modern method of schooling in England, gradually eradicating private tuition as a major educational force. Although it increased the numbers to be educated, it greatly decreased the quality of that education, thus if Alfred was one day going to succeed as duke of Saxe-Coburg Gotha, it was only sensible that he should do so as a German with a Continental education and not as an Englishman with secondary school learning, no matter what the supposedly privileged status of the school may have been. Marie therefore felt that she had no choice but to leave Alfred in Coburg for such lengthy periods away from herself and his father before the succession.

Rolfs improved still more after meeting Von Truchsess, but Alfred remained the same with both his behaviour and learning skills continuing to be erratic. In August 1887, Marie had to apologize to Lord Randolph Churchill over an incident that had taken place the month before on the Isle of Wight. Alfred ('our turbulent boy') had punched Winston Churchill in the head and knocked him to the ground in the belief that he had been teasing a younger boy. Chivalrous behaviour on the surface perhaps, but Alfred had been quite mistaken, allegedly realizing his error only when it was too late. Marie made him write a letter to Winston 'to enquire after his punched head! What a trouble boys are, to be sure!'³⁷

It matters little whether Alfred was telling the truth or not. The fact that he had immediately resorted to fisticuffs against a boy supposedly his friend before investigating the circumstances revealed a character already very seriously flawed. A year later, Marie again noticed some improvement. 'Our boy is getting on very nicely, and after good studies, enjoys his holy days thoroughly. He is much improved in manners and behaviour'.³⁸ Alfred was by this date fourteen years old; it was an age when in his era and station in society he ought to already have been a gentleman, even if not a scholar. As it was, he was destined to be neither.

In spite of Missy's protestations to the contrary, Alfred took after his father in the matter of intellectual gifts, and what little of these he possessed he rarely displayed. In September 1880, he had written the following letter to Aleksandr II at Tsarskoe Selo after the obsequies for the tsaritsa. It is here given in the original French:

Mon Cher Grand-papa – Je vous souhaite une bonne fête, et vous envoie nos félicitations. Nous espérons que Vous allez bien. Je fait très beau, nous allons très bien, et Baby va sortir aujourd'hui pour la première fois. Nous partons vendredi et nous serons très contents de revoir Papa et Maman. Nous nous sommes bien amusés en Russie et nous Vous remercions beaucoup de toutes Vos bontés pour nous. Mademoiselle Heim me charge de Vous envoyer ses remerciements du beau cadeau que Vous avez en la bonté de lui envoyer. Marie, Ducky, Baby et moi nous Vous embrassons bien.³⁹

Alfred took this letter with him on his return to Coburg and posted it back from the German border. This letter did not fool the tsar, who had had considerable contact with his grandson for some while. 'Alfred even wrote me a letter from the frontier in French', he wrote Marie shortly afterwards, 'it was probably copied from Mademoiselle's original'.⁴⁰ The French grammar of Alfred's letter was good but not as good as Amalie Heim's, suggesting (with all its other infelicities) that he had not been able to even copy out the original correctly. It was a low standard for the time (even for a boy approaching his seventh year) when those boys who were educated were educated at a far higher level than their descendants a century later.

In 1890, Alfred was accepted as a cadet into the 1st Regiment of Prussian Guards at Potsdam, enjoying his last summer in England when Wolseley saw him at Clarence House during what would prove to be his last dinner there. Wolseley too made a point

of remarking that Alfred was ‘immensely improved, and his mother is giving him very good manners’.⁴¹ But a few months later, Marie observed: ‘our boy does not always learn well and has the greatest difficulty in applying himself to his lessons’.⁴²

Two years later, Alfred was able to spend increasingly lengthy periods away from Coburg and his family when he achieved rank. By this time, he was displaying the first symptoms of the disease that would eventually lead to his death. He returned to Coburg in the spring a very sick young man, with a high fever and what in retrospect seems to have been severe inflammation at the mouth of Stensen’s duct (the excretory duct of the parotid gland), indicating the primary stage symptoms of what in his case would be meningovascular neurosyphilis, the same disease that was already killing Lord Randolph Churchill. ‘Dr Rolfs has really looked admirably after him all this time’, Marie observed.⁴³ But Rolfs was not a medical doctor, and even if he had been one there was little he could have done for Alfred in the 1890s.

Queen Victoria invested Alfred with the honours of a Knight of the Garter at Coburg on 23 April 1894 during Ducky’s wedding. It was an unusual action, and on the following day the prince was invested by special statute dispensing him from the customary election and ritual. By the time Alfred reached his majority in 1895, however, he was a virtual stranger to both his parents, although ‘a very fine ball’ was put on in his honour ‘which pleased the people here very much’.⁴⁴ Missy naturally blamed Rolfs and Marie for everything:

[Marie] was never able to talk with Alfred; she thought that severity and religious principles must keep him straight; he found no mercy when he sinned, so he lost confidence in those who might have helped him, and later, when liberated from Dr X and home rule, became secretive, led a double life and made a mess of things.⁴⁵

The straightforward truth that Missy refused to face is that her brother was simply morally, spiritually, and intellectually ill equipped to assume the responsibilities of his hereditary position. His was of course hardly a unique case in the history of male primogeniture whether in business or society. However, unlike many young men who found themselves in a similar position, Alfred chose not to endure the duties thrust upon him but to resist, oppose, and finally to flee from them.

But Missy had been right to recall the existence of a ‘double life’. While at Coburg, Alfred feigned to accommodate the duties that were the price for his privileged life; while at Potsdam, however, he indulged freely in the dissolute lifestyle available to any young officer in the Prussian army. A rumour subsequently spread that he had married an Irish commoner in contravention of the act of parliament by which all descendants of George II required the consent of the reigning monarch in order to marry below the age of twenty-five.⁴⁶ This rumour, however, was not strictly true, having its origins in a spurious claim made by a careless prostitute in a vain attempt to make legitimate a daughter she almost certainly did have by him. No heir apparent to a German dukedom would have been permitted to marry – in ‘secret’ or otherwise – anyone without the consent not only of Queen Victoria but also now the emperor, and Wilhelm II would sooner have abolished the duchy than permit such a thing to happen. By the same token, no minister would have dared to perform such a ceremony. It is possible, however, that the two infantile ‘lovers’ contrived either a pact or a bogus ceremony they considered morally if not legally binding.

Alfred had now joined the great nineteenth-century dissolute army of the diseased and the walking dead that had nothing to do but wait for probable madness and certain death. Alfred developed tertiary-stage (final) symptoms of his disease within six years of acquiring the deadly micro-organism. One of the symptoms of this form of syphilis

is the manifestation of various forms of psychoses, ranging from delusional paranoia to marked sociopathic behaviour, exacerbated in Alfred's case by his already having a serious personality disorder. He was dismissed from his regiment, and matters came to a head during the ducal celebrations for the silver wedding anniversary, which ran from Sunday 22 to Wednesday 25 January 1899 with considerable pomp in Gotha and at which he as sole heir had been expected to play a prominent part. The celebrations began with divine service at the *Schlosskirche* followed by a public serenade and, in the evening, a torchlit procession from Schloss Friedenstein to Gotha featuring 4,000 men and boys leading the ducal couple. Affie delivered a lengthy speech reported in the *Gothaische Zeitung* (23 January): 'The Duchess and I are filled with joy and gratitude by the expressions of loving and loyal devotion ... bestowed on us in such bountiful measure and in such manifold ... forms'.

No member of the family was unaware of Alfred's condition and what had caused it. In spite of Missy's subsequent claim in her memoirs that she knew nothing of his medical problems, in the autumn of 1896 she had written assuring her mother that she would try and talk to Alfred about his various unsavoury habits: 'I am sure I shall find words enough, because I find the whole thing so loathsome'. But she had recognized the impossibility of reforming him while he was part of a young, male, and proudly dissolute society: 'how will one ever be able to do anything as long as those horrible things are ... found quite natural by most, and encouraged'.⁴⁷ For her part, Marie had already witnessed the deterioration of Lord Randolph Churchill at first hand, and so knew precisely what to expect in the case of her son.

Monday 23 January began with the official reception of congratulatory notices, more than fifty in number. Alfred was, however, already quite unbalanced. Locking himself up in a room on the ground floor of the Schloss Friedenstein, he fell silent and refused to leave. Sir Condie Stephen, a former attaché at St Petersburg (1877), chargé d'affaires at Coburg (1893-97), then minister resident at Dresden and Coburg, saw what happened next. According to him, Alfred was seen on Monday (presumably he had not locked himself up for more than a few hours) when two Gotha physicians were called in to examine him. What Stephen was then told (and as he reported to Salisbury on 8 February) was that their decision had been to send the boy to a better climate where he might improve, although everyone, including Stephen on his own admission, had known that Alfred had been very ill for several weeks at least.

Affie and Marie continued with the celebrations, their children and their families also being present. That evening, at six o'clock, there was a state banquet. Two hours later, a procession through the illuminated streets of Gotha led the ducal party to the *Hoftheater* to see a performance of *Hashish*, an opera by Oscar von Chelius first produced in Dresden two years earlier. This was followed by the 'Lustspiel' *Der Küchenjunge*, originally a French farce by the successful duo Adolphe Aderer and Armand Ephraim. Von Ruxleben conducted, everybody laughed, and the concert was proclaimed a great success. 'All went off well today', is how Marie put it in a telegram to Victoria late that afternoon.⁴⁸ Alfred was not present, but he was still in Gotha, perhaps under supervision at the castle. Stephen also acknowledged the general air of gaiety in the duchy: 'the popular rejoicings bore witness to the gratification with which the auspicious anniversary has been hailed in the Duchies'.⁴⁹

On medical advice, then, on the morning of Wednesday 25 January (according to Stephen's diplomatic record), Affie and Marie sent Alfred for what they (but few others, and certainly not Stephen) knew to be emergency treatment at the Klinik Martinsbrunn in Gratsch near Meran, a little under 300 miles south of Gotha. This was a decision to which all nonetheless had agreed – including Lord and Lady

Monson who had shortly before left Germany for England – even if they were unaware of the gravity of Alfred’s condition. Meran was then within the predominantly German-speaking Austro-Hungarian South Tirol, well known to Affie since his favourite hunting lodge was close by. The sanatorium had acquired a high reputation since its foundation in 1891 by Norbert von Kaan, a physician specializing in diseases of the nervous system, although virulent forms of syphilis were still quite untreatable and invariably fatal even in specialized sanatoria. Alfred arrived at Meran in the evening, at about the same time that a state ball was taking place in Gotha.

However, Alfred was not taken directly to the sanatorium but was first placed in Affie’s hunting lodge. Why is unclear, although the lateness of the hour perhaps prevented immediate admission to the sanatorium. A suite of four had accompanied Alfred to the lodge, including Arthur Bankart, who had qualified as a Bachelor of Medicine from Guy’s Hospital and the University of Edinburgh in 1892, appointed surgeon aboard the *Surprise* on 4 November 1896. He and another member became detached from Alfred’s suite early the following morning to make the final arrangements for his formal admission at the Klinik Martinsbrunn, leaving him in the hands of his new tutor and his personal manservant. It was now, in the hunting lodge, on the morning of Thursday 26 that Alfred attempted to take his own life with one of Affie’s hunting rifles, just after the celebrations in Gotha had concluded.

With his mind completely unbalanced (there may also have been a struggle), Alfred failed to aim correctly and succeeded in putting the bullet into his upper chest instead of through his head from below the chin as he had obviously intended. He was not killed outright but nevertheless sustained a mortal wound, and although he was taken immediately to the sanatorium, where Von Kaan and his staff did all that was humanly possible for him, he died there at four o’clock on the afternoon of Monday 6 February. Earlier that same day, Bankart had sent a telegram to Queen Victoria making no mention of the attempted suicide but declaring Alfred to be ‘worse, and that his condition is most critical’.⁵⁰

Affie and Marie were also not informed of their son’s suicide attempt in the lodge on Thursday morning, probably in the vain hope that the gunshot wound had not been fatal. On Thursday afternoon, Affie left Gotha for Berlin to celebrate the kaiser’s fortieth birthday on the following day. No one suspected the seriousness of the situation, and indeed Reuter’s Agency had announced on Friday 3 March that Alfred was suffering from ‘nervous depression’. Finally informed of the gravity of the event, Affie, who had returned from Berlin on Saturday 4 February, decided to leave for Meran on the Sunday afternoon before his son’s death.

Some confusion followed as to whether Affie reached his destination. Reuter’s Agency announced in the German press that Affie was at his son’s bedside by midday Monday, basing this statement on a communication from Von Kaan, publishing it on Monday shortly before Prince Alfred’s death. However, Affie later telegraphed Queen Victoria explaining that he had been about to set out for Meran when he received the news that his son had already died, and he therefore did not go. The likely explanation for this confusion is that Reuter’s got hold of Affie’s plan and assumed that he had carried it out whereas he had not. But why Affie did not eventually go to the clinic when he had plenty of time to do so cannot be answered. In any event, it would have been futile to do so, as by this time his son would have been mentally incapable of appreciating Affie’s presence. However, even so it is not true, as Missy (and others) confidently stated, that her brother ‘died all alone at Meran’.⁵¹

Affie and Marie certainly travelled to Meran on the evening of their son’s death, by the ducal *Salonwagon*, to see their dead son. Marie returned to Gotha shortly

afterwards while Affie remained behind to accompany their son's body back to Germany. At 2:30 in the afternoon of Thursday 9 February, Alfred's body arrived in Coburg with Affie where it remained for one day before moving on to Gotha for the funeral at 10:30 on the following morning, and where Marie received the corpse. Prince Alfred was temporarily interred in the crypt of the *Schlosskirche* at Friedenstern where, according to *The Times*, 'the dead silence in the church' was broken only 'by the three volleys fired by the troops' as the body was lowered into the vault. On 14 October, Alfred's remains were translated to Coburg for permanent burial in the ducal mausoleum at Neuen Friedhof overlooking the town.

Back in England, on Friday 10 February, a special memorial service was held both in the chapel at Osborne House and at the Chapel Royal in St James's Palace. Sullivan, who was very distraught, attended the London service but was unimpressed, at least by the music, finding it 'tame & flabby'.⁵²

The official cause of death as published by the *Gothaische Zeitung* (7 February) was given as 'brain fever' attributed to 'œdema of the lungs' that had brought on 'heart failure'. *The Times* (7 February) printed the Reuter's Agency version given as 'chronic cerebral affection'. It was an absurd deception, and one the family attempted to maintain for decades to come. However, like all deceitful 'family history', its gradual exposure began almost as soon as the risible mendacity had been contrived. These were Marie's 'days of sorrow and trouble',⁵³ but as she had put it herself when commenting on the double suicide of Maria Vetsera and Crown Prince Rudolph of Austria-Hungary at Mayerling on Tuesday 29 January 1889: 'We cannot get over [it]! Has there ever been such a tragedy in a royal family before and accompanied by such painful details and circumstances ... they [the Habsburgs] will probably try to suppress as much of it as possible ... [but] the painful truth must come out at last!'⁵⁴

Immediate comment was made by at least two contemporaries. Queen Victoria was at Cimiez by 14 March where she was accompanied by her maid-of-honour since 1887, Marie Mallet, who in a letter dated 20 March wrote:

Dr [Bankart] from the *Surprise* who was with that unfortunate Prince Alfred when he died has been over here twice [Bankart would be transferred to the *Osborne* on 8 September]. He told the Duke and Duchess of Coburg the boy would not live a week and he died just two hours after the time prophesied. They truly refused to believe it, laughed him to scorn, packed the poor youth off to Meran and now lament and weep at his having died quite alone. It appears the end was paralysis of the larynx caused by the state of the brain, which in its turn was the result of the terrible fast life he had led in Berlin from the time he was 17 ... How strange Royalties are, their children seem to lack the ordinary care bestowed on our own humblest middle class.⁵⁵

Enough has been revealed about Affie and Marie for fair judgement to contradict Mallet's passage where their characters are concerned, and also the circumstances surrounding Alfred's departure for Meran. Bankart's comments, if relayed accurately, suggest jealousy at having been excluded from the decision reached by the two Gotha physicians. But it is also only fair to recall Marie's distrust of English doctors in general and naval surgeons in particular. Certainly Bankart was correct to state that Alfred would have died at Gotha sooner or later, but who can blame his parents for undertaking a final, desperate attempt at a cure in a celebrated clinic?

Lady Walburga Paget, whose aristocratic German connections supersede those of a middle-class English servant, made a more perceptive comment in her diary on 20 May: '[Prince Alfred] was a young man who led a very wild life; he was very ill and full of debts. It was said at the time that he shot himself'.⁵⁶ It was as simple as that.

~ Tsar Nikolai II ~

Aleksandr III died at Livadia on 20 October/1 November 1894 after a long illness. One of Marie's other brothers had telegraphed her in late October advising her to come immediately as Sasha's health was failing rapidly. She of course did so:

I was terribly upset by his change: he still pressed my hand and I told him how pleased I was to see him ... He then said "I am tired" and we left the room ... but about 2 they fetched us again, saying that he was dying ... He was sitting in an armchair and looked so peaceful ... as if he was asleep.⁵⁷

Two days later, Marie left Livadia for St Petersburg and the funeral accompanied by Bertie and Alix, who had arrived the day before having left London on 30 October but not managing to reach the tsar before he died. Affie arrived at St Petersburg on 3/15 November, and four days later Aleksandr III was interred at the cathedral fortress of SS Peter & Paul. Affie and Marie did not remain in Russia for longer than a fortnight, returning to Coburg on Friday 30.

Punch did not mourn Aleksandr personally, but it had appreciated his pacific foreign policy, particularly in resisting calls for military intervention against first Sandro and then Stambolov in Bulgaria. Nine days after his death, Tenniel published 'The Chief Mourner' showing the personification of 'Peace' weeping at his deathbed, although the tsar had expired in his favourite armchair, having been unable to breathe in bed. There had been an ulterior motive for Bertie's presence at the funeral. Lord Rosebery had replaced Gladstone in March 1894 on the Grand Old Man's retirement, and he had given Bertie instructions to try and create an atmosphere of Anglo-Russian accord with the new tsar. Rosebery was pleased with the result when Bertie returned to London in December. So too was Mr Punch: 'Well, Sir, and what found you in Muscovy?' he asked in Sambourne's 'Love's Labour Not Lost' of 15 December. 'Nothing but Peace and gentle visitation' Bertie replied, quoting Shakespeare.

Mr Punch was now more concerned by the actions of Turkey, where Kurds aided by Turkish troops were pursuing a policy of effective genocide against Armenians within the Ottoman empire. As on previous occasions, indigenous ethnic Christians were revolting against local conditions as well as the corrupt and oppressive rule of the sultan, sporadically since the Treaty of Berlin but more concertedly after the summer of 1894, and 'Abdul-Hamid, stimulated by an excessive fear of losing still more of his Ottoman heritage to yet another independent nation, reacted with his customary combination of ferocity and wilful ignorance. A remonstrance to him from Britain under Rosebery led to a commission of enquiry consisting of delegates from Britain in concert with the Dual Alliance of France and Russia in December. Some in Rosebery's cabinet had wished for more direct action, but Rosebery insisted that Russia should not be slighted by its not being involved in a diplomatic measure.

On 4 December, the leader of *The Times* had pointed out that Turkey's actions were contrary to Article LXI of the Treaty of Berlin. This obliged the Porte to carry out 'without further delay' all reforms demanded by 'local requirements in the provinces inhabited by the Armenians'; this it had signally failed to do. Furthermore, the Article obliged the Turks to 'guarantee their security against the Circassians and Kurds'; yet from June to August, Turks and Kurds had combined to massacre Armenians. This prompted Tenniel's 'An Old Offender' of 15 December, in which Europa looked on at 'Abdul-Hamid while clutching a report labelled 'Armenian Atrocities', pointing behind her at a sword marked 'Treaty of Berlin'. 'Again!' she

expostulated, 'but this time I have a weapon at hand!' But the weapon was less easy to employ effectively than it was to cite dramatically.

In many ways the situation paralleled the Bulgarian Atrocities of the 1870s. Gladstone, now genuinely the Grand Old Man, made the appropriate noises again, while the ageing dukes of Westminster and Argyll added to the brouhaha with a series of furious debates at St James's Hall commencing on 7 May 1895. *The Times* might have mentioned the fact that the Turkish action (or inaction) was also contrary to Article I of the Convention of Cyprus, which guaranteed British military support for Turkey in the event of Russian aggression, conditional on further reforms respecting the remaining Christian subjects of the Sublime Porte, such as the Armenians. Unfortunately, there were no provisions in the convention for putting this into practice unilaterally, and neither Russia nor Germany was willing to push the British Liberal cause any further than mild diplomatic persuasion.

For Russia, the Armenian revolt, if successful, placed before it the spectre of a second Bulgaria – another bulwark against potential interests in the Balkans. Furthermore, the Armenians were not in communion with the Moscow patriarchate. Although the first community to embrace Christianity, the Armenian Church was autocephalous and Monophysitic, adhering to the heterodox view (in the eyes of the orthodox) of a single Divine nature in Christ. For Germany, the issue was more political and far-reaching. Bismarck had never been appreciably concerned with the Eastern Question, but it was otherwise with Kaiser Wilhelm who had first visited 'Abdul-Hamid at Constantinople from 2 to 6 November 1889, declaring himself the sultan's best friend – he would do so again nine years later, actions that would have favourable consequences for him during the Great War.

Rosebery resigned in June 1895 following a censure of Henry Campbell-Bannerman, his secretary of state for war, for not having procured enough cordite for the armed forces. This was an unjust censure, as cordite had been invented as recently as 1889 and not proven successful following extensive field trials until 1892. However, Campbell-Bannerman had also procured the compulsory retirement of the ageing duke of Cambridge as commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The duke had been a reactionary militarist for Liberals as well as a destructive anachronism for progressive army men such as Wolseley; but he was a popular man for 'Private Tommy Atkins' and much of the country. Campbell-Bannerman had also effectively blocked Queen Victoria's choice of the duke of Connaught to take his place in order to prevent Wolseley from succeeding to the highest military office, thus ensuring for Rosebery's weak coalition administration the opposition of both the nation and the queen.

A general election returned Salisbury to office in July with a substantial majority. But Salisbury's subsequent determination for unilateral British action against Turkey over Armenia was undermined by his military advisers who, in a reversal of former transcendental logic, reckoned that such a measure would prompt Russia to attack India. Little was therefore actually done, and the desperate pleas of the Armenians – including the deliberately conspicuous assault on the Ottoman Bank at Constantinople on 26 August 1896 – fell on ears deafened by the roar of their posturing owners' verbal condemnations.

On 4/16 November 1895, Niki officially announced both the death of his father and his succession to the imperial throne of Russia to Queen Victoria in a *pro forma* message that also included the standard desire to improve Anglo-Russian relations. In the following month, Victoria replied: 'I beg you to be fully persuaded that on my part nothing shall be omitted which can strengthen and improve the relations of friendship

which now so happily subsist between the two Crowns; and to which I attach the highest value'.⁵⁸

Punch, on the other hand, was beginning to suspect it had been in error over Nikolai II. According to Marie's cousin Grand Duke Aleksandr Mikhailovich, on the day Aleksandr III died, Niki had confessed that he was not prepared for tsardom, that he had never wanted to become a tsar, knew nothing of the business of ruling, and that he did not even know how to talk to ministers. This would prove true enough, and it was hardly the result of momentary shock. On 17/29 January 1895, Nikolai substituted bombast and authoritarianism for policy in a speech at the Winter Palace that included the line 'I intend to protect the principle of autocracy as firmly and unswervingly as did my late and never-to-be-forgotten father', as *The Times* put it (31 January). On 9 February, Sambourne published 'Voici le Sabre de Mon Père!' in which Nikolai rattled a sabre marked 'Autocracy', and described the scene in verse:

He lifts his sire's great sword,
This youthful heir to power supreme, by freemen much abhorred,
But dear to bowing myriads of Slavdom's loyal hosts;
And with that calm cold dignity which despotism boasts
Establishes the Ego of Autocracy once more.

Amnesty means not Liberty. Autocracy is clear
In 'firmly and unswervingly', with strength that does not tire,
Holding the mastery of its race, the Sabre of its Sire!

But Niki was not yet an emperor crowned ritualistically in the sight of God. Marie and all her children other than Sandra attended the coronation of Nikolai II at the Kremlin in Moscow on 14/26 May 1896. She remained in Russia for a little over three weeks. Also present was the *Lumière Cinématographie* from Paris who shot seven 60-foot reels of the coronation. The first film shot in Russia, it is also the only moving image of Marie in existence.

Niki and Marie had never been particularly close, and their few meetings prior to the coronation were conducted in an atmosphere that was cordial at best. When Niki was an adolescent, Marie had found him to be 'a very nice boy, clever, bright and takes a great interest in everything, he is besides a passionate soldier and serves now in the hussars of the guards'.⁵⁹ But he was no chrysalis tsar. As for Aliki, she had opposed Ducky's marriage to her brother – not from any prescience on her part but as a result of the jealousy caused by his removal from her control. Although they did not yet openly state it in public, most Romanov family members appreciated that Nikolai II was a very different tsar from his father, and in many respects a good deal worse. Timorous, vacillating, and emotionally self-obsessed, Niki may have succeeded in a family banking firm, but he was singularly ill suited to assume control of a vast empire. Aleksandr III had taken the tsardom in a morally and politically indefensible direction, but at least he had been endowed with the ability to achieve his policies. Nikolai II had few original ideas of his own, allowing the tsardom to drift like a rusting hulk in a still sea, pushed and pulled every which way by those aspiring to control it, be they courtly sycophants or subversive opposition.

The calamity that took place at Khodinka field outside Moscow on 18/30 May was not so much an ill omen in the portentous sense as an example of the new tsar's inability to take control of events. At least 1,389 persons (the official figure, although some placed it as high as 5,000) out of half a million were crushed to death in a

general stampede for free food and drink to mark the coronation. Nikolai had not shown up as promised, and the impatient crowd had surged towards the kiosks where souvenirs were being given out ahead of time, with the result that boarding covering underground cisterns gave way beneath their feet. Nikolai was certainly misinformed as to the seriousness of the incident, as steps were immediately taken to deceive everyone – the cinematographers from Paris had been there and shot three reels of the disaster before being arrested and having their exposed films confiscated. Nikolai therefore commanded that the general celebrations should continue. His greater error was is not visiting the site of the tragedy, thus earning for himself at the outset of his reign a callous reputation and the epithet ‘Nikolai the Bloody’. To be sure, the decision to formally abandon the coronation festivities would have been a monumental one, and for all he knew also unnecessary. But it would have been the right decision for Nikolai to have made no matter what the truth of the incident, and both his grandfather and even his father would have determined for themselves the true extent of the tragedy by visiting Khodinka field before taking the appropriate action. Nikolai was not so much callous as simply incapable of making such a dramatic decision that was wholly outside the well defined and narrow parameters of his experience and tsarist tradition.

After the coronation, Marie and most of the imperial family spent their days in and around Illinskoe with Sergei and Ella. Marie had performed her family duty, but she was by now quite detached from tsarist rule, which she had seen decline from progressive liberalism through reactionism to a virtual farce. Her detachment was clearly evident in a letter written to Dowager Duchess Alexandrine:

[We have] thirty people every day at table, since Sergei loves to have plenty of people around him, in addition to which a number of Preobrazhenski officers are strutting about at the moment. Still, his idea was basically sound – he wanted to arrange for the Emperor a society that reminded him a little of his bachelor days. Their Majesties almost do not have a suite: the little Bariatinskaia as a maid-of-honour and the not-very-interesting General Hesse (who makes up our whist party each evening).

My son is also here for a few days, but he has to leave on Thursday, to his great regret. The youngsters are constantly amusing themselves – when not group riding, it’s lawn tennis, communal bathing in the river, boating trips, and noisy little games in the evenings. They disturb me as well, because they insist that I play double duets in this great heat – I, who practically no longer touch the piano.

It is all very tiring, I assure you, and I am suffering a little after the tranquillity of Coburg! Happily, the great heat has been replaced by a more agreeable temperature ... The lilacs are finished, but the lilies-of-the-valley are still flourishing and the woods are all white with them – I have never seen the like before! The Emperor appears to be content here, he relaxes and does what he pleases. He also carries himself well now and his pallor has returned to normal, since he scarcely becomes tanned after all the open-air bathing. The young sovereign – well, she rides her horse but moves little! ... Ducky is still here, and Missy lodged for the second time with the Yusupovs at Arkangelsk.⁶⁰

In his diaries, Nikolai concurred with Marie on a number of points:

What indescribable joy to arrive in this lovely tranquil place! [26 May/7 June] ... it is now possible to live for oneself ... it was sultry all day [27 May/8 June] ... We all had luncheon together, there were almost 30 people ... we picked lilac and lily-of-the-valley [28 May/9 June] ... I am delighted that Alix [Aliko] has taken up riding again [31 May/12 June] ... we had to go over to the theatre at Archangelskoe for 9 o’clock [1/13 June].⁶¹

The difference in characters is evident. Whereas Marie’s view of these events was suggestive of a detached observer rather than a participant, the tsar placed himself in the centre of them, becoming the nucleus of his own little world.

Political tension in Central Asia had not ended with the resolution of the Bulgarian Question. Russian expansion continued under the still uncrowned tsar with the occupation of Pamir bordering onto the north face of the Hindu Kush mountain range in early 1895, leading to an agreement with Britain in March respecting spheres of influence. Britain, meanwhile, had expanded northwards in India, occupying the province of Peshawar in 1891. Effective occupation of the small frontier state of Chitral bordering onto the south face of the Hindu Kush mountain range was achieved by August 1895. This followed a lengthy civil war waged by a succession of local Mehtars against the pro-British maharajah of Kashmir, who thereby threatened British influence in the region.

By achieving this occupation, Britain established a protectorate between the Indian Ocean and China, which Russia would now have to penetrate if it wished to pursue its alleged course into India. An apparent stalemate ensued that would not be finally resolved until the major Convention of August 1907 relating to Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet, bringing to an end several decades of fear and tension in Central Asia. Tenniel, conscious of the polite stalemate, continued to promote Nikolai as a pacific tsar in foreign affairs. On 30 May 1896, in 'A Coronation Greeting', his personification of 'Peace' said to him: 'I was your father's friend – let me be yours'.

One English politician who had not often succumbed to the 'national and royal obsession', and now made this public, was Salisbury. The almost immediate amelioration of the historic tension between Russian and Britain owed a great deal to the new premier and foreign secretary now heading his third administration. Salisbury was aware that Ottoman independence was one granted and maintained by the powers; and what they had given they could take away. Publicly, he occasionally reiterated Britain's adherence to treaty laws, but privately he came to question the usefulness of observing them.

In August 1895, at Cowes on the Isle of Wight, Kaiser Wilhelm had approached Salisbury with his own ideas as to how Turkey should be partitioned in the event of a collapse, but to the kaiser's chagrin his proposals were ignored. On 31 August 1896, Salisbury reckoned that to establish relations with Russia as had existed before the Crimean War was 'an object to be wished for and approached as opportunity offers'.⁶²

The opportunity soon presented itself. Tsar Nikolai spent two weeks at Balmoral from 22 September 1896 as part of a lengthy foreign tour with Aliko, and on Sunday 27, and again on Tuesday 29, Salisbury talked with him for over an hour on a number of topics. The tsar wished to be 'on the best terms with us', Queen Victoria noted in her journal on Monday. 'He had disclaimed in the strongest manner any unfriendly intentions against India'.⁶³ On 3 October, Tenniel published 'Blessed are the Peacemakers' in which the tsar cordially kissed Victoria's hand at Balmoral. Salisbury also reciprocated the offer the tsar's great-grandfather had once made to Hamilton Seymour: should the Ottoman empire disintegrate, Russia and Britain should enter negotiations to partition the spoils. But Nikolai II was not Nikolai I, and the 'Blessed Peacemaker' politely refused Salisbury's extraordinary offer because he claimed it would lead to a general European war.

However, the true reason for the refusal and the exact reversal of the *status quo* as it had existed fifty years earlier is not difficult to identify. Nikolai's 'pacific foreign policy' was nothing more than political inertia, and he extended the same courtesy to Turkey as he did to France now that he was a reluctant member of the tri-partite commission set up to put pressure on the sultan. Sambourne had already commented on this on 29 February in 'Nurse Bruin', in which the former 'rugged Russian bear' was dressed as a nurse looking after the interests of an undersized sultan, declaring:

‘What a spirit he has! Dear little chap! Interfere with him indeed; not while his old Nana is here’. By 17 October, Mr Punch had had enough, noting a clever and highly ambiguous exchange ‘At the Albert Club’:

First Member. Me and my Missus ran over to Paris to see the CZAR, and –
Second Member (who means business). ‘Ere, ‘Arry, drop the CZAR and let’s come to the Seizervitch!

Nikolai II had visited Paris immediately after Balmoral (5 to 9 October), donating the huge sum of 100,000 francs to various charities in an act of conspicuous munificence intended to ameliorate any French opposition to the Franco-Russian alliance. On 27 June 1897, President Félix Faure was invited to Russia, arriving at Kronstadt on 23 August and returning to Paris on the last day of the month, bringing with him the final confirmation of the financial and political alliance.

This alliance had not been popular in England. On 11 September, Tenniel published ‘Poor Relations’, in which Alsace and Lorraine personified as young country girls in regional costumes approached Faure on his return to France. ‘Bon Jour, M’sieu le President’, they asked in unison, ‘You have surely brought back something for us from Russia?’ Alsace-Lorraine had been hoping for Russian pressure to be put on Berlin for the return of these provinces to France, but nothing had been done. ‘Well – h’m – I’m afraid – er’, stammered Faure, turning aside and continuing: ‘Very awkward these troublesome people turning up – and at such a moment, too!’

Mr Punch’s exchange at the ‘Albert Club’ had been intended as a comment on the financial bias now evident in France. On 27 November, Sambourne published ‘Sentiment v. Business’, in which John Bull raised his hat to the French Republic (personified as a scruffy peasant-girl) gently saying: ‘Is it not strange, my dear Madam, that while *he* [the tsar], who only takes 9,000,000 francs of your produce, should be your bosom friend, I, who buy *sixty* times as much, get nothing but abuse!’ Francophiles in England must have remembered with moistened eyes the heady days of the *entente cordiale* under Napoleon III – a situation that would not be repeated until 1905.

Salisbury’s reversal of opinion as evinced by his offer to Nikolai resulted from his desire to arrange a new diplomatic structure for Britain in the Europe of the 1890s, at a time when Germany was putting pressure on the Foreign Office to join the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy. At his Guildhall speech of 9 November 1896, Salisbury had referred to the ‘superstition of antiquated diplomacy’ that had fraudulently maintained a culture of Anglo-Russian hostility for half a century, as *The Times* reported it (10 November). More was to come in the House of Lords on 19 January 1897, when Salisbury admitted that both he and Disraeli had been backing the wrong horse in the 1870s. It was a seminal moment in the long history of British support for Turkey, and Salisbury went further still by castigating his own country for not accepting Nikolai I’s offer of 1853. Salisbury was anticipating the inevitable collapse of Turkey, and removing British responsibility from an area in which he was coming to believe Britain no longer had vital interest. However, he was nonetheless keen not to encourage Russia in a potentially false conviction, and two months after the ‘wrong horse’ speech, he reminded their Lordships that to abandon Turkey would be to ‘disregard the solemn signature of England with regard to one of the most important treaties of the century’.⁶⁴

Russia and Britain again became involved together as a result of the Græco-Turkish War of 1897, originating in the desire by the Greek inhabitants of Crete to formally

unite with Greece and using the recent history of Bulgaria and the courage of the Armenians as models. Such attempts had been frequent since the 1860s, but, on 24 May 1896, Turkish soldiers retaliated by massacring unarmed Christians in Khaniá on the northern coast of Crete. In the following February, mainland Greeks landed on Crete while nationalist forces conducted raids across the border with Turkey. The three powers – France, Russia, and Britain – intervened on 2 March to isolate Crete by offering it autonomy under Turkish suzerainty provided mainland Greek forces left within six days, a proposal that was rejected two days later. The Greek army was mobilized on 15 March, and, on 5 April, the powers declared that the aggressor on the Græco-Turkish border would be held responsible. Twelve days later, Turkey declared war with immediate action following an attack by the Greek army in Macedonia.

The Greek army was outclassed from the beginning, and the war did not last long. On 9 May, the Greeks withdrew from Crete, and eleven days later concluded an armistice with Turkey. According to Turkey's demands, Greece would capitulate unconditionally, agree to Cretan autonomy under Turkish suzerainty, pay Turkey ten million pounds indemnity, and surrender Thessaly. The Greeks and the three powers considered this far too severe – and this was particularly the case in Britain where liberal opinion had sided strongly with Greece – and the fighting continued while peace negotiations were conducted at Constantinople.

On 25 May *The Times* noted that Aleksandr Nelidov, Russian ambassador at Constantinople, 'made the remarkable alternative proposal that Russia should take over the contemplated Greek War Indemnity, and that the Porte should write off an equivalent sum from the amount of the debt which it still owes to Russia [following the Russo-Turkish War]'. This inspired Sambourne's 'A Friend, Indeed' of 5 June, in which Bruin rummaged through his satchel for money to give a grateful sultan. Ironically, this was the same Nelidov who the year before had proposed to the tsar that Russia simply seize the Straits while Turkey was fully preoccupied with the slaughtering of Armenians and Cretans, although the proposal was of course never implemented. It was not until July that Turkey accepted a much modified peace treaty, by which Greece would pay considerably less indemnity and agree to only a minor northern frontier rectification in Turkey's favour. The Greek loan was obtained from the three powers on 12 January 1898 for the sum of £6,850,000, paid to Turkey by 10 July. Bruin did not have to raid his own satchel.

The anti-Semitic policies of Aleksandr III were genuinely if not completely ameliorated under his successor. International pressure from the Diaspora and its supporters had succeeded in the permission of foreign Jews to once again enter Russia from 16/28 June 1896, and the stringent passport laws regarding Jews in the medical profession were repealed on 26 November/8 December 1897. The English press noted these relaxations, but such legal niceties could not hope to alter the mentality of a nation. Sporadic acts of violence against Jews continued unabated, as when five men were killed and their properties looted and burned in Podolia, western Ukraine, by dragoon officers on 21 August/2 September 1896. But these were now regarded as simple criminal acts and police business, and they were no longer wilfully linked to the administration as they had been in previous years.

Nevertheless, a still highly critical British public became suddenly incensed at events unfolding in China. On 14 November 1897, German naval forces seized the port of Tsingtao (Ch'ingtao) in the Yellow Sea in retaliation for the murder of two German missionaries, demanding financial reparation, which China refused two weeks later. Nikolai's protestations of a pacific foreign policy notwithstanding, Count Mikhail Muraviev, the tsar's minister of foreign affairs after the death of Lobanov-

Rostovskii in 1896, saw this occupation as an excuse to do the same. On 18 December, a Russian fleet entered the East China Sea (with Chinese approval) and settled in Port Arthur (Lüshunk'ou), a strategic port facing the north of the Po Hai basin, forcing the smaller resident British warships to leave.

Salisbury feared that a general scramble for Chinese territory might ensue, and he was keen to protect British trade interests with China, to which end he was already negotiating with Russia, whose new bank at Beijing (Peking) had been opened the previous May. On 8/20 February 1898, Muraviev demanded a long-term lease on Port Arthur. On 1 March, China signed an independent Anglo-German loan agreement between Hong Kong and other banks, ratified two days later, causing Russia to break off its negotiations with Britain. On 23 March, Muraviev obtained a twenty-five-year lease on Port Arthur and nearby Dairen (Ta-lien-wan), and much of the peninsula, with railway concessions to eventually link Port Arthur to Harbin (Ha-erh-pin) in northern Manchuria and then to the Trans-Siberian rail link, then under construction. Five days later, Russian troops disembarked. All these actions had been conducted completely disregarding a secret treaty recently signed with China in which Russia had guaranteed all Chinese possessions in return for the railway concessions; Dairen, moreover, had been already established as a free port.

Some sections of the British public agitated for war, releasing once again the national demons of 1878. Salisbury lodged a formal protest but did not consider the occupation of Chinese territory a *casus belli*. But Salisbury was unable to take an active part in this, as he was indisposed due to ill health and recuperating in France. Events were directed by Curzon (parliamentary under-secretary for foreign affairs), Chamberlain (secretary of state for the colonies), and Arthur Balfour, acting foreign secretary, deputising prime minister, first lord of the treasury, and Salisbury's nephew. This trio had worked itself up to become a 'Jingo coalition' that on 25 March sought to appease public opinion by proposing in cabinet the occupation of Wei-hai-wei (weihai) on the promontory directly opposite Port Arthur, achieved on 30 May and made known to the Commons on 5 April. A spurious acquisition, it was left to Salisbury to make something of it by obtaining for Britain (9 June) a ninety-nine-year lease commencing 1 July on the so-called New Territories adjoining Hong Kong and the Kowloon Peninsula, already ceded to Britain (but in perpetuity) in 1842 and 1860 respectively following the two Opium Wars.

Tenniel thought the ensuing impasse at Dairen and Wei-hai-wei both amusing and threatening. On 16 April, *Punch* issued his 'Sentinels', in which Leo and Bruin marched before their respective sentry boxes a few feet from each other, glowering menacingly. Dairen and the other ports were once more declared open to trade at the beginning of April, but Dairen was no longer a free port, and duties were required to be paid to Russia. This inspired Tenniel's 'Honour à la Russe' on 7 May, in which Leo arrived to be stopped by Bruin the customs officer. 'You gave me your word!' Leo expostulated. 'My friend', Bruin replied, '*How* you misunderstood me!' It was not until 23 August 1899 when Tenniel could celebrate a return to normal trade with his contribution 'Open at Last!'

Salisbury's reaction to the diplomatic annexation of Port Arthur was considered, by some, an embarrassing retreat for Britain, although he had only sanctioned a move undertaken by the 'Jingo coalition'. One of these was certainly Tenniel, who on 25 June 1898 published 'The New Canute', depicting Salisbury as the Danish king seated on the seashore with Chamberlain ('The King's Chamberlain') pointing to the tide marked 'Russia' advancing on the beach marked 'China'. 'My liege, have I not bid you say "Thus far, and no further"?' but Salisbury's amusing reply was the opposite

of the one Chamberlain had been expecting: 'I think we'd better move back a bit'. Others, however, had recognized Salisbury's *laissez faire* attitude as a just and pacific move undertaken to prevent open conflict. But Salisbury was learning, as it had been his intention so to do, that the empty words of a weak man were valueless, and that whatever he had been told at Balmoral by the tsar could not be counted on.

There was further tension during the Boer War when France, Germany, and Russia independently considered using Britain's preoccupation with the intransigent Afrikaaner farmers to their political advantage. On 2 November 1899, Nikolai wrote to his sister Ksenia pointing out how easy it would be to mobilize 'the whole Turkestan army ... and march to the frontier ... The strongest fleet in the world can't prevent us from settling our scores with England precisely at her most vulnerable point'.⁶⁵ This action was almost certainly being proposed to him from without. Like all weak men, Nikolai believed and accepted whatever current idea was proposed to him provided only that it was couched in an attractive and specious fashion. It was perhaps only the tsar's constitutional inertia that prevented such action precipitating an Anglo-Russian war. Nevertheless, the feeling was widespread. On 2 December, Lord George Hamilton, secretary of state for India, wrote Balfour that he was expecting Russia to take advantage of Britain's entanglement in South Africa, and it only remained to be seen whether the squeeze would come in Persia or in Afghanistan. Hamilton's attitude was consistent. During Salisbury's enforced absence the previous year, Chamberlain had proposed an alliance with Germany against Russia over China, and Hamilton, the new Lord Selborne (under-secretary of state for the colonies), and Goschen had supported him in this. Chamberlain's highly irregular intervention (without Balfour's consent) came to little when Germany reacted coolly to the idea of further alienating Russia, but showed itself amenable to some less aggressive understanding. Fortunately, Salisbury returned from France before any such agreement could be worked out.

Meanwhile, Salisbury's administration learned that Muraviev had been in touch with Madrid, Paris, and Berlin sounding out the possibilities of a 'Continental League' to put pressure on Britain in South Africa for the protection of the Boers, and to effect certain changes elsewhere. The proposal failed due to German disinterest, but it appeared that Russia was attempting to alarm Britain into altering its foreign policies. Six months later, during the anti-Western 'Boxer Rebellion' in China, Salisbury could write to a no doubt receptive Queen Victoria that 'Russia, not China, seems to me the greatest danger of the moment'.⁶⁶

Sambourne could only agree, publishing 'The Russian Autolycus' on 30 May 1900. In this, Bruin was personified as a rag-and-bone *muzhik* collecting indiscriminate peace proposals in his tray but secret territorial gains under his cloak. As usual with *Punch*, there was a suitably deferential nod in the direction of Shakespeare with, on this occasion, a quote from *A Winter's Tale* (IV iii): 'My father named me Autolycus; who being, as I am, littered under Mercury, was likewise a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles'. As the new century approached, Anglo-Russian relations were not a great deal better than they had been fifteen years earlier during the Bulgarian Crisis.

~ 'He has slept away' ~

Relations between Affie and Marie did not greatly improve after their translation to Germany. Marie, according to her own testimony, may have virtually given up playing the piano, but Affie still occasionally fiddled with his violin. However, he was drinking more heavily than ever, and if he made the mistake of doing both the result could be little short of tortuous, as his niece recalled:

Uncle Alfred would succumb to flattery and oblige with a few of his favourite selections. Those who were adequately anaesthetized by his wine applauded at the wrong moment. Others, who had been more abstemious, suffered all they deserved from the erratic movements of his bow over the strings, which he fingered with exuberant originality but with little regard for the score.⁶⁷

Affie's interest in music, however, would never wane. On 16 July 1897, Bambridge acknowledged receipt of *My Musical Recollections* by Wilhelm Kuhe, who had now been teaching at the Royal Academy of Music since 1886, which had just been published in London. If memorialists freely send out copies of their memoirs unsolicited, they should at least have ensured that the recipients had been given a good mention in them. Kuhe's memoirs, although lively, made only one passing reference to Affie, and none at all to Marie.

Affie and Marie spent little time together, either at official functions or at home, and usually travelled separately even when attending functions together. On 14 June 1894, Affie was in London for the annual dinner given by the Royal Marines at the Metropole Hotel on Northumberland Avenue. Marie had arrived with him aboard the ducal *Salonwagen* but joined him only for the Buckingham Palace garden party on 2 July, where they had hoped to meet Gladstone. Affie and Marie travelled to St Petersburg for the marriage of Niki and Aliko at the Winter Palace on 14/26 November 1894, staying at the Anichkov palace with Georgie. Two days later, they left Russia, Affie going directly to London and Marie returning to Coburg. It would become a familiar pattern throughout the 1890s

In the following year, 1895, Marie stayed at Bagshot Park with the duke and duchess of Connaught during Ascot week on her own. Affie had a very different schedule. He left London on Tuesday 18 June aboard the *Salonwagen*, travelling from Dover to Ostende and arriving at Hamburg station shortly after eight o'clock on the following morning. The occasion was the official opening of the *Kaiser-Wilhelm-Kanals*, a project dear to the heart of the emperor, who would be present and who expected his foremost princely German vassals to also be present, their uniforms shining alongside his. Aboard the steamship *Kaiser Wilhelm II* Affie, the emperor, and the other princes and dukes passed down the new canal on Thursday 20 surrounded by fireworks and illuminations before Affie was free to return to London three days later, his duty as duke of Saxe-Coburg Gotha accomplished.

Affie was not present at Schloss Langenburg in September 1896 when Sandra announced her first pregnancy. Marie arrived on Tuesday 27 at the castle she considered a 'very nice old place ... beautifully situated ... old fashioned, but not at all uncomfortable'.⁶⁸ From Langenburg she travelled to Darmstadt to see Ernie and Ducky, leaving on Saturday 14 November for England. She stayed for a few days at Windsor Castle before returning to Clarence House on 1 December, having found that Queen Victoria 'has become old and walks slowly, also she sees poorly, but in spite of this she carries herself well and is very lucid'. But the regular walks and drives were still onerous to her, 'two times a day in every weather'. She stayed two days in London, planning to leave on 3 December for Coburg 'with joy and happiness

because at this time to stay here is worse than terrible. I am writing at this moment at ten o'clock in the morning with a light'.⁶⁹ Affie was again not present. Marie returned to the Palais Edinburg for Christmas and the New Year before arriving at Schloss Ehrenburg in Gotha on 20 January 1897, a palace that by now had become 'far too enormous for 3 people!'⁷⁰

Nor was Affie present for the birth of Sandra's first child on 24 April 1897. Marie had arrived six weeks earlier to organize the birth, preparing a musical concert at the *Hoftheater* to celebrate the occasion when it came. Sandra tried chloroform to begin with, but she was unable to stand the chemical and soon rejected any form of palliative. 'Poor Ernie was in a terrible state and much upset, as he could not see her suffer ... [he] began to cry with joy and emotion [at the birth]', she wrote Victoria.⁷¹ 'Sandra is very brave', she wrote Tolstaia, adding that she had received a letter from the dowager empress. 'Imagine!' she expostulated, 'I have actually received a letter from Marie Feodorovna!'⁷² Marie was back in Coburg by the middle of May.

Marie ensured that she was present for the first births of all her daughters, and although Affie had full opportunity to see three of them arrive into the world, he did not see any of his grandchildren born until Missy's third child was produced at Coburg. Even during the Diamond Jubilee the couple was seen intact on only formal public occasions. When, for example, Affie honoured the R.A.O.S. with his presence on Saturday 12 June (only as a passive member of the audience by now), Marie remained behind at Clarence House. The pattern established in the 1880s had not altered.

The ducal succession following Prince Alfred's death was a difficult, complex, and delicate matter to resolve. According to both the ducal constitution (3 May 1852) and the law promulgated by the ducal House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (1 March 1855), male primogeniture meant that the succession should have devolved onto Bertie's eldest son, the duke of Clarence. Since he had died in 1892, succession devolved to Georgie, but this was no longer possible now that Bertie had renounced all rights for himself and his family as heir to the throne. Succession then automatically moved to the duke of Connaught and his heirs. The duke, however, immediately expressed certain doubts.

Karl von Streng opened the inevitable debate on 28 March with a lengthy letter to Affie requesting him to do all in his power to ensure that the duke of Connaught would accept, as he was hoping to put this acceptance before the *Gothaische Landtag* in the following month. By so doing, Von Streng hoped to dissipate 'all apprehensions and sensational rumours' about the future of the duchies. He pointed out that there had never been a renunciation before, other than Bertie's withdrawal, which had been effected in compliance with the ducal constitution:

The population expects of the prince ... that he should actually undertake the Government; a renunciation thereof without manifest and universally appreciable reasons ... will be regarded as undervaluing the importance of the country and its throne ... I therefore cannot urge strongly enough that no alteration should at present be made in the existing order of succession ... the present situation requires that the son of ... the Duke of Connaught [Prince Arthur]... should be systematically prepared for his future vocation as reigning Prince and one of the joint holders of the Sovereignty of the German Empire.⁷³

Shortly afterwards, Von Streng wrote again 'to enter more closely on the consequences entailed by such a renunciation' of the duke of Connaught. He could renounce only his own rights 'in view of the small difference in age' between him and Affie, in which case Prince Arthur must succeed under a regency. Such a personal

renunciation would have no more effect than if the duke had suddenly died, and the German people would accept this; but he could not legally renounce the succession on behalf of Prince Arthur, who was only sixteen. Von Strengé suggested that the duke should accept his duty until his son reached his majority, when he could then decide for himself.

But Von Strengé foresaw further problems in that if the Connaught line should die out (Prince Arthur was an only son), succession should fall upon the young duke of Albany. If he were to die before his majority, the ducal succession should have to revert back to Bertie and his male line, as there would be no more brothers left. This, he reckoned, would usher in a very awkward situation in which English princes might have to be perpetually removed from their ducal heritage as and when the British throne devolved on them. The problem was serious because:

It must be recognized that in the German Press and in the Imperial Diet lively opposition is raised to the inheritance of German thrones by the rulers or Heirs Apparent of foreign States, and I fear that this feeling will also gain ground in the Federal Council of the Empire ... I am of the opinion that ... the [ducal] Diet, perhaps in order to obtain ... concessions with reference to the agreement respecting the [Crown] Domains, might withhold its assent, and in that case a constitutional conflict would occur, the adjustment of which ... would lie with the Empire.⁷⁴

Together, Von Strengé and the duke of Connaught would now commit a *faux pas* in the eyes of the imperial administration. On 6 April, while in Rome, the duke wired Von Strengé informing him that both he and his son were after all fully prepared to undertake their duties as heirs presumptive. However, the issue of Prince Arthur's German education required serious discussion, as the duke was opposed to this although he had no objection to his son entering a German university later in life. Four days later, Von Strengé made the announcement to the *Gothaische Landtag*, and both the announcement and the duke's statement were printed in the *Gothaische Zeitung* on the following day. Wilhelm was furious that this had been done without either Affie's knowledge or his own imperial sanction.

Meanwhile, Wilhelm had been briefing Count Paul Wolff-Metternich, since 1897 envoy at Hamburg and shortly to be appointed ambassador in London, on the matter of the Coburg succession. A private meeting between Wilhelm, Affie, and the duke of Connaught was arranged to take place at the Wartburg – the famous castle in the Thuringian forest known to Martin Luther and Wagner's heroes in *Tannhäuser* – on 22 April. The duke had arrived at Coburg two days earlier to first discuss the matter with Affie, and a day after the meeting he left Gotha for Paris.

However, it was not at this private meeting – one of general opinions and personal *phrases* – that the kaiser made his views known. Wolff-Metternich and Von Strengé were also at the Wartburg, and it was at their conference, undertaken after the departure of the rest of the party, that the kaiser's ruling was revealed. Von Strengé had managed to persuade Wolff-Metternich that the misunderstanding concerning the announcement of the succession had been unintentional, but thereafter the meeting had been a failure for both him and the duke of Connaught. In an official resumé sent to Affie for the ducal records, Von Strengé was forced to state that Wilhelm had made it clear that 'foreign princes who publicly advance their claims to German thrones, as the Duke of Connaught had done, must sever their connection with foreign countries, acquire German nationality, have their principal residence in Germany, and arrange for their sons to have a German education'. Von Strengé had objected to this, reckoning that such an attitude would prevent any foreign prince from inheriting a German throne. Wolff-Metternich had replied that this would apply only to princes

who 'publicly advanced' their claims, as the duke had apparently done. Von Strengé then implied that he had also been at fault by making the announcement to the diet, which he had done only to crush rumour, at which Wolff-Metternich made the withering comment that the matter had been one for the German empire and not for a regional diet. The row continued, but the chief point had been made, and now there was no retraction possible – the duke of Connaught would have to 'transfer his principal residence to Germany, relinquish his position in the English army, and educate Prince Arthur in Germany', probably in a *Kadetten Korps*.⁷⁵

This was now entirely unacceptable to the duke of Connaught, who made it clear that he had no intention of succeeding to the duchies. On 17 May, he wrote Wilhelm stating his wish to see him at Berlin on Friday 26 to explain his position, regretting that the meeting would have to be brief as he was required to be back in London by the following Monday, although he did not give his reasons. Affie wrote Wilhelm a letter he instructed his brother to take with him to Germany:

Upon careful consideration of the viewpoint that you had clearly submitted to us during our meeting at the Wartburg, my brother, to my great surprise, has elected to stand down. Unfortunately, it also seems that the resignation applies to his son. This leads us to legal difficulties, as Prince Arthur is not of age and his father cannot decide for him. One would have to find a guardian who would take on the responsibility [of a regency], and it is questionable whether such a person could be found. Because of the difficulty of this situation, I have asked my brother to have another discussion with you, and I ask for your kind cousinly advice and support in this matter ... I would be very grateful to you if you would let me have your opinion as soon as possible, as you can understand the position I am in.⁷⁶

To help with what would be quite obviously a somewhat nervous audience with the German emperor, Queen Victoria pre-empted her son's arrival with a letter: 'Respecting the Coburg affairs, I will surely say that I entirely agree with Arthur and his views, which he will communicate to you'.⁷⁷ This he did, and Wilhelm acquiesced: the duke of Albany would be the next duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. Accordingly, on 20 June, Von Strengé arrived in London with the text of the renunciation. On the following morning, Bertie received him at Marlborough House with Baron Monson and Sir Condie Stephen also present. Von Strengé read out the terms of the document, which were chiefly that the duke of Albany should go to Germany immediately and enter the school at Schnepfenthal in the Thuringian forest not far from Schloss Reinhardsbrunn. This school, reckoned by many to be the closest thing in Germany to an English public school, had been Liko's *alma mater*.

In spite of Affie's worries, the duke of Cambridge had agreed at short notice to stand as Prince Arthur's guardian in the event of his succession. This was no longer relevant, but in any event it was at Gloucester House in Piccadilly – his London residence shared with the duke of Connaught – that the declaration accepting the duke of Connaught's full right to succession, but also renouncing it, was signed on 24 June.

On 28 June, Affie explained to Wilhelm the matter as it then stood, concluding his letter with what the kaiser probably most wanted to hear: 'The remainder of the heir's education will take place in Germany under the guidance of his mother'.⁷⁸ On the following day, Affie informed all the leading princes of Germany. Wilhelm replied formally stating his acceptance of the proposal that the duke of Albany should inherit the ducal title with all the conditions that the duke of Connaught had rejected, an arrangement that he declared 'bids fair to secure due regard for the national interests of the German people'.⁷⁹ On 15 July, a law was passed amending the constitution of 1852 with two additional articles signed by Affie and Von Strengé in Gotha, published two days later. On 19 July, Bertie wrote Affie of his wholehearted approval

of the decision, and on the following day, Queen Victoria gave her formal assent. She wrote of her 'satisfaction' at the resolution, 'as also of the information that the education and training of the Duke of Albany is to take place in Germany under the personal superintendence of his mother'.⁸⁰ Accordingly, on 9 August, at Schloss Reinhardsbrunn, the duchess of Albany and Ernst von Hohenlohe-Langenburg (Karl's recognized guardian) signed their declaration of renunciation in favour of the young duke of Albany.

Linley Sambourne celebrated the decision in *Punch* (12 July) with a cut titled 'The Duke's Motto', in which the duke of Connaught shook hands with Mr Punch while conspicuously rejecting all the honours of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. The motto: 'But in spite of all temptations to belong to other nations, he remains an Englishman' from *HMS Pinafore*. However, Article I of the renunciation document revealed that neither Bertie nor the duke of Connaught was willing or able to distance themselves entirely from the succession, as there was still the matter of what should take place if Karl were to die during his minority, as Von Strengé had pointed out. In such an event, it was stated that the succession should pass to Prince Arthur, and if he too died before his majority, the title should pass to Bertie who would confer it upon the nearest male descendant of his line. Article II dealt with the regency, by which Hélène and little Karl would live in Stuttgart under the auspices of the king of Württemberg, while Ernst von Hohenlohe-Langenburg would act as co-guardian and also regent in the event of Affie predeceasing Karl's majority in 1902. The matter was not officially closed until 5 April 1900 when Affie bound together a volume of all the documentation and correspondence regarding the succession and had five copies made, which on that day he transmitted to Queen Victoria, Bertie, the duke of Connaught, Hélène, and Georgie.

Affie was by then a very sick man, and certainly some of his absences from his family can be attributed to his numerous medical complications and the journeys undertaken to Egypt and the Riviera from 1897 for his health. He was also a poor patient. Marie had noticed this once already, but again in the autumn of 1894 she noted that although 'the pains in his legs' had returned and she had suggested that he 'ought to see a specialist for skin diseases', Affie refused to take her advice and continued with his 'imprudent [purine rich] diet'.⁸¹ On 18 January 1898, Affie left Gotha for Venice en route for Cairo for a course of sulphur baths at a spa nearby, returning to Coburg on 28 April much refreshed. On 5 August, Affie and Marie left Coburg for Reinhardsbrunn with Baby Bee, Philipp of Coburg, and Sandra and Ernst. Seventeen days later, Marie took Baby Bee to St Petersburg returning to Germany in December. Affie meanwhile had gone hunting in the Tyrol, leaving on 8 September with two members of the ducal household and meeting Prince Christian at Munich. He returned to Coburg on 14 October an exhausted man; the feeling of well being after Cairo had been an illusion.

But now there were other problems for Marie. In 1898, she abandoned her by then annual journeys to England because she could not afford them, although she always had money to travel to her beloved Russia. Affie, always careless with money and incapable of understanding domestic finance, had been as reckless with his private funds as Ernst II had been with the public money granted him by the ducal diet, and travelling now had to be restricted to central European destinations or Russia. In practice, she travelled rarely throughout 1898 and 1899 until a journey to Illinskoe in the autumn of that year. On 20 September, Affie went hunting in the Tyrol once again, returning to Coburg on 13 October. Marie and Baby Bee had already left, and they did not return from Russia until 19 October, with Affie having left for Darmstadt

five days earlier. However, the family was reunited for Christmas when a heavily pregnant Missy and Nando arrived from Romania on 23 December.

This journey to Russia and the prosperous Christmas had been made possible only through Queen Victoria's generosity. Before Marie left for Russia, she had pleaded with Victoria for financial assistance for Affie. What no doubt for Marie had been an extremely humiliating request met with a favourable response when the queen made over to her distressed son the sum of £87,500 to pay off his debts:

I must also thank you ... [for] helping Alfred in such a generous way ... may he eventually be thankful to you and may it be at last a wholesome lesson to him. He was fast ruining us all! If he had only had the courage to tell us about it some years ago, it would never have come to this deplorable state of things! I would have been able to make great economies ... with God's help we will work ourselves out of this terrible position.⁸²

The day after writing this letter, Marie left Illinskoe for Moscow where she stayed for three days at the Kremlin before returning to Coburg. She subsequently travelled to Darmstadt to see Ducky, where she wrote Victoria again: 'Thank you, oh! thank you with all my heart, for your intense kindness and generosity!'⁸³

On 3 January 1900, the Edinburghs left Coburg for Gotha with Missy and Nando. Missy, temporarily exiled from Romania due to a major scandal concerning allegations of her marital infidelity, gave birth to a second daughter in Gotha on Tuesday 9, which Affie was able to see before leaving for a brief journey to Russia with Marie. Affie returned to Gotha from Russia on 22 February before moving down to Coburg with the rest of his family. He remained there until 29 April, when he left for a wedding in Munich, returning on Wednesday 2 May. He had had a difficult time at the reception, finding that he could not swallow without considerable pain and difficulty. Accordingly, on 6 May he left for the spa town of Bad Hercules in Hungary, accompanied by a single manservant, and then on to Vienna on Saturday 22 to undergo a medical consultation at the University (possibly by the ageing Virchow), and where he afterwards remained under observation. In June, a malignant advanced tumour was identified in his larynx, which was considered inoperable, and Affie returned to Bad Hercules before making his way back to Coburg.

Meanwhile, Marie and Baby Bee had spent four weeks at Windsor Castle unaware of how ill Affie had suddenly become, leaving London for Coburg on 17 July, arriving before Affie's return from Bad Hercules on Friday 27. Sir Condie Stephen saw Affie on his return: 'I regret to say that His Royal Highness has derived no benefit from the waters'.⁸⁴ If Affie had been anticipating a repetition of his improvement after Egypt, he was to be disappointed. Stephen's taciturn comment was succinct enough to reveal the true nature of his fears for Affie's health, for which no amount of relaxing water therapy could be of any use.

Indeed, it was immediately clear to everyone that Affie's condition was mortal, and he was taken directly to the Rosenau garden cottage – a small outhouse next to the main building – on his arrival as he requested. A tracheotomy performed on Saturday 28 lessened his agony a little, but a few days earlier Milbanke had already written to Victoria agreeing with a telegram sent previously by Affie's physicians that the situation was extremely serious. Three days later, Affie went to bed shortly after 7 p.m., slipped into a coma, and expired when his heart gave out at ten o'clock, dying in the presence of Marie, Sandra, Baby Bee, and Ducky.

On the following morning, Marie and her three daughters, now joined by Ernst and Ernie, held a short memorial service at the Rosenau. Missy, who later claimed that she

had been informed too late of the seriousness of Affie's condition (although every other member of the family arrived in good time), missed his death by one day.

During the evening of 31 July, Queen Victoria received a telegram from Marie: 'Dear Alfred passed away quite peacefully in his sleep this morning [last night], after having been with us in the garden in the afternoon. Most merciful release from long suffering. Cannot realise this terrible blow'.⁸⁵ But the queen already knew that Affie had died, since the sad news had been given to her that morning by a granddaughter: 'he has slept away!'⁸⁶

That same evening, at six o'clock, Affie was placed in his coffin at the Rosenau and on the following morning his remains were taken to the Morizkirche to lie in state until noon Saturday 4 August for the funeral. Among the mourners were Wilhelm, Sandra and Ernst (now officially regent) with the new boy duke, the duchess of Albany, Bertie and Alix with Georgie, Count von Bülow, the duke of Connaught, Ferdinand of Bulgaria, Aleksei, Segei, Philipp of Saxe-Coburg, and representatives from most of the German princely courts. Also present was Stephen:

The scene inside the church was most impressive. The Royal mourners took up their places on either side of the coffin which was guarded by officers and foresters, and was covered and surrounded by a wealth of flowers, conspicuous among which was a beautiful wreath in red, white, and blue from ... the Queen. The service consisted of hymns, prayers, an address ... and the benediction ... and lasted about three quarters of an hour. At its close, the Emperor, the Prince of Wales, and the Duke of Connaught, as well as the young Duke and Regent, remained for some time in silent prayer by the coffin.⁸⁷

Immediately after the funeral, Affie's body was taken in slow procession to Neuen Friedhof to lie beside his son. In England, Sir Arthur Sullivan was informed of the death in the evening, writing in his diary the next day: 'Received terrible news of the death of [the Duke] last night – upset me dreadfully – another of my oldest and best friends gone. Wired to the Duchess of Coburg'.⁸⁸

On the following day, three weeks' official mourning was declared throughout the duchy following a ministerial decision reached by the diet four days earlier. Affie's death was the occasion for universal mourning throughout the world, with messages of condolence sent to Queen Victoria from nations as far apart as Mexico, Bolivia, Canada, Australia, and Egypt. Curiously perhaps, the Russian embassy in London sent its condolences to the queen on 2 August – considerably later than most of the other formal mourners. As expected, the British press was lavish with its praises, if entirely orthodox in its obituaries. However, the *Daily Mail* (4 August) published a drawing Affie had executed of the Cape of Good Hope from the *Galatea* and accompanied it with a letter he had written Bertie describing the exquisite delights of blasting elephants in South Africa with a double-barrelled breech-loader.

Nearly one hundred communications were sent to Marie at Coburg, indirectly through the Foreign Office or Stephen, all of them commiserating with her at her loss of a respected member of the royal family. Many came from civic, ecclesiastical, and educational sources. On 2 August, the civic dignitaries of Dudley in the West Midlands convoked a special meeting at which it was resolved to communicate to her their deep sorrow at her loss. The vice-chancellor of Oxford University and several figureheads of various ordinary institutions made similar addresses. There were even two messages of sympathy from South Africa: the mayors of Port Elizabeth and East London, both remembering Affie's visit of more than three decades earlier.

John Tenniel was struck by the fact that the king of Italy had been assassinated two days before Affie's death, and he was moved to produce 'Sisters of Sorrow' for *Punch* (8 August) in which Britannia and Italia consoled each other. Mr Punch:

Summoned to lordship in a stranger land,
He left his English birthright of the main,
Now, swiftly touched by Death's restoring hand,
He is the Queen's again.

The German press was also consistently benign. The *Norddeutsch Allgemeine Zeitung* (1 August), a Berlin daily since 1862 and the mouthpiece of Bismarckian politics (known as the *Kanzlerblatt* – 'Chancellor Press'), noted: 'Brought up as an English prince ... [Affie] devoted himself with zeal to the duties of a German sovereign'. The *Gothaisches Tagelblatt* (1 August) was a Radical paper, and used the occasion to promote democratic views, nonetheless stating that Affie:

was a wise and kindly ruler who had the best interests of his country and people at heart ... wherever good was to be done, patriotism to be fostered, art and science to be supported, or the pain of grief and suffering to be alleviated, there Duke Alfred was to be found ... Originating in that land where the liberty and the rights of the people are respected, during his brief reign he always upheld the Constitution of his duchy and strove to promote the interests of his country.

Marie left Coburg and the duchy with Baby Bee, travelling to Darmstadt to stay with Ducky and Ernie. From there, Marie paid a courtesy visit to Berlin to be with Vicky, herself a dying woman:

You can imagine what a sad meeting it was. I had not seen her since poor little Alfred's death, and now this terrible loss. She was very nice and kind ... though she hates showing her feelings in general, she did not conceal from me how much she suffered.⁸⁹

Marie had come to alter her opinion of Vicky in the 1880s. The cause of the more favourable view had been Russia (naturally), just as Russia had once been the cause of their estrangement (naturally). Reminding Jennie in 1886 that she was possessed of a 'faithful and patriotic [Russian] heart', Marie noted that Vicky 'used to be anti-Russian and a great "anglomane" but since the marriage of Princess Beatrice with a Battenberg, she thinks that England is going to the very worst'. Marie still found the then crown princess 'dreadfully strict as to manners', and confessed that she had had to 'put on my very best manners' as a result. But she had been pleasantly surprised and impressed when, on one social occasion, Vicky 'kindly called me back and honoured me with the flattering denomination of "un enfant de bonne maison"'.⁹⁰

One particular reaction to Affie's death in England went a long way towards indicating how much attitudes to Marie had altered since the heady days of her arrival twenty-five years earlier. On Tuesday 31 July, the day Affie's death was made known in England, Salisbury, as premier and foreign secretary, used his privilege as a peer of the realm to move two addresses of condolence in the House of Lords. The first was to Queen Victoria for her 'great loss', and the second to Marie, also for her 'great loss'. The first address was passed by their Lordships and sent to the queen on Thursday (the day three weeks' general mourning was announced), with her response being read out in the Lords four days after that. However, it was resolved that no action would be taken regarding the second motion. At the same time, Balfour moved two similar addresses in the House of Commons (which he led), with exactly the same results, the Home Office marking the move to address Marie as 'not needed'.⁹¹ An old gentleman like Salisbury might have remembered that Marie had once been a British duchess, but both Houses were now peopled by a new generation of politicians for whom Marie was simply a Russian-born German federal dowager duchess.

~ The Queen is Dead ~

Queen Victoria left Windsor Castle for Osborne House for the last time on 18 December 1900. A few days earlier, she had affixed her regal and imperial signature to the last document concerning Marie. The earl of Strafford had died on 28 March 1898, and although it was necessary to find a third Commissioner In Trust for Marie's £6,000 in the event of Affie's death, it was obviously not thought urgent while Affie lived. His death, of course, changed that, and the queen attached a very shaky signature to the appointment by letters patent of Baron Augustus Monson as the new commissioner, approved by the Solicitor to the Treasury on 14 December. Baron Monson, the duke of Connaught, and William Colville received the first instalment of £1,500 in Marie's name on 5 January 1901.

Although weak and sick, and taking large quantities of chloral hydrate as a sedative that ensured she did not awake until noon each day, Victoria continued to attend to matters of state at Osborne House until her strength finally failed her. On 10 January, she saw Chamberlain, Salisbury's secretary of state for the colonies and designated heir apparent, who thus became the last minister of state to have an audience with her. On Sunday 13 January, the queen's great journal that she had kept for sixty-nine years without interruption drew to a close. Marie and Baby Bee arrived on the following day from Darmstadt to take up residence at Osborne Cottage, while the queen granted an audience to Lord Roberts, who had recently relinquished command of the British forces engaged in the Boer War after replacing Wolseley as commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

On the afternoon of Tuesday 15, Victoria took her last regular ride in her pony-chaise, accompanied only by Marie, and once again the weather was poor. There was some happy irony in the fact that the daughter-in-law and mother-in-law who had caused each other so much anguish over the years were the last two figures to occupy the familiar carriage. On Wednesday, Victoria was advised against taking any more rides, and on the next day Marie described the queen's state of health: '[She] is quite an invalide, does not appear to any meals and one hardly sees her. I found her much aged and weak, though I took a long drive with her the other day ... is it really "the beginning of the end"?'⁹² It was indeed just that, and Victoria's condition began to deteriorate so rapidly that on Friday 18 the wider family was summoned to Osborne House, including (and not to everyone's approval) Kaiser Wilhelm II. Queen Victoria died at a little after half-past six on the evening of Tuesday 22 January in Wilhelm's arms and in the presence of all her surviving children (other than the moribund Vicky) and most of her grandchildren. Randall Davidson, now bishop of Winchester, ministered to the queen's last moments.

Marie and Baby Bee remained in England throughout the period of the funeral and the long period of mourning that followed. They accompanied the cortege to London and then to Windsor Castle for the brief service in St George's Chapel, and then, after a further short lying in state, the interment beside Prince Albert on 4 February. They did not stay at Clarence House, as this no longer belonged to her, as she had explained to Georgie a few months after Affie's death on the assumption that he would inherit the house:

I think in the contract ... [Victoria] was to get Clarence House with all its furniture ... if even I had the right to take away the *meubles* I don't know, really, what to do with them as my house here is also lately full. I would only take away my pictures and small remembrances ... you no doubt will like to furnish the rooms with your own things.⁹³

However, Queen Victoria chose not to give the property over to Georgie and May but to the duke and duchess of Connaught as their London residence. Not only was Georgie now destined one day to be king, but also the ageing duke of Cambridge was still occupying Gloucester House with the duke and duchess of Connaught and their three children, which cannot have been a happy arrangement. Marie and Baby Bee therefore led a peripatetic few months in England, staying at Kensington Palace when in London.

The national – indeed international – realization that an era had come to an end with Victoria's death is not a conceit of future historians but a gloomy fact widely appreciated at the time. Sir John Tenniel, the undoubted *primus inter pares* at *Punch*, who had kept so much of Marie's difficult life in England before an amused public one way or another, resigned in February. His last major cut had appeared on 2 January. Called 'Time's Appeal', it was an exhortation for the new century to herald an era of world peace. Tenniel certainly believed he was of an age fit for retirement, but in any event he felt unwilling to carry on in an England without Queen Victoria. Salisbury felt much the same way, but soldiered on until July 1902 when he retired from active politics.

NOTES and REFERENCES to Chapter Eleven

- ¹ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1440, Marie to Queen Victoria 25 Jul. 1874.
- ² RA VIC/Add. A 20/1441, Marie to Queen Victoria 24 Aug. 1874.
- ³ *Marie of Romania* i 156.
- ⁴ RA VIC/Z 471/19, Clarence House to Balmoral 16 Sep. 1893.
- ⁵ CAC Churchill Papers CHAR 28/46/13-15, Coburg to London 2 Jun. 1886.
- ⁶ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1600, Marie to Queen Victoria 17 Feb. 1881.
- ⁷ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1667, Marie to Queen Victoria 21 Apr. 1891.
- ⁸ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1679, Marie to Queen Victoria 11 Aug. 1894.
- ⁹ *Marie of Romania* i 176-7.
- ¹⁰ *Pope-Hennessy* 250.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² *Marie of Romania* i 35. Needless to add, these ‘witnesses’ were not named; nor did Churchill make any reference to Missy in his own autobiography of his youth. The incident itself is not denied, only the substantive quality with which Missy endowed it. No doubt Churchill (another Apollonian) soon realized how risible the union would become. Missy was able to invent a romantic persona for herself in Romania with considerable freedom in spite of the stultifying court, and whatever it was that she became it is unlikely that she could have become it elsewhere, least of all in Buckingham Palace or Downing Street, for which Princess Mary and Clementine Hozier were, respectively, ideally suited.
- ¹³ PRO FO 104/110 (186-7), Malet (Berlin) to Rosebery 13 Jan. 1893.
- ¹⁴ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1673, Marie to Queen Victoria 3 Mar. 1893. It could be argued that Marie was being disingenuous in order to justify her actions to her mother-in-law, who had not supported the match. However, Marie’s letters are invariably straightforward and they never distort facts or tell untruths.
- ¹⁵ PRO FO 104/110 (89), Gladstone (Hawarden) to Ponsonby 19 Oct. 1892.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.* (91).
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.* (44), Ponsonby (Balmoral) to Gladstone 7 Nov. 1892.
- ¹⁸ PRO HO 144/20/49089 (6).
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.* (6b), Ponsonby (Osborne) to [Sir] Algernon West 27 Jan. 1893.
- ²⁰ *Pakula* 96, Marie to Missy 17 Jul. 1893.
- ²¹ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1675, Marie (Sinaia) to Queen Victoria 11/23 Oct. 1893.
- ²² *Pakula* 98-9, Marie to Missy 23 Feb. 1894.
- ²³ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1676, Marie (Coburg) to Queen Victoria 5 Jan. 1894.
- ²⁴ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1677, Marie to Queen Victoria 5 Apr. 1894.
- ²⁵ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1684, Marie (Darmstadt) to Queen Victoria 21 Mar. 1895.
- ²⁶ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1679, Marie (Reinhardtbrunn) to Queen Victoria 11 Aug. 1894.
- ²⁷ RA VIC/Add. A 20 1685, Marie (Coburg) to Queen Victoria 30 Apr. 1895.
- ²⁸ CAC Churchill Papers CHAR 28/46/29, Clarence House to Great Cumberland Place 20 Mar. 1896.
- ²⁹ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1456, Marie (St Petersburg) to Queen Victoria 3/15 Jul. 1875.
- ³⁰ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1470, Marie to Queen Victoria 18 Jun. 1876.
- ³¹ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1472, Marie to Queen Victoria 9 Aug. 1876.
- ³² RIG A.I.s. 8°x 4, Clarence House to St Petersburg 11 May 1879.
- ³³ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1057, Marie to Wolseley 29 Jun. 1883.
- ³⁴ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1061, Marie (Rosenau) to Wolseley 15 Jul. 1883. Marie was free to dismiss Rolfs only after Duke Ernst’s death, which is exactly what she did – a further point that Missy conveniently ignored.
- ³⁵ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1624, Marie (Eastwell Park) to Queen Victoria 21 May 1884.
- ³⁶ RIG unsigned fragment 8°x 4, Eastwell Park to [?] [January 1886].
- ³⁷ CCC MS 2619, Osborne Cottage to Connaught Place 13 Aug. 1889.
- ³⁸ RA VIC/ADD A 20/1649, Coburg to Windsor Castle 13 Jul. 1888.
- ³⁹ RIG A.I.s. 8°x 4, Tsarskoe Selo to Livadia.
- ⁴⁰ RIG A.I.s. 8°x 4, Livadia to Coburg 4/16 Sep. 1880.
- ⁴¹ *Arthur* 264, Wolseley to Lady Wolseley 8 Aug. 1890.
- ⁴² RA VIC/Add. A 20/1667, Marie (Coburg) to Queen Victoria 21 Apr. 1891.
- ⁴³ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1671, Marie (Coburg) to Queen Victoria 4 Apr. 1892.
- ⁴⁴ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1686, Marie (Coburg) to Queen Victoria 23 Oct. 1895.
- ⁴⁵ *Marie of Romania* i 201. Of all Missy’s deceits, this remains her most vengeful act of libel. It is quite clear that in order to remain at ease with her poorly-developed conscience, she accurately remembered

Rolfs as he had been in the first six months of 1883 but ignored both his improved character thereafter and the seminal part that both Marie and Von Truchsess played in it.

⁴⁶ Royal Marriages Act (12 Geo. III c. 11) 1772. The application was universal unless the descendant was of foreign birth and therefore subject to other laws. At and after 25, twelve months' notice had to be given to the privy council; subsequently, both houses of parliament still had to approve the marriage with a two-thirds majority in each before the marriage could go ahead.

⁴⁷ *Pakula* 107-8.

⁴⁸ RA VIC/Add. 413, Coburg to Osborne House 5:15 p.m. 23 Jan. 1899.

⁴⁹ PRO FO 215/42, Stephen to Salisbury 24 Jan. 1899.

⁵⁰ LQV III iii 337.

⁵¹ *Marie of Romania* ii 145. This is quite untrue, unless by this statement Missy intended to refer only to Prince Alfred's immediate family, in which case she should have been obliged to include herself. Missy made no effort to be at her brother's side, claiming ignorance of his condition as her excuse in her memoirs although her letters reveal a close knowledge of his illness over at least two years. Otherwise, Prince Alfred died not 'alone' but in the presence of his personal staff, including Bankart, a local priest (denomination unknown), and of course Dr Von Kaan with some of his medical staff.

The Klinik Martinsbrunn had been run as a private family concern, and on the death of Dr Von Kaan it was dissolved and the premises sold to the Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern, a nursing order associated with the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul. All the records of the clinic, which had been maintained intact up to Dr Von Kaan's death, were destroyed in accordance with medical ethics.

⁵² YUL *Sullivan Diaries* 1899 f.23.

⁵³ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1697, Marie (Gotha) to Queen Victoria 30 Mar. 1899.

⁵⁴ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1657, Marie to Queen Victoria 17 Feb. 1889. In spite of the lurid tabloid-style sensationalism that certain fabulists have attempted to concoct over the years, there were of course no parallels whatsoever between the two tragedies.

⁵⁵ *Mallet* 157-8.

⁵⁶ *Paget II* ii 298.

⁵⁷ RA VIC/Add. Z 499/95, Marie (Livadia) to Queen Victoria 24 Oct./5 Nov. 1894.

⁵⁸ PRO FO 83/2516 (137), Queen Victoria to Nikolai II 31 Dec. 1894.

⁵⁹ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1624, Marie (Eastwell Park) to Queen Victoria 21 May 1884.

⁶⁰ RIG A.I.s. 8°x 4, Illinskoe to Coburg 3/15 Jun. 1896.

⁶¹ *Maylunas and Mironenko* 149-50. Both Sergei and Prince Yussupov had given their neighbouring Moscow country residences names taken from existing centres in the north of Russia. Illinskoe is situated not far from Arkangelsk on the Severnaia Dvina on the White Sea coast, some four hundred miles northeast of St Petersburg.

⁶² *Charmley* 246.

⁶³ LQV III iii 85.

⁶⁴ *Charmley* 233.

⁶⁵ *Roberts* 758.

⁶⁶ *Roberts* 771.

⁶⁷ *Athlone* 86.

⁶⁸ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1689, Marie (Langenburg) to Queen Victoria 4 Oct. 1896.

⁶⁹ HL MS 62 MB1/U24, Clarence House to St Petersburg 2 Dec. 1896.

⁷⁰ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1691, Marie (Gotha) to Queen Victoria 20 Jan. 1897.

⁷¹ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1692, Marie (Langenburg) to Victoria 26 Mar. 1897.

⁷² HL MS 62 MB1/U24, Langenburg to St Petersburg 29 Mar. 1897. Marie's admiration for Minny never diminished, but this reference to the rarity of letters from her was a common complaint she made throughout her adult life: '[I] even had a long letter from Minny, which as a rule is only a yearly event' [RA VIC/ADD A 20/1650, Coburg to Windsor Castle 8 Aug. 1888].

⁷³ PRO FO 215/45, Strenge (Gotha) to Affie (Coburg).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Von Strenge to Affie 31 Mar. 1899.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Von Strenge to Affie 24 Apr. 1899. In spite of his *faux pas*, Von Strenge was subsequently honoured as a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order of Knighthood (2nd Class). This order, founded by Queen Victoria on 23 April 1896, was designed for subjects British and foreign who had rendered honourable personal service to either the queen or her family.

⁷⁶ PRO GFM 21/183 3 *Die Erbfolge Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha vol 1 May 1871 – 31 May 1899* (AS 1084), Affie to Wilhelm II 23 May 1899.

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- ⁷⁷ Ibid., 3 *Die Erbfolge Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha vol 2 1 Jun 1899 – 31 Dec 1914*, Victoria (Windsor Castle) to Wilhelm II [copy] 25 May 1899.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid. (AS 1401), Affie (Coburg) to Wilhelm II.
- ⁷⁹ PRO FO 215/46 *Die Thronfolge in den Herzogthümern Sachsen Coburg und Gotha (7)*, Wilhelm II to Affie 9 Jul. 1899.
- ⁸⁰ PRO FO 30/302, Windsor Castle to Coburg [copy].
- ⁸¹ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1680, Marie (Sinaia) to Queen Victoria 10/22 Oct. 1894.
- ⁸² RA VIC/Add. A 20/1699, Marie (Illinskoe) to Queen Victoria 24 Sep./6 Oct. 1899.
- ⁸³ RA VIC/A 20/1700, Marie (Darmstadt) to Queen Victoria 10 Dec. 1899.
- ⁸⁴ PRO FO 30/301 (29), Stephen to Salisbury 28 Jul. 1900.
- ⁸⁵ LQV III iii 580.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid. 579.
- ⁸⁷ PRO FO 83/1764, Stephen to Salisbury 5 Aug. 1900.
- ⁸⁸ YUL *Sullivan Diaries* 1900 f.122.
- ⁸⁹ *Lee* 341.
- ⁹⁰ CAC Churchill Papers CHAR 28/46/13-15, Coburg to London 2 Jun. 1886.
- ⁹¹ PRO HO 45/9953/B32475 (6).
- ⁹² RA VIC/Add. A 20/1152, Marie to Wolseley 17 Jan. 1901.
- ⁹³ RA GV/ AA 43/100, Marie (Rosenau) to Prince George 21 Sep. 1900.