

## SIX

### *The English countryside provokes me to great boredom*

#### **London ennui – Pogroms and Pomegranates – A very German succession**

*1889 to 1893*

#### **~ London ennui ~**

When Marie returned to Windsor Castle in April 1889, it was to discover that Queen Victoria had several new Muslim servants. She had acquired them on 23 June 1887, but Marie had not seen them previously as she had spent most of the Golden Jubilee on the Isle of Wight while her one visit to Windsor had predated their arrival. Among them was ‘Abdul Karim, who became known as ‘The Munshi’, after the Urdu for a writer or language-teacher as he had been a minor clerk in India and was now giving Victoria lessons in Hindustani, in addition to cooking exotic dishes for her. The Munshi rapidly became Victoria’s new obsession, and this amused Marie. She noted in her first letter to Countess Tolstaia that the Indians ‘glide through the rooms like well-trained cats’, and that The Munshi had become Victoria’s sole topic of conversation. ‘John Brown is nearly forgotten’, she observed on the queen’s former pet servant who had died on 27 March 1883. All Scots were in fact forgotten according to Marie, and were now regarded by the queen as merely ‘shabby looking’<sup>1</sup> next to her colourful servants from the ‘Jewel in the Crown’.

The Munshi spoke English imperfectly at best, and Marie noted in a second letter to Tolstaia that Marie Erbach, again in England, was ‘on the point of losing her patience’ with him at what seemed like deliberate attempts to misconstrue commands. There was in fact no one else for Marie to talk to other than her cousin, whose presence at Windsor Castle was ‘a great pleasure for me ... we lose ourselves in conversations on the past and present’. Marie as usual denounced as tiresome the daily drives Victoria insisted on taking no matter that the weather was invariably poor, particularly after three years on Malta, complaining that she never strayed from the route that must have been by then quite worn down by royal coach wheels. ‘The English countryside provokes me to great boredom’, she complained, ‘on account of its desolation, regularity, and complete absence of picturesqueness’.<sup>2</sup>

But of course she did not enjoy London any better. By arriving in 1874, she had at least missed by fifteen years the dreadful days of the ‘Great Stink’, when members of parliament could not conduct business on account of the rancid miasma rising from the Thames, then a general sewer for identifiable detritus and unidentified corpses. That problem had been largely solved in the 1860s, while the macabre days of gaslight and shadows in the fog were fast disappearing by 1889, although this was of course the period of the notorious Whitechapel Murders in the East End of London. The first house-to-house electric power station had opened at West Brompton on 24 January that year, and the City of London from Fleet Street to Aldgate had been illuminated by electric light in February. Nevertheless, Marie still found London dirty, dark, smelly, and congested, which of course it was next to the planned cities she

knew such as Paris and St Petersburg. 'I am staying alone at Eastwell, which does not thrill me much', she had once written prior to a departure for Kent, 'but this is nevertheless preferable to London', adding that the weather had been foul: 'a spring of storms and torrential rain ... after a severe and interminable winter'.<sup>3</sup> From 1889, Marie of course no longer had this choice as Eastwell Park had been surrendered on Affie leaving for Malta, and since 1886 – after the Comte de Paris had expressed a serious interest in leasing the property before changing his mind – it had been in the hands of an army captain and justice of the peace.<sup>4</sup> Necessarily therefore, much of what little time she would spend in England before Affie's accession to the duchy of Saxe-Coburg Gotha would have to be passed at Clarence House.

Unfortunately, since Marie's marriage in 1874, and before her removal to Germany in 1893, England experienced some of the wettest and stormiest years in recent meteorological history that had resulted in several disastrous crop failures and a number of severe inundations. There were severe winter storms throughout the South East in March 1875, November 1876 through to January 1877, November 1877, January and October through to December 1881, December 1883, January 1884, December 1886, November 1887, February 1889, November 1890, March and October 1891, and February and November 1893. Unusual spring, summer, and autumn storms were experienced in July 1874, April and August 1878, April 1879, July 1880, September 1883, and the Augusts of 1887, 1889, and 1891. Three days of heavy rainfall commencing 30 July 1888 caused Essex and Kent rivers to form lakes navigable by modest ships, while violent gales from 16 to 19 November 1893 killed nearly 300 persons. All of these storms and floods were recorded due to loss of life, destruction to property and the countryside, and loss of shipping as a direct result.

Marie had missed many of these depressing periods up to 1889, of course, and happily she would miss a few more after her return from Malta.

When Marie had written that Affie would 'rest on his laurels and wait patiently for his Coburg inheritance', this did not mean that he would put his feet up at Clarence House and smoke fine cigars until his uncle had the decency to die. Affie was kept busy with a number of high-profile social engagements on the following year. Henry Morton Stanley had arrived in London, on 26 April 1890, after three years in Africa, chiefly in the Sudan, and he was honoured by the Royal Geographical Society at the Royal Albert Hall on 5 May. In front of 6,500 invited guests, Bertie awarded him the society's gold medal with Affie seconding. On 14 June, Affie took the chair at a dinner at Trinity House, Tower Hill, at which Salisbury was the principal speaker. Trinity House was the headquarters of the corporation having supervision over pilotage around British coasts and over all lighthouses, light-ships, and beacons (Affie was an Elder Brethren, and also Master, from 15 March 1866 to 21 May 1894). Following this, he was given the standard end-of-career posting of a desk admiral as commander-in-chief at Devonport by Plymouth from 4 August 1890 to 1 June 1893, living either there at Admiralty House or in London at Clarence House.

Admiralty House was located at Mount Wise on the south-western promontory of Plymouth, overlooking a square and another admiralty building in front but with a small (almost useless) garden facing towards Plymouth Sound. It was a three-storey late eighteenth-century pile with three bays and Venetian windows, but it was not either as spacious or as homely as it can be made to appear in print. Marie would visit Devonport on just seven occasions during these three years: to see Affie installed in August 1890; from January to February, and then August, 1891; February, and then November through to December 1892; May 1893; and finally at Affie's official retirement in June 1893.

It must have been yet another place that did not appeal to Marie, who objected to the 'small and stuffy bedrooms' although she was pleased that her children 'make the best of everything, which is the happiest quality in life'.<sup>5</sup> Missy concurred, thinking the house 'very uninteresting' but very much making the best of the sea and garden.<sup>6</sup> Missy must have been overwhelmed, then, when on 2 December 1892 she was invited to launch the cruiser H.M.S. *Bonaventure* at Devonport under the proud gaze her mother and father. Affie too appeared to enjoy his new position, and Marie noted that he had taken up the relatively new sport of lawn tennis with considerable enthusiasm, although it is difficult to picture him engaged in lengthy rallies or running for a lob to the back of the court. Opposite and behind Admiralty House stood Government House, then the home of General Sir Richard Harrison, commander of the Western District of Britain (Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, and South Wales) for a five-year period since 1890. His children were the same age as the Edinburgh offspring, and they became firm friends, but preferring to use his large garden for play. Marie also preferred Harrison's garden. He noted that whenever she visited Affie 'she was glad to take her morning walks undisturbed in our garden'.<sup>7</sup>

Much of the rest of the time was devoted to travel, and Marie's first post-Malta journey took her to St Petersburg in February 1890 to see her younger brothers, with Affie, followed by a short stay at Coburg, returning at the end of April. Meanwhile, a great Exhibition of Electrical Science had been planned for Edinburgh, at Merchiston and Slatford in the suburbs of the south west of the city. With the scope of the enterprise increased, the renamed International Industrial Exhibition opened on 1 May, with Affie and Marie invited to perform the ceremony. The North British and Caledonian railway companies had both constructed temporary stations and branch lines to ferry visitors to the site, which included a central pavilion measuring 700 by 250 feet and a concert hall for 3,000 persons on ninety acres of land. Affie and Marie processed to Ardmillan Terrace for the ceremony on a bright day, declaring the exhibition open before the provosts of Glasgow, Leith, Perth, Aberdeen, Dundee, and Manchester. The exhibition closed on 31 October, but it had not been not a financial success. Affie had been to Scotland in an official capacity only once before, when he opened a new dock at Leith on 26 July 1881, but this was Marie's first and last visit to Edinburgh, and her sole official duty in Scotland.

On Tuesday 8 July, she and Affie dedicated the foundation stone for the new Royal College of Music (which Bertie would open four years later) opposite the Royal Albert Hall on Prince Consort Road, after which they were entertained at the French embassy. This was Marie's first official public function in England for five years.

In April of the following year, Marie was again in Coburg before returning for the summer. Hardly had she returned than she had to leave again when news reached her that Aline had died on 13/25 September at Illinskoe after a vigorous struggle to produce a moribund and premature infant. Marie wrote Queen Victoria a detailed account, reckoning that 'No human science could have saved her'.<sup>8</sup> The funeral was held at SS Peter and Paul in St Petersburg, with Marie returning to England directly afterwards.

The learned and liberal Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich died at St Petersburg on 12/24 January 1892. Marie was upset but also relieved, since he appears to have suffered from advanced premature senile dementia (Alzheimer's Disease). Marie saw him at Aline's funeral, and although he was not yet sixty-five she found him 'getting quite "idiotic" ... [he] hardly recognised anybody'.<sup>9</sup> She could not go to his funeral as she was tied up with social functions at Devonport, but she attended another in Darmstadt when Ludwig IV died on 13 March, leaving Darmstadt for Coburg in the

middle of May, arriving at the Schloss Rosenau on Saturday 21. On Friday 3 June, she was at Potsdam to see Prince Alfred before returning to Coburg for the rest of the summer. When Marie returned to London, Aleksandr de Stoeckl, appointed principal attaché in London in 1883, gave a ball in her honour at Chesham House. His wife recalled the occasion:

The Grand Duchess sent word to my husband that she wished to dance with him. In vain he endeavoured to explain to her Equerry that he could not dance, but it was insisted that he could not refuse. So ... [he] put his arm around her ample waist and they started, but, alas! at every step he trod on her feet. Finally in sheer agony she stopped, but he declared that she hated him ever after!<sup>10</sup>

Marie made no surviving comment on this ball, but as Stoeckl had been an occasional guest at Eastwell Park since 1883 she must have liked him, and it would have taken more than a bruised foot to alter her opinion. Stoeckl had not been quite serious.

The early spring of 1893 was again spent in Russia and Germany, with Marie arriving at the Anichkov Palace by early March, leaving on Tuesday 2/14 for Coburg. She was back at Clarence House on 22 April in order to take part in the most conspicuous public royal function in London since the Golden Jubilee. This took place on 10 May when Marie appeared in the queen's procession from Buckingham Palace to South Kensington for the grand opening of the Imperial Institute of the Colonies and India (now the largely rebuilt Imperial College of Science and Technology), first mooted in November 1886. It was a fine day, Bertie read an address to Victoria on behalf of the executive body; she replied, thousands cheered, and the gate was opened by the queen using a key made from precious colonial metals. There had been three separate processions, Bertie's approaching Kensington from Marlborough House by a different route, and many hundreds of colonial troops lining the streets. Marie, however, did not comment on the occasion in any surviving letters.

## ~ Pogroms and Pomegranates ~

On 15 July 1889, with Affie and Prince Alfred in Berlin and the daughters in Coburg, Marie attended the house-warming party given by the tsar and tsaritsa at their homely new fishing lodge near Kotka on the Finnish coast of the Gulf of Finland. Marie was one of the few invited guests along with Queen Olga of Greece. Undertaking no more impromptu visits, even accepting a formal invitation was by this time a rare event in her relationship with her imperial relatives. She and her numerous fellow Romanov critics (such as Vova and Miechen) would become increasingly unhappy with each successive tsardom until contact with them would be reduced to official functions and formal communication.

The most obvious and pernicious characteristic of Aleksandr III's reactionary Pan-Slavic tsardom was the state sanctioning of the persecution of Jews throughout the empire, led by Pobedonostev, Ignatev, and of course the tsar himself. Pobedonostev was infected by that unfortunate aspect of Christian 'theology' that had stigmatized the Jewish people as racially culpable, for all time, of the supreme crime of deicide. Ignatev, more mundane perhaps but no less paranoid, was obsessed by the mania that an international Jewish conspiracy had been behind the Russo-Turkish War, and that this malevolence had prompted the sending of the 'Jew Disraeli' to Berlin for the congress in order to betray Slavs to the hordes of Satan. Open policy to 'solve' the 'problem' of the Jews consisted in one third emigrating to either the Pale of Settlement in Russified Poland or abroad; one third to be Russified and Christianized within Russia; and one third to be allowed to die from starvation.

There was of course nothing very much new in either the persecution of the Jews in Russia or the Russification of non-Slavs by enforced religious conversion. But there were under Aleksandr III some important departures from previous administrative policies that removed politics from the procedure to replace it with the novel mania of racial and religious purity. Edward Erskine, acting chargé d'affaires at St Petersburg from 14 April to 12 October 1860 in the absence of Ambassador Sir John Crampton, informed the Foreign Office of the enforced conversions being carried out 'even under the comparatively benign rule of the present Emperor'. He wrote of the 'forced conversion to the Greek Church' of an entire Roman Catholic village in Lithuania, and also of Aleksandr II's 'utmost endeavours' to convert Muslims in the Caucasus to Orthodoxy'.<sup>11</sup> But these were politically motivated policies as part of a long-standing war against Catholic and Muslim forces who were themselves happy to persecute Orthodox Christians at every opportunity; Erskine went to some pains to point out to the Foreign Office that Protestants (as well as Jews) were being left alone. After all, in 1860, Russia would not again be in conflict with a major Protestant power until its conflict with Britain during the ninth Russo-Turkish War.

Aleksandr III accepted as true whatever he was told by Pobedonostev and Ignatev because he in fact also believed what they believed, and he therefore instituted a period of pogroms such as had not been known in Russia since the eighteenth century. This was also coupled with the by now militant Pan-Slavist Russification of non-Slavic peoples – the Pan-Slavist General Chernaev had been appointed to command the armed forces in Central Asia in 1882 – resulting in precisely what the revolutionists had hoped, as a national and, in particular, an international protest movement blossomed. One consequence of this new internal political direction and the international protest it brought about was the decline in English opinion of Russia, bringing relations to their lowest ebb since the crisis in Bulgaria.

In June 1881, about 60,000 Sephardim Jews requested permission to return to their ancestral home in Spain rather than remain in Russia to face imminent persecution; their request was granted and they left. There was a certain wry irony in the fact that the pomegranate fruit that they had introduced into Russia was reaching the height of its renewed popularity in noble circles at this time, where, accordingly, Slavist propaganda had branded it a 'native' fruit. From the following May, the tsar introduced a series of civil disabilities restricting Jewish professions and living quarters by forcing half a million Jews out of rural areas and smaller towns into larger urban areas within the Pale of Settlement, done to increase the effectiveness of policing by the Okhrana, and leading to mass unemployment and starvation. This move resulted in committees being formed in Berlin and London to raise money to assist Jewish large-scale emigration, for which purpose the new synagogue on Abbey Road in London was opened on 30 July 1882.

A further and sadder irony occurred on 24 October 1884 when the benefactor and Jewish patriot Sir Moses Montefiore celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in London, resulting in public celebrations in all centres of the Diaspora other than Russia. This contrasted sharply with the occasion when he had arranged for a congratulatory address to be sent to Affie and Marie at the time of their engagement (through the auspices of Aleksandr II), signed on behalf of all British Jews thanking the tsar for his humanitarian services to Russia's three million Jews. But the new dawn had been a false one. In April 1888, all Jews were expelled from Russified Finland and the district of Odessa, and, in July 1890, the 1882 edict was enforced on about two million more Jews throughout Russia, resulting in expulsions, vast internal migrations, and familial separation from October through to December.

Opposition to these policies within Russia was quelled wherever possible, although it proved impractical to suppress the Nihilist journal *Narodnaia Volia*, which had reappeared in October 1884. Dmitrii Tolstoi died on 26 April/7 May 1889, and his replacement at the Ministry of the Interior, Pëtr Durnovo, was, predictably, an equally reactionary figure who, in November 1890, forbade the publication of a monster literary protest by Lev Tolstoi against the persecutions when the Okhrana learnt of its proposal.

In England, sympathy for the Jews was widespread. On 10 December 1890, a substantial London meeting was held in the Guildhall under the auspices of Lord Mayor Joseph Savory appealing to the tsar for the total abrogation of his anti-Jewish policies.<sup>12</sup> The signed protest was sent to the Russian embassy but was returned to Savory through the Foreign Office without comment. On 24 May 1882, Granville informed Lord Dufferin that Lobanov-Rostovskii had told him that his mission in London as the new Russian ambassador 'was for the purpose of coming to a good understanding with us on all matters'.<sup>13</sup> This may have been so, but Gorchakov transferred him to Vienna in the late summer of 1882, replacing him with Baron Mohrenheim as a stopgap diplomat before the installation of Baron de Staal. He would remain the Russian ambassador in London for nearly twenty years, and although he was a personable and effective diplomat (he became Marie's friend and was often to be found at Eastwell Park or Clarence House), he was also a tentacle of the new anti-Semitic mentality in St Petersburg.

English popular opposition to Russia was once again led by *Bunch*, heavily supported by Joyce Preston-Muddock, a novelist, traveller, lecturer, and Swiss correspondent for the *Daily News* whose speciality was exposing what he saw as the evils of tsarist Russia. In 1888, he published *Stormlight: a story of Love And Nihilism in Switzerland and Russia*, a romance critical of the Nihilist creed but even more so of

the reactionary and oppressive tsardom that in Preston-Muddock's view had both seeded and harvested the terrors of Nihilism. Nine years later, he published (writing as Dick Donovan) *The Chronicles of Michael Danevitch of the Russian Secret Police*, a critique that might have been based on the life and work of Sudeikin. In between these, in 1892, came Preston-Muddock's undoubted masterpiece of anti-tsarist invective, *For God and the Czar*, a direct response to the pogroms and Lev Tolstói's failed attempt to publish his literary protest. The powerful – even prescient – 'Dedication' is certainly worth quoting in full:

To Jew and Gentile alike this book is humbly dedicated, in the hope that even the feeble attempt which I have made, under the guise of fiction, to lay bare the rottenness of Russia may not be without some good effect, and that honest men and women throughout the world, who believe that all races and creeds find acceptance in God's sight, will raise their voices against a system of government which is at once a disgrace and an outrage. The exile system peculiar to Russia, and the power that is placed in the hands of illiterate and stupid subordinates, would not be tolerated in any other civilized country where the people claim to be free. But surely the day is not far off when the downtrodden millions of Russia will resent this, and, bursting their shackles with a mighty wrench, will shake the world with their cry of Freedom. I, who love freedom and just laws, pray that God, the Father of all mankind, may hasten the coming of that day.

The novel, with its cover picture of a tsarist officer supervising the expulsion of a family of poor Jews, went into five popular editions before the Bolshevik Revolution.

*Punch* was not nearly so outspoken verbally, but Tenniel's natural humanitarian outlook led him to produce a series of scathing political cuts throughout this period. On 9 August 1890, 'From the Nile to the Neva' portrayed Aleksandr III as a Cossack withdrawing his sword marked 'persecution' from its scabbard while pressing a trussed-up Jew to the floor of a dungeon with his boot. As he prepared to kill his victim, the 'Shade of Pharaoh' warned: 'Forbear! That weapon always wounds the hand that wields it'. This cut was accompanied by a passage from Exodus (1:13-14) on the bondage of the 'Children of Israel' as well as a quote from a recent article in *The Times* deploring Russia's 'war against the Jews of the Empire'. This was followed by thirty-eight lines of loose hexameter making Tenniel's point quite clear – so clear, in fact, that from this moment *Punch* was forbidden in Russia. When Linley Sambourne visited St Petersburg shortly afterwards, he discovered that any cut against Russia or the tsar by Tenniel or him found in existing issues had been torn out and destroyed.

Mr Punch had always explained to his readers over the decades that whenever he had had his prominent nose tweaked by a 'foreign despot' it served only to make him redouble his efforts. Accordingly, Sambourne returned to England to produce 'The Russian Wolf and the Hebrew Lamb' on 20 December, in which Europa looked on impotently as a Jew was about to be 'dealt with' by a Cossack. Cossacks were often used as a model since they were by natural inclination primitive tribesmen and ferocious anti-Semites. Their geographical location made them the ideal natural police for the regime, and they took unrestrained pleasure in enforcing the new territorial laws with the indiscriminate application of the nagaika – a form of knouted hand-whip particular to them – whose effective use they had mastered while leaning off the side of a galloping horse, as thousands of Jewish heads had discovered to their terrible cost. This particular cut had been inspired by a series of letters to *The Times* published on 22 November and 3 and 10 December taunting Europe's impotence before Russia in the face of what the author – 'O. N.' – referred to as the 'wild attacks ... and mistaken protests' of European liberals.

The author of these anonymous letters may now be revealed as Olga Novikovna, a Russian woman long since based in London, where she had cultivated fruitful relations with Gladstone and other prominent liberals to become a fervent apologist for tsarist autocracy. However, it was of course not this aspect of her beliefs that endeared her to English liberalism, rather her attempts to prevent the spread of the 'national and royal obsession' in her general defence of Russia. In the beginning of 1880, Novikovna had published her monumental *Russia and England from 1876 to 1880 – A Protest and an Appeal*, full of maps, documents, and charts apparently demonstrating that Britain had nothing to fear from Russia either in India or in the Mediterranean. One of her many influential friends, the liberal historian James Anthony Froude, provided the book with a weighty and pacific preface, while Gladstone gave it a warm literary review in May.

This, as many would have readily conceded, was fair comment. But Novikovna was also Slavophil, anti-Semitic, and Pan-Slavist (one of her two military Pan-Slavist brothers had earned immediate martyrdom by becoming the first Russian to die in the war against Serbia), and many Liberals loathed her for her apparent influence with Liberal politicians. Novikovna's book pushed the Jewish conspiracy theory of Ignatiev (by an act of splendid contortion managing to quote Disraeli on her behalf), and also contained some perverse political reasoning. Her notion that Russia's failed Afghan war *proved* that the tsar had no intention of invading India was one of her more specious examples of political legerdemain, as it suggested that had Russia really wished to invade India it could not possibly have lost in Afghanistan along the way.

The Central Asian Question continued to generate interest until the final settlement of the Afghan border in 1895. During these last few years of the dispute, the man who assumed the position of acknowledged British 'expert' on the issue was George Nathaniel Curzon, subsequently the noted statesman but in 1889 Conservative member for the Southport division of Lancashire. Already a prize-winning historian, Curzon travelled extensively throughout Western Russia, the Caucasus, and Turkestan during the autumn of 1888 and spring of 1889, resulting in the first of three books on Asiatic affairs, *Russia in Central Asia in 1889 and the Anglo-Russian Question*. In this, it is possible to see the future nationalist for whom the rule and defence of India – he would be viceroy from 1899 to 1905 – became the political maxim of his career. It was a peculiar, if influential, book whose dedication was as peculiar as it was accurate: 'To the Great Army of Russophobes who mislead others, and Russophiles whom others mislead, I dedicate this book which will be found equally disrespectful to the ignoble terrors of the one and the perverse complacency of the other'.

Curzon was keen to stress that he had found 'no widespread hostility to England in Russia',<sup>14</sup> and he was quick to condemn the appalling racial and religious intolerance of Aleksandr III's political system. But his views on Russia and India were distinctly curious. 'I do not suppose that a single man in Russia ... ever dreams seriously of the conquest of India. To anyone ... who has even superficially studied the question, the project is too preposterous to be entertained'.<sup>15</sup> Tired wisdom by then, but Curzon then drew a distinction between conquest and invasion, reckoning that the Russians 'do most seriously contemplate the invasion of India ... His object is not Calcutta, but Constantinople; not the Ganges, but the Golden Horn'.<sup>16</sup> In other words, the 'second transcendental syllogism' was merely the pretext to carry into effect the first. By occupying British attention in India, Russia sought once and for all to make itself the master of the Bosphorus.

To support his view, Curzon quoted a number of Russian sources, in particular General Skobelev who had reckoned that 'sooner or later Russian statesmen will have

to recognise the fact that Russia must rule the Bosphorous' and that in order to do so there must be 'a serious demonstration in the direction of India'.<sup>17</sup> This was a pity, because there was always a great danger in quoting Skobelev on anything, as this brilliant military man was by nature a maverick who had died young not covered in blood and glory on some battlefield but in bodily fluids during an all-night sex orgy at a brothel. But in any event Curzon had been unwise to employ quotations in 1889 from a man speaking during the Russo-Turkish War a dozen years earlier. More recently, Skobelev had told Marvin in 1882 (shortly before his ignominious but perhaps glorious-in-another-sense death) that he would loathe to be commanded with the invasion of India as he believed the proposal, from the military standpoint, would be simply too enormous for any army to undertake. Needless to say this quote did not appear in Curzon's book, as his position as a Conservative was to state openly what many Liberals under Gladstone had quietly believed or suspected. Curzon only carefully drew that distinction between a Russia keen to snatch India away altogether from British rule – a rule whose inalienable right none in the debate sought to question – and a Russia whose own imperial momentum would inevitably carry the tsar's army across the border in some way and for some reason.

*Punch* ignored the Central Asian Question but persevered with its assaults on Aleksandr III's internal policies, publishing Tenniel's 'Blood versus Bullion' on 16 May 1891. This employed Shylock's speech from *The Merchant of Venice* (I iii) mocking Antonio's hypocrisy in requiring his money after having persecuted him. This was a reference to the proposal to borrow money (£20,000,000) from France under the forthcoming alliance in order to fund Russia's backward infrastructure – funds that would ultimately come from Jewish financiers in Paris – signed at St Petersburg on 6/18 November 1888. 'The Alarmed Autocrat' appeared on 13 June, in which Tenniel portrayed the horrified tsar demanding the removal of a Jew from his presence. To appreciate this cut, *Punch* readers would have had to remember that the tsar had recently admitted to the Moscow correspondent of *The Times* his conviction that all the many Nihilist plots against his life had been orchestrated by Jews.

There had been several attempts on Aleksandr III's life, and a dozen plots exposed. A mine had been discovered in the middle of St Petersburg as early as 3/15 March 1881, although it could not be established when it had been planted and therefore whether it had been intended for Aleksandr II. However, a conspiracy to blow up Aleksandr III with dynamite was uncovered in Warsaw on 27 August/8 September 1884. A military plot to assassinate him was uncovered in April 1886, with a number of officers being imprisoned. On 1/13 March 1887, two hundred conspirators (mostly students) were arrested after various explosives were discovered being prepared for insertion into bombs while some were apprehended in the streets carrying the finished devices concealed in hollowed-out books. Three of these were executed on 19/31 March, and five more on 4/16 May. In May 1888, a young lieutenant came closest to eliminating the tsar when he shot at him, narrowly missing his target. On 19/31 March 1890, about sixty imprisoned soldiers were released by the tsar, and who speedily repaid his clemency by drawing lots to determine which of them should assassinate him. However, the wretched man who selected himself for the task committed suicide, leaving a letter incriminating the rest, most of whom were quickly rearrested. At the end of October 1891, a political conspiracy to overthrow the tsar was uncovered in Moscow, with sixty arrests.

The tsar's statement to *The Times* in Moscow had followed the assassination of one of his prominent Okhrana members by a Jewess, and the revelation that another had been killed by a Jew. The first incident had involved the chief of the Moscow

Okhrana, who had been killed on 31 December 1889/11 January 1890 by a female Nihilist who immediately afterwards took her own life. In the second incident, reports in the press that the prominent Jewish Nihilist Sergei Degaev had been captured at Kostromo reached the tsar in February 1891. Degaev was the mercenary double agent who had betrayed revolutionists and Okhrana alike before assassinating Sudeikin in 1883. The report of the arrest was subsequently found to be false, however, since Degaev had been forced to flee from Russia in 1884 under a threat of death from revolutionists and he never returned, becoming a successful professor of mathematics at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

Wherever the tsar looked, it seemed, Jews appeared to be confirming the views of Pobedonostev and Ignatev. On 22 February/5 March 1890, a prominent Jewess noted for her writings on liberal education for women wrote the tsar a threatening letter for his continuing to suppress personal liberty; she was arrested and transported to the Caucasus. It seemed not to have occurred to the regime that the undeniably prominent Jewish composition of the socialist revolutionary groups was largely a reaction to the state persecutions, as both an offensive and defensive move. By its vicious anti-Semitism, the tsardom of Aleksandr III laid the foundations of the predominantly Jewish Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and it was not mere coincidence that one of the students hung in May 1887 had been Aleksandr Ulianov – Lenin's older brother.

But *Punch* could be wrong even when acting on behalf of what it believed to be right. On 22 August 1891, Sambourne published 'The Two Emperors' in which Emperor Kuang-hsü of China was contrasted favourably against Aleksandr III. Kuang-hsü had issued a decree on 15 June guaranteeing the safety of all foreigners (Westerners) in China, and Sambourne portrayed this non-Christian emperor welcoming a Christian priest into China; the allegedly Christian tsar, however, was shown flogging an elderly Jew with a nagaika. But Kuang-hsü – meaning 'glorious succession' – had assumed personal rule on 4 March 1889 as an inexperienced teenager. He became a figurehead and mouthpiece for alleged reforms while real power remained with the fiercely nationalist and anti-Western dowager empress who continued with her own persecution of foreigners just as fervently as Aleksandr conducted his pogroms. The point, however, had been well made.

No account of Anglo-Russian relations in the 1880s and 1890s can be complete without mentioning William Thomas Stead, the crusading journalist and advocate for world peace now editor of the highly influential *Pall Mall Gazette* as the phalanx of what became known as the New Journalism. Back in 1885, Stead had helped prompt the government into further expenditure on the navy – the 'peace through strength' theory – after a series of sensationalist articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette* he had called 'Truth about the Navy'. Three years later, he attempted something similar on Russia but in the form of a book, leaving England in late April 1888 for St Petersburg and not returning until early June. *Truth about Russia* was published immediately on his arrival, having been written on the return journey.

Stead was another friend of Novikovna (he would later write a benign account of her life when editing her papers) and, like her, attempted to disinfect Britain of the 'national and royal obsession', demonstrating its absurdity through personal interviews and close observation during his visit. Stead believed that Russia and England should develop closer ties – actually citing the marriage of Affie and Marie as an example of Anglo-Russian accord – and, like many others before and after him, reckoned that it was in fact Bismarck's Second Reich that threatened the peace of Europe. Stead's saints were Lev Tolstoi, the tsar, and Ignatev, while his demons were Dmitrii Tolstoi, Pobedonostev, and Bismarck.

Stead was probably aware that on 3/15 December 1887 the Russian government organ *Invalide Russe* had declared that although Russia wanted peace it was financially and militarily prepared for war with anyone, which may have recalled to Stead's mind the opening lines of Hunt's chorus from *We Don't Want To Fight*. In any event, he found that this was now the dominant atmosphere in Russia. However, although Stead gave his readers a generally accurate and balanced view of Russia's pacific foreign policies, it was at a time when Russia would not have been capable of conducting a full-scale war against any power – a point he did not, of course, stress.

But Russia's internal policies were a very different matter. Stead did not flinch from attacking the religious persecutions he had witnessed, but blamed them entirely on Dmitrii Tolstoi and Pobedonostev, aided and abetted by a primitive and obscurantist church. Because he chanced to find Ignatev and Aleksandr personable, he refused to admit their culpability, assuming that his readers would not know that had the tsar wished he could have put a stop to the pogroms with a single command.

On the other hand, and unlike the bulk of the English press, Stead made explicit the less widely known fact that it was not only the Jews who were being persecuted but also Roman Catholics in Poland and Evangelicals in Russia. Particularly affected were those evangelicals adhering to the teachings of the preacher Lord Radstock, who had visited St Petersburg in 1874 and 1876, and whose evangelical revival led to a number of high-profile expulsions of Protestants up to the 1890s. This policy of non-Orthodox expulsion also included Anglicans, Baptists, and Methodists, as well as dissenting Orthodox bodies such as the Old Believers, while the circulation of most non-Orthodox religious books had been prohibited in 1884.

Stead viewed all this as an uncharacteristic slide towards the religious despotism and persecutory mania customarily the province of Rome and the Catholic Church. Something, he reckoned, had suddenly gone very wrong in Russia, as though a disease had been introduced into a healthy body – perhaps 'from abroad', as every Slavophil fervently believed. Georges de Staal, in addition to being an ardent admirer of Novikovna, had read *Truth About Russia* by March 1889. He acclaimed it for the way its author had so cleverly exonerated the tsar from any accusations of anti-Semitism, as though this had been its primary objective, which of course in a way it was, and it is hardly surprising that Staal rejected Savory's Jewish petition. Stead's crusading technique often exhibited a strong degree of cant and humbug in addition to moral priggishness, and he had not the head to reason out the occasionally commendable certainties of his heart. He was one of those many men who thoroughly deserve to have the plaintive words 'He Meant Well' cut into their headstones.

The persecution of Jews under Aleksandr III was no more the monomaniacal obsession of all Russians than anti-Russian Jingoism under Disraeli had been the *raison d'être* of the entire British nation, although these characteristics have left a lasting impression. The fact that Marie had received Lady Rosebery at her table at Malta in November 1886 by her own invitation should not be overlooked as entirely trivial, but rather as a natural extension of her father's innate tolerance at a time when Jews were not welcome at her brother's Russian court. In so far as both conspicuous characteristics became the symbols by which Britain and Russia were measured, the one became regarded as insular, arrogant, and militaristic; the other as illiberal, reactionary, and despotic. Marie's private difficulty may be imagined, and so too her relief at knowing that she would soon accede to a German duchy. The irony of course would consist in the fact that shortly afterwards Anglo-Russian discord would dissipate and be overshadowed by Anglo-German and Russo-German tension, placing Marie in an even more difficult position than the one she had been in before.

~ A very German succession ~

On Wednesday 31 May 1893, Marie left Devonport for Clarence House to oversee the final preparations for Affie's arrival there before returning to him at Admiralty House on Saturday 3 June. On that day, Affie received his final *pro forma* promotion to the rank of admiral of the fleet as he prepared to leave Devonport with Marie (two days after his duties had officially ended) aboard a train that took them directly to London.

On Sunday 18, Tsarevich Niki paid them a visit at Clarence House for afternoon tea in the garden. This was Niki's first visit to Britain, he having been invited by Queen Victoria to attend the marriage of Georgie to Princess May the following month. Niki was unable to do this, but he had arrived for some of the pre-nuptial celebrations early that same day, lodging with Bertie and Alix at Marlborough House. Two days later, Niki and Marie went to the Russian chapel on Welbeck Street for the feast of the military martyr St Theodore 'Stratelates' of Heraclea. The service and singing were excellent, Niki thought, since the choir had been sent from Paris, where the cathedral of St Aleksandr Nevskii (1861) boasted the finest choir outside of Russia. Niki and a number of other royal guests then took luncheon at Clarence House.

The most interesting guest Niki received, at Marlborough House on Monday 26, was Mackenzie Wallace with whom he had a talk before leaving for a Guildhall banquet. There he sweated profusely when giving his speech as he was dressed in an obligatory Cossack coat (on 6/18 May 1887, he had been created hetman [captain] of the Novocherkassk Cossacks). Marie attended few official functions with her nephew, seeing him for the third and final time on the morning of 28 June when he left Marlborough House for Charing Cross station, and then the South Eastern Railway Company's Port Victoria on the Medway.

Affie and Marie with Ducky and Baby Bee made preparations to attend Georgie's marriage, which took place at the chapel in St James's Palace on Thursday 6 July, and on the following day they left for Darmstadt and Jugenheim, lodging at Heiligenberg. On Tuesday 11, Affie and Marie posed for a special photograph to mark the twentieth anniversary of their engagement, for which an official engagement photograph had been taken on the exact same spot on Wednesday 11 June 1873.

A few days later, the four Edinburghs arrived at their eponymous house in Coburg where Prince Alfred was waiting for them, Missy and Sandra being by this time married. The Palais Edinburgh had been built for Affie in 1865, being a modest three-story block resembling a second-rate first attempt at a third-grade provincial *Rathaus*. But the real joy of Coburg for Affie and Marie – as well as the children – was the Schloss Rosenau, situated in the woods four-and-a-half miles northeast of the town. Many buildings in Germany carry the courtesy title 'Schloss', a misnomer certainly applicable to Rosenau as it was really a modest *villa orné* in the gothic revival style of the eighteenth century constructed of stone, wood, and stained glass, carrying a squat tower capped with pseudo-crenellations giving (at a distance) a charming medieval illusion. However, it commanded a magnificent view of the mountains on one side and the Veste Festung on the other. The Veste Festung, a mile or so northeast of Coburg and resting 520 feet above the town on the great dolomite rock, was the thirteenth-century seat of the Saxe-Coburg family (rebuilt after 1499), and whose Hohes Haus was at that time still habitable and occasionally used for private functions. Rosenau also boasted a large romantic garden filled with water features, a grotto, secluded stone seats, as well as a vast selection of flowers, shrubs, and trees.

Schloss Rosenau was, of course, the house in which Prince Albert had been born and raised, and both Queen Victoria and Affie had been there on several occasions

long before either had ever heard of Marie Aleksandrovna. Unfortunately, the property had been allowed to decay since Albert's death, as his brother Ernst cared little for it, and this was one of many aspects of Ernst's life that found little sympathy with Marie, as she had written ten years earlier:

The stuffs actually fall off the chairs and sofas and the paper on the walls is cracked and in some rooms it is also falling off and detached as the rooms are never warmed ... My most cherished wish is that Uncle Ernest should give us the Rosenau to keep and restore.<sup>18</sup>

It took Affie and Marie five years to partly achieve their objective. Although Ernst would not formally make the Rosenau over to them, Marie explained to Victoria on 13 July 1888 that:

Uncle Ernest has allowed us to restore the house, we feel much more comfortable in it and have already made a few sanitary improvements, which were absolutely necessary. The rooms, however, have remained just as they were, with only a few comfortable chairs and sofas put about. The gardens were always admirably kept and the whole place looks too pretty, I really love it.<sup>19</sup>

It would be neither an exaggeration nor a disservice to Marie's memory to state that she loathed Ernst.

Ernst had married Princess Alexandrine von Baden on 3 May 1842, but he would have no legitimate issue. A political liberal and fervent nationalist, he had succeeded to the two duchies – since 1826 a pair representing one of four Saxon duchies ruled by members of the Ernestine line of the House of Wettin – on 29 January 1844. He had been one of the few German princes to offer political refugees asylum after the 1848 Revolution, and, after 1860, he became the patron and protector of the *Nationalverein*. He ingratiated himself with Wilhelm I by subordinating his army to that of Prussia in 1861, but annoyed Bismarck with his continued democratic leaning. His important role in the creation of the future Second Reich effectively ended in 1866 with the political absorption of the German Confederation by Prussia between August and October through a treaty of alliance between Bismarck and twenty-one Germanic states, eliminating independent action by any one prince. The North German Parliament met for the first time on 24 February 1867, but on 1 January 1871 it was absorbed into the Second Reich, and Saxe-Coburg Gotha became a federated duchy with the emperor as titular ruler over a local diet answerable to parliament and the chancellor. After this, Ernst's marital and fiscal life – already notorious – became the scandal of Europe, with his obsessive priapism rendering virtually any female within his reach a potential victim of the most organized career of lechery in the history of nineteenth-century Germany.

In the event of Ernst dying without issue, succession should have fallen to Bertie. However, as heir to the British throne, Bertie's succession to a foreign duchy was impossible, and on 19 April 1863 he made his *pro forma* renunciation of the ducal inheritance in favour of his next youngest brother. Thus Marie had lived her entire English life in the knowledge that she would almost certainly succeed to the duchy of Saxe-Coburg Gotha.

The prospect may have been attractive as a means of quitting England, but it appalled her from the practical point of view. Ernst had thoroughly enjoyed his position and had made the most of it, bleeding the ducal treasury dry to fund his vast artistic and municipal projects, worthy enough enterprises in themselves but utterly ruinous for the local economy. As early as 1881, she had complained that Ernst's financial affairs were 'not in a brilliant condition',<sup>20</sup> which led to some heated

arguments between the duke and his heir, with Marie noting that Affie's solo visit in 1885 'was not satisfactory at all. What are we to do, and how is one to look to the future with any hope of a reconciliation?'<sup>21</sup>

The licentiousness of Ernst's life and his generally appalling behaviour towards others were of even more concern to Marie. The duke fathered an unknown quantity of (male) illegitimate children during a long life of uncontrollable concupiscence, but what scandalized Marie the most was his treatment of Frau Königsegg, a recently twice-widowed illegitimate (only) daughter who lived in Coburg. Nor did she spare Duchess Alexandrine in this, whom she held to be guilty not so much by association as by wilful purblindness:

As to Affairs in Coburg, they are very painful and Uncle Ernest cannot be enough blamed. He is surrounded by dreadful people and has dismissed all the true and faithful friends of the family ... [who are] mortally offended and are never seen nowadays ... As to Mme Königsegg it is really too shameful for words, the conduct of both towards her. The poor unfortunate woman! who has gone twice through the deepest grief and sorrow, who always has been so good, and brave and faithful to them, and now she is abandoned, pursued, with nobody to help or protect her, almost verging on poverty, with a boy still at home and two daughters to provide for. I had a long conversation with her two days ago and I never heard such a tale of misery, humiliation of every kind and the most revolting unkindness. And when one thinks who she is, his own and only daughter, and what her position is ... they both absolutely refuse to see her ... Aunt is still more to blame, but she is so blind as to the faults of her husband that it is perfectly useless to make her understand his shameful conduct towards his only daughter.<sup>22</sup>

Alexandrine, meanwhile, was Ernst's 'absolute slave and not what a wife ought to be'.<sup>23</sup> Two years later, Marie wrote that she was 'getting very sick of the whole business' of Königsegg. But now she noted the 'extraordinary folly' of the duke's involvement with a new young woman he was fraudulently claiming to be his daughter in order to be able to keep her in the ducal palace as his mistress.<sup>24</sup>

Affie and Marie were in Coburg for Ernst II's final illness. Affie travelled to Schloss Reinhardsbrunn, the castle built by Ernst I on the site of a medieval Benedictine abbey at Friedrichroda in Gotha, at the end of July 1893. He returned to Coburg on 9 August and the following day wrote Wilhelm a short report on his uncle's health, which was far from good:

On the evening of 1<sup>st</sup> August Uncle had a paralytic stroke by which his right side, both arm and leg, and his speech and consciousness, were affected. There has been a slow but steady improvement ever since ... He now sits in a chair for a large portion of the day ... I have great doubts whether his mind will recover its activity.<sup>25</sup>

Affie was right to question the duke's full mental recovery, and he died after a second massive stroke, with reasonably considerate timing and, as Marie put it, with 'his mind ... gone',<sup>26</sup> on Tuesday 22 August at Reinhardsbrunn. Queen Victoria's subtle and laconic comment in her journal on hearing the news of the duke's death encapsulated everything that Marie had gone to such lengths to express: Alexandrine 'perfectly adored' him but 'he was often very trying'.<sup>27</sup>

Affie and Marie were informed immediately by telegraph and they travelled directly to Reinhardsbrunn, where on the following morning Affie took his oath of allegiance to the ducal and imperial constitutions in front of Wilhelm II. Two days later, the official announcement of Affie's succession was made public. On 28 August, the party returned to Coburg for Ernst's funeral at the fifteenth-century church dedicated to St Mauricius of Thebes, fourth-century *primicarius* and martyr, and known locally as the Morizkirche. Also present were Bertie representing Victoria,

Ferdinand of Bulgaria, and the duke of Connaught. On 2 October, the federal diet of the combined duchies met to approve and arrange the forthcoming festivities connected with the public reception of Affie and Marie into the duchies the following year. On Saturday 28, Wilhelm II received Affie and Marie officially at Potsdam as the new duke and duchess of Saxe-Coburg Gotha, where they made obeisance to him as their new emperor.

In 1863, Affie had been rather excited at the prospect of succeeding to a German duchy, but the loose confederation of Germanic states at that time was a very different Germany from what Bismarck and Wilhelm II had made of it as the Second Reich. The struggle for supreme control of the Reich had led to the dismissal of Bismarck in March 1890 and the establishment of Wilhelmine Autocracy, whose precepts of *personalismus* and *nationalismus* regarded Affie with the deepest suspicion. His succession raised considerable opposition within the ranks of the now Wilhelmine Reptile Press that saw him as the forthcoming instrument of Germanophobic English influence in *Der Kaiserland*. *The Times* (24 August) reckoned that ‘as he is an English Prince, a naval officer of singular ability and large experience, and the brother-in-law of the Tsar of Russia ... [he] will of course have to live down a certain amount of [German] opposition on account of his English training, but ... that training will rather help than hinder him’. Two days later, *The Times* supported this prophetic passage when it translated and quoted a typical passage from *Der Reichsbote* (‘The State Messenger’, a government organ) stating: ‘We confess openly that it offends our national sensibility that an English Duke and Admiral should be Regent of a German state ... The thought is intolerable ... if it is imposed upon the nation ... it can only conduce to diminishing the importance and prestige of the monarchy’.

The fiscal problems with the duchy were by 1893 very nearly insurmountable. ‘Uncle Ernest’s money matters were in a dreadful mess’, Vicky explained to a daughter, ‘and he [Affie] has had to cut down and reduce the expenditure in every way ... there are tremendous debts to pay off’.<sup>28</sup> Gladstone, now heading his fourth and final administration, and with whom Affie had been corresponding since 1866, had to deal with this problem as Affie attempted to retain as much of his civil list as was humanly and legally possible.

Gladstone opened the general debate regarding Affie’s new status at a cabinet meeting on 4 November. This did not go well for Affie, the majority of those ministers present being in favour of his unconditional renunciation of both annuities. Chief among Affie’s opponents were John Morley, chief secretary for Ireland; Herbert Asquith, the home secretary; and Arthur Acland, who had entered the cabinet as vice-president of the Committee of Council on Education. One of Affie’s most fervent supporters, apart from the prime minister, was Rosebery, foreign secretary for the second time under Gladstone. The following day, he wrote a scathing letter to Gladstone complaining of the Jacobin attitude of Morley, and how the cabinet’s majority attitude would throw a bankrupt Affie at the financial mercy of his wife – a horror barely to be contemplated by the Victorian male.

Affie opened the private life of the debate in writing with a letter addressed to Gladstone on 19 November 1893:

My accession to the Dukedom of Saxe Coburg and Gotha caused me to recognise that my position as the recipient of money granted to me by the British people is substantially affected. I read the words of the provisions contained in the Acts of 1866 & 1873 as intimating that Parliament reserved to itself the right if I succeeded to the Sovereignty of the Duchy of Saxe Coburg to readjust the provisions made for me under those acts.

Affie then went on to remind Gladstone that in 1873 he had said “the Duke of Edinburgh might become a foreign sovereign [but] he would not therefore cease to be an English Prince” and therefore his income would require adjusting. Affie explained that he wished to pass ‘a substantial portion of every year’ in England and therefore wished to also ‘retain possession of Clarence House’ and such staff as he may require. Affie was happy to renounce ‘a certain portion’ of his income if that was required of him, but he asked to retain ‘a sum sufficient to enable me to bear the expense’ of being both an English prince and a German duke. The following day, Gladstone replied telling Affie that his letter had ‘set forth’ his views ‘with a lucidity which leaves nothing to be desired’.

There were other important considerations apart from money. Spencer, still in his position of first lord of the admiralty, had written to Gladstone on 9 November suggesting that Affie retain his position in the navy. On 23 November, an Order in Council confirmed him as admiral of the fleet for life but deprived him of his automatic right to take a seat in the House of Lords. On Monday 4 December, Affie resigned his membership of the Privy Council, as he had been obliged to do, and waited for Gladstone’s official response regarding his income. It came on Saturday 16 December, announcing in spite of strong cabinet opposition that ‘it would be a just and equitable arrangement’ for Affie to renounce the £15,000 a year granted to him by the 1866 Act, but to ‘continue during your life’ to receive the additional £10,000 granted by the 1873 Act. It was a workable compromise, and ten days later Affie thanked Gladstone for the ‘kind manner’ in which he had dealt with the matter, thereby bringing the awkward business to a mutually satisfactory conclusion.<sup>29</sup>

Publicly, however, these matters had taken a very different turn. Following Liberal and Radical questioning, Gladstone had revealed to the Commons (13 November) that Affie would be retained on the Navy List, albeit without pay or capacity for active service, to the dismay of those who thought that he should be struck off altogether. Ten days later, it was asked whether Affie was bound by his oath as a privy councillor now that he was a foreign duke. Gladstone responded by reminding the House that as a member of the royal family Affie did not have to swear the traditional oath. On Thursday 21 December, Gladstone outlined the entire annuity question as he had just arranged it with Affie, to the horror of the uncompromising section of the Commons led by Henry Labouchère, Radical-Liberal member for Northampton since 1880. Labouchère asked the House to divide on the issue of more parliamentary time for the members to discuss what he considered to be an extremely important question for the nation. However, Gladstone’s spirited defence of Affie ensured that Labouchère lost the vote by 59 to 177.

The matter did not end there. On 28 December, the issue of Affie’s nationality was raised, and again Gladstone defended by pointing out that Affie remained a British national as the son of Queen Victoria but that he owed her no further allegiance as a sovereign. This was too fine a point for many to digest. *The Daily News* (29 December) stated: ‘We sympathise strongly with those who object to the grant both because the Duke has enough, and because he will be henceforth for all practical purposes a foreigner’. Accurately, though petulantly, it observed that ‘Nobody asked him to retain Clarence House’. However, *The Daily News* did accept Gladstone’s explanation of the legal differences between the 1866 annuity act, which was personal and which he could renounce (and had), and the 1873 marriage treaty between Britain and Russia, which could not be revoked without a special and additional act of parliament in Britain. Such a revocation would also require imperial consent in Russia, as Marie’s annuity in the event of Affie’s death was bound up in the same act.

On 19 April 1894, *The Times* concluded the speculation thus: 'A British subject may at the same time be a foreign subject, and might, also, at any rate down to the passing of the Naturalization Act of [12 May] 1870 [33 & 34 Vict. c.102; also 35 & 36 Vict. c.39 (25 July 1872)], be also a foreign Sovereign'. *The Standard*, a thoroughly Conservative newspaper founded in 1827, found itself siding with Gladstone on all these issues. On 19 April 1894, it attacked the Labouchère coterie: 'Notwithstanding the ill-natured manœuvres of a small body of English politicians, who seek systematically to advertise themselves by assailing whatever good citizens hold in respect, the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh have not lost any of the esteem in which they were held when abiding among us'. Nevertheless, there were sporadic attacks in the Commons against Affie for the rest of his life, usually with the objective of having his £10,000 annuity withdrawn. These critics were never able to understand the difference between the two annuity acts, and their no more gifted parliamentary descendants would raise the matter again two decades later respecting Marie.

In order for Affie and Marie to enter Gotha as the new ducal couple they first had to vacate it. After the official recognition by Wilhelm in Potsdam, Affie returned to England while Marie, who had been in Romania for the birth of Missy's son on 3/15 October 1893 and had returned for the Potsdam ceremony, now travelled to Russia a little while after Affie's departure. The three unmarried children stayed behind in Coburg. Affie attended Bertie's birthday celebrations at Sandringham on 9 November, spending several days at Windsor Castle and Cumberland Lodge, then returned to Clarence House from where he conducted his correspondence with Gladstone. Marie lived quietly in St Petersburg until the time appointed for her to meet Affie in Coburg for Christmas and the New Year prior to the state entry into Gotha.

Shortly after Affie and Marie succeeded to the duchy, Vicky commented on the prospect to her daughter:

For Uncle Alfred, this is a difficult time, he will have to give up dear old London for good, and devote himself to his German home and his new duties. But he will do it all so well, and Aunt Marie will love being No 1, and reigning Duchess, I am sure.<sup>30</sup>

Marie Erbach later recalled that 'only as a German Federal Princess and reigning Duchess of Saxe-Coburg Gotha did she attain to that sphere of action suited to her character and capacities'.<sup>31</sup> This is in fact what many believed would be the case, and retrospectively what many believed had been the case. But the real boon was not in favour of Marie but Affie, whose moroseness and irascible temper would have been dangerously intolerable without it. As will be seen, Affie could not in any case make the adjustment from sea to land, but as a retired seaman in England with nothing to do other than kill stags in Scotland and time in London it is probable that he would have deteriorated much sooner. 'I feel so intensely grateful to Providence', Marie wrote on succeeding to the duchy, for having 'sent him this new serious occupation'.<sup>32</sup>

## NOTES and REFERENCES to Chapter Six

- <sup>1</sup> HL MS 62 MB1/U24, Windsor Castle to St Petersburg 8 May 1889.
- <sup>2</sup> HL MS 62 MB1/U24, Windsor Castle to St Petersburg 26 May 1889.
- <sup>3</sup> HL MS 62 MB1/U24, Clarence House to [?] spring 1879.
- <sup>4</sup> Eastwell House was demolished in the 1920s and replaced by a facsimile of a neo-Elizabethan mansion from Hertfordshire; it is currently a hotel. The church of St Mary and Lake Lodge fell into ruin, while the old rectory disappeared entirely. The grounds were extensively remodelled, and today only the neo-Jacobean gatehouse of the 1840s is still largely as Affie and Marie would have known it.
- <sup>5</sup> RA VIC/Add. A 20/1668, Marie to Victoria 1 Aug. 1891.
- <sup>6</sup> *Marie of Romania* i 208.
- <sup>7</sup> *Harrison* 321.
- <sup>8</sup> RA VIC/Add. A 20/1669, Illinskoe to Balmoral 29 Sep./11 Oct. 1891.
- <sup>9</sup> RA VIC/Add. A 20/1670, Marie to Queen Victoria 29 Feb. 1892.
- <sup>10</sup> *Stoeckl* 49.
- <sup>11</sup> PRO FO 65/554 (58), Erskine to Lord John Russell 28 Jul./9 Aug. 1860.
- <sup>12</sup> By this time, the Corporation of London had elected three Jews to the office of lord mayor: David Salomans in 1855; [Sir] Benjamin Samuel Phillips in 1865 (who had given the Freedom of the City of London to Affie); and Savory's immediate predecessor and fellow alderman Sir Henry Aaron Isaacs.
- It was by no means only Russia's treatment of its Jewish population that caused a furore in England and elsewhere. The Exile System to Siberia, begun by Pëtr I in 1710, was also attacked. On 26 December 1889, *The Times* carried a report of how thirty exiles at Yakutsk, including women and children, had rebelled against their captors and been ruthlessly crushed with three men hanged. Subsequent reports denied this, and then, when confronted by incontrovertible evidence, claimed it was an exaggeration. George Kennan, an American journalist in London, had spent a year in Siberia observing the system, exposing it in a book (1891) that finally demonstrated to an incredulous and horrified public the truth about this harsh, arbitrary, and archaic method of punishment.
- <sup>13</sup> *Fitzmaurice* ii 416.
- <sup>14</sup> *Curzon* 21.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 320.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 321.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 323.
- <sup>18</sup> RA VIC/Add. A 20/1612, Marie to Queen Victoria 7 Jul. 1882. Marie subsequently wrote that she and Affie could then 'give up that very dull and costly Eastwell' [RA VIC/Add. A 20/1613, 10 Sep. 1882].
- <sup>19</sup> RA VIC/Add. A 20/1649, Coburg to Windsor Castle.
- <sup>20</sup> RA VIC/Add. A 20/1600, Marie to Queen Victoria 17 Feb. 1881.
- <sup>21</sup> RA VIC/Add. A 20/1630, Marie to Queen Victoria 18 Oct. 1885.
- <sup>22</sup> RA VIC/Add. A 20/1612, Marie to Queen Victoria 7 Jul. 1882. On 22 November 1897, Marie petitioned Queen Victoria for a donation of £100 to add to one of her own of the same amount in order for Baroness Königsegg to retire 'to Geneva' and die there peacefully [RA VIC/Add. A 20/1695]. Victoria's Privy Purse accounts reveal that on 1 December she paid £100 6s 9d to a 'Lady at Coburg'. It is amusing to see that Victoria's contribution just had to be a few shillings greater than Marie's.
- <sup>23</sup> RA VIC/Z 471/8, Marie to Queen Victoria 2 Sep. 1893.
- <sup>24</sup> RA VIC/Add. A 20/1622, Marie to Queen Victoria 15 Apr. 1884.
- <sup>25</sup> PRO GFM 21/183 *Die Herzogliche Familie vol 1 Apr 1887 – 25 Aug 1893* (A 6735), Affie (Rosenau) to Wilhelm II 10 Aug 1893.
- <sup>26</sup> RA VIC/Z 471/8, Marie to Queen Victoria 2 Sep. 1893.
- <sup>27</sup> LQV III ii 305, 23 Aug. 1893.
- <sup>28</sup> *Lee* 152, Germany to Greece Aug./Sep. 1893.
- <sup>29</sup> BL MS Loan 73, *Correspondence 1866 to 1894*. Even sympathetic scholars have criticized Gladstone for the time and effort he expended on what they see as a trivial issue, pointing out that at the cabinet meeting of 4 November 1893 the matter took precedence over Matabeleland and Chief Lobengula. This is to ignore Gladstone's personal affection for Marie, his respect for Affie, his desire to honour an agreement he himself had helped reach, and the political liberalism of the ducal couple.
- <sup>30</sup> *Lee* 150, Germany to Greece Aug. 1893.
- <sup>31</sup> *Erbach* 174.
- <sup>32</sup> RA VIC/Z 471/8, Marie to Queen Victoria 2 Sep. 1893.