



VICTORIA AND ALBERT

"They set a standard. . . . They became a pattern"

Consort until 1857, 17 years after his marriage, when it was conferred on him by letters patent.

How Much To Spend?

The matter of income, too, caused the Queen some considerable mortification. The sum of £50,000 was suggested by Lord Melbourne. This is what had been given to Leopold, and it was the sum given to Queen Consorts since the reign of George II. But a Queen, it was argued, by those blackguardly Tories, required a much more elaborate household than a Prince, who was only a man after all. Moreover Queen Consorts were recognised by the Constitution. Prince Consorts not. Again, the country was in a depression. So to the Queen's chagrin Albert was given only £30,000 a year—which, with the Queen's income, seems to have been ample once his household was properly organised.

Poor Albert, in fact, found the Palace in the state of chaos one can imagine as existing in an establishment where the Lord Steward was responsible for the laying of the fires while the Lord Chamberlain was responsible for lighting them; where the insides of the windows were cleaned by one or other of their departments while the outsides were the responsibility of the Office of Woods and Forests. It took as long then to mend a broken sash as it does to get cement for Buckingham Palace to-day. It was four years before Prince Albert,

at first a mere cipher, was able to assert his authority in the matter of Palace expenditure.

And that was only one of his troubles. Prince Albert in the first years of his marriage was a rather unpopular nonentity, for all Victoria's adoration. He was simply the Queen's husband and the Queen's subject, holding precedence by Royal prerogative. But he did not long remain a nonentity. Just as he soon became the master in his own house, so his influence came to guide the Queen throughout her public life, which continued long after his death. A Peerage would have been irrelevant to the position he eventually built for himself. It is important to realise to what an extent his later role was made by his own actions and personality in ways which had nothing to do with rank.

Position of the Sovereign

The husband of Princess Elizabeth, however, will probably accept a Peerage (so we have been given to understand) and already there is talk as to what rank will be conferred on him. Beyond that his role, like Albert's, will largely depend on himself and his attitude and policy in conjunction with that of Elizabeth as Queen. However, it must be remembered that the position of a Sovereign to-day is somewhat different from what it was in Queen Victoria's time.

The Hanoverian kings who preceded Victoria had wrought havoc with royalty.

Victoria sought to re-instate it by taking an active interest in politics, or rather by a participation which became ardent partisanship. She adored the Whigs in the person of Lord Melbourne who guided her first Queenly footsteps (she was only 18), but she loathed the Tories with an equal ardour. It was Prince Albert who made friends with Sir Robert Peel when the Tory party finally, in spite of all Victoria's efforts, came into power. Albert had vowed that he would take no part in politics, but he found there was much in the way of balance and impartiality as well as of proper Constitutional behaviour that he could teach his young wife, three months his elder though she was. Prince Albert studied law. He steeped himself in the British Constitution. He became the Queen's secretary and confidential adviser. More and more the reign became a joint one in all but name, and jointly they created a tradition that gave royalty once more the mana and respectability which for a while it had lost. In fact, together they raised it to a particular kind of dignity that it had never had. Albert believed in the permanence of the crown through shifting ministries; he believed in a continuity in foreign policy which it seemed to him that this gave. He believed in a stability in nice accord with his own sober and dutiful attitude to life. But he did more than believe. He became an active centre of foreign affairs. From the time of the Peel ministry it is said that not a despatch was sent from the Foreign Office without his perusal, and no report of any importance was allowed to be kept from him.

In domestic politics, however, the role of the Queen and her Consort became progressively more passive than active. They set a standard. They became a pattern. Constitutionally the political power of the Sovereign was, and still

is, very limited. But no constitution can limit the powers of the monarchy in philanthropy, in art and music and industry. Albert became a patron of everything. He made model farms, he encouraged musicians, he dabbled in architecture. But his *tour de force* was the great Exhibition and the Crystal Palace. There was no end to Victoria's pride and satisfaction. And England was proud of him, too, though to the end it never forgot that he was a foreigner.

To the Prince Consort, then, as much as to the Queen herself, we owe the character of Victoria's reign. There is no question that a Prince Consort can have a wide influence for good or ill, since royalty has become a symbol of all that is right and respectable in English life. Politically, his hands are tied. Even the reigning Monarch has little to do with politics. Legally the Sovereign can appoint and dismiss ministers, dissolve Parliament, create Peers, and refuse assent to any Bill which Parliament may have passed. But to-day it is almost always unconstitutional to use these powers without the advice of the Ministry. Now and then, however, awkward problems arise which call for a decision. And even though to-day one might not so readily say to Princess Elizabeth as Lord Melbourne said to Victoria on her engagement, "You will be much more comfortable, for a woman cannot stand alone for any time in whatever position she may be," still most of us find it good to have someone to consult. And though the position of Prince Consort is not an easy one, it is not so hard to-day to play second fiddle to a woman as it was in Albert's time. There are more precedents.

So, altogether, Lieut. Mountbatten begins without most—and those the greatest—of Albert's handicaps. But above all, it is his role to carry on a tradition, not to make one.

Another Success for Lilburn



THE New Zealand composer Douglas Lilburn scored another success in the Wellington Town Hall on Wednesday, July 9, when his "Diversions" was given its first performance by the Boyd Neel Orchestra. A short time ago Lilburn's "Sonatina" was received with great enthusiasm when Lili Kraus played it in her last solo recital in Wellington. "Diversions," which was composed earlier this year, consists of five short pieces. It was well received by the large audience and Boyd Neel himself told "The Listener" he thought it excellent. "New Zealand is fortunate to have such a composer," he said. "That type of music is one of the most difficult to write successfully." Lilburn (right) is seen above with Boyd Neel after the performance