

Royal Weddings I Have Attended

Princess Marie Louise to the Duchess of York



ROYAL WEDDINGS OF RECENT YEARS.—(Left) Princess Marina, whose wedding next week is being eagerly looked forward to by the whole Empire. (Centre) Princess Mary, whose wedding to Viscount Lascelles was one of the most brilliant affairs London has known. (Right) The Duchess of York, who, before her marriage was Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, a member of an ancient Scots family.

Next week's Royal wedding will have the largest congregation in history, for the ceremony at Westminster Abbey is to be broadcast to the Empire. Princess Marina arrived in London this week and arrangements are now complete for the ceremony which will link the Royal houses of England and Greece. The story printed below was written by a London society woman who has attended many Royal wedding ceremonies.

THE first Royal wedding I ever attended was that of our Princess Marie Louise, then known as Princess Augusta of Schleswig-Holstein. It took place at St. George's Chapel, Windsor. The bridegroom was Prince Aribert of Anhalt. There was great excitement about it, and I recall that the crossed "A's" of the Royal couple were worked on everything in use.

The Emperor of Germany and his consort, the late Empress, were present, and the scene—with our then Prince and Princess of Wales and other members of our Royal family, great officers of State, Ambassadors and Ministers, senior officers of the Services and parliamentarians in their uniforms, and ladies in formal dress and wearing imposing jewels—was dazzling.

But the real cachet was given when, from a side door, there entered a short figure all in black and wearing the blue ribband of the Garter, and was conducted by the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII., to the Royal pew, from where Queen Victoria witnessed the wedding of her grand-daughter.

Later I was at two French Royal weddings. The brides were sisters of the late Duke of Orleans. Both had been brought up in England, where their parents, the late Comte and Comtesse de Paris, had found a refuge in their exile. The present King of Italy, then Prince of Naples, was best man at the first of these weddings, which took place in the little riverside chapel at Kingston-on-Thames, built by a former Countess of Mexborough. The wedding was by way of being a quiet affair, the little chapel holding only a tithe of the friends of bride and bridegroom. One stately old lady I can visualise as French Royalties and courtiers bent to kiss her hand. She was the last daughter of King Louis Philippe.

The marriage of the other sister of the late Duke of Orleans took place at his Worcestershire seat, Wood Norton. The Comtesse de Paris was then alive, and I remember meeting her walking down the avenue. She was tall and rather angular, with a pronounced nose and clever, fine face.

On the eve of the wedding it was found that the ceremony could not be legalised if performed in the temporary chapel, which the Duke had put up regardless of expense. The legal ceremony therefore took place in a little corrugated iron church at Evesham, at a very early hour on a cold and frosty morning, and I remember finding my way over a frost-whitened cabbage patch to the chapel, into which I was soon followed by King Alfonso of Spain, one of the bridegroom's supporters.

Soon all the principals in the wedding arrived, and in a few minutes the legal ceremony was concluded and the party returned to Wood Norton.

Special guards were put on for this wedding. There were the King and Queen of Spain, Queen Amelia of Portugal, the bride's eldest sister, the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess Vladimir of Russia, grand-parents of Princess Marina, soon to be a Royal bride in our own Royal family, and other Royal personages were present. The Grand Duke was at that time a marked man in Russia.

As the German Emperor and the late Empress were guests at Windsor at the time of this wedding, our own Royal family was engaged at the castle. The procession of Royal personages from the house to the temporary chapel, however, was a long one, and the Duke of Orleans, surrounded by French Royalists, was treated with all ceremony as King of France.

My next Royal wedding was that of Princess Mary, our Princess Royal, to Viscount Lascelles in Westminster Abbey. I occupied a very good seat overlooking the chancel, and spent a most interesting time previous to the actual ceremony watching all the people arrive.

The apparel of the two Archbishops and the Scottish Primus was such as I had never seen before, very dignified and magnificent. Royal guests were seated as they came at either side of the chancel, those of the bridegroom at one side and of the bride at the other.

Lord Lascelles looked from his wrist watch to the great West door several times, and whispered to his best man, Sir Victor Mackenzie, in a nervous sort of way. At last the bride arrived, with the King, and she looked so girlish and sweet that a hum of admiration could be heard. I have seen her many times and in many costumes, but that was the occasion when I realised the real loveliness of our King's daughter.

I was in almost the same seat in Westminster Abbey about a year later for the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of York. Again preparations and arrivals occupied eyes and thoughts. The Duke of York looked very bright and happy as he awaited his bride.

My last recollection is of a dense crowd outside and my appeal to a burly police constable to get me through a portion of it. "Hold on to my belt," said he. I did so and was trailed along at a good pace and very pleased to be in charge of the police!