Royal tourists, colonial subjects and the making of a British world, 1860–1911

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CHAPTER ONE

British royals at home with the empire

We were so frightened to hear that our husbands were going to war.... We had no slight idea what the war was about, the thing is, we only heard that Queen [Victoria] has asked for help, so they are going to fight for the Queen. We then know that this involves us, if they [the Germans] are fighting the Queen, as we were her people. We were under her, and she helped us against our enemies and with other things, so we had to help her. We didn’t know how long they were going to take there. Even if we were afraid we just encouraged them to go in the name of God, we will also pray for them whilst gone, so that they can help the Queen as she helped us.

Miriam Pilane of Bechuanaland, post-war interview

As Miriam Pilane saw it, the Tswana-speaking peoples of southern Africa were motivated to serve the British war effort during the Second World War because of their loyalty to a long-dead British Queen. While her invoking of the Great White Queen was, at some level, simply an instance of confusion, it also demonstrates the longevity of Queen Victoria as a symbol of British justice and benevolence, the image carefully nurtured by colonial officials and imperial stakeholders of the Queen as the mother of empire. Despite anti-colonial movements of the interwar period and imperial betrayals from the Union of South Africa to the Amritsar Massacre, this image managed to survive, a testament to the effectiveness of imperial propaganda.

Through the ideological work of colonial officials, Queen Victoria’s subjects across the empire imagined her to be a justice-giving imperial mother. There are perhaps more statues of Victoria on earth than of any other non-religious figure in history. She sits or stands among whizzing automobiles in Auckland, in front of neo-Gothic façades in Mumbai, and near the waterfront that bears her name in Cape Town – in bustling metropolises and provincial towns, near churches, mosques, and temples. In 1876, using the successes of the Prince of
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Wales’ tour of India in 1875–76, she persuaded Disraeli to style her Empress of India, an event celebrated by a royal durbar in Delhi. Her children and grandchildren travelled extensively through the empire. Her son Edward was the first Prince of Wales to visit the empire. Her grandson as King George V would become the first reigning monarch to visit the empire. As David Cannadine has argued, the empire lent itself to a monarchy in need of cultural refashioning, and the monarchy in turn gave itself to the empire. Place names, monuments, and royal visitors all commemorated this developing solidarity, through which the ‘imperial monarchy intruded itself into the individual lives and collective consciousness’ of its subjects. During her lifetime, Victoria was a ubiquitous symbol of Britain and its empire, made real to people across the world through images, statues, and visits. Her image as a maternal and justice-giving Queen was disseminated, used, and appropriated by her subjects in Britain and abroad – politicians, administrators, settlers, and local people – to various ends.

Yet the reality of the Great Queen was rather different. The ornamentalism described by Cannadine, and the willing role played by the monarchy in it, was an imperial fantasy. Indeed, Victoria’s attitudes to royal visits to the empire reflect a certain ambivalence and reluctance about empire that contrast sharply with the mythology. While Victoria relished Benjamin Disraeli’s efforts to title her as the imagined heir to the Mughal emperors, for instance, in most other respects she played a limited and sometimes resistant role in the cultivation of her imperial image. On multiple occasions, she rejected proposals from her colonial subjects for a royal visit, insisting that family and the monarchy’s duties at home came first. Even when she allowed the royal tours to go ahead, her journals and correspondence about and during the tours focus on matters closer to home – that her children and grandchildren were developing into dutiful and useful young men and, above all, that they returned home safely. For her, the empire was an accepted part of life, but it was – outside of moments of national-imperial crisis – of limited or superficial interest. As an examination of the royal tours will demonstrate, Queen Victoria’s participation in crafting and disseminating a vision of imperial culture that centred on her person was surprisingly limited and often unwilling.

In the end, however, her resistance to royal visits was almost always overcome, circumvented, or ignored. As this chapter demonstrates, royal tours went on with or without her blessing, and it appears that she sometimes agreed in the end simply to save face. She could not be the Great White Queen, for she lacked the political power – the efficient capacities of Walter Bagehot’s English Constitution – to do much more than advise, even in matters that involved her children and
grandchildren. On the public stage, she played the role masterfully, but she struggled, unsuccessfully, to manage the production behind the scenes. While her resistance to part with her children and grandchildren was likely personal, particularly after the death of Albert, rather than an act of rebellion against her own political impotence, she either truly believed herself to be the master of the monarchy or simply could not accept the purely symbolic role that later monarchs would embrace.

As for the royal children, they were generally bored by royal rituals and offer us limited reflections on their colonial encounters. Even as they sat in hunting camps in the Punjab or greeted cheering subjects in Cape Town or Auckland, they rarely wrote of the empire in their correspondence home. When they did, they often complained of the tedium of their ritual duties and encountered empire with a tourist’s sense of distance. For royal tourists, the royal tour was a quotidian practice, a job. In time, however – through experiences in the empire – a younger generation of royals came to accept their ceremonial place in imperial culture without the struggle for political power put up by Victoria and Albert. Through these processes, the invented tradition of the 1860s and 1870s became the standardised ritual practices of the twentieth century.

This chapter aims to understand how Victorian royals thought and talked about the empire through the lens of the royal tour. As a whole, the Victorian royal family was deeply and profoundly ambivalent about the British Empire. Victoria’s consort Prince Albert and her grandson George, the future George V, were the most important exception to this observation. After Albert’s demise in 1861 and a decade of mourning, Queen Victoria consistently resisted the royal tours. She unsuccessfully struggled to assert her royal prerogative and to control her image, which had been, by that point, almost fully appropriated by officials at home and the empire as well as by her colonial subjects around the world. Her children, on the other hand, were at home with empire. It was the background, the *mise-en-scène* for other adventures away from controlling parents and escapes from the tedium of royal duties. That the empire was quotidian for them reflects an acceptance of its normality as part of British and royal life. For future generations of royals – represented in this chapter by Albert Edward’s second son George – the royal tour as developed and perfected by the Victorian generation was embraced as a standard practice and duty. Educated principally in and about the empire, rather than the Continent, tutored by Joseph Chamberlain, and coming of age in an era of perceived imperial crisis, the future George V accepted and embraced the dignified functions of the empire without his grandmother’s struggle for political
power, on one hand, or bereaved ambivalence, on the other. In the end, perhaps despite themselves, Victorian royals invented the truly imperial monarchy of the twentieth century.

Inventing the Great Queen

Long before the ‘imperial turn’ in British history and his work in Ornamentalism, Cannadine radically reconceptualised the meaning of royal ritual in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger’s The Invention of Tradition. Writing in the early 1980s, when the modern Elizabethan monarchy was experiencing a period of unpopularity stemming from a series of family controversies, Cannadine sought to understand how the monarchy emerged from a transformative age of political reform as a popular symbol of nation and empire. For Cannadine, the answer was to be found in the ritual functions of the British monarchy, what Walter Bagehot had called the dignified powers of the Crown. He identified ‘theatrical show’ to be ‘central in explaining the emergence of popular monarchy’ during the nineteenth century, which ‘shap[ed] a national identity based on tradition, hierarchy, and peculiarity’. Under Victoria, then, the monarchy embraced a newfound raison d’être, to ceremonially perform as a symbol of the British nation-empire.

Queen Victoria, Cannadine argues, was fundamental to this reinvention of the British monarchy. Victoria’s eventual willingness to come out of mourning and embrace her public duties in the 1870s helped transform the monarchy into a ‘symbol of consensus and continuity to which all might defer’. Within Cannadine’s chronological frame, the golden age of royal ceremony began after 1876, when Victoria became Empress of India. The Golden (1887) and Diamond (1897) Jubilees represented high-water marks in this symbolic reinvention, during which the monarchy was celebrated in grand style in Britain and across the empire. Thus, the last decades of the nineteenth century were, he argues, ‘a time when old ceremonials were staged with an expertise and appeal which had been lacking before, and when new rituals were self-consciously invented to accentuate this development’.

Twenty years after his Invention of Tradition essay, as a younger generation of royals has embraced their ceremonial roles, Cannadine’s argument about the British monarchy is more persuasive than ever. While it is true that royal ritual was not entirely new to the British monarchy – one need only revisit Elizabeth I’s royal progresses to realise this fact – they were underused and largely out of practice by the time the young Victoria came to the throne in 1837. If Victorian ceremonials had roots in the past, they were used in a new context and for new reasons. The royal tours, for instance, were made possible by
the steamship and the railway, on which young royals could travel in safety and comfort, and their images and narratives were transmitted over telegraph wires to engage the readers of a burgeoning popular press in Britain and the colonies.

The British monarchy then and now has sought to project itself not only as ancient and timeless, and therefore indispensable to national identity, but also as modern and useful. For Victoria and Albert as well, making the monarchy a modern and useful national-imperial institution informed how they raised their children and grandchildren. For them, as this chapter shows, the royal tours were often as much or more about instilling the importance of national service in their children as they were about consciously embracing the imperial role of the monarchy.

**The Queen/Mother**

To suggest the limits of Queen Victoria’s imperial consciousness is not to say that she did not care about her empire. As her extant letters demonstrate, she was a prolific writer on imperial affairs, particularly during the decades before Prince Albert’s death (1861) when he served as her de facto personal secretary and exerted political influence over his wife and colonial affairs. Over the course of her long reign, Victoria wrote to prime ministers, colonial secretaries, and colonial governors frequently. She loudly voiced her (often unsolicited) approval or disapproval of colonial policies to the government, writing an average of 2,500 words on every day of her adult life. She tried to learn ‘Hindoostani’, corresponded with several South Asian princes, and employed a trusted Indian servant named Abdul Karim. She even adopted a Maori child as her godson after his parents, the Ngapuhi chief Hare Pomare and his wife Hariata, lamented the death of Albert. And, after becoming Empress of India, she insisted on signing her name as ‘Victoria RI’, that is Regina Imperatrix or Imperial Queen.

At the same time, her relationship with the empire was more ambivalent and complicated than these examples suggest. Her imperial interests focused on India, and the vast majority of her letters on foreign affairs are on the subject of Europe. When she wrote to her globetrotting children and grandchildren, she very rarely discussed imperial politics, focusing her attention on family, marriages, and children. Her private journals lament the absence of her children and rarely reflect on the larger implications of the tours for the monarchy or the empire.

And after the death of her beloved husband Albert, her interest in governance and policy wavered significantly, to be rekindled during
the 1870s by political and public pressure. Even then, she, like the British public, rediscovered the empire during periods of crisis. Despite her outward interest in empire, she was always reluctant to allow her children and grandchildren to take long journeys abroad. For her, family and the domestic duties of the monarchy came first.

Her ubiquity across the British world as a symbol of Britain and ‘her’ imperial dominions largely reflected an effort by government and colonial officials to use her image to their own ends, rather than any ideological work on her part. Victoria could certainly be described as an imperialist, if of the banal variety. She was fascinated by India, but mostly out of nostalgia for Albert, who himself demonstrated a keen interest in the subcontinent. While she did write prolifically on imperial affairs, particularly during crises, she was far more interested in European politics.

Colonial propaganda presented her as the maternal and justice-giving Great Queen, an idea many dispossessed peoples clung to well into the twentieth century. She was frequently visited by colonial subjects and did, at times, exhibit a strong interest in their welfare. Walter Arnstein argues that she demonstrated a brand of Victorian multiculturalism, seeing ‘herself far less as the head of a homogenous nation-state than as the head of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious Empire’ and ‘insist[ing] time and again that other traditions and religions and even rulers in the Empire deserved respect’. At the same time, she believed that the expansion of British rule (rather than German, French, or Russian) would serve to push civilisation forward. As a constitutional monarch, she had little power to live up to her mythology as the Great Queen, defender of subject peoples, and did not choose to spend what little political capital she had on defending her subjects.

With the exception of Ireland in 1849 and 1900, Queen Victoria never visited her empire. She did travel around the British Isles and to the Continent extensively. Because of these limits, one useful way to truly understand how Victoria felt about her colonial subjects is to examine what happened when the empire came to visit her (see Chapter 5). During these encounters, Victoria was regularly used to convey and legitimise decisions made by the government regarding imperial affairs. When the Bechuana chiefs Khama, Sebele, and Bathoen came to Britain in 1895 to appeal for imperial justice against the land-hungry Cecil Rhodes, Queen Victoria met with them at Windsor Castle. She addressed the chiefs, her words presumably approved in advance by Joseph Chamberlain, telling them that she was ‘glad to see [them], and to know that they love[d her] rule’ and confirming their settlement with Chamberlain, which reaffirmed imperial protection in their dispute with Rhodes.
For Victoria, these colonial encounters in the imperial metropole and those of her children and grandchildren in the empire infrequently registered in her letters and diaries. Above all, Victoria was a nation-imperial symbol, one that was used and remade by her subjects at home and in the empire. Despite her interest in colonial subjects, her concerns, and those of Albert, centred principally on salvaging what remained of the monarchy’s domestic prerogatives and raising their children and grandchildren to be useful to the British nation. Future monarchs, including her grandson George, would embrace imperial rituals and the royal tour, developed however reluctantly during the reign of Victoria, as principal functions of the British monarchy.

Victoria's struggle to maintain control of royal travels and the projection of her image was part and parcel of a larger effort by both Victoria and Albert to recover the political prerogatives of the British monarchy. Victoria's uncle, William IV, was the last British monarch to dismiss a prime minister (Viscount Melbourne in 1834). In *The English Constitution* (1867), Walter Bagehot unofficially demarcated the limits and rights of the constitutional monarchy inherited by Victoria – to be consulted, to advise, and to warn; he went as far as to suggest that the political transformations of the nineteenth century had allowed a 'Republic [to] insinuate ... itself beneath the folds of the monarchy'. But, like so much of the British constitution, these were unwritten agreements, forged over centuries of political and cultural negotiation. To Victoria, they were suggestions at best. In one letter to her eldest daughter Victoria, she lamented what a 'miserable thing [it was] to be a constitutional Queen'.

The true litmus test of this nineteenth-century constitutional settlement was whether or not politicians could willingly ignore or circumvent Victoria's imagined prerogative. William Gladstone, about whom the Queen expressed the bitterest sentiments, rarely shared what he considered Victoria's political meddling with his colleagues. Similarly, as we shall see, when Joseph Chamberlain wanted the Duke of York to go on a royal tour during the South African War, he circumvented the Queen's objections by collaborating (or conspiring?) with the duke to persuade her. The fact that the Queen's protests and attempted interventions rarely altered plans or policies is telling.

Both Gladstone, the grand old man of nineteenth-century liberalism, and Chamberlain, the former Birmingham radical turned imperialist, embraced and co-opted the monarchy as a national-imperial symbol compatible with their political worldviews, perhaps the clearest evidence of the monarchy's extremely limited political prerogative by the *fin de siècle*. What the 1860s and early 1870s proved was that Queen Victoria could refuse her public services, but only at grave risk to the monarchy's existence as an institution. The Great Queen became a
symbol to be managed and manipulated, a process that Victoria unsuccess-
sfully sought to limit and control. As the royal tours demonstrate,
Victoria was a reluctant and often unwilling participant in the projec-
tion of her image – but she had little choice in the matter. Despite the
failures of Victoria and Albert in this regard, both participated – will-
ingly at times, unwillingly at others – in the reinvention of the British
monarchy as a symbol of the nation-empire, a role that was accepted
and embraced by her descendants.

The Prince Consort
The German-born Prince Albert (1819–61) proved himself to the British
political establishment as a thoughtful and efficient political operator.
Albert was, as Cannadine puts it, ‘fascinated by statecraft’ and ‘deter-
mined to play a full part in the political life of his adopted country’. He
paid visits to politicians, was always present when Victoria met with
her ministers, and drafted most of her letters. He quickly established
himself as a patron of culture and the sciences and worked endlessly
on his various projects. He was hardworking, tireless, and ruthlessly
efficient. In the historical record, it is often extremely difficult to tell
where Victoria ends and Albert begins. His influence as Victoria’s clos-
est adviser and personal secretary over this period (1840–61) is undeni-
able. It was also comparatively short.

Albert was the cultural engineer of the Victorian monarchy and, in
the context of this work, of an imperial culture centred on the mon-
archy. Long before Disraeli’s Crystal Palace speech (1872) or the Royal
Titles Act of 1876, Albert conceived of a new place for the monarchy
in British society, namely a British imperial culture that was culturally
anchored in the monarchy and monarchism. Albert’s personal involve-
ment in the design of the Star of India, which itself became an essential
part of royal visits to India, offers some insight to the role he played in
imagining a new role for the monarchy:

The ‘Eastern star’ will perhaps on [the] whole be the best denomination.
The Centre of the badge of the Order might then be the Queen’s image
surmounted by a star & surrounded by an appropriate motto & the star
of the Order might be the star surrounded by flames on a glory…. The
Badge to be worn suspended from a Collar which might be composed of
stars, Lions and Unicorns or the sunflower, or Lotus & ordinarily from a
Ribbon. The presiding Idea would be contained in the Angel’s salutation
‘Glory to God, peace on earth & goodwill towards men’.

While Victoria grew reluctant to participate in this new role after his
premature death, his efforts unleashed irreversible changes to the way
the monarchy did business. Most significantly, he had willingly and enthusiastically promoted the first royal tours of empire by his sons in 1860.

It was Albert who encouraged the Duke of Newcastle to accept the invitation from Canada and his wife to embrace George Grey’s proposal for a South African visit. It was Albert who worked through the arrangements and negotiations for the visits and imagined the ideological work that they would achieve.23 He wrote to his close friend Baron Stockmar: ‘What a cheering picture is here of the progress and expansion of the British race, and of the useful co-operation of the Royal Family in the civilisation which England has developed and advanced!’24 In a toast given at Trinity House in June 1860, Albert remarked:

It will be a curious coincidence, that at the same time – a few weeks hence – though almost at the opposite poles, the Prince of Wales will inaugurate, in the Queen’s name, that stupendous work, the great bridge over the St. Lawrence in Canada, while Prince Alfred will lay the foundation stone of the breakwater for the harbour of Cape Town. What vast considerations, as regards our country, are brought to our minds in this simple fact! What present greatness! What past history! What future hopes! And hope important and beneficent is the part given to the Royal Family of England to act in the development of those distant and rising countries, who recognise in the British Crown, and their allegiance to it, their supreme bond of union with the mother country and each other!25

Albert’s careful planning of both of his sons’ tours indicates the importance of the visits to him. His public excitement and the laborious private negotiations over the royal tours reflect a concerted effort to reshape the monarchy and to create a new kind of imperial culture. While Albert may have been the ‘uncrowned King’ of the United Kingdom, Victoria was the reigning monarch and the official author of most correspondence on the subject of the royal visits. The obvious change in the Queen’s tone regarding the travels of her children and grandchildren after his death reflects both the loss of his voice and the profound personal and psychological trauma that she experienced over his death.

Through public patronage, national service, and royal ritual, Albert sought to connect the monarchy to notions of progress and improvement. He spent his years as a British royal nurturing an image of the monarchy as a patron of the arts and sciences, most famously in organising the Great Exhibition of 1851. To Albert, the monarchy needed to excise the demons of excess and decadence associated with the previous two reigns and make a new image for itself of a respectable and
moral royal family, one that echoed the reign of George III. In this vein, he demanded that his children be useful – to commit to a difficult regimen of learning and improvement and to serve their nation in Her Majesty’s military forces.

Victoria and Albert raised their children to be useful, both to their family and to the nation. There was nothing particularly imperial about their or their children’s upbringing. Victoria and Albert considered the royal tradition of military service most important. In an age before proconsular apprenticeship, service in Her Majesty’s armed services was the primary route through which royal sons could earn their spurs and see the world. Their children Alfred (navy) and Arthur (army) served, as did their grandchildren Albert Victor and George (both in the navy).

For this reason, royal visits could not, he decided, invoke images of the royal progress of past times (with some exception for India). Royal children were to visit the empire as respectable and upstanding subjects, who dressed in the respectable and simple clothing of modern royals, rather than the effete regalia of monarchy’s past. India was different, because colonial administrators identified the need to appeal to an ‘Oriental mind’ that yearned for medieval spectacle. But most of this was left for imperial durbars, where the viceroy rather than royal children represented the Queen in an official capacity.

Victoria and Albert had very specific ideas about how their children should behave and represent the monarchy while abroad. As we shall see, governments and colonial administrators were also deeply concerned with the dynamics of royal rituals in relation to the legitimacy of imperial hierarchy. Who would represent the sovereign and how she was represented were crucial questions for both the monarchy and for governing elites who ran the empire.

Thus, royal children were to appear in the empire as first subjects of the Queen rather than as her representatives. In 1875, for instance, the Queen and the Viceroy of India, Lord Northbrook, agreed that there could be no durbar when the Prince of Wales visited India. When her sons and grandsons travelled as royal sailors, they were expected to perform their duties, much to the surprise of the Queen’s colonial subjects. Propriety demanded that only the governor of a colony, the Queen’s official proxy, could represent her, and this fact had to be reflected in imperial ceremonies. On certain occasions, tour planners made certain that the governor and the royal visitor were not seen together, so as to avoid any confusion in the minds of colonial peoples. Seeking to avoid the perception of excess that characterised Continental monarchies and past British monarchs, Victoria and Albert sought to project the image of a respectable and modern royal
family both as a means of raising dutiful and respectful children and protecting the monarchy from the fate of its Continental brethren.

While Victoria dictated that royal children could not represent her in an official capacity, this conceptual distinction was not easily maintained on the ground. When royal children arrived, they immediately became the centre of attention. Sometimes exceptions were granted for Princes of Wales to pass out medals or honours, but never without a debate about the precedents and consequences of doing so. In 1875, the Queen opposed the idea of the Prince of Wales rather than Lord Northbrook distributing the Star of India. During the investiture ceremony, as things turned out, Edward and Northbrook sat together, and Edward awarded the Star of India to the guests of honour under ‘special warrant from the Queen’.

This standard also made sense in the context of the royal tours as an educational experience. As didactic tools, the royal tours were imagined as grand tours of empire, not leisurely tourist expeditions. Victoria – and particularly Albert – wanted the monarchy to be useful. Before Alfred’s travels in 1860, Queen Victoria sent off countless letters to naval and colonial officials, explaining that her son was to receive no special treatment (once sailor reached land, this never happened, of course). For instance, Lord John Russell wrote to the Foreign Office regarding:

Her Majesty’s desire and intention that HRH should apply himself more particularly to his professional studies as an officer in HM Fleet, combining with those studies the acquirement of such knowledge of Foreign Countries as he may have opportunities of obtaining.... You will explain the nature and objects of HRH’s visits to the Ports of the Country, and, unless otherwise informed, you will state in the most respectful manner ... that His Royal Highness should decline formal civilities.

While the protocols established by Victoria and Albert were focused on shaping their children’s attitudes, colonial subjects took note. It was said that the Xhosa chief Sandile – who was brought to Cape Town by Governor George Grey to be awed into obedience – was impressed most not by Cape Town or its works of progress but by the sight of Prince Alfred swabbing the deck. When the Prince of Wales returned from Canada in 1860, under the ‘delusion that the tumultuous welcome [he experienced] was for [him]’, Albert forcefully reminded him that ‘it was nothing of the kind. It was simply an expression of loyalty to the Queen.’ For royal sons serving in the military, the tours were as much about discipline and service as seeing the world. For the heirs
to the throne, they were meant to give them public responsibilities and to see the empire over which they would one day rule.

Victoria and Albert took a particular interest in carefully selecting fellow travellers for their children and grandchildren. The Prince of Wales went to Canada, as Ian Radforth describes, with a group of middle-aged men and was prohibited from interacting with the younger midshipmen aboard the HMS Hero.\textsuperscript{34} Albert made sure that General Robert Bruce, the Prince of Wales’ governor, was always ‘under the same roof’ with Edward while in North America so as to avoid any moral wandering on the prince’s part.\textsuperscript{35} There was a long conversation between the monarchy and Indian administrators over Alfred’s travelling companion for his 1870 visit to India. The Queen thought that the young prince was ’rather easily led away’ and thus in need of a ’steady, firm’ travelling companion who would ‘exercise a good influence’.\textsuperscript{36} For the Queen, this was one of the few prerogatives that she could dictate during later tours.

\textbf{Royal children}

On 12 March 1868, Prince Alfred – royal spare to Albert Edward the Prince of Wales and second son of Queen Victoria – was shot in the back with a pistol at Clontarf, north of Sydney in New South Wales, by an Irishman named Henry James O’Farrell in a Fenian-inspired assassination attempt.\textsuperscript{37} Months earlier, three Fenians, who became known as the Manchester Martyrs, had been executed for killing a policeman. The assassination plot aroused trepidation across the British world that an empire-wide Fenian conspiracy was underway, a fear best illustrated by the draconian Treason Felony Act passed by the parliament of New South Wales six days after the attack and modelled on the British Treason Felony Act of 1848 (\textit{11 & 12 Vict. c. 12}).\textsuperscript{38} Without question, ethnic and sectarian tensions informed the political, social, and cultural discourses of the nineteenth-century colonies of settlement, as the outburst of anti-Irish rhetoric and violence in the aftermath of O’Farrell’s attempt demonstrates. During Alfred’s visit, Irish Catholics in Melbourne had rallied outside the Protestant Hall, evoking the Battle of the Boyne in illumination form.\textsuperscript{39} On the other hand, the Sydney Catholic newspaper \textit{Freedman’s Journal}, fearing that an Irishman would soon be revealed as the shooter, affirmed that, if such were the case, ‘Irishmen must bow their heads in sorrow, and confess that the greatest reproach which has ever been cast on them, the deepest shame that has ever been coupled with the name of our people, has been attached to us here in the country where we have been so free and
Prosperous'. The act was condemned by Irish communities across Australia and the empire.

Curiously enough, even O'Farrell’s commitment to republicanism appears questionable, and in interviews he advocated a future for the Irish within the British Empire. Excerpts from his diary and the transcript of an interview he had with the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales, Henry Parkes, were published in 1868 as *Fenian Revelations: The Confessions of O'Farrell who Attempted to Assassinate the Duke of Edinburgh*. During his confession, O’Farrell claimed that he was part of a Fenian cell in Sydney ordered from England to assassinate the prince. While he condemned the execution of the Manchester Martyrs and damned England, he also expressed little sorrow for having failed, indicating that he ‘rather liked’ the duke and voted against the plan to kill him in the first place. When Parkes interrogated him on his political beliefs, O’Farrell advocated not an independent republic of Ireland but a united republic of the British Empire. He expressed concern that the prince would be in grave danger should he steam on to New Zealand, only for the purposes of ‘a few more addresses’. While perhaps an extreme example, O’Farrell’s apparent loyalty to the empire, despite his hatred of the English and the monarchy, complicates more traditional narratives of ethnic and sectarian conflict in the British world.

On the other hand, Alfred received an outpouring of outrage and concern from Australians and colonial subjects from across the empire. The Royal Archives and National Archives at Kew contain an impressive array of these letters, odes, and declarations to Alfred, which demonstrate the sincere concern felt by colonial subjects for the young prince. Recovering in Australia, Alfred wrote to his mother about the aftermath of the attempt on his life, expressing how deeply touched he was by the outpouring of loyalty and concern, not from her colonial subjects but from his crewmates:

I shall never forget ... the manner in which I was spontaneously cheered by the whole squadron especially by my own ship’s company & the manner they received me on board. I was very much overcome by it & had to go to my cabin & remain there.... I think it was the proudest moment of my life, to find that the nearly 600 men I command really loved me.

Of course, Alfred did convey his thanks to his mother’s subjects, but his deeply emotional response had little to do with what happened on land. He was not ungrateful to his mother’s colonial subjects, but the relationships that he had developed on board his ship made naval life more meaningful to him.
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While the Great Queen and Empress of India had never travelled outside of the British Isles or the Continent, her children and grandchildren travelled the world as servicemen and royal ambassadors. Their encounters with the Britain’s subjects across the globe importantly shaped how the monarchy was received and understood in the empire. As British ambassadors within and beyond the borders of British imperium, Princes Alfred, Albert Edward, and George actively participated and became part of local mythologies of imperial community in the empire. Alfred, for instance, became memorialised as South Africa’s prince, a hybrid tradition that appealed to both local and imperial narratives of belonging. Foreshadowing later proconsular appointments held by royal children, there were calls for Victoria to install her sons as governors or kings of the white colonies of settlement. More profoundly, colonial subjects often used the forum of the royal tour to profess a membership in the political and cultural community of empire, inspiring – even if quite accidently – the development of decidedly modern notions of political identity and belonging in the British Empire.

A generational difference arose through these experiences, through their participation in royal tours and their extended contact with the empire: a younger generation of royals – exemplified by Edward VII’s son George – came to willingly embrace and accept their ceremonial place in imperial culture without the political fight put up by Victoria and Albert. While Victoria’s sons Alfred and Albert Edward travelled extensively throughout the empire, they expressed in their letters a limited appreciation for their mother’s dominions. Prince George, the future George V, developed the model embraced by the twentieth-century monarchy, of a royal with a keen interest in imperial matters and who embraced his ritual role without contention. Based on the experiences of the royal tours, it is of little surprise that George V would be the first reigning monarch to visit the British Empire. Victoria and Albert set in motion a tradition – albeit one that was embraced reluctantly and ambivalently at times – that would have the consequence of shaping their grandchildren into true imperial rulers who embodied concerns that were only mythical for Victoria herself.

Alfred

Victoria’s second son Alfred is perhaps best known in European history for almost becoming the Greek King. He was selected in a Greek plebiscite to fill the throne left vacant by the deposition of King Otho. The prospect of accepting this ‘election’ was interpreted by the British government to be a violation of the 1830 London Protocol, designed
to limit the influence of any individual ‘protecting power’ on an independent Greek state. He married the daughter of Tsar Alexander II and later became the hereditary duke of Saxe-Coburg Gotha. He lived a somewhat uninspiring life as a German duke and died an early death.

Yet Alfred’s teens and twenties, when he toured the world as a royal sailor, are the far more interesting and, arguably, historically significant episodes in his life. He was the one of the greatest royal travellers in history. In terms of distance travelled and places seen, he ranks with the greatest of Victorian adventurers. In August 1870, Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Balfour Haig, Alfred’s equerry, estimated that, since leaving Wellington sixteen months prior, the prince’s ship had travelled more than 31,000 nautical miles, or one and a half times the circumference of the world. This astounding figure represents a mere segment of Alfred’s life at sea. He travelled to Australia, New Zealand, South America, South Africa, China, India, Japan, and many other places in his twenty-year-long naval career. Alfred was probably seen in the flesh by more people in the colonial empire than any royal before the advent of the jet age.

By 1860 when he set sail for South Africa, Alfred had become the great hope of Victoria and Albert. He was not the most intellectually gifted boy, Victoria frequently observed, but he demonstrated a curiosity and common sense that his older brother rarely did. Having passed his naval exams by age 14, Alfred was sent off to sea by his father and spent the next decade of his life travelling the world. Queen Victoria, less guarded in her letters to daughter Vicky, abandoned her usual reverence for Albert in expressing her anger over Alfred’s departure:

I have been shamefully deceived about Affie…. It was promised to me that the last year before he went away to sea, he should be with us, instead of which he was taken away…. Papa is most cruel upon the subject. I assure you, it is much better to have no children than to have them only to give up!

By the time Sir George Grey, the Governor of the Cape Colony, invited Alfred to South Africa in 1860, his mother had accepted his fate, and both parents recognised an opportunity. They imagined his naval apprenticeship and his royal visit would combine ‘his professional studies as an Officer in H.M. Fleet’ with the ‘acquirement of such knowledge of Foreign Countries as he may have opportunities of obtaining’. His first voyage out, in 1860, took him to South Africa, with stops at South American ports on the trip out and on the West African coast on the journey back. On Alfred’s sixteenth birthday, which he spent in southern Africa, Victoria lamented his first birthday
apart and prayed ‘May God bless & protect him, & may he become like his beloved father!’

His governor Major Cowell was given full discretionary powers over him, and Alfred was expected to be treated as a normal sailor in the Royal Navy, except in instances approved in advance. The message was relayed in letter after letter penned by Victoria to local officials and to the officers of his ship, HMS *Euryalus*. Some exception was intended for the Cape Colony, where it was planned Alfred would inaugurate the construction of a new Table Bay breakwater. While these rules were rarely, if ever, followed on land, they were followed at sea: Alfred was seen on duty at the gangway when the ship arrived in Table Bay. While this performance of the work ethic was meant to shape both Alfred and his audience, to nurture a particular image of the monarchy, it also represented the childrearing philosophy of Victoria and Albert, who sought to nurture the merit of service in their children and grandchildren.

Victoria and Albert intended for the *Euryalus* to be a royal classroom, where their son could learn discipline and see the world, while avoiding the various digressions of his older brother. For his parents, the trip had clear didactic purposes, with welcomed political side-effects for the empire. Toward the end of the 1860 tour, Major Cowell reported to Albert that the desired results were ‘purchased … very cheaply’ and that Alfred had reflected on and understood the state of affairs in southern Africa. Victoria reflected in 1860:

Affie was greeted [in southern Africa] by endless savage Tribes, with a loyalty & enthusiasm highly gratifying. He travelled 1000 miles, chiefly on horseback & returned all the better for it …they say that the benefits produced by this journey will be immense & interesting, that the 2 Brothers should just at the same time be making their triumphal and peaceful progress, in such very opposite parts of the Globe!

As for Alfred himself, the personality of the young man who had visited southern Africa in 1860, demonstrating a keen interest in whatever Governor George Grey had to show him, was quickly transformed by life in the navy. He became far more interested in the hyper-masculine culture of the sea and far less interested in the cultures of the empire. He shared his father’s love of hunting and often completed his duties as a royal visitor with the expectation that he might be rewarded with a hunt. He even tried to divert the itinerary of his 1869 tour in order to stop in Natal for a hunting expedition. Of course, these interests were important components of a British imperial culture, but they represented a subconscious, banal imperialism rather than an explicit, ideological one.
Between 1860 and the early 1870s, Alfred transformed from an active and intellectually curious young prince into an adult far more settled in his ways, the boor that his mother frequently described. Despite his early curiosity, Alfred’s worldview on empire and the royal tour can be detected from his earliest tour and retained a significant degree of consistency over time. Alfred wrote frequently to his mother, and these letters offer valuable insights into his understandings of his travels. Details about colonial cultures or his experiences were rarely reported back to Victoria by Alfred, but were usually conveyed by his co-travellers and through newspapers sent back by colonial officials. Victoria and Alfred most frequently discussed family and European politics. Home life, impending marriages, and Continental affairs rather than the empire dominated these conversations. As his letters illustrate, Alfred’s expressions of interest in his mother’s colonial subjects were rarely articulated explicitly (which is not to say that he had none). Indeed he found meaning in the royal tours not in his role as an imperial prince but in the masculine culture of the navy and in his favourite pastime, hunting.

Growing up in the navy, Alfred’s life was shaped by its culture. The homosocial space of a Royal Navy ship cultivated a brand of masculine camaraderie and friendship that Alfred cherished, to such a degree that he later had trouble socialising back on land in Europe. Despite the highly regimented nature of the navy, life aboard ship for Alfred was one of playful, and sometimes violent, horseplay and a fair dose of taunting and vexation. Once, when he arrived at Malta, his fellow midshipmen aboard the Euryalus ‘bumped him on the deck’ with each shot of the royal salute.\(^{58}\) This playfulness was somewhat of a departure from his strict upbringing by his parents.

Feelings of camaraderie eased the strict regime and social separation of a navy life. Lieutenant-Colonel Haig reported to Queen Victoria the profound isolation of life at sea and the importance of human connections. One night per week, part of the main deck was transformed into a stage, lit by a row of lanterns.\(^{59}\) With an ‘orchestra’ of a piano and a fiddle, the sailors performed songs, readings, and recitations to entertain their audience, who, ‘determined to be amused … sit there, and laugh, and cheer to their hearts’ content’.\(^{60}\) The ship even had its own band of minstrels, who would perform ‘Negro melodies’.\(^{61}\) On other nights, Alfred might be found playing the violin while other men sat or lay about reading or doing crochet.\(^{62}\) Alfred grew very comfortable and content with this life and these relationships.

When off the ship, hunting was never far from Alfred’s mind. In this, he was like his father, who had adored the royal estate at Balmoral, in part because he could spend hours stalking deer in the Scottish
Alfred frequently and excitedly reported to his mother his hunting adventures while on tour. In South Africa, he and George Grey awaited a rumbling herd of wild animals, rounded up and driven toward them by a group of local natives, and began firing upon them en masse during a rather grotesque ‘hunting’ trip in 1860. He went hunting with the Maharajah of Benares in 1870 and ‘rolled over an enormous tiger’ that ‘got away very badly wounded’. He hunted antelope, elephants, ostriches, partridges, pheasants, deer, and many other exotic animals. While encountering his mother’s subjects, it seems, his mind often wandered to the hunt.

Like other royal children, when he did write to his mother about his visits, it was often to complain. He openly complained to his mother during his visit to India in 1869–70. From Calcutta in 1869, he griped that ‘ever since my arrival it has been one unceasing state ceremony, Levées, large dinners, state receptions, visits, balls, & drawing rooms in rapid succession’. He reported that the previous day the festivities began at 8.30 in the morning and continued until 1.30 that morning.

Early in January 1870, he again wrote to his mother complaining of his duties:

I received the Native Princes on board this is a very tedious ceremony. They each come separate with the Viceroy’s agent who is attached to him and a few native attendants, he is brought in by the foreing [sic] secretary & sits down on my right with the foreign secretary & his attendants on his right & my staff on my left. The conversation consists of asking after one another’s health, the beauty of the weather …. The only difference in the seven [?] visits was the number of guns in his salute & the number of steps.

Royal children routinely complained about such visits and their tedium. His letters home reflect boredom with his imperial duties, preferring his shipmates to local dignitaries and hunting trips to dinners at Government House.

Alfred was not wholly uninterested in the empire, but it often represented an irritating interruption of the life he most enjoyed. He probably travelled more than any royal before or after him, yet he hardly thought about or commented on his role as one of the British Empire’s greatest travellers. While colonial subjects who met him often commented on his warmth and graciousness, on his skill as a royal ambassador, these encounters virtually never registered in his letters home. For his parents, travelling the world as a sailor in the Royal Navy was a method of teaching Alfred a profession and giving him an opportunity to see the world. For everyone else who was touched by the visits, he was a symbol of diverse manifestations of imperial identity and
citizenship. For Alfred, the meaning of his royal tourism was found in the joys of navy life and the pursuit of his favourite pastime.

**Albert Edward, the Prince of Wales**

Victoria and Albert had high expectations for young Albert Edward (the future Edward VII), the heir to the throne, and his parents’ rigorous educational programme for him reflected these desires. They sought to avoid the decadent excesses of his uncles and to train Edward as an informed and thoughtful King in the model of Albert. The young prince, however, was not an intellectually curious child and was rather quickly considered somewhat of a lost cause by his parents. He was not Albert, and more closely resembled his polar opposite. Victoria and Albert favoured his older sister Victoria, and later Alfred and Arthur. Edward wrote very little and left historians very little textual evidence, other than what was written on his behalf by his private secretary Francis Knollys and in the official histories of the monarchy.

In British history, Edward has come to represent cultural and moral excess, a reaction against the strictness and austerity of Victorianism. Yet his reaction was initially to his father, not his mother, with whom he had much in common. He found his father’s rules and morals stifling and his expectations unachievable. In this regard, the image of the Savile Row Prince of Wales, wearing midnight blue dinner-jackets, smoking, attending the theatre, philandering, and generally living up to his reputation as a rakish playboy is accurate. He was, as Bagehot suggested, ‘an unemployed youth’, with no obvious role in life other than waiting to be King. He performed adequately at Oxford and Cambridge, matriculating at Trinity College in 1861. He unsuccessfully tried out life in the army during the summer of 1861, only for gossip about his romantic encounter with the actress Nellie Clifden to be spread around London. And, when his father died, his mother would blame him and all of his trouble-making for his death.

As a royal tourist, however, Edward proved rather successful in carrying out his ceremonial duties in the empire, which required more in terms of charm and far less in terms of intellect. His performance in the 1860 royal tour of Canada was a rare occasion when his parents openly expressed satisfaction in his performance. He was the first heir to the throne to visit the empire and was very well travelled, taking frequent trips to the Continent; travelling to North America in 1860; cast off to Jerusalem, Cairo, and Constantinople in 1862 after his father’s death; and making a trip to India in 1875–76. Even if he was far out-travelled by his younger brother Alfred, he was the most ‘globalised’ Prince of Wales in history (though this honour would
immediately pass to his son, George). Jane Ridley, writing about his tour of India in 1875–76, argues that the royal tour ‘was royalty as theatre, and he excelled in the role. His passion for uniforms and dressing up coupled with his addiction to the London stage meant that he knew his lines perfectly and understood instinctively how the role of the prince-emperor should be played.’ Despite his success as a royal ambassador, his mother did not trust him to act as her representative in performing the monarchy’s public duties, despite her own refusal to perform them.

In 1860, Queen Victoria was invited by the Canadian colonies to inaugurate the Victoria Bridge over the St. Lawrence River. Victoria did not want to go but agreed to send her oldest son, Albert Edward, the Prince of Wales. His father, the Prince Consort, and the Colonial Secretary, the Duke of Newcastle, conceived of the tour as a historic moment in the history of the British Empire. Newcastle travelled with the prince and acted as his handler. Albert Edward spent several months in Canada and the United States. He watched Charles Blondin cross the Niagara Gorge on a tightrope and stayed with the President James Buchanan at the White House.

Like Alfred’s tour, the idea for his older brother Albert Edward’s royal tour of Canada in 1860 came from the empire, at the invitation of the Canadian legislature. Victoria had been invited to Canada several times in the 1850s, a prospect that she considered to be impossible. She proposed that once the Prince of Wales was old enough, he would visit Canada. As was the case during the Duke of Cornwall’s royal tour forty years later, it was intended to thank colonials for their contributions to an imperial war effort, in this case the Crimean War. Moreover, the idea of the heir to the throne inaugurating the new Victoria Bridge across the St. Lawrence River, one of the Victorian era’s greatest engineering marvels, as his younger brother across the Atlantic tipped the first truck of stone into Table Bay built on much of the ideological work Albert had done as the Prince Consort – to connect the monarchy to notions of progress.

There is little sense that Edward realised the importance his parents and the Canadian government placed on the visit. He wrote to his mother in the mode of a tourist, rather than as a future imperial monarch. He performed well and impressed his handlers. Yet he was a teenager who was simply performing the duties being asked of him. He wrote to his mother after performing his first public duties as a royal ambassador in Newfoundland: ‘I had to receive fourteen addresses, rather a large number for the first time.’ He commented on an encounter with First Peoples in the language of a sightseer, which would be repeated during his 1875 tour of India; he noted that they
treated him civilly and wore ‘more modified costumes than those that are generally represented in pictures’.

While in North America, he often reported on the beauty of the New World and matter-of-factly on his experiences with colonial people. Even his official biographer, Sidney Lee, admitted a complete lack of imperial consciousness by Edward: ‘If the Prince’s descriptions of his experiences ... proved bare and informal, they were relieved by some naïve comments on the persons whom he met, by comparisons of scenes which were new to him with familiar places at home, and by occasional notes on surviving memories of his grandfather.’

Even while in the empire, his mind remained very much at home.

In 1875, when the Council of India raised the idea of a royal visit by the Prince of Wales to India, however, the Queen was reluctant to grant her permission. While his younger brother Alfred had recently visited India, Edward had survived a bout of typhoid fever in 1871, the disease that likely killed his father, and the Queen was unwilling to part with him. The Queen had not always opposed the idea of Edward travelling to India; before his father died, Albert had imagined India to be on the itinerary of his planned travels in the Near East. But now, perhaps understandably, the Queen did not want to give up her son.

Victoria was surprised and angered, then, when Lord Salisbury, the Secretary of State for India, announced to her his plan for the prince’s tour of India. The Prince of Wales himself was determined to go to India, although his motive, other than escaping his mother’s grip, is unclear. Upon finding out, Victoria wrote to Lord Salisbury to articulate her unhappiness about the plans: ‘The Queen has received Lord Salisbury’s letter of the 17th relative to the Prince of Wales’ going to India and she wishes him to know that while she gave her consent, she did so very reluctantly as she thinks the risk and responsibility very great for the Prince of Wales is no longer in his former health and invariably over does his powers of endurance & fatigue and the distance from home is enormous!’

Two months later, she explained in a letter to Lord Northbrook, the Viceroy of India, that she had given ‘a very unwilling consent’ and that ‘she had expected it ... would have been very carefully considered and weighed in the Cabinet before being announced to the Viceroy’. She indicated that she wanted to convey her ‘real feelings and views on this subject’ to him and sought his ‘impartial opinion’ on the visit. Noting these reservations, Salisbury and Northbrook continued to forge their plans for the visit.

The Queen grew irritated by her exclusion from the planning process. She complained to Salisbury that she had personally ‘received no information’ from the Secretary of State about the tour arrangements,
even though ‘the newspapers are full of them’. Victoria demanded that she be ‘accurately informed on every point’ and that ‘her sanction may be obtained before anything is decided’. She focused her efforts on preserving Edward’s health over the duration of the visit by trying to limit his engagements. She also sought to approve of the prince’s party, mainly so she could excise any of his troublesome friends from the list. According to Derby, one letter from Victoria to Disraeli was written ‘with so much violence and so little dignity that to hear it read with gravity was impossible’. Furthermore, the Queen insisted, in agreement with Salisbury, that the Prince of Wales was to travel to India as first subject rather than as a representative of the Queen. Northbrook was her true representative, as she understood imperial hierarchy. Her son could not, then, hold a durbar or take any ceremonial precedence over the viceroy.

The Prince of Wales and the government forged ahead despite her reservations, and although the Queen came to imagine herself as the proper master of the planning process, this notion was very much an illusion. As the responses to her protests reflect, planning Albert Edward’s tour of India continued with or without her blessing. As the case of the Prince of Wales’ second son George will demonstrate, Victoria could refuse and obstruct plans, but proponents would collude – as we shall see, Prince George, the Colonial Secretary, and the Queen’s personal secretary – to convince her to put aside her reservations.

While he never developed a well-defined knowledge or consciousness of the empire, Edward did express an interest in local peoples, particularly the Indian princes, during his visits and sought to recast himself more visibly as an imperial monarch once King. In a sense, he became a better-travelled version of his mother, captured by the idea of being an imperial monarch but without an obvious understanding of what exactly being one meant.

The extant letters of Edward offer some limited insight into his understanding of the royal tour of India. In terms of his imperial consciousness, he had much in common with his mother. While he articulated an interest in local people, he also demonstrated a certain naivety about the empire, seeing it as an uncomplicated place. He recounted, for instance, his encounter with the Gaekwad of Baroda (see Chapter 2) in simple terms to his mother: that he gave the young gaekwad, ‘a very intelligent boy, quite overloaded with jewels’, some gifts, which pleased the boy, and received in return ‘some very pretty things’. In conveying an image of Bombay to his mother, he described his travels through the streets of the city in the language of a tourist: ‘You see mixed together natives of all classes, creeds & origin. Their Houses are very picturesque & they are all painted different colours. The lowest
classes & children hardly wear any garments at all.’

This assessment reflects a limited knowledge of his surroundings and enough cultural distance to avoid the moral implications of his sightseeing.

Like his mother, Edward expressed a much more profound interest in the hereditary princes of India than anything else in the Raj. He complained to his mother about the abuse of the princes by colonial administrators:

What struck me, most forcibly, was the rude and rough manner with which the English ‘Political Officers’ (as they are called, who are in attendance upon them) treat them. It is indeed much to be deplored, and the system is, I am sure, quite wrong. Natives of all classes in this country will, I am sure, be more attached to us and to our rule, if they are treated with kindness with firmness at the same time, but not with brutality & contempt.

While the dynamics of ornamentalism and imperial rule will be discussed in Chapter 2, Cannadine’s notion that the British ‘saw’ their empire in terms of an imperial social hierarchy, rather than race or colour, is useful in this context. In the looking-glass of empire, did Edward see, in the behaviour of British officials toward native princes, a mirror image of the Victorian monarchy, deprived of its power and pushed around by government officials? It would not be a conceptual leap to suggest that royals recognised some semblance of *similarity*. This does not mean that his sympathy did not also invoke *difference* (racial or otherwise) or that what he imagined reflected anything but an invented ‘idea’ of India. Yet Edward’s simple imperialism represented a limited kind of imperial consciousness; deprived of any real power in the imperial hierarchy, he may well have recognised that he was not all that different from the princes with whom he sympathised.

Much like Victoria, Edward delighted in the idea of being an imperial monarch in name. The effect of travelling twice to the empire, to Canada in 1860 and to India in 1875, indelibly informed his notions of what it meant to be the British monarch. Upon the death of Victoria, Edward proposed a revision to the royal title that included ‘Greater Britain’. The request was certainly influenced by his reading of Dilke but was more directly inspired by the suggestion of Sir Alfred Milner, the Governor of the Cape Colony and High Commissioner for Southern Africa. Ironically perhaps, he would never set foot in the empire again.

**George**

Prince George had much in common with his uncle, Alfred. Between 1879 and 1882, George travelled the world as a royal cadet aboard HMS
**Bacchante** with his older brother Albert Victor. As a reaction against his own austere and ‘over-pressured intellectual education’, Albert Edward encouraged a less rigorous and more limited educational programme for George and his brother. George had a limited knowledge of French and German and had little exposure to the Continent. During his 1879–82 tour of the world, George visited many places, both British and not: among them, Gibraltar, the Mediterranean, the West Indies, the Falklands, the Cape, Australia, Fiji, Japan, China, the Straits Settlements, Ceylon, Egypt, and Palestine. His understanding of his royal duties was profoundly informed by his years in the Royal Navy, where he legitimately earned his spurs as an officer, and he felt a deep respect for and connection with naval culture and with the people with whom he developed relationships during this period of his life. Unlike his parents and grandparents, he expressed a certain discomfort with Europe, despite his marriage to the English-born Mary of Teck. As the second son of the Prince of Wales, he had little prospect of becoming King, that is until his older brother Albert Victor died suddenly of influenza in 1891. Despite the similarities, George developed a different and more complex understanding of empire than his uncle, in part through his relationship with Joseph Chamberlain.

His consciousness of the empire as grandson and son of a monarch and later as King George V represents a generational difference with his grandmother and father and reflects broader changes in British society. His coronation at Westminster Abbey in June 1911 was celebrated by a Festival of Empire in London, and he was the first reigning monarch to visit the overseas empire, holding a coronation durbar in Delhi in 1911. Growing up in the high age of European imperialism, his understanding of the empire represents a turning point between a nineteenth-century monarchy that struggled and failed to retain its political relevance and a twentieth-century monarchy that came to accept its ceremonial role in British and imperial culture, best illustrated by Elizabeth II’s frequent travels in Britain and abroad. Ironically, George V reigned over the beginnings of the transformation of the British Empire from an empire on which the sun never set into a collection of associated states (later institutionalised as the Commonwealth) and the decline of Britain as a global power.

The Queen soundly rejected Prince George’s first invitation to the empire as an adult royal. Apparently enthused by the outpouring of colonial loyalty to the Queen during the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of 1897, the government of New Zealand invited the Duke and Duchess of York to visit New Zealand and Australia. Queen Victoria very quickly refused, citing her reluctance to allow a prince so close to the throne to travel so far away from home. She scolded the Cabinet
for even considering the proposal and asserted that she would ‘never give [her] consent to this idea’. George, in a letter to the Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, wrote that he was sorry about his grandmother’s decision, considering that ‘it is so very important to do all we can to please the Colonies at this moment, and to so bind them more closely to the Mother Country’. The government’s unquestioning acceptance of the Queen’s refusal was extremely rare, if not unheard of, during this period. The fact that neither Chamberlain nor the Duke of York took a particular interest in the visit and or the Queen on the issue, as was usually the case, perhaps explains this capitulation.

In 1900, Chamberlain again proposed a royal tour, this time in response to an Australian invitation to inaugurate the new federal parliament in Melbourne. While his initial proposal focused on Australia, but quickly incorporated a Canadian invitation, he imagined a much larger global tour of empire. Chamberlain conceived of the tour as an opportunity to thank the colonies for their service in the South African War and to forward his own ideas about imperial unity. Prince George was very enthusiastic about the prospect of this trip and corresponded frequently with the Colonial Secretary about the state of the negotiations with his grandmother. As on previous occasions, Queen Victoria was extremely reluctant to allow the Duke of York to go to Australia. Chamberlain and George, assisted by the Prince of Wales and the prime minister, Lord Salisbury, spent several months negotiating with the Queen and, in effect, conspiring with one another to convince the Queen to permit the tour.

In 1900, the Australian colonies invited the Queen to send her grandson George to the inauguration of an Australian federation, an offer that she declined. Over the course of several months, Victoria had to be coaxed and convinced by the government and by her family to allow George’s visit. George took the lead in advocating in favour of the visit to his grandmother. He wrote to Chamberlain in early July 1900 to indicate that he had made some progress with his grandmother on the subject of the royal tour, since she ‘seemed less unfavourable to the suggestion than on a former occasion’, and that his father the Prince of Wales would speak to her on the importance of the visit, ‘a most important event connected with the birth of the Empire’. By mid-August, George found her to be ‘not adverse’ to the idea of a brief visit to Australia, though she refused any consideration of a stop in Canada. He wrote in the manner of an intelligence-gatherer, suggesting to Chamberlain that ‘it would be better if you did not mention that you had heard from me’. For George, his prospects of his royal tour looked promising. Far more than his grandmother, he understood the
importance of the royal tours and actively participated in convincing the Queen.

The Queen, however, would waver and then refuse, again. Two days later, the Queen’s personal secretary Sir Arthur Bigge wrote urgently to Chamberlain, explaining that ‘Her Majesty did not seem to be so much in favour of the proposal as the Duke assumed her to be after their conversation two days ago.’ She was unhappy that the prime minister or the Cabinet apparently had no knowledge and thus no opinion of the proposal and concluded, according to Bigge, that ‘if [she] was asked now [she] should feel inclined to refuse’. The Queen’s age and the need to have royal children on hand to attend ceremonies in her place further discouraged her willingness to consent. Despite collaboration between George, the government, and the Queen’s personal secretary, she was more reluctant to grant permission for royal visits than ever before.

Bigge, a personal servant of the Queen, informed Chamberlain that he sensed that, when the proposal was put clearly and formally to the Queen, she would realise the importance of the visit to Australia, ‘the practical birthday of a new Empire’. Lord Salisbury feigned ignorance, Bigge informed Chamberlain, because the Prince of Wales wished to first speak to her on the matter. If the government was respectful of her concerns and appealed to her through official channels rather than through her grandson, he encouraged, she would be far more receptive. Even the Queen’s personal secretary, it seems, conspired with George and Chamberlain in the scheme to bring a royal son to the empire.

After receiving a formal proposal from Salisbury, the Queen finally agreed to the visit, with very specific stipulations. She agreed to the visit if the South African War had concluded by the time of the tour; if she remained in good health; if his visit was no longer than five months; and if George agreed to visit Canada and India another time. Bigge confided to Chamberlain that she ‘does not like the idea’ but was convinced of its importance by Salisbury. While worried that he might be considered a disloyal servant of the Queen, he even suggested that the limitations set by the Queen might be overcome with time. Chamberlain would assure him of his loyalty and indicated that other proposals for visits, from Canada, for instance, could still be considered until later stages in the planning process. George similarly proposed to Chamberlain that Canada might be reconsidered at a later time. They had got what they wanted and could seek more concessions from the reluctant imperial monarch later.

Despite the Queen’s reluctance and obstructionism, the semi-official account of the tour, written by fellow traveller Joseph Watson, was
curiously titled *The Queen’s Wish*. The idea of the Queen as a willing and enthusiastic participant reflects a key ideological component of the royal tour, principally that Queen Victoria sought to share her children and grandchildren with her colonial subjects as a gesture of maternal goodwill. Yet, even though she was the iconic symbol of the empire, the Queen was always a reluctant partner in royal visits. She wished to keep her children and grandchildren close to home. Only through the work of others, including young royals, was she ever persuaded to allow such travels.

George’s letters to Joseph Chamberlain before and during his 1901 tour demonstrate a deep knowledge of and interest in imperial politics. He had enthusiastically promoted the tour to his grandmother, in part because he foresaw ‘the greatest possible benefits to the Empire’. Before the tour began, he articulated a desire to distribute medals to colonial troops, this while expressing concern over the sack of Kumasi on the Gold Coast. He might be compared to his grandmother in his interest in empire, except that George had been to the empire and understood many of the political and cultural intricacies that would have been lost on Victoria.

Other than describing the loyalty of Australians, which he attributed to the rule of his grandmother, the South African War, and the work of Chamberlain, he articulated a sophisticated understanding of colonial policy. His letters reflect a profound knowledge of Australian politics, particularly after such a short time in the country: the rivalries between the different states, trade policy, policies regarding ‘Black’ and Chinese labour, drought and agricultural production, and many other topics. His correspondence reads like colonial intelligence, a seismic shift from previous royal tours. To describe George’s more developed awareness of empire is not to romanticise his knowledge or concern for empire.

The royal tour – the most extensive to date – only developed George’s sense of being better connected to the empire than his predecessors and the rest of British society. Returning to Britain late in 1901, he gave a speech at Guildhall on 5 December that he claimed reflected the colonial mood, asserting ‘that the Old Country must wake up if she intends to maintain her old position of pre-eminence in her Colonial trade against foreign competitors’. This sentiment reflects the political work of his imperial tutor, Joseph Chamberlain. In this regard, George represented a departure from his father and grandmother, in having a clear sense of his role as an imperial monarch. He advocated imperial unity and defence and travelled to the empire once he became King. Yet it was in George that the British monarchy took on its familiar twentieth-century form, as an institution that had come to accept
its purely symbolic role in both British domestic society and at the centre of a global empire and Commonwealth.

Prince George would be a monarch in a much different mould from his grandmother. As the first reigning monarch to visit the empire, he embraced its importance to the monarchy and his own role in its ritualistic order. As a teenager, he had written on Bagehot’s *English Constitution* and had internalised the notions of the monarchy’s ‘dignified’ and ‘business’ (rather than ‘efficient’) capacities. He returned from the 1901 tour as a vocal advocate of imperial unity. As Prince of Wales, he visited India in 1905–06, and echoing his father’s complaints of 1875–76, argued that ‘the Ruling Chiefs ought to be treated with greater tact and sympathy, more as equals than as inferiors’. He also wrote to the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian army, encouraging improved pay and conditions for Indian soldiers, and in his Guildhall speech called for ‘wider sympathy’ on the part of colonial administrators in relation to their colonial subjects. As George V, he travelled to India in 1911 to be crowned King-Emperor at the Delhi durbar and Imperial Assemblage (see the Postscript). What Victoria resisted and refused would be embraced by a new generation of royal children.

**Conclusion**

Victoria died a few months after George and Chamberlain secured her reluctant commitment, in January 1901. The South African War would not end for another year. Edward VII was slow to allow the heir to the throne to go ahead with the tour but ultimately approved it, at the insistence of Arthur Balfour, the Conservative Party leader. George would visit not only Australia but also New Zealand, Mauritius, South Africa, and Canada, with stops in Aden, Ceylon, and Singapore. This world tour was hardly the ‘Queen’s wish’. While those who planned and participated in the tour regarded a federated Australia as representing the symbolic beginnings of a new imperial century, it more clearly represented the newly developed role of the monarchy in a British world, forged and refined over the previous four decades. George and his successor would embrace Bagehot’s ‘dignified’ powers and the importance of empire in a way that Victoria never did.

The image of Queen Victoria was transmitted to and appropriated by Britain’s colonial subjects around the world. It was used by colonial administrators to support and legitimise imperial rule and by colonial subjects to demand imperial citizenship as loyal subjects to the Queen. It spread to the farthest reaches of the British colonial empire, often
far beyond the zone of effective military or political control. And, long after her death, subject peoples continued to appeal to her memory in demanding rights and fairness. Queen Victoria was the most potent cultural symbol in the history of the British Empire.

The British monarchy was reinvented as an imperial monarchy through the efforts of colonial officials and Victoria's subjects across the globe. The Great Queen was a reluctant participant in the royal tours and demonstrated a limited interest in her empire after the death of Albert. While her children frequently embraced a similar attitude toward the empire, of distance and reluctance despite their own encounters with it, her successors would ultimately accept the monarchy's ritual and cultural role in the empire as vitally important. By the crowning of George V as King-Emperor, and certainly by the coronation of his granddaughter Elizabeth, the myth of the imperial monarch became real.

Notes


2 David Cannadine, Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire [London, 2001].

3 Cannadine, Ornamentalism, 103.

4 According to Miles Taylor, before 1876 Victoria ‘thought she was Empress of India already’. Miles Taylor, ‘Queen Victoria and India, 1837–61’, Victorian Studies 46, no. 2 (Winter 2014), 264.


7 Cannadine, Ornamentalism, 133.


12 Alison Drummond, ‘Queen Victoria Had a Maori Godson’, Te Ao Hou: The New World, no. 24 (October 1958): 60–1; Miles Taylor, Queen Victoria and India [New Haven, forthcoming]. Taylor argues that Victoria was intensely engaged with her Indian empire, a fact that I do not dispute here. I do contend that her interest was limited and ambivalent and was most often focused on moments of crisis or celebration.
ROYAL TOURISTS


14 Royal visits to the empire, with the exception of the Prince of Wales’ visits to Canada and India in 1860 and 1875–76 respectively, are virtually ignored in the historical biographies and the published letters of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, as well as those of their children and grandchildren.


16 James Murphy has written a very skillful study of the British monarchy and Irish society, particularly Victoria’s royal tour of 1900, the insights of which will be revisited in the later chapter on imperial rule. See James Murphy, Abject Loyalty: Nationalism and the Monarchy in Ireland during the Reign of Queen Victoria [Washington, DC, 2001]. For more on Victoria’s travels see David Duff, ed., Victoria Travels: Journeys of Queen Victoria between 1830 and 1900, with Extracts from her Journal [New York, 1971]. A very curious, if interesting, volume about Victoria’s imaginary visit to Jamaica was published in the 1980s by Doubleday, republished by Random House in 2002: Jonathan Routh, The Secret Life of Queen Victoria: Her Majesty’s Missing Dairies (Garden City, NY, 1980).

17 Parsons, King Khama, 227–8.


19 Quoted in Hibbert, Queen Victoria in her Letters and Journals, 4.

20 David Cannadine, History in Our Time [New York, 2000], 42.


22 Collar of the Order of the Star of India, RCIN 441295, Royal Collection, London.

23 Albert’s extraordinary attention to detail can be witnessed in his lengthy letter to the Duke of Newcastle detailing arrangements for the Prince of Wales’ tour of Canada. Albert to the Duke of Newcastle, 8 July 1860, Ne C 12771/1, Papers of the Duke of Newcastle, University of Nottingham.


26 On this topic, see Miriam Scheider, ‘Royal Naval Education, Sailor Princes, and the Re-Invention of the Monarchy’ [MPhil thesis, University of Cambridge, 2011].


28 Lord Northbrook to Lord Salisbury, 29 April 1875, RA VIC/MAIN/Z/468/10.

29 Queen Victoria to Lord Salisbury, 27 May 1875, RA VIC/MAIN/Z/468/11. This problem was deemed of particular importance in India, particular because a Raj ruled by the Crown rather than a trading company was a rather new idea in the 1870s. This issue was also discussed in the preparations for Alfred’s visit of 1875. Lord Northcote
to Baron Lawrence, 1 August 1868, Papers of Sir John Lawrence, British Library, London, European Manuscripts [henceforth BL MSS Eur], F90/29 no. 40.

30 Lord Salisbury to Queen Victoria, RA VIC/MAIN/Z/468/ CFP/24. Salisbury appealed to the precedent of the 1860 Canadian tour, which he saw as allowing a temporary suspension of this policy on grounds that ‘there is some real danger that if the Queen’s own son is put in a position of obvious inferiority, the true relation of the Viceroy to the Queen will be misunderstood or ignored’.

31 J. Fayer, Notes on the Visits to India of Their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and Duke of Edinburgh, 1870–1875–76 (London, 1879), 75.

32 Major Cowell to W. Christee [Foreign Office], 30 April 1860, RA VIC/Add A 20/49.


34 Ian Radforth, Royal Spectacle: The 1860 Visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada and the United States [Toronto, 2004], 44.

35 Albert to the Duke of Newcastle, 8 July 1860, Ne C 12771/1, Papers of the Duke of Newcastle, University of Nottingham.

36 Lord Northcote to Baron Lawrence, 1 August 1868, Papers of Sir John Lawrence, BL MSS Eur F90/29 no. 40.

37 Whether O’Farrell was actually a Fenian remains unclear. The Colonial Secretary of New South Wales at the time, Henry Parkes, who doubled as a police detective during the investigation, remained convinced, thirty years later, that O’Farrell was of sound mind. Henry Parkes, Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History [London, 1892], 190–211.


40 Cited in Campbell, ‘A “Successful Experiment”’, 70.


42 Fenian Revelations, 5.

43 Fenian Revelations, 3, 13. He told Parkes that the Fenians did not target the Prince of Wales because he was ‘useful to the cause – the Republican cause, because he disgraces loyalty.… He is turning England against royalty.’

44 Fenian Revelations, 12–15.

45 Fenian Revelations, 9–10, 24. ‘Perhaps he wants to make up a million exactly, or a legion, 10,000; he has received a stream now from all parts of the colony.... Will he take them all home with him? Will the Galatea hold them all? I think he ought to set fire to the lot and take the ashes of them all home.’

46 Alfred to Queen Victoria, 27 March 1868, RA VIC/ADDA20/1281.


48 Arthur Balfour Haig to Queen Victoria, 27 August 1870, RA VIC/MAIN/S/27/54.

49 Quoted in Hough, Victoria and Albert, 162.

50 John Russell to W. D. Christie, 30 April 1860, RA VIC/ADDA20/49.

51 Queen Victoria's Journals, Princess Beatrice’s copies, vol. 49, 204–5, 6 August 1860.

52 Status in this sense would be revisited again and again during the royal tours, as we shall see.
Gardner D. Engleheart to the Governors of the Cape, St. Helena, Sierra Leone, 5 May 1860, RA VIC/ADDA20/62.

Major John Cowell to Albert, 29 August 1860 and 5 September 1860, RA VIC/ADDA20/69.

RA VIC/MAIN/QVJ [W], 28 October 1860 (Princess Beatrice’s copies).

Alfred to Queen Victoria, 28 December 1869, RA VIC/ADDA20/1303.

Several scholars of empire have argued that hunting was a function of colonialism. It reflects an imperial consciousness much different from the one being examined here, however. Most importantly, see John MacKenzie, The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism [Manchester, 1997].

Hough, Victoria and Albert, 163.

Arthur Balfour Haig to Queen Victoria, 27 August 1870, RA VIC/MAIN/S/27/54.

Arthur Balfour Haig to Queen Victoria, 27 August 1870, RA.

Arthur Balfour Haig to Queen Victoria, 27 August 1870, RA.


Saul Solomon, The Progress of His Royal Highness Prince Alfred Ernest Albert through the Cape Colony, British Kaffraria, the Orange Free State, and Port Natal in the Year 1860 [Cape Town, 1861], 86–92.

Alfred to Queen Victoria, 24 January 1870, RA VIC/ADD/A/20/1306.

Alfred to Queen Victoria, 28 December 1869, RA VIC/ADDA20/1302.

Alfred to Queen Victoria, 28 December 1869, RA.

Alfred to Queen Victoria, 9 January 1870, RA VIC/ADDA20/1304.


Baghetto, The English Constitution.


Matthew, ‘Edward VII’: ‘The queen, however, was strongly hostile to the prince’s taking on public duties in Britain. She tried to maintain the code of behaviour which Albert had prescribed, which was one in which Albert was the chief male prince. The queen, as Sidney Lee put it, kept her son “in permanent in statu pupillari. She claimed to regulate his actions in almost all relations of life”. Maintaining a sort of fiction that Albert was alive and active, she forbade the prince’s presence on royal commissions and public bodies, and, despite her own almost total seclusion, he was not allowed to represent her at public occasions.’

As Prince of Wales, Albert Edward was the ranking son of Queen Victoria. In some sense, the decision to discuss Albert Edward after Alfred is decidedly subversive. After all, Alfred was a far greater traveller than Albert Edward and deserves first attention in a study such as this one. I have relied heavily on Ian Radforth’s excellent history of the 1860 tour of Canada rather than retracing what he has already done. Radforth, Royal Spectacle, 17.


Radforth, Royal Spectacle, 18.

Lee, Edward VII, 89.

Lee, Edward VII, 90.

Lee, Edward VII, 88.

Lee, Edward VII, 373.

Lee, Edward VII, 370.

Queen Victoria to Lord Salisbury, 18 March 1875, RA VIC/MAIN/Z/468/3. Emphasis in the original text.

Queen Victoria to Lord Northbrook, 17 May 1875, RA VIC/MAIN/Z/468/7.
BRITISH ROYALS AT HOME WITH THE EMPIRE

85 Queen Victoria to Lord Salisbury, 27 May 1875, RA VIC/MAIN/Z/468/11.
86 Queen Victoria to Lord Salisbury, 27 May 1875, RA.
88 Prince of Wales to Queen Victoria, 14 November 1875, RA VIC/MAIN/Z/468/98.
89 Prince of Wales to Queen Victoria, 14 November 1875, RA. Colonial administrators generally guarded him from the worst examples of suffering and poverty.
90 Prince of Wales to Queen Victoria, 14 November 1875, RA. A similar sentiment would later be echoed by his son George upon returning to Britain from India in 1905–06.
91 Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*.
92 Joseph Chamberlain to Edward VII, 15 April 1901, Papers of Joseph Chamberlain, University of Birmingham, JC 11/12/37/60 [henceforth JC].
95 Earl of Ranfurly to Joseph Chamberlain, 25 November 1897, JC 29/6/6/6; extract from Address by the Governor of New Zealand to the House of Representatives, 23 September 1897, JC 29/6/6/5.
96 Joseph Chamberlain to Queen Victoria, 7 February 1898, JC 29/6/6/10; Joseph Chamberlain to the Earl of Ranfurly, February 1898, JC 29/6/6/2.
97 JC 11/38/10. This document is unsigned, undated, and was written on a plain sheet of notepaper. Context clues, however, make obvious that it conveys the Queen’s opinion of the New Zealand invitation. Whether it was written by the Queen or her personal secretary Arthur Bigge is unclear. I must acknowledge Helen Fisher at the Special Collections Library, University of Birmingham, for her assistance on this matter.
99 She was also unhappy about the Australians’ choice of ‘Australian Commonwealth’ as the new federation’s name because she thought that it reflected republican sentiments. Chamberlain assured her that they simply wanted to use a different name from the Canadians. Extract from the Queen’s Journal, 27 June 1900, *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, ed. G. E. Buckle, Third Series, 1886–1901, 3 vols (London, 1930–32), vol. 3, 566–7.
100 Duke of York to Joseph Chamberlain, 1 July 1900, JC 11/37/7.
102 Duke of York to Joseph Chamberlain, 15 August 1900, JC.
103 Sir Arthur Bigge to Joseph Chamberlain, 17 August 1900, JC 11/38/12.
104 Sir Arthur Bigge to Joseph Chamberlain, 17 August 1900, JC.
105 Sir Arthur Bigge to Joseph Chamberlain, 17 August 1900, JC. Her son Alfred had died in late July 1900, and her grandson Albert Victor died in 1892. These deaths left her the Prince of Wales and his immediate successor the Duke of York, in addition to Prince Arthur, the Duke of Connaught. She determined Arthur to be even more indispensable than George. Queen Victoria to Joseph Chamberlain, 26 August 1900, JC 11/38/17.
106 Sir Arthur Bigge to Joseph Chamberlain, 17 August 1900, JC.
107 Queen Victoria to Lord Salisbury, 26 August 1900, JC 11/38/14.
112 Duke of York to Joseph Chamberlain, 15 August 1900, JC.
114 Duke of York to Joseph Chamberlain, 2 June 1901, JC 11/12/77.
ROYAL TOURISTS

115 *The Times*, 6 December 1901. Chamberlain also gave a speech at the Guildhall celebratory luncheon, where he contrasted the current relationship between Britain and its colonies to the period of the 1860 royal tour of Canada, when the imperial connection was being questioned both at home and in Canada.


119 Matthew, ‘George V’.