
MATERIALS

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Theory and practice of royal education based on Victorian Prince of Wales' educational experiment

Abstract

For Queen Victoria and Prince Albert the proper education of their eldest son, and the future king of England, was of paramount importance. Their most important advisor in this matter was Baron Stockmar, who believed in strict control of every moment in the boy's life. The article examines available documentary sources dealing with the theory of the prince's education as presented mainly in Queen Victoria's, Prince Albert's and Stockmar's memoirs, as well as the way this theory was translated into practice by the Prince's tutors and teachers. The main documentary sources here are the official reports and private diaries of Lady Lyttelton, Henry Birch and Frederick Gibbs. All in all, to the great disappointment of the Prince's parents, the educational theory promoted by Stockmar proved to be a complete failure.

Keywords: royal education, educational experiment, Prince of Wales, Victorian Age

In May 1853, a note was published in the American *Cambridge Tribune* in which a "London correspondent" attempted to illustrate the way in which the eldest son of Queen Victoria, the eleven-year-old Prince of Wales, Albert Edward, was brought up.¹ One day, the correspondent reported, the young prince stood in his room in the

¹ I would like to thank Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for granting me access to the Royal Archives in Windsor and for her permission to quote from the documents in the Royal Archives.

There is a lack of a comprehensive discussion of Albert Edward's upbringing and education, but all his biographies discuss his childhood, upbringing and education in a more or less detailed manner. The most commendable are two works largely based on archive queries, a landmark work by Philip MAGNUS *King Edward the Seventh*, London 1964, p. 1-23, although he did not have access to many sources, as well as Jane RIDLEY'S *Bertie. A Life of Edward VII*, London 2012, in particular p. 15-34; among the remaining biographies the following need to be mentioned: ST. AUBYN, G., *Edward VII. Prince and King*, London 1979; WEINTRAUB, S., *The Importance of Being Edward. King in Waiting, 1841-1901*, London 2000; HIBBERT, Ch., *Edward VII. The Last Victorian King*, London 2007.

Windsor royal palace, next to a window comprising many small panels, which covered an entire wall from the ceiling to the floor. He was to memorize a text he had been assigned, but instead he looked through the window at the garden and tapped his fingers on the glass. Seeing his behaviour, his governess, the harsh Miss Hillyard (sic),² politely asked him to return to his duties. The young prince responded: “I do not want to”, to which Miss Hillyard answered “Therefore, I will have to send you to stand in the corner, Sir.” “I am not going to learn”, he responded with conviction, “and I am not going to stand in the corner, because I am the Prince of Wales.” Saying this, he knocked out one of the glass panes in the window. In this situation, Miss Hillyard said: “Sir, you will either study or I will have to stand you in a corner.” “I will not”, he said and kicked out another windowpane. The governess called a servant and asked him to tell Prince Albert that his immediate presence in an urgent case concerning his son was necessary. The devoted father arrived immediately and, having heard about what happened, went to his room and returned with the Bible and a birch rod. “Now listen”, he said to the Prince of Wales, “what Apostle Paul tells you and other children in your situation”, after which he quoted the letter to Galatians: ‘The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father’.³ “It is true that you are the Prince of Wales and if you behave well, you can achieve a high social standing, and even after your mother’s death you can become the king of England. But now you are only a small boy who must obey his teachers and carers. Besides, I must remind you of another saying by the wise Solomon, “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes”⁴.”⁴

Saying that, the father took the birch rod and punished the heir to the throne of the largest empire in the Christian realm, and then he stood him in a corner saying, “You will stand there and learn until Miss Hillyard releases you from your punishment. And you should never forget that you are now to obey your teachers and carers, just like you will have to obey the law given by God in the future”. The press correspondent added that this is a perfect example of Christian upbringing that every citizen with children should observe and use in practice.⁵

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert had nine children. In November 1841, nine months after their wedding, their first-born daughter Victoria was born, called Vicky by the family. Later on, she would become an unparalleled model for her other siblings.⁶

² Correct spelling: Hildyard. Miss Hildyard, the pastor’s daughter, was called Tilla by children.

³ Galatians 4:1-2. [KJV].

⁴ Proverbs, 13:24. [KJV].

⁵ “The Flogging of a Prince”, a press note translated from a “German paper”. “Cambridge Chronicle”, vol. VIII no 21, 21 V 1853, p. 3, column a. WEINTRAUB, S., *The Importance of Being Edward. King in Waiting 1841-1901*, p. 1-2 also quotes this story, attributing it to *The New York Tribune*.

⁶ The best work concerning Vicky is Hannah PAKULA, *An Uncommon Woman. The Empress Frederick. Daughter of Queen Victoria, Wife of the Crown Prince of Prussia, Mother of Kaiser Wilhelm*, London 1995.

A few months later, Victoria was pregnant again. However, she did not want the other child, because she considered women who are constantly pregnant to be “repulsive; resembling rabbits or guinea pigs.”⁷ In November 1841, the first son of Victoria and Albert was born⁸ – Albert Edward, also known as Bertie,⁹ heir to the throne, bearing the traditional title of the Prince of Wales.¹⁰

In 1857, the royal family already had 11 members.¹¹ The birth of the Prince of Wales caused a nationwide euphoria, but when the number of 'royal children was going up almost every year, and economists began to give public lectures about the danger of overpopulation, the increase in the number of “royal tax eaters” was increasingly criticised.¹² Victoria was very intrigued by her eldest children and wrote that “although they are often the source of many worries and problems, children are a great blessing, they make our lives cheerful and brighten it up.”¹³ But as their number slowly grew, she became more impatient and spent less and less time with them, up to the point when she started treating them as rivals in the fight for her husband’s feelings. Years later, Vicky confessed: “Often I was mad at you that I could not get rid of you when I dreamt of spending a moment alone with the dearest Papa! These were always my happiest moments!”¹⁴ Over time she lost her fascination with their development and growing up; however, she lamented the cult of worship of children and warned her older daughter against showing them too much affection and becoming a “slave.”¹⁵

Like in other wealthy homes, the children mostly stayed in separate rooms all day under the care of their nannies and later governesses, they played together, learned and ate their meals. However, every evening, all of them visited their mother one by one. She examined them closely, asked them about their activities during the day, reprimanded them for their bad behaviour or lack of progress in learning. Albert, howev-

⁷ Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess, Victoria, 15 VI 1859, *Dearest Child: Letters Between Queen Victoria and the Princess Royal, 1858-61*, ed. R. FULFORD (London, 1964), 195

⁸ Queen Victoria’s Journal (Princess Beatrice’s copies), 2 XII 1848. On-line www.queenvictoriasjournals.org [Accessed: 12 October 2015]

⁹ Victoria to King Leopold, 6 VI 1843, *Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty’s Correspondence*, ed. A.Ch. BENSON and V. ESHER, 3 vols., London 1907, vol. 1, p. 602.

¹⁰ Queen Victoria’s Journal, 10 XII 1841.

¹¹ In 1843 Alice was born, followed by Alfred (1844), Helena (1846), Louise (1848), Arthur (1850), Leopold (1853) and Beatrice (1857).

¹² Cf. THOMPSON, D., *Queen Victoria. A Woman on The Throne*, London 2001, p. 44.

¹³ Queen Victoria’s Journals, 10 II 1852.

¹⁴ Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess, Victoria, 2 III 1958, *Dearest Child: Letters Between Queen Victoria and the Princess Royal, 1858-61*, ed. R. FULFORD, London 1964), p. 68.

¹⁵ 22 VI 1858, *Ibidem*, p. 118. Regarding Queen Victoria’s attitude towards motherhood, Cf. MISZTAŁ, M. “Królowej Wiktorii spojrzenie na macierzyństwo” [in:] *Człowiek w teatrze świata*, ed. B. POPIOŁEK, Krakow 2010, p. 53-68.

er, at least until he was completely busy working on endless projects and state affairs, devoted more time to his children than most Victorian fathers.

In 1847, the parents drew up a memorandum on their children's education, which was to be based on Victoria's conviction that children should be brought up in "as simple a way as possible" and that after their classes they should spend as much time with their parents as possible, learning "to trust them in all matters."¹⁶ All problems, rewards and punishments, which in the case of both boys and girls usually consisted of standing in the corner with their hands tied in the back, were to be determined in detail with the queen.¹⁷ Prince Albert, however, never shunned corporal punishment, even in the case of girls; for example, the then four-year-old Alice "received a decent punishment" for lying and "screaming."¹⁸

The children were divided into grades. The main goal of the first grade, until the age of six, was physical development, education and teaching them obedience; apart from that they were also taught English, French, German and elements of religion. Then they moved to the second grade, where, under the watchful eye of the governess, they were to develop the "strength of their character". After reaching the age of seven, in the third grade, the princes were assigned their own tutors and servants, while the princesses got their own servants and governesses who instructed them in etiquette until they got married. Learning good manners was supposed to be the main goal of the girls' education, but they also had art, music and dance teachers. In the fourth grade, the thirteen-year-old princes were supposed to get acquainted "with life and the world". Sunday was supposed to be a day of entertainment and rest, and Victoria strongly rejected the opinion that it was shameful to play cricket on Sunday or engage in "innocent entertainment" such as amateur theatre, dance or shooting.¹⁹

Practical subjects also had an important role in the children's upbringing, which is why in 1853, Albert planned the construction of the Swiss Cottage in Osborne, which he supervised in person. The interior was adapted to the children's height and included a fully equipped kitchen and a stove. There, the princes could learn carpentry and gardening, while the princesses could learn not only gardening, but also cooking and housekeeping. The plates of miniature tea, dinner and dessert services were decorated with the inscription "Waste not, want not". One of the rooms was a grocery store for

¹⁶ Royal Archives, Windsor Castle (further referred to as RA) VIC/MAIN/M/12/55, Memorandum by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, 3 I 1847.

¹⁷ "We have taken a drive... the Princess Alice having been sadly naughty and disobedient all the way; and ended by arriving in the most stunning roar. I thought the case very grave, and that I should obey His Royal Highness's instructions best, by administering a real punishment, by whipping". RA VIC/MAIN/M/13/87, Lady Lyttelton to the Queen, 18 VIII 1847.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*. Cf. Lady Campbell's opinion that "it is pointless to reprimand children, it is better to beat them immediately." Queen Victoria's Journal, 3 VIII 1838, and Lord Melbourne's opinion that "caning" did a lot of good to him and he regrets that he was not punished more often at Eton. *Ibidem*, 15 X 1838, see also *Ibidem*, 1 X 1838. See also Mitchell, L.G., *Lord Melbourne, 1779-1848*, Oxford 1997, p. 213-215.

¹⁹ RA VIC/MAIN/M/12/55, Memorandum by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, 6 I 1847.

dolls, “Spratt, Her Royal Majesty’s grocery store,” where children could learn about the prices of various products. Stones, fossils and plants collected under Albert’s supervision were exhibited in a small “natural history museum” on the upper level. In the garden next to the cottage, each child was given separate plant beds and gardening tools, with spades, hoes and wheelbarrows, and every hour of their work in the garden was rewarded with a small amount of money. In a miniature earthen fort nearby, equipped with functional brass guns, the princes practised battle tactics.²⁰

The oldest son, Bertie, gave his parents most cause for concern. Just as in the case of Vicky, immediately after Bertie was born, he was handed over to a wet nurse, Mary Ann Brough,²¹ who was dismissed after eight months because she was “gloomy, grumpy and stupid.”²² At a time when it was widely believed that with the wet nurse’s milk could carry her character, vices and merit over to the child,²³ one can only imagine Victoria’s horror, when in 1854 she found out that Brough had killed her six children in a fit of rage.²⁴ Victoria herself had been fed by her mother, who confessed that she loved her baby too much to allow a stranger to feed her, and added that mothers who give up breastfeeding give up “a lot of true *joie de vivre*.”²⁵ Despite this, the queen felt an “immense aversion” to breastfeeding, considering it part of the “humiliating and animal” part of motherhood.²⁶

The Queen had extremely high expectations regarding her successor. Victoria’s great hope was that Bertie, the future king, would resemble his “angelic dearest father”. After her son was born, she wrote to her uncle Leopold, whom she regarded as her second father²⁷: “I wonder very much who our little boy will be like. You will understand how fervent my prayers and I am [sure] everybody’s must be, to see him re-

²⁰ TUCKER, N., *Swiss Cottage, Osborne House, Isle of Wight*, “History Today” vol. 40, no 9 (September 1990), p. 62-63; WEINTRAUB, *The Importance of Being Edward*, p. 9-10.

²¹ RA VIC/MAIN/Y/198/140, Queen Victoria to Leopold, king of Belgians, 14 XII 1841; Queen Victoria’s Journal, 25 I 1842.

²² Queen Victoria’s Journal, 16 VII 1842. RIDLEY, *Bertie*, p. 15, mentions Brough but does not say anything about her dismissal.

²³ Cf. “With wet nurse’s milk, her vices, passions and inclinations are transferred to the child, i.e. with her milk, the child also took in the tendency to lie, to anger and laziness, etc.”. BILZ, F.E., *Nowe lecznictwo przyrodne*, Leipzig 1903, p. 378, after NAWROT-BOROWSKA, M., Mamki – najemne karmicielki w świetle literatury poradnikowej z drugiej połowy XIX i początku XX wieku, *Biuletyn Historii Wychowania* 31 (2014), p. 85-112.

²⁴ Queen Victoria’s Journal, 13 VI 1854; RA VIC/MAIN/Y/99/23, Queen Victoria to Leopold, king of Belgians, 13 VI 1854. Trial of a Woman for the Murder of Her Six Children – Plea of Insanity, *The New York Times* 25 VIII 1854, Murder of six children by their mother, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 IX 1954, p. 2, column a; *Freeman’s Journal*, 16 IX 1854, p. 4., column a. Brough died in an asylum in 1861.

²⁵ RA VIC/MAIN/M/3/6, The Duchess of Kent to the Dowager Duchess of Coburg, 22 VI 1819; Lynne Vallone, *Becoming Victoria*, London 2001, p. 4-5.

²⁶ Queen Victoria to the Crown Princess, Victoria, 15 VI 1858, *Dearest Child*, p. 115. When her second daughter, Alice, decided to breastfeed her children, the angry queen named one of the milk cows in Windsor after her. Cf. Misztal, Mariusz, *Królowej Wiktorii spojrzenie na macierzyństwo*.

²⁷ “il mio secondo padre” Journals of Queen Victoria, 16 IX 1836.

semble his angelic dearest Father in every, every respect, both in body and mind.”²⁸ The Queen called her son, her “little boy” and one and a half years after his birth she wrote: “I do not think that he is worthy to be called Albert yet.”²⁹ Sadly, her wish never came true and everybody in the family always called him Bertie.

Out of concern for Bertie’s future, his parents discussed his physical, intellectual and especially moral training. Bertie was a nice child, but at the same time he was a slow student, unwilling to cooperate with his teachers. Victoria has convinced herself that he was a “good” boy, and that he “[did] not lack intelligence” at all, but he was “uncertain and [did] not believe in himself”, which is why she consciously distanced herself emotionally from her son following the advice of her husband, probably in the belief that liberating him from too-strong ties with his mother would contribute to the development of his independence and other leadership traits. However, outside observers saw it differently and the omniscient Charles Greville repeated circulating rumours that the queen “[did] not really like this child.”³⁰ The first seven years of Bertie’s life passed in a relatively relaxed atmosphere, deprived of the rigorous education he would soon become a victim of.

The education of the future ruler was an extremely important matter for his parents. It would determine whether Bertie would continue the program of moral renewal of the monarchy initiated by his parents, or whether he would resemble his debauched uncles from Hanover. Over time, the mother also began to notice her son’s positive traits. On his ninth birthday, she wrote in her journal that there was “a lot of good in him. He is so tender, very truthful and straightforward.”³¹ That, however, was not enough to dutifully fulfil his future role. There was only one panacea, in which the Victorians deeply believed – education.

Prince Albert was well aware that the role and influence of the monarch had largely changed since Victoria’s predecessors ruled, that the monarch would reign but not rule, and that since 1830, executive power had been in the hands of the government,³² and that the role of the monarch – as Walter Bagehot correctly summed up – had been limited to three rights: advising, encouraging and issuing warnings. The monarch became a symbol of “dignity”, uniting the loyalty and obedience of subjects to the state and strengthening the government’s position with the power of religion behind it, as well as the head of society and a model of morality.³³ That is why Albert believed

²⁸ Queen Victoria to Leopold, king of Belgians, 7 XII 1841, Letters, 1: 460. Cf. Queen Victoria’s Journal, 12 XI 1841, 25 I 1842.

²⁹ RA VIC/MAIN/Y/198/181, Queen Victoria to Leopold, king of Belgians, 14 VII 1843.

³⁰ Greville Diary, 22 I 1848.

³¹ Queen Victoria’s Journal, 9 XI 1850.

³² Christian F. Stockmar to Prince Albert, 27 XII 1845, MARTIN, Th., *Life of H.R.H. the Prince Consort*, 5 vols., London 1875-1880, vol. 1, p. 314.

³³ BAGEHOT, W., *The English Constitution*, London 1867.

that the monarch's influence could only be strengthened by the personal character of the ruler.³⁴

Albert asked the most important and influential personalities for opinions and advice on how to educate the heir to the throne, including the future recurrent Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone, known for his studies on Homer, the influential historian Thomas B. Macaulay and Bishop of Oxford, Samuel Wilberforce, who declared that the primary goal of educating the Duke of Wales is bringing him up to be "the most perfect man."³⁵

One of the most discussed voices in the discussion regarding Bertie's education was an anonymous pamphlet titled "Who should educate the Prince of Wales?", published in 1843 and dedicated to the queen. The author suggested that he could not be educated by statesmen or politicians who, of course, sought ministerial positions, nor the clergymen, for they dreamed of becoming bishops; the author also believed that entrusting the education of children to clerics was a "relic of barbarism" (p. 10-12). The tutor should be non-partisan and devoted to truth, have a passion for learning and be able to make the prince aware that there was no royal path to knowledge. The pamphlet constantly called upon authorities such as Plato, Socrates, Fenelon, Montaigne or Rousseau and, in terms of teaching methods, suggested that the prince should not learn by heart but acquire knowledge through thinking, searching and solving problems by linking facts, comparing and drawing conclusions. In addition to developing the mind, the prince should also develop his body through sport and horse riding. He should also get to know nature by taking long walks in the woods and meadows and meet his subjects during incognito trips to towns and villages. The prince must also realise that the king of England is an official, respected and generously paid for by hard-working subjects, so that he can maintain the universal order, freedom and security, not in order to provide him with sensual pleasures and a lavish life. Finally, the author admitted that they were aware that such an education for the Prince of Wales was only their dream, which would probably be rejected with disgust by people making decisions.

The influential and satirical *Punch* also weighed in regarding the prince's education. The article titled "Education of Royal Children" said that a new swing could be seen over the wall surrounding the Buckingham Palace, where the royal family lived. Thanks to this wonderful idea, the royal children would learn from their earliest years that even princes are sometimes at the bottom and sometimes on the top, that we sometimes move forward, but sometimes we have to go back, and it is never too early to try and understand these truths.³⁶

The old Lord Melbourne opposed these opinions and warned that even a very rigorous education rarely achieved "as much as is expected of it", since it could shape

³⁴ RA VIC/MAIN/Y/148/1, Prince Albert to Christian F. Stockmar, 6 I 1846, MARTIN, *Life*, vol. 1, p. 316.

³⁵ RA VIC/MAIN/M/12/46 (enclosure to 45, copy: RA VIC/MAIN/Y/184/12, Memorandum Bishop of Oxford, Samuel Wilberforce.

³⁶ Education of the Royal Infants *Punch, or the London Charivari*, IV (1843), p. 232.

and guide character, but rarely managed to change it.³⁷ The opposing point of view was represented by Baron Christian Stockmar, a trustee of Albert's and Victoria's uncle Leopold, who was the king of Belgium since 1831, who since their wedding served as an unofficial political guardian and who became the most influential advisor in the process of developing the principles and goals of education of the young Prince of Wales.³⁸

In 1842-1848 Stockmar prepared a series of memorandums which emphasized the necessity of "truly moral and truly English" education. Stockmar considered that a system that would ensure that Bertie, as the future 'manager of the country', would become "a treasury of all moral and intellectual virtues that would unite the country and under whose leadership it would move forward on the great path of civilisation" should be instituted.³⁹ The Protestant tradition taught that in order for princes not to listen to the surrounding sycophants in their adult lives, it was necessary to start working with them in order to develop an absolute morality, a love for hard work and a sense of duty early in their lives. Bertie's education system, developed by Stockmar, was typical of the German model of royal education in the 19th century⁴⁰ and reminded us of the way Prince Albert was brought up and educated.⁴¹

The main principle of the system proposed by Stockmar was that the child was born with natural inclinations to good and evil, and the aim of the education process was to develop and strengthen the former, and to cure and weaken the latter. He believed that it was never too early to start a good education.⁴² He repeated John Locke's opinion that "neglecting the beginnings is the fundamental mistake of parents." Like Locke, Stockmar believed that education was about organising experience. "Nine-tenths of a man's character and ability are shaped by education", wrote Locke and argued that educational experience should be physical, mental and spiritual – "a healthy mind in a healthy body."⁴³

³⁷ Viscount Melbourne to Queen Victoria, 1 XII 1841, *Letters*, 1: 458.

³⁸ Charles GREY'S *The Early Years of His Royal Highness The Prince Consort. Compiled under the Direction of Her Majesty the Queen*, New York 1867, p. 160 contains the following opinion of the Queen about Stockmar: "The Queen, remembering her friend from the early years of marriage with gratitude and sympathy, will never forget about the help Baron gave to the young couple.... in directing the education of their children." Regarding Stockmar's influence, Cf. STOCKMAR, E.A., *Denkwürdigkeiten aus den Papieren des Freiherrn Christian Friedrich v. Stockmar*, Braunschweig 1872; CRABITES, P., *Victoria's Guardian Angel: A Study of Baron Stockmar*, London 1937.

³⁹ RA VIC/MAIN/M/12/44, Ch. F. Stockmar's Opinion on the Question – Should the Instructor of the Prince of Wales be a Clergyman, or a Layman?, 30 VII 1846.

⁴⁰ MEYER, J., *E' Education des Princes en Europe du XVIe au XIXe Siecle*, Perrin 2004, p. 210-14.

⁴¹ Cf. MISZTAL, M., *Królowa Wiktoria*, Ossolineum 2002, p. 89-91; GREY, Ch., *The Early Years of the prince Consort*, London 1869; WEINTRAUB, S., *Albert. Uncrowned King*, London 1997, p. 39-65.

⁴² RA VIC/MAIN/M/12/14, Memorandum by Ch. F. Stockmar, 6 III 1842

⁴³ "A sound mind in a sound body". LOCKE, J., *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. Vol. XXXVII, Part 1. The Harvard Classics. New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909–14; Bartleby.com, 2001. www.bartleby.com/37/1/, par. 1. Locke refers to a Latin sentence *mens sana in corpore sano* used by Juvenalis in *Satire X*

Stockmar wrote that the main aim of the educator was to regulate the child's natural instincts and to care for the purity of their mind. The task that the heir's parents needed to face is much more difficult than that of other parents, because their children must not only be people of high moral values, but also be prepared to successfully carry out their future duties as monarchs.⁴⁴ Stockmar also recalled the mistakes made by previous rulers, especially George III, who failed to instil the "principles of truth and morality" into the minds of his sons, which led to the debauchery and moral downfall of the monarchy.⁴⁵

Equally important, according to Stockmar, was a proper selection of prince's tutors among "good people with untarnished reputation", worthy of absolute trust. He believed that "education starts from the first day of his life and the best gift for the expected child is a good choice [of care]."⁴⁶ Parents must have complete confidence in the carer. In the case of king's children, the person responsible for their upbringing must also have sophisticated manners, as well as experience. They should also be a person from the higher class, to make it easier for them to get the staff to do their bidding.⁴⁷ Stockmar had his candidate. It was Lady Sarah Lyttelton, who has been a lady of the court since Victoria came to power. Her primary task was to supervise companion ladies, which she performed exceptionally well. Friendly, although full of "proper seriousness", she was well-liked in the court. At the request of Victoria, Lady Lyttelton agreed to take over the supervision of the crèche.⁴⁸

Lady Lyttelton, who stayed with the children most of the day, was able to evaluate Bertie's character in a more objective way than others.⁴⁹ He was not easy to work with, he was grumpy and often had fits of anger and bad mood. When asked to do what he didn't feel like doing, he would start screaming and kick his legs or stamp with anger or throw things around until he was out of breath. Lady Lyttelton wrote

(10.356). See also RANISZEWSKA-WYRWA, A., Johna Locke'a koncepcja wychowania moralnego *Biuletyn Historii Wychowania*, 31 (2014), p. 161-175.

⁴⁴ RA VIC/MAIN/M/12/14 Memorandum by Ch. F. Stockmar, 6 III 1842.

⁴⁵ Regarding the education of George III see The Education of the Hanoverian Kings in the Age of Reason: From George I to William IV, [in:] P. GORDON, D. LAWTON, *Royal Education. Past, Present and Future*, revised edition, London 2003, p. 91-132. For obvious reasons, Stockmar overlooked the scandals connected to Albert's parents: mother, who had already had enough of her husband's endless love affairs, started looking for happiness in the arms of another man and finally decided to leave Coburg and live with her lover, whom she married after receiving her divorce. There were also speculations that Albert was not the son of Prince Ernest, but that his true father was Baron von Meyern, a Jew and a chamberlain in Coburg. See Weintraub, S., *Albert. Uncrowned King*, p. 20-36.

⁴⁶ RA VIC/MAIN/M/12/14 Memorandum by Ch. F. Stockmar, 6 III 1842; RA VIC/MAIN/Y/153/9 Ch. F. Stockmar to Prince Albert, 1 X 1840; CRABITES, P., *Victoria's Guardian Angel: A Study of Baron Stockmar*, London 1937, p. 125.

⁴⁷ RA VIC/MAIN/M/12/16, The Queen to Melbourne 24 III 1842; RA VIC/MAIN/M/12/17, Lord Melbourne to the Queen, 25 III 1842.

⁴⁸ Queen Victoria's Journal, 6 IV 1842.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

about the two-year-old Bertie that she is “as rude as most children, but not more than others, and I think that he is going to be well in terms of his character and intellect.”⁵⁰ A year later, she said that Bertie “does not speak as clearly as his sister [Vicky] and has a childish way of speaking” and although he understands a little French, his education in languages is delayed overall. She also wrote that he was “very intelligent and generous and has a gentle character, with occasional fits of passion and stamping.”⁵¹ With time, the young prince rebelled more and more. Bertie refused to learn, threw books around and hid under the table. He also started stuttering, and Vicky’s mockery of his speech impediment drove him to fury.⁵²

Lady Lyttleton was able to reconcile “motherly sensitivity with common sense.”⁵³ When Bertie was two years old, she wrote to Victoria that his “greatest crime” was throwing his toy soldiers through the Windsor castle window, but at the time “it was unlikely that this behaviour would create a dangerous precedent” for his future life.⁵⁴ She only rarely resorted to the punishments recommended by Albert and Victoria, especially corporal punishment. Advising her daughter-in-law on how to raise her daughter, the mother of five wrote:

I do not think that the eruptions of crying at her age mean a nasty character. As for the way of stopping them, I think it is best not to pay attention to them. I admit that I am against punishments; they are quickly exhausted, and it is never known whether a child understands that they are a result of their bad behaviour.⁵⁵

Lady Lyttleton taught Bertie the basics of foreign languages. He had no problems with German, which was often used in the court, because in the nursery children spoke German and at the age of five he was already reading books in German.⁵⁶ Lady Lyttleton noted that his first sentence was in English,⁵⁷ but although the famous actor George Bartly became his teacher of English diction,⁵⁸ years later it was noticed that his English sounded very strange.⁵⁹ There are no preserved recordings of his voice, but

⁵⁰ RA VIC/MAIN/M/13/46, Lady Lyttleton to Queen Victoria, 29 IX 1843.

⁵¹ Lady Lyttleton to Queen Victoria, 16 II 1844, Lord ESHER, *The Influence of King Edward*, London 1915, p. 6.

⁵² RA VIC/MAIN/M/13/68, 74, Lady Lyttleton’s Journal, 24 VIII 1845, 3IX 1845

⁵³ MIDDLEMAS, K., *Edward VII*, London 1972, p. 17.

⁵⁴ RA VIC/MAIN/M/13/45, Lady Lyttleton to Queen Victoria, PAKULA, *An Uncommon Woman*, p. 18.

⁵⁵ *Correspondence of Sarah Spencer, Lady Lyttleton, 1787-1870*, ed. Mrs. H. WYNDHAM, London 1912, p. 327.

⁵⁶ BUNSEN, S.B., *King Edward VII*, London 1925, 1:17.

⁵⁷ RA VIC/MAIN/M/13/51, Lady Lyttleton to Queen Victoria, 11 IX 1844

⁵⁸ Queen Victoria’s Journal, 2 VIII 1855.

⁵⁹ RA VIC/MAIN/Z/442/43, Frederick W. Gibbs to Prince Albert, 14 VIII 1857.

according to common opinion, even during public speeches, he pronounced his r's in a guttural, German way.

Bertie was very unfortunate, because he was always compared by his parents to his older sister, who was extremely intelligent and bright. Lady Lyttelton admitted that Vicky was "an extremely delicate, vulnerable and emotional child with a rather sensitive character," but she also noticed that she was intelligent and smart enough to keep her fits for the carer and to behave in an exemplary way in the presence of her mother.⁶⁰ Victoria's notes and letters are full of praise for her "engaging" nature and examples of intelligence, good manners and on-point sayings.⁶¹

Lady Lyttelton saw that Vicky did not shy away from lies if she had something to gain by lying, while Bertie always told the truth. He was a charming child, with a natural penchant to showing his sympathy, and he tried very hard to satisfy others' expectations, although it was not easy for him to do so.⁶² Lady Lyttelton also believed that Bertie was learning more by observing others than by reading books. Unfortunately, his parents did not notice Bertie's positive qualities and, praising Vicky's virtues and achievements, they constantly criticized Bertie's shortcomings and deficiencies, up to the point when Victoria started to consider him being "mentally challenged."⁶³

Concerned by their son's development, the parents have repeatedly called for the consultation of well-known phrenologists,⁶⁴ Andrew Combe⁶⁵ and his brother George Combe,⁶⁶ who, based on the shape of the boy's skull, were supposed to determine his talents and disabilities and advise them on how to deal with the boy. Having carefully examined the skull of four-and-a-half-year old Bertie, George Combe pointed out the "specific features of his character and brain" and assessed that the "poor quality of his brain" meant that the prince would be "hyperactive", susceptible to violent fits of anger, stubborn and inflexible, but these would not be "intentional actions, but merely the effect of the physiological structure of his brain." The brain organs responsible for ostentation, destructiveness, self-esteem, edginess and the need for approval of

⁶⁰ Lady Lyttelton to Queen Victoria, 5 II, 5 IX 1842, *Lady Lyttelton's Correspondence, 1787-1870*, ed. Mrs H. WYNDHAM, London 1912, p. 327-9.

⁶¹ Zob. PAKULA, *An Uncommon Woman*, p. 15-19. Years later, however, the queen wrote to her adult daughter that "she has never met a more disobedient and wayward girl", and the way and tone in which Vicky addressed her mother even in the presence of strangers "shocked" everyone. 28 VII 1858, *Dearest Child*, p. 124-5.

⁶² Sarah, Lady Lyttelton to W. H. Lyttelton, October 1847, *Correspondence of Sarah Spencer; Lady Lyttelton*, p. 372.

⁶³ Queen Victoria to Leopold, king of Belgians, 20 IX 1842, *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 549.

⁶⁴ Regarding popularity of phrenology in Victorian England, see PARSSINEN, T.M., *Popular Science and Society: The Phrenology Movement in Early Victorian Britain*, "Journal of Social History", vol. 8, No 1 (Autumn 1974), 1-20.

⁶⁵ In 1838 Andrew Combe was appointed the Queen's doctor in Scotland. He was an author of the highly popular *The Management of Infancy, Physiological and Moral* (1840)

⁶⁶ Prince Albert to George Combe, 29 X 1851, [in:] Ch. GIBBON, *The Life of George Combe*, 2 vols., London, 1878, vol. 2, p. 298-299, 215.

other people are high. Other organs responsible for intellect were “only partially developed.” As a result, he would develop “strong will, sometimes even stubbornness”, with his self-esteem so great that he will be extremely sensitive to everything that affects him.”

Dr Combe concluded that the prince should not be treated like a normal child, because insisting on strict adherence to the rules and forcing him to study for hours could be dangerous for him. Rather, it would be necessary to allow him to rest, encourage him to learn instead of forcing him to do so, all while treating persistent refusal as a reflex reaction of the body, which is best responded to by frequent persistent and gentle reminders, and if they do not help, it would be necessary leave him alone and wait until he calms down. Dr Combe reassured Albert that Bertie’s “moral organs” are developed so well that one should not fear that he would pretend lack of comprehension or ability to skip learning. It seemed that Bertie would regard any lie as completely below his dignity.⁶⁷

Stockmar’s response to phrenologists’ opinions and problems with Bertie was a recommendation of systematic brain training. The six-year-old Bertie, under the supervision of the governess, Miss Hildyard, was to participate in classes according to a detailed schedule. The whole time from 8 a. m. to 6 p. m. was scheduled for various classes, for example in January 1848, Bertie had the following daily schedule:

8:20 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. calculus, spelling, writing
11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. French
1:00 p.m. – 1:55 p.m. German
4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Reading, geography, writing
5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Dancing, on other days chronology and history, reading poetry
6:00 p.m. Reading stories, playing with historical maps or board games.⁶⁸

Stockmar’s detailed principles, objectives and methods of Bertie’s early education did not bring the expected results, and teachers complained more and more often about lack of any satisfactory progress. Even Lady Lyttleton was forced to admit that in many respects, he was a “very difficult student”, and moreover, he was not better developed than other children of his age.⁶⁹

The prince’s first tutor was thirty-year-old Henry Birch, who received an education at Cambridge, master of Eton, the most elite private school for boys. In April 1849, he was appointed as the head of all prince’s teachers for a period of 3 years, with an annual salary of 800 pounds.

⁶⁷ RA VIC/MAIN/M/14/107, George Combe to Sir James Clark, 22 VI 1850, RA VIC/MAIN/M/15/2, George Combe to Prince Albert, 21 X 1850, National Library of Scotland, MSS. 7437, Correspondence of Prince Albert with Dr George Combe, Dr George Combe’s reports, after: HIBBERT, *Edward VII*, p. 10.

⁶⁸ RA VIC/MAIN/M/12/66, Miss Hildyard’s Table of Time for the Children; January 1848.

⁶⁹ RA VIC/MAIN/M/13/89, Lady Lyttleton to Queen Victoria, 3 IX 1847.

His task was to strictly respect the rules described in Stockmar's educational programme approved by Albert, and to prepare regular reports on Bertie's progress. They would start at 8 a.m. and finish at 4 p.m., and when Bertie was 9 years old, they would finish at 4:30 p.m. instead. Each day was divided into five classes, each of them was half an hour or an hour long. Birch taught arithmetic, geography and English, and other teachers taught religion, German, French, French, calligraphy, drawing and music. Bertie had shorter holidays than other boys of his age who attended private schools.

Bertie did not like the system imposed by the overloaded educational programme, which meant five hours of classes five days a week. Birch reported that Bertie was "very disobedient, acted brazenly towards teachers, and reluctantly subordinated to discipline." He was also extremely selfish, and was unable to continue any game or play even for a few minutes, or to try doing something new or difficult without losing control." He hated when someone made fun of him, but "in spite of his irritability I laughed at him... and treated him as he would have been treated in any English private school, the same way I had been treated myself."⁷⁰

In the end, Birch suggested that Bertie's wayward nature must be met with a decisive response and severely punished. In response, Albert decided on corporal punishment, especially caning, which had a "great effect."⁷¹

Birch believed that Bertie should have more contact with his peers. In practice, apart from everyday meetings with his parents that lasted several minutes, he did not see anyone except his teachers.⁷² Unfortunately, Albert and Stockmar thought otherwise. In addition, Albert stopped trusting Birch and decided that his refusal to attend presbytery services during his stay in Balmoral meant a lack of loyalty.⁷³ Despite his desire to remain in charge, in February 1852, Birch was dismissed after three years of service and went on to become an ordained priest.⁷⁴ Bertie, who had become attached to his tutor, was deeply saddened⁷⁵ and corresponded with him for some time describing the most important events.⁷⁶ Albert, who most probably had already for-

⁷⁰ Gibbs Papers, MAGNUS, *King Edward*, p. 7.

⁷¹ Royal College of Physicians, GB 0113 MS-CLARJ, Sir James Clark Diary, 24 VI 1849; RA VIC/MAIN/15/19, H. Birch to Ch. F. Stockmar, 24 XI 1850.

⁷² RA VIC/MAIN/M/14/49, H. Birch's Private Thoughts, 1 XII 1849

⁷³ Benjamin Disraeli to Lady Londonderry, 10 X 1851, Londonderry Papers, after: HIBBERT, *King Edward*, p. 11.

⁷⁴ Prince Albert to Prince William of Prussia, 27 I 1852, *The Letters of the Prince Consort*, 1831-1861, ed. Kurt Jagow, London 1938, p. 182. Contrary to popular opinion, Birch was dismissed from the job by Albert, even though he wanted to continue working with the prince. RIDLEY, *Bertie*, p. 22-4.

⁷⁵ Lady Canning, one of the queen's court ladies, wrote that Bertie's behaviour, who after learning about the news of Birch's dismissal sent him small gifts and letters was "extremely moving." WEINTRAUB, *The Importance of Being Edward*, p. 17.

⁷⁶ The Education of a Prince. Extracts from the Diaries of Frederick Waymouth Gibbs, 1851-1856, *The Cornhill Magazine*, vol. 165, no 986 (Spring 1951), 105-119, p. 106.

gotten about the traumatic experience of parting with his favourite tutor, Christoph Florschütz, did not care at all.⁷⁷

Before his departure, Birch summarized his observations on Bertie. He admitted that his progress in writing and spelling was poor, but few English boys knew German and French so well. If Bertie had a chance to meet a 21st century child psychologist he would certainly be diagnosed with hyperactivity, dyslexia⁷⁸ and perhaps dyspraxia (decreased manual skills) which made writing a laborious activity for him.⁷⁹ “He has a very sensitive perception of good and evil, very good memory, and an exceptional gift of observation”, but his problems largely stemmed from the fact that he had no contact with his peers and he was the very centre around which everything revolved, but, as Birch concluded, “everything indicates that the Prince of Wales will eventually grow to be a good – in my modest opinion – a great man.”⁸⁰

The new tutor for nine-year-old Bertie and his six-year-old brother, Alfred (called Affie by the rest of the family) was middle-class lawyer Frederick Waymouth Gibbs, educated in Cambridge, whose view of education was very similar to that of Stockmar and Albert. He was to receive an annual salary of as much as 1000 pounds for his work. His patron, Sir James Stephen of Cambridge, wrote that despite being dry, in reality Gibbs was unrivalled when it came to his dedication to “truth, honour, dignity and purity”, that he was courageous and energetic, confident in his own power and sometimes stubborn, which could be perceived as being rough and authoritarian, but he was never gloomy or irritable – instead, he was kind and sensitive.⁸¹

After coming to power, Edward VII ordered the destruction of most documents related to his education⁸², but Gibbs kept a journal in which he wrote down daily observations concerning the Prince of Wales.⁸³ The schoolwork was extended to six hours per day and six days per week. The classes started at 8 a.m. and finished at 7 p.m. The breaks between individual classes were filled with demanding physical exercises, which more often than not resembled a regime in a penal camp, so as to make sure that the princes were properly tired in the evening. “Lighter” reading, even Walter Scott’s novels which were considered as such by Gibbs, was banned.

However, Gibbs introduced one important innovation in Bertie’s education, namely he convinced Albert to allow princes to contact students from aristocratic families

⁷⁷ See MISZTAL, *Królowa Wiktoria*, p. 90-91.

⁷⁸ Cf. WEINTRAUB, *The Importance of Being Edward*, p. 3.

⁷⁹ RA VIC/MAIN/M/14/37, Prince Albert’s memorandum, Education of the Prince of Wales, 12 IV 1849; RA VIC/MAIN/Z/444/68, Tarver to Prince Albert, 9 III 1848, Ridley, *Bertie*, p. 21.

⁸⁰ RA VIC/MAIN/M/15/107, H. Birch’s Memorandum, 25 II 1852.

⁸¹ *The Education of a Prince*, p. 105.

⁸² RA GV/GG9/439, Viscount Esher to Frederick Ponsonby, 19 IV 194. Regarding the destruction of documents by Edward VII after his rise to power, see Ridley, *Bertie*, p. 480-4; regarding the censorship of documents before publication, see WARD, Y., *Censoring Queen Victoria*

⁸³ Extensive excerpts from the diary were published in *The Education of a Prince. Extracts from the Diaries of Frederick Waymouth Gibbs, 1851-1856*.

studying at the nearby Eton. But although Bertie started participating in the meetings of the Eton Discussion Club, this did not mean that in reality could communicate freely with boys of his age. The visits of carefully selected Eton students at Windsor also did not result in a success and Eton's rector, Dr Edward Hawtrey complained that Bertie "enjoys inflicting pain on others", which was also noticed and commented on by other people around the prince⁸⁴ and which was something that Stockmar considered as a characteristic feature of the mental illness that affected George III. During one of these visits in 1854, Bertie met Charles Carrington, who was to become his closest friend until the end of his life, the only one whom he addressed by name. Carrington himself recalled that although Prince Alfred was the favourite of all, he preferred Bertie, who often found himself in trouble, but who had "such a kind and benevolent nature and the most sensitive heart of all." At the same time, Carrington recalled that Bertie was very afraid of his father, who constantly observed him and even secretly followed him and seemed to be a "proud, shy and reserved" man who could not make friends with children.⁸⁵

Gibbs' results were unsatisfactory. From class to class, Bertie grew increasingly daring and disobedient, refusing to learn anything or follow commands. Gibbs' diary is full of remarks such as: he was "constantly nervous", "agitated and disobedient". "violent", "rude", "making stupid faces", "insulting me", "could not focus", "threw a pencil around the room", "kicked chairs and knocked them over", "hit Prince Alfred", "argued and hit Alfred", "pulled Alfred's hair while brandishing a letter knife", "pelted me with stones", "pelted me with mud". When Bertie resorted to physical violence, hitting Gibbs in anger with a cane, he complained to Albert, who responded saying that Gibbs should smack Bertie on his ears or beat his hands with the same cane. Ultimately, the prince was left in a closed room as a punishment.⁸⁶

Victoria was fascinated by such treatment of Bertie by Gibbs, whom she regarded as a "real treasure" and informed uncle Leopold that since his arrival "our poor bizarre boy had improved a lot."⁸⁷ In her conversation with Gibbs she admitted that staying in a kindergarten with Vicky, who was very intelligent and clever, could have had a negative impact on his mind, and to this day Bertie sometimes kept his head down low and looked at his feet, and every day or every two he had fits of unstoppable anger, and when he was very tired he often lost any sense of self-control.⁸⁸

Neither Albert nor Stockmar took any notice of the remarks of other teachers who criticized Gibbs' behaviour, e.g. Dr Becker, his German teacher, wrote in his report

⁸⁴ 2 III 1853, *The Education of a Prince*, p. 117. Bertie's grandfather, the Duke of Kent, was also known for his cruelty, which ended his military career. See MISZTAL. *Królowa Wiktoria*, p. 11-12.

⁸⁵ Bodleian Library, MSS Film 1120, Papers of Charles Robert Wynn-Carrington, marquess of Lincolnshire, "King Edward VII as I knew Him for 55 years".

⁸⁶ 18 II 1852, *The Education of a Prince*, p. 111.

⁸⁷ RA VIC/MAIN/Y/97/23, Queen Victoria to Leopold, king of Belgians, 29 VI 1852. Cf. 22 IV 1852, *The Education of a Prince*, p. 114-115.

⁸⁸ 16 I 1852, *The Education of a Prince*, p. 107.

that the fits of anger were simply caused by the fact that the boy was overworked.⁸⁹ The only reaction to such remarks was to encourage Gibbs to experiment with new methods⁹⁰ and Albert's instruction that Bertie should continue his classes even during the royal summer vacations to Balmoral in Scotland, which even Gibbs considered an exaggeration.⁹¹ In the end, Stockmar seemed to have lost all hopes that Bertie would ever be able to fulfil the hopes of his parents. He told Gibbs that Bertie was a "difficult case"⁹², a "an exaggerated copy of his mother"⁹³, and if Gibbs considered that he was no longer able to do anything, he should at least take care of the younger prince, Alfred.⁹⁴

After several years of observation, Gibbs believed that Bertie's behaviour showed a "constant conflict between impulse and principles." Usually he was impulsively rude and unkind, he ridiculed and annoyed others and as a result, his playful and humorous tone was perceived as "rough and rude." Gibbs believed that Bertie was aware of the fact that he was not as kind as he should or would like to be, which is why he sees reprimand in every word and even perceives good advice this way. On the other hand, Gibbs continued, there was a "sense of duty" closely linked to the need for his father's and the mother's approval and the sense of satisfaction resulting from good behaviour. It was true that Bertie had immense problems with focusing and "thinking required effort, sometimes even painful effort," but developing his liking for fun and entertainment, which requires perseverance and thought could be beneficial in his case. Bertie's character was marked by such qualities as "imagination, sensitivity to beauty and sense of humour." Gibbs summed up his report concluding that

the prince was very childish for his age and for some time he has to be considered as mentally challenged. In his best moments, the prince showed a real willingness to learn.... Even if these efforts are not lasting, they show enough dormant strength to allow us to hope that when he reaches the age at which he becomes aware of the responsibility of his own position, he will be able to muster up the strength to work more, and if, in the meantime, he will be able to learn the basic knowledge, which can only be acquired in childhood, his inborn cunning and common sense will help him understand and fulfil his obligations that he is destined to fulfil.⁹⁵

In 1856, Bertie's parents conceded to the idea that his book education was not appropriate for his temperament and intelligence and decided that travel could be a good alternative. In autumn, they sent him on a hiking trip around Devon, but although

⁸⁹ Becker to Prince Albert, 19 I 1852, MAGNUS, *King Edward*, p. 10-11.

⁹⁰ 31 III 1852, *The Education of a Prince*, p. 114.

⁹¹ 20 IX 1852, *The Education of a Prince*, p. 116.

⁹² 28 I 1852, *The Education of a Prince*, p. 107.

⁹³ 14 II 1852, *The Education of a Prince*, p. 110.

⁹⁴ 31 III 1852, *The Education of a Prince*, p. 114.

⁹⁵ Gibbs' Memorandum for the Queen, May 1854, *The Education of a Prince*, p. 118-119.

Bertie travelled *incognito*, as Baron Renfrew, the secret was uncovered and he was greeted along the way by crowds demonstrating their loyalty. His parents did not like this at all, and so the trip was ended immediately. In the following year, Bertie left for his first four-month trip around Europe, during which he visited Bonn, where he was to study German language and literature, and then Switzerland.

In 1856, the adolescent prince received an annual allowance of 100 pounds and had permission to choose his own clothes. At the same time Queen Victoria, worried about her son's approach to extravagant outfits and haughty way of speaking, explained to him what the place of clothes in his life should be. "We do not want to impose control over your own tastes and preferences, which we believe you should satisfy and develop", after which she immediately added, "but we expect that you will never wear anything extravagant, not because we do not like it, but because it would prove your lack of respect for yourself and it would also contradict good manners, leading – as it often happens to others – to indifference towards what is immoral and evil."⁹⁶ The mother's warnings did not work and in a letter to Vicky, Albert complained that Bertie was interested "only and exclusively" in his outfits, and even during a hunt he was "more interested in his trousers than animals"⁹⁷ and Victoria complained to her daughter that "he saddened her very much. He was so lazy and weak."⁹⁸ Victoria must have subconsciously realised that Bertie was like a caricature of her.⁹⁹ He had inherited her joy of life, an explosive temperament and a reluctance to learn. But, unfortunately, he still did not resemble his father at all.

In April 1858, to the surprise of his parents, Bertie passed his religion exam with a good result and had his Anglican confirmation. He was rewarded with a two-week-long holiday in Ireland, but immediately afterwards Albert decided that he should be "isolated from the world" and prepare for a military academy exam. Three experienced officers were supposed to polish up his manners. Albert pointed out to them that the prince was to be taught the proper way of moving, caring for his appearance and manners, particularly around other people; he was not allowed to hunch his back or keep his hands in his pockets, he was supposed to be punctual, avoid gossiping, playing cards or billiards.

In November 1858, on his 17th birthday, Bertie received a document signed by his parents in which they declared that he was "released" from parental control and care. They admitted that although he might have thought that his education was sometimes too strict, they did everything for his good, trying to strengthen his mind and prepare him to deal with the "irresistible charm of flattery" to which he would be con-

⁹⁶ Queen Victoria to the Prince of Wales, 26 X 1857, V. Esher, V., *The Influence of King Edward and Essays on Other Subjects*, London 1915, p. 10.

⁹⁷ Prince Albert to Victoria, the Princess Royal, 17 XI 1858, CAESAR, E., *The English Empress: A Study in the Relations between Queen Victoria and her Eldest Daughter*, tr. E. M. Hodgson, London 1957, p. 50.

⁹⁸ Queen Victoria to Victoria, the Crown Princess, 8 March 1858, *Dearest Child*, p. 73.

⁹⁹ Queen Victoria to Victoria, the Crown Princess, 27 April 1859, *Dearest Child*, p. 187.

stantly exposed. From now on, he was to make his decisions on his own and his parents would not impose anything on him, although they would always be ready to give him advice if he asked for it. His parents did not hesitate to remind Bertie that “life is made up of duties, and a true Christian, a true soldier and a real gentleman can be distinguished by proper, timely and eager fulfilment of his duties.”¹⁰⁰

The educational experiment, developed with remarkable attention to detail and aimed at forming a perfect successor to the throne, ended up being a total failure. Bertie not only did not become an intellectual, but the method of education tested on him discouraged him from learning or even reading anything so effectively that it was widely believed that he had not voluntarily read not a single book in his life.¹⁰¹ It was ironic that it was not Bertie, but all his younger brothers, to whom much less attention was devoted, inherited at least to a certain extent the scientific interests and temperament that his parents so much desired. Alfred was interested in geography and science, he developed faster than his age would suggest, Leopold who suffered from haemophilia was a lover of art and good literature, while Arthur was a boy with an exceptionally pleasant nature and soon became his mother’s favourite child.

The educational experiment also did not bring the expected results in terms of moral education of the prince. Until the end of her life, Queen Victoria believed that the death of her beloved Albert was hastened, if not a direct result of the scandal caused by eighteen-year-old Bertie’s romance with actress Nellie Clifden.¹⁰² What is more, the affinity of the Prince of Wales, who would later become King Edward VII, for romance was widely known, which is why he was nicknamed “the Caresser.”¹⁰³ But neither the excessive love for women, nor the long hours and fortunes spent playing the game of dice prevented King Edward VII from being an exemplary ruler of England.

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¹⁰⁰ Queen Victoria and Prince Albert to The Prince of Wales, 9 XI 1858, ESHER, V., *The Influence of King Edward*, p. 13-15. Cf. GREVILLE, Ch., *The Greville Memoirs. A Journal of the Reigns of King George IV, King William IV, and Queen Victoria*, ed. H. REEVE, London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1898, 8: 217, 4 XI 1858; St Aubyn, p. 41.

¹⁰¹ HIBBERT, Ch., *Edward VII: The Last Victorian King*, London 2007, p. 201.

¹⁰² RA VIC/MAIN/Z/141/94, Prince Albert to the Prince of Wales, 16 XI 1861; Queen Victoria to Victoria, the Crown Princess, 12 XI 1862, *Dearest Mama*, p. 132.

¹⁰³ Henry James to Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr, January 1901; EDEL, L., *Henry James: The Master: 1901-1916*, New York 1972.

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