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The Happy Secret: Alexandra of Denmark and Ireland, 1863-1925

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Abstract

For many years the notion of Princess Alexandra of Denmark's political sympathy with Ireland has persisted among her biographers, while historians have been much more reserved in their endorsement and aware that the historical basis for Alexandra's image as a supporter of Ireland is very tenuous. Nevertheless, Alexandra's supposed feelings toward Ireland have never been discussed in-depth and have rather been taken for granted as having been useful to her husband for a time. The origin of this affinity has never been fully explained, short of suppositions concerning her political sensibilities and similarities between Denmark and Ireland. What follows is an attempt to discover the roots of the affinity between Alexandra and Ireland by looking at it in a different way; as being a construct of the 19th century popular press in Britain.

As a bride in 1863 Alexandra was subjected to different portrayals in the media, but was presented as an influential figure set to play a significant part upon the national stage. When she visited Ireland in 1868, questions were raised as to whether or not her presence or her actions were her greatest asset in aid to the faltering Irish polity. In the midst of the fiery visit of 1885 she became a model for a more active relationship between the Irish populace and the Crown. As Queen in 1903, press writers looked to bind her image together and twin the successes of previous visits with her superb conduct most recently. The image created by the reporting of her actions in Ireland was such that upon her death in 1925 she was remarked as having been unique in the dynasty and proclaimed a true friend of Ireland.

Keywords:

Alexandra of Denmark, House of Saxe-Coburg, Ireland, Irish Home Rule, Irish Unionism, popular press, King Edward VII, Queen Victoria, loyalism, monarchy, queens, celebrity, motherhood, nationalism, royal ceremony, newspapers, royal visits

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Introduction

Alexandra, Princess of the Danish House of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg and consort to King Edward VII of Great Britain, was, at the height of her popularity, recognized as a model of 19th century fashion, a generous donor to charity, and, alongside the Empresses Elisabeth and Eugénie, considered one of the most beautiful royal women in Europe. Regardless of how politically active or aware she might have been, both scholarly texts and romantic biographers have argued that beginning during her time as Princess of Wales, and later as Queen, Alexandra had an affinity for Ireland. Archival evidence suggests that she enjoyed her trips to Ireland and welcomed the adulation of the Irish people, but speaks very little about the agency she possessed or wished to exert. From an evidentiary standpoint, the entire notion that she was in any way sympathetic to the cause of Irish Home Rule has long been grounded on a conversation in 1892 where she noted her support for Home Rule when dining with William Gladstone. As a result, Alexandra's supposed feelings toward Ireland have never been discussed in-depth and have rather been taken for granted as having been useful to her husband for a time. The origin of this affinity has never been fully explained, short of suppositions concerning her political sensibilities and similarities between Denmark and Ireland.

This dissertation will argue that the friendship was, in large measure, a construct of the 19th century popular press in both Britain and Ireland, and that newspapers interpreted and reinterpreted Alexandra's actions in Ireland so as to present her as being sympathetic in a time when the Saxe-Coburg dynasty seemed increasingly distant or, alternatively, inclined toward coercive measures in dealing with Irish political agitation. The absence of Queen Victoria, and

the profligate image of the Prince of Wales, left room for Alexandra to become a focus for Irish loyalty, whether for the pro-Union conservative press or more liberally-minded publications espousing Irish nationalism within the constitutional monarchical framework.

Beginning as an ingénue in 1863, Alexandra's friendly status in Ireland grew in the course of her subsequent visits as her popularity spread and her benevolence was chronicled. Though the image of Alexandra as open to the Irish people at large was enduring across newspapers of varying political motivations, excepting the radical and republican press, what her friendship meant was up for interpretation. Columnists saw Alexandra's popularity, charity, and ability to connect with individuals, and drew conclusions ranging from her ability to inspire Irish loyalty, her unique sympathy for Irish social causes, or her enjoyment of Ireland as pointing to its favoured place within the United Kingdom. Though the practical effect of this friendship was dubious, a fact often pointed out by contrary-minded newspapers, it was presented in the loyalist and home rule press alternatively as partly curative of Irish political discontent, or creating an atmosphere in which mutual understanding between the discontented and Westminster could be reached.

When considering her political power, such as it was, certain authors and historians note that Alexandra had a measure of influence with her husband, and likewise, in later life, upon her son, George V.¹ This outlook is in keeping with historiographical trends that claim that role of

¹ Roderick R. McLean, *Royalty and Diplomacy in Europe, 1890-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 82-4, 190; Simon Heffer, *Power and Place: The Political Consequences of Edward VII* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1998), p. 269; Frank Hardie, *The Political Influence of the British Monarchy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 78; David Cannadine, "In Churchill's Shadow" (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 58; Sir Sidney Lee, *King Edward VII: A Biography Vol I: Birth to Accession* (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1927), p. 323; Sir Sidney Lee, *King Edward VII: A Biography Vol II: The Reign* (Toronto:

the consort queen has too often been dismissed as being of peripheral importance and that consort queens have played a valuable role within the royal court and were influential in the nation at large.² Obviously, what follows is in agreement with these arguments, but only in so far as the press coverage of the royal visits discussed remark on the central nature of Alexandra. While it is true that columnists and newspapers often needed her action for their discourse, it was their reaction, and the consistent construction of her friendly image across the Irish Sea, that is the focus here, rather than Alexandra's own active role, if any, in the creation of this representation.

Other representations of Alexandra note her charm and generosity as elements in her success as a member of the royal family. Alexandra's less formal style of monarchy was noted as having been more appealing to those who felt, especially during the reign of the reclusive Queen Victoria, increasingly alienated.³ Scholars like Regina Schulte, Margaret Homans, and Sharon Aronofsky Weltman have attempted to understand the institutional transformation that meant that, by the mid-nineteenth century the female monarchical standard became simplicity, morality and innocence. Instead of being portrayed as powerful and domineering, queens were to be unassuming and examples of goodness, whose passivity, duty, and moral power were very much

Macmillan Company of Canada, 1927), pp. 54, 532, 590-91, 672-4; Graham & Heather Fisher, *Bertie & Alix: Anatomy of a Royal Marriage* (London: Robert Hale & Co., 1975), p. 163; Jane Ridley, *Bertie: A Life of Edward VII* (London: Vintage Books, 2012), pp. 82-87, 108-9, 255, 304, 420-21, 431-33, 477; Phillip Magnus, *King Edward the Seventh* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1964), pp. 66-7, 82-3, 93-7, 151, 182-3, 292; 54. Christopher Hibbert, *Edward VII: The Last Victorian King* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 77, 90, 111, 149, 218, 218, 284

² Clarissa Campbell Orr, ed. *Queenship in Europe, 1660-1815: the Role of the Consort* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1-16; Ann Wallace, *Royal Mothers: from Eleanor of Aquitaine to Princess Diana* (London: Piatkus, 1987, c1986), pp. 150-171; Louise Olga Fradenburg, *Women and Sovereignty* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), pp. 34-56; Geoffrey Wakeford, *Three Consort Queens: Adelaide, Alexandra & Mary* (London: Hale, 1971), pp. 65, 176

³ Battiscombe, *Queen Alexandra*, pp. 1-4, 95-96; G. Arthur, "Alexandra" in Frank Prochaska ed., *Royal Lives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 475.

in keeping with the standards of constitutional monarchy, to say nothing of the focus on their appearance above their action.⁴ This too plays a key role in the discussion which follows, as it was this more relaxed nature that was harnessed by columnists time and again to present an image of unprepossessing grace from afar, but also warmth and intimate concern, when Alexandra met and seemingly touched the lives of individuals in the course of her visits in Ireland. Moreover, it was this tender effigy, carved and sculpted by the press, both in Britain and Ireland, that allowed her in many ways to supplant Victoria as a locus for affection, especially among the Home Rule press.

However, historians such as G. W. Monger, Zara Steiner, W. L. Langer, and A. J. P. Taylor have tended to place a greater focus on the agency of government, or on the influence of socio-economic factors, as the chief engineers of policy. For these, the royal family was at times useful for its ceremony, but the opinions of its members were largely inconsequential.⁵ This view, as it relates to Alexandra, is not entirely without foundation. There existed a feeling that Alexandra was not properly prepared, having not progressed mentally beyond a state of

⁴ Regina Schulte "Conceptual Approaches to the Queen's Body," in Regina Schulte ed. *The Body of the Queen: Gender and Rule in the Courtly World, 1500-2000*, (New York, NY : Berghahn Books, 2006), pp. 7-8; Margaret Homans, *Royal Representations: Queen Victoria and British Culture, 1837-1876* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. x; Sharon Aronofsky Weltman, "'Be no more housewives, but Queens': Queen Victoria and Rushkin's Domestic Mythology," in Adrienne Munich & Margaret Homans ed. *Remaking Queen Victoria* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 105-22; Thompson, *Queen Victoria Gender and Power* (London: Virago, p. 1990), pp. 139-40

⁵ G. W. Monger, *The End of Isolation British Foreign Policy, 1900-1907* (London, 1963); Zara S. Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy 1898-1914* (Cambridge, 1969); W. L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902*, 2nd Edition (New York, 1965); A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918* (Oxford, 1954); Norman Stone, *Europe Transformed, 1878-1919* (London, 1983), pp. 205-6;

adolescence, or that she was marginalized by her husband's rakish behaviour.⁶ This sort of dismissal, lends itself to this study, insofar as what follows will point to the creative power of the press. While not espoused fully by this dissertation, repudiations of Alexandra, consistent with those made by scholars more recently, were to be found in references to the coverage of contrary-minded newspapers that placed greater focus on political action rather than ceremony and ritual. Though seemingly not able to tarnish Alexandra's friendly image in Ireland, something other newspapers touted at her death in 1925, they do present a more practical approach which loyalist papers felt they needed to refute, leading to interpretations of Alexandra's friendship based more on action than simple attraction.

As regards her role in Ireland, most consider Alexandra's initial visit, alongside her husband in 1868, as holding a special significance for the future relations between Alexandra and the Irish people, placing her at the centre of the festivities as a popular royal visitor, through whom the government in London wished to inspire a great outpouring of loyalty.⁷ While the coverage reviewed by this investigation bears much of this out, what appears to be missing in the texts is the press' careful cultivation of expectation, as well as its efforts to characterize Alexandra as being at home in Ireland, and a potential advocate for an Irish royal residence.

The increased agitation resulting from Parnell's Land League has caused most to take a grim view of her 1885 visit. The common approach presents the Princess entering a hostile

⁶ John Vincent ed., "September 12, 1874," *Diaries of Edward Henry Stanley 15th Earl of Derby* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1994), p.179; Kenneth Rose, *Kings, Queens & Courtiers* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1985); Dorothy Thompson, *Queen Victoria Gender and Power* (London: Virago, p. 1990), p. 48

⁷ W.R.H. Trowbridge, *Queen Alexandra: A Study in Royalty* (New York: D Appleton & Co., 1921), pp. 209-211; Sir George Arthur, *Queen Alexandra* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1934), pp. 76-77; Georgina Battiscombe, *Queen Alexandra* (London: Constable, 1969), p. 95; Murphy, *Abject Loyalty*, pp. 152-3; Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, p. 115

environment, but decidedly courageous and contributing to a sense that the royal party better understood Irish grievances in the wake of the visit.⁸ Far from courageous imagery, what follows will present that it was benevolent imagery that characterized the Princess' tumultuous visit in 1885, and saw her image gain a grounding in the reporting of the personal moments she shared with individuals, rather than her spectacle before fawning crowds.

Finally, commentary on Alexandra's role in the royal visit of 1903 is very positive, with the King insisting on her presence, and her contributing to a much more relaxed and comfortable atmosphere throughout the visit.⁹ Here the dissertation will attempt to bring Alexandra out from behind the king and tie the disparate episodes alluded to in the texts together to show how various newspapers shaped the final phase of her image, drawing the success of the past into the achievement of the present. Beyond this visit, historians and biographers have little more to say about Alexandra and Ireland, and with fewer visits the newspapers are also largely silent. Yet, what follows will look toward how the friendly image of Alexandra in Ireland was maintained throughout the final decades of her life, and further reinforced at the time of her death in 1925.

As James Loughlin notes, the study of the monarchy's place in Ireland has traditionally received little sustained treatment, with focus on either specific visits, or on the effect opposition to royal visits had on nationalist groups. Loughlin himself took on a larger study, both chronologically, beginning with the Act of Union and continuing to the present day, and by

⁸ E.E.P. Tisdall, *Alexandra: Edward VII's Unpredictable Queen* (New York: John Day Co. 1954), pp.189-90; Battiscombe, *Queen Alexandra*, p. 95; Arthur, *Queen Alexandra*, pp. 151-153; Murphy, *Abject Loyalty*, p. 239; Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp. 191, 195

⁹ Duff, *Alexandra: Princess and Queen*, pp. 227-229; Arthur, *Queen Alexandra*, pp. 228; John G Rowe, *Queen Alexandra : The Beloved* (London : Epsworth Press, 1925), p. 88; Richard Hough, *Edward & Alexandra: Their Private and Public Lives* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993), p. 285; Mary Kenny, *Crown and Shamrock* (Dublin: New Island, 2009), pp. 84-86; Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, p. 263

including loyalist reactions to monarchy alongside those of nationalists. He emphasized the monarchy's role in everyday Irish life, the role of the Irish Viceroyalty, and the influence of welfare monarchism. James Murphy undertook an investigation of Victorian monarchy and Irish nationalism attempting to unite public reaction to monarchy with Victoria's private views as understood from archival source material, and concluding that monarchical popularity in Ireland was a threat to the nationalist movement in the 19th century.

The study which follows is much more focused than those which came before it, but like Loughlin it will attempt to understand the diverse reactions of both loyalist and nationalist onlookers, while also looking at those who dismissed the effect of Alexandra and the royal party altogether. Keeping with Loughlin, central to the image of friendship created by the press was Alexandra's engagement with Irish men and women in their daily lives, as well as her extant role as a noted charity patron. However, the study will perhaps place greater focus on the conclusions of Murphy, by looking at public reaction and postulating that if Victoria could be focus of anger by nationalists, so too could Alexandra be presented as a symbol of compassion and reconciliation and become a focus for closer union between the crown and Ireland.

Speaking generally, monarchy as a form of government is a complex entity. Even in the modern age, where regal authority is growing increasingly rare, crowns still inspire debate in academia. Katy Schiel puts forward that monarchy's greatest strength has been in its ability to provide order and stability. Thus she asserts that the rise of centralized nation-states and the growth of industrialization threatened, and ultimately curtailed, regal power. She argues that these trends led to an increased flow of ideas that bred skepticism concerning monarchical

precepts and doubts about the efficacy of its rule.¹⁰ Yet A.W. Purdue argues against seeing the decline of monarchy in terms of the unavoidable result of broad historical forces. He points to monarchies as being adaptable throughout the urbanizing and industrializing nineteenth century, and notes that modern crowned heads of state reign over some of the most stable countries in the world.¹¹ While Schiel's skepticism is clearly in evidence in some of the reporting reviewed, this investigation submits that it is subsumed by notions of Purdue's adaptability argument. While radical and nationalist newspapers often led with many of the same criticisms, articles in the loyalist press revel in the malleability of the royal image and the many roles Alexandra was suited to play, especially when faced with greater opposition in 1885. In this way their overall image of friendship is largely consistent, but its proofs are more variable.

Within the context of the British monarchy, it is not surprising that most historians also agree with Purdue due to the shift of political power from the executive to the legislative branches of government throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, noting the changing conceptions of what exactly constituted 'success' as a monarch throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.¹² In Ireland specifically, Loughlin and Murphy argue that, initially at least, evidence

10 Katy Schiel, *Monarchy: a Primary Source Analysis* (New York: Rosen Pub.Group, 2005) p. 55

11 A. W. Purdue, *Long to Reign?: the Survival of Monarchies in the Modern World* (Stroud: Sutton, 2005), pp. 1-22

12 Edward Gregg, *Queen Anne* (Yale University Press, 2001); Ragnhild Hatton, *George I* (Yale University Press, 2001); Jeremy Black, *George III: America's Last King* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006); Jeremy Black, *The Hanoverians: The History of a Dynasty* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2007); John Van der Kiste, *King George II and Queen Caroline* (History Press, 2013); G. M. Ditchfield, *George III: An Essay in Monarchy* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002); Richard Pares, *King George III and the Politicians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953); E. A. Smith, *George IV* (London: Yale University Press, 1999); 18. Christopher Hibbert, *George IV Regent and King 1811-1830* (London: Allen Lane, 1973); Tom Pocock, *Sailor King: The Life of King William IV* (Thistle Publishing, 2013); Philip Ziegler, *King William IV* (Harper Collins, 1973); Walter L. Arnstein, *Queen Victoria* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Margaret Homans, *Royal Representations: Queen Victoria and British Culture, 1837-1876* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); John Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media*

that there existed in Ireland of a view that the monarch had increased agency and could be characterized as a defender of minorities whose office stood as representative of all the population.¹³ These conclusions are compelling in consideration of the evidence presented in this study. Just as Margaret Homans notes that the success of Queen Victoria, and her iconic image, was built of smaller episodes and characterizations, so too will it become clear that the image of Alexandra as friend of Ireland was a mosaic, composed of many parts both personal and regal. At the same time, she notes that seeming, appearing, or being represented were part of Victoria's agency, regardless of whether actively undertaken, and, despite Alexandra not being regnant queen, this study would assert the same can be said of her and the way in which she was referenced in the press with regard to her feelings for Ireland and its people; appearance was as important as reality, and often more so. Elsewhere, as Christopher Hibbert and Tom Nairn note humanity as being key to the personal connection that made monarchical reigns a success, it could be said that reports of Alexandra's friendship were grounded in that same humanity and relaxed image that softened the sometimes blinding glare of royal opulence.

If then, monarchy was to be closer to the people, it stood to reason that the mystery of monarchy, so long a secret and the domain of the chosen few, had to be made more public. As Eric Hobsbawm has noted, tradition, invented or otherwise, proved a powerful cohesive force for

Monarch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Christopher Hibbert, *Edward VII: The Last Victorian King* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Raphael Samuel ed., *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity* Vol. III: National Fictions (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 83-84; Michael Billig, *Talking of the Royal Family* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 168.

¹³ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp. 33, 36 & Murphy, *Abject Loyalty*, p. 93.

monarchies throughout the modern era.¹⁴ David Cannadine and Simon Price emphasize the necessity of utilizing anthropological approaches and data in order to supplement the historian's longer view of events. They have investigated the relationship between power and ritual and discover that the two are strongly linked. Power itself, they point out, is an intangible thing and therefore ritual and ceremony provide a necessary link between the governed and their sovereign.¹⁵ Within the Irish context, certain historians argue that royal ritual was a means of reconciliation between the Crown and the Irish.¹⁶ While ceremony in the course of the royal visits was an important part of the construction of Alexandra's friendly image, especially entries into Dublin, and arranged visits and interactions, this investigation will submit that the reporting of moments of charity and concern were more important. No doubt there is a link to be found between royal ceremony and charity in Ireland, but columnists were far more concerned when reporting the latter to make mention of it. Schiel, Purdue, and, most notably, Frank Prochaska have also attempted to understand this shift in regal focus by pointing to the careful cultivation of images of welfare monarchy. As patrons to benevolent organizations and direct participants in charity work, monarchs showed themselves to be valuable and contributing members of the national and international communities. This was viewed as a product of the tumultuous times in which Europe found itself, braving the dangers and innovations of industry and still beset by

14 Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger ed., *The Invention of Tradition*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 101-64

15 David Cannadine, and Simon Price ed., *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 1-19

16 See James Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland: 1800 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp. 1-12; John S. Ellis, "Reconciling the Celt: British National Identity, Empire, and the 1911 Investiture of the Prince of Wales." *Journal of British Studies* 37, no. 4 (1998): 391-418.

tensions within individual states and without. Benevolence was therefore seen as a necessity and a testament to one's faith in the Christian message.¹⁷

In Ireland, loyalist forces, who supported the crown and the political union with Great Britain, were often key to perpetuating the mythology of regal closeness. While Irish nationalism has garnered a great deal of scholarly inquest, which will be commented upon subsequently, unionism was not investigated to the same degree until the latter part of the 20th century.¹⁸ Work done by those like Theodore Hoppen and Alvin Jackson present the unionist movement as having grown out of Irish Toryism, drawing from the longstanding history of Protestant organization, and being led by those with experience in crisis reaction, whether on the issues of land reform or antisestablishmentarianism. They add that, though very often associated with the north of Ireland, influenced in part by southern unionist acceptance of the Irish Free State, unionism coalesced around organized workers in Protestant Dublin before the same could be said of Belfast.¹⁹ Peter Gibbon adds that the movement was underpinned by evangelical Protestantism, preached by men whose political and religious creeds were

17 Schiel, *Monarchy*, p. 56; Purdue, *Long to Reign?*, pp. 1-22; Frank Prochaska, *Royal Bounty: the Making of a Welfare Monarchy* (London: Yale University Press, 1995)

18 Ó Tuathaigh, G. 2005, 'Political History', in Lawrence M. Geary & Margaret Kelleher (eds.), *Nineteenth Century Ireland: A Guide to Recent Research* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2005), pp.1-26 and 223-232; Jim Symth, "Like amphibious animals": Irish Protestants, ancient Britons, 1691-1707', *Historical Journal*, 36:4 (1993), 785-97; "The Act of Union and public opinion", in Jim Symth (ed), *Revolution, counter-revolution, and union: Ireland In the 1790s* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 146-60; Daniel Mansergh, "The union and the importance of public opinion" in Daire Keogh & Kevin Whelan (eds), *Acts of union: the causes, contexts and consequences of the Act of Union* (Dublin, 2001), pp 126-39; D. George Boyce, "Weary patriots: Ireland and making of unionism" in D. George Boyce & Alan O'Day (eds), *Defenders of the union: a survey of British and Irish unionism since 1801* (London, 2001), pp 15-38; Allan Blackstock, *Loyalism in Ireland, 1789-1829* (Woodbridge, 2007)

19 K. T. Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland, 1832-1885* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 285, 312; Alvin Jackson, *The Ulster Party: Irish Unionists in the House of Commons, 1884-1911* (Clarendon: Oxford, 1989), p. 17;

blended.²⁰ However, Jackson also notes the pivotal role of the landlords, as committed unionists regardless of religion, as being a defining factor of the movement.²¹ James Loughlin notes that those who supported union, especially in Ulster were quick to use royal visits to their advantage and present a binary opposition between themselves and their reputedly disloyal counterparts.²² What follows will display this dialectic printed by the unionist press, especially in times of grave opposition to royal guests, but will also show that these same newspapers were among Alexandra's fastest friends and seeing great value in the visits made by she and her husband.

Of course, some historians refute such claims and regard the momentary royal visits to Ireland as being an altogether inadequate gesture. For scholars like Murphy and Senia Pasetta, Ireland needed a sustained sense of belonging, not simply a momentary acknowledgement.²³ Many of their colleagues agree that the relationship between the monarchy and Ireland, at least through the period of the Union, has often been characterized by misunderstanding and lost opportunities.²⁴ This is why historians contend that, when confronted with established

20 Peter Gibbon, *The Origins of Ulster Unionism: The Foundation of Popular Protestant Politics and Ideology in Nineteenth Century Ireland* (Manchester, 1975), pp. 9, 131

21 Jackson, *The Ulster Party: Irish Unionists in the House of Commons, 1884-1911*, p. 18

22 James Loughlin, "Parades and Politics: Liberal Governments and the Orange Order 1800-86", in T. G. Fraser (ed), *The Irish Parading Tradition: Following the Drum* (Basinstroke 1999); James Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism and British National Identity since 1885* (London, 1995)

23 James H. Murphy, *Abject Loyalty: Nationalism and Monarchy in Ireland During the Reign of Queen Victoria*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, c2001), pp. 1-19; Senia Pasetta, "Nationalist Responses to Two Royal Visits to Ireland, 1900 and 1903." *Irish Historical Studies* 31, no. 124 (1999): 488-504.

24 Frank Hardie, *The Political Influence of Queen Victoria 1861-1901* (London, 1938), pp. 177-8; Algernon Cecil, *Queen Victoria and Her Prime Ministers* (London, 1953), p. 83; Elizabeth Longford, *Victoria R. I.* (London, 1964), p. 191; Stanley Weintraub, *Victoria: Biography of a Queen* (London, 1987), p. 207; Virginia Crossman, *Politics, Law and Order in Nineteenth Century Ireland* (Dublin, 1996), p. 92; Simon Heffer, *Power and Place: The Political Consequences of Edward VII* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1998), p. 24; Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp. 238, 277

nationalist resistance, as in 1865 and 1885, royal visits proved to be much more modest, or, as was the case in 1900, heavily structured and guarded.²⁵ Moreover, when resistance armed itself beyond previous extents, and proceeded from titular wars against tithes and over land to actual warfare against Britain, the role of the monarchy became increasingly, and in the end totally, ephemeral.

Though some blame the discontent in Ireland on the continuance of a Vice-regal administration in Dublin, which meant that many felt they existed at once part of the Union and subject to colonial rule, it has been contended that the British government never truly saw the so-called “Irish Question” clearly, or at least not from an Irish perspective, and the differences between an industrializing and progressive Great Britain, and an agrarian and backward Ireland meant that, though Union should have meant greater prosperity, it resulted in calamity.²⁶ Regardless, unable to find support from the monarchy, historians note that individual figures soon dismissed or displaced the ‘champion’ role of the Crown among the disaffected in Ireland. The Fenians, though traditionally depicted as armed revolutionaries, have been presented as having been less as an apparatus of national liberation, more as a means of expressing personal freedom, and largely ineffectual when compared with parliamentary representation and activism

²⁵ Angus Hawkins & John Powell ed., “May 12, 1865,” *The Journal of John Wodehouse 1st Earl of Kimberley for 1862-1902* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1997), p. 160; Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp. 111, 182-85, 252-55; Roby, *The King, the Press & the People*, pp. 220, 222

²⁶ Thomas William Heyck, *The Peoples of the British Isles 1688-1870* (Chicago: Lyceum, 2002), p. 281 & James Loughlin, “Crown, spectacle and identity: the British and Ireland under the Union 1800-1922,” in Andrzej Olechnowicz ed., *The Monarchy and the British Nation 1780 to the Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 108-109.

from the 1880s.²⁷ Far from radicalization then, the expansion of nationalism in Ireland has been linked by historians to the expansion of democracy, but some historians look to the land question as the central issue in furthering the expansion of the nationalist cause.²⁸ With regard to this study, though the Land Purchase Act's role in the success of the 1903 visit points to the compelling nature of academic argument vis-a-vis the power of agrarian concerns, for our purposes it will be telling to see how land reform agitation in 1885 played such a key role in the changing of reporting styles, and reformation of Alexandra's friendly image around notions of her connecting with individuals.

The press then is at the heart of this study, as well as its relationship with the monarchy in Ireland during the period in question. The diffusion of cheaply printed words and images brought the dynasty into the consciousness of the population on a regular basis, but the political press was certainly a double-edged sword.²⁹ Michael Billig presents this as the press playing dual roles; a means through which the public comes to 'know' the royals – a source of knowledge – and a purveyor of deliberate falsehood about members of the dynasty – a source of lies.³⁰ Other scholars note refer to the Victorian monarchy specifically and present newspaper media as being capable of at once promoting respect and awe for Victoria, and praising the open

²⁷ Lawrence J. McCaffrey, "Components of Irish Nationalism," & R. V. Comerford, "Patriotism as Pastime: The Appeal of Fenianism in the mid-1860s," in Alan O'Day ed., *Reactions to Irish Nationalism* (London: Hambledon Press, 1989), pp. 15-32.

²⁸ James S. Donnelly Jr. "The Land Question in Nationalist Politics," & McCaffrey, "Components of Irish Nationalism," in Hachey & McCaffrey ed. *Perspectives on Irish Nationalism*, pp. 8, 12, 79, 94-95; Micheal Hurst, "Ireland and the Ballot Act of 1872," & Samuel Clark, "The Political Mobilization of Irish Farmers," in O'Day ed., *Reactions to Irish Nationalism*, pp. 33 – 78; Loughlin, "Crown, spectacle and identity," in Olechnowicz ed., *The Monarchy and the British Nation*, pp. 108-109.

²⁹ Thompson, *Queen Victoria Gender and Power* (London: Virago, p. 1990), p. 139; John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and the Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 4-5;

³⁰ Billig, *Talking of the Royal Family*, pp. 149.

and affable Prince of Wales, or decrying the Queen's secretive and aloof nature while moralizing about her son's penchant for vice and idleness.³¹ At the same time, Ireland could be depicted to meet the demands of a certain publication as well, whether a land of latent loyalty waiting to be called forth, a broken but unbowed nation seeking its own destiny, or housing some mixture of regal allegiance and political agitation.³² As will become evident, a great deal more than was seen in the case of monarchical relations generally, press coverage of those interactions between royalty and the Irish were coloured by personalities, both of those involved and those penning the articles. In the end, the monarchy's image as saints or sinners would have been impossible to conjure up without reference to specific events and reactions. By the same token the reporting of these events, could easily exaggerate the power and prestige of the royals, making them all the more heroic or villainous.

Scholars note that, since the growth of the press coincided with the growth of the franchise there came a growing awareness that government bodies needed a wider body of support to legitimate them. The press therefore was often considered the best way to gauge public support, short of an actual election.³³ Harold Innis claimed that empires were dependent

³¹ Anthony Taylor, 'Down with the Crown': British Anti-Monarchism and Debates About Royalty since 1790 (London, 1999); Richard Williams, *The Contentious Crown* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), pp. 14, 34, 67, 100-101, 198; Tom Cullen *The Empress Brown* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), pp. 84-85; Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch*, p. 200

³² O'Brien, *The Irish Times*, pp5-18, 24-25, 33; Murphy, *Abject Loyalty*, pp. 291-93

³³ Broadly speaking, the public sphere emerged from the interplay between the state and the individual. While feudalism had seen common people simply as subject to state will, capitalist society saw the public gain a greater awareness of itself as composed of private individuals whose lives are regulated by state policy. As a result, new resources are developed in order to subject state policy to debate and criticism. This notion was first given entry into the political realm in Great Britain in the eighteenth century when those looking to influence state decisions appealed to the public for legitimacy. Bureaucracy politicized all areas of social life by making them subject to administration, which in turn led individuals to feel powerless and uncertain as to the nature of political power. As a result, many sought means of political action outside formal channels. Though liberal democracy

on process of communication to receive, process and disseminate information, and create of an ‘imperial village’, capable of at once reinforcing the inequalities inherent in the political system, and drawing in others who, acknowledging the power that communication technology could bring, would use it to undermine imperial power.³⁴ Benefitting from industrialization and urbanization by mid-century, Ireland saw her newspapers become more current and more popular.³⁵ Party politics also drove press expansion.³⁶ Classic liberal thought saw the newspaper as a tool of social equity, promoting liberty and progress and until the party was divided in 1886, most of the Provincial press in Britain retained a Liberal flavour.³⁷ The Victorian Conservative Party looked upon the provincial press with suspicion, and rested on the notion that increasing prosperity would naturally lead to more newspapers and journalists becoming conservative.³⁸ Similarly in Ireland, many newspaper owners, editors and journalists

failed to extend political power to all citizens, the ideal of political participation transcended this realization. Andrew Edgar, *The Philosophy of Habermas* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2005), pp. 28-29, 33; Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), pp. 57-66; Kennedy, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy*, pp. 51-52; Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, pp. 57-66; Edgar, *The Philosophy of Habermas*, p. 37

³⁴ Chandrika Kaul, *Reporting the Raj* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 3-5

³⁵ Marie-Louise Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism: The Irish Provincial Press 1850-1892* (Four Courts Press, Dublin, 1999), pp. 19-20; O’Brien, “Journalism in Ireland the evolution of a discipline,” in Rafter ed. *Irish Journalism Before Independence*, pp. 16-17; Simon J. Potter, *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), p. 20

³⁶ John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 228; O’Brien, “Journalism in Ireland the evolution of a discipline,” in Rafter ed. *Irish Journalism Before Independence*, pp. 11-12; A. Aspinall, *Politics and the Press 1780-1850* (1949), p. 2; Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, pp. 55, 61-62; Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England*, pp. 18-19; Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain Vol 1 – The Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), pp.4, 9

³⁷ Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England*, p. 21; Michael Diamond, *Victorian Sensation* (London: Anthem Press, 2003), pp. 1-8; Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, pp. 7, 12, 29, 32-33, 111, 135, 189; Peatling, *British Opinion and Irish self-government*, pp. 36-37, 59-60; Raymond L. Schultz, *Crusader In Babylon: W. T. Stead and the Pall Mall Gazette* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), p. 227

³⁸ Bruce Coleman, *Conservatism and the Conservative Party in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London: Edward Arnold, 1988), pp. 71-4 & 91-105; Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England*, pp. 133-34, 158, 160-

expressed their opinions on the burgeoning issue of Irish national sovereignty in an undiluted form, for a mass audience.³⁹ I have consulted seven Irish weeklies, seven Irish dailies, six metropolitan dailies, one metropolitan weekly, and three popular journals.⁴⁰ In aggregate, 1025 articles were examined, distributed in this manner: two hundred thirteen of these articles were op/ed, five hundred eighty were news reports from correspondents, one hundred fifty-three were court circulars, forty-five were letters to the editor, twenty-five were illustrations, and nineteen were poems. In addition, in order to add Alexandra's own voice into this study, and with the permission of the Royal Archives, several letters pertaining to her Irish visits are included.

61; John M. MacKenzie, *The Press and Empire*, in Simon J. Potter ed., *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), p. 34; Wilfrid Hindle, *The Morning Post 1772-1937* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 1974), p.232

³⁹ G.K. Peatling, *British Opinion and Irish self-government 1865-1925* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2001), p. 8; *The Waterloo directory of Irish newspapers and periodicals, 1800-1900* (Waterloo, Ont. : North Waterloo Academic Press, 1986) pp. 68-9, 134-35, 297, 370-1, 418-419, 486; Mark O'Brien, *The Irish Times* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), pp5-18, 24-25, 33; Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism*, pp. 74, 177, 182, 190; Felix M Larkin, "Arthur Griffith and the Freeman's Journal," in Rafter ed. *Irish Journalism Before Independence*, pp. 174-79.

⁴⁰ Unionist opinions in Dublin are most readily seen in the *Irish Times*, an Irish daily broadsheet newspaper launched in 1859, with daily figures moving from 20 000 in 1867 to 73 789 by 1900, and which championed the cause of land reform, though not the methods of Parnell and others. To the North, in Ulster, the *Belfast Newsletter* was another strongly unionist and conservative daily, which found its audience among the nobility, gentry, clergy and leading commercial operators, and tempted to indicate Ulster's connectivity with Great Britain and the United States.

Home Rule was supported by the *Freeman's Journal*, which circulated widely in Dublin and influenced opinions nationally, growing from a daily circulation of 1 475 in 1850 to 43 000 in 1887. While it advocated what it called 'national' Irish principles and called for repeal of the Act of Union, it had little sympathy for either the Young Ireland or the Fenian movements. The *Cork Examiner* was another example of liberal nationalist journalism, and was known as the principle organ of Catholicism in southern Ireland. In 1851, it strongly supported the repeal of the Act of Union as well as advocating for the rights of tenant farmers. By 1872 it was the leading advocate for southern Irish tenants, had adopted the Home Rule movement, and was strongly promoting the expansion of industry in the South.

The more strident nationalist view in Ireland was taken up by publications like the *Nation*, which boasted publication figures of 193 650 for the year 1850, and boldly advocated Irish independence, along with advocating a union of all Irishmen, regardless of religion, focusing on themes of cultural nationalism, separatism, liberalism and physical force philosophies. The *Anglo-Celt*, which circulated over a large part of County Cavan in the North, also advocated for a union of Irishmen, regardless of creed, for national purposes, in times of suffering. Finally, the *United Irishman* continued many of these traditions in 1899, taking its name from a paper that called for an Irish Republic in 1848, and attempting to assert a unique Irish culture by covering Gaelic art, music and drama.

While these must be considered within the aristocratic social order in which they were written, addressed as they were to officials or other members of the Royal Family, they are meant to provide some sense of Alexandra's own reflections on Ireland, in order to give the newspaper reports further context.

Referring to Figure 1, which looks at mentions of Alexandra in several of the newspapers in question, a sharp spike is seen in 1885, the year of her most tumultuous royal visit to Ireland, and when the columnists began to move away from depicting her simply as an icon for veneration and focused more on how her friendship with Ireland was best displayed through her interaction with people. Notable increases were obviously seen in 1863 at the time of her marriage, in 1864 with the birth of her first son, in 1872 for the thanksgiving celebration in the wake of her husband's recovery from typhoid fever, and smaller spikes at the time of Edward VII's death in 1910, and Alexandra's own demise in 1925. British papers, which reported on Alexandra more often, may have skewed and homogenized many of these results however, and by looking at Figure 2 we see that the four major Irish newspapers used in this investigation added peaks of coverage. First in 1865, coinciding with a rumoured visit by the Princess of Wales when her husband visited that year, and encouragement for her to join him so that greater success might be achieved by future visits. Next, mention of her was high throughout the 1870s, when rumours of her return to Ireland after her successful visit in 1868 were high, Prime Minister Gladstone was pressing for greater royal involvement in Ireland, and when tensions between the Princess and Queen were heightened in 1875 over restrictions on Alexandra's freedom to travel. Elsewhere, largely sustained levels of Irish press coverage are seen between

1886 and 1893, when her sons visited Ireland. Finally, a boost in coverage was seen during the royal visit of 1903. Taken together, these figures could demonstrate the extent to which Alexandra's exposure in Ireland was tied to the dynasty and role royalty played across the Irish Sea in the years of her life. With this in mind, the articles chosen for this study focus on these periods, the royal wedding of 1863, the royal visits of Alexandra, some intervening press coverage between the visits, and the deaths of Edward VII and Alexandra.

By the close of the century, so-called ‘new journalism’ regarded the expanding newspaper-reading public as being less political and more demanding of objectivity in the reporting of government affairs, allowing the empire and the crown to be seen in a new way through this new focus on interviews, illustration and human interest.⁴¹ Only by fully grasping the press’ development and shift from politics to public interest can one truly appreciate the appeal of Alexandra, at once a political figure while remaining a darling of society and known charity benefactor. As was the case with the shifting political climate that existed between the monarchy and the Irish polity, once again Alexandra’s timing was fortunate, if somewhat fortuitous. As the political press diversified, her actions in Ireland could come under closer analysis, allowing for a fuller image of her to be constructed in a time when the true image of royalty was debated and often obscured. Moreover, as the humanity of the Crown was investigated, in keeping with the more popular outlook taken by the press as the 20th century dawned, she provided a domestic and luminous contrast to stories of monarchical scandal and decadence. It will become clear then how reporters of the older political approach and the newer socio-cultural approach could both look at a Danish princess, renowned for physical beauty and personal charm, whose actions were open to political interpretation, and create a royal friend for Ireland.

⁴¹ Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain*, p.6; Rafter ed. *Irish Journalism Before Independence*, p. 12.

The Royal Wedding 1863

The year 1858 is the ideal departure point for a discussion of the royal marriage of Prince Albert Edward of England and Princess of Alexandra of Denmark, and its impact on the image of Alexandra as a friend of Ireland. That year Queen Victoria and Prince Albert felt it was time that their eldest son should marry, thereby curbing his desire for travel by grounding him in the responsibility of home and family; a domesticity that had served Victoria well in reinventing the monarchy as a respectable institution after years of Hanoverian excess. The *Times* immediately fuelled public interest in the prospective marriage by printing a list of seven princesses that might be suitable.⁴² That same year, on St. Patrick's Day, James Stephens, a veteran of the Young Ireland Rebellion of 1848, launched a revolutionary society in Dublin that was dedicated to the establishment of a democratic Irish republic. In time, this society took a name which referenced the ancient warriors of Ireland, they became the Fenians.⁴³

Victoria and Albert turned to their eldest daughter, the Crown Princess of Prussia, to search for suitable matches for her brother. After presenting several unappealing German options, she gave her endorsement to the seventeen-year old Princess Alexandra of Denmark.⁴⁴ Alexandra was said to have felt only a certain affection for the Prince of Wales when she met

⁴² Richard Mullen, "The Last Marriage of a Prince of Wales, 1863," *History Today* (June 1981), pp. 10-11.

⁴³ Brian Jenkins, *The Fenian problem : insurgency and terrorism in a liberal state, 1858-1874* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), p. 34

⁴⁴ Mullen, "The Last Marriage of a Prince of Wales, 1863," *History Today*, pp. 10-11.

him at Speyer Cathedral on what was, unbeknownst to her, a prearranged meeting, in September 1861.⁴⁵ Victoria wrote in her journals that Albert Edward too “seemed nervous about deciding anything yet.”⁴⁶ Following the death of the Prince Consort however, the Prince of Wales asked that Alexandra stay in England forever, at his side. She brushed aside rumours she was hungry for station by assuring her sister-in-law that were her future husband a cowboy, she would love him regardless.⁴⁷

Meanwhile in Ireland, the ties which bound the United Kingdom were becoming, for some, very fragile. Although an Irish peer led the governing party in the House of Commons, Lord Palmerston was not regarded as a hero by his nationally-minded countrymen across the Irish Sea, not least for having argued the commercial benefits of maintaining the corn export during the Great Famine and encouraging a mass migration to North America. As a landowner himself, he vehemently opposed the extension of tenant rights, already in existence in Ulster, to the whole of Ireland, and wrote to the Queen claiming that agitation for such reforms was part of a Catholic conspiracy. Though Palmerston rose in Victoria’s estimation due to his sympathetic reaction to the death of the Prince Consort, Albert’s passing was to deepen the divide between Ireland and the Crown.⁴⁸

To begin with, Albert of Saxe-Coburg was not particularly popular in Ireland, due to the publication in 1860 of an 1847 letter to Alexander von Humboldt, a Prussian geographer,

⁴⁵ Georgina Battiscombe, *Queen Alexandra* (London: Constable, 1969), p.35.

⁴⁶ “Monday 30th September 1861,” *Queen Victoria’s Journals* (Princess Beatrice’s Copies) Vol. 50 pp. 279-280

⁴⁷ Graham & Heather Fraser, *Bertie & Alix: Anatomy of a Royal Marriage* (London: Robert Hale & Co. 1975), p. 53

⁴⁸ Jasper Ridley, *Lord Palmerston* (London: Constable, 1970), pp. 322, 512-13, 520

naturalist, and explorer. The letter in question contained a derisive comparison between the Irish and the Poles, who had just staged the abortive *Wielkopolska* Uprising, and stated that neither deserved sympathy. The publication of this cold sentiment, written in a time of famine in Ireland and equating the Irish people with a conquered nation, did little to ingratiate the Prince Consort across the Irish Sea.⁴⁹ Following his death, a proposed memorial in Dublin became a contentious issue, and it was not until the 1870s that a piece of land was found for it, and in so obscure a location that Victoria deemed it an insult. Moreover, Britain's increased communications network and burgeoning popular press allowed the Irish to see their plight as an international one, fulfilling Albert's comparison. When another Polish insurrection began in January 1863, nationalist passions were said to have been inflamed as another subject people poised themselves to cast off the yoke of oppression, just as the Fenians planned to do.⁵⁰ With the royal wedding about to take place just three months later, the stage was set for a memorable performance both in Ireland every bit as much as in London.

The result of this spectacle, staged in the early weeks of March 1863, was presented as something not seen before, and its romantic overtones were discussed in words both poetic and prosaic. In Ireland, both the unionist and nationalist press attempted to understand Alexandra as a potential ally. Yet, when the wedding became politicized, several newspapers questioned its efficacy as a national celebration. As much as this was an event which took place away from

⁴⁹ Dr. Kurt Jagow ed., E.T. S. Dugdale trans., *Letters of the Prince Consort 1831-1861* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co, 1938), p. 346

⁵⁰ James Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland, 1800 to Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 103, 105.

Ireland, it introduced key players and opinions which would persist until the Princess of Wales visited Ireland in 1868.

Royal weddings are a study in contradiction. A wedding, a ceremony that by necessity involves at least two principle figures, seems at odds with a monarchical paradigm that seeks a single locus for power, loyalty and attention. For this reason the royal wedding, cloaked in the language of dynastic continuity, was long held as a predominantly private affair, unable to play a central role in constitutional state-building to the same degree as other regal rituals.⁵¹ The marriage ritual itself, having far less to do with the dynamics of power than, say, a coronation, was relegated to a place of lesser importance. Nevertheless, with the advent of the popular press, stories of royal love and courtship began to proliferate, thereby creating a new, public aspect to the marriage ritual.⁵² In this way, the link between the governed and the crown was established not by the ritual alone, but through press accounts of that ritual and the stories around it, allowing the people, the nation, or even the entire empire, to participate in the romantic and intimate lives of their future rulers.

Awareness of this new link was seen in the early months of 1863 as the Prince of Wales prepared to wed Princess Alexandra, only the fifth time in history that a Prince of Wales had married, and the only time in living memory.⁵³ Conservative newspapers of the day were quick to capitalize on the union as being something different, using it to illustrate a positive contrast to

⁵¹ David Cannadine, and Simon Price ed., *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 1-19

⁵² Abby Zanger, *Scenes from the Marriage of Louis XIV* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp.3-6, 10-11

⁵³ "Marriages of Princes of Wales," *The Freeman's Journal* Vol. XCVI, March 6, 1863, p. 3

its earlier precedents. The *Belfast News-Letter* and the *Morning Post* published lengthy articles on the past marriages of Princes of Wales – Edward of Woodstock (popularly known as the Black Prince), Arthur Tudor, Frederick Louis of Hanover, and George Augustus Frederick (later George IV). These were meant to show the degree of change that had taken place with the current wedding and the Belfast paper noted that no happy precedent for marital bliss existed in the past, as three princes died before succeeding to the throne and George IV had little joy of his marriage, and went on to speak of the higher hopes for the future match of Albert Edward and Alexandra.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the *Post* was clear that this was an open and public affair, no longer the preserve of the favoured few, as in past.⁵⁵ Such reporting may have also looked to differentiate the heir and his wife from the current monarch, for just as surely as the past was guarded and furtive, so too was Queen Victoria, now beginning her self-imposed exile following the death of her husband. Indeed some reports indicated the general displeasure which met the news that Victoria's desire to inject more mourning elements had been overcome.⁵⁶ Such sombre antics lacked the spirit of the royal marriage envisioned in the press, as a public affair and source of celebration.

Less traditionalist publications viewed ideas of openness as encompassing the notion that royal marriage was not a purely aristocratic affair. This was to be an occasion for celebration for those from all walks of life, and, despite many lists of highborn wedding guests, the newspaper press made a point to focus on the lower orders and their experience of the wedding festivities.

⁵⁴ *Belfast Newsletter* March 10, 1863 pg. 2

⁵⁵ *Morning Post* March 10, 1863 pg. 4

⁵⁶ *Manchester Guardian* March 3, 1863 pg. 2

A letter submitted to the editors of *Reynolds' Newspaper* pointed to the average men and women on the street as the source of true nobility in their welcome for Princess Alexandra when she arrived in England at Gravesend.⁵⁷ While this was meant as a barb to the aristocracy, it evidenced the key role played by the people in this newly unrestricted celebration. *Reynolds'* asserted that it was in their hospitality toward royalty that the average people ennobled themselves.⁵⁸ In Ireland, both nationalist and unionist papers presented the wedding celebrations as an opportunity to include the poor.⁵⁹ This sort of inclusive language was meant to demonstrate that even the most far removed, both geographically and socially, were to have a part in a wedding celebration that was no longer the preserve of the social elite.

As it regarded Ireland specifically newspapers on both sides of the Irish Sea printed stories about preparations, noting that the celebration was every bit as large in Dublin as in London. From Manchester, the *Guardian* wrote that no house was to be unlit on Dublin's main streets and that only very few would remain dark on secondary roads. Meanwhile the University and the Bank of Ireland were set to vie with one another in terms of artistic design in a contest that would likely bring many spectators to College Green.⁶⁰ The *Morning Post* went so far as to say that Dublin had put on a display that rivalled any other, when considering the size of the city and the opportunity afforded to it.⁶¹ The *Irish Times* went further, and its journalists were quick to describe the intricacy of the lights, comparing them to the delicate wire art of filagree. With a

⁵⁷ *Reynolds' Newspaper* March 8, 1863 pg. 3

⁵⁸ *Reynolds' Newspaper* March 1, 1863 pg. 3

⁵⁹ *Freeman's Journal* March 10, 1863 p. 2, *Belfast Newsletter* March 12, 1863 pg. 3

⁶⁰ *Manchester Guardian* March 7, 1863 p. 5

⁶¹ *Morning Post* March 12, 1863 pg. 3

note of condescension, it was reported that preparations in Ireland were well underway when the enthusiasm of England began.⁶² Irish loyalty was to be seen not as mere sycophancy, but genuine.

Coverage in Ireland was reminiscent of that which had accompanied the accession of another royal lady nearly three decades earlier. In 1838, in response to the coronation of Queen Victoria, Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Wexford, Waterford, Limerick, Sligo, and a host of other cities, were enthusiastically illuminated by their celebrating citizenry. This was arranged by Daniel O'Connell, who erroneously believed that the new queen would conciliate Ireland, due to her affinity for his political ally Lord Melbourne, and exercised a great influence among the rank and file of Catholic Ireland.⁶³ In 1863 then, Ireland was again faced with a celebration and now it was Alexandra whose attitudes regarding Anglo-Irish reconciliation were the subject of inquiry.

When looking at the wedding in light of the Irish question, the conceptions of openness and difference took on still another meaning. The fundamental question within the Irish press was whether or not Alexandra was something different. Was she someone who was to be truly recuperative and inspiring to the stilted House of Saxe-Coburg, an open ear to an Ireland in the midst of struggle, or was she the latest in a long line of foreign interlopers who offered Ireland nothing more than empty ceremony and ignorance?

Dublin's *Irish Times* showered praises on the new Danish addition to the dynasty. Much mention was made of the long-standing Nordic tradition that linked the two kingdoms.

Alexandra's Danish blood was said to be more restorative to the Saxe-Coburg dynasty than that

⁶² "Rejoicing in Ireland," *The Irish Times*, March 11, 1863; Vol. V, Issue 1191, p. 2

⁶³ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp. 48-50.

of a German bride.⁶⁴ In fact, several articles were quite hostile to the idea of a German Princess of Wales. It was felt that the principalities of Germany were arrogant beyond the proportion of their power, and, as a result, were weak. Meanwhile, the Danes were frank and honest; the newspaper expressed its opinion that closer ties with them ought to have been forged long ago.⁶⁵ Obviously the reader was meant to understand that a princess drawn from either of these territories would mirror the character of their homeland. Leaving aside the fact that the Princess and her husband were cousins through King George II, the opposition expressed toward a German consort may well have stemmed from Ireland's own tortured past with the Hanoverian dynasty.⁶⁶ Even for a conservative newspaper like the *Irish Times*, which saw Ireland's place as being within the United Kingdom, the past was not always a place to find inspiration, and most of its conservative counterparts in England looked back only as far as Victoria when suggesting role models for the Princess of Wales.⁶⁷

At the same time however, this aversion in the Irish press toward the prospect of a German Princess, and the summarily negative characterization of the German principalities, may have also had a good deal to do with the controversy arising over the Schleswig-Holstein Question.⁶⁸ Though war between Prussia and Denmark would not begin until February 1864,

⁶⁴ *The Irish Times*, March 7, 1863; Vol. V, Issue 1189, p. 2

⁶⁵ *The Irish Times*, March 11, 1863 p. 3

⁶⁶ James Loughlin, "Crown, spectacle and identity: the British and Ireland under the Union 1800-1922," in Andrzej Olechnowicz ed., *The Monarchy and the British Nation 1780 to the Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), .

⁶⁷ *Morning Post* Feb. 6, 1863 pg. 4

⁶⁸ The status of the northern European duchies had been in dispute as early as the 1840s. At the conclusion of the 1848 Revolutions insurrectionists appealed to the German Confederation in hopes of freeing the territory from Danish control. Agreements in the early 1850s had led to a measure of independence for the duchies, but the relations between them and the Danish remained ambiguous.

tensions were high at this time. As the heirless King Frederick VII of Denmark grew older, his successive cabinets became increasingly focused on maintaining control of the duchies following his death. Indeed, the infamous November Constitution, which created a joint parliament to both Denmark and Schleswig was already being prepared. This was in response to actions by the German Confederation in 1858, which deprived Holstein of any constitution.⁶⁹ As tensions grew, Denmark was most certainly the underdog, a position that the Irish press, including unionist publications, could easily identify with.

Yet, a different nationality for the Princess of Wales was proof of very little, and it was only through further reports that the Irish press sought to present the newly arrived royal as being open to the Irish people; setting her apart from the seemingly indifferent royal house to which she was about to become a part. The greatest proof of this was seen to be reports that upon arriving in England, the princess was dressed in clothes made in Ireland. The unionist press chose to take this as a sign of favour for Ireland; this small gesture was but a foretaste of the intercession she would give when placed closer to the throne.⁷⁰ Attempting to be shrewder, the *Freeman's Journal* pointed out that the Princess had chosen an Irish design over many alternatives, and that if this was not a mark of favour toward the entire island she had at least favoured Irish manufacturers.

...she did Ireland the honour of appearing in a robe of royal beauty, the produce of the Irish loom, and the result of the skill and labour of Dublin artisans. England and Scotland anxiously competed for this proud distinction. France – her own land, Denmark – any country in Europe would have been proud to produce the fabric in which the future Queen of the greatest European kingdoms

⁶⁹ David Brown, *Palmerston: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 455-7

⁷⁰ *The Irish Times*, March 10, 1863; Vol. V, Issue 1191, p. 2

would make her first public appearance amongst congregated millions of her future subjects. But the palm was awarded to Ireland...⁷¹

Moreover, her choice of an Irish garment would likely give a boost to Dublin artisans, and grant jobs to many in the textile industry, by setting a trend. This was of far greater importance to the *Journal*, which pointed to the jobs created by increased demand as giving employment to the poor in Dublin.⁷² The possibility for future political intercession notwithstanding, the more liberally-oriented *Journal* chose to characterize Alexandra as sympathetic to industry and workers, looking past her own desires to serve the ends of individuals.

From the outset then, coverage of the wedding in the liberal and conservative media set it out to show it as a departure from the past. Whether understanding the ceremony and celebration as being more open and inclusive, or the Irish press' understanding of the bride in these terms, coverage was meant to focus on a bright future. These ideas were later twinned with a sense of romanticism that viewed the love between the prospective bride and groom as existing within the public sphere. This fairy tale quality, that is still so much a part of regal romance, was the result of conflict between the Queen and the public over the nature of the wedding. A year earlier, Princess Alice married in a subdued fashion and while the public was willing to countenance such privacy in light of the Prince Consort's death, they were unwilling to extend the same understanding to the wedding of the future king, although the Queen resolutely refused a public ceremony on the grounds of her continued mourning.⁷³ Reporting on public affection between

⁷¹ *The Freeman's Journal*, March 10, 1863; Vol. XCVI, p. 2

⁷² *The Freeman's Journal*, March 10, 1863; Vol. XCVI, p. 2

⁷³ Christopher Warwick, *Two Centuries of Royal Weddings* (London: Arthur Baker Ltd, 1980), pp. 22-23

the Prince and Princess afforded newspapers the opportunity to display the open nature of the marriage, even in the midst of the privacy of the ceremony itself.

The easiest way to present greater romantic love in the present royal marriage was to contrast it with the last marriage of a Prince of Wales, that which occurred between Prince George Augustus Frederick and Caroline of Brunswick in 1795.⁷⁴ A better comparison could not be asked for in order to juxtapose the old marriage of state opposite the more recent marriage of mutual affection. Even the radical *Reynolds' Newspaper*, which was very critical of the marriage and used the wedding in 1795 as an example of how perfunctory royal matches could be, was forced to concede that the current Prince & Princess were likely, judging by appearance, to have a far more enviable future than the Prince's great-uncle and aunt.⁷⁵ The remaining newspapers, regardless of political orientation, were far more glowing in their prose, with the *Belfast Newsletter* condemning the idea of marriage being used as a tool of statecraft and boldly declaring that the hearts of the Prince and Princess were already one.⁷⁶ These notions were reaffirmed in Dublin by the *Freeman's Journal* which noted that, far from the inauspicious wedding of 1795, no marriage was more an affair of the heart than that which bound the young couple in 1863.⁷⁷ When the Princess landed, both the *Times* and *Guardian* reported the first meeting between the royal couple on English soil as though it were an episode of the most

⁷⁴ The marriage was disastrous since each party was unsuited to the other. The two were formally separated after the birth of their only child, Princess Charlotte, in 1796, and remained separated thereafter. In 1804, a dispute arose over the custody of Princess Charlotte, which led to a Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry into Princess Caroline's conduct after the Prince of Wales accused her of having an illegitimate son. The investigation cleared Caroline of the charge but still revealed her behaviour to be extraordinarily indiscreet.

⁷⁵ *Reynolds' Newspaper* March 8, 1863 pg. 3

⁷⁶ *Belfast Newsletter* March 10, 1863 pg. 2

⁷⁷ *Freeman's Journal* March 11, 1863 p. 3

dramatic proportions, complete with the timid and shy Princess standing in the March cold until her royal husband reached Gravesend and the betrothed shared a “hearty kiss” to the thunderous roar of the crowd.⁷⁸ Alexandra had charmed the Prince of Wales and his passions were centred on her. The implication in all of this coverage was clear, the Prince and Princess were in love and the people of the United Kingdom ought to know it. The open showcase of romance and passion was not to be lost on the people viewing it.

Yet the romantic overtones in the press coverage of Alexandra’s voyage to England were all too evident as well. Witnesses to her leaving home declared that Copenhagen was in tears, while a head cold rendered the Princess unable to speak in tones louder than a whisper. She attended one last Danish church service and heard a mournful farewell ode sung to the air of an old Danish national song. She was depicted in her parting with arms filled with bouquets to the point where she could no longer keep hold of them all.⁷⁹ While this historical portrait was indeed a very appealing one, the conservative press in England sought to create its own account of Alexandra’s parting with her native land.

Maintaining a theme of close bonds between monarchy and the public, the *Morning Post* recounted the Princess’ trepidation at leaving home, but the majority of the coverage focused on those who filled the city and cried ‘God Bless Princess Alexandra’, and were said to have confessed a great interest in continuing to follow her progress and hear of her reception in England. Indeed, the columnist also noted the strong attachment many Danes, of all classes, felt

⁷⁸ ‘The Reception of Princess Alexandra,’ *The Times*, Monday, Mar 09, 1863; pg. 9 & *Manchester Guardian* March 10, 1863 p. 3

⁷⁹ “Account of Alexandra of Denmark leaving for England,” Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) Reference # D3897/46

toward their princess, as if she were a member of their own family.⁸⁰ The implication was clear; Denmark's loss was to be Britain's gain. Surely a woman so beloved of her own countrymen would receive a warm welcome in her new home and quickly endear herself to her subjects. Even in reporting Alexandra's unease at leaving sent a clear message that she had renounced the girl's life she had known and took up a new identity, as Princess of Wales and future Queen.

The *Times* looked to integrate both Denmark and the United Kingdom through the person of the Princess, and pointed to the fact that Alexandra was still in mourning for the Prince Consort, fifteen months after his death. In this way, the paper illustrated the point that the affairs of both nations were not far removed from one another and that the passing of such a great man as Prince Albert was a wound slow to heal, not only in the British royal palaces, but throughout Europe. That the Princess was taking instruction in Anglicanism, though obviously necessary given her future, was also remarked upon rather casually, and was another subtle hint at Protestant solidarity between her new home and her old one.⁸¹ The *Times* later reinforced ideas of continuity when it remarked as to the unique nature of the union, claiming that never before had the merits of the parents shone so clearly through the bride and groom.⁸² The question was the extent to which the Princess' leaving Denmark for Britain was a radical shift for her. The newspaper's accounts endeavoured to make the transition as seamless as possible, as though the princess was moving from home to a place of familiarity. In its view, little separated one nation from the other and an air of continuity was maintained throughout their coverage.

⁸⁰ *Morning Post* March 5, 1863 pg. 5

⁸¹ "The Princess Alexandra," *The Times*, Tuesday, Jan 20, 1863; pg. 6; Issue 24460; col D

⁸² *The Times*, Wednesday, Mar 11, 1863; pg. 9; Issue 24503; col D

Several newspapers also devoted commentary to Alexandra's physical beauty, something that would continue throughout her life. The *Spectator* was the first to point out that Alexandra, unlike other royal brides, was genuinely beautiful.⁸³

The Princess does not need the conventional courtesy extended to all Royal personages. She is a genuinely beautiful girl, of the true Saxon type, with a face far more expressive than the best photographs, and a manner which, already winning though immature, will one day be royally gracious.⁸⁴

The *Manchester Guardian* chose the much more succinct words of the Prime Minister, who claimed the Princess was possessed of the four requirements needed to be the heir's wife; she was young, handsome, amiable, and Protestant.⁸⁵

Conversely, Irish newspapers, particularly the *Belfast Newsletter* and *Freeman's Journal*, opted to speak of her intellectual endowments in addition to her physical charms. The former spoke her as being gifted with an educated mind and good common sense, which augured well for her as wife of a future King and mother to a line of kings thereafter.⁸⁶ To this, the Dublin newspaper added,

The education of the Princess Alexandra has not, we are assured, been neglected, for her mental acquirement and accomplishments are stated to be equal to her personal grace and polished manners....⁸⁷

The *Journal* further framed its commentary on Alexandra's mental acuity by discussing past royals known for their lack of education and stating that the extent of her intelligence was the

⁸³ *Spectator* March 14, 1863 p. 1, 10

⁸⁴ *Spectator* March 14, 1863 p. 1, 10

⁸⁵ *Manchester Guardian* February 27, 1863 p. 2

⁸⁶ *Belfast Newsletter* March 10, 1863 pg. 2

⁸⁷ *Freeman's Journal* March 11, 1863 p. 3

equal of her personal grace and polished manners.⁸⁸ Here again is seen a focus on action as opposed to display. Irish newspapers placed greater value in the Princess's intellectual talents since they were of far greater use than her undisputed physical attributes. A pretty face on its own had done little for Irish interests in the past, especially when coupled with an inability to comprehend Irish grievances. Therefore columnists focused on the discerning mind of the Princess in hopes that their readers would perceive its value and its contrast with the present dynasty.

Adding another layer to this romantic air were reports that created an ethereal atmosphere around the affair and around Alexandra herself. Comparing the decorations around London to some fantastical land of fairies, the *Times* noted the loud cheers of the crowds and Alexandra's not inconsiderable effort to make herself visible to all of them. Mention was made that this was done with some discomfort to the Princess herself and that such actions were befitting of a princess beginning and not ending a long journey. She was rewarded for her actions by the loving embrace of Queen Victoria upon arriving at Windsor Castle. The reaction was said to have been particularly enthusiastic at Eton and Windsor. The Eton boys had gained permission to yoke themselves to Alexandra's carriage and draw her along the street to Windsor Castle. As it happened, such an arrangement proved impossible; the hour was too late and the weather very rainy.⁸⁹ In this coverage, Alexandra appeared more engaged with people as she was presented among them, her own character and emotion interacting with theirs. Even more, it was apparent that the Princess went out of her way to be gracious.

⁸⁸ *Freeman's Journal* March 11, 1863 p. 3

⁸⁹ 'The Reception of Princess Alexandra,' *The Times*, Monday, Mar 09, 1863; pg. 9; Issue 24501; col A

The use of poetry to welcome the Princess was widespread, and added an additional level to the romanticism to her arrival and marriage. This was not unexpected when one considers that the wedding came in the midst of the so-called Romantic period, which took recourse in the idealized past as an escape from modern industrial realities. Much of the poetry was filled with the intense emotion that had been validated by the literature of the era. The use of rhyme and verse was especially useful in promoting an image of the Princess, but also typical of the time, as poetry was common, in consideration of events of national consequence.

The *Times* and its Dublin counterpart chose a very conventional approach, publishing odes which spoke of revival. In London, the author, R. T. E. spoke of morning dawning and the darkness and sorrow, under which the land has been living, being dispelled. The restorative powers of the wedding were lauded throughout and a sense of restored hope in the future was seen.⁹⁰ In Dublin, Richard Garnett presented Alexandra as the season of spring, blown in on friendly Baltic winds and meant to revive and beautify the British Isles and fill the land with song.⁹¹ These sentiments play well with the previously established notion that Alexandra brought with her a positive change for the future. Darkness and sorrow, whether in reference to the death of Prince Albert or Ireland's heavy burden as the lesser half of the United Kingdom, were contrasted with a bright future much as the past marriages has been shaded when compared to the new union. This poetry was derivative to an extent and the *Spectator* referred to such

⁹⁰ *The Times*, Wednesday, Mar 11, 1863; pg. 11; Issue 24503; col C

⁹¹ *The Irish Times*, March 2, 1863; Vol. V, Issue 1184, p. 3

glowing tributes as being clichéd and hyperbolic.⁹² Evidently certain old approaches to commemorating royal nuptials proved unsuccessful when adapted for new media.

The *Belfast Newsletter* struck a much more martial tone with an ode from Queen's College that described Alexandra as a conqueror, enslaving all with flowers for every hand, and planting peace and hope in the sun of the wedding day.⁹³ While clearly meant as a rebuff to those who characterized Alexandra as a foreign invader of sorts, the poem reinforces Alexandra's femininity while still speaking of her in powerful terms. She remains an irresistible force, even when conquering with smiles and dimples. Such soldierly themes were popular at the time, and could also be seen in the *Irish Times*, where the point was made that the cheering throng which greeted the Princess and called upon the Almighty to bless her in her sacred charge, were her defenders as well. The hands that reached for her or were enfolded in prayer, would readily take up arms in order to defend the kingdom to which Alexandra now belonged.⁹⁴ These martial themes are especially suited to publications promoting the values of Irish loyalism. The conquests of Alexandra are easy, her presence alone inspiring loyalty from existing royalists and her grace and candour winning over the stalwart hearts of nationalists. Having done so, she unites all of Ireland in the more arduous task of defending the nation and preserving the Crown.

⁹² *Spectator*, September 26, 1863 p. 23

⁹³ *Belfast Newsletter* March 10, 1863 pg. 6

⁹⁴ Moreover, in the weeks and months that followed there arose the possibility that Britain might take up arms against a territorially expansive Prussia on Denmark's behalf. Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, who believed that Britain was much stronger than Austria and Prussia, spoke to the House that July and stated that the British government wished that "the independence, the integrity, and the rights of Denmark may be maintained. We are convinced—I am convinced at least—that if any violent attempt were made to overthrow those rights and interfere with that independence, those who made the attempt would find in the result that it would not be Denmark alone with which they would have to contend." *The Irish Times*, March 7, 1863; Vol. V, Issue 1189, p. 2

A different type of unity was evidenced when the *Freeman's Journal* published a piece by Tennyson, which spoke of Alexandra as the Sea King's daughter and that, regardless of race or ethnicity, all were Danes when welcoming her to her new land.⁹⁵ The theme of unity points to the wedding as a time of united celebration. Moreover the celebration would be linked forever with the arrival of Alexandra, certainly another stellar effort to convince the Irish populace of their having a friend at Court. Yet there was a secondary meaning here as well. Alexandra, as a Dane was easily likened to an Irishwoman, powerless against the larger forces of Germany in just the same way as the Irish felt imposed upon by Great Britain. In 1865, following the events of the Second Schleswig War, the *Freeman's Journal* wrote of the links that bound the two nations:

Denmark has many friends in Ireland. Danish is largely interfused with Irish blood. Many Danish names, slightly altered, abound in Ireland. The Princess Alexandra then would find relatives amongst us, though very distant ones.⁹⁶

Ireland of course was very well aware of how Great Power politics could easily neglect the needs of smaller nations. John Arthur Roebuck, born in India, raised in Canada, and a Member of Parliament for Sheffield, regarded the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein as being to Denmark what Ireland was to England, and he denounced their seizure by the Kingdom of Prussia.⁹⁷ So in saying that all were Danes in their welcome for Alexandra Tennyson no doubt meant to herald a united welcome for the princess, but in publishing it the *Freeman's Journal* opened the way to

⁹⁵ *The Freeman's Journal*, March 13, 1863; Vol. XCVI, p. 4

⁹⁶ *The Freeman's Journal* May 10, 1865.

⁹⁷ Keith A. P. Sandiford, *Great Britain and the Schleswig-Holstein Question 1848-64: a study in diplomacy, politics, and public opinion* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), p.134

another type of unity, namely that between Ireland and Denmark as fellow victims of larger geopolitical forces.

All of this coverage was indicative of an attitude expressed in Belfast that interest in political news reporting had dropped off precipitously as preparations for the wedding neared their completion.⁹⁸ The wedding was to be devoid of political agenda, and even when British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston wrote to the editor of the *Times* in order to quash notions of an Anglo-Danish alliance resulting from the marriage, the lack of political entanglements was accepted as proof that domestic harmony and mutual affection were the primary reasons the Prince had chosen Alexandra as his bride.⁹⁹ There can be little doubt that newspapermen remembered well how, some twenty years earlier, when the Queen wed Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg, dynastic politics had cast a pall over much of the affair when Albert was castigated as a ‘pauper German’ from a ‘pumpernickel state’ come as a freeloader. There had even been great controversy as to the income he should receive from parliament and Tory members wanted him declared a Protestant, in keeping with the 1701 Act of Settlement, since several members of the Coburg family were Catholics.¹⁰⁰ Yet, in 1863, it was recognized that political entanglements cheapened the substance of the marriage, as the suggestion of them indicated that the Prince had chosen his bride based on something other than the feelings of his own heart.

The aim of the coverage therefore was to create an atmosphere around the wedding, one in which all were welcome and all was as idealistic as could be expected. In doing this, the

⁹⁸ *Belfast Newsletter* March 10, 1863 pg. 2

⁹⁹ Mullen, “The Last Marriage of a Prince of Wales, 1863,” *History Today*, pp. 10-11

¹⁰⁰ Walter Arnstein, *Queen Victoria* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp.51-52.

columnists and publishers chose to depoliticize the union as much as was possible. Though certain political ideas and observations might easily be inferred in the coverage provided to the reception and wedding of the Prince and Princess, no overt political statement was made. Certain Irish newspapers for instance certainly looked for some political action from the Princess in future, but confined themselves as yet to simply noting her sympathy for Ireland in very broad and undefined terms. It was ironic that in making the wedding out to be inclusive, the press also promoted its exclusivity in so far as they made certain that it took place in a vacuum of sorts. The language that separated it from the past, and proclaimed it as an event of singular significance, also placed it apart from other national events.

If by depoliticizing the marriage journalists aimed at depicting it as something warmer and more domestic, allowing it to be cause for national celebration regardless of political stripe, they also opened the regal nuptials to criticism. Looking at the wedding from a political standpoint and finding it devoid of political aim, it was easy for less monarchically minded columnists to question the utility of this widespread, and fairly costly, celebration. So, while the *Morning Post* excitedly wrote that the present generation could not remember such an event, which witnessed sympathy for the royal couple across class lines, other newspapers presented a far less cheerful picture.¹⁰¹ *Reynolds' Newspaper* sought to question these notions of unity among economic classes and the idea that any marital union, regardless of mutual affection, was, as the *Post* it, “an epoch in national life.”¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ *Morning Post* March 7, 1863 pg. 5

¹⁰² *Morning Post* March 9, 1863 pg. 5

In articles and published letters to the editor, the columns of *Reynolds' Newspaper* harped on a familiar theme of aristocratic avarice and sloth. The expense of the celebration was noted, as well as the annual incomes voted to the Prince and Princess by Parliament. How was it that government could vote exorbitant funds to a twenty-one year old young man and his nineteen year old wife, and ignore the needs of the poor in Lancashire, now in the grips of the Cotton Famine?¹⁰³ With this in mind, the publishers posed the question as to whether it would not be better to collect money for poor relief than to buy expensive gifts and jewellery for a woman who did not need them and could easily afford her own. So, by re-politicizing the wedding and focusing on the dynasty's values as opposed to the supposed value of the marriage to the nation, *Reynolds' Newspaper* characterized the entire episode as part of a decadent institution that existed apart from the needs and desires of average men and women. Taking this a step further, whereas publications had attempted to use the openness of the regal romance as a means of showcasing the wedding's universal appeal, *Reynolds'* took a realist approach and pointed out that assertions as to the deep feelings that existed between the royal bride and groom were very dubious given that they had spent less than a week in each others company before they were married.¹⁰⁴ In regarding things in this way, the newspaper made it clear that it recognized the 'fairy tale' quality of the royal marriage, insofar as fairy tales were fictitious.

As compelling, and artfully written, as *Reynolds'* points were, they did not appear to resonate strongly with the public at large. However, there was criticism, particularly among

¹⁰³ *Reynolds' Newspaper* March 1, 1863 pg. 3 The Lancashire Cotton Famine (1861–65), was a depression in the textile industry brought about by overproduction and coincided with the interruption of baled cotton imports caused by the American Civil War.

¹⁰⁴ *Reynolds' Newspaper* March 8, 1863 pg. 4

conservative papers in England, over the lacklustre state of the presentation made to Alexandra upon her arrival. Coverage in the *Spectator*, as well as a letter to the editor in the *Times*, agreed that the carriage and horses that drew the Princess through the streets were of an abysmal quality.¹⁰⁵

Neither the liveries nor the harness were new, or anything like new, nor were the horses matched either in colour or in figure; indeed, they might reasonably have been objected to by any moderately fastidious Woman of the Bedchamber going out a shopping; and yet they were deemed by the Master of the Horse – and by nobody else – good enough to drag to her home, in public procession, in the face of assembled England, Alexandra, our future Queen.¹⁰⁶

The more radical *Manchester Guardian* noted that the procession of the Princess was not worthy of the occasion and that civic management was so poor as to result in several injuries when the crowd pressed forward to see Alexandra.¹⁰⁷ The Earl of Kimberley expressed similar doubts in his journal, recording that the procession was a shabby affair, for which he blamed the Home Secretary, Sir George Grey.¹⁰⁸ For such commentators, it was important that public spectacle matched the expectations for a royal wedding. Though Alexandra's beauty and character had lent themselves to romantic prose, the reception she received was to have been every bit as idealistic.

These criticisms were not long-lasting in England however, and within days of the wedding even *Reynolds' Newspaper* was noting that the festivities had been good for the public,

¹⁰⁵ *Spectator* March 14, 1863 p. 1 & "The Royal Equipages," *The Times*, Tuesday, Mar 10, 1863; pg. 7

¹⁰⁶ "The Royal Equipages," *The Times*, Tuesday, Mar 10, 1863; pg. 7

¹⁰⁷ *Manchester Guardian* March 9, 1863 p. 4

¹⁰⁸ Hawkins & Powell ed., "March 7, 1863," *The Journal of John Wodehouse*, p. 86-87

although any celebration, royal or not, would have had a similar effect.¹⁰⁹ The *Spectator*, which pointed to the ‘dropsical loyalty’ and ‘flaming metaphors’ used and overused by its press compatriots did so apologetically, noting that while writers wished to express the burst of feeling in something more than words, words were all they had.¹¹⁰ Confronted with the reality of the reception, *Reynolds’* switched tactics and sought to urge the abandonment of empty ceremony in favour of real service by royalty to the nation and its people. Were the Prince and Princess to begin their time as man and wife by leading the way in contributing to poor relief, they would do far more to prove their virtue than any glowing report had done.¹¹¹ Such a reorientation by a key radical organ in England demonstrated that the more contrary-minded view of the wedding had largely failed in England. If the public clamoured for monarchical show, the best *Reynolds’ Newspaper* could do it seemed was to call for it to be directed toward some benefit other than sheer amusement.

In Ireland, *The Nation*, a zealous nationalist publication, also looked to deflate rumours of Irish joy at the news of the royal wedding. In terms far from flattering, it noted that there was no real rejoicing at the royal nuptials across the Irish Sea and that those in Dublin who illuminated their houses or shops, in seeming celebration, actually did so under coercion. Looking to add insult to injury, it was reported that George IV, in spite of his many vices, was better received in Ireland in 1821 than the wedding of his great-nephew had been.¹¹² So would begin a long-

¹⁰⁹ *Reynolds’ Newspaper* March 15, 1863 pg. 3

¹¹⁰ *Spectator* March 14, 1863 p. 10

¹¹¹ *Reynolds’ Newspaper* March 15, 1863 pg. 3

¹¹² “Illuminations!,” *The Nation*, March 7, 1863; Vol. XX No. 28, p. 440. “A Proclamation,” and “Illumination loyalty,” *The Nation*, March 14, 1863; Vol. XX No. 29, p. 455, 457.

running debate between Irish papers on the truth of any Irish reception for a royal guest. As fervently as the conservative and loyalist press insisted that the people of Ireland welcomed royal visitors and spectacle, the *Nation* and its successors would invariably attempt to call any and all displays into question as well as the motives of those participating. Artful criticism was often the order of the day as well, as was the case on this occasion when the paper held up George IV, to this point decried as the antithesis of princely behaviour, as someone better liked and more celebrated than the vaunted royal couple. For the *Nation* and its publishers, the wedding of a Danish Princess to an Anglo-German Prince had nothing to do with Ireland; to quote one Irishman, “The Saxon and the Dane, our immortal hills profane.”¹¹³

In response to the notion of change inherent in the choice of Alexandra as bride, the *Nation* cast her as another foreign interloper, the heir of Norse invaders who had, centuries earlier at the Battle of Clontarf in 1014, been dispatched by the fallen King Brian Boru.¹¹⁴ To further emphasize this point, and in response to the fawning poetry that greeted the Danish princess, the nationalist organ published a poem, written as a conversation between Britannia and Hibernia, which addressed the issue of the royal marriage. Britannia scolds her Irish counterpart for her disobedience and intransigence in the face of Alexandra’s arrival, questioning why Ireland does not join in the revelry and bid welcome to the new princess. In response, Hibernia asks why her own cries of torment have not been heard and why her people are to forget their agony in order that they might celebrate with their oppressors. She recalls the great victories of

¹¹³ “Illuminations!,” *The Nation*, March 7, 1863; Vol. XX No. 28, p. 440. “A Proclamation,” and “Illumination loyalty,” *The Nation*, March 14, 1863; Vol. XX No. 29, p. 455, 457.

¹¹⁴ James H. Murphy, *Abject Loyalty: Nationalism and the Monarchy in Ireland During the Reign of Queen Victoria* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), p. 139

her warrior king and champions over the Norse hordes that had enslaved her, and claims that she would not profane their memory by doing homage to the daughter of Denmark.¹¹⁵

The tide of more realistic reporting, seen most clearly in the *Nation*, was not lost on other Irish newspapers. Even the *Irish Times*, which glowingly printed many of the most sanguine notes regarding the arrival of the Princess, was forced to admit the potential for further Anglo-Irish complications resulting from this wedding. Having made much of the young princess' innocence, the loyalist organ acknowledged that this virtue carried with it certain dangers. Its reporters in Dublin lamented the possibility that an anti-Irish faction might attempt to pervert Alexandra's thinking so she might come to think ill of Ireland. Members of Lord Palmerston's government were singled out by the article, and accused of denying Irishmen a voice in the direction of their own country.¹¹⁶ As little could be expected from Westminster, in terms of encouragement for the Princess' supposed feelings toward the Irish, it would fall to the young heir and his wife to discern the truth of Irish fealty. The question as to whether Alexandra's famed innocence and purity would guide her or be stained by the prejudice of others was an interesting one. It drew a sharp demarcation between what constituted loyalty and servility and even though the paper voiced every confidence that the new princess would resist such partisanship, these reports provide clear evidence that the newspaper was not pleased with the current state of the Anglo-Irish relationship. Though it looked to the monarchy as a source of amelioration, it was plain that, as yet, it could find no solace there.

¹¹⁵ "Britannia and Hibernia," *The Nation*, March 7, 1863; Vol. XX No. 28, p. 443.

¹¹⁶ *The Irish Times*, March 10, 1863; Vol. V, Issue 1191, p. 2

Unlike in London, where cheering crowds saw the Princess in person and silenced the doubts of skeptics, in Ireland the situation was much more fluid. Although most moderate and conservative papers were confident of a change in royal attitude, there were no guarantees so early on. The monarchy was in Great Britain and much more present there, so it stood to reason that even the unionist press could have its confidence shaken. While part of the royal celebration, Ireland remained removed from it, and therefore no amount of joy or celebratory fervour could be taken for granted.

As it happened, *The Nation* seemed to have judged the mood of the Irish people fairly, as being much more hostile to the wedding than more conservative organs would have led one to believe. The wedding celebration in Ireland devolved into public disorder in Dublin, Cork, Tipperary and elsewhere.¹¹⁷ While the nationalist press presented the property damage and arrests as proof of Irish feeling, and placed the blame and the cost at England's feet for forcing the celebration on the nation's inhabitants, other newspapers took a much different view of all that had transpired.¹¹⁸

Some in the conservative press was largely dismissive of the entire affair. Articles in the *Morning Post* referred to those who caused disturbances in Dublin as 'scamps' collectively, and their actions were effectively trivialized as those of immature boys seeking attention.¹¹⁹

Taken as a whole, the character of the rejoicings in this district of the city was credible in every respect, with the exception of a few gangs of young scamps who occasionally attempted to create disturbance, but, receiving little

¹¹⁷ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp. 103.

¹¹⁸ *The Nation* March 14, 1863 p. 455

¹¹⁹ *Morning Post* March 12, 1863 pg. 3

encouragement, were forced to desist. A more orderly crowd could not possibly have met together.¹²⁰

The *Post* found its compliment in Ireland in the form of the loyalist *Irish Times*, which also chose to see the entire episode as a success. When dealing with the disturbances, a lighter tone prevailed. Though the article noted that, generally speaking, good order was maintained, lower class ‘ruffians’ were said to have damaged property, but the presence of police mitigated the spread of what the paper referred to as ‘practical joking’.¹²¹ In both cases, the trouble-making which took place was presented in the least flattering light, as actions of little consequence. The Irish people were united in celebration, but for the puerile efforts of a few. At the same time, the paper looked to present the assailants as members of the lower orders, and enemies of property, to its readership, drawn from the educated and influential classes.

When faced with the issues of conflict and disorder, other conservative papers were quick to turn to old prejudice and forsake the ideas of unity earlier touted. The *Times* in London, presented articles concerning the illuminations in Dublin and, when the Catholic University remained in darkness the newspaper was able to place that institution as part of a disruptive group who regrettably lacked the composure and grace to enjoy the celebration.¹²² Notes of disappointment were placed within the articles, stating that the reporter was sure that these attitudes were not indicative of the majority of Irishmen and that Roman Catholics too celebrated

¹²⁰ *Morning Post* March 12, 1863 pg. 3

¹²¹ “Rejoicing in Ireland,” *The Irish Times*, March 11, 1863; Vol. V, Issue 1191, p. 2

¹²² “The Wedding Day In Ireland,” *The Times*, Thursday, Mar 12, 1863; pg. 5; Issue 24504; col A

despite the lack of illumination at the university.¹²³ The *Times*' presentation of Ireland as divided between loyalist and Catholic radical made a compelling case for the union; clearly Ireland was in no position to govern itself. The *Belfast Newsletter* took ideas of division a step further, blaming Roman Catholics directly for the disruptions in Ireland. After the violence, Catholics were noted as having been behind the riots that took place in Dublin and Cork.¹²⁴

...we may very safely arrive at the conclusion that the loyalty of the Romanists in Ireland is, of all events, not of a conspicuous type. There are very honourable exceptions; but, as a rule, it is with regret we say it, Mr. J. F. McGuire's statement appears to be fully borne out - "If there was a French invasion to-morrow...the people of Ireland would not take up arms, at all events to resist it."¹²⁵

The coverage ably displayed the disparity between Ulster loyalty and celebration and southern perfidy and chaos and claimed Catholicism as its source. To the *Newsletter*, that Ulster was loyal was supremely important, especially when other parts of Ireland proved themselves to be less so.

More moderate publications saw the actions as a loss for all parties, particularly the cause of constitutional nationalism. The *Cork Examiner* laid out the carnage in full detail, organizing stories specifying injuries sustained by specific constables and rioters. Little favouritism was shown, as a report of a sub-constable, who was severely beaten after trying to arrest some men throwing stones, was placed next to accounts of several rioters, who had been bayoneted and

¹²³ It is interesting to note that in Great Britain the Illumination Act of 1832 outlawed the practice of illuminating houses due in part to the fact that dissent could so easily be shown and that violence often accompanied illuminations. "The Wedding Day In Ireland," *The Times*, Thursday, Mar 12, 1863; pg. 5; Issue 24504; col A

¹²⁴ *Belfast Newsletter* March 14, 1863 pg. 3

¹²⁵ *Belfast Newsletter* March 14, 1863 pg. 3

were so afraid of capture they left hospital without the full measure of treatment.¹²⁶ An underlying implication as to the futility of such demonstrations in the furtherance of the nationalist cause was easily inferred. At the same time, the *Freeman's Journal* decried the actions of those in the provincial towns, and chose to present their actions as a dual insult, both to the cause of Irish self-government and to the Princess.¹²⁷

We ask, in the name of common sense and common decency, are these things to continue? Is the name of Ireland to be degraded before Europe and its nationalist hopes identified with low vulgar ruffianism? Do the men who prepared and stimulated these acts...imagine they are serving the cause of 'nationality,' or advancing 'popular rights,' by exciting the indignation of all that is pure, upright, and honourable against the sentiment which these men have so flagrantly identified with the disreputable conduct we have described.¹²⁸

In subsequent royal visits much was often made of Irish chivalry and hospitality, so, to these columnists, these hurtful events both impugned the dignity of those who participated in them and gave undeserved affront to a lady who had nothing to do with regal indifference from London.

Regardless of how it was presented, the fact remained that the display of Irish affection and loyalty was hopelessly marred by the actions of nationalists, whether fair or foul. Like the radical press in England, the liberal and conservative-minded press in Ireland had to re-position their coverage in order that some good might be seen. Proximity became the issue that was played upon. If nationalists had succeeded in propagating the feeling that Ireland was increasingly isolated within the United Kingdom, a royal visit by the Princess was the way to

¹²⁶ *Cork Examiner* March 12, 1863 pg. 2

¹²⁷ *The Freeman's Journal* Vol. XCVI, March 13, 1863, p. 2

¹²⁸ *The Freeman's Journal* Vol. XCVI, March 13, 1863, p. 2

prove the mutual affection between her and the nation. The theme of a royal visit in the near future was therefore driven home again and again throughout the coverage.

The *Irish Times* claimed that, should Alexandra and her husband visit Ireland they could be in little doubt concerning the loyalty of their Irish subjects, promising that “they shall receive a right royal welcome – a welcome from the heart.”¹²⁹ There followed many complaints that the royals were ignorant of the feelings of the Irish people since there were so few royal visits made to Ireland. This was doubly upsetting for the columnists when they considered Ireland’s resources, population, and that it’s people had been faithful to the Crown in past.¹³⁰

Accordingly, articles promised that the adoration and well wishes sent across the Irish Sea to the Princess were only a preview of the greeting she would receive were she to accompany her husband on a visit and allow the Irish people to welcome her among them.¹³¹ The *Belfast Newsletter* gave assurances to its own readers that the royal couple were soon to visit Ireland and vacation in the romantic environs of Killruddery in County Wicklow.¹³² For the conservative and loyal press in Ireland the lesson of the disturbances was clear, a royal presence could set things right in Ireland, allowing the Prince and Princess to see the beauty of the land and draw out the love of the people. If cheers could drown out the cynicism in London, surely the same could be done in Dublin.

The Irish had, for better or worse, played their part in commemorating the wedding. Though some felt shut out from a larger role, others wanted no role at all, which no doubt left

¹²⁹ *The Irish Times*, March 12, 1863; Vol. V, Issue 1191, p. 2-3

¹³⁰ *The Irish Times*, March 12, 1863; Vol. V, Issue 1191, p. 2-3

¹³¹ “Rejoicing in Ireland,” *The Irish Times*, March 11, 1863; Vol. V, Issue 1191, p. 2

¹³² *Belfast Newsletter*, March 24, 1863 p. 4

both sides displeased at the outcome. Though still a stranger, those who looked for signs saw Alexandra as sympathetic to the Irish cause. Even those who maligned her did so based on a centuries-old anger and a feeling of apathy toward the entire affair. For those who held such opinions, no concession or sign of favour would be sufficient, short of liberation. The Irish press seemed keenly aware that it was only a matter of time before their citizens saw Alexandra face to face and got a true accounting of her attitudes.

Among the invited guests at the wedding was Charles Dickens, who remarked on the Princess' countenance at that auspicious hour.

The Princess's face was very pale and full of a sort of awe and wonder. It was the face of no ordinary bride, not simply a timid, shrinking girl, but one with a distinctive character of her own, prepared to act a part greatly.¹³³

Alexandra had been subjected to different portrayals in the media, but most writers, regardless of political affiliation, saw her as Dickens had and wished her to act her part upon the national stage. She and the Prince of Wales were to mark a deviation and bring the crown closer to the people. Even more radical newspapers like *Reynolds' Newspaper*, who felt there was no change inherent in the wedding, eventually came to express its own hope that the union would eventually inspire a new social conscience for the monarchy. This call to action for the monarchy would be consistent in the pages of the radical press, which did not shy from politicizing the visits to Ireland. In so doing, it aimed to show, as it had in 1863, that royal ceremony was devoid of importance if not coupled with some meaningful action on the part of the royals themselves.

¹³³ "Queen Alexandra," *The Times*, Saturday, Nov 21, 1925; pg. 17; Issue 44125; col A

For many conservative organs in England, Alexandra's purpose was to revitalize the monarchy and breathe new life into a dynasty not yet recovered from the loss of Prince Albert. Although in the company of politicians and princes, the conservative press seemed to preference Alexandra's interaction with the crowds and to accentuate her cordiality, and in so doing create an image of her as a princess beloved by the people. When confronted by the cynical views of other publications, they let the cheering throng in England argue the matter, and carry the day. Even the seeming Irish rejection of the wedding was cast aside and its participants belittled as ignorant and child-like. For conservative editors, the wedding had been a huge success and began the process of drawing the Crown out of the darkness and into the light. This blinkered approach would continue as well, painting Ireland and the Irish as largely loyal, but for nationalist elements as regrettable as they were negligible. In casting Alexandra as a source of admiration and awe, the conservative English press often fell into the hands of ardent Irish nationalists by advocating an unthinking loyalty that infantilized the Irish people.

As a prologue to the creation of her image as a friend of Ireland, the royal wedding had begun to hint at themes which would become salient throughout the coming years. Like the wedding, Alexandra was something different, more open and engaged than her predecessors. Alexandra was cast opposite a hostile parliament in the *Irish Times*, and as a contrast to uneducated and unenlightened British rulers in the *Freeman's Journal*. Surely there had been a great deal of forced love in the guarded relationship Ireland had experienced with the Crown to this point, and the loyalist and home rule papers certainly hoped that this would be a love match at last, or at least a more amicable liaison, based on the tone and tenor of their coverage.

Together, loyalist and moderate nationalist columnists alike presented the Princess as possessing some inclination toward Ireland, and being more mindful of it than many royal personages who had come before her. In their poetry the papers stressed themes of change, but also of unity, whether in celebration or commiseration. Only the ardently nationalist *Nation* in Ireland stalwartly denied the notion that anything about the wedding was a change, save for a new face on an interloping dynasty. Indeed the *Nation* went further, branding the princess' coming as a retrogression and return to Norse invasion.

When confronted with rioting and disorder in their streets, the Irish press divided, with loyalist organs choosing to either trivialize the affair or use it as a platform for questioning the allegiance of their fellows. It was among the moderate publications that contrition was offered toward an offended Alexandra and a sense that something had been lost in the disturbance. In both cases, the Irish press shunned its more constrained outlook in the coming years and looked to the Princess of Wales in order to present a truer picture of Ireland alongside this new addition to the royal house, and perhaps, in the process, appropriate a fuller measure of the woman herself.

1 Visit to Ireland – 1868

The wedding of the Prince and Princess of Wales had raised hopes and heightened expectations in Ireland concerning the possibility of an Irish royal visit by the heir and his wife. Albert Edward was no stranger across the Irish Sea, having accompanied his parents on their own first visit in August 1849, where he was created Earl of Dublin, a title previously held by his grandfather, the Duke of Kent. He returned with the Queen and Prince Albert in 1853 to inspect an exhibition of Irish industry, and took a private tour of Killarney, Bandon, Bantry and Skibbereen in 1858, while undertaking military training in Curragh.¹³⁴ Alexandra however was something new, and despite the riotous events which had accompanied her wedding celebrations in Ireland, there still existed an attraction toward her, especially from those of a moderate or conservative political outlook. That said, and despite early rumours to the contrary at the time of her nuptials, the arrival of the Princess in Ireland was not quick in coming.

Attitudes in Dublin Castle were steadily shifting in the years that followed the wedding, with the popular, but often lampooned, Earl of Carlisle being replaced by John Wodehouse, 1st Earl of Kimberley, as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. While the former had been eager to use the regal rituals associated with his office, the latter found them absurd, favouring instead a much more circumscribed and administrative approach. This, combined with Victoria's growing absence on the political stage, and her favouring of Scotland over Ireland as a retreat, left the prospects of instilling loyalty to the Crown, by way of personal presence, very low indeed. In the

¹³⁴ Sir Sidney Lee, *King Edward VII: A Biography* Vol. 1: From Birth to Accession. (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1927), pp. 23-24, 47-48.

absence of regal spectacle, the ideological tenants of Fenianism began to take hold in the public imagination.¹³⁵

Announcements in early 1864, congratulating her on the birth of her son, carried with them an image of a strong and vital woman, who loved the outdoors, and attempted to make the best of a premature delivery which few were prepared for. The reports in Ireland also offered sympathy for her father, as he attempted to navigate the crisis over Schleswig-Holstein and “keep within bounds the ambition of Germany”, reinforcing the unique bond between Denmark and Ireland as small nations in a world dominated by Great Powers.¹³⁶ By April of 1864 there were once again rumours of an Irish royal visit by the Prince and Princess of Wales to Killruddy, and by August it was to be Kenmore House in Killarney¹³⁷ It was clear that no one had forgotten about the Princess, but neither visit came to pass.

In May 1865, the Prince of Wales visited Dublin to take in the International Exhibition of Arts and Manufactures. The Lord Lieutenant was impressed with the Prince’s sensibility and desire to conciliate the Irish, and soon became convinced that an official royal visit would be productive.¹³⁸ His eagerness notwithstanding, the strength of the Fenian movement in Dublin meant that the Prince’s presence was largely ineffectual. Fear of a rising that year sent Dublin into a series of panics, spread by rumours which extended into the South and West of the country. Though, in the end, the movement proved unable to galvanize a sufficient number of

¹³⁵ James Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland, 1800 to Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 108

¹³⁶ *Belfast Newsletter* January 11, 1864 p. 2

¹³⁷ *Belfast Newsletter* April 19, 1864 p. 2 & August 9, p. 2

¹³⁸ Angus Hawkins & John Powell ed., “May 12, 1865,” *The Journal of John Wodehouse 1st Earl of Kimberley for 1862-1902* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1997), p. 160

armed supporters, it remained very successful in imbedding itself in the popular imagination. Though English politicians still felt that the bulk of the Irish populace were hovering between loyalty to the Crown and separatism, the Fenian movement was too well organized at this time to be put off by an informal visit, even by the Heir to the Throne.¹³⁹

Alexandra was unable to attend, as she was pregnant with their second child, the future King George V, who would be born weeks later. The *Belfast Newsletter*, *Morning Post*, *Dublin Evening Mail*, and *Pall-Mall Gazette* carried the words of the 4th Duke of Leinster, the Dublin Corporation, the Kingstown Commissioners, and the Exhibition's Executive Committee respectively, each welcoming the Prince, expressing wishes for the Princess' health and hope that it would not be long before circumstances allowed her to visit Ireland. In each case, the Prince, in response, said that his wife regretted not being able to attend as much as he did; she was anxious to visit Ireland and meet the Irish people.¹⁴⁰ Even as the Prince was leaving, newspapers reported that crowds braved the intemperate weather to convey their hope that he would soon return, with the Princess alongside him.¹⁴¹

The Lord Lieutenant was impressed with the Prince's sensibility and desire to conciliate the Irish, and soon became convinced that an official royal visit would be productive.¹⁴² The *Times* had reached a similar conclusion, publishing an article on the matter that was widely quoted by other papers. It noted that while the Queen had reigned for twenty-eight years she had

¹³⁹ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, p. 111

¹⁴⁰ *Belfast Newsletter* May 10, 1865 pg. 3 *Morning Post* May 11, 1865 pg. 5 & May 13, 1865 pg. 4 *Dublin Evening Mail* May 9, 1865 p. 3 *Pall-Mall Gazette* May 8, 1865 p. 7

¹⁴¹ *Belfast Newsletter* May 13, 1865 pg. 3 & *Freeman's Journal* May 13, 1865 pg. 3

¹⁴² Angus Hawkins & John Powell ed., "May 12, 1865," *The Journal of John Wodehouse 1st Earl of Kimberley for 1862-1902* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1997), p. 160

spent less than half as many days in Ireland, and that it was a shame that the Prince and Princess of Wales could not more frequently represent her there. Linking Irish discontent with feelings of regal neglect, the article pointed out that many mansions were available to the royal couple, and many Irish nobles who would be honoured to entertain them on their sojourn.¹⁴³

The eagerness of the aristocracy notwithstanding, the strength of the Fenian movement in Dublin in 1865 meant that the Prince's presence was largely ineffectual.¹⁴⁴ The press noted the tepid reception and promised far greater preparation and celebration should the Princess visit. Extrapolating from the published addresses, a hope emerged that Alexandra would indeed visit Ireland, with her husband, in the autumn of 1865. The *Morning Post* lamented her not having been present on this occasion, noting she would have lent popularity and zest to the visit, a veiled slight against the Prince, who evidently had too little of either quality. Moreover, the paper promised that the current display would be outdone, should the Princess arrive.¹⁴⁵ The *Dublin Evening Mail* claimed greater efforts would be made by the public to prove the extent of Irish loyalty, if the rumours of the Princess' coming proved to be true.¹⁴⁶

There is a general idea – the wish probably being father to the thought – that, as her Majesty visited the Dargan exhibition in 1853, in the month of August, the Princess of Wales may honour Ireland with a visit before the season is over; and in that event, greater efforts will be made to convince the Prince of our loyal regard for his house.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ *The Times* May 13, 1865; pg. 9

¹⁴⁴ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, p. 111

¹⁴⁵ *Morning Post* May 10, 1865 pg. 5 & May 13, 1865 pg. 4

¹⁴⁶ *Dublin Evening Mail* May 9, 1865 p. 2

¹⁴⁷ *Dublin Evening Mail* May 9, 1865 p. 2

Clearly Alexandra was a focal point for columnists, even to the point of being an explanation as to why the visit was not more successful than it was. It is interesting to note that it was the Princess's novelty that was stressed most often in the reports, as opposed to any supposed affinity that she might have had for Ireland. The speculation as to her being a potential ally for the Irish people, or a friend at Court, which was evident two years earlier, was absent from the calls for her arrival in 1865. The focus had shifted toward simply encouraging her to visit. Unionist newspapers had claimed in 1863 that the love of the Irish people for the Princess would win her heart and it was apparent that the press still felt this was the case. Should Alexandra visit, a true dialogue between she and the Irish people might well commence.

Meanwhile the Fenian movement continued to grow stronger, creating an attitude of fear within Ireland. In February 1867 a rising in County Kerry was followed by an attempt at a nation-wide insurrection, but due to poor planning and British infiltration, the rebellion failed. The Fenian Rising, while militarily unsuccessful, did give impetus to parliamentary action. In April 1868, William Gladstone passed a motion in favour of disestablishing the Church of Ireland, sparking debate and ultimately the Irish Church Act of 1869.¹⁴⁸ At the same time, Fenian military defeat prompted many in Westminster to believe, as they had in 1849, that separatist forces in Ireland were weakening and that loyalism had to be encouraged as a result, and there was no better way to do that than through a royal visit.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ The primacy of the Church of Ireland had long been resented by Catholics and Presbyterians, since state church members accounted for only one eighth of the Irish population. The Church establishment's wealth and political prestige also contrasted sharply with its minority position. Gladstone felt that disestablishing the Church was a necessity in pacifying Ireland In the wake of the 1867 rising.

¹⁴⁹ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp. 110-113

The visit that followed in the spring of 1868 saw the press set about establishing the friendly relationship between Alexandra and the Irish people. What had come before had simply been educated guess work on the part of print media, extrapolating her feelings of affection for the Irish nation from the Princess' background and a few limited actions. Now, with her in the midst of the Irish people, there was a greater ability to craft the narrative of monarchical friendship and mutual regard, which would inform columnists for the next six decades.

Nevertheless, at the outset, the newspapers were divided on the efficacy of the proposed visit. Some championed the cause of the ruling party and regarded the visit as something very beneficial to Ireland and the royal couple alike. Meanwhile others chose to regard the affair with greater hesitation as regards to its political implications, but held out some hope that it might have value in producing a better atmosphere in Anglo-Irish politics. Finally, there were those who dismissed the visit entirely and claimed it was more hindrance than help.

The more triumphal line was touted by conservative papers. Viewing itself as a champion of monarchy and an enemy of Irish self-governance, it was to be expected that the *Morning Post* endeavoured to create an aura of expectation in Ireland. Articles spoke of a very anxious atmosphere in Dublin with competitions between shopkeepers, as each attempted to beautify their establishment in preparation for the royal couple. It was reported that these merchants were spending more on decorations in a week than they would have in a year¹⁵⁰ Dismissing fears of a political demonstration in opposition to the visit, the *Spectator* advised that

¹⁵⁰ *Morning Post* April 3, 1868 pg. 5 & April 11, 1868 pg. 5

trusting in the loyalty of the Dublin population was the best way to ensure its allegiance.¹⁵¹ In Belfast, the *Newsletter*'s columns claimed that the visit was to be restorative. In its view, the prototypical Celt was naturally loyal, but confused by bad influences, characterized as 'the priest' and 'the agitator'. That these figures were permanent residents in Ireland constantly added more urgency to the need for royal visits, as the regal presence helped the Irish forget the old tradition that so often led them into trouble. Looking back at the visit paid to Ireland by Queen Victoria in 1849, the paper was noted that she had lifted the 'Young Ireland fever' and it was hoped that her son would once more cement the union between the two kingdoms.¹⁵² Though quick to note the apolitical nature of the visit, this rebuke of Catholicism was anything but; spurred on by the rising call for the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland.¹⁵³ For these newspapers, the visit was a necessity in furtherance of government planning and one that would witness to great outpouring of affection from an Irish crowd.

More modest expectations were put forward by the *Pall-Mall Gazette*, *Manchester Guardian* and the *Freeman's Journal*. The *Gazette* noted that the visit was well-intentioned, but it was ridiculous to believe that it would lead to anything enduring. In short, the visit was not a substitute for government legislation aimed at addressing Irish grievances. Some good could

¹⁵¹ *Spectator* April 11, 1868 pg. 2

¹⁵² *Belfast Newsletter* April 9, 1868 pg. 2 Though the Queen's visit had produced a rapturous welcome in Dublin, the Earl of Clarendon, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, later reflected that the visit could not "at once remove evils that are the growth of ages." Herbert Maxwell, *The life and letters of George William Frederick, fourth earl of Clarendon* (London: E. Arnold, 1913), p. 304

¹⁵³ Indeed, immediately following the article dealing with the impending visit, was a piece praising Ulster members who had voted against disestablishment, and claiming that their votes were more representative of Ireland as a whole due to that province's growing population and industry. When the author added the sixteen votes in favor of the established church from other Irish MPs, it was concluded that the total of forty-five votes represented the will of some three and a half million Irish constituents, as opposed to the two and a quarter million represented by those fifty-four Irish MPs who had voted with Gladstone for disestablishment. *Belfast Newsletter* April 9, 1868 pg. 2

surely come from the visit, and the paper advocated a warm welcome for the Prince since, whatever he might accomplish, he would certainly not do any harm.¹⁵⁴ The *Guardian* noted that the visit was of unusual significance and would be greatly helped by a new, more conciliatory, attitude in Parliament in regards to Ireland. As for the royal couple, they had the best wishes of all good citizens, and they would do well to continue the task undertaken in Victoria's few visits, that of forging and strengthening bonds with the Irish public.¹⁵⁵ In Ireland, the *Journal* characterized the entire country as a cast off family member, beginning with a literary reference to Ireland as Cinderella, now coming to meet the prince, hoping to make a favourable impression when compared to her step-sisters England & Scotland.¹⁵⁶ Later editions compared Ireland to an unloved relative, who was relegated to the background and not allowed to see the royal couple until granted permission and called for.¹⁵⁷ This sort of imagery speaks to a feeling of neglect, that the visit, though welcome, had been long in coming. A criticism of union was also obvious, for if Ireland was truly a part of a united kingdom, why was it that years passed between royal visits while England and Scotland were given a good deal more royal attention? Once again the notion of Ireland as a whole being friendless at Court was plainly in evidence. For all of this though, the *Journal* claimed that the collective Irish heart had not been chilled and hope was expressed that the visit might be a harbinger of peace and goodwill between Ireland and the Crown.¹⁵⁸ These papers took the government to task, in regard of legislation and Irish grievances

¹⁵⁴ *Pall-Mall Gazette* March 19, 1868 pg. 2

¹⁵⁵ *Manchester Guardian* April 14, 1868 pg. 4

¹⁵⁶ *Freeman's Journal* April 3, 1868 p. 3

¹⁵⁷ "Royalty and the Irish," *The Freeman's Journal*, April 17, 1868, Vol. CI, p. 4

¹⁵⁸ *Freeman's Journal* April 16, 1868 p. 3

over an absent monarchy. Their writers also foresaw that the efforts of the royal visitors might help in smoothing the progress of Anglo-Irish amity.

The dissenting voices were best summed up in the views of *The Anglo-Celt*, *The Nation*, and *Reynolds' Newspaper*, each regarding the visit as having little benefit for Ireland or its people. Addressing the planners of the royal sojourn, *The Anglo-Celt* wrote that Disraeli and his Tories were using the royal family to prop up the Irish Protestant Ascendency with an aim toward drawing support away from the cause for Irish dis-establishment.¹⁵⁹ *The Nation* focused on the notion of regal feebleness and attempted to deflate the pomp and ceremony by claiming that the Prince visited out of duty and not desire and had no power to act in the interests of Ireland.¹⁶⁰ The most artful dismissal of the visit came from *Reynolds' Newspaper*, which, aware that the seminal moment of the visit was to be the investiture of the Prince as a Knight in the Order of St. Patrick, proclaimed Albert Edward the new Saint Patrick, come to drive out the landlords, spies and informers, as his pious predecessor had once rid the emerald isle of snakes, or perhaps he meant only to reconcile the Irish people to these devices of English dominion.¹⁶¹

Let us be thankful we live in better and more enlightened times, and that the blessings of providence, and the kind endeavours of "Jolly Nash," the "Great Vance," and the "inimitable Menken," our Prince may succeed in accomplishing a work which baffled the most strenuous efforts of all preceding princes and statesmen.¹⁶²

Two weeks later, the paper concluded that, though the Prince might not have ill intentions, a good welcome for him was tantamount to dismissing Irish grievances, as it would surely be used

¹⁵⁹ *Anglo-Celt* April 11, 1868 p. 3

¹⁶⁰ "The Royal Visit," *The Nation* April 4, 1868 Vol. XXV Issue #33, p. 520

¹⁶¹ *Reynolds' Newspaper* March 15, 1868 pg. 5

¹⁶² *Reynolds' Newspaper* March 15, 1868 pg. 5

as proof of public joy and contentment.¹⁶³ Once again, the dissenting outlook was characterized by a critical approach. Whereas the newspapers discussed earlier spoke of politics and the implication of the visit in very abstract ways, these journals showed a greater level of specificity, citing certain issues and events that point to the impotence of the visit and the visitors.

To this point everything seemed a touch formulaic, the reports being what one had come to expect. The loyalist papers hoped for some type of spontaneous reaction, stemming from the idea that the royal presence alone was curative. Moreover, an official visit of state, with all of its accompanying pomp and ceremony, would serve this restorative function a good deal better than the more informal visits made in 1865 and earlier. While moderate papers in Ireland and Britain echoed the feeling of their conservative and unionist counterparts, that an official visit was welcome, if long in coming, their optimism stopped short of imbuing it with power to solve the Irish question. A royal visit could do no harm, and might be cause for renewed dialogue, but it was not to be seen as a resolution of Irish grievance in and of itself. This sentiment was taken to its ultimate conclusion by more extreme papers, which simply dismissed the visit as government pandering and ridiculed the Prince as an ill-equipped saviour. Nothing was out of the ordinary in what appeared to be standard commentary for a standard visit by the Prince of Wales. The tone began to change however, with the injection of the Princess of Wales to the visit, and expectations began to shift.

¹⁶³ *Reynolds' Newspaper* March 29, 1868 pg. 3

Owing to her delicate health, it was not certain whether or not Alexandra would be able to accompany her husband on the proposed visit.¹⁶⁴ The Prince wrote excitedly to his mother expressing a hope that his wife would indeed be able to join him in Ireland, as he was sure that her presence would aid the success of the endeavour.¹⁶⁵ Disraeli was also in favour of the Princess' presence in Dublin, despite Victoria's writing to him that Alexandra's leg was still stiff from her recent bout with rheumatic fever.¹⁶⁶ He asked if it would be worth considering that the good expected to be produced by the Prince's visit might be doubled should the Princess be present to add grace and gravity to the occasion.¹⁶⁷

The press covered the matter as well, creating an atmosphere of expectation. The *Irish Times* offered commentary on the so-called 'timid doctors' who advised caution and advocated for the Princess to remain at home, and likened them to uncompromising politicians, as it was believed that they might poison the Princess against Irish interests.¹⁶⁸ This was first indication that the Princess was being deliberately kept away from the Irish people, a reaction to five years of unfounded rumours regarding her arrival. Publishing the views of those wishing for the Princess to journey to Ireland, the *Anglo-Celt* reported that Archbishop Marcus Beresford of Armagh, the Anglican Primate of Ireland, expressed hopes at a gathering for the Benevolent Society of St. Patrick, that the Princess could visit Ireland. He felt certain that, if she were well enough to travel, she would receive a welcome in Ireland no less warm than that which she

¹⁶⁴ During the birth of her third child, Princess Louise, in 1867, a bout of rheumatic fever threatened Alexandra's life, and left her with a permanent limp

¹⁶⁵ Buckle ed. *Letters of Queen Victoria*, pp. 515.

¹⁶⁶ Letter from Victoria to Disraeli, March 14, 1868; Oxford Bodleian Library, Special Collections; Dep. Hughenden 77/1, pg. 102

¹⁶⁷ Letter from Disraeli to Victoria March 14, 1868 RA VIC/MAIN/D/23/46

¹⁶⁸ *The Irish Times* April 3, 1868 Vol. X, p. 3

received upon entering London in 1863.¹⁶⁹ The *Pall-Mall Gazette* carried the words of the Prince himself, stating that he would be glad if Alexandra were to accompany him, and that she was anxious to go, if she could. The Prince also felt certain of the cordial greeting his wife would receive.¹⁷⁰ On one hand, these quotes are prescribed, since neither the Archbishop nor the Prince was about to advocate that Alexandra stay home; even Victoria's trepidation was framed in her concern for her daughter-in-law's health. That being said, with so much undecided regarding whether or not Alexandra would attend, these papers wanted to spread the message that important figures wanted the Princess of Wales to come and she wished to go, if she were able.

In correspondence, Alexandra indicated that she had a strong desire to visit Ireland and that she would write to Lady Abercorn, wife to the Lord Lieutenant, and advise her that she would not exert herself in the mornings, so as to be able to participate in the evening balls. Despite the risk for her health, she protested that her leg was stronger now and that she was anxious at the prospect of being estranged from her husband.¹⁷¹ Yet, even when her condition began to improve to the extent that she would be able to go, the Prince still sought to keep it secret, due to the Queen's disapproval.¹⁷² Victoria wrote that Alexandra was very thankful for the Queen having yielded to the wishes of her husband and the Prime Minister, although the Queen noted her reluctance in her journal entry.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ *Anglo-Celt* March 21, 1868 p. 3

¹⁷⁰ *Pall-Mall Gazette* March 18, 1868 pg. 6

¹⁷¹ Letter from Princess of Wales to Victoria March 26, 1868 RA VIC/MAIN/D/23/65

¹⁷² Letter from Albert Edward to James Hamilton, March 19, 1868; Public Record Office of Northern Ireland D623/A/327/42

¹⁷³ "Monday 30th March, 1868," *Queen Victoria's Journals* (Princess Beatrice's Copies) Vol. 57 p. 91

Reaction from the press when the attendance of the Princess was confirmed, was decisive. The *Anglo-Celt*, which had, six days earlier reported the news, confirmed by the highest authority, that the Princess would not be present, on April 4th was happy to print that she was coming after all. The columnist noted that all had thought that the frailty of her health would preclude travel, but there was happiness when it was learned that she was strong enough to make the journey. The paper promised the Princess a hearty, enthusiastic, and ‘thoroughly Irish’ welcome when she arrived.¹⁷⁴ The *Morning Post* played on the theme of unity in Ireland when reporting that the announcement of the Princess’ presence gave satisfaction to all classes, especially as her earnest desire to see the country was known.¹⁷⁵ The *Guardian* claimed there had been gloom in Dublin when it was thought she would not be present, but rejoicing when it was known that she was to visit.¹⁷⁶ The *Freeman’s Journal* chose to praise the Princess for raising herself from her sickbed and choosing to visit Ireland, throwing her weakened form upon the hospitality of the Irish people. For this reason alone the newspaper felt that the Princess had paid a great compliment to Ireland by her presence and her appeal to Irish courtesy.¹⁷⁷ The ‘is she or isn’t she?’ build toward the announcement created an additional appeal for Alexandra. As it seemed as though she might not have been able to come at all, her presence was a gift long sought after, but never fully expected. Moreover, her attendance was said to have sprung from desire rather than obligation, with her wish to visit mirroring the expectation created in the press and signalling the existence of a royal friend whose absence had been previously lamented. This

¹⁷⁴ *Anglo-Celt* April 4, 1868 p. 3

¹⁷⁵ *Morning Post* April 1, 1868 pg. 5

¹⁷⁶ *Manchester Guardian* April 16, 1868 pg. 5

¹⁷⁷ *Freeman’s Journal* April 24, 1868 p. 2

expectation, nurtured in the newspapers since 1863, and further cultivated in the midst of the unenthusiastic welcome offered to the Prince in 1865, was at last to be realized.

With the Princess' presence confirmed then, the theme of renewed vigour was evident in press reports. The *Pall-Mall Gazette* recounted expressions of satisfaction among members of the Dublin Corporation, while the *Times* and *Freeman's Journal* both reported that medical clearance for the Princess had revived expectations and caused efforts, in preparation for her arrival, to be redoubled.¹⁷⁸ The *Irish Times* pointed to a marked upswing in business resulting from the announcement of the Princess' arrival and even the more nationally-minded *Cork Examiner* made mention of the fact that the Princess's presence was more historically interesting than that of the Prince, and was quick to note the tide of public sympathy being strongly in Alexandra's favour.¹⁷⁹ These newspapers showed a jubilant Ireland at the announcement of the Princess' ability to accompany her husband. The reports of the preparations made it clear that Alexandra was a focal point and that Irishmen of all stripes were eager to give her welcome, and leave her with a favourable impression of their country. Not yet on display herself, it was Ireland's populace which was showcased in these accounts. Just as it was hoped that the Princess might dispel the aura of regal indifference, so these reports aimed at putting to an end notions of Irish hostility toward the dynasty. Only in this way, with both sides setting aside harmful preconceptions, could the varied messages of the columnists reach the object of their desire.

¹⁷⁸ *The Times*, April 2, 1868; pg. 9 *Freeman's Journal* April 1, 1868 p. 2

¹⁷⁹ *The Irish Times* April 3, 1868 Vol. X, p. 3 *Cork Examiner* April 16, 1868 p. 2

Editors were well aware from the very beginning that the spectacle of monarchy was the key to its power and that the reception given to a woman of such vaunted beauty and charm was of a singular importance. The *Times* noted the concern among the planners, and questions over who would be present to receive the Princess upon her arrival and conduct her to her proper place on the platform.¹⁸⁰ The *Pall-Mall Gazette* criticized the lack of Irish peers present upon the royal couple's entry into Dublin, noting that they could ill afford to stand aloof from their countrymen at such a time as this.¹⁸¹ Still more, *The Nation*, which had argued that the visit was a futile waste of time and money, still made a point to advise that the Prince and Princess both be given a cordial welcome. An article stated that while no one wished the Prince to be subject to any incivility, it was paramount that his wife not be touched by even the shadow of discourtesy.¹⁸² Alexandra's presence in Ireland for the first time was clearly a cause for concern among her hosts. From the loyalist point of view, her royal attendance demanded a proper welcome, or else they risked giving offence. Effrontery was also on the minds of more ardent nationalists, who did not wish to be seen as rude and thereby injure their Home Rule cause. Though possessed of no political authority, the Princess of Wales was afforded great respect and deference, and her celebrated status that gave Irish planners and pundits pause.

Upon her arrival, loyalist newspapers were awash with references concerning Alexandra and the welcome she received upon landing at Kingstown and progressing to a rapturous greeting in Dublin. Much was made of the lengths people had travelled in order to see the Princess and

¹⁸⁰ "Ireland," *The Times*, Tuesday, Apr 07, 1868; pg. 5; Issue 26092; col C

¹⁸¹ *Pall-Mall Gazette* April 17, 1868 pg. 4

¹⁸² "The Royal Visit," *The Nation* April 4, 1868 Vol. XXV Issue #33, p. 520

the huge crowds that arrived to greet her. The *Pall-Mall Gazette* spoke of many ‘rustics’ who, by virtue of their clothing, looked as if they had travelled far in order to be present at the landing, days later it reported that people from at least five counties had ventured to Dublin to see the Princess.¹⁸³ To this was added the reports of the *Morning Post*, which recounted how one hundred thousand people lined the eight miles from the quay at Kingstown to Dublin in order to see her.¹⁸⁴

The reception afforded the newspapers a unique opportunity to display the Irish as gracious hosts, and the Princess as inspiring a warm and spirited welcome. This theme was seen most often in the Irish press as newspapers looked to pay compliment to their countrymen alongside the royal guests. This type of reports took a medieval direction when speaking in terms of Irish chivalry and gallantry. So-called ‘Romantic Medievalism’ had been growing in popularity for decades by this time, and there was much chivalric talk as Irish crowds vied for the favours of the Princess of Wales.¹⁸⁵ The *Belfast Newsletter* claimed that the Princess, referred to as “Denmark’s Pearl”, called forth Irish gallantry and allowed the people to forget the religious and political obstructions to unity in favour of doing homage to the daughter of

¹⁸³ *Pall-Mall Gazette* April 16, 1868 pg. 7 & April 18, 1868 pg. 8

¹⁸⁴ *Morning Post* April 17, 1868 pg. 5

¹⁸⁵ Conservative authors had looked to the medieval era for feudal paternalism, and interdependent communities, in the midst of an industrializing age. Conversely, more liberally-minded writers drew from the Middle Ages a primitive democracy which existed within the villages, and individual liberties guaranteed by the feudal contact. For the British monarchy, the fourteenth century king Edward III proved to be an inspirational figure, as George III revived his chivalric Order of the Garter, George IV staged a mock-medieval banquet upon his coronation, and in 1842 Queen Victoria and Prince Albert chose the court of Edward III and Queen Philippa as the theme for their first costume ball. The Crown’s motives were political, to inspire patriotic fervour in a glorified past and to unite the aristocracy around the Throne as Edward had in the course of the Hundred Years War. Elizabeth Fay, *Romantic Medievalism: History and the Romantic Literary Ideal* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 1-5.

Denmark.¹⁸⁶ The *Guardian* made note of a Sackville Street banner which read “Blest forever is she who relied on Erin’s honour and Erin’s pride” amidst its coverage of the cheers the Princess received and the charming smiles she offered in reply.¹⁸⁷ The *Cork Examiner* praised those at the reception who ensured that Alexandra’s first experience was of the gallant spirit of Ireland, an attitude it later discussed as ‘chivalrous enthusiasm.’¹⁸⁸ The *Freeman’s Journal* remarked that the Princess’ personal charm captivated Dubliners from the first moment they looked at her.¹⁸⁹ Stating that the royal visit was made a thousand fold more gracious by her presence, the *Journal* noted that the nation had a keen sense of the wrongs done to it, that its sense of gallantry overcame it when seeing the Princess, and it resolved to give her a welcome with the genuine hospitality for which it was famous.¹⁹⁰ Following the installation of the Prince of Wales, three newspapers recorded the Lord Lieutenant’s words at the reception where he echoed the chivalric sentiments of the press in saying that Irish gallantry was indeed dead if the Princess were not acknowledged and that all had felt her presence as a ray of sunshine in the course of her visit.¹⁹¹ The coverage was as much in praise of the Irish for showcasing their ancient hospitality, as for the Princess who inspired this outpouring of gentlemanly welcome. At the same time, the coverage looked back in order to look forward, foreshadowing a more cordial relationship which could exist, between Ireland and the Crown, if issues of mutual trust could be overcome.

¹⁸⁶ *Belfast Newsletter* April 16, 1868 pg. 4

¹⁸⁷ *Manchester Guardian* April 16, 1868 pg. 5

¹⁸⁸ *Cork Examiner* April 16, 1868 p. 2 & April 17, 1868 p. 2

¹⁸⁹ *The Freeman’s Journal* April 24, 1868; p. 4

¹⁹⁰ *The Freeman’s Journal* April 16, 1868; p. 3

¹⁹¹ *Pall-Mall Gazette* April 20, 1868 pg. 6, *Morning Post* April 20, 1868 pg. 6, *Manchester Guardian* April 21, 1868 pg. 5 & *Cork Examiner* April 21, 1868 pg. 4

Perhaps the most powerful image of interplay between the Princess and the crowds was painted by the *Irish Times* which took an almost religious view, presenting the Irish as worshipping at the shrine of the Princess' youth and beauty.¹⁹² Their prose painted a vivid picture of the Princess at the Punchestown Races, with amity among one and all:

If she could mix with the masses she would discover that the tenant identified himself with his landlord in the fortunes of the race, and that a shout of exaltation is triumphantly raised when a good employer – one of the old blood – or a kindly gentleman has won. Many an Irish blessing will be uttered for the 'sweet-cheeked' Princess which she will never hear, and in numerous homes the old and the young will speak of the Danish lady who would come to see them in spite of all, and seemed, by her smiles, to like them.¹⁹³

Articles spoke of men schooled in hard labour and women dressed in simple clothing lining the route to catch a glimpse of the Princess, with their children upon their shoulders. The article remarked about the countless praises for the Princess, whispered in hushed tones as she passed or uttered in the homes of those she graced with her smile.¹⁹⁴ The *Times* in London also speculated on how many hands the Princess must have shaken on her approach to the Races, and quoted a number of nameless Irishmen who bid her welcome and asked that she might return soon and stay forever.¹⁹⁵ These reports of the reception Alexandra received, with their almost utopian overtones, painted a striking portrait of a divided land unified by the grace and charm of a single person. Alexandra had arrived at an opportune moment when her personal spectacle could be showcased to greatest effect. Not only then had she inspired a gallant welcome, but the press further credited her with promoting a notion of unity that saw a place for all under the Crown.

¹⁹² *The Irish Times* April 13, 1868 Vol. X, p. 3

¹⁹³ *The Irish Times* April 15, 1868 Vol. X, p. 3

¹⁹⁴ *The Irish Times* April 16, 1868 Vol. X, p. 2

¹⁹⁵ *The Times*, April 18, 1868; pg. 9

Previous royal visitors had called for loyalty, but these reports present Alexandra as inspiring it with her gracious bearing and open nature, cultivating friendship between the Irish themselves, as well as with the dynasty.

It is also interesting to note how Alexandra's reception was very often presented through the eyes of women. From the beginning of the visit, a strong female presence was remarked upon by the press, with the *Anglo-Celt* claiming that the Kingstown harbour crowd was chiefly composed of women.¹⁹⁶ Floral presentations by a Mrs. Vance at the quay and by a group of twenty-five women at Blackrock, along the road to Dublin, were reported in a number of publications.¹⁹⁷ The *Morning Post* wrote of a special welcome given to the future Queen by a group of women who had filled a large platform on College Green.¹⁹⁸ The *Guardian* noted how, during the procession to St Patrick's Cathedral for the installation of the Prince, ladies on platforms, and at windows overlooking the route, were profuse in professing loyalty to her.¹⁹⁹ The *Freeman's Journal* remarked that the Irish ladies spoke at length on the Princess' beauty, and that her manner had captivated the women of Ireland, who were known to rule the men.²⁰⁰ Women could easily be chosen to provide such commentary due to the fact that their observations on Alexandra's beauty were not as easily misconstrued as attraction, as would a man's. At the same time, the newspapers were attempting to present these women as regarding the Princess as a role model. This was so not only in the sense of splendour, but also in regard to

¹⁹⁶ *Anglo-Celt* April 18, 1868 pg. 3

¹⁹⁷ *Pall-Mall Gazette* April 16, 1868 pg., *Anglo-Celt* April 18, 1868 pg. 3 & *Freeman's Journal* April 24, 1868; p. 3.

¹⁹⁸ *Morning Post* April 17, 1868; p. 5

¹⁹⁹ *Manchester Guardian* April 20, 1868; p. 3

²⁰⁰ *The Freeman's Journal* April 24, 1868; p.2, 4.

the nineteenth century female ideal of beauty and obedience that all women, and most especially royals, were supposed to aspire to attain. After all, Alexandra was coming to Ireland to accompany her husband, at the encouragement of the Prime Minister, and with the permission of her doctors.

Writing to the Queen, Alexandra expressed her delight at having been able to accompany her husband and her appreciation of the kind welcome she received. She made a point to tell Victoria that she thought the Irish people to be very loyal. Moreover, she assured her mother-in-law that wherever the Prince and Princess went, they heard cheers for the Queen. The installation of her husband as the Knight in the Order of St. Patrick was said to have been splendid, as was the banquet afterwards. She also gave praise to Lord and Lady Abercorn, who, as kind hosts, looked to aid her in every way and ensure she did not over-exert herself.²⁰¹

Though most newspapers had stated from the outset that the visit had few, if any, political implications, in the wake of this enthusiastic welcome for the Prince and Princess there was a trend toward political commentary in critically-minded newspapers. As was to be expected, the initial commentary focused on the political values behind the visit. *The Nation* presented Alexandra as a plaything of the British government that sought in all things to support the Anglo-Irish ascendancy in its policy of quasi-colonial rule and oppression. She was meant to distract the Irish from their true goals and was a means of spreading disinformation through fraudulent reports of the warm welcome she was said to have received.²⁰² Both *The Nation* and

²⁰¹ Letter from Princess of Wales to Victoria April 19, 1868 RA VIC/MAIN/Z/449/7

²⁰² "The Royal Visit," *The Nation* April 4, 1868 Vol. XXV Issue #33, p. 520

Reynolds' Newspaper accused London of coercing the crowds that greeted her, the latter going so far as to claim more than £10 000 was spent on hiring the applause alone.²⁰³

The opposing view was taken up by the conservative press, which heralded the reception as proof of an end of radicalism, just as *The Nation* had feared. The *Morning Post* stated that the 'old Irish humour' had returned to the island, forcing Fenian issues to yield.²⁰⁴ Subsequent articles took on a more artistic tone when describing a "midnight of conspiracy and revolt" giving way to a season of royal smiles and popular acclamation.²⁰⁵ The *Belfast Newsletter* rang to the same tune when printing that the visit, and the reception it received, were a strong rebuke of those who would coax rebellious behaviour and attempt to reopen old wounds.²⁰⁶ Regardless of what was being printed in March and early April of 1868 then, there were clear political ramifications to this royal visit, as far as the press was concerned. The defeat of Fenianism, whether erroneously inferred or actually achieved, was uppermost on the minds of journalists on both sides of the Irish Sea. Once again however, the radical press suffered a defeat, able only to offer unverified reports of bribery and coercion as an explanation for the welcome Alexandra and her husband received. Though correct in their assumption that the animated greeting would be used against nationalist interests, they proved unable to assert the 'true' feelings of frustration they described with reference to the events of the visit.

With the initial success of the visit certain to most journalists, it remained to be seen what Alexandra's role in the visit would be. She may have been pretty and she had certainly made an

²⁰³ *Reynolds' Newspaper* April 26, 1868 pg. 2

²⁰⁴ *Morning Post* April 13, 1868 pg. 5

²⁰⁵ *Morning Post* April 22, 1868 pg. 5

²⁰⁶ *Belfast Newsletter* April 21, 1868 pg. 2

impression upon her arrival, but would that be enough? Given the hopes expressed at the time of her wedding, and the enthusiasm reported when her coming to Ireland was confirmed, a joyous procession through Dublin was yet insufficient proof of her friendship. Perhaps aware of this, a trend developed in the coverage of the visit, looking to link Ireland and the Princess in more than just politics, but also personal affection.

Politically speaking, the *Times* noted that the presence of the Princess was aimed at combating notions of royal absenteeism and allow Ireland to feel more a part of the United Kingdom.²⁰⁷ This idea was given support by both the *Belfast Newsletter* and the *Freeman's Journal*. The *Newsletter* asserted that the Princess gave domestic completeness to the English throne, softening royalty by rooting it in family.²⁰⁸ The *Journal* praised her efforts, stating that her charms popularized the royal family in Ireland. What was more, she understood the people and how to approach the so-called 'popular heart', something other royals could not do.²⁰⁹ Such notions of peacemaking by the Princess, in service to the restoration of closer ties between Ireland and the Crown, were given further credence by depictions of Alexandra as a force for peace, as in *Punch* (see Fig.1).

²⁰⁷ *The Times*, Tuesday, Apr 21, 1868; pg. 8; Issue 26104; col E

²⁰⁸ *Belfast Newsletter* April 21, 1868 pg. 2

²⁰⁹ *Freeman's Journal* April 20, 1868 pg. 2



Fig. 1 Alexandra's Offering to Erin (April 18, 1868)²¹⁰

Offering a shamrock, whose four leaves spell 'love' and bound with a ribbon of truth, the Princess was clearly being presented as an agent of peace. More importantly that she gave this gift to Erin is also significant as she was often thought to be a more nationalist personification of Ireland, as opposed to Hibernia, who is often depicted under the care of Britannia. Since Tudor times, Hibernia was viewed as the virginal embodiment of Ireland whose fertility and youthful

²¹⁰ "Alexandra's Gift to Erin," *Punch or the London Charivari* Vol. LIV (April 18, 1868) p. 171.

beauty needed protection, especially from the enemies within. Therefore Hibernia was depicted as needing a husband to guard her, a role England, and later Britain, was willing to play. Erin meanwhile was often presented as a victim, often depicted in chains, weeping or with eyes downcast as seen here. Usually seen at the mercy of English politicians, most notably in the works of J. F. O’Hea, she was presented as the quintessential victim of British imperial governance.²¹¹ It was all the more telling then that this image saw Alexandra as able to offer the unbound, yet unbroken, Erin the love and truth she was so often denied, and perhaps mend the broken bonds between her and the Crown. Following in this vein, the *Cork Examiner* noted her sweet bows to the crowd, but also her countenance, which was reported as being pensive and sad, as opposed to radiant.²¹² This was interpreted as a sign of commiseration at the sight of a nation oppressed. Her kindness was inferred from these looks and a sense was given that her feelings were not simply put on, as some speculated. While it was often the outlook of the conservative and loyalist press that it was the Irish who needed to reconcile themselves to the Crown, these reports from the *Journal* and the *Examiner*, as well as the *Punch* cartoon, present Alexandra as a force for reconciliation on behalf of a wounding dynasty.

The press further reinforced notions of unity and rapprochement when presenting Alexandra’s interaction with members of the Catholic Church.²¹³ Interaction with church

²¹¹ L. Perry Curtis Jr. “The Four Erins: Feminine Images of Ireland, 1780-1900” , *Eire-Ireland* (Fall/Winter 1998 & Spring 1999) Vol.33 No. 3 & 4 & Vol.34 No. 1 pp. 70-102

²¹² “The Royal Visit to Ireland,” *Cork Examiner* April 16, 1868; No. 5728, p. 2

²¹³ The Church, as a hierarchical organization itself, supported the Crown and gave its blessing to the regnant sovereign. Most Catholics were monarchists, and though some did pine for the long deposed House of Stuart and a Catholic Restoration, most were much more realistic. Irish republicanism, such as it existed at the time, drew its roots to Presbyterian thought and French anti-clericalism and was therefore critical of Roman Catholicism. It would

hierarchy then had the dual benefit of further binding the Crown and the Church, and also acknowledged Catholicism in Ireland as the religion of the majority, especially important in a period leading to the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. So it was then that when the Princess treated Cardinal Paul Cullen with kindness and respect when they met at Dublin Castle in 1868, she was applauded by the *Freeman's Journal* and assured that her actions touched the hearts of many Irish Catholics.

Nay more, that Princess whose winning beauty and gracious mien are making Irish hearts her subjects indeed, shows special favour to the head in this country of the Church which is the Church of the affections of the Irish people; to his Eminence invitations are repeated, and the respect and favour in which the Prince and Princess of Wales have learned to hold this Prince of the Holy Roman Church are openly and nobly evidenced.²¹⁴

Later in the visit, when the Prince visited the National Seminary for Ireland at Maynooth, he received an address from the Very Reverend Doctor Charles W. Russell, president of the college. He expressed regret that the Princess was not able to attend her husband, but spoke of his admiration for her domestic virtue and the gracious manner in which she endeared herself to the people.²¹⁵ The words of the President, praising Alexandra's virtue and grace, heralded another facet in Alexandra's image as friend to Ireland, namely as a charitable individual concerned with the well-being of the poor and suffering.

Before the visit even got underway, the *Irish Times* had noted that the splendour and opulence of the British court did not distract the Princess of Wales from her duties as wife and

not be until the latter part of the 19th century that republican ideas took a firm hold in the minds of the Catholic masses. Tom Garvin, *1922: The Birth of Irish Democracy* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1996), pp. 11, 23..

²¹⁴ "Our Royal Visitors and the Cardinal Archbishop," *The Freeman's Journal* April 20, 1868; p. 7.

²¹⁵ *Morning Post* April 24, 1868 pg. 5, *Belfast Newsletter* April 24, 1868 pg. 4 & *Cork Examiner* April 24, 1868 pg. 4

mother and that her conduct was to be emulated.²¹⁶ Yet, that motherhood would be spread wider and come to encompass more children than simply her own. This was especially seen in Ireland when the Princess visited Alexandra College in Dublin, where she was patron. Founded by Ann Jellicoe, and aimed at providing a university style education to women, it was the first of its kind in Ireland. In 1868 she spoke with some of the pupils and received an address from co-founder Archbishop Chenevix Trench.²¹⁷ The *Belfast Newsletter* reported that the girls at the college scattered flower petals at the Princess' feet when she exited her carriage, a show of affection that made Alexandra blush as she bowed in acknowledgement.²¹⁸ Later that same week, Alexandra witnessed a review by the cadets of the Royal Hibernian Military School.²¹⁹ The trainees were the orphans of Irish servicemen and the Princess was depicted laughing with them, especially as they fiercely marched to the tune of the British Grenadiers.²²⁰ Elsewhere, she was said to have charmed the youngest son of the Lord Lieutenant, Ernest Hamilton, who would write later that she won his heart with her gentle bearing and 'general loveliness'.²²¹ To the youth in Ireland then, Alexandra, only twenty-three at the time, was presented as something of a guiding light and a source of motherly compassion. Looking to instruct girls with the knowledge that would make them fit wives and mothers, and enchanting the families of the aristocratic elite.

Speaking in the aftermath of the landing, the *Pall Mall Gazette* was another paper that noted the Princess' reputation for deeds of charity and kindness, and that these acts justified the

²¹⁶ *Irish Times* April 13, 1868 Vol. X, p. 3

²¹⁷ *The Irish Times*, April 18, 1868; Vol. X, p. 3

²¹⁸ *Belfast Newsletter* April 20, 1868 pg. 4

²¹⁹ *Morning Post* April 22, 1868 pg. 5

²²⁰ *Belfast Newsletter* April 22, 1868 pg. 3

²²¹ Lord Ernest Hamilton, *Forty Years On* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1922), p. 18

warm welcome she received.²²² Charitable deeds would account for a considerable portion of the liberal nationalist coverage of Alexandra's direct role in the visit, and would continue to be a role she would be seen to occupy in future visits. In 1868, her visit to the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, established by the Sisters of Mercy in 1861, was a source of much praise for her. Her visit continued a trend of royal calls on such institutions; in 1849 Queen Victoria had visited the Royal Hospital at Kilmainham, while in 1861 a series of prisons were inspected by members of the royal family, including the Queen, the Prince Consort, and the Prince of Wales.²²³ In the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which also included coverage of the visit to the Protestant-founded Adelaide Hospital, Alexandra was represented passing books out to individual patients, certainly a kindly act.²²⁴ However, the pages of the *Freeman's Journal* presented a much more flattering and grateful account. It was noted that the Princess, still weak in the wake of her bout with fever, might be too fatigued to actually venture into the hospital. When she did, it was reported that the spirits of many of the afflicted were raised. One boy was said to have called out to her and, with a little help from the Prince, was able to see her. The *Journal* reported that her touch and kind words stimulated his spirit and affected a healing that no medicine was like to provide. The article expressed gratitude, and praise, that, in the midst of so many festivities, Alexandra had not forgotten her 'holy duty' of looking to the needs of the stricken.²²⁵ When the visit drew to a close, the *Pall Mall Gazette* printed a list of the Princess' gifts, donations made in parting to

²²² *Pall-Mall Gazette* April 15, 1868 pg. 8

²²³ James H. Murphy, *Abject Loyalty: Nationalism and the Monarchy in Ireland During the Reign of Queen Victoria* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), pp. 92, 126.

²²⁴ *Pall-Mall Gazette* April 25, 1868 pg. 8

²²⁵ *Freeman's Journal* April 25, 1868 pg. 3

schools, convalescent homes, hospitals and orphanages.²²⁶ All of this went some way to proving the truth of the *Freeman's Journal's* words when it reviewed the visit and claimed that the Princess had a heart that felt for the poor.²²⁷

The point was made over and over again that the love and loyalty paid to Alexandra by the Irish people was on account of her concern for them, even the most wretched. Alexandra was a living symbol of Ireland's tie to the Crown. In the eyes of many columnists, Queen Victoria clearly did not care for Ireland to the extent her daughter-in-law did, and in a time where many press organs painted Ireland as an outsider within its own country, the charitable acts played a dual role. Their publication did combat the notion of regal estrangement. At the same time though, these articles allowed Alexandra to be seen a friend as opposed to simply a token presence as some had labelled her at the outset of the visit. Those in the loyalist press depicted her as someone who had displayed deep concern Ireland and the Irish. The *Irish Times* summarized in this way:

It seemed as if the Irish heart, yearning for some more substantive object of its loyalty than an abstract Constitution or an absent Sovereign, had suddenly found a realization of its haunting hope in this bright and gracious Princess.²²⁸

There were those in Irish press who wished to cultivate a unique relationship between Ireland and the Princess of Wales in the hopes that she might prove to be a willing partner and a means of proving their respect for the Crown.

²²⁶ *Pall-Mall Gazette* April 28, 1868 pg. 7

²²⁷ *Freeman's Journal* April 27, 1868 pg. 2

²²⁸ *The Irish Times*, April 13, 1868; Vol. X, p. 3

With Alexandra's special place in Ireland touted in numerous articles, certain publications began discussing the topic of her having a more permanent place in Ireland alongside her husband. Since 1852, when the Balmoral estate and its original castle were purchased privately by Prince Albert, there existed an expectation in loyalist Ireland that it too would be integrated into the kingdom in this way.²²⁹ The beginnings of this trend toward a greater and more lasting presence for the Princess saw the loyalist press present Ireland as having a restorative effect on the Princess' fragile health. The *Pall-Mall Gazette* reported that she found the Irish climate to be hospitable, and viewed it as an advantageous change from that of England.²³⁰ At the close of the visit, and no doubt with the 'timid doctors' and their recommendations ever-most on their minds, the *Irish Times* claimed the Princess was now the picture of health after her brief stay.²³¹

That she might equate the scenic and pastoral beauty of Ireland with that of her native Denmark was postulated by the nationally-minded *Freeman's Journal* upon her arrival in Dublin.²³² The *Journal* was an avid supporter of a residence in Ireland for the Princess, asserting only days after her arrival that one would have thought she had spent her whole life in Ireland. The *Journal* freely proclaimed that Dublin suited the Princess better than her estates at Marlborough or Sandringham.²³³ That the heir and his wife were favoured guests was evidenced

²²⁹ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, p. 102

²³⁰ *Pall-Mall Gazette* April 21, 1868 pg. 6

²³¹ *Irish Times* April 25, 1868 p. 3

²³² *The Freeman's Journal*, April 16, 1868, p. 3

²³³ *The Freeman's Journal* April 20, 1868; pp. 2, 4.

by the assertion that Ireland preferred the company of the Prince and Princess of Wales to that of Queen Victoria.²³⁴

Regarding the establishment of an Irish royal residence, most newspapers expressed a feeling that it would be a beneficial addition. The most tepid sign of support came in a letter to the editors of *Reynolds' Newspaper* expressed some doubt that more royal visits to a regal residence would help the Irish situation, but conceded that it was possible. In any case, it was the newspaper's opinion that the Queen should pay for such an estate, since the Prince and Princess were doing her job for her.²³⁵

This more mild and skeptical approach would not do for more conservative publications like the *Spectator*, which stated that the splendour of monarchy must be supported and so the cost of an Irish royal residence should be borne by the government. Moreover, it felt that to have Parliament simply vote the Prince more money to establish a residence would rob the deed of any grace.²³⁶ The *Belfast Newsletter* claimed that a residence was needed now more than ever and declared that the Prince and Princess would surely agree, that the English people would not oppose, and it was hardly probable that the Queen would not sanction it. With a more consistent royal presence, the current disloyalty and disaffection would be removed and a new, better, order would be brought about.²³⁷ Such placid sentiments were best evidenced by a *Punch Magazine* cartoon from 1868 that showed the Prince and Princess riding out from their hoped for residence in Ireland (see Fig.2). While the royal couple exchange a loving glance, a crowd of Irishmen

²³⁴ *The Freeman's Journal*, April 15, 1868, Vol. CI, p. 4

²³⁵ *Reynolds' Newspaper* April 26, 1868; p. 2, 5

²³⁶ *Spectator* April 18, 1868; p. 2

²³⁷ *Belfast Newsletter* April 9, 1868; p. 2

smile and see them on their way. This image of relaxed and unprepossessing royalty is indeed well suited to the image of Alexandra as a more informal and personal figure. Not only a ravishing beauty, she conducted herself humbly and attempted to relate to her subjects.



Fig. 2: An Irish Balmoral or a Vision of 1869 (May 2, 1868)²³⁸

Moderate nationalist papers supported the idea as well, but disagreed as to the precise benefits that would come from a regular royal presence in Ireland. It was not Irish rabble-rousing that was the issue to be solved, but rather English absence. The *Cork Examiner* made

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“An Irish Balmoral or a Vision of 1869,” *Punch or the London Charivari* Vol. LIV (May 2, 1868) p. 193.

the point that absenteeism in Ireland was a huge problem, all the more because it was tacitly sanctioned by royal family, who had spent so little time there. If the royals were to establish a residence, it would likely mean the return of landowners and greater attention from England for Irish issues.²³⁹ *The Freeman's Journal*, which felt certain that pro-residence supporters could count on Alexandra's vote, chose to see the issue of an Irish residence in the light of recent events in Europe.

Let us know what we are to do and it shall be done. Here His Royal Highness would learn the principles and practices of government to prepare him for the more exalted duties which, in the course of time, will devolve upon him, and from which he is excluded by his position in England. Here he would have all sorts of enjoyment and amusement and any amount of privacy, while the Princess would be as great a favourite as the Empress of Austria at Pesth.²⁴⁰

The example set in Austria-Hungary, where a political compromise in June 1867 created a dual monarchy and partially re-established the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Hungary with the Austrian Emperor as its King, was not lost on the nationalist newspaper, and the implication that Princess ought to use her influence to support the establishment of an Irish royal residence, thereby gaining more favour among Irish men and women, could easily be inferred. Whether a political call to action is also implied here, is less clear, but certainly the *Freeman's Journal* presented Alexandra as a means to gaining a sustained royal presence and one which, based on earlier articles, was preferable to that of Queen Victoria.

²³⁹ *Cork Examiner* April 17, 1868; p. 2

²⁴⁰ *The Freeman's Journal*, April 16, 1868, Vol. CI, p. 4 . The Empress Elisabeth, who claimed a deep affinity for Hungary, was thought to have influenced her husband on behalf of constitutional reformers and Hungarian nationalists. This line of thinking was further reinforced when, as a coronation gift, Hungary presented the royal couple with a country residence in Gödöllő, where Elisabeth lived primarily in the following years.

The Queen would eventually make it clear that she was content with Balmoral in Scotland, and did not wish for residences outside of those already in existence, for fear that the dominions of the British Empire might demand such favours.²⁴¹ The Earl of Kimberley decried such attitudes as short-sighted. He claimed that the monarchy was blind to the dangers posed in Ireland and too selfish to sacrifice personal convenience for the sake of the nation.²⁴² Such government intransigence and seeming regal apathy did little to convince the Irish that they were equal partners in Union and furthered arguments that Ireland was subject to colonial rule. Nevertheless, Princess Alexandra confessed to friends that she disliked Balmoral and would have greatly preferred a residence in Ireland. In part, this was due to practical concerns; the Princess' struggle with rheumatic fever had left her lame and therefore indifferent to the Scottish Highlands.²⁴³

The line between union and Home Rule sympathies blurred when both sets of journalists advocated for a more permanent place for the royals in Ireland. Both clearly wanted the heir and his wife to gain a greater appreciation of Ireland and establish closer bonds with its people, each envisioning their own ends. That the Princess was to be an agent in achieving this goal was clear in the words of the moderate national press, particularly the *Freeman's Journal*. While other papers dealt with the royal couple collectively, it was the *Journal* who pushed the idea that Alexandra would be happiest in Ireland, as it both reminded her of her Danish home and suited

²⁴¹ James Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland: 1800 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 101-2

²⁴² Hawkins & Powell ed., "June 24, 1871," *The Journal of John Wodehouse*, p. 261

²⁴³ Lady Geraldine Somerset's Personal Diary April 30, 1868 cited in Georgina Battiscombe, *Queen Alexandra* (London: Constable, 1969), pp. 95-96

her better than her English estates. In this way she was presented as an advocate and potentially deserving of the esteem already given to forward thinking royals like Elisabeth of Austria.

While there had been unity on this issue of a residence, loyalist and nationalist newspapers drew different lessons from the success of the visit. As the royal party was preparing to leave Ireland, the *Times* quoted an unnamed nationalist who claimed that if all the Irish could see Alexandra moving about the crowded streets of Dublin, as she had done for the last week or more, the government could withdraw its soldiers.²⁴⁴ Lord Abercorn would later write that the Princess and her husband left a good impression even in areas where it was not expected. He also cited an ‘undoubted authority’ who attested that several Fenian sympathizers were converted by the royal display.²⁴⁵ The *Morning Post* saw the entire affair as a learning experience, wherein the British began to understand the Irish better as a people fond of grand displays, shows and parades.²⁴⁶ Such an infantilizing sentiment was rejected by the *Anglo-Celt*, which published a story that claimed that the visit was not a styptic to stop the seeping wounds in Ireland. While the Irish people would continue to welcome the royals, and were happy they received a good reception, more substantive evidence of a change in attitude from Westminster was needed.²⁴⁷ The *Freeman’s Journal* chose a middle path, calling the visit a triumph that was as agreeable to the people as it was pleasant for their royal guests. It went further however, and dismissed the notion that the visit had simply been for the benefit of a single class, referring to the loyalist aristocracy, but had been for the benefit of the Irish nation as a whole. It closed by

²⁴⁴ *The Times*, April 27, 1868; pg. 9

²⁴⁵ Letter from Abercorn to Victoria April 25, 1868 RA VIC/MAIN/D/24/34

²⁴⁶ *Morning Post* April 25, 1868 pg. 5

²⁴⁷ *Anglo-Celt* April 25, 1868 p. 2

evidencing these sentiments by referring to the Princess' own concern for the less fortunate throughout the course of the visit.²⁴⁸

As an introduction to the image of Alexandra as a friend of Ireland, the 1868 had proven to be very aristocratic in flavor. The top-down befriending of Ireland was seen throughout the coverage of the visit, as commentary on individuals who were not high-ranking officials, or their children, tended to be collective. Even the home rule press characterized the permanence of the royal residence as a means of engaging landlords and returning English interest to Ireland. Though much had been made of the familiarity between Alexandra and the Irish public who greeted her, the newspapers clearly built her friendship toward Ireland from her side.

In looking back at 1868, from the standpoint of the conservative and unionist press, Alexandra's first trip to Ireland focused more on her use as a means of guaranteeing Irish obedience and fidelity. The Irish people were presented as being very enthusiastic in their welcome. Whether drawn from the Protestant Ascendancy, or the Catholic Church hierarchy, or even humble tenants, shopkeepers, and landlords, all crowded the streets to see her. This sort of unity played into conservative thinking that her presence alone was powerful enough to smooth over the rough relations between both halves of the United Kingdom.

The aim of the nationalist press, or that part which still viewed the monarchy as an agent for intercession, was to present Alexandra to its readers as a true friend within the dynasty. As a result, their coverage focused on the people that flocked to see the Princess, and how Ireland seemed suited to her. The moderate nationalist press purposed to situate her as someone who

²⁴⁸ *Freeman's Journal* April 27, 1868 pg. 2

was well-liked and liked Ireland well. Though action from government was their ultimate aim, these newspapers used the royal visit, as well as Alexandra's presence and seeming affection for Ireland, as a means of planting a seed in hopes it would germinate and grow to reach their expectations. The aim to use devotion to Alexandra as a means of displaying continued loyalty to the Crown, was in keeping with Home Rule aspirations. It was the legislative connection to Great Britain that Home Rule proponents wished to be rid of. They did not wish to sever the so-called 'golden link' of a united crown at the head of dual governments.²⁴⁹

The conclusions arrived at in 1868 would frame reporting on Alexandra and Ireland going forward and be waiting for her when she returned seventeen years later in 1885. The question that remained in 1868 from a press standpoint was whether or not Alexandra's presence was where her power lay or rather in her actions and the realization that she was indicative of a new attitude of royal friendship. For loyalists the visit of 1868 was an ending, proving that royal appearances, celebration, and lavish ceremony were the cure for the issues across the Irish Sea. With that in mind, the Crown should seek a greater visual presence in Ireland, providing a consistent check against nationalist fervour. Moderates saw the visit as only the beginning and hoped that it heralded greater closeness between the Crown and Ireland with the aim of opening a dialogue toward the remission of Irish grievance. Alexandra's friendly image certainly had a role to play in this.

²⁴⁹ Murphy, *Abject Loyalty*, p. 183.

1 Visit to Ireland – 1885

The royal visit of 1868 had been very successful and the press had, for the most part, portrayed Alexandra as an admirable figure in Ireland who ought to have a more permanent place there, bringing the monarchy closer to its Irish subjects. Yet, on the heels of this successful sojourn word arrived from Sydney of the attack on the Duke of Edinburgh and the supposed Fenian status of his would-be assassin.²⁵⁰ The *Freeman's Journal* quickly moved to distance moderate Irish nationalism from the heinous act and later dubbed O'Farrell a lunatic, thereby rejecting him as a champion of Irish national rights.²⁵¹ Nevertheless, the attempted assassination put a damper on the prospect of a return to Ireland for the Princess.

In 1869, the *Freeman's Journal* would use the Prince and Princess' reception of Cardinal Paul Cullen a year previously, and his sitting next to Alexandra at the banquet at Dublin Castle thereafter, as a means to deflate criticism directed at the Mayor of Dublin for offering similar pride of place to the Cardinal at his own banquet. To those who claimed the move was aimed at seeking favour with Catholics, the Journal answered that if the rank of the Cardinal was formally recognized in the presence of the future king and queen a year earlier, than the mayor was merely following precedent.²⁵² That Alexandra's gracious reception of Cullen had been part of setting that precedent, as was evidenced by the Journal's coverage, was further proof of the role the publication played in creating an image of openness and friendship around the Princess of Wales.

²⁵⁰ James H. Murphy, *Abject Loyalty: Nationalism and the Monarchy in Ireland During the Reign of Queen Victoria* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), pp. 167-68

²⁵¹ *The Freeman's Journal*, April 27, 1868

²⁵² *The Freeman's Journal*, February 17, 1869, p. 2

The following year, much was made of a proposed visit by the heir and his wife to unveil the Albert memorial in Belfast at Easter, but this was confirmed not to be the case by mid-March.²⁵³ As the 1870s began, the Prince initiated a friendly relationship with Prime Minister William Gladstone, who had been elected in 1868 promising to bring justice for Ireland. Albert Edward took instruction from Gladstone on the issue of the Irish Land Act of 1870, causing the Prime Minister to remark privately at the Prince's natural intelligence.²⁵⁴ Gladstone felt that the Prince's known moral defects resulted from a lack of responsibility and power. With that in mind, he wished to restructure the government in Ireland around the Prince as Viceroy.²⁵⁵ This plan was to achieve the tripartite aim of employing the Prince, ameliorating the Irish people by giving them direct contact with their future sovereign, and strengthening the Crown generally in an age of growing republican sentiment.²⁵⁶ When Queen Victoria refused this request in 1871, the Prince was compelled to agree with his mother or else create dissension in the royal house. The Queen claimed that she had learned the business of government at her accession and not before. Moreover she did not think her son would be suited to, what she termed as, the least of the three kingdoms, as he would be easily led into extremist sentiments.²⁵⁷ Privately however, the Prince confided in Gladstone that he was open to alternative proposals.²⁵⁸

²⁵³ *Belfast Newsletter*, January 6, 1870 p. 2; March 2, 1870 p. 2; March 11, 1870 p. 3 & April 11, 1870 p. 3; *Freeman's Journal* March 10, 1870 p. 2

²⁵⁴ The act gave tenants increased security through compensation for improvements made to a farm if they surrendered their lease, and compensation for damages in the case of tenants evicted for causes other than non-payment of rent. Lee, *King Edward VII* Vol. 1, p. 230.

²⁵⁵ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp. 134-135.

²⁵⁶ Magnus, *King Edward the Seventh*, p. 115.

²⁵⁷ Simon Heffer, *Power and Place: The Political Consequences of Edward VII* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1998), p. 24.

²⁵⁸ Roby, *The King, the Press & the People*, p. 171

That same year, the Prince visited Ireland with his sister, the Duchess of Argyll and his brother, the Duke of Edinburgh. The participants were chosen with purpose, the Duke to prove his lack of fear after surviving the Fenian attempt on his life, the Duchess to prove her public worth in a time when her annual allowance was becoming a source of controversy, and the Prince to aid his flagging image in the aftermath of the Lady Mordaunt divorce trial.²⁵⁹ The sympathetic and charitable aims of the visit were called into question before it began, when petitions for amnesty made to the Duchess were curtly rebuffed. A riot in Phoenix Park at the conclusion of the visit, seemed to confirm that many contentious issues remained unresolved and that more than royal figures were needed to solve them.

Alexandra was supposed to return to Ireland as early as 1871, but due to the recent death of her third son, Prince Alexander John, and a trip to Germany to restore her fragile health, she was replaced by her sister-in-law, the Duchess of Argyll. Disappointment was published in both the unionist and nationalist presses. The *Belfast Newsletter* reported universal regret in Ireland that the Princess would not be present, noting that she was a favourite among the people.²⁶⁰

It is a cause of sincere and universal regret that the Princess of Wales will be unable to accompany her husband. The Princess is the favourite of the Irish people, and she does not conceal her regret that she cannot on this occasion gratify her own wishes and their desires.²⁶¹

The *Times* printed the words of the Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Spencer, who was sorry to have missed the opportunity of seeing Alexandra, whose face, name, and influence acted on everyone she met. Spencer claimed that no one was better able to appreciate her noble character and

²⁵⁹ Murphy, *Abject Loyalty*, p. 182.

²⁶⁰ *Belfast Newsletter* July 1, 1871; p. 3

²⁶¹ *Belfast Newsletter* July 1, 1871; p. 3

beauty than the Irish.²⁶² The words of the mayor and council of Belfast were relayed by the *Morning Post*, also expressing disappointment at the Princess' absence and the hope that a permanent residence for the royal family might soon be established in Ireland.²⁶³ These sentiments were echoed the nationalist press when the *Freeman's Journal* acknowledged that Alexandra's presence was missed, especially considering that she was by far the most popular member of the Royal Family and possessed a great reputation among the Irish citizenry. The *Journal* therefore suggested that the government might do well to encourage such feelings, evidence that there were those in Ireland who wished to see the Princess more. Indeed, reports did indicate that, as gay as the atmosphere in Dublin was, it would have been much more so had the Princess of Wales been present.²⁶⁴ To all of this the Prince was reported to have said that the Princess regretted her absence, and, remembering the reception she received in 1868, she wished very much to return to Ireland.²⁶⁵

The newspaper coverage was very reminiscent of the longing for Alexandra expressed in 1865, including the Prince's assurances that his wife regretted her absence and the newspapers' pledge that the celebration would have been larger had the Princess of Wales been present. Now however, the Princess was no longer a stranger, and mutual affection between she and the Irish people had been convincingly presented by press accounts in 1868. This friendliness was used as a lever, allowing the *Post* to advocate for a royal residence in response to her popularity. In Ireland, the *Journal* could seize upon that popularity as well. After all, it was government

²⁶² *Times*, August, 3, 1871; p. 12

²⁶³ *Morning Post*, August, 4, 1871; p. 5

²⁶⁴ *The Freeman's Journal*, August, 1, 1871, Vol. CIV, p. 6

²⁶⁵ *Times*, August, 3, 1871; p. 12

officials who believed that the royal presence alone was restorative in Ireland, so why not make better use of a lady whom the paper acknowledged as the most popular member of the dynasty? Yet, both of these appeals would fall on deaf ears and it would be more than a decade before Alexandra was afforded the opportunity to return to Ireland.

Rumours of a return by the Prince and Princess of Wales continued throughout the following years. In 1873 they were supposed to, according to the *Freeman's Journal* and *Belfast Newsletter*, attend the Punchestown Races as guests of Lord and Lady Clonmell, with the former predicting a greater spectacle than was seen in 1868.²⁶⁶ Alexandra's ameliorating presence was evoked in the *Freeman's Journal* in February 1875 when covering the Lord Mayor of Dublin's banquet. The Mayor noted that the Princess inspired a uniquely Irish enthusiasm, and hoped it would not belong before the royal couple and their children returned to Dublin.²⁶⁷ A clue as to why rumours of supposed visits may have circulated was to be found in the *Freeman's Journal*, which postulated that erroneous reports of visits were used by certain newspapers to drum up sympathy in the press and that their eventual 'cancellation' heightened the call for more active participation by the dynasty in Irish affairs.²⁶⁸ This admission of the press' power of instigation, as well as its knowledge and willingness to employ it, is a powerful statement that compliments the notion of Alexandra's friendship being a press construction. If royal visits could be conjured from mere rumour to kindle the fires of royalism and calls for more active monarchy, how much

²⁶⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, February 7, 1873, p. 2 & *Belfast Newsletter* February 13, 1873 p. 2

²⁶⁷ *Freeman's Journal*, February 4, 1875, p. 6

²⁶⁸ *Freeman's Journal*, October 29, 1879, p. 5

easier would it be to create a royal friend for Ireland out of a princess known for her sympathies and warmth?

Yet, in the interval since Alexandra had last visited, the mood across the Irish Sea had changed drastically. Ireland was entering the so-called Land War waged between tenant farmers, backed by Charles Stewart Parnell and the Irish National Land League, and their landlords. Since the Great Famine, land reform and tenant's rights were being demanded by the Irish people.²⁶⁹ Though the Gladstone government had begun the reform process, the pace was too slow for some. The conflict escalated in 1879 in County Mayo when a decline in agricultural incomes led to calls from tenants for rent reduction. When landlords refused, rents were withheld and evictions were legally delayed or physically impeded. The legitimacy of the landlord system was questioned and identified with British infiltration, while rhetoric that denounced privilege among landlords gave the Land War movement a more democratic colour.²⁷⁰

Mass meetings and social ostracism became the chief weapons of the Land League, as well as an outbreak of unofficially sanctioned violence that spread throughout the south and into Ulster by the autumn of 1880. Parnell also attacked the indifference of the monarchy, criticizing the Queen's contributions to Famine relief in the 1840s and also the lacklustre efforts at amelioration which were being made at the present time. When the Duke of Edinburgh

²⁶⁹ Tenant right, already in existence in Ulster, allowed departing tenant farmers to receive compensation from their landlord for improvements made on the land.

²⁷⁰ Philip Bull, *Land, politics and nationalism: A study of the Irish Land Question* (Gill & Macmillan, 1996)

attempted to organize relief for the destitute in the west of Ireland, he was ignored by the Dublin Corporation who instead heaped praise on the relief efforts from the United States.²⁷¹ A hunting visit in 1880 by the Empress Elisabeth of Austria, a Catholic Empress in what was predominately a Catholic country, saw Parnell state that Elisabeth was always welcome in Ireland, as opposed to Queen Victoria.²⁷²

The government of William Gladstone instituted coercive measures to deal with the problems in Ireland, before issuing the Land Law Act of 1881.²⁷³ This move undercut some support and Parnell, the leadership were jailed, and the Land League was outlawed in October 1881. A year later, Parnell founded the National League, which twinned the agrarian struggle to the broader fight for Home Rule. The movement therefore drew a wider mix of supporters, with local branches of the league ostensibly representing local nationalist opinions in the selection of parliamentary candidates. Growth was slow from 1882-85 and the movement's newspaper, *United Ireland*, only began to turn a profit in 1884. In addition, electoral reforms in 1884-85, which resulted in the Irish electorate expanding from 226 000 to 738 000. This expansion necessitated a change in strategy on the part of the political factions within Ireland. While Parnell's Land League attempted to martial the newly enfranchised in the cause of Irish

²⁷¹ James Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 172-73

²⁷² Murphy, *Abject Loyalty*, pp. 203-205

²⁷³ The Act embodied the demand for the so-called 'three Fs'- fair rents, fixity of tenure and free sale. Land courts were empowered to fix a judicial rent for 15 years, upon application. A rent voluntarily agreed upon by landlord and tenant and registered in the court was also to be fixed for 15 years. On land purchase, the amount to be advanced by the state was increased from two thirds to three quarters of the purchase money, to be repaid over 35 years.

nationalism, conservatives tempted to appeal to the working middle class, while liberals began to take the notion of home rule more seriously.²⁷⁴

The year 1885 was very significant in the struggle between Parnell and the Viceregal administration in Ireland, not simply because of electoral reforms. Lord Spencer was attempting to make progress in re-establishing order in Ireland, his powers as Lord Lieutenant having been increased as a result of the Phoenix Park Murders.²⁷⁵ For all of this however, Spencer still felt as though Parnell and his supporters were cause for grave concern as they attempted to alienate Ireland from the executive and from the royal family. While the Lord Lieutenant proposed a major royal visit as a solution to the land issue, to Parnell's burgeoning National League, such a visit was perceived as a possible threat, best seen as being opposed by the bulk of the Irish populace.²⁷⁶

Therefore, the royal visit of 1885 was to be a defining moment for Alexandra's friendly image in Ireland and one that settled the debate begun in 1868 as to what type of royal presence she was to offer. Was she best served in the company of influential and high-minded men, renewing the governing body with a new and gentler image, or rather as an active force for actual change in the day-to-day lives of individuals? Greater political turmoil in Ireland necessitated a shift in perspective.

²⁷⁴ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp. 182-85

²⁷⁵ The Phoenix Park Murders were the fatal stabbings of Lord Frederick Cavendish (newly appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland) and Thomas Henry Burke (Permanent Undersecretary) on May 6, 1882 in the Phoenix Park in Dublin. The murders brought about a reorganization in Dublin Castle and the Metropolitan Police. A subsequent coercion act gave Spencer power to deal with Irish crime and disorder, including establishing non-jury trials and unlimited powers of search.

²⁷⁶ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland* pp. 182-85

The Anglo-Irish press replied to this visit with characteristic division. Most nationally-minded journals in Ireland questioned the motives of the visit, often seeing it as an attempt at propping up Spencer, which it clearly was. Conversely, unionist and conservative papers looked at things much differently, citing the crown's neutral stance and calling upon the Irish to be gracious, and enthusiastic hosts. While much of this seemed to be par for the course, the refusal by the Dublin Corporation to offer an address, alongside similar refusals by other towns and cities, caused the situation to shift. Now the contrary-minded viewpoint was looking to have genuine support, at least at a municipal level, and the prospect of an uncommonly chilly welcome for the royals seemed a genuine possibility.

The pages of the *Nation*, *Cork Examiner* and *Pall-Mall Gazette* fanned these flames by recording a series of public meetings which discussed the prospective visit. In Killarney, the Catholic Bishop of Ardfert and Aghadoe, Rev. Andrew Higgins, attempted to convince those assembled that a cordial welcome was due to the Prince, but was interrupted by those who hoped he would never be king, and who stated Ireland was not England. These outbursts were received with much applause and laughter.²⁷⁷ The *Cork Examiner* later reported that Killarney opted not to present an address, following the presentation of a petition signed by two hundred fifty people, including four commissioners and eleven poor law guardians.²⁷⁸ In Listowel, a resolution was proposed stating that the visit by the Prince and Princess amounted to nothing more than an attempt to convince the world that Ireland was satisfied with English rule and to suppress the

²⁷⁷ *The Nation* April 4, 1885 pp. 2-3

²⁷⁸ *Cork Examiner* April 6, 1885 p. 3

knowledge of the heinous deeds committed by the Lord Lieutenant.²⁷⁹ In Limerick, the *Examiner* reported a large meeting which protested the County Council's decision to present an address and challenged its authority in representing the people. Cries were heard, urging the Prince to stay home, and the mayor of Limerick said his city did not want the Prince to visit, suggesting he was coming to whitewash the crimes of the Lord Lieutenant.²⁸⁰ Meanwhile, in Cork, the *Pall-Mall Gazette* reported that the Mayor wished to observe neutrality when the royal couple visited his city, though some of his aldermen were inclined to disagree and join committees set to offer a welcome.²⁸¹ The *Guardian* quoted John Redmond, Member of Parliament for New Ross, as saying that those who exhibited flags, in welcome to the royal guests, would dye them with Irish blood if they were able.²⁸² With all of this in mind, the *Pall-Mall Gazette* confessed it was likely that the Prince and Princess would suffer for the sins of the Lord Lieutenant.²⁸³ The reception for the Prince and Princess, in the south of Ireland at least, was being presented as likely to be a dismal one, and despite their image elsewhere, the royals were seen to have no part to play in Ireland, other than perhaps a symbol of its bondage.

The *Anglo-Celt* took that theme one step further by choosing to castigate the royals directly. They presented that it was Queen Victoria who was the author of the visit, pushing Prime Minister Gladstone in an effort to support Spencer, who had served in the Royal Household from 1859-66. Viewed by the newspaper as having the attitude of a bad step-mother,

²⁷⁹ *The Nation* April 4, 1885 pp. 2-3
²⁸⁰ *Cork Examiner* April 7, 1885 p. 3
²⁸¹ *Pall-Mall Gazette* March 21, 1885 pg. 7
²⁸² *Guardian* April 8, 1885, pg. 5
²⁸³ *Pall-Mall Gazette* March 24, 1885 pg. 9

Victoria had wounded Ireland with her long-standing indifference. Indeed, the publication felt that United States President Grover Cleveland, who had Irish ancestry on his mother's side, was closer to Ireland than the Queen was.²⁸⁴ Later editions took aim at the Prince of Wales, noting that his presence was insufficient to deserve the attention of the Irish populace, which was composed of intelligent and reflecting individuals.²⁸⁵ Elsewhere, *Reynolds' Newspaper* published a letter to its editor which impolitely asserted that a 'portly middle-aged gentleman' and his wife were incapable of removing the deep Irish grievances.²⁸⁶

The two newspapers pitched the royal paradigm on its head by suggesting that it was the Saxe-Coburg dynasty that needed to earn Irish respect, rather than the other way around. Actions mattered, and if elements of the Irish population had been remiss in their duty to the Crown than the same could be said of the Crown in its duty to the people. This sort of reporting was also aimed at deflating notions like those propagated in 1868 by the *Morning Post*, that spectacle was the necessary ingredient in appealing to the Irish masses. On the contrary, as a discerning people the Irish paid close attention to what was and was not done by those who claimed to reign over them, and judged their character accordingly.

Yet, for the most part, the opposition newspapers were not as angry with the royals as they were with the government who sent them, evidenced by a tendency toward exonerating the Prince, and Princess, as they had little enough part in the political machinations of the visit. This idea was one employed by the nationalists, as Parnell attempted to strike a delicate balance;

²⁸⁴ *The Anglo-Celt* February 28, 1885 p. 3

²⁸⁵ *The Anglo-Celt* March 13, 1885 p. 2

²⁸⁶ *Reynolds' Newspaper* March 8, 1885 pg. 2

protesting the visit but respecting the visitors. The *Pall Mall Gazette* presented the views of Timothy Michael Healy, Member of Parliament for Monaghan, that the Prince was being misled by Lord Spencer, and that it was unfortunate that a man who had always maintained neutrality in England had become the plaything of factional politicians in Ireland. Healy, a member of the Irish Parliamentary Party, felt no antipathy toward Albert Edward, but rather compared him to a butterfly carried on the wind.²⁸⁷ The *Guardian* quoted Healy as saying that blame for current hardships should fall on Spencer, not on the Prince and his “amiable consort.”²⁸⁸ *Reynolds’ Newspaper* also presented the royal guests as misguided figures. Columnists urged that the Prince should come to Ireland as head of a Royal Commission aimed at the amelioration of Irish land disputes. Questioning what he could possibly learn from dinner at Dublin Castle that would be of any consequence, it was evident to *Reynolds’* columnist that the truth of the situation into which they were arriving was being concealed from the heir and his wife.²⁸⁹ The Prince’s ignorance was also bemoaned in the pages of the *Freeman’s Journal*, as was the unfortunate circumstance that had allowed him to be drawn into the visit. As far as the newspaper’s editorship was concerned, the Irish wanted to be able to welcome the Prince as they had in the past, but they felt that they could not under the circumstances.

Whether, as a matter of fact, in its inception the visit of their Royal Highnesses had any direct political object, whether it was intended as an attempt to rehabilitate Earl Spencer and to divert the Irish people from the struggle for self-government, back to the path of political subserviency to

²⁸⁷ *Pall-Mall Gazette* April 8, 1885 pg. 10

²⁸⁸ *Guardian* April 8, 1885, pg. 5

²⁸⁹ *Reynolds’ Newspaper* April 12, 1885 pg. 4

English parties, there is no doubt whatever that as the preparations have progressed the visit has assumed a distinctly political aspect.²⁹⁰

It was plain that he needed to realize the facts of the situation, and understand that Ireland, as a source turmoil, could only be transformed into something more stable through government concessions allowing the Irish people the full management their own affairs. The paper was quick to point out however that this involved neither the disintegration of the Empire nor the severing of any link with the Crown.²⁹¹

Though this reporting largely exempted the Prince and Princess from blame, it called on readers to look deeper and challenged the royals to do the same. If Albert Edward and Alexandra had been misguided, the newspapers hinted at the possibility that they had allowed themselves to be, like a butterfly carried on the wind. Both *Reynolds' Newspaper* and the *Freeman's Journal* pointed to the fact that the Crown had advisory powers in regard to legislation and, if the Prince and his wife might realize the extent of the Irish situation, ignorance would no longer be an excuse for their inaction.

The theme of self-respect was prevailed in the coverage leading up the arrival of the royal party. It was expressed in several newspapers that a positive and animated reception for the Prince and Princess would be a breed of dishonesty and a betrayal of Irish dignity. The *Anglo-Celt* wrote as much when advising its readers against becoming a 'bleating crowd' upon the arrival of the royals. Favouring a more dignified position of neutrality, the newspaper claimed

²⁹⁰ *The Freeman's Journal*, April 8, 1885, Vol. CXIX, p. 4

²⁹¹ *The Freeman's Journal*, April 8, 1885, Vol. CXIX, p. 4

that sycophantic loyalism represented nothing but noise.²⁹² The *Freeman's Journal* chose its words more carefully in stating that the Irish people had a duty to themselves beyond that which they owed to the Prince and Princess, though it wished that no discourtesy be shown to the royal guests.²⁹³ Both publications agreed with *Reynolds' Newspaper* that a hearty welcome would be a lie, denying the real state of affairs in Ireland and giving approval to the system of British domination.²⁹⁴

Now moderate publications were joining more ardent nationalist and radical papers in saying that the needs of Irish men and women came before those of the royal family. Moreover, the royals seemed to have been divested of the agency which the *Freeman's Journal* had given them in 1868 when the visit by the Prince and Princess provided an opportunity to showcase Ireland before the royal family.

More conservative organs still held to these ideas and saw the visit as retaining as much promise as its predecessor. The *Morning Post* forecast a cordial and satisfactory reception for the visit. Further, it printed that the preparations being made to receive the royal guests in Dublin were seeing to the financial needs of many tradesmen who were able to ply their trade decorating the city.²⁹⁵ The *Manchester Guardian* also spoke of preparations, noting windows along the royal route were being let for up to £3, and that hoteliers and drivers would reap the residual financial benefits of the visit along with their counterparts in the trades.²⁹⁶ Contesting

²⁹² *The Anglo-Celt* March 13, 1885 p. 2

²⁹³ *Freeman's Journal* April 8, 1885 p. 4

²⁹⁴ *Reynolds' Newspaper* March 22, 1885 pg. 4

²⁹⁵ *Morning Post* April 7, 1885 p. 5

²⁹⁶ *Guardian* April 6, 1885, pg. 8 & April 8, 1885, pg. 5

notions of regal indifference, the *Irish Times* printed an article which claimed that the Prince and Princess hoped all of Ireland would be able to enjoy their visit to the fullest extent. In the same edition, a letter to the editor urged a warm reception for them, and claimed that reform for Ireland might well follow a successful visit.²⁹⁷ In an effort to revive this familial image of the Prince and Princess, they were depicted in *Punch Magazine*, in an illustration dubbed “A Step in the Right Direction”. Alexandra was preparing for her visit by plucking a traditional Irish harp, keeping time as her husband danced a jig with a shillelagh over his head (see Fig.1).

²⁹⁷ *Irish Times* April 4, 1885 pg. 6

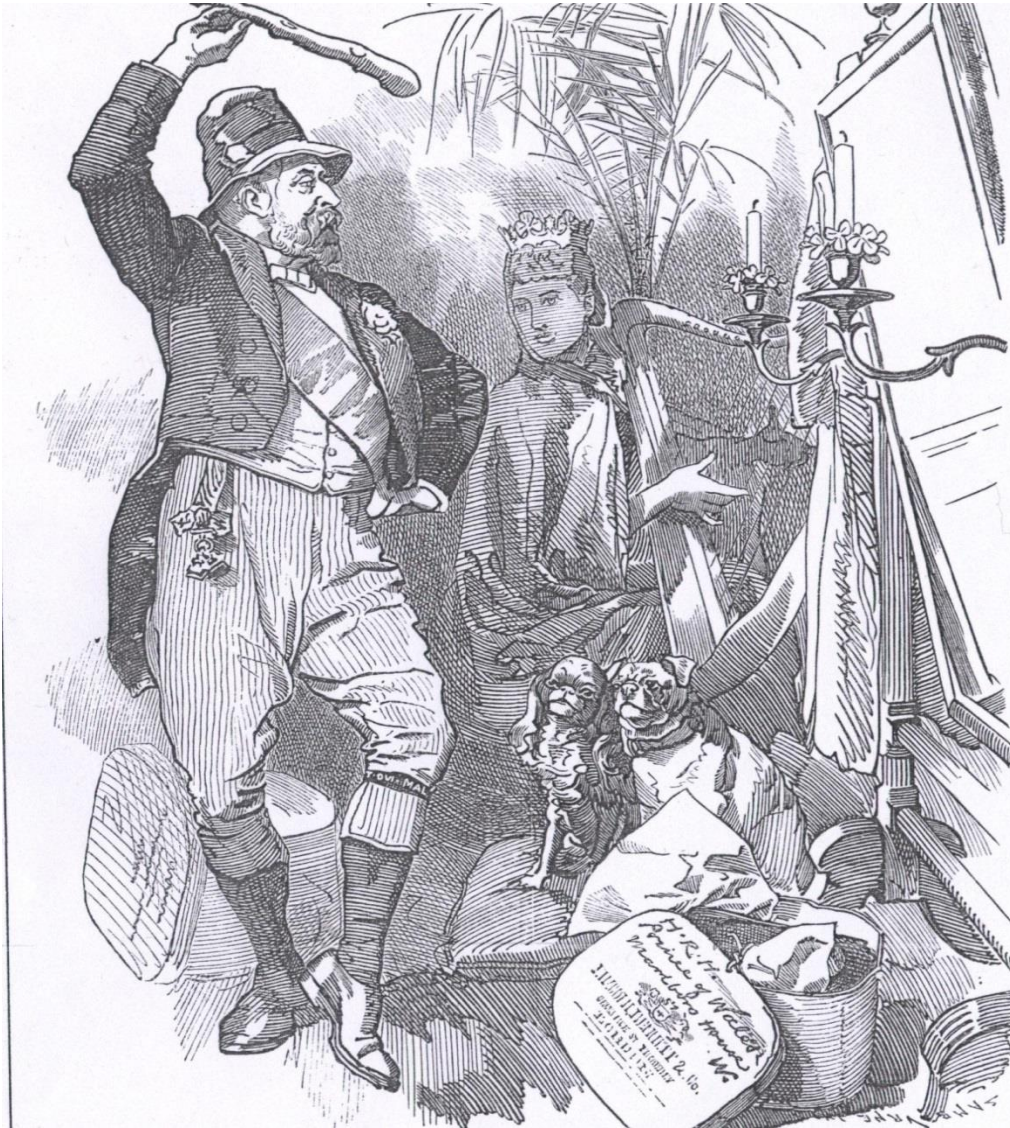


Fig. 1: A Step in the Right Direction (March 7, 1885)²⁹⁸

Though clearly remaining a background figure when compared to her husband, Alexandra and Albert Edward were working in tandem in Ireland once again. As much as this was meant to harken to the visit of 1868, and the hopes of renewed success as the royals showed off their Irish

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“A Step in the Right Direction,” *Punch or the London Charivari* Vol. LXXXVIII (March 7, 1885) p. 111.

flare, the depiction was likely also meant to show the Prince and Princess united as a loving couple, especially following the public nature of Prince's marital indiscretions in the 1870s.²⁹⁹ For the conservative newspapers then, the benefits of the royal visit were evident. Indirectly, royal spectacle promised jobs in construction and fabrication, while the promise of regal intercession was ever present. Unlike their more circumspect counterparts then, these publications continued to feel that Ireland, through its people, needed to prove it deserved the praise and friendship of the Crown, along with the commensurate benefits.

Of course, such proofs required a degree of loyalty from the Irish people and the conservative press was eager to show that the population was anxious to see the Prince and Princess once again. In early March, the *Morning Post* noted a national public subscription aimed at defraying the cost of the visit, reporting the High Sheriff of Cavan had already deposited £100.³⁰⁰ The *Belfast Newsletter* used the opportunity of the visit to doubly ingratiate the north of Ireland by saying that efforts in preparation for the reception of the royal guests in Ulster contrasted favourably with efforts in the south of Ireland.³⁰¹ Only days later did it note that Dublin had awakened to its own duty and begun to prepare itself.³⁰² The *Morning Post* chose to depict Dublin much more favourably by noting that most of the citizens were disgusted

²⁹⁹ Murphy, *Abject Loyalty*, p. 182. The Prince of Wales was called into court to account for his actions with Lady Harriet Mordaunt, who had named him as one of her lovers. The scandal of a prince being involved in such a matter was dreadful enough in itself, but the incident came at a time when a rise in republican sentiment was calling into question the usefulness of the monarchy. The Queen's self-imposed seclusion was now compounded by the criticism of the pleasure-seeking lifestyle of her heir. Despite the fact that Edward denied any inappropriate relations with Lady Mordaunt, he was not universally believed. *Reynolds's Newspaper* got to the heart of the issue by wondering if the Prince could be counted on to uphold his high office and wrote grimly at the prospect of his succession.

³⁰⁰ *Morning Post* March 10, 1885 pg. 5

³⁰¹ *Belfast Newsletter* April 1, 1885 p. 7

³⁰² *Belfast Newsletter* April 6, 1885 p. 8

with their municipal representatives who refused to offer an official welcome.³⁰³ The *Irish Times*, perhaps intending to show how isolated Dublin's denial was, cited 160 addresses that were being prepared across the island at the beginning of April. It also made note of the fact that tickets for the Citizen's Ball were growing scarce, evidence of the high demand to see Albert Edward and Alexandra.³⁰⁴ Speaking of the entire island in terms reminiscent of 1868, the *Times* noted that a fascination with royalty drew all true Irish hearts, even those unwilling to admit to it. Royal visits aroused loyalty, and removed disappointment and jealousy from among the Irish people.³⁰⁵ That such extensive proofs of Irish loyalty were necessary certainly spoke to the fact that it was being tested as it had not been in previous visits and the loyalist press was attempting to shore up the notion that a warm reception awaited the royal visitors.

Pre-visit reporting presented two opposing notions of something to be proven. The unionist and conservative press believed that it fell to the Irish citizenry to prove their loyalty in the coming visit, while their nationalist counterparts argued that it was for the royals to prove their value to the Irish people in this bleak period. Alexandra's role was already much more circumspect than it had been in 1868. Her status in Ireland seemingly established, she was an accompanying act meant to celebrate, distract, or bear witness, depending on one's political viewpoint. The visit that unfolded would see a shift in exactly what the Princess of Wales was supposed to represent. In the beginning she was clearly meant to evoke the depth of Irish loyalty, by the end however, she personified the depth of the Crown's concern for Ireland.

³⁰³ *Morning Post* April 7, 1885 pg. 5

³⁰⁴ *Irish Times* April 2, 1885 pg. 6

³⁰⁵ *Times* April 9, 1885 pg. 7

In the beginning, all went according to plan and the royal couple received a hearty welcome when they arrived in Dublin to begin their visit. The Earl of Spencer wrote to the Queen that enormous crowds awaited the royal yacht and that the visit brought a great influx in trade. Most beneficial of all, Spencer opined, was the opportunity afforded to loyalists both to display their devotion, and to display themselves, before the heir and his wife.³⁰⁶ Such sentiments were echoed by Sir Arthur Ellis, who had travelled with the Prince for nineteen years and confided to the Queen that he could not remember a better reception than the one Dublin gave to the Prince and Princess. The enthusiasm was viewed as unmistakable and Ellis deemed the success of the visit undoubted, and a threat to the cause of Irish nationalism.³⁰⁷ The purpose of the visit for these men was therefore made clear, and it confirmed the fears of nationalist press at the time. Spencer and Ellis both informed Victoria of the impact of the visit upon the loyalist/nationalist rift, going so far as to use those terms directly. It is arguable as to whether or not either man had much concern for the Irish people however, as Ellis remarked that, “an Irish crowd is certainly uglier & dirtier than any other.”³⁰⁸ To their eyes, the visit of the Prince and Princess was meant to reassure the position of Britain in Ireland by allowing loyal displays to overshadow the tumult of previous years.

In the wake of a very positive reception for the Prince and Princess upon their landing in Dublin, it appeared as though the conservative and unionist press had rightly judged the situation and that the Irish population was indeed very pleased at the arrival of the royal couple. As was

³⁰⁶ Letter from Spencer to Victoria April 9, 1885 RA VIC/MAIN/D/37/34

³⁰⁷ Letter from Ellis to Victoria April 9, 1885 RA VIC/MAIN/Z/455/7

³⁰⁸ Letter from Ellis to Victoria April 9, 1885 RA VIC/MAIN/Z/455/7

to be expected, the first target of their coverage was the National League who had prophesied calamity for the loyal reception. The *Morning Post* proclaimed that the ill intentions of the nationalists had been frustrated and that the loyal and respectable majority of citizens had dismissed self-styled patriots as miserable and petty, much like their grievances.³⁰⁹ The *Spectator* seemed genuinely impressed by the reaction; writing that there was more enthusiasm than expected and that, with no sign of hostility, the followers of Parnell were chagrined.³¹⁰ This attitude was visually summarized in the Punch cartoon “Ceàd Mile Fáilthi !!!” where Erin chastises a short and pouting nationalist ‘brother’ to join the celebration or give disgrace to the ‘family’.

³⁰⁹ *Morning Post* April 9, 1885 pg. 5

³¹⁰ *Spectator* April 11, 1885 pg. 1



Fig. 2: Ceàd Mìle Fáilthi !!! (April 11, 1885)³¹¹

From here, the conservative newspapers reinforced the ideas set out before the visit. The *Belfast Newsletter* asserted that though social conditions in Ireland may have changed, the deference of the population for their dignified guests had not.³¹² This was certainly a bold statement in proof of Irish loyalty and was followed days later by a statement in the *Irish Times* that the Prince had not come for an exhibition of royal splendour and pomp, but rather as a worker, looking out for

³¹¹ “Ceàd Mìle Fáilthi !!!,” *Punch or the London Charivari* Vol. LXXXVIII (April 11, 1885) p. 111.
³¹² *Belfast Newsletter* April 10, 1885 pg. 4

his future subjects.³¹³ This was an able response to the letters printed in the Dublin paper before the visit, which had speculated that a warm welcome might lead to royal intercession as it pertained to Irish grievances. The unionist and conservative press was driving home the points that had been previously made that one could catch more flies, even windblown butterflies, with honey.

The more nationally-minded *Cork Examiner* characterized things much differently, and looked to strike a balance and emphasize the moderate themes of respectful neutrality and missed opportunities. It claimed that the visit was not greeted with the great outburst of feeling which had characterized other royal arrivals, but neither had it been the scene of anything resembling discourtesy or rudeness to the royal guests. Moreover, it blamed the Prince for not taking advantage of the loyalists who did greet him. It was reported that the Kingstown Town Commission offered a loyal address and received a written reply in response. Elsewhere, the Dublin Citizen's Committee called for a royal residence in its own address, but received no acknowledgement in the Prince's reply.³¹⁴ The visit was presented in its opening moments as being unoriginal. The Prince was following instructions, or simply was too frightened to deviate. In either case, he was not acting as an independent agent, and therefore was pleasing no one.

More strident journals sought to explain away the rapturous reception through suggestion that the crowds who hailed the royals were not actually Irish. This resulted in debate within the press. The *Anglo-Celt* printed that only sight-seers were cheering, while most of those along the streets observed a respectful silence, which was characterized as being of greater worth than the

³¹³ *Irish Times* April 14, 1885 pg. 4

³¹⁴ *Cork Examiner* April 9, 1885 p. 2

disingenuous display of the interloping loyalists.³¹⁵ *The Nation* claimed openly that the celebration was taken up by West Britons and not Irishmen.³¹⁶ *The Freeman's Journal* agreed with this interpretation, noting that Dublin's support for the English Ascendancy was the result of an element best characterized as being not wholly Irish.³¹⁷ The unionist press hit back however, the *Belfast Newsletter* printing that those assembled to welcome the royal pair were drawn from the humbler classes and that Dublin's true spirit, too long repressed by Irish nationalist agitators, had finally broken loose.³¹⁸ The editors of the *Irish Times* felt very much the same, noting sincere rejoicing and brushing aside any thought of coercion by stating that the people were not acting for any personal gain. Columnists conceded that the assembled crowds disliked the tactics of the current vice-regal ministry but were loyal to the Crown, as it represented no party.³¹⁹

Alexandra herself wrote of these matters of identity, and seemed quite contented by the reception she received when she wrote to her son George on the third day of the visit. She noted that all was beautiful, and that she did not believe that any Irishmen wished her, or her husband, any harm. On the contrary, she claimed the crowds were friendly. Interestingly, the princess was quick to point out that any so-called 'miscreants' were from outside of Ireland, or more specifically Irishmen now living abroad.³²⁰ It was of course a very popular view that the typical Irishman was devoted to the crown and was acted upon by others who encouraged hostility in the

³¹⁵ *Anglo-Celt* April 11, 1885 pg. 2

³¹⁶ *The Nation* April 11, 1885 p. 1

³¹⁷ *Freeman's Journal* April 8, 1885 p. 5

³¹⁸ *Belfast Newsletter* April 9, 1885 pg. 8

³¹⁹ *Irish Times* April 8, 1885 pg. 4

³²⁰ Letter from Alexandra to Prince George April 10, 1885 RA GV/PRIV/AA 30/11

pursuit of political aims. Whether or not Alexandra bought into the fullest extent of this broad depiction of the Irish, it is clear that she wished to believe that, based on the reception she received in 1868 and in Dublin in 1885, the mass of Irishmen were pleasantly disposed toward the monarchy and dissenting voices were of negligible value.

Press reactions to Alexandra were very favourable regardless of politics, with the *Morning Post* making note of several welcomes for “Denmark’s Fair Daughter” conspicuously placed in several locations along the royal route to Dublin.³²¹ Wishing to reinforce the broad appeal that she enjoyed, the *Belfast Newsletter* reported that it was the humbler classes who gave the great shouts along the route, and were fuelled and spread by the Princess’ smiles in reply.³²² The *Guardian* wrote that “There need not be the least hesitancy in ascribing to the whole population a hearty feeling of liking for the Prince and of enthusiastic admiration for the Princess”.³²³ The *Freeman’s Journal* agreed, its articles speaking of how the labouring woman and the merchant’s wife were both anxious to welcome her upon her arrival and express their warm admiration for her beauty and queenly bearing.³²⁴ The press was quick to return to established themes when speaking about Alexandra, focusing on class unity and her popularity with women and the poor. This continuity was meant to reinforce the image of friendship, that the press had attempted to keep alive throughout Alexandra’s seventeen year absence. Even the *Freeman’s Journal*, who had called into question the representative nature of the royal reception

³²¹ *Morning Post* April 9, 1885 pg. 5

³²² *Belfast Newsletter* April 9, 1885 pg. 8

³²³ *Guardian* April 10, 1885 pg. 5

³²⁴ *Freeman’s Journal* April 8, 1885 pg. 5

in Dublin, still felt her role as a friend was important enough to make it was necessary to point out the concord that Alexandra inspired.

As in times past, the *Journal* made a point to make Alexandra a particular focus of the royal arrival. Indeed, in coverage leading to the visit, its columns had taken the Prince to task, but remarked that his wife was universally and deservedly held in the greatest respect. Now, upon her arrival in Dublin, articles painted a vivid picture, complete with the sun peering through the clouds at the moment Alexandra appeared on the deck of the royal yacht. She was also compared with a celestial body, a bright star who would receive welcome amidst even the darkest of surroundings.³²⁵ Clearly the newspaper presented Alexandra as a bright spot in a visit fraught with opportunities for misinterpretation from both the Crown and the Irish people. Her own correspondence indicated a belief that those who were rude in their welcome were not indicative of genuine Irish feeling and that she and her husband were in no danger while travelling. Furthermore, since the paper had made such a point to show Alexandra as an active figure on behalf of the poor, both in 1863 and 1868, perhaps they hoped for further displays of that concern and therefore placed greater emphasis on her role.

Alternatively, *The Nation* wished to de-emphasize the Princess' function and labelled her as part of a 'carnival of flunkyism', meant to delight the eye but leave the spirit discontented.³²⁶ There was indignation expressed at those who felt that the all that the Irish needed was the Princess' smile in a time when so many were dying due to their poverty.³²⁷ Action was what

³²⁵ *Freeman's Journal* April 8, 1885 pg. 4, 6

³²⁶ "The Week," *The Nation* April 11, 1885 Vol. XLIII Issue #15, p. 1

³²⁷ "The Week," *The Nation* April 18, 1885 Vol. XLIII Issue #16, p. 1

was being demanded once again by the ardently nationalist press, without any of the exceptions made by their more moderate counterparts. If the Princess, for all her attractions, could not offer the Irish people anything but smiles, waves, and her participation in empty ceremony, she was unworthy of whatever adulation she received.

Such harsh criticism was dismissed by loyalist newspapers, who continued to hail the visit as a success. The *Morning Post* went so far as to venture the possibility that this visit could well have been the most positive yet paid by the royal family to Ireland.³²⁸ The *Belfast Newsletter* claimed that the popularity of the royal party was increasing every hour.³²⁹ These papers also focused, in the earliest part of the visit, on how it was conducted in the upper strata of society. Accordingly, Alexandra was depicted as displaying a royal bearing among the aristocratic elite of Ireland. To these publications, the Princess was a source of regal support, her graceful approach and affable nature a sign of her friendship to Ireland.

The greatest concentration of this type of reporting centred around the Drawing Room held by the Princess at Dublin Castle on the evening and night of April 9. The *Pall Mall Gazette* spoke of a veritable galaxy of pretty girls, noting the many brides and debutantes who joined the one thousand ladies who met with the Princess, in an event which stretched until midnight.³³⁰ The *Belfast Newsletter* noted fifteen thousand presentations made to the Princess and took the opportunity to point out that Ulster ladies were present among those attending, giving further proof of that ancient province's unwavering loyalty. The paper made a point to say that this was

³²⁸ *Morning Post* April 10, 1885 p. 3

³²⁹ *Belfast Newsletter* April 13, 1885 pg. 4

³³⁰ *Pall-Mall Gazette* April 10, 1885 pg. 10 & April 11, 1885 pg. 8

the most brilliant ceremony in Dublin's history.³³¹ The *Morning Post* agreed in part, but restricted itself to claiming the event as one of the most attractive ever held in the confines of Dublin Castle.³³² As a focal point, the event was meant to further bind the Crown to the elite of Irish society and allowed the *Newsletter* to claim that the wealth and intellect of Ireland was following the royal couple, with the clear message that everyone else should fall into step.³³³ This was a dangerous step however, as it obviously confirmed what contrary minded journalists had been saying all along, that Albert Edward and Alexandra had come to answer the call of the landed classes; to prop them up through a show of regal opulence, which is clearly what the Princess' Drawing Room had turned out to be.

More pomp and ceremony was to take place the following day when Alexandra was granted an honorary doctorate in Music from the Royal University in Dublin. The *Times* had reported that the country at large agreed with the University Senate's decision that she should be honoured for her talents. Even though the surprise was lost when the presentation was announced beforehand, reports assured that it afforded both the Princess and the people much pleasure.³³⁴ The *Irish Times* echoed these sentiments and called the presentation one of the most interesting items in the visit and looked forward to the sight of the Princess in her cap and gown.³³⁵ Again, the idea of a grand spectacle was touted and placed Ireland in the subservient position, needing to do honour to the Princess.

³³¹ *Belfast Newsletter* April 10, 1885 pg. 8

³³² *Morning Post* April 10, 1885 p. 3

³³³ *Belfast Newsletter* April 10, 1885 pg. 4

³³⁴ "The Royal Visit To Ireland," *The Times*, Tuesday, Apr 07, 1885; pg. 5; Issue 31414; col B

³³⁵ *Irish Times* April 6, 1885 pg. 5

As to the event itself, Sir Dighton Probyn wrote to the Queen that the sight of Alexandra in her doctoral robes was a sight unsurpassed by any seen in Dublin.³³⁶ The *Morning Post* agreed, printing that the Princess never looked more charming, and that prolonged cheering accompanied the conference of her degree.³³⁷ Alexandra thought differently, writing to her son that she felt rather foolish, and declined to put on her fool's cap (mortar board) when she went onto the platform to receive her honours. That said, she took the entire affair with humour, joking that, "Papa (Prince of Wales) was also made a Doctor, but one of Laws – not such a grand one as me!!!"³³⁸ The *Cork Examiner* picked up on this jocular attitude from the Princess, noting that the novelty of the ceremony and the new title made her smile frequently throughout.³³⁹

It is interesting to note that in 1863 certain Irish newspapers had made much of Alexandra's learning and intellectual capabilities, yet when she was honoured by an academic institution the only thing the newspapers seemed to be concerned with was her appearance in her robes. Only the *Morning Post* and *Manchester Guardian* offered any deeper meaning to her actions when they transcribed the words of the Prince, who claimed that his wife had accepted the honorary doctorate to show her approval of those women who attended the university.³⁴⁰ The *Cork Examiner* also took time to mention that the Royal University was the first in the world to receive a royal lady.³⁴¹ While her advocating for women's education was certainly noteworthy, it was not the sort of advocacy that was being asked for by liberal and radical

³³⁶ Letter from Probyn to Victoria April 12, 1885 RA VIC/MAIN/Z/455/9

³³⁷ *Morning Post* April 11, 1885 p. 3

³³⁸ Letter from Alexandra to Prince George April 10, 1885 RA GV/PRIV/AA 30/11

³³⁹ *Cork Examiner* April 11, 1885 p. 3

³⁴⁰ *Morning Post* April 11, 1885 p. 3 & *Guardian* April 11, 1885 p. 5

³⁴¹ *Cork Examiner* April 11, 1885 p. 3

journalists. Yet, it did fit well with the paternalistic image of monarchy and Alexandra's maternal role in it, which characterized much of the press coverage of the visit to this point.

Newspapers had noted in 1868 that she was not preoccupied with the rich pageantry of her royal station, and rather focused on her domestic duty as wife and mother; conduct that was considered to be exemplary.³⁴² In the course of the 1885 visit her maternal image in Ireland was emphasized in press accounts. In much the same way as women had often been used as figures of welcome in 1868, children were placed in close proximity to Alexandra throughout her sojourn through Ireland in 1885.

The first child was, of course, her own, Prince Albert Victor, a young man of twenty-one and accompanying his parents on their royal visit. Conservative-minded newspapers clearly made mention his presence in the hopes that presenting a show of domestic harmony among the heir's family might dissuade those keen on protest. Letters at the time indicate that the young prince accompanied his parents on visits to the poorer parts of Dublin, learning a style of personal charity that served the monarchy well.³⁴³ The young prince was not a central figure in the coverage of the visit, but on a few occasions in the early days, he was placed at the forefront alongside his mother. The *Morning Post* recorded that the scores of white flowers, cast upon the path before the Princess upon her exiting the royal yacht, were gathered up by Albert Victor and presented to her.³⁴⁴ At the Artane Industrial School near Clontarf, the young prince and his

³⁴² *Irish Times* April 13, 1868 Vol. X, p. 3

³⁴³ Letter from Ellis to Victoria April 9, 1885 RA VIC/MAIN/Z/455/7

³⁴⁴ *Morning Post* April 8, 1885 p. 5

mother both offered compliments for the music performed by the school's choir & orchestra.³⁴⁵

The *Belfast Newsletter* claimed that it was when standing with her son that Alexandra had a profound effect on the Irish people.³⁴⁶

The Princess, who comes to Ireland for the second time, is needless to say the cynosure of admiration...as she stood upon the deck of the royal vessel to-day, with the young Prince Albert Victor beside her, who has just attained to man's estate, she kindled an affection which has never been extinguished in the hearts of people here, but which rather a long absence seems to have intensified.³⁴⁷

The coverage presented pointed to the Princess of Wales' son as representing the future of the crown. The *Newsletter* clearly depicted Alexandra standing next to her son, as if showing that the new generation of royalty shared her own well-published affinity for Ireland. The loyalist paper framed an image of dynastic continuity and deserved fealty. Such imagery was easily confirmed in 1887 when Albert Victor visited Ireland alone receiving the Order of St. Patrick, as his father had in 1868, and an honorary degree from Trinity College. Indeed much of the visit was planned with a mind toward the successful elements of his parents' trips.³⁴⁸ When he visited Belfast in 1889, newspapers even expressed a wish that he might marry an Irish lady.³⁴⁹

While the Princess of Wales never ceased to involve her own children in her affairs across the Irish Sea, it would be the children of others who provided the press' largest source of maternal imagery for public consumption during this Irish visit. The use of children in this way

³⁴⁵ *Guardian* April 13, 1885 pg. 6

³⁴⁶ *Belfast Newsletter* April 9, 1885 pg. 8

³⁴⁷ *Belfast Newsletter* April 9, 1885 pg. 8

³⁴⁸ James H. Murphy, *Abject Loyalty: Nationalism and the Monarchy in Ireland During the Reign of Queen Victoria* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), pp. 257-59

³⁴⁹ *Freeman's Journal* May 22, 1889 p. 6

certainly had a number of meanings. While it is certain that Ireland could be regarded as an orphan child of the empire, there was something more at work.

A visit to Dublin for the Princess would not have been complete without a stop at Alexandra College. On this occasion, the *Pall Mall Gazette* noted the enthusiastic cheers she received when visiting and the address she was presented.³⁵⁰ The *Cork Examiner*, which praised the College for having made use of its limited opportunities to do such honourable work, agreed, noting the time Alexandra took to interact with the young girls at the college, and stating that she had retained her charms and was numbered among the most beautiful women in Europe.³⁵¹ The *Belfast Newsletter* wrote in greater detail on the later point, quoting from the address as to the high and lofty character which Alexandra possessed and which the students of the college were to take as an example.³⁵² To these young ladies then, Alexandra was cast as something of a guiding light and a source of inspiration. Alexandra joined the College in its mission and looked to instruct these girls with the knowledge that would make them fit citizens. This call was taken up by the *Freeman's Journal* which approved of the visit as an event of interest to any who had a concern for women, especially in making certain of their access to higher education. That the Princess had given her patronage to the college was proof enough for the *Journal* as to her own interest in these matters.³⁵³ Her visit to the College then was not only used as proof of her laudable status or her exemplary character, but could also be represented as evidencing her matronly concern for the intellectual and academic well-being of Irish girls, present and future.

³⁵⁰ *Pall-Mall Gazette* April 10, 1885 pg. 10

³⁵¹ *Cork Examiner* April 11, 1885 p. 2

³⁵² *Belfast Newsletter* April 10, 1885 pg. 8

³⁵³ *Freeman's Journal* April 10, 1885 p. 6

Elsewhere, joyous acknowledgement of the visit came from a body of Dublin Sunday School children, who presented Alexandra with a loyal address. The royal couple was reported to have been very amused by how anxious the children were to see them and how there was much laughter and merriment.³⁵⁴ Numbers of children varied wildly in the conservative and loyalist newspapers, with the *Morning Post* claiming only six thousand in attendance, the *Irish Times* reporting twelve thousand, and the *Belfast Newsletter* fifteen thousand.³⁵⁵ This was also the case in regard of the address which was presented to the royal couple. It was reported in the *Irish Times* that the address singled out Alexandra and asked that she might return more often to Ireland.³⁵⁶ The *Morning Post* had it differently, focusing on that part of the address which expressed hope that the royals would leave the island with many memories, and be assured of the warmth of the hearts of Ireland.³⁵⁷ This scene, with the Princess surrounded by cheering and gleeful children, easily lent itself to maternal imagery.

Along with these more formal events, both loyalist and nationalist newspapers recorded countless interactions between the Princess and small children, most often involving the presentation of flowers. The *Morning Post* recorded four such presentations, one at Trinity College by the Provost's daughter, another on behalf of Dublin Philosophical Society from a pretty six year old child, a third in Lisamore, County Waterford, and finally in Killarney, where girls spread flowers on the path before her.³⁵⁸ The *Belfast Newsletter* added floral presentations

³⁵⁴ *The Irish Times*, April 22, 1885; Vol. XXVII, p. 6

³⁵⁵ *Morning Post* April 22, 1885 pg. 5, *Irish Times* April 22, 1885 pg. 6 & *Belfast Newsletter* April 22, 1885

pg. 5

³⁵⁶ *The Irish Times*, April 22, 1885; Vol. XXVII, p. 6

³⁵⁷ *Morning Post* April 22, 1885 pg. 5

³⁵⁸ *Morning Post* April 10, 1885 pg. 3, April 13, 1885 pg. 3, April 15, 1885 pg. 5 & April 17, 1885 pg. 5

by children at Fermoy and Kilmeadow, as well as by the young ladies of Cork.³⁵⁹ The *Freeman's Journal* included Miss Maud Shiel of Roscommon, a girl of six, who also gave flowers to Alexandra in tribute to her visiting Ireland.³⁶⁰ Children seen giving simple gifts and conversing with the Princess certainly added to the friendly image cultivated by the press. The unstained faith of a child in the wholesome values of monarchy, and a child's trust that those who wielded political power would discharge their duties fairly and deal justly with everyone complimented the already glowing reviews in the articles to this point. Alexandra's warm welcome was being made across classes and among all ages.

Fashion was another renewed focus, though not to the extent which it had been previously. Harkening back to 1863, when the Princess' wearing of Irish poplin was thought to auger well for the growth of the textile industry, the *Guardian* assured its readers that though the trend remained slow to catch on, this was not for lack of advocacy on the part of Alexandra.³⁶¹ Where once Alexandra's shamrocks had won her much and varied acclaim, now it was only the liberal *Pall Mall Gazette* and the nationalist *Freeman's Journal* who remarked on her fashion and its wink at the national audience. The former noted that her constant wearing of the national symbol was very popular with the people, though sometimes a touch too sombre, as at the Drawing Room at Dublin Castle.³⁶² Meanwhile, the *Journal* disagreed with this interpretation and referred to her fashions, shamrocks included, as being exquisitely tasteful and yet quiet,

³⁵⁹ *Belfast Newsletter* April 15, 1885 pg. 8 & April 17, 1885 pg. 5

³⁶⁰ *Freeman's Journal* April 13, 1885 p. 2

³⁶¹ *Guardian* April 10, 1885 p. 5

³⁶² *Pall-Mall Gazette* April 11, 1885 pg. 8 & April 13, 1885 p.4

something it clearly approved of.³⁶³ Here was seen a difference of opinion that could easily stand as exemplary for the entirety of the coverage so far reviewed. The English paper clearly wanted something more vibrant, since shamrocks and lively displays of fashion earned positive comment seventeen years before. At the same time the Irish Home Rule press saw in the muted tones of the Princess' wardrobe something useful. It was as though Alexandra's sombre fashions were a subtle nod to the more sombre mood in Ireland, the type of realization that certain columnists were demanding from the royal family.

To this point much of what had been seen of Alexandra in the press was carefully cultivated, whether visits, ceremonies or staged presentations by children. The loyalist press was clearly trying to build on the success of the 1868 visit and show that very little had changed in seventeen years. Alexandra was still a focus for attention from the Irish people, a source of beauty, grace, and inspiration. While she may not have been the subject of such intense female admiration as was the case in 1868, she was surrounded by children, an icon of motherhood and service, as a woman of her age ought to have been. Her friendship with Ireland was still very much based in the appeal she had with the crowd, whether young or old, and her actions represented as driven by a uniquely heartfelt concern.

In light of what came next, in Mallow and Cork, however, it became clear that the old formulas for success were not as applicable as they might first have appeared. An idea put forward in the *Pall Mall Gazette* best summarized the situation, the notion that set formalities would not suffice on this occasion and that a desire to learn and to see the Irish condition was

³⁶³ *Freeman's Journal* April 8, 1885 p. 6

what was being asked from the Prince and Princess, not posing and action without substance.³⁶⁴

The demonstrations that lay ahead of the royal couple were to accomplish two things. First, they called into question the entire positive reporting that had been put forward to that point, to the extent that accusations of blatant lying were made. Second, it was to show that the royal family and its loyalist allies were not the only people in Ireland capable of staging a show.

Alexandra and her husband met with vocal opposition, black flags, and jeering at Mallow and Cork. For these crowds there was no denying what side the Crown stood on, and it would be sufficient to send a message to London by means of the treatment given to their royal visitors. The Royal Hussars were required to defend the Princess and her husband from the coarser elements of the Cork protesters, who pelted the royal carriage with onions.³⁶⁵ The Lord Lieutenant was quick in his attempts to regain control of the situation, and salvage some benefit, when he wrote to the Queen. While the display was offensive, it was said to have arisen from only a portion of the populace; he noted that the clergy had given a very cordial welcome. Moreover he defended the visit to the South of Ireland by saying that, had it been abandoned, reports of disorder would have been seen to be triumphant over events which, on the whole, would have a good effect and strengthen support for the Queen.³⁶⁶

Reaction to the uproar in the south by the press was swift. Among the initial feelings was one that presented the loyalist press as having precipitated these displays with their disregard for the true feelings of the Irish citizenry. The glowing reports of the reception in Dublin were seen

³⁶⁴ *Pall-Mall Gazette* April 8, 1885 pg. 2

³⁶⁵ Lord Ernest Hamilton, *Forty Years On*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1922), p. 19

³⁶⁶ Letter from Spencer to Victoria April 17, 1885 RA VIC/MAIN/D/37/36

as creating the wrong atmosphere, making it seem as though the royal visit had indeed triumphed over the cause of reform and opposition to the vice-regal administration. As early as April 13, the *Cork Examiner* reported preparatory meetings in Cork which acknowledged press distortions and the apparent failure of the neutral position being advocated by Parnell.³⁶⁷ A letter to the editor, published in *Reynolds' Newspaper*, accused the London newspapers of clearly lying about royal reception, and the success of the visit, given the events Mallow and Cork.³⁶⁸ The *Anglo-Celt* attempted to explain the matter by pointing to the great degree of misinformation that had plagued the visit all along. In the first place, the Prince himself had been misled, as he was not told of the maladministration that characterized the governance of Ireland in his mother's name. In this way, the protests were meant to educate the royal couple as to plight of a people whose only escape for years had been to flee across the ocean. Secondly, the protests were, in the newspaper's opinion, to be remembered as being indicative of the true feeling of the Irish populace toward the British government.³⁶⁹

As regards the demonstrations themselves, the moderate Home Rule press was divided. The *Freeman's Journal* castigated the police who had used brutality to clear the streets and claimed that, though attracted to the Prince, the Irish populace at large remained attached to their political leaders and the political ideals they espoused.³⁷⁰ Alternatively, there was disgust from the *Cork Examiner*, which felt that the dignified stance of neutrality had been sullied by the actions of more violent and loud demonstrators. The *Examiner* pointed out that Irish quarrels

³⁶⁷ *Cork Examiner* April 13, 1885 p. 2

³⁶⁸ *Reynolds' Newspaper* April 26, 1885 pg. 2

³⁶⁹ *Anglo-Celt* April 18, 1885 pg. 2

³⁷⁰ *Freeman's Journal* April 14, 1885 p. 4

were not with the Prince and Princess and it was very possible that they had come with only kindly intent, motivated by an urge to conciliate.³⁷¹ The *Manchester Guardian* also presented divided loyalties in the Irish South, with crowds amassing on the Grand Parade outside Cork to sing “God Save Ireland”, but an enthusiastic reception from the citizenry within, which swept away feelings of apathy with cries of welcome.³⁷² Moreover, there were grim demonstrations at the stations of Tralee, Abbeyfeale, and Newcastle, as the royals moved through the southwest, but loyalty and respect at Ennismore, Adare, and Limerick.³⁷³

Taking a page from 1863, many loyalist and conservative newspapers dismissed the actions of the demonstrators, much as they had when riots had occurred in Cork over the royal wedding. Firstly, the demonstrations themselves were presented as having been of an inconsequential character. The *Morning Post* once again led the charge, labelling the contrary minded residents of Cork, who chose to hiss the royal guests, ragamuffins, much as they had two decades before. Shouts in protest were said to have been overwhelmed but cheers in praise of the Prince and Princess, and black flags were unnoticed, though curiously still reported.³⁷⁴ The *Belfast Newsletter* wrote in a similar vein, claiming that the hostile element in Cork was a minority of citizens and that their hisses, meant to upset the reception, were weak.³⁷⁵ The dismissal of the protests was aimed at robbing them of any power to impede what had been a successful visit to that point. Yet, the coverage itself betrayed these actions as being far from

³⁷¹ *Cork Examiner* April 14, 1885 p. 2

³⁷² *Guardian* April 15, 1885 p. 5 & April 16, 1885 p. 8

³⁷³ *Guardian* April 21, 1885 p. 6

³⁷⁴ *Morning Post* April 14, 1885 pg. 3, April 15, 1885 pg. 5 & April 16, 1885 pg. 5

³⁷⁵ *Belfast Newsletter* April 16, 1885 pg. 8

negligible. Moreover, the demonstrations themselves necessitated a complex reaction in the conservative press.

The next step in the loyalist press coverage was to assert the loyalty of Cork and its citizens. Not content with their reports that the antagonistic element was marginal, these newspapers attempted to showcase the displays of loyalty by the Cork citizenry. Every window along the thoroughfare in Cork was said to have been full, as onlookers vied with one another and waved their handkerchiefs to the Princess, according to the *Belfast Newsletter*.³⁷⁶ The *Morning Post* also noted the warm atmosphere and large crowds which greeted the royals, concluding that the reception at Cork was exceedingly satisfactory.³⁷⁷ The *Irish Times* also took this point of view, stating that the reception was enthusiastic and joined by workers, and that not even in Dublin were more flags being flown in welcome.³⁷⁸ A warm reception clearly improved the chances for royal intercession on Ireland's behalf, and sending the royals home disappointed was a poor strategy.

The final point in the loyalist press' refutation of the events at Cork and Mallow was to emulate the nationalist and radical presses and claim that an untruth had been bandied about in Ireland. For these papers however, it was Parnell, O'Brien and their nationalist brethren who had done away with truth, attempting to tar all of Ireland with their traitorous brush. The *Spectator* noted that where the residents of Cork were not hectored by ardent nationalists, the royals were well-received. The publication concluded that the party of order still held sway in Ireland and

³⁷⁶ *Belfast Newsletter* April 16, 1885 pg. 8

³⁷⁷ *Morning Post* April 16, 1885 pg. 5

³⁷⁸ *Irish Times* April 16, 1885 pg. 4

that discontent with the Union was not to be confused with displeasure with the monarchy.³⁷⁹ The *Belfast Newsletter* reasoned that the meagre demonstrations were attempting to force a situation, since the Irish people had ample time to reconsider their position, if in fact they had been carried away at the initial arrival of the royal guests.³⁸⁰ Using the reactions in the south as proof to the contrary, the paper left its readers with the conclusion that demonstrators were looking to create a false response and were simply provocative. The *Irish Times* took this thinking a step further by claiming that the entire affair had been staged. The nationalist organizers were lambasted as creating a theatrical production aimed at misrepresenting Irish feeling, thereby removing its claim to being a popular action.³⁸¹ Reports were made in the wake of the actions in Mallow that noted strong feelings of revulsion among the local people at news of what had taken place.³⁸²

The response in Cork and Mallow was also used as further fuel to stoke the argument for a royal residence in Ireland. The *Belfast Newsletter* did concede that whatever restlessness there had been in the south had been brought on by the absence of the royals, clearly implying that a more sustained presence was the remedy for such misbehaviour.³⁸³ Even before the visit, a letter in the *Irish Times* rationalized that the more time the Prince spent in Ireland the more aware he was likely to become of the issues needing government attention.³⁸⁴ Attesting to southern Irish support for a residence, the *Morning Post* printed that both the Earl of Kenmore

³⁷⁹ *Spectator* April 18, 1885, pp. 1, 7

³⁸⁰ *Belfast Newsletter* April 15, 1885, pg. 8

³⁸¹ *Irish Times* April 16, 1885 pg. 4 & April 17, 1885 pg. 4

³⁸² *Irish Times* April 15, 1885 pg. 4

³⁸³ *Belfast Newsletter* April 15, 1885, pg. 8

³⁸⁴ *Irish Times* April 4, 1885 pg. 6

and the Catholic Archbishop of Cashel hoped to see a residence established soon.³⁸⁵ Dighton Probyn, the Keeper of the Privy Purse, also wrote of how the issue of a royal residence remained the only way to keep the peace in Ireland, though it had yet to materialize.³⁸⁶ Even the nationalist *Anglo-Celt* agreed that the visit may have been better received if the royals had come to their own residence, instead of as guest of Spencer.³⁸⁷

By the end of the visit it seemed as though the call had increased, with the *Irish Times* stating that it received more letters than it could print in support of such a measure as would bind the Crown and people more firmly together.³⁸⁸ The *Anglo-Celt* printed a report by a committee on Irish Affairs composed of Liberal MPs James Bryce (Tower Hamlets), Charles Russell (Dundalk), William Summers (Stanleybridge), and Thomas Alexander Dickson (Tyrone). Their recommendations included the end of coercion and the establishment of a royal residence at the centre of a new administration in place of the extant vice-regal one.³⁸⁹ Faith in royal prerogative remained strong and the potential solutions brought by direct royal presence remained appealing. Once again it was the question of who needed to change their attitude that separated the papers as nationalists wanted a residence for the benefit of the royals and their perspective, while loyalists touted its ameliorating effect for the Irish public.

³⁸⁵ *Morning Post* April 18, 1885 pg. 3 Valentine Augustus Browne, 4th Earl of Kenmare, was Lord Chamberlain of the Royal Household, Lord Lieutenant of Kerry, and owned a 117,000 acre estate, predominantly in County Kerry. Thomas William Croke, Archbishop of Cashel and Emly, was born in County Cork and was a strong supporter of Irish nationalism, aligning himself with the Irish National Land League.

³⁸⁶ Letter from Probyn to Victoria April 12, 1885 RA VIC/MAIN/Z/455/9

³⁸⁷ *Anglo-Celt* April 11, 1885 pg. 2

³⁸⁸ *Irish Times* April 28, 1885 pg. 4

³⁸⁹ *Anglo-Celt* May 23, 1885 pg. 3

The Prince of Wales wrote to his mother that though she had likely read the newspaper accounts and received word from Ellis and Probyn, he would offer his own reflections. The Prince characterized the reception at Cork as having been mixed and noted that nothing exceeded to the enthusiasm of those Irishmen loyal to the crown. As for those more nationally minded, Albert Edward noted that they made themselves as disagreeable as possible and were composed largely of the lower orders, but did not venture into any description of their activities. He claimed that they had been marshalled by T.P. O'Connor, who was upset by the reaction the royal couple had received in Dublin and meant to counter it.³⁹⁰ Though Alexandra was apparently struck by a small coffin, which was launched at the royal carriage, she was later to remark that she preferred her trip through the rambunctious south of Ireland to her sojourn through the more loyalist north.³⁹¹ Neither the Prince nor the Princess gave any outward sign of being fazed by the reception they were given. While Spencer and others were quick to provide excuses and express their regrets, the royal couple took the entire episode in stride, at least in so far as they publicly expressed any reaction to it. Displaying this sort of regal panache won them the respect of both the government and of their ideological foes.

Queen Victoria, upon hearing of the commotion that prevailed when the Prince and Princess visited Cork, reflected that her son and daughter-in-law should have simply avoided going to such areas.³⁹² Such sentiments grant some credibility to those who would label her an absent figure in these trying times. Moreover, it speaks to a difference in strategy between two

³⁹⁰ Letter from Prince of Wales to Victoria April 19, 1885 RA VIC/MAIN/Z/445/20

³⁹¹ Sir George Arthur, *Queen Alexandra* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1934), p. 153

³⁹² "Saturday 18th April 1885," *Queen Victoria's Journals* (Princess Beatrice's Copies) Vol. 81 p. 142

royal mothers. As the great imperial mother, Victoria remained a cold and distant figure, recommending absence as a treatment to the issues facing Ireland. At the same time, Alexandra was present, however infrequently, and personally accessible to people, especially children, while also meeting the challenge of the protesters. As it had been in 1868, this difference could not have been lost on newspaper columnists.

Therefore, the demonstrations at Mallow and Cork had a clear impact on how newspapers reported the goings on of the visit from that point forward. The criticisms of 1868, that the monarchy's presence in Ireland was superfluous due to their lack of action, apparently still rang true in 1885. As the Epistle of James said, "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."³⁹³ With this in mind, both the loyalist and nationalist presses began reporting a series of encounters between the Princess and those she met along the way of her journey. These were chance meetings, but ones that afforded the newspapers the opportunity to show the Princess' well publicized friendship for Ireland in action. As the *Spectator* put it following the protests, loyalty was excited when those occupying the highest station identified with the feelings of the lowly.³⁹⁴ Though she may not have been in a position to ameliorate the sufferings of the Irish public at large, the newspapers now attempted to show that it was within her power to affect some change on an individual level.

This was a theme the press had experimented with previously in the midst of the Land War. The press seemed aware of the shift in Irish feeling at that time, and began reporting on the interaction between Alexandra and visiting farmers from Ireland. The *Belfast Newsletter* and

³⁹³ James 2:17

³⁹⁴ *Spectator* April 18, 1885, pg. 11

Freeman's Journal both published a letter from one such farmer, John Glover, remarking as to the reception he received from the heir and his wife and how touched he and his fellows were by the concern they showed for the plight of the tenant farmers. A reply, published in the same article, noted that the Prince and Princess were gratified to host so many of their fellow countrymen.³⁹⁵ It is worth noting that the letters also lamented the fact that the farmers delegation was unable to see the Queen, once again placing her at a distance. The *Freeman's Journal* would later refer to the royal couple as true members of the working class, in view of the busy public schedule they adopted in the 1880s.³⁹⁶ The message was meant to be clear, that the Prince and Princess were of the people and not standing removed from their concerns. Now, in 1885, it fell to the press to reinforce that notion, by adding a more active and personal component to the image of Alexandra, ensuring that her friendship with Ireland would no longer be quite so one-sided.

The first of these episodes occurred in the Gap of Dunloe, a narrow mountain pass in County Kerry, housing five lakes connected by the River Loe. It was here that the Princess met a blind fiddler, to whom she kindly gave a gratuity, according to the *Morning Post*.³⁹⁷ The *Belfast Newsletter* elaborated upon this tale.³⁹⁸

An old blind fiddler had taken up his stand midway in the Pass with his spouse and was vigorously playing to the gaunt mountain sides, when the Princess came along. Observing that the itinerant violinist was unable to see, she advanced to his wife and passed into hand a piece of silver, the proportions of

³⁹⁵ *Belfast Newsletter*, July 17, 1879, p. 3 & *Freeman's Journal*, July 16, 1879, p. 5

³⁹⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, May 26, 1882, p. 4

³⁹⁷ *Morning Post* April 18, 1885 p. 3

³⁹⁸ *Belfast Newsletter* April 18, 1885 p. 8

which seemed to delight the poor creature beyond measure, and in her quaint Kerry brogue she poured upon the Princess head untold blessings.³⁹⁹

The *Times* had it that the old man played Seán O Duibhir aè Ghleanna, a 18th century Gaelic song about the flight of the so-called 'Wild Geese' to France, Austria, and Spain, while his wife danced a jig. When they received the gratuity from the Princess, the elderly lady invoked a thousand blessings for Alexandra.⁴⁰⁰ The *Cork Examiner* placed the interaction within a more formal setting, the fiddler and his wife presented for royal review and summarily receiving payment for a job well done.⁴⁰¹ Oddly, the *Freeman's Journal* also recorded the episode but made no mention of the Princess. Rather, the paper described an exchange between the Prince and the fiddler wherein the former made a request that 'God Save the Queen' be played, but the latter confessed he did not know the tune.⁴⁰²

Regardless of who had the correct account of this meeting, it would appear that each variant holds a purpose and places the fiddler and his wife within the role of surrogates for Ireland. The loyalist press presented the couple in escalating states of merriment, overjoyed at the opportunity of meeting the royals and grateful for the Princess' generosity. Moreover, in dancing about, singing songs and invoking blessings in their colourful brogues, they behaved much like a quintessential, or stereotypical, Irish person might. On the other hand, the moderate papers presented the meeting as a much more circumscribed affair, with the Irish couple presented before the royals. The *Journal* went so far as to have the fiddler land a verbal jab over

³⁹⁹ *Belfast Newsletter* April 18, 1885 p. 8

⁴⁰⁰ *Times* April 18, 1885 p. 9

⁴⁰¹ *Cork Examiner* April 18, 1885 p. 3

⁴⁰² *Freeman's Journal* April 18, 1885 p. 5

the Prince, a show that he, nor perhaps Ireland as a whole, must shrink before the royal presence. Though the Prince was the subject of this last report, it was his wife in all other cases who was showcased as the prime agent, a depiction that meant to show that, though the motivations of some may have been suspect, hers were not; she had come to help.

While in Killarney, as a guest of Lord Kenmore, the Princess was afforded an opportunity to rest, and many were the remarks made about her rejuvenation following this brief repose. While resting, Alexandra was reported to have desired an Irish jig, and Kenmore's boatmen were happy to oblige her, accompanied by a regimental band, much to her enjoyment.⁴⁰³ Later, she took a guided tour of the region and complimented her escort on his skills.⁴⁰⁴ Here the newspapers were looking to demonstrate the Princess' interest in Irish culture and landscape, much as they had done in 1868. Here was presented a member of the royal household who was delighted by the showcase of Irish music and dance and keen to learn about the areas she visited. Such depictions were clearly meant to combat notions of regal indifference and speculation that duty, and not desire, motivated the royals to visit Ireland.

While in Belfast, the *Times* made note of the Princess' visit to the firm of Richardson, Sons & Owden's, purveyors of linen. While touring the operation, Alexandra took time to speak with an older lady who was employed at spinning in the damask room, as well as some other girls who worked in that part of the factory.⁴⁰⁵ She also visited the Ward Printing Company, where the proprietor's daughter, Mabel Ward presented her with a copy of *Speed Well*, and

⁴⁰³ *Guardian* April 20, 1885 p. 5

⁴⁰⁴ *Belfast Newsletter* April 20, 1885 p. 8

⁴⁰⁵ *Times* April 25, 1885 p. 7

bashfully engaged her with well wishes, much to the Princess' pleasure. Later, both the *Cork Examiner* and *Manchester Guardian* reported that she spent some time in conversation with the female students at Queen's College, asking many questions and paying particular attention to the graduates.⁴⁰⁶ Again, Alexandra was to be recognized as having the vaunted 'common touch', able to connect with her audience, especially the works, as had been brought forward years earlier. This presentation of closeness on the part of Alexandra was key to affirming ideas put forward by the press earlier in the visit, that the royal couple was coming to affect change, or at least to better understand the situation, rather than strictly for celebration and display.

During the same visit, the Princess learned of the illness of a Baronscourt churchwarden's daughter. She drove to the girl's residence and visited the child, speaking with her for a time. She was very upset to hear of the girl's passing the next day and immediately sent her condolences to the girl's parents.⁴⁰⁷ Lord Frederic Hamilton, who accompanied her on the visit, was later to remark on the nature of the gesture, and the eight miles the Princess travelled in an open carriage, braving the rain, in order to avoid disappointing a child she had never met previously, and of whose existence she was unaware of hours before.⁴⁰⁸

It was on account of events such as these that the *Cork Examiner* claimed Alexandra's sympathy won all hearts, as she found time to be charitable even on the busiest of days.⁴⁰⁹ The

⁴⁰⁶ *Cork Examiner* April 25, 1885 p. 2 & *Guardian* April 24, 1885 p. 8

⁴⁰⁷ "The Royal Visit To Ireland," *The Times*, Tuesday, Apr 28, 1885; pg. 5; Issue 31432; col E & Pall-Mall Gazette April 28, 1885 p. 7

⁴⁰⁸ Lord Frederic Hamilton, *The Days Before Yesterday* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1931), pp.101-102

⁴⁰⁹ *Cork Examiner* April 28, 1885 p. 2

Freeman's Journal added that these actions did more to raise her in the estimation of the public than anything else.⁴¹⁰

The Princess was attired in dark green Irish poplin – the same dress, in fact, which she wore on landing at Kingstown, and a very hearty greeting was accorded to her. As a matter of course, the cheers given her by far and away exceeded in number and enthusiasm those those raised for the Prince, and a simple act of womanly kindness on her part to a sick child at Baronscourt did more to raise her in the popular estimation there than any other consideration whatsoever.⁴¹¹

This image, one of commiseration and understanding was one that increasingly permeated the image of Alexandra as an imperial mother. Far from letting tragic events drive her from public view, she was to be represented as sharing grief with the Irish people. This connection, now even extending to the emotional level, was a powerful image created by the press, a union that was presented as extending beyond mere adulation and royal splendour.

As the visit ended, and the royals sailed out from Larne, there was consolation to be taken in the fact that Ulster had performed as expected and the closing of the visit was accordingly a merry one. Both unionists and nationalists looked for signs of victory from what had transpired over the preceding three weeks, the former focusing on the greeting in Dublin and Belfast, the latter on Mallow and Cork. As the visit was reviewed in its aftermath, the prognosis in the press also ranged from glowing to tentative to pessimistic. Indeed, the visit had done very little to change the minds of the news media from their initial forecasts weeks earlier.

The conservative and unionist tone remained congratulatory. Throughout the visit they had felt that it was the task of the Irish public to prove their loyalty and now they touted the

⁴¹⁰ *Freeman's Journal* April 28, 1885 p. 3

⁴¹¹ *Freeman's Journal* April 28, 1885 p. 3

successful showcase of Irish fealty. Both the *Belfast Newsletter* and *Morning Post* printed articles that spoke of loyalty throughout the country and the visit having been a continued success throughout.⁴¹² The *Newsletter* added that the entire affair had proven that Parnell's 'people' were not the people of Ireland.⁴¹³ The *Spectator* was slightly more circumspect, saying that the visit was a success on the whole and small hostile demonstrations were of no account, though nationalist propagandists would attempt to make something out of them. Further, a published letter to the editor stated that though the visit had been satisfactory, an effectual long-term remedy for Irish grievances was needed and that conciliatory legislation only emboldened enemies of the union. Therefore, true imperialists must adjust their focus from the Far East and maintain the empire at home.⁴¹⁴

A call to action was also what the liberal and Irish nationalist press wished to make, albeit to different end than their counterparts. The *Nation* reminded its readers that the pomp and spectacle of the visit would do little real service to Ireland and would likely act simply as a prelude to quenched hearths and ruined homes in places like Gweedore in County Donegal.⁴¹⁵ Other newspapers were more hopeful, the *Anglo-Celt* and *Freeman's Journal* both presented stories on committees resolving to advocate for more strongly for a royal residence, feeling that the plight of the Irish would be better known among the royals if they were more present, and advocacy might ensue.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹² *Morning Post* April 28, 1885 p. 5 & *Belfast Newsletter* April 28, 1885 pg. 4

⁴¹³ *Belfast Newsletter* April 28, 1885 pg. 4

⁴¹⁴ *Spectator* April 25, 1885 pg. 1, 11

⁴¹⁵ *Nation* May 9, 1885 p. 4

⁴¹⁶ *Anglo-Celt* May 23, 1885 pg. 3 & *Freeman's Journal* April 29, 1885 p. 6

It was also this branch of the press that saw Alexandra's friendship as having some role to play in this new, more active relationship between the Irish and the Crown. This was mostly on account of her attitude of concern which had been effectively displayed throughout the visit. The *Guardian* spoke of her hope that peace in Ireland might come with renewed prosperity.⁴¹⁷ The *Cork Examiner* went further, and noted that it was not for her hope of better days alone that she was to be admired. The Princess of Wales was a lady of sympathy, who thought more of others than of herself.⁴¹⁸ For the liberal and moderate nationalist press, the royal visit 1885 was about turning a corner. The message concerning Alexandra was no longer that she was a friend in the abstract, someone relatable and approachable in a certain context, now it was the Princess herself who was to be seen relating and approaching. She was still to be viewed as Ireland's friend at large, but now that friendship began to have a face.

⁴¹⁷ *Guardian* April 28, 1885 pg. 5

⁴¹⁸ *Cork Examiner* April 28, 1885 p. 2

1 Visit to Ireland – 1903

In the wake of the 1885 royal visit, it was clear that neither nationalists nor loyalists could claim victory, which did not stop the press on either side from asserting a measure of success following the royal departure. Nationalist columnists had claimed that their demonstrations had made an impression and believed that they had instilled in the royal couple a greater appreciation for the need for reform in Ireland. Meanwhile, the loyalist press saw the nationalists as having been divided among themselves, having failed to mobilize the lower classes in force, proving the pacifying effect of royal visits. Royal visits to Ireland would continue sporadically, but once again nearly two decades would pass before Alexandra returned.

In the election of November 1885, the Irish Parliamentary Party gained twenty-three seats at the expense of the Liberal Party, along with an additional four percent of the popular vote, finishing as the third party in the Commons. As the victorious Liberals under Gladstone did not achieve an overall majority, Parnell's party held the balance of power. This, along with Gladstone's conversion to the cause of Home Rule, saw the introduction of the Government of Ireland Bill the following year, which proposed to create a devolved assembly for Ireland which would govern in specified areas. The bill's defeat, which split the Liberal Party and ushered in a Conservative majority under Lord Salisbury in July, was attributed to Gladstone's secretive drafting, refusing to consult his ministers or Parnell.⁴¹⁹

The Conservatives remained in power for most of the next twenty years, presenting themselves as the only party which sought to preserve the Union. Indeed, Salisbury had

⁴¹⁹ Alan O'Day, *Reactions to Irish nationalism* (London: Hambledon Press, 1987), pp. 319-20

erroneously informed the Queen that Gladstone's Home Rule plan was far more radical than it actually was, sowing further discord between Victoria and Gladstone. For Irish nationalists the advent of Home Rule legislation ushered in a new period in their relationship to the Crown. Where, in times past, Parnell had freely attacked Victoria's reputation, it was now clear that such antagonisms would have to end, as an essential part of the new Home Rule campaign became demonstrating Irish loyalty to the monarchy.⁴²⁰

In the summer of 1887, Alexandra's sons, Prince Albert Victor and Prince George, visited Ireland as part of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee celebration. After receiving the Order of St. Patrick, as his father had in 1868, Albert Victor received an honorary degree from Trinity College, mimicking his parents who had done the same two years earlier. The *Freemans Journal* took a grim view of the visit, and of the Jubilee as a whole, questioning what it was that Ireland was meant to celebrate. Yet, it still spared space for a welcome offered by the loyal citizens of Dublin, which spoke of the Prince of Wales' generosity and assured the loyalty of the Irish toward him, and toward the gracious Princess of Wales. In reply, Albert Victor thanked the citizens' representatives for the remarks in regard of his parents and claimed that the Prince and Princess still held fond memories from their last visit and would be pleased to learn of the warm regards of their 'Irish friends.'⁴²¹ Later, when the Princes laid a foundation stone for the new wing of the Hospital for the Incurables at Donnybrook, cheers were raised for the Princess, alongside those for her husband and the Queen.⁴²²

⁴²⁰ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp. 205, 213

⁴²¹ *Freeman's Journal*, June 28, 1887 p. 5

⁴²² *Times*, June 30, 1887; pg. 5

The newspapers were kinder five years later, in 1892, when the Duke of Clarence died. His death occurred just as plans for both his marriage to Mary of Teck and his appointment as Viceroy of Ireland were under discussion. First contracting influenza, he developed pneumonia and died at Sandringham House less than a week after his 28th birthday.⁴²³ Newspapers reported disbelief in Ireland at the news of Albert Victor's death, along with great unrest and mourning.⁴²⁴ At this time of national loss, Alexandra was lauded in the *Irish Times* as an example of nobility in motherhood, and a figure that commanded the love of her people.⁴²⁵ The *Freeman's Journal* carried special coverage concerning the Princess of Wales' state in the wake of her son's death and mentioned his affinity for Ireland along with 'general and well authenticated' reports of Alexandra's sympathy for Irish men and women.⁴²⁶ Such inferences were further enhanced by the warm thanks given by the Prince and Princess to those who sent their condolences, and the rumours that their supposed sympathies for Ireland had been shared by their son.⁴²⁷

The following year, Prime Minister William Gladstone was in the midst of his second attempt to enact a system of home rule for Ireland. The bill was essentially the same as its 1886 predecessor, but granted certain intercessory powers to the monarch, especially in regard of advising the Lord Lieutenant in vetoing legislation. Queen Victoria left no question as to her opposition to the bill and would have accepted a petition from Ulster loyalists in opposition to it, but for the fact that her officially neutral position would necessitate giving equal time to Home

⁴²³ Theo Aronson, *Prince Eddy and the Homosexual Underworld* (New York : Barnes & Noble, 1995),

⁴²⁴ "The Late Duke Of Clarence," *The Times*, Tuesday, Jan 19, 1892; pg. 4; Issue 33538; col A

⁴²⁵ *The Irish Times*, January 16, 1892; Vol. XXXIV, p. 5

⁴²⁶ *The Freeman's Journal*, January 15, 1892, Vol. CXXVI, p. 4

⁴²⁷ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp.234, 235

Rule supporters.⁴²⁸ The Prince too did not support Gladstone's Home Rule initiative, couching his opposition in a fear that Home Rule in Ireland was incompatible with the preservation of the much-vaunted British Empire. Nevertheless, as a sign of continuing amity, the Prince banqueted Gladstone while the Bill was being debated in the House of Lords.⁴²⁹ The Bill was passed by the House of Commons in September 1893, however when it was presented to the House of Lords it was defeated.

In this trying time, a singular episode took place between the Prime Minister and Alexandra in which the Princess famously gave voice to her feelings concerning the Irish political situation by indicating her support for the Home Rule Bill.⁴³⁰ While such sentiments were unlikely ever to reach the ears of the Irish populace, they remained a notable vote of confidence in Gladstone's policies at the time, and a clear sign that the affairs in Ireland were not far removed from the thoughts and intimate conversations of the royal family. This sort of advocacy was spoken about briefly in 1889 when the *Freeman's Journal* published an article from the *Echo* in Southampton, stating that Alexandra, though publicly silent on political matters, was, in what it referred to as "the semi-privacy of home", very outspoken on Irish affairs and believed that the royal family neglected Ireland. Moreover, the article stated that she felt as though, had she and her husband been allowed to spend more time there, the attitude of the

⁴²⁸ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp.239-240

⁴²⁹ Lee, *King Edward VII* Vol. 1, pp. 241-245.

⁴³⁰ At Osborne, while at dinner with the Queen, Gladstone had neglected to kiss hands upon meeting her and despite repairing this faux pas before dinner, he was still subject to the cold distance of the Queen. Meanwhile, the Princess of Wales was as charming as her reputation suggested, while the Prince too was very gracious. Seeing this spectacle and contrasting Gladstone's treatment at the hands of Victoria and Alexandra, Francis Ponsonby joked to the latter that she must be a Home Ruler. Alexandra turned and replied that she was. Maurice V. Brett ed., "September 4, 1892," *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher* Vol. 1: 1870-1903, (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson Ltd, 1934), 161.

public toward the Crown would be markedly different.⁴³¹ This very blunt assessment seems out of character for Alexandra, whose kindness and charm shine through in the Osborne story. The tabloid nature of the *Echo*, and the relative singularity of this story's brusque depiction of Alexandra, seem to bear this out. That said, such reporting could not help but make an impression and further bolster press-created notions of Alexandra as someone who sought the best relationship between the Crown and the Irish people.

By this time however, the political scene in Ireland had become seriously marred by the fall of Parnell and the fracturing of the Irish Parliamentary Party. Since 1880 Parnell had had a relationship with a separated woman, Katharine O'Shea, who had borne him three children. When Parnell was named as a co-respondent in her divorce proceedings in 1890, the Liberal Party abandoned him and the Catholic Church condemned him. The Queen was jubilant at the fall of the Irish party's leader, feeling his supposed past wickedness was receiving its just punishment. She would remark upon his death in October 1891 that he was worthless and laid before him the responsibility for the lives lost in the course of his political endeavours.⁴³² The Irish Party split over the resulting political scandal with the Parnellite Irish National League under John Redmond and John Dillon's anti-Parnellite Irish National Federation. Following Conservative victory in the 1895 general election and the exclusion of Home Rule from the governing agenda, apathy among the Irish towards politics resulted from political disarray and disunity of purpose. The Irish Parliamentary Party was not reunited until 1900, under the leadership of John Redmond, over the issue of the Boer War.

⁴³¹ *Freeman's Journal*, March 22, 1889, p. 4

⁴³² Murphy, *Abject Loyalty*, p. 261

Three years after the failure of the Second Home Rule Bill, in 1896, George Cadogan, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland from 1895 to 1902, invited the Princess to two separate events. Though a Conservative politician, Cadogan sought reform in Ireland while holding the viceregal office. He supported the Land Act of 1896, appointed commissions to investigate education standards, and sponsored legislation meant to foster agricultural, industrial and technical growth in Ireland.⁴³³ In early 1896, Alexandra was invited to open the Irish Association's Annual Winter Sale, but after consultation with her husband was forced to decline as she would be entertaining a series of shooting parties with the Prince. She did, in written reply, confess that she would have liked to have helped, and that she followed with great interest the previous year's sale, which realized £5 000, and wished Lord and Lady Cadogan similar success in 1896.⁴³⁴ In June of the same year, she was invited to the Cadogan's residence in Newmarket, County Clare, but the impending wedding of her daughter, Princess Maud to Prince Carl of Denmark prevented her. Alexandra confessed to great anxiety about the wedding planning, and even greater unease at what she saw as the loss of her daughter.⁴³⁵ It was apparent that Cadogan was keenly aware of the esteem in which Irishmen held the Princess and was keen to use it to his advantage, however ill-timed his attempt may have been. For her part, Alexandra appeared contrite when explaining why she was unable to visit.

Political in-fighting in Ireland allowed the monarchy an opportunity to further ingratiate itself across the Irish Sea. As in decades past, the failure of nationalist initiatives proved a

⁴³³ *Dictionary of National Biography*, Twentieth Century, 1912-1921. Oxford University Press. 1927. pp. 84–85. Article by H.W.C. Davis

⁴³⁴ Papers of George Henry Cadogan (1840-1915), fifth Earl Cadogan, Parliamentary Archives, CAD 1057

⁴³⁵ Papers of George Henry Cadogan (1840-1915), fifth Earl Cadogan, Parliamentary Archives, CAD 897

catalyst to royal visits in the hope of resulting loyalist displays. The visit to Ireland by the Duke of York, as part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 1897, once again showed the extent to which Alexandra remained a part of Anglo-Irish relations. The Earl of Cadogan planned a bold country-wide tour for the Duke and Duchess. In an effort to conciliate Irish Catholics, the Duke's refusal of an address from the Orange Order was widely publicized. Inducted as a Knight in the Order of St. Patrick, and officially opening an Exhibition of Irish Manufactures, the visit provided opportunities to be contrasted favourably with previous visits, most notably that of 1885. Nevertheless, Cadogan attempted to imbue the entire visit with a less formal air, referring to the Duke not by his station, but rather as a welcomed guest. As his mother and father before him, the Duke felt an Irish royal residence necessary for cultivating the already abundant loyalty to the throne and the dynasty.⁴³⁶

The *Times* remarked upon the lessons of 1885, and that the 1897 visit was not meant as a partisan action. The lessons from Alexandra were certainly applied to the Duchess of York in the course of the visit, as the *Belfast Newsletter* made a point to remark how she had never looked more beautiful than when clothed in Irish poplin.⁴³⁷ Likewise, the *Freeman's Journal* recorded that, like Alexandra, Princess Mary's fashion sense made her a patron of Irish industry, as she sent for samples of lace and embroidery, hoping to purchase such quality work.⁴³⁸ Further evidence was seen in Princess Mary's portrayal at Alexandra College, taking an audience with

⁴³⁶ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp. 238, 277

⁴³⁷ *Belfast Newsletter* September 4, 1897 p. 5

⁴³⁸ *Freeman's Journal* August 28, 1897; pg. 6

honoured students and receiving bouquets of flowers in much the same manner as her mother-in-law.⁴³⁹

The Duke later paid tribute to Michael Connor, a postilion who had served his parents in 1885 before offering his services to the Duke and Duchess on this occasion.⁴⁴⁰ In Derry, arches invoking blessings for the Prince and Princess stood alongside those recognizing the ‘Sailor Prince and Princess’ and the voices in the crowd asking that the royal visitors might remain were reminiscent of those in Dublin in 1868. Moreover the elders of the Presbyterian Church spoke of the high place the Prince and Princess of Wales occupied in the opinion of the populace and how good it was to see their son.⁴⁴¹ Before leaving, the Duke assured the citizens of Belfast, who proposed a toast to his parents, that Albert Edward and Alexandra still held the city in dear remembrance and would be heartened to hear that the citizenry still recalled their visit with warmth.⁴⁴² The 1897 visit also reopened the issue of an Irish royal residence, which the Prince, much like his parents before him, seemed amiably disposed toward.⁴⁴³

Following the visit, Lady Cadogan received thanks from Alexandra for the kind treatment she and the Lord Lieutenant had shown to the Duke and Duchess. She credited their efforts in creating the success of the visit. She also noted that, though she would be travelling and unable to patronize the Annual Sale of Irish Industries on St. Patrick’s Day 1898, she wished to order

⁴³⁹ *Times*, August 27, 1897; pg.

⁴⁴⁰ *Times*, August 28, 1897; pg. 4

⁴⁴¹ *Belfast Newsletter* September 6, 1897 p. 6

⁴⁴² *Times* September 9, 1897; pg. 8 & *Belfast Newsletter* September 9, 1897; pg. 7

⁴⁴³ *Belfast Newsletter* September 8, 1897 p. 5 & Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp. 238, 277

some articles, demonstrating that her long-standing support for manufacturing in Ireland was not merely a newspaper construct.⁴⁴⁴

Queen Victoria visited Ireland for the final time in 1900 in what was presented as being more of a personal visit in an effort to soften her taciturn image in Ireland. The Queen's trademark, and decidedly common, mourning attire and her advanced age unwittingly aided this portrayal, evidenced by one spectator crying out “Sure, she is only an old body like ourselves!” Though the visit witnessed a grand welcome for the Queen in Dublin, the mass of security around the Queen was telling. In addition, meticulous management masked any sign of opposition, however significant. When the Archbishop of Dublin, and other members of the Catholic hierarchy, boycotted the visit, the Primate of Ireland was convinced to attend the viceregal banquet on the false pretext that the Queen would address the Church's grievances, thereby creating the image of Catholic approval for the visit.⁴⁴⁵ Victoria then ended her relationship with Ireland on a note of personal triumph but with many hidden tensions still present across the Irish Sea. The *Irish Times* claimed the capital had awakened from a dream, though the *Irish Daily Independent* dismissed such notions as sycophancy and defined the visit's success in terms of unionist enthusiasm and nationalist courtesy.⁴⁴⁶ As the first visit by the Queen in nearly four decades, the coverage of the event provides an interesting contrast between Victoria and Alexandra, and their images within the press.

⁴⁴⁴ Papers of George Henry Cadogan (1840-1915), fifth Earl Cadogan, Parliamentary Archives, CAD 1318

⁴⁴⁵ The Catholic hierarchy, and Archbishop Walsh in particular, was upset over the refusal to establish a Catholic University, as well as over-taxation and the denial of Home Rule. Moreover, attempts to organize Catholic schoolchildren in Protestant events put on by the Band of Hope in honour of the visit, raised the ire of the clergy. Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp.252-55

⁴⁴⁶ *Irish Times* April 26, 1900 and *Irish Daily Independent* April 19 & 27, 1900

The announcement of the visit, coupled with the command that Irish soldiers were henceforth to wear the shamrock on St. Patrick's Day, seemed to auger well for the success of the visit, and heralded, according to the *Cork Examiner*, the possibility that the dynasty and the political establishment in Britain might be reconsidering their neglect of Ireland. However, the newspaper added a hope that the reception by the Irish crowds in Dublin would not be misrepresented as they had been in 1885.⁴⁴⁷ Much was made of the successful visit the Queen had undertaken in 1849, especially by the *Irish Times*, which attempted to link the past and present visits in a lengthy article.⁴⁴⁸ The *Cork Examiner* also referenced the visit, but presenting it as the last visit by the Queen, ignoring the less formal 1852 and 1861 visits she had made. This allowed them to claim that, far from the thirty-nine year estrangement some newspapers mentioned, it had been more than fifty years that separated the Queen and her Irish subjects.⁴⁴⁹ With a backhanded compliment, the newspaper promised the Queen would be treated with courtesy and respect as befitted any "distinguished stranger".⁴⁵⁰ The *Freeman's Journal* agreed and contended that it was not to the Queen that Irish crowds gave welcome in 1900, but rather to "an aged and feeble lady".

This is assuredly no time for recriminations. But the fact is not to be forgotten that is nothing in Her Majesty's treatment of this country, nothing in her attitude toward the religious creed or the national aspirations of the people to evoke the devoted loyalty of the Catholics or Nationalists of Ireland.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁷ *Cork Examiner* March 8, 1900, p. 5

⁴⁴⁸ *Irish Times* April 6, 1900, p. 4

⁴⁴⁹ *Cork Examiner* March 8, 1900, p. 5

⁴⁵⁰ *Cork Examiner* March 8, 1900, p. 5

⁴⁵¹ *Freeman's Journal* April 5, 1900, p. 4

Quite unlike the reporting surrounding the arrival of Alexandra at any time in the past three decades, the nationalist press wished to characterize the Queen as an outsider who was, at best, given deference due to her advanced age and uncertain health. It was not politics, but the woman herself who seemed poised amidst the blame, and the shame, in the pages of these newspapers.

Though the reception Victoria received upon her entry was cordial, the *Journal* noted that students from Trinity College very nearly provoked a disturbance during an altercation with some homeless bystanders. Moreover, columnists claimed that the cheers for Victoria came from Belfast loyalists who travelled to Dublin once it was known that the Queen refused an invitation to journey to the north of Ireland. The paper also decried the so-called ‘cheap loyalty of wealthy supporters of the Throne who offered a holiday to their workers to see the royal entry, in accordance with the Queen’s wishes, but later refused to pay them.’⁴⁵² The *Cork Examiner’s* columns recounted a reception that was “on the whole, enthusiastic.” Though there were cheers, the columnist wrote that the majority of those who lined the route were respectfully silent and contented themselves with lifting their hats in a show of regard.⁴⁵³ A French correspondent, quoted by the *Freeman’s Journal* suggested that the former Lord Lieutenant, John Hamilton-Gordon, 1st Marquess of Aberdeen, had received greater ovations than that which greeted the Queen upon her entry.⁴⁵⁴ Now not only is the Queen to be seen as an outsider, but also a divisive figure, whose ceremony provoked disagreement and displays that were loyal in flavour but short

⁴⁵² *Freeman’s Journal* April 5, 1900, p. 4, April 11, 1900, p. 9 & April 18, 1900, p. 4

⁴⁵³ *Cork Examiner* April 5, 1900, p. 6

⁴⁵⁴ *Freeman’s Journal* April 11, 1900, p. 9

on true substance. The contrasts made with the unity provoked by Alexandra in 1868, and to a lesser extent in 1885, are easily made.

With regard to the political aspect of the visit, the Irish press was predictably divided. Nationalist papers seemed to sense an unsettling aspect in the Queen's presence. Commentary from the *Cork Examiner* pointed to missed opportunities and a sense that, though Victoria did have a measure of political authority, it was regrettable that she had never expressed a kind feeling toward her Irish subjects. As a result, though a loyalist minority would endeavour to send a message of fidelity to the Crown by way of their enthusiasm, nationalists would maintain their self respect.⁴⁵⁵

But the same consideration demands that Irishmen must not by any act or expression give justification for the puerile and ignorant idea that one whit of our national claim is abated in deference to this belated mark of royal regard.⁴⁵⁶

The *Freeman's Journal* put forward an equally damning sentiment when publishing the contents of a letter by "An Irish Nationalist", which claimed the Queen came not to right the wrongs of the past but to gather soldiers for the present.⁴⁵⁷ Meanwhile, more loyal accounts likely agreed with British clergyman Malcolm MacColl, who, in a letter to the editor, blamed any mismanagement in Ireland, or South Africa, on the Queen's ministers, while claiming that it was Victoria's will to visit Ireland and pay homage to Irish gallantry in the field. He regretted that such chivalry could not be found from those who attacked an eighty year old woman in capable

⁴⁵⁵ *Cork Examiner* April 4, 1900, p. 4

⁴⁵⁶ *Cork Examiner* April 4, 1900, p. 4

⁴⁵⁷ *Freeman's Journal* April 14, 1900, p. 5

of defending herself.⁴⁵⁸ These congratulatory sentiments were echoed by a correspondent with the *Belfast Newsletter*, who quoted the Queen's words to the Lord Mayor, speaking of valour of Irish soldiers and noted the love that joined the Queen to her subjects.

Her very first words on landing on our shores yesterday morning were words of blessing. "I pray," she said. "that God may bless Ireland with increasing welfare and prosperity." Need we say more as to the motives which have brought the Queen to Ireland?⁴⁵⁹

In later editions, the *Newsletter* would decry the spiteful reporting of its Nationalist counterparts, who were compared to birds defiling their own nests.⁴⁶⁰

Reinforcing notions of isolation and royal absenteeism, the *Freeman's Journal* also noted the security that surrounded the Queen, listing her guards, and noting that routes were chosen without prior notice. As a result articles noted that nothing of interest occurred on her informal trips about the city. It was also noted how the visit was used as an opportunity to suppress the *United Irishman* newspaper, by means that would ever have been considered tolerable in Britain.⁴⁶¹ The *Cork Examiner* added to this when reporting that large crowds were disappointed when the routes were changed without notice, and puzzled when it was discovered the new routes contained no scenic views or sites of historical interest.⁴⁶² Alexandra had been praised for her ability to appeal to the popular heart, and reports of her personal interactions were a key factor in the pivoting of coverage during the 1885 visit. Meanwhile, the Queen was made

⁴⁵⁸ *Cork Examiner* March 27, 1900, p.8

⁴⁵⁹ *Belfast Newsletter* April 5, 1900, p. 4

⁴⁶⁰ *Belfast Newsletter* April 19, 1900, p. 4

⁴⁶¹ *Freeman's Journal* April 7, 1900, p. 4 & April 26, 1900, p. 11

⁴⁶² *Cork Examiner* April 7, 1900, p. 5

to appear distant from her Irish subjects even when she was among them, walled off by security and fear.

Within the realm of fashion, the *Freeman's Journal* made a point to note that the Queen's tastes ran toward the monumental rather than the chic, and that her own only fashionable bonnet, worn in 1887 at her Golden Jubilee, had been altered by the Princess of Wales after she found it offensive. A correspondent was amused to report that during the course of the visit milliners on Grafton Street were selling wide mushroom-style hats, fringed in black, and "with an arch like the railway bridge at Clontarf", calling them 'the royal pattern hat' and 'the Victoria bonnet.'⁴⁶³ A deputation from the Irish Lace Depot were presented to the Queen at the Viceregal Lodge, where she purchased £200 worth of their wares. Of particular interest was the work of Mary Fleming, who made the christening cap of the late Duke of Clarence and the wedding shawl of the Princess of Wales.⁴⁶⁴ Again, the link with Alexandra is clearly seen in the *Freeman's Journal's* account. The Queen is outdated, and the best she can hope for, in an effort to remain relevant, is to associate herself with her daughter-in-law.

To this point the coverage of the Queen was less than complimentary, and loyalist papers attempted to combat the notion of a distant monarch by presenting Victoria as being much closer to the average population. The *Irish Times* conceded that there were likely grander receptions in afforded the Queen in her lengthy reign, but none were as genuine as she received in Dublin. Perhaps with the *Freeman's Journal's* words in mind, the article noted that the crowds paid

⁴⁶³ *Freeman's Journal* April 11, 1900, p. 9

⁴⁶⁴ *Freeman's Journal* April 26, 1900, p. 11

tribute to Victoria less as a great queen and more as an excellent woman.⁴⁶⁵ With this in mind, charity was a salient theme touched upon in the course of the visit. The *Irish Times* named the Queen as the instigator of a visit to children's hospitals by Princess Beatrice, the Duchess of Connaught, and her children Margaret and Arthur of Connaught, due to the Queen's long-standing regard for the saving work the institutions performed. It added, in reference to the laying of the foundation stone for the Dublin hospital, performed by Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, that at a time when so many of her soldiers were suffering the South African War the Queen's heart went out to any work of practical beneficence.⁴⁶⁶ Days earlier, both the *Irish Times* and *Belfast Newsletter* had made much of the thousands of children who were presented to her at Phoenix Park. The *Times* felt she must have been moved by the sight of them, while the *Newsletter* noted innumerable examples, without elaborating on any, of the special pains she took with children that proved the pleasure she took in them. The latter went on to detail an episode wherein the Queen gave a special reception to a group of children from Mayo who, arriving late, had missed the original reception.⁴⁶⁷ The *Cork Examiner*, along with printing a note from the Queen to the Lord Lieutenant on how pleased she was the reception she had received in Ireland, also added that £1000 had been given to be distributed among the Dublin poor, in whose welfare Victoria took an interest.⁴⁶⁸

With the death of Victoria in 1901, the crown was effectively distanced from the dark days of famine and hardship and the fact that the accession of Edward VII took place amidst

⁴⁶⁵ *Irish Times* April 5, 1900, p. 4

⁴⁶⁶ *Irish Times* April 9, 1900, p. 4, April 10, 1900, p. 4 & April 11, 1900, p. 4

⁴⁶⁷ *Irish Times* April 9, 1900, p. 4 & *Belfast Newsletter* April 9, 1900, pp.4-5

⁴⁶⁸ *Cork Examiner* April 27, 1900, p. 3

celebration, even in the radical centres of Limerick and Cork, provided ample evidence of the acceptance the new King enjoyed. Where once the King's past indiscretions were held against him, now they were chalked up to a frailty that humanized him. His aptitude as a sportsman was held up at this time as being in line with Irish attitudes, as was his enjoyment of and skill in horse breeding and racing. Finally, between five and nine Irish Nationalist MPs defied the party's strict regulation, and attended Edward VII's coronation in 1902.⁴⁶⁹

From the moment of his accession there were those who felt as though the hour of greater Irish liberty was drawing near. Irish Nationalist Member of Parliament T. P. O'Connor wrote to Reginald Viscount Esher of the King saying that he has more friends in Ireland than perhaps he knew, and that one day he would pass through the streets of Dublin to open an Irish Parliament. Esher showed the letter to the King, who described O'Connor's forecast as being 'curious.'⁴⁷⁰ Nevertheless, rumours of the King's pro-Irish feeling were seen to be given greater grounds following the appointment of the 2nd Earl of Dudley, a man of known pro-Irish feeling, as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland shortly after the coronation in 1902. Many in Ireland viewed this appointment as being a direct result of royal intervention, and accordingly became convinced of the King's sympathy for Ireland.⁴⁷¹ Another auspicious appointment was that of A. P. MacDonnell to the post of Permanent Undersecretary. MacDonnell, an Irish Catholic, had distinguished himself in the Indian Civil Service and was most welcome in Ireland. This was due in no small part to his being seen to give the King an honest appraisal of the situation across the

⁴⁶⁹ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp. 256-258.

⁴⁷⁰ Lee, *King Edward VII* Vol. 2, pp. 163.

⁴⁷¹ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp. 256-257.

Irish Sea. For instance, he is said to have told the King before his 1903 visit that the Irish were concerned over the security of their land and desirous of educational reform. This prompted the King to promise that he would come to Ireland with a Land Bill in one hand, and education legislation in the other.⁴⁷²

Following his accession, Edward VII had wanted to visit Ireland in 1902, following his coronation, but Irish nationalist enthusiasm over British military setbacks in the Boer War, combined with a bout of appendicitis, forced those plans to change. In April 1903 a visit by the King to Pope Leo XIII had a favourable impact on Irish feelings, propagating the notion that healing the breach with Catholicism was necessary before venturing to Ireland.⁴⁷³ Therefore the King and Queen prepared to embark across the Irish Sea in the summer of that year. The 1903 Land Purchase Act had allowed tenant farmers to buy out their landlords and own their land, effectively ending the property-owner's domination over their leaseholders. This legislation set the tone for what was to be another successful visit.⁴⁷⁴ Hope was expressed in *Punch Magazine* that the visit heralded a new age in relations between Ireland and the Crown:⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷² The Land Purchase Act of 1903, which provided a prologue to the visit, finished landlord control over tenants and made it easier for tenants to purchase land, facilitating the transfer of about 9 million acres up to 1914. The Act went so far as to provide tenant farmers with more rights than their counterparts in the rest of the United Kingdom. Lee, *King Edward VII* Vol. 2, pp. 167, 171.

⁴⁷³ James Loughlin, "Crown, spectacle and identity: the British monarchy and the Ireland under Union 1800-1922," in Andrzej Olechnowicz ed., *The Monarchy and the British Nation 1780 to the Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 125-126.

⁴⁷⁴ Roby, *The King, the Press & the People*, p. 299

⁴⁷⁵ *Punch*, July 22, 1903



Fig. 1: Sunrise (July 22, 1903)

Sails in the east had long been a harbinger of invasion for Ireland, but the *Guardian* explained that the ships depicted were arriving upon a fateful horizon.⁴⁷⁶

In Dublin, debate over the appropriate response to the visit led to heated exchanges between contrary-minded nationalists, according to the unionist press. The *Belfast Newsletter* published articles detailing how moderate nationalists in the capital were of a mind to present an address to the royal guests, but were prevented by the extremist minority in their movement, who packed meetings with their own supporters in order to force their agenda.⁴⁷⁷ The *Irish Times* also expressed distaste and printed that the refusal by the Dublin Corporation did not advance the

⁴⁷⁶ *Manchester Guardian* July 21, 1903 p. 7

⁴⁷⁷ *Belfast Newsletter* July 4, 1903 p. 4

nationalist cause in any way, but rather displayed that they had forgotten civility and kindness, so vaunted in the Irish character.⁴⁷⁸ This style of reporting was the heir to an old loyalist theme, that the real antagonists are a regrettable minority. Yet, in all previous conservative coverage the ‘nationalists’ had been the adversaries, plotting in secret to advance a radical agenda that the bulk of the Irish populace did not agree with, now however, the movement was subdivided into a majority who supported the Crown but not the government, and an uncompromising faction that appeared even more isolated as a minority of a minority. This fractured image of the nationalist cause reflected the nature of the Irish Parliamentary Party, which had divided over the issue Parnell’s leadership in 1890 and was, at this time, only slowly reuniting under the joint leadership of John Redmond and John Dillon, who themselves had differing views as to the efficacy of the current visit and the land reform legislation that preceded it.

The *Irish Times* pointed out that moderate nationalists had learned from the experience of 1885 and recognized that nothing could be gained for their cause from the use of rude coldness toward the royal guests.⁴⁷⁹ The *Pall-Mall Gazette* shared an article paraphrasing the thoughts of men on the street who felt that, since the Dublin Corporation had been negligent in their duty, the Dublin public was obliged to do more, resulting in decorations that, by comparison, made those for the 1900 visit by Queen Victoria look cheap.⁴⁸⁰ The *Belfast Newsletter* used the denial in Dublin to its own advantage when stating that while royal visits attracted more attention in

⁴⁷⁸ *Irish Times* July 13, 1903 p. 4, *Irish Times* July 14, 1903 p. 4 & *Irish Times* July 15, 1903p. 4

⁴⁷⁹ *Irish Times* July 21, 1903 p. 4

⁴⁸⁰ *Pall-Mall Gazette* July 22, 1903 p.3

Ireland than anywhere else, there was disloyalty in at least three provinces, meaning Munster, Leinster and Connaught.⁴⁸¹

The *Cork Examiner* attempted to explain the nationalist position and asserted that the King was held in high regard by the nationalist movement and was only being refused an official welcome as the Head of State, a denial that did not lessen the respect in which he was held.⁴⁸²

Interviewed by the *Manchester Guardian*, the Mayor of Dublin trivialized the presenting of addresses as a competition among beggars for titles, but affirmed that the Corporation felt no ill will toward the King.⁴⁸³ Even when the *Freeman's Journal* reported that the Newry Board of

Guardians voted down the presentation of a loyal address, on the grounds that Irish law must come from an Irish parliament, the article added that one and all agreed that no one wished any discourtesy toward the King or Queen.⁴⁸⁴ The protest was to be more formal than substantive,

an acknowledgement that, though the King had begun to right the wrongs of the past, there was yet more to be accomplished. Going further, the *Examiner* implied that the welcomes of loyalists were disingenuous and the King would see through such petty place-seeking behaviour.

⁴⁸⁵ In subsequent issues, no less than William O'Brien attested that the King, as a lover of constitutional freedom, would certainly understand the reasoning behind the Dublin

Corporation's refusal, and place it in its proper perspective.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸¹ *Belfast Newsletter* July 21, 1903 p. 6

⁴⁸² *Cork Examiner* July 14, 1903 p. 4

⁴⁸³ *Manchester Guardian* July 14, 1903 p. 7

⁴⁸⁴ *Freeman's Journal* July 14, 1903 p. 11

⁴⁸⁵ *Cork Examiner* July 14, 1903 p. 4

⁴⁸⁶ *Cork Examiner* July 18, 1903 p. 5

This ‘nothing personal’ approach was likely a descendant of the coverage from 1885 where the Prince and Princess’ ignorance was bemoaned. Now, the King was viewed as a much more conscious political actor, whose aim in Ireland was not bound in ceremony, and would therefore forgive such slights as being directed at the government he represented and not at his own person. The *Irish Times* noted the same when its columns pointed out that if King was kindly disposed toward Ireland at the present time, it was on account of determined Irish attitudes from 1885.⁴⁸⁷

Of course such conciliatory notions concerning the visit were not universal. The *United Irishman* took issue with the jocular mood and reminded nationalists of every stripe to remain vigilant in the face of the pretentious fidelity expressed in loyal addresses.⁴⁸⁸ It minced no words in claiming that anyone who would forsake the cause of nationalism and do homage to the royal couple was a flunkey or, at best, incapable of independent thought.⁴⁸⁹ Put simply, the nationalist cause was sacred and inviolable and the recognition of the King was a betrayal of Ireland.⁴⁹⁰ The strident nationalists therefore took a page from the loyalist newspapers of 1885. Confronted with a shift in the Anglo-Irish relationship, they returned to old rhetoric in the hopes of enjoying the success they had achieved in previous royal visits.

Despite commentary on the legitimacy of the visit itself, the judgment of the King personally saw the majority of the press present him as deserving of the warm welcome he was forecast to receive. The *Pall Mall Gazette* attributed this to the effect of the Land Purchase Act,

⁴⁸⁷ *Irish Times* July 4, 1903 p. 5

⁴⁸⁸ *United Irishman* June 13, 1903 p. 4

⁴⁸⁹ *United Irishman* June 13, 1903 p. 5

⁴⁹⁰ *United Irishman* June 20, 1903 p. 6

noting that the visit was sure to be politicized, regardless of the King and Queen's intentions, but that the passage of such necessary legislation had shown the good intentions and a sense of justice in England toward the 'sister island'.⁴⁹¹ The *Spectator* agreed and noted that England did not fully grasp the gravity of what land reform meant to Ireland's peasant farmers. It added that this visit by the King was also to be restorative as the dynasty had neglected the art of royal conciliation in past years.⁴⁹² *The Irish Times* was also quick to heap praise upon the royal couple, presenting the full itinerary for the visit and claiming that if the King and Queen were to fulfill all of the obligations set before them, they would ratify their reputation as the hardest workers in the dominions.⁴⁹³

The *United Irishman* felt much differently however, and described Edward VII as a commonplace old man.⁴⁹⁴ He was decried as a scandalous figure such that there was no question concerning the manhood of anyone who would grovel to him.⁴⁹⁵ Moreover, and returning to a lasting theme which the *Nation* was fond of, the publication asserted that King came not out of desire but duty. The newspaper speculated that he would likely become bored, and that his only real aim in coming was to demonstrate to the world that Ireland was conquered and had accepted the English yoke.⁴⁹⁶ In some respects, the questions of 1885 were as yet unanswered, was the King a conqueror or the friend of constitutional freedom? Now possessing

⁴⁹¹ *Pall-Mall Gazette* July 20, 1903 p. 2

⁴⁹² *Spectator* July 25, 1903 p. 5

⁴⁹³ *Irish Times* July 19, 1903 p. 4

⁴⁹⁴ *United Irishman* June 13, 1903 p. 5

⁴⁹⁵ *United Irishman* July 4, 1903 p. 5

⁴⁹⁶ *United Irishman* July 11, 1903 p. 5

the power and influence he had been denied as Prince of Wales, it remained to be seen how the King would employ them.

The royal cause received reinforcement just as the King and Queen were crossing the Irish Sea. Pope Leo XIII died at the age of 93, after having been Supreme Pontiff since 1878. In the week before the visit the *Guardian* published that there was a belief in Ireland that the Pope was fighting his own demise on the King's behalf, so as not to interfere with the visit.⁴⁹⁷ However dubious such notions seem, they testified to the extent to which the press wished to unify the monarch and the pontiff in the eyes of its readers. The King's kind words in recognition of the sad occasion became a sound beginning to his visit, and one that touched the hearts of many Roman Catholics in Ireland. Though the *United Irishman* had spoken against the notion of the King's sympathy for Catholics, claiming that the visit to the Vatican had been calculated as a means to 'invade' Ireland, this was not the attitude taken by the bulk of newspapers.⁴⁹⁸ The King's sympathy with the Irish over the Pope's death was, in the columns of the *Pall-Mall Gazette* and *Spectator*, said to have further bound the King to his people.⁴⁹⁹ Famously, a young Irish girl was said to have claimed, "I am so glad that we may love the King now because he spoke so nicely about the Pope."⁵⁰⁰ The *Freeman's Journal* gave special attention to the condolences the King sent to Cardinal Michael Logue, instructing him to extend his sympathies to the entire College of Cardinals in Rome. This action was said to have

⁴⁹⁷ *Manchester Guardian* July 21, 1903 p. 7

⁴⁹⁸ *United Irishman* June 27, 1903 p. 4

⁴⁹⁹ *Pall-Mall Gazette* July 21, 1903 p. 2 & *Spectator* July 25, 1903 p. 1

⁵⁰⁰ Loughlin, "Crown, spectacle and identity," in Olechnowicz ed., *The Monarchy and the British Nation*, pp. 125-126.

displayed the King's recognition of the status of the Catholic Church in Ireland, as he desired his commiserations be sent through the proper channels. Furthermore, it provided evidence to some that the King would stop at nothing to make his visit a successful one.⁵⁰¹ It was to be an auspicious beginning.

From loyalist perspectives the welcome afforded to the King and Queen was all that could have been desired. The *Guardian* noted that the great crowd ably complimented the art of the decoration committees, resulting in a gorgeous spectacle.⁵⁰² Most chose to focus on a theme of unity when writing about the events of the entry into Dublin. The *Pall-Mall Gazette* claimed that the whole nation had joined to demonstrate love and loyalty in what it described as a 'truly Hibernian' welcome.⁵⁰³ The *Irish Times* added that such harmony was the aim of the royal visit entirely, as the King had come to heal old wounds and use his royal influence to further bind the kindred English and Irish peoples.⁵⁰⁴ The *Belfast Newsletter* also pointed to unity between moderates and unionists as they both expressed devotion for the King and Queen, as known to be friends of Ireland.⁵⁰⁵ For loyalists then, the depiction of a united crowd in Dublin was paramount. Just as they had attempted to show the nationalist movement as fractured in the weeks before the visit, so now they focused their energies on establishing that those who greeted the King and Queen were bound together by a common respect for them and their ameliorating efforts.

⁵⁰¹ *The Freeman's Journal*, July 22, 1903, Vol. Vol. CXXXVI, p. 4

⁵⁰² *Manchester Guardian* July 22, 1903 p. 5

⁵⁰³ *Pall-Mall Gazette* July 21, 1903 p.7

⁵⁰⁴ *Irish Times* July 23, 1903 p. 5

⁵⁰⁵ *Belfast Newsletter* July 22, 1903 p. 6

More nationally minded news organs also expressed approval with the reception. The *Cork Examiner* claimed that it was hearty and was actually enhanced by an absence of formal addresses. The newspaper noted that several council members who had opposed the presenting of an address were conspicuous by their shows of enthusiasm as the King and Queen entered Dublin, making it clear that they bore the royal party no ill will and their rejection had been based purely in principle.⁵⁰⁶ The *Guardian* made mention of the mayor of Dublin doffing his hat and receiving a personal acknowledgement from the King and Queen.⁵⁰⁷ The point was also made that the visit was not aimed at pleasure alone, and that it afforded a chance for the royals to learn and see how ordinary people worked and lived.⁵⁰⁸ Moreover, statesmen were implored to take full advantage of the positive feeling now prevailing across the Irish Sea.⁵⁰⁹

Of course the more strident nationalist press expressed little sympathy when speaking of the royal reception, which it saw as an exhibition of sycophancy. Like the *Nation* before it, the *United Irishman* asserted that the only cheers for the royals came from government confederates planted in the crowd. It characterized the predominant mood as being one of apathy, as there were stretches along the route which were empty and an estimated three fifths of the Dublin population had stayed home.⁵¹⁰ Indeed, according to the newspaper, the King was later said to have privately expressed his disappointment with the reception he received.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁶ *Cork Examiner* July 23, 1903 p. 7

⁵⁰⁷ *Manchester Guardian* July 23, 1903 p. 4

⁵⁰⁸ *Cork Examiner* July 23, 1903 p. 4

⁵⁰⁹ *Manchester Guardian* July 23, 1903 p. 4

⁵¹⁰ *United Irishman* July 25, 1903 p. 4

⁵¹¹ *United Irishman* August 1, 1903 p. 4

As yet, in the earliest part of the visit's coverage, the King was the main figure of interest and Alexandra remained a supporting cast member. This was understandable, considering her husband's status and presumed support for the reform initiatives that were currently reshaping the Irish view of the crown. Alexandra's long-touted affinity for Ireland would not be long absent from the pages of newspaper coverage however. Her actions would prove to be in keeping with those of her husband, aimed at improving the welfare of his Irish subjects. At the same time, presentation of her actions would continue to promote her own image as an active figure on a personal level.

The first reports of the Queen were found amidst the coverage of the entry into Dublin, where she was said to have provoked a number of differing reactions. The most disparaging came from the *United Irishman*, which took aim at the Queen as pitiable figure, likely indicative of an abject monarchy.⁵¹²

It was somewhat pathetic to see the Queen of England bowing and smiling to the silent crowds on the footwalks, under the impression they were cheering, but on the whole the proceedings were reminiscent of that comic opera in which an unpopular monarch addresses his valet as 'my dear subject' and thanks him for his loyal and enthusiastic reception.⁵¹³

It is interesting to note that even when Alexandra was cast as a pathetic or laughable character, it was on account of being unaware that her friendly gestures were not reciprocated. More reassuring notes came from the *Irish Times*, which remarked at how very difficult it was to believe that forty years had passed since Alexandra had first arrived in the United Kingdom, especially for those who saw her face to face. In very flattering prose, her countenance was

⁵¹² *United Irishman* August 1, 1903, Vol. 10, p. 4

⁵¹³ *United Irishman* August 1, 1903, Vol. 10, p. 4

compared both to that of a girl and her smile to the warming rays of the sun.⁵¹⁴ Such reporting seemed to be the order of the day, as it was reported in both the *Times* and its Dublin counterpart that the Queen almost entirely monopolized the crowd's attention as the dominant figure in the course of the royal entry.⁵¹⁵ Referring to her as 'Alexandra the Good', the *Belfast Newsletter* declared that she had appeared to be scared upon her departure from the royal yacht, but was reassured by the enthusiasm of the Irish crowd.⁵¹⁶ The *Cork Examiner* remarked on her presence and reaffirmed her as a never failing object of interest to fashionable spectators.⁵¹⁷ The theme here was continuity, whereas the King seemed to have to prove himself again, now robed in greater authority, Alexandra was something of a known quantity. She was still present for the adulation of the crowd, whether as a sorry figure, or a celestial sight to marvel.

Yet the press made it clear that the reception given to the Queen was not brought about by the deference due to royalty, but rather to the special relationship she shared with the Irish people. The loyalist *Belfast Newsletter* reported that the poor near the Grattan Street Bridge were heard to remark about her beauty, and of an exchange of smiles between them. Later in the same edition, it was postulated that the Queen was enjoying the trip through the Dublin streets even more than her husband.⁵¹⁸ Summing up the difference in feeling Irishmen had toward Alexandra and her husband, the more nationalist *Freeman's Journal* pointed out that the King was liked, while the Queen was admired.⁵¹⁹ Such notions were reinforced in the *Pall-Mall*

⁵¹⁴ *Irish Times*, July 21, 1903; Vol. XLV, p. 4

⁵¹⁵ *The Times*, Friday, Jul 24, 1903; pg. 8; Issue 37141; col C & *Irish Times*, July 24, 1903; Vol. XLV, p. 4

⁵¹⁶ *Belfast Newsletter* July 22, 1903 p. 7

⁵¹⁷ *Cork Examiner* July 25, 1903 p. 6

⁵¹⁸ *Belfast Newsletter* July 22, 1903 p. 7

⁵¹⁹ *The Freeman's Journal*, July 22, 1903, Vol. Vol. CXXXVI, p. 4

Gazette, where an article giving a ‘woman’s impressions’ spoke of the royal entry and singled out the Queen for special mention. The columnist claimed that the crowds were barely able to contain themselves as the Queen passed, crowding her carriage such that she passed only through a narrow lane of spectators. Remarking that Alexandra at no time looked more like a storybook queen: fair, young and gracious, the correspondent reported that there was an air about her that suggested she was at home in Ireland, and among her own people.⁵²⁰ The King would always have a place in Irish affection, but this reporting placed the Queen firmly among the Irish people as someone much more closely related to them. Despite all that may have happened in past visits, the press pointed to binding ties that united the Irish with Alexandra and allowed her experience in Ireland to be something more than that of other royal guests.

As they had in 1885, loyalist journalists turned to a series of individual encounters with the common people to further solidify the image of the Queen’s friendship with the Irish people. In the course of the entry, particular mention was made of an elderly woman who shared a warm moment with Alexandra. The *Belfast Newsletter* identified her as having come from Ellis quay, and stated that she rushed through the military cordon toward Queen and extended her hand, when Alexandra took it there came a good deal of cheering from the assembled masses.⁵²¹ When the *Pall-Mall Gazette* reported the same interaction, it included the detail that the woman blessed the Queen stating, “Ah, my sweet lady may the blessing of the Almighty go with ye.” It was then that Alexandra, very much affected by these words, took the lady’s hand and pressed it

⁵²⁰ *Pall-Mall Gazette* July 24, 1903 p.4

⁵²¹ *Belfast Newsletter* July 22, 1903 p. 8

firmly.⁵²² Such episodes, filled with a warmth and intimacy that do not usually characterize royal interactions, reaffirmed the image of Alexandra's unique bond with the Irish people. It is also worthwhile to note that whereas in 1885 reports had Alexandra extending herself in meeting the average Irish man or woman, now it was this woman who was reported to have out of her way and even scorned security measures, to offer blessings to the Queen.

After affirming what they saw as the Queen's unique relationship with the Irish people, loyalist newspapers also chose to focus on the parity between Alexandra and her mother-in-law, writing of how the Princess of Wales had succeeded to the queenly title of Victoria. Noting Alexandra's many worthy traits, which had won her the regard of the people, the *Belfast Newsletter* likened her to Victoria in empathizing with the Irish in their joys and pains.⁵²³ Later in the visit, the remarks from the wife of the Mayor of Derry linked the two royal ladies as setting an example for all women as wives, mothers, and tender hearted ladies. It was therefore deemed fortunate that Alexandra had succeeded Victoria, and it was reported that those who loved the Princess of Wales only saw their love grow as she became Queen.⁵²⁴ Queen Victoria herself was said to have felt gratified that her daughter-in-law would assume the title of queen. Alexandra, the Queen attested, had spared her much fatigue and strain by appearing at great functions in her stead, and never complained about tasks that some considered a nuisance.⁵²⁵ While highlighting the mutual affection of Alexandra and Victoria, these reports also aimed to rehabilitate the latter. By linking Victoria, still castigated by some for her seeming indifference

⁵²² *Pall-Mall Gazette* July 22, 1903 p.7

⁵²³ *Belfast Newsletter* July 25, 1903 p. 6

⁵²⁴ *Irish Times* July 29, 1903 p. 6 & *Belfast Newsletter* July 28, 1903 p. 4

⁵²⁵ Hélène Vacaresco, *Kings & Queens I Have Known* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1904), pp.79-81

toward Ireland, with Alexandra, a person of such outward charity, the loyalist press likely hoped to blunt the edge of criticism for the great lady and mourned queen.

The theme of continuance was furthered within the loyalist press by their renewed interest in the topic of a royal residence. Undaunted by almost four decades of regal and government intransigence on this matter, the *Belfast Newsletter*, *Spectator*, and *Irish Times* all pushed forward again in an effort to present the case for a more permanent royal home. The *Newsletter* began by stating that royal visits to Ireland attracted more attention than anywhere else in the United Kingdom, and yet no residence existed there for the royal family.⁵²⁶ In view of this, the paper recommended that visits should be more frequent, occurring at least every other year, if not annually, and a residence be established. In this way, Irish loyalty would grow even stronger, as it was exposed to a more consistent royal presence.⁵²⁷ The *Spectator* felt that regular visits by the Court to Ireland would prompt new moneyed interests, eager for recognition and social distinction, to follow.⁵²⁸ The *Times* in Dublin felt that Ireland and England were not well enough acquainted and therefore hoped that the royals would return to Ireland soon with a mind toward house hunting.⁵²⁹ This newspaper also suggested annual visits, but added that they need not be filled with official routine and might easily be regarded as a time for relaxation and respite for the King and Queen.⁵³⁰ Though official consideration for a residence would not be renewed after 1902, elements of the loyalist press still saw it as a viable solution to royal

⁵²⁶ *Belfast Newsletter* July 21, 1903 p. 6

⁵²⁷ *Belfast Newsletter* July 23, 1903 p. 6

⁵²⁸ *Spectator* July 25, 1903 p. 5

⁵²⁹ *Irish Times* July 21, 1903 p. 4

⁵³⁰ *Irish Times* July 25, 1903 p. 6

absenteeism and, in the extreme, the rising tide of nationalism. Playing upon existing notions of the royals being more comfortable in Ireland, many of which were tied to Alexandra, the newspapers now added a relaxed image of the Royal Family taking their leisure in a pacified and contented Irish kingdom. Adding to this image of regal familiarity, several newspapers invoked the happy memories that called the King and Queen back to Ireland after a long hiatus.

The happy recollections continued when Alexandra visited her collegiate namesake to present certificates to distinguished students and review the grounds. Many were the accounts of the cheering as she went through the streets on her way to the College and the *Cork Examiner* described the scene of her arrival as being ‘fairy-like’ with the Queen in the midst of fresh-coloured and bright-eyed female students.⁵³¹ This was no doubt enhanced by a song presented by the students and sung to the air of God Save the Queen:

Welcome to Erin’s Isle
Welcome with sunny smile
Welcome this happy while
Queen of our land.

We hold our name through thee
True Sea-King’s daughter free
Welcome once more.

Accept our loyal praise
In strains we no up raise
We sing in one strong phrase
God Bless our Queen.⁵³²

To this was added a meeting between the Queen and a Miss Mulvinny, who, in 1885, had helped the then Princess of Wales into her doctoral robes at the Royal University. Indeed the lady had

⁵³¹ *Cork Examiner* July 23, 1903 p. 5

⁵³² *Belfast Newsletter* July 23, 1903 p. 9

chosen to wear the brooch, which the Princess had given her, for the occasion of the Queen's visit. Alexandra was said to have recognized her and the two were reported to have shared warm words and lively recollections before the Queen took her leave.⁵³³ The *Freeman's Journal* also made mention of the meeting and used it as proof of the Queen's extraordinary memory, adding an anecdote about an Irish musician who played for her in 1885 whom she later met at the Royal College of Music In London.⁵³⁴ This brief episode once again reinforced the personal relationships that were so integral to the larger union the moderate press created between the nation and the Queen. So often formulaic addresses spoke of royals never forgetting their past encounters in the course of decades-old visits, but here was proof of the concern Alexandra had for those about her, remembering the kindnesses done for her by a simple school teacher nearly two decades previous.

The *Irish Times* added greater weight to the visit to the College by placing it within the context of the Queen's concern for women's higher education, touched on in 1885 when she became a Doctor of Music. It was remarked that Alexandra College was doing excellent work in this field and that the Queen, through her visit and continued patronage, gave added impetus to the college's work and goals.⁵³⁵ The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, the elite Dublin-based medical institution, added their praise for the Queen in this regard as well. In an address, published in the *Freeman's Journal*, the body expressed admiration for her noble and womanly

⁵³³ *Cork Examiner* July 23, 1903 p. 5, *Belfast Newsletter* July 23, 1903 p. 9 & *Pall-Mall Gazette* July 23, 1903

p. 7

⁵³⁴ *Freeman's Journal* July 25, 1903 p. 11

⁵³⁵ *Irish Times* July 22, 1903 p. 4

virtues and that her influence was used in the educational advancement of women.⁵³⁶ This advocacy was an important part in the creation and furtherance of Alexandra's image as a friend of Ireland, as it was used to point to her commitment to improving the lives of the Irish people. Though often regarded as having been indifferent to her own education as Princess of Wales, Alexandra's commitment to promoting women's education in Ireland could be presented as having clear outcomes. Moreover, in aiding women, her known sympathy for the disenfranchised was furthered by the press.

Alexandra's sympathy for many causes was showcased throughout the course of the visit. The *Times* in London claimed that the Queen was always full of tender feeling for those afflicted with suffering and poverty.⁵³⁷

They have been impressed, as Irishmen are well inclined to be, by the dignity, the geniality, and the overflowing kindness of King Edward himself, and not less so by the grace and gentleness of his Queen, always full of tender feeling for suffering and poverty.⁵³⁸

In keeping with this notion, several journals remarked on the awards she bestowed upon Jubilee nurses at the outset of the visit, the *Cork Examiner* noting ten and the *Freeman's Journal* fourteen.⁵³⁹ Alexandra involved herself in medical care in a number of ways. Her most notable contribution was in combat nursing, where she outfitted hospital ships and lent her name to several nursing branches of the British Army, most notably, Queen Alexandra's Royal Army

⁵³⁶ *Freeman's Journal* July 23, 1903 p. 12

⁵³⁷ *The Times* July 25, 1903 pg. 11

⁵³⁸ *The Times*, Saturday, Jul 25, 1903; pg. 11; Issue 37142; col C

⁵³⁹ *Cork Examiner* July 23, 1903 p. 5 & *Freeman's Journal* July 23, 1903 p. 4

Nursing Corps, which replaced the Army Nursing Service in 1902.⁵⁴⁰ While taking part in a military review in Phoenix Park, the *Guardian* noted that the Queen smiled with admiration at the acclamation she received, but upon seeing an accident on the parade grounds she turned her attention to the condition of those affected and sent an attendant to inquire as to their state of being.⁵⁴¹

Another episode which further solidified Alexandra's reputation as a concerned benefactor was her visit to Hospice for the Dying at Harold's Cross and Royal Hospital, also known as the Hospital for Incurables, at Donnybrook. Upon hearing of the proposed visit, the *Belfast Newsletter* commented that the Queen appealed to popular sentiment by visiting both Catholic & Protestant hospitals.⁵⁴² The *Guardian* noted that between the visits she diverted her route through the suburb of Rathmines, an area of the city which had fallen into disrepair after housing a spa in the early part of the 19th century.⁵⁴³ The *Irish Times* viewed the visits as testament to the Queen's sympathetic interests, while the *Freeman's Journal* regarded them as a memorable demonstration in recognition and support of Dublin's humanitarian work.⁵⁴⁴

At Harold's Cross, the Queen was accompanied by Archbishop William Walsh and was reported to have visited each patient and offered words of hope and comfort, leaving in her wake a bouquet of choice flowers.⁵⁴⁵ Various newspapers also reported on a chance in encounter with a young female patient, Essie Pugh, who eagerly presented the Queen with flowers of her own.

⁵⁴⁰ Frank Prochaska, *Royal Bounty: the Making of a Welfare Monarchy* (London: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 124-126

⁵⁴¹ *Manchester Guardian* July 24, 1903 p. 4

⁵⁴² *Belfast Newsletter* July 22, 1903 p. 7

⁵⁴³ *Manchester Guardian* July 25, 1903 p. 7

⁵⁴⁴ *Irish Times* July 25, 1903 p. 6 & *Freeman's Journal* July 25, 1903 p. 4

⁵⁴⁵ *Pall-Mall Gazette* July 25, 1903 p.7

Before leaving, she took an unscheduled visit to a third ward, St. Patrick's, where she met and spoke at length with two soldiers who had served in the Anglo-Boer War in the Royal Irish Fusiliers. It was said that their faces brightened while in the presence of the Queen.⁵⁴⁶

Here Her Majesty paid a visit to each bed individually, and presented a bunch of flowers to each patient, accompanying the Royal gift with sympathetic words. It was indeed a pathetic sight to observe the tears of gratitude coming to the bright eyes of the poor sufferers, old and young, and to witness their feeble attempts to demonstrate their thankfulness.⁵⁴⁷

Her grace and sympathy were again lauded when she visited the Donnybrook, later the same day.

⁵⁴⁸ At the hospital, a series of small incidents were recorded that aimed to show the Queen as a woman of pathos and empathy. The *Cork Examiner* spoke of the visit as having been unique and citing that no consort had visited the hospital since the 1740s.⁵⁴⁹ Meanwhile, the *Belfast Newsletter* wrote of short conversations between the Queen and patients, most of whom met her at the door to their rooms.⁵⁵⁰ The *Newsletter*, as well as the *Manchester Guardian*, also noted the many blessings she was offered, the latter making mention of the fervent Gaelic manner in which they were given.⁵⁵¹

Throughout their visits, Dublin had always been a welcome port for the King and Queen and planners no doubt aimed at recreating past successes when they laid out the sojourn in 1903. No less was this the case for the press, which continued to present the Queen as being intimately involved in the lives of the needy, as it had toward the latter part of the 1885 visit. Meanwhile,

⁵⁴⁶ *Irish Times*, July 25, 1903p. 7 , *Belfast Newsletter* July 25, 1903 p. 7 & *Cork Examiner* July 25, 1903 p. 6

⁵⁴⁷ "Queen's Visit to the Hospice for the Dying," *The Irish Times*, July 25, 1903; Vol. XLV, p. 7

⁵⁴⁸ "Queen at Donnybrook," *The Irish Times*, July 25, 1903; Vol. XLV, p. 7

⁵⁴⁹ *Cork Examiner* July 25, 1903 p. 6

⁵⁵⁰ *Belfast Newsletter* July 25, 1903 p. 8

⁵⁵¹ *Manchester Guardian* July 25, 1903 p. 7

her visits to Harold's Cross and Donnybrook harken to her call on the Mater Misericordiae Hospital in 1868. Of course, newspapers still took to displaying her as the darling of the Dublin crowds, as they had always done before.

As the royal visit continued into Ulster, to visit Derry and Belfast, it was reported in the *Irish Times* that the North had gone the way of the South and joined Dublin in praise of the Queen. Oddly, the paper wrote that the Southern attitude was to be expected, but it was in the North where hard hearts were melted by the Queen.⁵⁵² A potential reason for this interesting inversion of the almost habitual loyalty of the North was the King's restored friendship with Catholicism. Indeed, this had led some Ulster loyalists to refer to Edward as 'Popish Ned'.⁵⁵³ It also likely explained some localized stoicism in the North directed at Queen Alexandra. Some newspapers reported a general lack of enthusiasm in the Northern greeting and rows of men who, quite unchivalrously, refused to remove their hats as the Queen passed by.⁵⁵⁴ It was also observed that it was English politicians who seemed most desirous of creating divisions in Ireland, while the monarchy attempted to mend the broken bonds and forge new ones to more closely tie the nation together and unite it with the crown. The speeches of Joseph Chamberlain and the Marquess of Salisbury in Ulster were held up to scorn in particular, as they both looked to divide the Protestant North from the Catholic South.⁵⁵⁵ For years the newspaper press had spoken about division in Ireland, yet it was always the rebellious south that seemed the troublemaker. Now, like the Biblical prodigal son, the south had returned to the King's good

⁵⁵² *The Irish Times*, July 29, 1903; Vol. XLV, p. 6

⁵⁵³ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, p. 263

⁵⁵⁴ *Donegal News* August 1, 1903 p. 5

⁵⁵⁵ *The Freeman's Journal*, July 30, 1903, Vol. CXXXVI, p. 4

graces and the North, like the stalwart older brother from the Gospel of Luke, was resentful. While politicians were seen to sow the seeds of discord, it was the Queen who melted stony hearts and helped to bring unity, according to the words of the journalists.

The Northern portion of the visit was also an opportunity for the loyalist press to again capitalize on the image of Alexandra as being in the company of children. As she rode north, the *Times* reported that Alexandra was greeted by two ragged children, a Catholic boy and a Protestant girl, who presented her with a bouquet of carnations, lilies and shamrocks.⁵⁵⁶ In Derry, the *Newsletter* reported that Winifred Tillie, a girl of eight, was to advance and give flowers to the Queen, but was very shy. When Alexandra rescued her, by approaching her instead, many cheers resulted. Later, she visited a county infirmary and took special interest in the children's wards. She reportedly once again made an effort to see to the comfort of each patient, and bring a measure of cheer to them.⁵⁵⁷ Even when she proved unable to visit the Nazareth House Primary School in Derry, it was reported that her will alone was taken for the deed.⁵⁵⁸

When the royal visit began, there was a great deal of talk in the press about the royal couple's concern for Irish prosperity. The *Belfast Newsletter* went so far as to say that the Queen, no less that the King, was guided by a pledge to promote the interests of the Irish people and fulfill her royal responsibilities.⁵⁵⁹ The actualization of these sentiments, for both loyalist and home rule newspapers, was most apparently seen in the coverage of the royal visit to the

⁵⁵⁶ *Times*, July 27, 1903

⁵⁵⁷ *Belfast Newsletter* July 25, 1903 p. 5, 6

⁵⁵⁸ *The Freeman's Journal*, July 29, 1903 p. 11

⁵⁵⁹ *Belfast Newsletter* July 29, 1903 p. 6

west of Ireland, particularly in the Connemara region. The region was so unused to royal guests that, according to Sir Henry Robinson, an Irish civil servant travelling with the King and Queen, one elder gentleman bade the King welcome as Henry VI, followed boisterously by his fellow citizens. The *Guardian* presented this image of renewed royal closeness ably. In the cottages of Glenagimla, the columnists spoke of the King chatting with young ladies while the Queen bought cloth and offered kind and simple words to the local children.⁵⁶⁰

The trip to Killery harbour from the north had been plagued with rough weather and the Queen was reported to have been sea-sick.⁵⁶¹ Nonetheless, she was said to have given delight to onlookers as she and her husband shook hands with all who offered them, even the local priest.⁵⁶² While travelling with Lord and Lady Dudley through Leenane the *Times* reported that Alexandra ventured into numerous cabins and purveyed the work of several looms. Upon seeing some of the work, she was reported to have purchased pieces of homemade cloth and other articles of weaving.⁵⁶³ The *Belfast Newsletter* conveyed that she spoke to specific families, the Carrigans, who worked in tweeds, and the Joyces, who produced loomed webbing, and purchased their wares.⁵⁶⁴ Reports surfaced after the visit that the Tuam Mercy Convent, which had supplied lace for a gift to the Queen, was honoured when Alexandra made a point of ordering more of their merchandise.⁵⁶⁵ Such actions could give readers a display of the Queen's confidence in the textile industry and praise for the artisan's craft. What is more, Alexandra was

⁵⁶⁰ *Manchester Guardian* July 30, 1903 p. 6

⁵⁶¹ *The Freeman's Journal*, July 31, 1903 p. 9

⁵⁶² *Manchester Guardian* July 31, 1903 p. 4

⁵⁶³ "Their Majesties In Ireland," *The Times*, Thursday, Jul 30, 1903; pg. 6; Issue 37146; col A

⁵⁶⁴ *Belfast Newsletter* July 30, 1903 p. 5

⁵⁶⁵ *Tuam Herald* August 8, 1903 p. 2

presented as doing more than simply associating with the aristocracy, but was providing an example to them that the monarchy was viably involved in the affairs of the average person.

Episodes of particular interest took place when the King and Queen visited a stone quarry in the course of the western sojourn. Newspapers reported that, before arriving at the quarry, the Queen had indulged a favourite pastime, fishing, in nearby Delphi Lake.⁵⁶⁶ The *Cork Examiner* described an episode where the King and Queen, upon arriving at the quarry, found themselves on an incline, such that they needed the help of a few quarry workers to surmount. The Queen was said to have given them encouragement as they aided her, cheering them on in their show of physical strength. Later, she was described as giving a piece of gold to a woman at the quarry by way of Major Victor Albert Spencer.⁵⁶⁷ Sir Henry Robinson recalled in his memoirs that a certain elderly peasant woman in a shawl presented a bouquet of white and purple heather to the Queen with trembling hand and offered prayers for her long life.⁵⁶⁸ The quarry owner, Peter Rafferty, later testified to a particularly moving episode between the Queen and her daughter, Princess Victoria, who was accompanying her parents:

The Princess Victoria, in stepping out of the carriage, brushed her skirt against the wheel and splashed it with yellow sand. And the Queen, the Queen of England, mind ye, stooped down as humble as the poorest woman in the land and brushed the Princess's skirt with her own hand! There she was with the First Lord of the Admiralty beside her, who she could have ordered to do it, and other great lords and generals, but no! humble she was, and humbly she brushed the skirt with her own hand before everyone, and an example to everyone. Oh dear God, the humbleness of it!⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁶ *Western People* August 1, 1903 p. 10

⁵⁶⁷ *Cork Examiner* July 31 1903 p. 5

⁵⁶⁸ Sir Henry Robinson, *Memories: Wise and Otherwise* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1923), p. 154

⁵⁶⁹ Robinson, *Memories*, pp. 157-58

All of this coverage showed Alexandra as a very personable and relatable monarch, not so unlike the men and women she met in her journeys. She enjoyed sport, happily encouraged those who offered her aid and exchanged charity with those less fortunate than she. Though Princess Victoria, at age thirty-five, may well have been embarrassed by her mother's actions, even this seeming innocent gesture served as an example, to Mr. Rafferty at least, that the Queen of England was a woman, and a mother, not so unlike any other. Once again, Alexandra was written about as relating to Ireland through the relationship she shared with the people around her. Moreover, her actions, slight though they may have been, allowed newspaper readers to see the monarchy as being a relaxed, familial, institution with their own eyes.

Before leaving the marble quarries, it was widely reported that Alexandra was approached by an impoverished woman who handed her a petition asking that her husband's jail sentence be remitted, and he be given his freedom. After consultation was made, and with the King's approval, the Queen declared that the man was to be freed. While his wife burst into tears, the crowds that greeted the King and Queen, upon hearing of this act of mercy, cheered louder than before.⁵⁷⁰ When the *Freeman's Journal* presented the incident however, they made no mention of the King's participation in it, such that the undiscerning reader was left to conclude that Alexandra had pardoned the lady's husband, seemingly on her own authority.⁵⁷¹ Later, the same paper noted that it was an occurrence of singular interest, and likely the first time since 1688 that a royal pardon was issued without prior ministerial approval.⁵⁷²

⁵⁷⁰ *The Times*, Jul 31, 1903; pg. 8, *Cork Examiner* July 31 1903 p. 5 & *Belfast Newsletter* July 31, 1903 p. 5

⁵⁷¹ *Freeman's Journal*, July 31, 1903 p. 8

⁵⁷² *Freeman's Journal*, August 1, 1903 p. 8

In this rare exercise of direct royal power, the press displayed a royal friend seemingly committed to active monarchy. No longer the outward sign of regal power and influence, she was portrayed as having taken a more active role by interceding directly. Though she would never use her proximity to the sovereign in order to argue the larger matters of state and advocate for Irish autonomy, it was clear throughout the visit of 1903 that Alexandra did wish to use what little power she possessed in an effort to aid the Irish on a personal and individual basis.

Reaction to the visit as a whole was largely favourable in the press. Though the *United Irishman* pointed to the King having been more guarded than his nephew the Tsar, a clear allusion to his supposed place in nationalist opinions, these veiled accusations proved quite tame when compared to coverage that likened the King to a live ass when compared to Pope Leo XIII, revered as a fallen lion.⁵⁷³ These acerbic remarks were almost par for the course, and could, especially in the case of the latter commentary, be dismissed as provocative muck-raking in the face of a visit that had not gone the nationalists' way. More pliable newspapers confirmed that the success of the visit had come with a change in government attitudes, confirming that the lessons of 1885 had been well learned. The *Cork Examiner* testified that the visit would never have been such an achievement had it relied on the coercive means of the past.⁵⁷⁴ Other newspapers agreed and noted that the accomplishment of the visit reflected well upon the King and Queen, as well as on the Irish people themselves, who were sensitive to ill-treatment but would always remember a kindness. It was stated that never in seven hundred years had the

⁵⁷³ *United Irishman* August 1, 1903 p. 7 & August 8, 1903 p. 4

⁵⁷⁴ *Cork Examiner* August 1, 1903 p. 4

royals come with friendship and respect for Ireland's national ideals.⁵⁷⁵ The *Guardian* labelled it the most remarkable visit ever paid to Ireland, with enthusiasm unmatched in Scotland or England. Its columns noted the many calls from among the crowd, urging the royals to return.⁵⁷⁶

The King was the focus of much coverage in the wake of the visit, his tact and kindness praised and said to have won him goodwill from Irishmen of all political affiliations and perhaps deprived opposition groups of their ferocity.⁵⁷⁷ His message in parting to the Irish people provided ample proof of his desires for a more egalitarian and liberal Ireland. Beginning by thanking his Irish subjects for the hospitality they lavished on he and the Queen, the King went on to express the hope that, in line with the hopes of many in Ireland, a new dawn was beginning for that nation and her people.⁵⁷⁸ That the King looked a future where the Irish enjoyed better education, industrial and commercial growth and increased administrative control was very telling indeed. Implications that the King favoured the policy of Home Rule could have easily been made and eventually followed.

Alexandra also received her share of praise, and not surprisingly it fell within the realm of charity. A letter by Hugh H. Smiley, published in several newspapers, called attention to the Queen having won all hearts through her kindness for the impoverished. The author urged all those willing to show their gratitude to donate to a project for the establishment of more country nurses, championed by Lady Rachel Dudley, wife of the Lord Lieutenant. The *Freeman's Journal* printed the letter with an article which stated that the Queen and Mr. Smiley had already

⁵⁷⁵ *Irish Examiner* August 1, 1903 p. 4

⁵⁷⁶ *Manchester Guardian* August 3, 1903 p. 5

⁵⁷⁷ *Spectator* August 1, 1903 p. 2

⁵⁷⁸ *Freeman's Journal*, August 3, 1903, Vol. Vol. CXXXVI, p. 4

donated to the initiative, the latter to the sum of £5 000.⁵⁷⁹ Though the press had left the King's ultimate vision of Ireland appropriately vague, allowing him to court both brands of opinion concerning Irish national self-determination, the Queen's role was much clearer. She was meant to inspire others to continue in her stead. Though Alexandra was never to be a permanent resident in Ireland, the Home Rule press presented an appeal to keep her ameliorating influence alive, empowering others to bring care to the sick and suffering as she had always been seen to do in the course of her visits.

For nationalists who envisioned an Ireland totally separate from the United Kingdom, the visit of 1903 was a stumbling block. While there had been attempts at fomenting dissension among the masses, notably by Irish revolutionary, feminist and actress, Maud Gonne, the reporting in the *United Irishman* was uncharacteristically vitriolic. Gone were the reasoned, if sometimes spirited, rejections of newspapers like the *Nation* and in their place were found personal attacks on the monarch and his wife. The likeliest explanation is that the paper fell victim to the ameliorating effect of conciliatory legislation and therefore fell back to appealing to what it saw as an enduring mistrust of the monarchy engendered over generations. When this proved insufficient, religious rhetoric and personal slanders were employed.

As 1903 was, for all intents and purposes, to be the grand finale of the story of friendship between Alexandra and Ireland, constitutional nationalist, moderate and loyalist publications displayed a unity of opinion that was, to this point, unseen in the course of Irish visits by Alexandra. Their purpose was tying her image together and twinning the successes of previous

⁵⁷⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, August 1, 1903 p. 8 & *Irish Examiner* August 1, 1903 p. 10

visits with her superb conduct most recently. As Queen, loyalists made the obvious links with Victoria and noted a degree of dynastic continuance, but more nationally-minded papers focused more on her actions in tandem with the King, looking forward to a brighter future with the monarchy in the wake of the Land Purchase Act. Nevertheless, the themes of charity and personal interactions were to once again be the bedrock for Alexandra's friendly image in Ireland and in this she was seen an independent agent. Though no one was aware that 1903 was to be the final major state visit she would make to Ireland, there was some sense that her friendly image in Ireland was reaching completion, a combination of amiability between the woman and the people, and more informal episodes which illustrated it better than accounts of cheering crowds.

n: Alexandra's Death – 1925

Queen Alexandra returned to Great Britain in August of 1903 as an Irish favourite, if the press accounts of the day were to be believed. Less because of coverage relating to pomp and spectacle than due to columns concerning her own unprepossessing manner, she was portrayed as a friend to those she met with, and, by extension, the population at large. However, it would be more than two decades until the Anglo-Irish press again brought her Irish sentiments to the fore for discussion. When Alexandra died in November 1925, much had changed in the relationship between Great Britain and Ireland, and yet it appeared as though much had remained the same, as newspapers wrote of Alexandra's legacy, both politically and personally, in Ireland. Though the years between 1903 and 1925 had seen her regress into the periphery of royal affairs, her presence and her loss were deeply felt.

The royal visit of 1903 had been so successful that the King and Queen ventured to Ireland twice more, in 1904 and again in 1907, much more informally. In 1904 the pair undertook a visit of nine days, where they attended the theatre in Dublin, as well as the Punchestown Races, before visiting Kilkenny Castle and finally Lismore Castle. They later remarked that the visit was both very interesting and satisfactory.⁵⁸⁰ The visit also coincided with the release of a book by Irish politician and writer, Arthur Griffith, comparing Ireland to the newly resurgent Kingdom of Hungary. Griffith claimed Ireland drew inspiration from a vibrant and liberated Hungary, and he looked for the Irish to follow their Hungarian counterparts, who had not conciliated, but rather turned their backs to Vienna and focused on creating a political

⁵⁸⁰ Sir Sidney Lee, *King Edward VII* Vol. 2 (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1927), p. 172.

and national centre within their own lands. The ultimate act of their triumph had been the crowning of the Austrian Emperor as King of Hungary, thereby binding him to the defence of the Hungarian Constitution. Griffith too envisioned a King of Ireland who would do the same.⁵⁸¹ The royal couple returned again in July of 1907 to visit the Dublin International Exhibition, which had opened that May. The visit was marred by the theft of the heavily jewelled star and badge regalia of the Sovereign and Grand Master of the Order of St. Patrick, which were removed from the safe in Dublin Castle and never recovered.⁵⁸² The King, who was skeptical about Lord Aberdeen the new Lord Lieutenant, was very greatly angered by the theft, but the matter was kept quiet and the visit was deemed a success and a royal seal of approval for new Liberal social legislation in Ireland.⁵⁸³

In the pages of the Irish press, the visits by the King and Queen were framed within the context of their deep concern for Irish industry. In 1904 newspapers noted that the King deplored the out-migration of Irish labour and that his inclinations and sympathies had long been with “the Celtic race.”⁵⁸⁴ Meanwhile, while visiting Kilkenny, Alderman Edward O’Connell was quoted in the *Freeman’s Journal* as claiming that Alexandra had endeared herself to the Irish people through her interest in the promotion of Irish industry.⁵⁸⁵ In 1907, the Queen’s interest in cottage industry was recognized and she was encouraged to visit the Home Section of

⁵⁸¹ Arthur Griffith, *The Resurrection of Hungary: A Parallel for Ireland* (Dublin: Whelan and Sons, 1918), pp. xiii-xiv, 61.

⁵⁸² Lee, *King Edward VII* Vol. 2, pp. 472-74.

⁵⁸³ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, p. 272

⁵⁸⁴ *Kildare Observer* April 30, 1904 p. 4

⁵⁸⁵ *Freeman’s Journal* May 2, 1904 p. 10 & *Irish Examiner* May 6, 1904 p. 5

the International exhibition, where she obtained a parasol.⁵⁸⁶ It was observed in the press that the royal visit uplifted the flagging interest in the Exhibition, and ensured its success.⁵⁸⁷

Traditional themes were also covered in the press during the course of the visits, particularly an extensive commentary on the Queen's Irish fashions, likely meant to compliment her reported industrial interests and highlight the work of Irish textile manufacture.⁵⁸⁸ Her grace and kindness were lauded at Naas in 1904, while the gift of her perennial youth and beauty was commented on in 1907 at Leitrim.⁵⁸⁹

King Edward and Queen Alexandra remained, in the eyes of the Irish press, supportive figures. Though her fashion and beauty remained remarkable, it was image of the Queen supporting Irish industry, both on the grand scale, and in the cottages, that was given the most esteem in the words of columnists and politicians. With the Land Purchase legislation of 1903 appearing to be too conciliatory to the landlords by 1904, and the newly elected Liberals slow to act on their party's longstanding Home Rule agenda in 1907, it was to the monarchy that some still looked to in the hopes of finding government friends for Ireland.

On the King's death in 1910, Alexandra was presented as the chief mourner and a locus for national sympathy. Home Rule supporters were said to have been in mourning as well. During the Constitutional Crisis of 1909-1910, the Liberal Party was relying on Irish Nationalist support for the passage of the "People's Budget" in exchange for the passage of a Home Rule

⁵⁸⁶ *Freeman's Journal* July 10, 1907 p. 5

⁵⁸⁷ *Leitrim Observer* July 13, 1907 p. 2

⁵⁸⁸ *Irish Examiner* May 6, 1904 p. 5, *Freeman's Journal* May 2, 1904 p. 10 & *Irish Independent* July 12, 1907 p. 5

⁵⁸⁹ *Kildare Observer* April 30, 1904 p. 2 & *Leitrim Observer* July 13, 1907 p. 2

Bill in the future. To combat the intransigence of the House of Lords, Henry Asquith's government asked the King to create many Liberal peers in order to ensure the budget's passage in the upper house. Many in Ireland viewed the King's agreement to this as further evidence of his Home Rule sympathies.⁵⁹⁰ The King's death in the midst of this affair was therefore greeted with mass mourning in Ireland.⁵⁹¹

In her hour of loss, newspapers offered up their sympathies to Alexandra and constantly reported as to her health. Worry over the Queen's condition was doubtless brought on by news of her consistent presence in the King's bedroom with Edward's body and her inability to rest, despite her weary state. The *Times* published a letter from the Queen, addressed to the nation, wherein she gave thanks for their great sympathy and affection, and asked for their prayers. She attested that her son, now King George V, would do his utmost to follow his father. She also was keenly aware of the extent of the loss she, and the nation, had suffered. She wrote, "Not alone have I lost everything in Him, my beloved Husband, but the nation, too, has suffered an irreparable loss by their best friend, Father and Sovereign, thus suddenly called away."⁵⁹²

In coverage that seemed reminiscent of Victoria, when bereft of the Prince Consort, the press was careful to place the Queen in an almost helpless state, alone in a world of sorrow and grief. Indeed, she became something of a representation of Britain itself, miserable at such a catastrophic loss, yet aware of the great consolation pouring in from all over the world and placing the mantle of the late king on the shoulders of his royal son. The *Irish Times* joined in

⁵⁹⁰ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp. 278-279.

⁵⁹¹ *The Irish Times*, May 9, 1910; Vol. LII, pp. 7-8

⁵⁹² "The Late King," *The Times*, May 11, 1910; pg. 8; Issue 39269; col A

expressing of sympathy for the dowager queen. In a series of articles the condolences of a number of bodies was reported to have been sent to her. Chief among them were those of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, which received a personal note of thanks from the Queen. Elsewhere, the Council of Alexandra College and the Religious Society of Friends sent their sympathies as well, and praised the late King and the nearly fifty years Alexandra had spent with him.⁵⁹³ Archbishop William Walsh, the Catholic Primate of Ireland, held a votive mass for the King at the hour of his funeral in London, respecting tradition, but also the cordial relations that existed between the King and the Catholic Church hierarchy.⁵⁹⁴ As Alexandra transitioned from consort to dowager, she certainly had many Irish sympathizers, including the mayors of Kilkenny and Cork, who were reported to have sent personal notes of condolence, as well as the Irish Trade Union Congress, Cork Branch of the Women's National Health Organization, Limerick Chamber of Commerce and the Derry Corporation.⁵⁹⁵ That said, it was apparent that many of her supporters were often drawn from the ranks of British loyalists and those institutions that supported Ireland's place within the United Kingdom.

Upon his accession, King George V reluctantly agreed, as his father had, to flood the upper house with Liberal peers if necessary, and the Lords acquiesced. George's coronation provided further encouragement to Irish nationalists, especially when he demanded that the Coronation Oath be amended so as to exclude those lines which were anti-Catholic.⁵⁹⁶ The

⁵⁹³ *Irish Times*, May 9, 1910; pg. 7-8

⁵⁹⁴ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp. 278-279.

⁵⁹⁵ *Irish Independent*, May 11, 1910; pg. 5 & *Irish Independent*, May 17, 1910; pg. 5

⁵⁹⁶ Harold Nicholson, *King George V* (London: Macmillan, 1967), p. 162

O'Connor Don, direct decendent of Ireland's last native king, carried the Irish standard.⁵⁹⁷ In this atmosphere, the Irish Parliamentary Party's boycott of royal functions was very difficult to maintain. John Redmond conceived of abandoning it altogether but feared the intra-party conflict that might result.

In July 1911, King George V visited Dublin as part of his Coronation Tour. Though most reminiscences focused on the late King Edward VII, and to a lesser extent Queen Victoria, Alexandra was recalled in a number of addresses published in the *Freeman's Journal*, as a long-time patron of the Royal Irish Academy of Music, a welcome visitor in 1903 at the Hospital for Incurables at Donnybrook, and a supporter of industry whose efforts in 1885 were remembered by the Dublin Ports and Docks Board.⁵⁹⁸ This appeared as something more than a fawning reference the King's mother. The *Journal*, always very sympathetic to Alexandra, presented an image of monarchical devotion to service, which had passed from mother to son.

In 1912 the power-broker position of the IPP resulted in the introduction of a third Home Rule Bill. However, the earlier passing of the Parliament Act of 1911 meant the House of Lords could no longer exercise veto, but rather delay passage for two years. Therefore, when the bill passed in the Commons in 1912, Irish parliamentary leader John Redmond was assured that self-government in Ireland would take effect by 1914. However militant unionists organized themselves and formed the Ulster Volunteer Force. Armed through illicit gun-running, with the aid of Germany, who wished to see Great Britain occupied in its own affairs away from the continent, the UVF was bent on opposing the imposition of Home Rule, by force if necessary.

⁵⁹⁷ Mark Bence-Jones *The British Aristocracy* (London, 1979), p. 148

⁵⁹⁸ *Freeman's Journal* July 11, 1911 p. 9

When the British army in Ireland proved unwilling to stop them, Home Rule supporters formed the Irish National Volunteers and furnished themselves with guns. The spectre of armed insurrection was only dispelled by the onset of the Great War.⁵⁹⁹

In the course of the Great War, a break occurred between Alexandra and burgeoning Irish nationalist forces. Her own modest home rule sentiments were becoming anachronistic in a time when Irish Nationalism began to give way to notions of separatism and republicanism. Like IPP leader John Redmond, the Dowager Queen approved of Irish involvement in the military struggle in France, though this was likely due more to her long-held hatred for Germany rather than Redmond's belief that self-government would be granted in full after the war and that the common sacrifice by Irish nationalists and Unionists would bring them closer together. Her support for the war effort in Ireland was touted by the *Irish Independent* in 1914 when it reported her encouragement at the transformation of Dublin Castle into a Red Cross hospital, and her sending £100 for equipment.⁶⁰⁰ Later in the war, she was reported to have extended personal congratulations to Michael O'Leary of the Irish Guards, who won the Victoria Cross for single-handedly charging and destroying two German barricades near the French village of Cuinchy.⁶⁰¹ Articles in the *Irish Examiner* later showed her visiting repatriated Irish prisoners of war and attending an Irish concert to raise money for soldier's meals.⁶⁰²

John Redmond approved of Irish involvement in the military struggle in France, with the belief that self-government would be granted in full after the war and that the common sacrifice

⁵⁹⁹ Gerry White & Brendan O'Shea, *Irish Volunteer Soldiers 1913-23*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003), p.8

⁶⁰⁰ *Irish Independent*, Dec. 16, 1914 pg. 6

⁶⁰¹ *Freeman's Journal*, June 26, 1915 pg. 5

⁶⁰² *Irish Examiner* Jan. 10, 1916 p. 3 & March 20, 1916 p. 8

by Irish nationalists and unionists would bring them closer together. His appeal to the Irish National Volunteers was well received and the bulk of the militia, redubbed the National Volunteers, joined the British army. The radical remainder of between two and three thousand, the Irish Volunteers, slowly reorganized and rebuilt, gaining a membership of fifteen thousand by 1916. That year, a republican-led section of the Volunteers staged the Easter Rising.⁶⁰³

George V was not initially concerned by the rising, especially after being reassured about the measures taken to suppress it. Indeed, most of the inhabitants of Dublin did not support the actions of the Volunteers, until their leaders were executed and mass arrests followed. The severity of the British reaction, and a failed Home Rule initiative by Lloyd George that made contrary promises to nationalist and unionist leaders as to the state of Ulster, began to turn the tide of opinion away from John Redmond and constitutional nationalism. Redmond's ideological opponents in the nationalist movement castigated him for placing trust in an English government whose perfidy had been well-proven. Sinn Féin, the Irish Republican party founded 1905 with a policy to establish a national legislature, grew in support and drew a clear line between Ireland's true defenders and those who looked to continue 'King George's War.'⁶⁰⁴

Following the war, the General Election of 1918 saw the Irish Parliamentary Party lose 67 of their seats, while Sinn Féin, under Éamon de Valera, won 73 seats with 47 members being incarcerated at the time of their election. These 73 members then declined to take their seat in the British House of Commons, sitting instead in the Irish revolutionary assembly, Dáil Éireann. The

⁶⁰³ Ibid, pp. 384-5, 475

⁶⁰⁴ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp. 302-304.

Dáil convened in January 1919, which marked the beginning of the Irish War of Independence. The conclusion of this war in 1921 provided for the establishment of the Irish Free State as a self-governing dominion within the British Commonwealth of Nations. Ulster was given the option to opt out of the Free State, which it did. The treaty in turn led to the Irish Civil War where the forces of the "Provisional Government", who supported the settlement, fought the Republican opposition, under de Valera, who saw it as a betrayal of the Irish Republic which had been proclaimed during the Easter Rising.⁶⁰⁵

When John Redmond died in 1918, the *Freeman's Journal* carried Alexandra's memorial to him, which referred to him as 'our great Irish leader' and claimed she felt that an irreparable loss had been suffered.⁶⁰⁶ Alexandra was to have no such affinity for later Irish leaders, who espoused a far more aggressive and uncompromising approach. Following the war in Europe and the subsequent war in Ireland, Alexandra denounced Eamonn de Valera, a leader of Ireland's struggle for independence and of the anti-Treaty forces in the Irish Civil War.⁶⁰⁷ She wrote to King George that she hoped that peace might be restored and that the actions of the anti-Treaty forces were disturbing a nation she still remembered as 'dear and lovely'. About de Valera himself, she referred to him as the 'head brute' and complained that he was not an Irishman at all, but a foreign intriguer.⁶⁰⁸ These sentiments shed some light on Alexandra's opinion on Irish politics and point out that whether or not she wished for greater Irish autonomy, she did not

⁶⁰⁵ Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland*, pp. 325-331

⁶⁰⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, March 8, 1918 pg. 2

⁶⁰⁷ The Irish Civil War was waged over the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which, in 1921, provided for the establishment of the Irish Free State as a self-governing dominion within the British Commonwealth of Nations. The forces of the "Provisional Government" supported the Treaty, while the Republican opposition saw it as a betrayal of the Irish Republic which had been proclaimed during the Easter Rising.

⁶⁰⁸ Letter from Alexandra to George V September 11, 1921 RA GV/PRIV/AA 35/37

support the more radical and violent policies of this period. Moreover, her comment about de Valera's background, apart from displaying her knowledge of his Spanish father and American birth, demonstrated her belief that the Irish themselves felt as she did, and were not naturally inclined to violence and disruption. While this arguably speaks to a certain naiveté, since she had encountered similar attitudes in 1885, it likely explains why she gravitated to more moderate political actors, such as Redmond. Regardless, her brief tribute to Redmond, evincing a relationship and bond with Redmond, whether or not one actually existed, certainly reinforced the ideas of closeness and camaraderie that remained very much a part of the press' narrative surrounding Alexandra.

Queen Alexandra's last years were filled with ill health, deafness, impaired memory, and blighted speech. The world of the 1920s was much different than the one she had grown up and grown old in, and she was at pains to come to grips with it. She attempted to find some solace in her family, as it seemed that they were the only thing capable of soothing the deep depression she often found herself in, especially as her circle of friends was winnowed by death. In particular, the Queen doted on her grandchildren, worrying about the Prince of Wales, the future Edward VIII, and his continued bachelor status. Conversely, she recounted the stories of her youth to Prince Albert, Duke of York, and future King George VI. Of course, she still doted on her son, who continued to write to her regularly on matters personal and political.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁹ She was angered when the royal yacht that bore her name was decommissioned, despite the estimated £26 000 it would have taken to retain it. She was also deeply hurt when the 19th Royal Hussars (Queen Alexandra's Own) was disbanded as part of the post-War reduction in British armed forces. As Colonel-in-Chief of the regiment, she was so displeased that she refused to take ceremonial command of another when her son offered it. Georgina Battiscombe, *Queen Alexandra* (London: Constable, 1969), p. 296-302.

As her dementia deepened and her deafness became almost total, Alexandra retreated to her Sandringham estate, imploring family and friends to remember her as she had been, and not as she was. On November 20, 1925 Alexandra died of a sudden heart attack at the age of eighty. For more than six decades she had been an enduring presence in the British monarchy, as loyal daughter, dutiful wife and compassionate mother.⁶¹⁰ While the death of the Queen Mother was certainly bemoaned, few could say that it was completely unexpected. Announcements of her passing and the condolences that followed did not herald the toppling of a national icon, but rather the end of a long life of service. Her memorials then were aimed at reflecting upon the life she led and the great gift her presence among her subjects had been.

The death of a member of the royal family has long been associated with a time of cultural cohesion, as the death of any famous individual is usually a time for collective reflection on mortality. In the early modern period this royal grief was focused to a greater degree on maintaining political stability, but as thrones became more stable the passing of a royal family member became an increasingly private affair, greeted with less display. It was only in the nineteenth century that the combined forces of political instability, Romanticism, and religious revival inspired a more pronounced response to royal death.⁶¹¹ In Great Britain, the public became anxious for an end to the sudden shock of royal death, coming largely unexpected due to misleading or absent reports about illnesses. The press quickly moved in to fill the void, printing official bulletins and whatever information could be gleaned, in order to satiate the public's

⁶¹⁰ "Death Of Queen Alexandra," *The Times*, Saturday, Nov 21, 1925; pg. 12; Issue 44125; col A

⁶¹¹ John Wolfe, *Great Deaths: Grieving, Religion and Nationhood in Victorian and Edwardian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 2-11, 15-19

desire for information. Deaths within the House of Saxe-Coburg therefore acquainted the British public with the notion that even the highest members of society were not immune from loss, tragedy, and sorrow.⁶¹²

Alexandra's longevity and the more than sixty years she had spent as Princess, Queen, and Dowager, were recounted everywhere so as to inform young and old alike of her long affiliation with the Crown and the kingdom. It was this permanence that was also said to have been the cause of much sorrow, as the nation felt it was bereft of an old and dear friend. The *Manchester Guardian* wrote that her death was felt by thousands as personal loss, while the *Belfast Newsletter* claimed that her death touched every loyal subject, and referred to her as 'mother to countless races'.⁶¹³ The *Irish Times* pointed out that, more than a widow and mother of kings, she was a binding tie between stages of British history, arriving in the heady days of the Victorian age, taking the throne alongside her husband at the height of British imperial glory, and living her retirement years through the struggles of the First World War and the difficult economic circumstances of the post-war era.⁶¹⁴ As is often the case for those who lived through moments of national significance, and certainly synonymous with those great public figures of the Victorian era, Alexandra was remembered in equal measure for her own actions, and for the time she lived in. Indeed, the *Guardian* referred to her as a great Victorian, whose habits of mind, values, conduct, and dress were reflective of that era, even as Britain became un-

⁶¹² Wolfe, *Great Deaths*, pp.19, 199, 214

⁶¹³ *Manchester Guardian*, Monday, Nov 21, 1925; pg. 16 & *Belfast Newsletter* Nov. 21, 1925 p. 6

⁶¹⁴ "Queen Alexandra," *The Irish Times*, Nov. 21, 1925; Vol. LXVII, pp. 6

Victorian.⁶¹⁵ This type of nostalgia was a breed of collective memory wherein the greatest and the least of the kingdom were bound by experiences shared.

This feeling of reminiscence was extended across Europe, as condolences came from across the continent. Of course special coverage was given to Denmark, and Danish sorrow was highlighted in several newspaper articles, placing both Denmark and Britain as co-mourners at the side of Alexandra's funeral bier.⁶¹⁶ A special note came from Vienna, where her love of music was said to have linked her to the public, and her memory was said to have evoked the image of a romantic Habsburg past, which had ended in 1914.⁶¹⁷ For monarchies elsewhere there was a keen sense of loss at the death of Alexandra. With so few monarchies remaining in the wake of the Great War, there was special attention paid to those who symbolized, in their own persons, the golden age of monarchy. When she had been alive it seemed that the memories of the past were only a step away, yet without her, they seemed increasingly distant.

There was also a move within the press to cast Alexandra as an exemplar to other women. The *Guardian* noted that for someone who was so familiar to the nation, Alexandra was the subject of no gossip and her stunning lack of egoism left the public with no sense of her dislikes or idiosyncrasies. Later articles spoke of her private virtue and public patriotism and characterized her as a dutiful daughter, loyal daughter-in-law, self-denying wife, and devoted mother. She was heralded as fulfilling the ideal of womanly simplicity, refinement, and tact, whose distinction lay in her having navigated the treacherous precipice of public life and not

⁶¹⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, Monday, Nov 21, 1925; pg. 12

⁶¹⁶ "The News In Denmark," *The Times*, Monday, Nov 23, 1925; pg. 7; Issue 44126; col A

⁶¹⁷ "The Queen-Mother's Link With Vienna," *The Times*, Monday, Nov 23, 1925; pg. 7; Issue 44126; col B

fallen.⁶¹⁸ In Ireland, the *Irish Independent* claimed the Queen had lived a model life, stating that she was one of the most inspiring royal figures of the time.⁶¹⁹ In Cork, the *Examiner* quoted one of the dowager's servants as saying Alexandra was best thought of as having been a living example of a good wife, queen and mother.⁶²⁰ The *Irish Examiner* blended these notions by declaring Alexandra had the bearing of a queen coupled with a good woman's lovable qualities.⁶²¹

Alexandra's personal popularity had been due in some measure to her having been affable, and now as newspapers memorialized her, her vaunted openness was used to shorten the social distance between herself and ordinary people. She was not only held up as the example for queens and aristocratic ladies, but also for women everywhere. That the example she set was very modest was to be expected and once again spoke to a measure of nostalgia surrounding her image. In a time where the Women's Social and Political Union had used violence in the pursuit of women's suffrage, and Maud Gonne was agitating against the Irish Free State and being arrested for sedition, Alexandra's devotion to duty, modesty, and family again harkened to an idealized time of feminine innocence and isolation. Interestingly though, whereas there was a focus in some British papers on Alexandra's role in society, Irish newspapers looked more closely at her place within the dynasty and her efforts to be a model queen as well as a model woman.

⁶¹⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, Nov 21, 1925; pp. 12, 15

⁶¹⁹ *Irish Independent*, Nov 21, 1925; pp. 6, 7

⁶²⁰ *Cork Examiner*, Nov 21, 1925; p. 9

⁶²¹ *Irish Examiner*, Nov 21, 1925; p. 10

Devotion then was the cardinal virtue extolled at the time of Alexandra's death and her constancy was praised; Alexandra's star had shone brightest in her service to the dynasty. The *Times* reminded one and all that her Danish motto had been "Faithful unto death," one which she was said to have carried out to the full.⁶²² The *Spectator* declared that no foreigner ever loved their adopted country more than Alexandra loved England.⁶²³ This notion was taken further by the *Guardian*, which made mention of the fact that it was fully expected that Alexandra would return to Denmark after the death of Edward VII, but she let it be known that England was her home.⁶²⁴ The *Irish Times* wrote that she also was praised for her handling of her many responsibilities and her bravery in the face of her private grief.⁶²⁵ To a nation that had just emerged from the horrors of war less than a decade earlier, and was already coping with its new place in the world, the former Queen's tireless efforts were particularly admirable. Throughout her life, she had been an example of national service and now, in death, her actions carried all the more weight.

Though a model in life, it is fascinating that only in death did Alexandra, who had long appeared as a much more personable figure in public, become memorialized in the press as an angelic figure of legendary status. A new infusion of mysticism and the supernatural in this post-industrial era had long attempted to return wonder to a world of bleakness. Angels, fairies and other such fabled creatures hailed from a realm that was the negative image of a world

⁶²² "The News In Denmark," *The Times*, Monday, Nov 23, 1925; pg. 7; Issue 44126; col A

⁶²³ *Spectator*, Nov 28, 1925; p. 4

⁶²⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, Nov 20, 1925; p. 11

⁶²⁵ *The Irish Times*, November 21, 1925; Vol. LXVII, p. 6

blackened by manufacturing and perennially at war with itself.⁶²⁶ It was said that in her youth Alexandra had met the famed poet Hans Christian Anderson and was raised on his stories and fairy tales. Now, it was she who was cast as a fairy, whose ageless beauty was the makings of stories for young Danish children who had never seen her face. This fantastic youth was said to have its origin in the youthful heart that Alexandra possessed and itself was the subject of further fable. Newspaper articles spoke of her 'magical gift' of sympathy shown for many in times of distress and hardship.⁶²⁷ The *Spectator* and *Manchester Guardian* picked up this theme of magic when speaking about her smile, which the former claimed had a bit of witchery in it, and latter reported often cast a spell upon those who received it.⁶²⁸ The *Irish Times* wrote that her youthful appearance, despite her being a great-grandmother, was owed not to any physical accolade, but rather spiritual in origin, derived from the youthful and pleasant outlook that Alexandra had always carried with her and the grace of character she was always noted for.⁶²⁹

In Ireland, Alexandra was often spoken of in a grandiose manner, as though she somehow was akin to an uncanny benevolence. It was for Ireland that the Princess of Wales was reported to have left her sick bed in 1868. Though limping and showing ample evidence of the effects of her bout with rheumatic fever, the end of her initial visit saw physicians reporting that the escape to Ireland and the sea air had done her constitution good. Alexandra's presence at that time was presented by columnists as bringing with it the promise of happier days, lifting the regal gloom

⁶²⁶ Nicola Brown, *Fairies in Nineteenth Century Art and Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 1-2, 4, 8.

⁶²⁷ "Alexandra," *The Times*, Saturday, Nov 21, 1925; pg. 13; Issue 44125; col G

⁶²⁸ *Spectator* Nov. 28, 1925 pg. 4 & *Guardian* Nov. 21, 1925 pg. 13

⁶²⁹ *The Irish Times*, November 21, 1925; Vol. LXVII, p. 6

that fallen in the years since the last truly successful royal visit decades earlier. Her timeless beauty was also heralded, praised in her first visit and given even greater acclaim when she returned as a grandmother – still looking as though she were a girl. Her infectious merriment and loveable charm were also attributed to her as powers belonging to some waiflike entity. At the same time, Irish newspapers presented the masses of their countrymen paying homage to the Princess and Queen and worshipping her youthful temperament and much vaunted beauty. So then it is fair to say that there was something ethereal in the image of Alexandra as a friend to Ireland. To one extent she was presented as being unique among the royal family for the consistent affection she felt for Ireland, that perhaps it was inevitable that she be compared favourably with the fairy tale images of benevolence.

Queen Alexandra was laid in state before her funeral, at which time an estimated five thousand people passed her coffin every hour.⁶³⁰ In Ireland, several photographs of decorative wreaths, adorned with an A and fashioned into the form of Irish harps, were published with information detailing their being sent to London. At St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, a large congregation gathered and heard a lesson from St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. The organist played Chopin's Funeral March and the whole assembled body stood and reverently bowed their heads. At Christ Church Cathedral, where the Archbishop of Dublin held a service to coincide with Alexandra's funeral, the assembly filled the nave and the aisles.⁶³¹ Cardinal Bourne instructed Catholic churches to play the Miserere or recite the Litany of the Holy Name

⁶³⁰ "The Late Queen," *The Times*, Saturday, Nov 28, 1925; pg. 12; Issue 44131; col A

⁶³¹ *Irish Times*, Nov. 28, 1925, p. 6

at benediction and asked the faithful to pray for the King and Royal Family.⁶³² At Westminster Cathedral, Fr. V Russell had an Irish dirge played in Alexandra's honour, which the *Cork Examiner* reported as having been a poignant expression of emotion at the national loss.⁶³³

Cast as a pious woman in life, Alexandra's death was likened to the Dormition of the Virgin Mary in some newspapers.⁶³⁴ In Belfast, the *Newsletter* published that the gracious lady had been gathered up to Paradise, while in Cork the *Examiner* recalled Tennyson when it claimed that God had touched her and she slept.⁶³⁵ Since the fifth century, when the Virgin Mary was hailed as 'Queen of Heaven' the temporal roles of consort queens became marked by Marian spirituality. Queens were to be angelic figures, examples of chastity, mercy, patience and obedience.⁶³⁶

Such notions were carried forward by the clergy who eulogized her. The Archbishop of Dublin spoke of her as having never been regarded as a foreigner and presented her as a paradigm of Christian womanhood, gracious, sympathetic, kindhearted and beautiful. He pointed to her contributions to education in Ireland and claimed that nowhere was her loss more deeply felt.⁶³⁷ The Rt Rev William Woodcock Hough, the Anglican Bishop of Woolwich, proclaimed her a queen of hearts, wielding an invisible sceptre of love and sympathy, and whose simple goodness and sincerity won her acclaim.⁶³⁸ Cardinal Francis Bourne claimed that for a half century her association with charity and good causes was an example to the nation and the

⁶³² *Irish Independent*, Nov. 24, 1925, p. 7

⁶³³ *Cork Examiner*, Nov. 23, 1925, p. 8

⁶³⁴ *Belfast Newsletter*, Nov. 23, 1925 p. 8 & *Cork Examiner* Nov. 21, 1925 p. 9

⁶³⁵ *Belfast Newsletter*, Nov. 23, 1925 p. 8 & *Cork Examiner* Nov. 21, 1925 p. 9

⁶³⁶ Eleanor Herman, *Sex with Queens* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), pp. 4-7

⁶³⁷ *Irish Times*, November 23, 1925; p. 6

⁶³⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, November 23, 1925 p. 8

empire.⁶³⁹ To these were added the words of several clergymen of multiple faiths, including certain rabbis, all noting her simple goodness and revered status.⁶⁴⁰ The message was obvious, through a Christian life, devoted to love of God and love of neighbour, Alexandra had become a model for the Empire and the world.

Religion had been the first means used to bind Alexandra to her new home, as she undertook instruction in Anglicanism, heard her last Danish Lutheran service, and took ship to Gravesend. Throughout her life she was given out to be a pious woman, an image that fit well with that of the devoted wife and mother. In death, she was eulogized as the epitome of Christian womanhood. Yet, the religious sectarianism of Ireland afforded her a unique opportunity to showcase her talents of amelioration and regal bearing. It was through patronization of both Protestant and Catholic institutions that Alexandra was able to solidify her matronly image among the Irish, tending to the needy and comforting the dying. Among the Irish Catholic bishops and cardinals she showed the crown's concern for its Roman Catholic subjects. In the same way, the great ceremonies of the Church of Ireland also allowed her to display the opulence and ritualistic brilliance of the monarchy. In 1925 clergymen of all stripes were kind in their estimation of her and were among the loudest voices applauding her as a friend of Ireland.

As was to be expected, Alexandra was also eulogized by the leading politicians of the day, and newspapers chose their quotes with judicious effect. The *Belfast Newsletter* highlighted

⁶³⁹ *Irish Independent*, November 24, 1925 p. 7

⁶⁴⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, November 23, 1925 pp. 8-9, *Belfast Newsletter* Nov. 23, 1925 p. 8 *Cork Examiner* Nov 23, 1925 p. 8

the words of the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, who spoke of the love which Alexandra had inspired from all classes. Moreover, he remarked on the rarity of her personality and how she quickly identified with her adopted nation in 1863.⁶⁴¹ The theme of unity highlighted here was apt, for it had been very much a part of Alexandra's press image, both in Ireland and elsewhere. The *Guardian* chose to feature the sentiments of former Prime Minister David Lloyd George who confessed that he could not recall a time when the Queen was not loved, but far from superficially delighting in her beauty and charm, she exhibited a charity that was unrestrained and eminently hopeful.⁶⁴² Again, this quote reflected a popular characterization of Alexandra in the media, namely that she was aware of her royal responsibilities and was not merely content as a figurehead and showpiece figure. Finally, the *Cork Examiner* focused on the thoughts expressed by the Leader of the Opposition, Ramsay MacDonald, who was quoted as saying, "she entered into relations with her people."⁶⁴³ The link to Alexandra's much publicized personal interaction with the people of Ireland could easily be made.

Amidst the mass mourning a clear note of grief came from Ireland. In Ireland, throughout the nineteenth century, Dublin was linked with ideas of loss and decline, in spite of its gains in demography and economic importance. The forfeiture of the Irish parliament in the Act of Union and the losses of the famine periods certainly contributed to this sense of deficit. With that in mind, the Irish were perceived to have struggled in attempting to find the appropriate reaction to the death of a member of the royal family. This issue was one of loyalty;

⁶⁴¹ *Belfast Newsletter* Nov. 24, 1925 p.7

⁶⁴² *Manchester Guardian* Nov. 24, 1925 p.11

⁶⁴³ "Labour Leader's Tribute," *Cork Examiner* Nov. 21, 1925; No.22 446, p. 10

was a show of grief at the loss of Prince Albert or Queen Victoria a tacit sign of agreement with the system of government they had represented and supported in life? Such questions led some to choose a respectful observance of the United Kingdom's grief, but not a total commiseration with it.⁶⁴⁴

It was said in several articles that the Irish public as a whole were very upset to have heard of the passing of the Queen Mother, feeding into the image long established of the friendship which existed between them. The *Times* in particular was quick to point out that in both Northern Ireland and in the Irish Free State there existed deep sorrow and grief over the loss of the Dowager Queen.⁶⁴⁵ In Belfast, the picture shows were closed and businesses drew their blinds as a show of commiseration, while in Dublin the Irish tricolour flew at half-mast alongside the Union Jack.⁶⁴⁶ Alexandra's visits to Ireland were again recalled by the *Irish Times* and it was concluded that her relationship with Ireland was invariably happy; the legacy of Alexandra as a cordial, familial, figure, was well established. In her later years, it was said that the memories of her visits, along with her tributes to the bravery of the Irish in the First World War, kept her name well-polished across the Irish Sea.⁶⁴⁷ The *Belfast Newsletter* took a familial tone, when its columnists wrote that she had loved the Irish and made them her own.⁶⁴⁸ A more measured note came from the *Irish Independent*, which noted sincere regret in Ireland for a lady who had left a

⁶⁴⁴ Wolfe, *Great Deaths*, pp. 123-133

⁶⁴⁵ *The Times*, Monday, Nov 23, 1925; pg. 8

⁶⁴⁶ *The Times*, Saturday, Nov 28, 1925; pg. 17 & *Guardian* Nov. 23, 1925 pg. 8

⁶⁴⁷ *The Irish Times*, November 21, 1925; Vol. LXVII, pp. 7-8

⁶⁴⁸ *Belfast Newsletter*, Nov. 23, 1925 p. 8

strong impression in her wake, and whose character and sorrows had always appealed to the people of Ireland.⁶⁴⁹

As was to be expected, the words of commiseration from the Irish politicians were to be divided along the lines of partisanship.⁶⁵⁰ Nevertheless, from the beginning press coverage of Alexandra's affiliation with Ireland paid much attention to her dealings with the public. It was the harsh reception of 1885 that informed her change her attitude, and the course of news coverage, toward a much more episodic style. Singular events were highlighted and individual well-wishers were given an opportunity to be showcased. These episodes displayed people drawn from humbler origins sharing centre stage alongside Alexandra and made representative for their countrymen by the coverage of correspondents. In such ways Alexandra was presented as more closely embracing the view of those in Ireland that demanded greater action from the crown and a role for themselves other than objects of charity. Though her friendship with Ireland had begun to be evidenced through her relations with important individuals, with time the most compelling proofs of that friendship were depicted in newspapers through interactions with the common people. It stands to reason then that the true determinant of her actions and legacy was not to be found in the words of politicians, but rather in print.

Accordingly, with Alexandra's death also came assessments of her legacy as a consort, yet some disagreement as to the extent of her influence. In London, the *Times* noted that she did not have political power, nor did she wish to have it, rather her great legacy was to unite the

⁶⁴⁹ *Irish Independent*, Nov. 21, 1925 p. 6

⁶⁵⁰ *The Irish Times*, November 23, 1925 p. 6; *Irish Independent* Nov. 23, 1925 pg. 8; *Cork Examiner* November 23, 1925; No. 22447, pp. 5; "The Nation's Sympathy," *The Times*, Tuesday, Nov 24, 1925; pg. 16; Issue 44127; col G; *The Irish Times*, November 21, 1925; Vol. LXVII, p. 7 & *Guardian* Nov. 23, 1925 pg. 8

monarchy with its people through bonds of love and affection.⁶⁵¹ Reports in the *Guardian* echoed this and pointed out how she had passed from a greater to a lesser place with grace upon the death of her husband. Furthermore, there was no call for initiative from Alexandra and additional articles praised her prudence and self-control in the midst of the Schleswig war, when she could have used her popularity to drum up support in England for her native Denmark.⁶⁵² Notes were made about the small intercessions made on behalf of relations in Denmark, Greece and Russia, but she was not to be accused of putting the interests of her relatives over those of her adopted nation, as her sister-in-law, the Empress Frederick, had done.⁶⁵³

For others, Alexandra's legacy as Queen was one of charitable intercession. The Right Reverend Samuel Kirshbaum Knight, Bishop of Jarrow, when preaching at the Chapel Royal at St. James' Palace, professed that Alexandra had humanized the monarchy and used her influence to promote happiness among all classes, never shying from the challenge of the distressed, even in her last years.⁶⁵⁴ The *Spectator* opined that she influenced changes in crown's relation to people, proving affection as means of governance.⁶⁵⁵ Former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Arthur Ponsonby submitted to the *Guardian* that Alexandra was not a commanding personality, an exceptional mind, nor a name for history, but rather a ray of sunshine for the royal house, which no cloud of calamity could shade.⁶⁵⁶ Also adding to this

⁶⁵¹ *The Times*, Nov 21, 1925; pg. 13

⁶⁵² *Manchester Guardian*, Nov 21, 1925; pp. 12, 15

⁶⁵³ *The Times*, Nov 21, 1925; p. 13

⁶⁵⁴ "A Fellowship Of Kindness," *The Times*, Monday, Nov 23, 1925; pg. 7; Issue 44126; col F

⁶⁵⁵ *Spectator*, Nov 28, 1925; pg. 4

⁶⁵⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, Nov 21, 1925; p. 13

image were Britons who wrote a letters to the editor praising the late Queen for her role in the creation of the “Queen’s Fund for the Unemployed.”⁶⁵⁷

This more politically docile image of Alexandra suited the British press well. Other than a few more discerning publications, most of the British press placed Alexandra within a larger spectacle. In 1863, the *Times* printed grandiose words to describe the landing of the new Princess of Wales at Gravesend, while the *Morning Post* laid out the historical backdrop to the royal wedding, and added dramatic scenes of Alexandra’s parting in Denmark. Both saved their criticism for shabby carriages and the unruly Irish crowds that both disrupted the beautiful scene. In 1868, The *Guardian* claimed that the announcement of the Princess’ visit had lifted the gloom in Dublin, the *Pall-Mall Gazette* detailed the rustics who greeted her in place of Irish peers, the *Morning Post* recounted how one hundred thousand people lined the road to see her, while the *Spectator* urged public funding for an Irish royal residence suited to the splendour of the monarchy. By 1885, the *Times*’ columnists wrote of a fascination with royalty drew all Irish hearts, the *Spectator* published that the reception in Dublin hurt the followers of Parnell, and the *Morning Post* printed that the Princess never looked more charming than at the conference of her degree from the Royal University in Dublin. Even when disseminating stories of Alexandra’s generosity later in the visit, the focus seemed more on presentation than on the deeds themselves; the encounter with the Dunloe fiddler becoming more spectacular, and stereotypical with each publication, and the visit with the Baronscourt churchwarden’s daughter presented in serial detail. Finally, in 1903 the *Pall-Mall Gazette* presented a united Ireland demonstrating a ‘truly

⁶⁵⁷ "Queen Alexandra," *The Times*, Wednesday, Nov 25, 1925; pg. 17; Issue 44128; col F

Hibernian' welcome, while the *Times* placed the Queen commanding the attention of Irish crowds. Whether as a leading lady, or in a supporting role, Alexandra was part of an ensemble cast in the pages of the British press. It was then fitting that, with her death, her political role was memorialized, in these same papers, as having been less active and her exemplary public image emphasized instead. For these papers the image of friendship itself was only part of a larger narrative of Irish loyalty and struggle for greater relevance for the Crown in Ireland's affairs. Alexandra was therefore a character in the foreground of a grander image.

In Ireland, a much different picture was presented, one that showcased a much more influential Princess and Queen. The *Irish Times* was at the forefront of this new addition to the friendly image of Alexandra – the intercessor. One letter to the editor noted that though she could not rightfully call the Irish subjects, since she was not a monarch in her own right, she was a 'queen of hearts'.⁶⁵⁸ Once again, the Irish press was quick to pick up on the theme of agency, and according spoke to the authority Alexandra supposedly possessed,

The happy secret of the influence for good exercisable by a Queen Consort – an influence which reached its highest development in the noble life of Queen Alexandra – is that such influence is more potent because it is exercised by no legal power, but by the much stronger forces produced by the affection and respect which the occupants of that position, and, notably, Queen Alexandra, have inspired.⁶⁵⁹

Now dead, Alexandra could be looked upon as a force for intercession, regardless of how little that force was exerted, or if it even existed at all. In subsequent reports, she was compared to the powerful Caroline of Ansbach, as well as the sympathetic Caroline of Brunswick. Moreover it was noted that her power was derived from popular support and that in using that power to

⁶⁵⁸ "Queens of England," *The Irish Times*, November 25, 1925; Vol. LXVII, p. 7

⁶⁵⁹ "Queens Consort and Queens Dowager," *The Irish Times*, November 28, 1925; Vol. LXVII, p. 7

further ingratiate herself to the Irish, she maintained her authority throughout her life and would be remembered as a friend.⁶⁶⁰

While this overstatement of Alexandra's power was clear, it is in keeping with remembrances of a much more active Alexandra – an image salient in Irish newspaper coverage throughout her decades-long association with Ireland. At the time of her wedding, much was made of her choice of an Irish dress, worn as she landed in the United Kingdom, both the *Belfast Newsletter* and *Freeman's Journal* opted to speak of her intellectual endowments in addition to her physical charms, and both the *Journal* and the *Cork Examiner* gave a sense that something had been lost in the disturbances in Ireland on the wedding night. The *Irish Times* pointed to a marked upswing in business resulting from the announcement of the Princess' arrival in 1868, while the *Cork Examiner* observed, in the shamrocks she wore, a compliment by the Princess to the 'national spirit' of Ireland, and *Belfast Newsletter* claimed that the Princess allowed the people to forget that which divided them. In 1885, the *Irish Times* printed that the royal visit was not an exhibition, but rather an opportunity for beneficial work. Elsewhere, the *Cork Examiner* noted Alexandra's support for furthering the education of Irish women, and even the *Freeman's Journal*, which had called into question the representative nature of the royal reception in Dublin, still felt it was necessary to point out the concord that Alexandra inspired. When speaking of her at the close of the visit, the *Freeman's Journal* printed that her actions did more to raise her in the estimation of the Irish public than anything else. The *Irish Times* added greater weight to the Queen's concern for women's higher education in the course of its

⁶⁶⁰ "Queens Consort and Queens Dowager," *The Irish Times*, November 28, 1925; Vol. LXVII, p. 7

coverage in 1903, the *Belfast Newsletter* presented her as empathizing with the Irish people in their joys and pains, the *Freeman's Journal* printed the Queen's support for country nurses, and the *Cork Examiner* wrote of the encouragement she offered to the quarry workers who aided her in Connemara. For Irish journalists then the friendship that was present was based on mutual affection and interaction, to be sure Alexandra was part of the grand tableau created in the British press, but she could also step away and take part in the more intimate, quiet, and sombre moments as well, allowing the columnists could represent the subtlety of her actions in larger and more meaningful ways.

It seems hardly surprising then, given this image of Alexandra as having been much more involved, that the conclusion was drawn in the Irish press that Alexandra had, in her life, been a friend and ally to the Irish people. Irish-born MP, and leading nationalist figure, T. P. O'Connor rose in the House of Commons to speak Alexandra's loyalty, tenderness and sympathy for the Irish people and the love they bore her in return.⁶⁶¹ This grief in Ireland owed much to the belief that the Queen was sympathetic to the call of Irish autonomy. The *Irish Independent* noted that there was substance to the rumours that Alexandra used her influence toward the betterment of the Irish people and her support of Irish industry, and sympathy in times of hardship, were sure signs of her desire for Irish happiness.⁶⁶²

In Ireland too, her death will be sincerely regretted, for though royalty cannot safely show predilection, queen Alexandra, whenever the opportunity arose, let it been seen that she loved Ireland and took a special interest in its welfare. Besides, her character and her sorrows were such as made a special appeal to

⁶⁶¹ *The Irish Times*, November 24, 1925; Vol. LXVII, p. 8

⁶⁶² "Queen Alexandra's Career: A Friend to Ireland," *Irish Independent* Nov. 21, 1925; Vol. 34 Issue 278, p.

the sympathy of the warm-hearted Irish people. Though she visited Ireland only six times, her beauty, graciousness, and tact made a lasting impression on an impressionable nation.⁶⁶³

Rescinding the epithets that had greeted her in 1863, she was never to be considered ‘a Viking’s daughter.’⁶⁶⁴ The *Cork Examiner* credited her with holding unorthodox views on Ireland for a member of the royal household. It explained this by confirming suppositions made in 1863, saying that her Danish heritage had both spared her the prejudices of England, and given her greater sympathy for small and suffering nations.⁶⁶⁵

It is clear that, despite the positive estimation of her contributions recorded in the newspapers of 1925, Alexandra remained a background character, her memorialization placed behind reports of the Irish Boundary Commission or issues arising from the diplomatic talks at Locarno that had concluded in October. Simply put, Alexandra, though still an important and beloved figure in her old age, had faded into the background. Even in the prime of her life she had usually shared the limelight with others, but with the United Kingdom grappling with the after effects of the Great War, and Ireland tested by the challenges of self-government for the first time in more than a century, there was little room for the cares of the idiosyncratic Queen Mother. That having been said, Alexandra remained a necessary figure, her influence touted at the time of her death and still remembered decades later by authors, columnists and scriptwriters who acknowledged the necessity of her presence and her place in history. In Ireland, where

⁶⁶³ “Queen Alexandra’s Career: A Friend to Ireland,” *Irish Independent* Nov. 21, 1925; Vol. 34 Issue 278, p.

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⁶⁶⁴ “Queen Alexandra’s Career: A Friend to Ireland,” *Irish Independent* Nov. 21, 1925; Vol. 34 Issue 278, p.

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⁶⁶⁵ *Cork Examiner* Nov. 20, 1925; p. 6

much of the monarchical presence was about to be purged from view, there remained a remembrance of her dynamism and an enduring respect.

At the end of this study we are, of course, faced with the question of ‘so what?’. The press created an image of Alexandra as a friend of Ireland, but to what end, and why does it matter? In the end, the affections of a Danish princess, whether inferred, invented or legitimately held, were immaterial to the progress of Irish governance or society during the period in question. Add to that the fact that she only visited Ireland on five occasions. However, while Queen Victoria’s absence is lamented time and again in the pages of the press and her image is that of an outsider and a distant sovereign, Alexandra is consistently presented as an insider, links being made between Ireland and Denmark in 1863 and 1868, her grand entries to Dublin being presented, and sometimes explicitly stated, as homecomings, and sporadic coverage that presented her as a concerned figure whether she was in Ireland or at home. Therefore Alexandra’s friendship with Ireland was necessary for the press, as a binding tie between the Crown and the Irish people. The Queen was far removed, and the Prince of Wales, though more sympathetic than his mother, lacked the warmth, grace, and certainly the innocence of his wife. It must also be understood that this image has endured to modern times, seemingly unique among royals as it pertains to their relationship with Ireland.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶⁶ Lorna Hogg, “The day the British King arrived drunk for his grand tour of Dublin,” *The Irish Independent* February 19, 2011; Roya Nikkhah, “Duchess of Cambridge presents St Patrick’s Day shamrock to Irish Guards,” *The Telegraph* March 17, 2012 / “Kate presents shamrocks to troops” *The Telegraph* 17 Mar 2014 / Ruth Styles “Princess on parade! Pregnant Duchess of Cambridge presents the Irish Guards with their traditional St Patrick’s Day shamrocks” *Daily Mail* 17 March 2015

Considering Alexandra posthumously, there are also questions as to what extent the truth matters, perhaps the perception of Alexandra as a friend to Ireland was more important than the reality of whether or not she really was. At the time of her death, years after she had last visited, and at a time when it appeared Irish politics had outdistanced notions that loyalty to the Crown somehow negated nationalist sentiment, Alexandra was still mourned as a friend to the Irish people and touted as something unique in the royal household. None of the columnists who wrote of her, nor many of the politicians who eulogized her, knew her true feelings as it related to her encounters with Ireland and the Irish people, and yet all presented a woman who had befriended an entire nation in the course of her infrequent visits. As important as it was to certain British journalists that the monarchy be seen to have friends in Ireland, it may have been more important for certain Irish journalists to show that Ireland had a real friend among a dynasty that too often seemed distant. That this 'friend' was an outsider herself was appropriate, that she proved her friendship by a myriad of reportable and easily sensationalized episodes, both public and personal, had to have been serendipitous, but also most welcomed.

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