

The Love Story of Queen Victoria

Told Artlessly in Her Letters Recently Published—Her First Meeting With Prince Albert—Love at First Sight—How She Received the News That She Was Queen—Her Own Description of Her Coronation at the Abbey—Her Proposal of Marriage to Prince Albert—The Wedding Day.

Appended are some intensely interesting extracts from the "Letters of Queen Victoria," which were published this year for the first time. The majority of the letters were written by the Queen to her uncle, King Leopold of Belgium, who married Princess Charlotte, the only child of George IV. of England. Princess Charlotte, who would have succeeded to the throne of Great Britain if she had lived, died in 1817, leaving no children. The succession then passed to Princess Victoria, daughter of the Duke of Kent, the only one of the sons of George III. who left legitimate issue. Princess Victoria regarded her Uncle Leopold with filial affection, and maintained an unreserved correspondence with him to the end of his life. He cherished the hope that she would marry her cousin, Prince Albert of Cobourg, and arranged that Albert and his brother Ernest should visit England with their father, Duke Ernest, in 1836. The following correspondence begins with a letter describing Victoria's first impressions of Albert, then comes the death of King William IV., which gave Victoria the crown; then the Queen's own account of the manner in which she received the news; then her description of the coronation in Westminster Abbey; and finally her engagement and marriage.

Albert's First Visit to England.
The Princess Victoria to the King of the Belgians:

23rd May, 1836.
My Dearest Uncle,—I have just received your letter of the 17th inst. and I am looking remarkably well, and my cousins are most delightful young people. I will give you no detailed description of them, as you will see them yourself. But I must say that they are both very amiable, very kind and good, and extremely merry, just as young people should be; with all that, they are extremely sensible, and very fond of occupation. Albert is extremely handsome, which Ernest is not, but he has a most good-natured, honest, and intelligent countenance. We took them to the opera on Friday, to see the Puritani, and as they are excessively fond of music, like me, they were in perfect ecstasies, having never heard any of the singers before. . . .

The Princess Victoria to the King of the Belgians:

My Dearest Uncle,—These few lines will be given to you by my dear Uncle Ernest when he sees you. I must thank you, my beloved uncle, for the prospect of great happiness you have contributed to give me. In the person of dear Albert, I know me, then, my dearest uncle, to tell you how much I like him in every way. He possesses every quality that could be desired to render me perfectly happy. He is so sensible, so kind, and so amiable, too. He has, besides, the most pleasing and delightful exterior and appearance you can possibly see. I have only now to beg you, my dearest uncle, to take care of me, and to take him under your special protection. I hope and trust that all will go on prosperously and well on this subject of so much importance to me. Believe me always, my dearest uncle, your most affectionate, devoted, and grateful niece, VICTORIA R.

Death of King William IV.
Viscount Melbourne to Queen Victoria:

South Street, 29th June, 1837.
Viscount Melbourne presents his humble duty to Your Majesty, and being aware that Your Majesty has already received the melancholy intelligence of the death of his late Majesty, will do himself the honor of waiting upon Your Majesty in a little before nine this morning. Viscount Melbourne has requested the Marquis of Lansdowne to name eleven as the hour for the meeting of the council at Kensington Palace.

Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians:

20th June, 1837 (half past eight a.m.).
Dearest, Most Beloved Uncle,—Two words only, to tell you that my poor uncle, the King, expired this morning at twelve minutes past two. The melancholy news brought to me by Lord Conyngham and the Archbishop of Canterbury at six. I expect Lord Melbourne almost immediately, and hold council at eleven. Ever, my beloved uncle, your devoted and attached niece, VICTORIA R.

The Queen Officially Notified.
Extract from the Queen's Journal:

Tuesday, 20th June, 1837.
I was awake at 6 o'clock by mamma, who told me that the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Conyngham were here, and wished to see me. I got out of bed and went into my sitting-room (only in my dressing gown) and alone, and saw them. Lord Conyngham (the Lord Chamberlain) then acquainted me that my poor uncle, the King, was no more, and had expired at 12 minutes past 2 this morning, and consequently that I am Queen. Lord Conyngham knelt down and kissed my hand, at the same time

delivering to me the official announcement of the poor King's demise. The Archbishop then told me that the Queen was desirous that he should come and tell me that he had directed his mind to religion, and had died in a perfectly happy, quiet state of mind, and was quite prepared for his death. He added that the King's sufferings at the last were not very great, but that there was a good deal of uneasiness. Lord Conyngham, whom I charged to express my feelings of condolence and sorrow to the poor Queen, returned directly to Windsor. I then went to my room and dressed.

Since I have pleased Providence to place me in this station, I shall do my utmost to fulfil my duty towards my country; I am very young and, perhaps, in many, though not in all things, inexperienced, but I am sure that very few have more real goodwill and more real desire to do what is right than I have.

Breakfasted, during which time good, faithful Stockman came and talked to me. Wrote a letter to dear Uncle Leopold and a few words to dear good Feodore. Received a letter from Lord Melbourne, in which he said he would wait upon me at a little before 9. At 9 came Lord Melbourne, whom I saw in my room, and, of course quite alone, as I shall always do all my ministers. He kissed my hand, and I then acquainted him that it had long been my intention to retain him and the rest of the present ministry at the head of affairs, and that it could not be in better hands than his. He again then kissed my hand. He then read to me the Declaration which I was to read to the council, which he wrote himself, and which is a very fine one. I then talked with him some little time longer, after which he left me. He was in full dress. I like him very much, and feel confidence in him. He is a very straightforward, honest, clever, and good man. I then wrote a letter to the Queen. At about 11 Lord Melbourne came again to me, and spoke to me upon various subjects. At about half-past 11 I went downstairs and held a council in the red saloon. I went in, of course, quite alone, and remained seated the whole time. My two uncles, the Dukes of Cumberland and Sussex, and Lord Melbourne conducted me. The Declaration, the various orders for the evening, in the privacy of the council, of which there were a great number present, and the reception of some of the lords of the council, previous to the council, in an adjacent room (likewise alone) I submit here, I will not at all mention. I went in, of course, quite alone, and remained seated the whole time. My two uncles, the Dukes of Cumberland and Sussex, and Lord Melbourne conducted me. The Declaration, the various orders for the evening, in the privacy of the council, of which there were a great number present, and the reception of some of the lords of the council, previous to the council, in an adjacent room (likewise alone) I submit here, I will not at all mention.

Received after this, audiences of Lord Melbourne, Lord John Russell, Lord Althorpe (Master of the Horse), and the Archbishop of Canterbury, all in my room and alone. Saw Stockman. Saw Mary. Wrote to Uncle Ernest. Ernest Hohenlohe, who brought me a kind and very feeling letter from the poor Queen. I feel very much for her, and really feel that the poor good King was always so kind personally to me, that I should feel and feel grieved at his death. The poor Queen is wonderfully composed now, I hear.

Wrote my Journal. Took dinner upstairs alone. Went downstairs. Saw Stockman. At about twenty minutes before 9 came Lord Melbourne and remained till near 10. I had a very important and a very comfortable conversation with him. Each time I see him I feel more confidence in him; I feel more sure of his manner, too. Saw Stockman. Went down and said good night to mamma, etc. My dear Lehen will always remain with me as my friend, but will take no situation about me, and I think she is right.

The Coronation.
Extract from the Queen's Journal:

Thursday, 28th June, 1838.
I was awake at four o'clock by the guns in the park, and could not get much sleep afterwards on account of the noise of the people, bands, etc., etc. Got up at seven, feeling strong and well; the park presented a curious spectacle, crowds of people up to Constitution Hill, soldiers, bands, etc. I dressed, having taken a little breakfast before I dressed, and a little after. At half-past 9 I went into the next room, dressed exactly in my House of Lords costume; and met Uncle Ernest, Charles, and Feodore (who had come a few minutes before into my dressing room), Lady Lansdowne, Lady Northampton, the Duchess of Sutherland, and Lady Blandford in their robes. At 10 I got into the state coach with the Duchess of Sutherland and Lord Althorpe and we began our progress. I submit a minute account of the whole proceeding—the route, etc. It was a fine day, and the crowds of people exceeded what I have ever seen; many as there were the day I went to the city, it was nothing, nothing to the multitudes, the millions of my loyal subjects, who were assembled in every spot to witness the procession. Their good humor and excitement were beyond everything, and I really cannot say how proud I feel to be the Queen of such a nation. I was alarmed at times for fear that the people would be crushed and excited, and I squeezed on account of the tremendous rush and pressure.

I reached the Abbey amid deafening cheers at a little after half-past 11. I first went into a robing-room quite close to the entrance where I

found my eight train-bearers: Lady Caroline Lennox, Lady Adelaide Paget, Lady Mary Talbot, Lady Fanny Cooper, Lady Wilhelmina Stanhope, Lady Anne Fitzwilliam, Lady Mary Grimston and Lady Louisa Jenkinson—all dressed alike and beautifully in white satin and silver tissue with wreaths of silver cockle-shells on the front, and a small one of pink roses on the left side, and pink roses in the trimming of the dresses.

After putting on my mantle, and the young ladies having properly got hold of it only Lord Melbourne, who had the end of it, left the robing-room and the procession began as is described in the annexed account, and all that followed and took place. The sight was splendid; the bank of peers, and the peers on the other side. My young train-bearers were always near me, and helped me whenever I wanted anything. The Bishop of Durham stood on the side near me, but he was as Lord Melbourne told me, remarkably maladroit, and never could tell me what was to take place. At the beginning of the anthem, where I've made a mark, I retired to St. Edward's Chapel, a dark small place immediately behind the altar with my ladies and train-bearers—took off my crimson robe and kirtle, and put on the superlunary of cloth of gold, also in the shape of a kirtle, which was put over a singular sort of little gown of linen trimmed with lace; I also took off my circlet of diamonds and then proceeded bareheaded into the Abbey; I was then seated upon St. Edward's chair, where the Dalmatic robe was clasped round me by the Lord Great Chamberlain. Then followed all the various things; and last (of those things) the crown being placed upon my head—which was, I must own, a most beautiful impressive moment; all the peers and nobles, and on their coronets at the same instant.

My excellent Lord Melbourne, who stood very close to me throughout the whole ceremony, was completely over-awed at this moment, and very much affected; he gave me such a kind, and I may say fatherly look. The shouts, which were very great, the drums, the trumpets, the firing of the guns, all at the same instant, rendered the spectacle most imposing. The enthronement and the homage of, first, all the bishops, and then the uncles, and lastly of all the peers, in their respective order was very fine. The Duke of Norfolk (holding for Lord Melbourne with a cross) with Lord Melbourne stood close to me, on my left, etc., etc. All my train-bearers, etc., standing behind the throne. Poor Lord Rolle, who is 82, and dreadfully infirm, in attempting to ascend the steps fell and rolled quite down, but was not the least hurt; when he attempted to re-ascend them I got up and advanced to the end of the steps, in order to prevent another fall. When Lord Melbourne's turn to do homage came, there was no cheering; they also cheered Lord Rolle, who was a very old family; his ancestor was a Sir Something Audley in the time of the Black Prince, who, with Chandos, fought the battle of Poitiers. I then sat on the sofa for a little while with Lady Barham and then with Charles; Lord Melbourne sitting near me the whole evening. Mamma and Feodore remained to see the illuminations and only a few minutes later, and mamma went away before I did. Uncle Ernest drove out to see the illuminations.

I said to Lord Melbourne when I first sat down that I felt a little tired, but he said, "You must be very tired," he said, "Spoke of the weight of the robes, etc., etc., the coronets, and he turned round to me with tears in his eyes, and said so kindly: 'And you did it beautifully—every part of it. You can't give a person advice upon; it must be left to a person.' To hear this, from this kind, impartial friend, gave me great and real pleasure. Mamma and Feodore came back just after, and he said, 'Spoke of the bishop's copes, about which he was very funny; of the pages who were such a nice set of boys, and who were so handy. Lord Melbourne said, that they kept them the whole time. Little Lord Rolle was very good, and very handy. Lord Melbourne's page, and looked lovely; Lord Paget (not a fine boy) was Lord Melbourne's page and remarkably handy, he said. Spoke again of the young ladies' dresses, about which he was very amusing; he waited for his carriage with Lady Mary Talbot and Lady Wilhelmina; he thinks Lady Fanny does not make as much show as the other girls, which I must not allow. He set off for the Abbey from his house at half-past eight, and was there long before half-past six and had to go round by Kensington. He said there was a large breakfast in the Jerusalem Chamber; he said, laughing, that when ever the clergy, or a dean and chapter, had anything to do with anything, there's sure to be plenty to eat.

Spoke of my intending to go to bed, etc. I said, 'You may depend upon it, you are more tired than you think you are.' I said I had slept badly the night before; he said that was my mind, that nothing kept people more awake than any consciousness of a place, and being agitated. He was not sure if he was not going to the Duke of Wellington's.

Stayed in the dining-room till twenty minutes past eleven, but remained on mamma's balcony looking at the fireworks in Green Park, which were quite beautiful. Uncle Ernest, Charles, Feodore, and the ladies and gentlemen (like Lehen, etc.) saw me leave the palace, arrive at the Abbey, leave the Abbey, and

again, which I at last did with great pain. Lady Fanny, Lady Wilhelmina, and Lady Mary Grimston looked quite beautiful. At about half-past four I re-entered my carriage, the crown on my head, and the sceptre and orb in my hands, and we proceeded the same way as we came—the crowds, if possible, having increased. The enthusiasm, affection, and loyalty were really touching, and I shall ever remember this day as the proudest of my life! I came home at a little after six, really not feeling tired.

At eight we dined. Besides we thirteen—my uncles, sister, brother, Spatch, and the Duke's gentlemen—my excellent Lord Melbourne and Lord Surrey dined here. Lord Melbourne came to me and said: 'I must congratulate you on this most brilliant day, and that all had gone off so well. He said he was not tired, and was in high spirits. I sat between Uncle Ernest (the King of Hanover) and Lord Melbourne, and Lord Melbourne then me and Feodore, whom he had led in. My kind Lord Melbourne was much affected in speaking of the whole ceremony. He asked kindly if I was tired; said the sword carried (the first, the sword of state) was the sword of the Duke of the crown brought me a good deal. He was so much amused at Uncle Ernest's being astonished at our still having the Litany. We agreed that this thing was a very fine sight. He thought the robes and particularly the Dalmatic, 'looked remarkably well—excellent!' said he, with tears in his eyes. He said he thought I looked rather pale and 'moved by it,' but he said he was very much pleased; and that 'natural; and that's better.' The Archbishop and Dean's copes, which were remarkably handsome, were from James the Second's time; the very same that were worn at his coronation. Lord Melbourne told me. Spoke of the Bishop of Durham's Dalmatic, Lord Rolle's fall, etc. Of the Duc de Nemours being like his father in face; of the young ladies (train-bearers) dresses, which he thought beautiful. He said he was very much struck by the ceremony of the coronation; of the English being far too much used to be kind to South. Lord Melbourne went home the night before, and slept very deeply till he was woken at six in the morning. I said I did not sleep well. Spoke of the illuminations and Uncle Ernest's wish to see them.

After dinner, before we sat down, we (that is Charles, Lord Melbourne, and I) spoke of the numbers of peers at the coronation, which, Lord Melbourne said, was unprecedented. He said: 'There are very few vicounts; that they were an odd sort of title and not really English; that they were vicounts, that dukes, marquises, and barons were the only English titles; that marquises were like wise not English; and that they made people marquises when they did not wish to make them dukes. Spoke of Lord Rolle, who was a very old family; his ancestor was a Sir Something Audley in the time of the Black Prince, who, with Chandos, fought the battle of Poitiers. I then sat on the sofa for a little while with Lady Barham and then with Charles; Lord Melbourne sitting near me the whole evening. Mamma and Feodore remained to see the illuminations and only a few minutes later, and mamma went away before I did. Uncle Ernest drove out to see the illuminations.

Albert and His Brother Ernest at Windsor.
Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians:

Windsor Castle, 12th October, 1839.
My Dear Uncle,—The dear cousins arrived at half-past seven on Thursday, after a very bad and almost dangerous passage, but looking both very well, and much improved. Having no clothes, they could not appear at dinner, but nevertheless debated after dinner in their negliges. Ernest is grown quite handsome; Albert's beauty is most striking, and he so fascinating; he is excessively admired here. The Granvilles and Lord Clanricarde happened just to be here, but are gone again today. We rode out yesterday and danced after dinner. The young men are very amiable, delightful companions, and I am very happy to have them here; they are playing some symphonies of Haydn under me at this very moment; they are passionately fond of music. The way of news I have got nothing to tell you today. Everything is quiet here, and we have no particular news from abroad. In Spain the Fueros seem to give sad difficulty to the Cortes. Ever, my dearest uncle, your devoted niece, VICTORIA R.

The Queen Proposes to Albert.
Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians:

Windsor Castle, 10th October, 1839.
My Dearest Uncle,—This letter will have always shown and taken so warm an interest in all that concerns me. My mind is quite made up—and I told Albert this morning of it; the warm affection he showed me on learning this gave me great pleasure. He seems perfection, and I think that I have the prospect of very great happiness before me. I love him more than I can say, and I shall do everything in my power to render the sacrifice he has made (for sacrifice in my opinion it is) as small as I can. He seems to have a very great tact—a very necessary thing in his position. These last few days have passed like a dream to me, and I am so much bewildered by it all that I hardly know how to write; but I do feel very happy. It is absolutely necessary that this determination of mine should be known to no one but yourself and Uncle Ernest—till the meeting of Parliament—as it would be considered otherwise neglectful on my part not to have assembled Parliament at once to have informed them of it. . . . Lord Melbourne, whom of course I have consulted about the whole affair, quite approves my choice, and expresses great satisfaction at the event, which he thinks in every way highly desirable. Lord Melbourne has acted in this business, as he has always done towards me, with the greatest kindness and affection.

We also think it better, and Albert quite approves of it, that we should be married very soon after Parliament meets, about the beginning of February; and, indeed, loving Albert as I do, I cannot wish it should be delayed. My feelings are a little changed, I must say, since last spring, when I said I couldn't think of marrying for three or four years; but seeing Albert has changed all this. Pray, dearest uncle, forward these two letters to Uncle Ernest (to whom I beg you will enjoin strict secrecy, and explain these details, which I have not time to do) and to faithful Stockman.

I think you might tell Louise of it, but none of her family. I should wish to keep the dear young gentlemen here till the end of next month. Ernest's sincere pleasure gave me great

return to the palace. Got a long letter from Aunt Louise.

Queen Not Sure of Her Feelings.
Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians:

Buckingham Palace, 15th July, 1839.
My Dear Uncle,—I have no letter from you, but hope to get one soon. . . . I shall send this letter by a courier, as I am anxious to put several questions to you, and to mention some feelings of mine upon the subject of my cousins' visit, which I am desirous should not transpire. First of all, I wish to know if Albert is aware of the wish of his father and you relative to me? Secondly, if he knows that there is no engagement between us? I am anxious that you should acquaint Uncle Ernest, that if I should like to do this year, for, at the very earliest, any such event could not take place till two or three years hence. For, independent of my youth, and my great repugnance to change my present position, which I am perfectly convinced in this country for such an event, and it would be more prudent, in my opinion, to wait till some such demonstration is shown—else if it were hurried it might produce discontent. Though all the reports of Albert are most favorable, and though I have little doubt I shall like him, still one can never answer beforehand for feelings, and I may not have the feeling for him which is requisite to insure happiness. I may like him as a friend, and as a cousin, and as a brother, but not more; and should this be the case (which is not likely), I am very anxious that it should be understood that I am not guilty of any breach of promise, for I never gave any. I am sure you will understand my anxiety. For I should otherwise, were this not completely understood, be in a very painful position. As it is, I am rather nervous about it, the visit for the subject I allude to is not an agreeable one to me. I have little else to say, dear uncle, as I have now spoken openly to you, which I was very, very anxious to do.

You will be at Paris, I suppose, when you get this letter, and I therefore beg of you to lay me at the feet of the whole family, and to believe me ever your devoted niece, VICTORIA R.

Albert and His Brother Ernest at Windsor.
Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians:

Windsor Castle, 12th October, 1839.
My Dear Uncle,—The dear cousins arrived at half-past seven on Thursday, after a very bad and almost dangerous passage, but looking both very well, and much improved. Having no clothes, they could not appear at dinner, but nevertheless debated after dinner in their negliges. Ernest is grown quite handsome; Albert's beauty is most striking, and he so fascinating; he is excessively admired here. The Granvilles and Lord Clanricarde happened just to be here, but are gone again today. We rode out yesterday and danced after dinner. The young men are very amiable, delightful companions, and I am very happy to have them here; they are playing some symphonies of Haydn under me at this very moment; they are passionately fond of music. The way of news I have got nothing to tell you today. Everything is quiet here, and we have no particular news from abroad. In Spain the Fueros seem to give sad difficulty to the Cortes. Ever, my dearest uncle, your devoted niece, VICTORIA R.

The Queen Proposes to Albert.
Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians:

Windsor Castle, 10th October, 1839.
My Dearest Uncle,—This letter will have always shown and taken so warm an interest in all that concerns me. My mind is quite made up—and I told Albert this morning of it; the warm affection he showed me on learning this gave me great pleasure. He seems perfection, and I think that I have the prospect of very great happiness before me. I love him more than I can say, and I shall do everything in my power to render the sacrifice he has made (for sacrifice in my opinion it is) as small as I can. He seems to have a very great tact—a very necessary thing in his position. These last few days have passed like a dream to me, and I am so much bewildered by it all that I hardly know how to write; but I do feel very happy. It is absolutely necessary that this determination of mine should be known to no one but yourself and Uncle Ernest—till the meeting of Parliament—as it would be considered otherwise neglectful on my part not to have assembled Parliament at once to have informed them of it. . . . Lord Melbourne, whom of course I have consulted about the whole affair, quite approves my choice, and expresses great satisfaction at the event, which he thinks in every way highly desirable. Lord Melbourne has acted in this business, as he has always done towards me, with the greatest kindness and affection.

We also think it better, and Albert quite approves of it, that we should be married very soon after Parliament meets, about the beginning of February; and, indeed, loving Albert as I do, I cannot wish it should be delayed. My feelings are a little changed, I must say, since last spring, when I said I couldn't think of marrying for three or four years; but seeing Albert has changed all this. Pray, dearest uncle, forward these two letters to Uncle Ernest (to whom I beg you will enjoin strict secrecy, and explain these details, which I have not time to do) and to faithful Stockman.

I think you might tell Louise of it, but none of her family. I should wish to keep the dear young gentlemen here till the end of next month. Ernest's sincere pleasure gave me great

delight. He does so adore dearest Albert. Ever, dearest uncle, your devoted niece, VICTORIA R.

Congratulated By Her Uncle.
The King of the Belgians to Queen Victoria:

Wiesbaden, 24th October, 1839.
My Dearest Victoria,—Nothing could have given me greater pleasure than your dear letter. I had, when I saw your decision, almost the feeling of old Zacharias—"Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace!" Your choice had been for these last years my conviction of what might and would be best for your happiness; and just because I was convinced of it, and knowing how strangely fate often deranges what one tries to bring about, as being the best plan one could fix upon, the maximum of a good arrangement, I feared that it would not happen. In your position, which may and will, perhaps, become in future even more difficult in a political point of view, you could not carelessly have having a happy and an agreeable interior.

And I am much deceived—which I think I am not—or you will find in Albert just the very qualities and disposition which are requisite for your happiness, and which will suit your own character, temper, and mode of life. You say most amiably that you consider it a sacrifice on the part of Albert. This is true in many points, because his position will be a difficult one; but much, I may say, will depend on your affection for him. If you love him, and are kind to him, he will easily bear the burden of the position; and there is a steadiness and at the same time cheerfulness in his character which will facilitate this. I think your plans are excellent. If Parliament had been called at an unusual time it would make them uncomfortable, and if it were to receive the communication at the opening of the session, it will be best. The marriage, as you say, might then follow as closely as possible.

Lord Melbourne has shown himself the amiable and excellent man I have always told him for. Another man in his position, instead of your happiness, might have merely looked to his own personal views and imaginary interests. Not so our good friend; he saw what was best for you, and I feel deeply to his praise. Your keeping the cousins next month with you strikes me as a very good plan. It will even show that you had still the confidence and trust of Albert's character.

Now I will conclude with my best blessings, and remain, my dearest and most beloved Victoria, your devoted uncle, LEOPOLD R.

Her Aunt's Congratulations.
The Queen of the Belgians to Queen Victoria:

Laeken, 9th November, 1839.
My Most Beloved Victoria,—Your uncle has already told you, I trust, with what feelings of deep affection and gratitude I received the so interesting and important communication which you made to me. I am very happy to have you here; they are playing some symphonies of Haydn under me at this very moment; they are passionately fond of music. The way of news I have got nothing to tell you today. Everything is quiet here, and we have no particular news from abroad. In Spain the Fueros seem to give sad difficulty to the Cortes. Ever, my dearest uncle, your devoted niece, VICTORIA R.

The Queen Proposes to Albert.
Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians:

Windsor Castle, 10th October, 1839.
My Dearest Uncle,—This letter will have always shown and taken so warm an interest in all that concerns me. My mind is quite made up—and I told Albert this morning of it; the warm affection he showed me on learning this gave me great pleasure. He seems perfection, and I think that I have the prospect of very great happiness before me. I love him more than I can say, and I shall do everything in my power to render the sacrifice he has made (for sacrifice in my opinion it is) as small as I can. He seems to have a very great tact—a very necessary thing in his position. These last few days have passed like a dream to me, and I am so much bewildered by it all that I hardly know how to write; but I do feel very happy. It is absolutely necessary that this determination of mine should be known to no one but yourself and Uncle Ernest—till the meeting of Parliament—as it would be considered otherwise neglectful on my part not to have assembled Parliament at once to have informed them of it. . . . Lord Melbourne, whom of course I have consulted about the whole affair, quite approves my choice, and expresses great satisfaction at the event, which he thinks in every way highly desirable. Lord Melbourne has acted in this business, as he has always done towards me, with the greatest kindness and affection.

We also think it better, and Albert quite approves of it, that we should be married very soon after Parliament meets, about the beginning of February; and, indeed, loving Albert as I do, I cannot wish it should be delayed. My feelings are a little changed, I must say, since last spring, when I said I couldn't think of marrying for three or four years; but seeing Albert has changed all this. Pray, dearest uncle, forward these two letters to Uncle Ernest (to whom I beg you will enjoin strict secrecy, and explain these details, which I have not time to do) and to faithful Stockman.

main, my most beloved Victoria, ever and ever your most affectionate LOUISE.

Announcing the Engagement.
Queen Victoria to the Prince Albert:

Windsor Castle, 23rd November, 1839.
Just arrived here, 5.30. Everything has gone off very well. The council was held at two o'clock; more than a hundred persons were present, and there I had to read the declaration. It was rather an awful moment, to be obliged to announce this to so many people, many of whom were quite strangers, but they told me I did it very well, and I felt so happy to do it.

Good Lord Melbourne was deeply moved about it, and Uxbridge likewise; it lasted only two or three minutes. Everybody, they tell me, is very much pleased, and I wish you could have seen the crowds of people who cheered me loudly as I left the Palace of Windsor. I am so happy today! Oh, if only you could be here! I wish that you were able to participate in all the kindness which is shown to me. Today I can only send you the declaration. The description of the whole I will send after this. . . . Send me as soon as possible the report of the announcement at Coburg. I wear your dear picture mornings and evenings, and I look at it also at the meeting of the council.

The Wedding Day.
Queen Victoria to the Prince Albert:

10th February, 1840.
Dearest,—How are you today, and have you slept well? I have rested very well, and feel very comfortable today. What weather! I believe, however, the rain will cease. Send one word when you, my most devoted bridegroom, will be ready. Thy ever-faithful, VICTORIA R.

The Day After.
Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians:

Windsor Castle, 11th February, 1840.
My Dearest Uncle—I write to you from here, the happiest, happiest place that ever existed. Really, I do not think it possible for anyone in the world to be happier, or as happy as I am. He is an angel, and his kindness and affection for me is really touching. To look to those dear eyes, and that dear sunny face, is enough to make me adore him. What I can do to make him happy will be my greatest happiness. Independent of my great personal happiness, the sensation we both met with yesterday was the most gratifying and enthusiastic I ever experienced; there was no end of the crowds in London, and all along the road. I was a good deal tired last night, but am quite well again today, and happy. . . . My love to dear Louise. Ever your affectionate, VICTORIA R.

OUR ATMOSPHERE HAS CHANGED

Earth's Surroundings Not the Same as in Earlier Days.

Geologists, astronomers and chemists agree that our atmosphere was not the same in the earth's early days as it is now. Further than this there is no record. Theories of the origin of the atmosphere and of the changes that it has undergone are very numerous, but none of them is generally accepted. The principal ones, as gathered in a recent scientific work, says a writer in the New York Herald, show a difference of opinion that is interesting in itself, but unsatisfactory. In the first place, it has been generally believed that in early geological epochs the air was heavy with carbonic species, the air was heavy with carbonic species, which was ultimately absorbed in the luxuriant vegetation of the coal measures, or combined to form the carbonates that form a mass 25 times the weight of the present atmosphere, and would exert such a pressure as to liquefy part of it. Evidently only a small part of this gas could have been in the atmosphere at one time. To explain the continued existence of carbonic gas in the air, it has been supposed to proceed from volcanic vents. Some authorities regard this hypothesis as inadequate, and one eminent chemist, the Sherry Hunt, put forth the somewhat startling theory that there is what is called a "cosmic" or universal atmosphere, from which the atmospheres of all the planets are derived. The only trouble with this is that the composition of the planetary atmosphere appears to be quite different.

Another hypothesis about the atmosphere is that there was no free oxygen in it at first, all the available oxygen having been used up in forming the various oxides that are constituents of the earth's crust. According to this theory, oxygen appeared in the atmosphere with the advent of the first plants, for these early carbonaceous plants, utilizing the carbon for their own growth and freeing the oxygen. Some authorities think that the percentage of oxygen in the air is slowly increasing, while others believe that it is diminishing.

One unique atmospheric theory is that of Professor T. C. Chamberlain, of the University of Chicago, who believes all the planets, including our own, were formed by the slow aggregation of an infinite number of small solid bodies—gases in a state of which contained accumulated mass finally developed a pressure sufficient to raise the centre to a high temperature and release the gases, which escaped to form the globe's interior, instead of being a mere residue of chemical actions taking place in the outer crust. About 1890 Japanese divers entered the business of pearl-fishing, and now the whole of the licensed divers in the Tokyo Straits are Japanese. From 1890 to 1907 the total take of pearls was 16,242 tons, and the average value per ton works out at £110. In 1897 legislation limited the fishing to shell of five inches, a mere measurement. The American treasure hunting expedition, which has returned to Japan, found no money, but located the position of eight Spanish galleons. A number of bell-mouth cannon and other wreckage were scattered over a wide area of coral reef. The divers believe that it was the scene of a battle long ago, the ships having a number of holes in their sides.