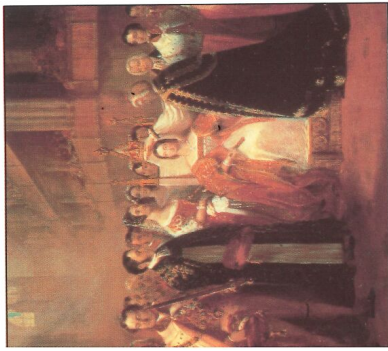


‘What is Fit and Right’



(Above) The Archbishop of Canterbury crowning Queen Victoria in Westminster Abbey.

The new young queen was hugely popular throughout Britain. She seemed such a refreshing change from the feeble old kings she followed. However, some people were worried that she was too young and might be easily led by powerful people who had only their own interests at heart. But Victoria knew otherwise. She had a clear idea of right and wrong and could be very **stubborn** with those who disagreed with her. As soon as she became queen, Victoria moved into her own bedroom and then to Buckingham Palace to escape from her mother's influence.



(Right) The young queen's first meeting with her ministers.

Victoria's coronation in 1838 was an occasion for great rejoicing. Thousands gathered in London to watch the little queen – she was only 150 cm tall – on her way to Westminster Abbey for the ceremony. Others bought plates, books, medals and pictures as souvenirs of the event. Victoria herself wrote, ‘How proud I feel to be the queen of such a nation.’

But there was just one thing missing in Victoria's life: she had no husband to share the burdens of office. Fortunately, she knew of a suitable young man – her German cousin, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg.

When Albert visited England in 1839, Victoria immediately fell desperately in love with him. She admired his looks, his intelligence, his charm and his dancing skills. Before long, Victoria proposed to Albert; and Albert's acceptance was, she wrote, ‘the happiest moment in my life’. In February 1840, they were married and soon expecting their first child.



A detail from a painting showing the marriage of Victoria and Albert. Queen Victoria's white wedding dress set a fashion that many brides still follow today.

IMPORTANT DATES

- 1838 Victoria is crowned queen in Westminster Abbey.
- 1840 Victoria marries her cousin Albert; their first child, Vicky, is born.
- 1842 Victoria and Albert's first visit to Scotland.
- 1845 Victoria and Albert buy Osborne House.

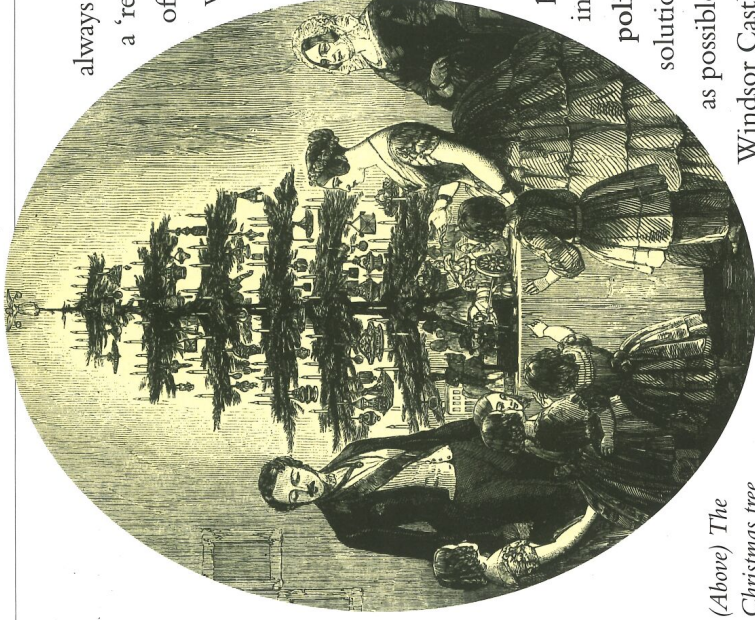
The next few years were very happy for Victoria. Of course, her position as queen made any sort of normal family life difficult; but Victoria and Albert were determined not to hand their children over to the care of others, as many rich people did. Victoria's old governess was at first employed as nurse. This did not please Albert, who wanted to control the nursery routine. Before long, Governess Lehzen was sent away and Prince Albert oversaw the running of the nursery.

The royal family in 1843. This was one of Queen Victoria's favourite paintings.



always pregnant, and she found this a 'real misery . . . the shadow side' of marriage. Unlike other women, she could not simply withdraw from public life but had to continue with her engagements even when she was heavily pregnant.

Victoria had many royal duties to perform, but she was by nature quite a shy person, and often felt uneasy in the company of nobility, politicians and bishops. Her solution was to spend as little time as possible at Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle, the official royal homes.



(Above) The Christmas tree became popular after Prince Albert had one set up at Windsor Castle. This picture of the royal family gathered around their Christmas tree appeared in the Illustrated London News in 1848.



(Right) Seven of the royal children presenting 'the Seasons' for their mother in 1854. They are (from left to right) Princess Alice as Spring; Princess Vicky and Prince Arthur as Summer; Princess Helena as the spirit of Empress Helena; Prince Alfred as Autumn; Princess Louise and Prince Albert Eduard as Winter. Queen Victoria did not approve of Prince Arthur's bare legs.