



# Queen Victoria's Granddaughters: 1860-1918

*Christina Croft*

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On 6th July 1868, when told of the birth of her seventh granddaughter, Queen Victoria remarked that the news was 'a very uninteresting thing for it seems to me to go on like the rabbits in Windsor Park.' Her apathy was understandable – this was her fourteenth grandchild, and, though she had given birth to nine children, she had never been fond of babies, viewing them as 'frog-like and rather disgusting...particularly when undressed.' The early years of her marriage had, she claimed, been ruined by frequent pregnancies; and large families were unnecessary for wealthy people since the children would grow up with nothing worthwhile to do. Nevertheless, her initial reaction to the birth of Princess Victoria of Wales belied the genuine concern that Queen Victoria felt for each of her twenty-two granddaughters. 'As a rule,' she wrote, 'I like girls best,' and she devoted a great deal of time to their wellbeing and happiness, showering them with an affection she had seldom shown her own children. By 1914, through a series of dynastic marriages, the Queen's granddaughters included the Empress of Russia, the Queens of Spain, Greece and Norway, and the Crown Princesses of Roumania and Sweden. As their brothers and cousins occupied the thrones of Germany, Britain and Denmark, Prince Albert's dream of a peaceful Europe created through bonds of kinship seemed a real possibility. Yet in little more than a decade after Queen Victoria's death, the Prince Consort's dream would lie shattered in the carnage of the First World War. Royal cousins and even siblings would find themselves on opposing sides; two of them would die horrifically at the hands of revolutionaries and several others would be ousted from their thrones. They had lived through the halcyon days of the European monarchies but their lives, like the lives of millions of their peoples, would be changed forever by the catastrophe played out on the battlefields of France. Through all the upheavals, tragedies and conflicts one person had bound them together and, even when wars had divided their nations, to the end of their lives, they would look back and remember 'dearest grandmama' with love.

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