

# PHOTOGRAPHING ROYALTY:

A CHAT WITH MR. J. RUSSELL.

BY RUDOLPH IRETON.

*Illustrated from special Photographs.*



It would be difficult to find a place more interesting to the average human being than the studio of a society photographer. At least this was the opinion I arrived at after wandering about in the studio of Baker Street, Portman Square, among the works of art for which Messrs. Russell & Sons are responsible.

Outside the weather was as dull as London could make it—and that is saying a good deal. But inside there was so much to be seen that one soon forgot the outer world with its cold and fog, its streams of hurrying people, and the never-ceasing noise of 'buses and vehicular traffic.

On every side one encountered familiar faces looking at one from life-size portraits down to the tiny miniatures—Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. F. H. Cowen, Mr. Anthony Hope, Mrs. Mary Davies—but one cannot stay to enumerate them all, for their name is legion.

Almost unconsciously however one found oneself drifting towards the large photographs of various members of our own royal family. One of the best of these perhaps was the photograph of her Majesty, Queen Victoria, that had just been selected for a frontispiece to our Christmas number. The Prince and Princess of Wales, the Duke and Duchess of York, many photos of the Empress Frederick and her son

the German Emperor, also the stalwart looking figure of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, claimed one's attention from time to time.

The great ones of the earth always have had and always will have an attraction for the majority of men and women, and I confess to being no exception. Therefore, while

Mr. Russell was showing some more of the photos he has taken of the crowned heads of Europe, I induced him to give some of his reminiscences concerning the originals.

"What is my general opinion with regard to royal sitters? Most unhesitatingly I can say that they are, without exception, the most courteous and considerate that I ever have to do with. And every time I am privileged to photograph any member of our royal family this fact is again impressed upon me."

"First of all, will you tell me about her Majesty. Where do you usually photograph her?"

"At Windsor. There is a special studio fitted up in the Castle, but her

Majesty is not photographed there. She is generally taken in one of the drawing-rooms, preferably the White Drawing-room."

"Do you suggest the pose, or does the Queen signify how she wishes to be taken?"

"She invariably leaves the arrangement to the photographer. Of course one has to work very rapidly, and one endeavours to get as many plates as possible. But at the best



MR. J. RUSSELL.



of times a sitter may become fatigued, and therefore, in the case of her Majesty, we make as little alteration in the various positions as we can. Sometimes she will suggest an alteration, such as having the lace cap removed and wearing a bonnet instead to give variety to the photographs."

"How many do you take at one sitting?"

"The last time I had two cameras and took sixteen plates."

"Does her Majesty enter into conversation with you on such occasions?"

"Oh, yes. The last time I was at Windsor

the room she said, 'I am so sorry to have kept you waiting.' It transpired that the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha had arrived at the Castle unexpectedly, and thus the Queen had been detained."

"You have photographed other members of our royal family, of course?"

"Yes; with the exception of H.R.H. Princess Louise, Marchioness of Lorne, I think I have taken all the princes and princesses. Princess Louise has a fixed objection to publicity being given to her portrait, and when she is photographed at



From a photo by]

DUKE OF CONNAUGHT.

DUKE OF SAXE-COBURG-GOTHA.

GERMAN EMPEROR.

[Russell.

PRINCE OF WALES.

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN.

THE EMPRESS FREDERICK.

I had some photographs with me that I had brought to show her, and she looked at them most interestedly and talked to me about them.

"On one occasion I was summoned to be at the Castle at three o'clock to photograph the Queen. I waited in the room with everything ready till four o'clock before she came in. I thought nothing of this however; her Majesty's time must be so fully occupied that the wonder is how she can ever find a minute to spare for such ordinary matters as photographs. When at length she walked into

all, which is not often, it is only for private disposal among her friends. When she was in Canada she once allowed herself to be prevailed upon to sit for a Canadian photographer. Some of these portraits were subsequently sent to England and offered for sale here, but they were all bought in immediately. The last time I was at Windsor Castle the Princess was in the room while I photographed her Majesty, and she discussed the various details most pleasantly.

"For delightful personality however it would be difficult to find anyone to eclipse





From a photo by]

THE EMPRESS FREDERICK.

THE QUEEN.

PRINCESS HENRY OF BATTENBERG.

[Russell.





From a photo by]

[Russell.

THE TSAR AND TSARINA OF RUSSIA.

the Princess of Wales; consequently photographing at Sandringham is exceptionally pleasant work. There is such perfect naturalness and one might almost say a homeliness about the Princess and her daughters. They take the liveliest interest in the portraits—the grouping and general arrangement, and they chat with such easy graciousness, that one is more than sorry when it is over.

“The Prince of Wales too is most thoughtful, and remembers faces and events with wonderful accuracy—small details that would slip from the memory of a man who had only half his royal highness’s responsibilities one would think. On one occasion when I was at Coburg the Prince of Wales saw me, and after returning my salute, stopped and said, ‘There will be a party at Rosenau to-morrow. You might get some good groups if you go,’ and he asked his equerry to get a pass for me. I thanked his royal highness, and then went to the palace with the equerry, who then left me while he made application forthwith to the Hof-marshal. He returned however with the information that it was to be a private function, and that in consequence no passes could

possibly be issued for that occasion. I was coming down the grand staircase again when I met the Prince of Wales coming up. ‘Well,’ he said, ‘is it all right? Have you obtained a pass for the gathering I told you about?’ I informed him as to the result of my application. ‘Oh, they don’t understand,’ he replied. ‘I’ll go and see what I can do.’ And he left me, an official bringing me word almost immediately that if I would be at a certain restaurant which was close to Rosenau, they would send for me when they were ready to be photographed. I did so, and was summoned in due course to take photos of the royal personages and their guests. The occasion was a particularly interesting one, it being the celebration of the betrothal of the present Emperor and Empress of Russia (then the Tsarevitch and Princess Alice of Hesse). I remarked to the Tsarevitch that I had had the honour of photographing him about twenty years before with his father. He replied at once, ‘Yes, it will be exactly twenty years ago.’ I had taken a number of plates of various groups, and at last the Prince of Wales, who had been suggesting and directing throughout, said, ‘And now is there anyone else you wish to photograph? I should think you have everyone?’ I replied that I would like to



From a photo by]

[Russell.

PRINCESS CLEMENTINA OF BELGIUM.



take a special plate of the German Emperor, as I only had him in a group with others on this occasion. 'The German Emperor is wanted,' the Prince of Wales called out. 'Where is the German Emperor?' His Majesty came and said, 'You have taken me alone so many times before, you can't want me again!' 'But I have never taken your Majesty in that uniform,' I protested; and he laughed and consented to the ordeal."

"I think you have recently visited Moscow?"

"Yes, I was over there at the time of

time, and I left Russia immediately, having other imperative work on hand. Yet the time I spent in the Kremlin was in itself worth a very long journey."

"Was this your first visit to Russia?"

"No, I had already been to St. Petersburg, photographing in the royal palace."

"What other royal residences have you visited abroad?"

"The first time I ever had the honour of taking photographs at a foreign court was at Berlin, on the occasion of the marriage of Princess Margaret (the daughter of the Empress Frederick) to Prince Charles of

CROWN PRINCE  
OF ROUMANIA.

DUKE OF  
SAXE-COBURG.

THE  
TSAR.  
GERMAN  
EMPEROR.

DUKE THE LATE PRINCE PRINCE  
OF HENRY OF OF  
CONNAUGHT. BATTENBERG. WALES.



From a photo by]

[Russell.

GERMAN  
EMPEROR.

PRINCESS HENRY  
OF BATTENBERG.

DUCHESS OF  
CONNAUGHT.

DUCHESS OF  
SAXE-COBURG.

PRINCESS  
ALEXANDRA  
OF SAXE-COBURG.

THE TSARINA.  
PRINCE ALFRED OF  
SAXE-COBURG.

(Photographed at Rosenau, Coburg, on the day of the betrothal of the present Tsar and Tsarina of Russia.)

the coronation. I took a great number of photos inside the palace. Though I was not so fortunate on that occasion as to get a sitting from the Tsar himself. It was on this wise. I was taking some photos in the conservatory one morning when his Majesty came in. He said that he was sorry he was too busy to spare the time just then, but would do so the following week. Immediately after this however the dreadful accident occurred, of which of course you read in the papers. This naturally so upset his Majesty that all thoughts of a photo had to be put on one side for the

Hesse. Later on the Empress Frederick was good enough to allow me to take photos of her house, "Friedrickshof," at Homburg, and then I was wonderfully impressed with her pleasant, unaffected bearing. She said she would like to show me over the grounds, and point out which she considered the finest views; so throwing a wrap over her head and shoulders, she there and then took me round, and seemed to evince such an interest in everything and to be so pleased when she saw that I was delighted with the scenery. The Empress Frederick certainly inherits her mother's gracious courtesy in dealing with





From a photo by]

[Russell.

THE GERMAN EMPEROR AND EMPRESS.

those who are necessarily almost strangers to her."

"You have taken various portraits of the present German Emperor, I believe?"

"Yes, and also of the Empress. The first time I was summoned to Potsdam to photograph the present Emperor remains very vividly on my mind. The appointment was for eight o'clock in the morning. I was in Berlin one evening when the telegram arrived, and had to leave very early next morning in order to reach Potsdam at the hour named. By a most unfortunate misunderstanding however the man from my hotel drove me in the morning to the wrong station in Berlin. When we got there we found there was no train to Potsdam, and what was still more vexatious, we had lost the one from the other station. There was nothing for it but to wire to his Majesty, and in a most uneasy frame of mind I eventually reached the palace by about 8.30. The officials received me with various remarks to the effect that his Majesty was not in the habit of being kept waiting, etc., and advised me to get my camera ready with as much despatch as possible, and then they would ascertain his Majesty's pleasure regarding my backsliding self—all of which was not particularly reassuring. As soon as I was ready the Emperor came out (I was to photograph

him in the open air in front of the palace). I immediately expressed my regret at the unfortunate delay. 'Oh, I quite understand how it happened,' he replied most affably. 'Pray say no more about it,' and thereupon he began to speak about the work in hand. I was most anxious to have him photographed in more than one uniform, if possible, but hardly liked to suggest it, as it would take up still more of his time. However he immediately consented, and after being photographed in the uniform of an honorary English admiral (which was to be sent to the Naval Exhibition at that time in London), he quickly reappeared in a German uniform (which portrait subsequently appeared in the German Exhibition), and he then favoured me with a sitting on horse-



From a photo by]

[Russell.

THE KING OF ROUMANIA.



THE LATE PRINCE HENRY OF BATTENBERG.  
PRINCESS HENRY OF BATTENBERG.

CROWN PRINCE OF ROMANIA.

PRINCE ALERED  
OF SAXE-COBURG.

DUKE OF  
SAXE-COBURG.

DUKE OF  
CONNAUGHT.

DUCHESS OF  
SAXE-COBURG.

DUCHESS OF  
CONNAUGHT.

PRINCE OF  
WALES.



From a photo by]

[Russell.

THE TSAAR AND TSARINA OF RUSSIA.  
HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN.  
PRINCESS BEATRICE OF SAXE-COBURG.  
EMPERESS FREDERICK.  
GERMAN EMPEROOR.  
PRINCESS FEDORA OF SAXE-MEININGEN.  
Duchess of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha.  
(Taken at Coburg, by request of the Queen, the day after the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Hesse-Darmstadt.)



back as a finale. When he was riding away he turned again and said, 'The Empress will let you know when she will be at liberty to see you.'

"Later on a telegram came to my hotel, naming the hour when her Majesty would be disengaged. When I arrived again at the palace she herself took me through the various rooms in order that I might select which would be the most advantageous for the photograph. Then she suggested various flowers which she thought would look effective, and she had them brought and arranged them experimentally. She was very bright, and chatted most freely concerning the photos."

"Whom do you consider the most satisfactory among royalty as a photographic subject?"

"That is an extremely difficult matter to decide. From a public point of view, naturally her Majesty is without a doubt the most popular subject a photographer could possibly have, and personally she is very easy to take; she complies immediately with the utmost graciousness with any suggestion one may venture. Again, the Prince and Princess of Wales have a hold on the public that only increases as time goes on, in addition to which the Princess of Wales makes a most lovely photograph, quite apart from the question of her exalted station.

"The Empress Frederick is an exceptionally interesting sitter. Being an accomplished artist, she will go into the general details of the photographs, and herself arrange the background and surroundings with the utmost intelligence and skill, and she spares no pains to get just the effect she desires.

"But nearly all the members of our royal family are endowed with artistic tastes far removed from the ordinary, and naturally it finds expression in many ways.

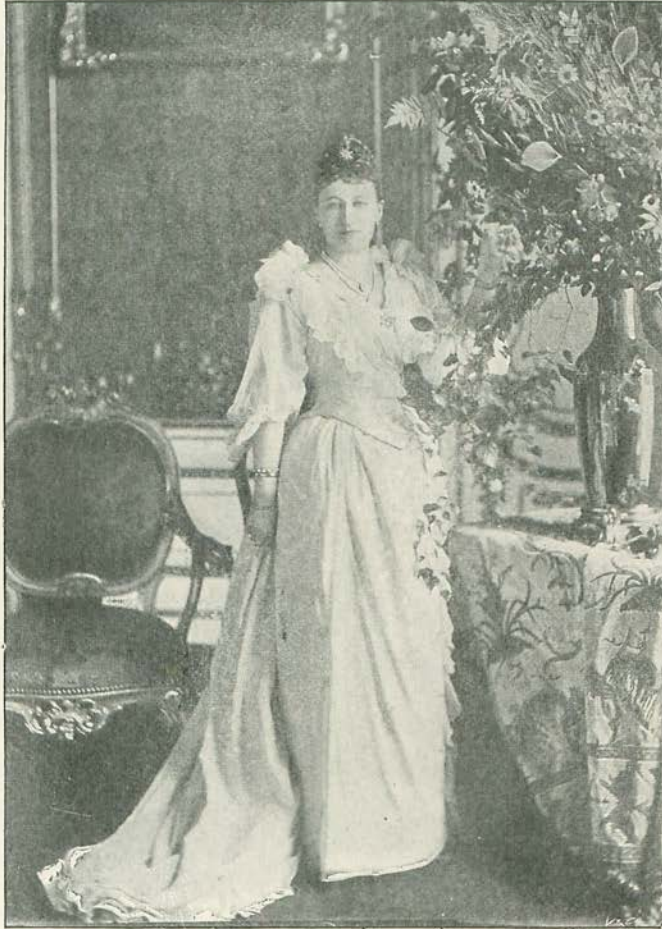
"Pictorially the German Emperor is always a success. It matters not in what dress he may be taken, he always looks well. And the same may be said of the Empress. The last time the Emperor was over here I was fortunate enough to get an exceptionally striking photo of him, taken on board his Majesty's yacht the *Hohenzollern*.

"For the largest number of distinguished personages in one group I think the various

photos I took at the several weddings of the young princesses of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha are fairly representative of the Courts of Europe, and they have met with much appreciation. Of course the greatest demand is always for the members of our own royal family. This is not surprising."

"Have you taken any Eastern potentate?"

"I photographed the Shah when he was



From a photo by]

THE GERMAN EMPRESS.

[Russell.



over here. I took him along with the Prince and Princess of Wales."

"Did he converse with you?"

"No. He seemed to be somewhat apathetic. The Oriental temperament is so different from ours that one cannot judge them by the same standard as Europeans. It was at the suggestion of the Prince that the Shah was photographed."

"I suppose it must be somewhat of a trial

"In what language are you usually addressed at foreign Courts?"

"Invariably their Majesties speak English, and perfect English too. I may say that nowhere have I heard more beautiful English than that spoken at the Russian Court. There was not the smallest hint of accent about it."

"Have royalty the same desire to see proofs of their photos as ordinary mortals?"

HEREDITARY PRINCESS OF SAXE-MEININGEN.  
GRAND DUCHESS OF HESSE.

PRINCESS BEATRICE OF SAXE-COBURG.  
PRINCESS FEODORA OF SAXE-MEININGEN.  
CROWN PRINCESS OF ROUMANIA. DUCHESS OF YORK.



From a photo by]

[Russell.

PRINCE ALFRED OF SAXE-COBURG.  
DUKE OF YORK.

PRINCE MAX OF BADEN.  
GRAND DUKE OF HESSE.

CROWN PRINCE OF ROUMANIA.

to be in such constant request as a photographic subject?"

"Possibly; but so far as my own experience goes the royal personages who have been good enough to favour me with sittings have always done so with the utmost readiness, and without the slightest trace of boredom. Sometimes indeed the occasions have been productive of the greatest merriment. A few years ago I was three weeks on board the *Osborne*, taking groups every day, and frequently the sitters seemed to find a great deal of amusement in the proceedings."

"Certainly; and in many cases duplicate sets have to be sent to other members of the royal family."

"Do royal sitters purchase many of their own portraits?"

"Oh, yes. Sometimes an order has come in for as much as £300. They must of necessity give away a great number in the course of a year, I should think. And that is not only a fortunate thing for the favoured recipients, but it is likewise fortunate for the photographer."

But there is a limit to everything, even to the time of so courteous a man as Mr.



Russell; and therefore, knowing this, I brought my interview to a conclusion.

Mr. Russell is at the best of times extremely diffident in speaking of his own achievements. Fortunately this failing is more than counteracted by his works, which speak for themselves, and in no uncertain manner either.

It is gratifying to know that not only in England is Mr. Russell's marked ability recognised. He has just received from his Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Russia an insignia in commemoration of the coronation, with the ribbon of St. Andrew to be worn, and a certificate from the Imperial Court authorising him to wear it.



*From a photo by]*

CANOPY IN THE CHURCH AT MOSCOW WHERE THE  
TSAR WAS CROWNED.

*[Russell.*





Portrait by Mr. J. Russell.

Windsor Magazine, 1896.

Vincent Novello & Co. Ph. Sc.

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