

## A LETTER FROM QUEEN AMÉLIA TO KING MANUEL II

Printed below is the text, and translation, of a photostat copy of a letter written by Queen Amélia of Portugal, widow of Dom Carlos I, to her son the young King Dom Manuel II. This letter was bequeathed to the Society by the late Mrs. Gertrude Haig.

As will be seen, the Queen used a cypher for certain words in her letter, and these are given in brackets in the text.

*In the last decades of the 19th century relations between Great Britain and Portugal had become severely strained over conflicting interests in Africa; but those between the two Royal Houses remained cordial, helped by the close friendship between the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, and the Marquês Soveral, Portuguese Minister to the Court of St. James. Visits by Dom Carlos to England and by both Queen Alexandra and, in 1902, by Edward VII himself to Lisbon, and the reaffirmation of the provisions of the ancient treaty of 1661, did much to restore harmony. Further to help set this diplomatic cement there was a proposal, agreed by both Royal Families and, apparently endorsed by the Portuguese press and people, that a marriage should be arranged between Dom Manuel and an English princess. As early as March 1909 a lady writing from Lisbon to the Marquês Soveral in England suggested that if «...our King was married to Princess Alexandra of Fife it would render a great service to our monarchy and our country...». In July 1909 the Lisbon newspaper «Palavra» said that the marriage «to a daughter*

*of the Duke of Fife was a certainty», although this had been denied in London. Late in 1909 King Manuel visited England, and the English press confidently expected his engagement to an English princess to be announced. Although nothing definite came of this visit, by July 1910 the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs was writing to Soveral to say that the marriage of the King to an English princess would coincide with the general sentiment of the country as well as being politically expedient.*

*As regards the proposed marriage to the «Princess Battenberg», which is the subject of Senhora Dona Amélia's letter, the Earl Mountbatten of Burma kindly consented to have a search made in his archives, but nothing on this matter was found. He, however, wrote that he had the clearest possible memory of the story, and has allowed us to quote him: «I remember that my younger sister, Princess Louise of Battenberg, was definitely proposed to by King Manuel II and although she liked him very much as a friend she did not fancy the idea of changing her religion and going to live in Portugal.» Lord Mountbatten adds that King Edward VII was angry when he heard of Princess Louise's refusal and «complained bitterly» that the chance of a Portuguese| British alliance should have been thrown away, but «my parents refused to bring pressure on her to change her mind.» (1)*

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(1) Princess Louise eventually married Crown Prince Gustaf Adolph of Sweden in 1923, and became Queen of Sweden on his accession to the throne in 1950.

Text:

Biarritz 6 de Março de 1910

Confidencial

Filho queridissimo,

Recebi a sua carta que o Soveral me trouxe, e antes de mais nada, quero dizer-lhe quanto me enterneceram as expressões do seu amor e respeito filial. Enterneceram-me, mas não me surpreenderam, pois bem conheço o seu coração.

Pela sua carta, e pelo que o Soveral me diz, vejo que, perdido a esperança de 91238 (realizar-se) — 39134 (seu) — 85641 (casamento) — com a 19877 (Princeza) — 81290 (Fif) — 93843 (e) — concordaram em que a 19877 (Princeza) — 84491 (Battenberg) — filha do Príncipe Luiz, devia ser escolhida para sua 45901 (noiva), no caso, já se vê, d'ella querer 98775 (abjurar) — e tambem depois de se ter encontrado consigo.

E ficou o Soveral encarregado, depois de ter conversado conmigo, de sondar o 41877 (Príncipe) — 84491 (Battenberg).

Antes d'esta decisão expuz-lhe, como expuz ao Soveral, o que se me affigura sobre este 85641 (casamento) — e aqui lh'o repito. Sei bem quanto o Paiz reclama o seu 85641 (casamento) — com uma 19877 (princeza) — 17675 (ingleza); e é exactamente a minha duvida no projecto actual. A 19877 (Princeza) — 84491 (Battenberg) é considerada 19877 (princeza) — 17675 (inglesa), para que o Paiz encontra n'este casamento o que elle reclama?

Isto dito, Filho, tenho a acrescentar o que já sabes, que tenho a maior sympathia para a Familia e muito em especial pelo 41877 (Príncipe) — 71754 (Luiz) — 84491 (Battenberg) —, que mais de perto conheço e que tão considerado e estimado é por todos.

E sobretudo Filho da minha alma, quero mil vezes mais que a vida, a sua felicidade, e o bem do nosso Paiz. Se este 85641 (casamento) realizar esta aspiração de todos que lhe são dedicados, que se faça, e que elle seja abençoado!

N'este sentido fallei ao Soveral. Elle aqui espera o Rei Eduardo que está a chegar.

Filho queridissimo que Deus o abençoe. Mil beijos de Sua Mãe,

Amélia.

Translation:

Biarritz 6 March 1910

Confidencial

Dearest Boy:

I have your letter brought to me by Soveral, and first of all let me say how touched I was by your expression of your love and filial respect. Touched, but not surprised, as I am no stranger to your loving heart.

From your letter, and what Soveral said to me, I realize that now that there is no hope of bringing about your marriage to the Princess of Fife, it has been agreed that the Princess Battenberg, daughter of Prince Louis, should be chosen as your future bride, on the condition, of course, of her being ready to abjure — and also after you have seen one another.

And Soveral has been deputed, having discussed the matter with me, to sound out Prince Battenberg.

Before this decision, I told you, as I told Soveral, what I felt about this marriage, and I now repeat what I said. I know how anxious the Country is that you should marry an English princess; and this is precisely what makes me doubtful about the present plan. Is Princess Battenberg considered an English princess so that the Country will look on this marriage as a fulfilment of its wishes?

Having said this, dear Child, I must add what you already know, that I have the greatest affection and regard for the Family, and very especially for Prince Louis of Battenberg whom I know best, and who is so esteemed and beloved by all.

And above all, my dearest one, what I want, a thousand times more than life itself, is your happiness and the well-being of our Country. If this marriage fulfils the expectations of all those devoted to your welfare, then let it take place and may it be truly blessed! (1)

This is what I told Soveral. He is here waiting for King Edward who is expected at any moment (2).

God bless you, dearest Boy. A thousand kisses from Your Mother

Amélia.

*Acknowledgements:* The Society is grateful to the Fundação da Casa de Bragança for agreeing to this letter's being published. It would also like to thank the Viscondessa Soveral and the Right Hon. The Earl Mountbatten of Burma for their help in filling in the background.

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(1) In the end King Manuel II married Princess Victoria of Hohenzollern, a cousin of the Emperor Wilhelm II.

(2) This must have been the last of King Edward VII's many visits to Biarritz. The King arrived back in London on 27 April 1910, and died on 6 May.