

Prince Leopold: The Untold Story of Queen Victoria's Youngest Son

By Charlotte Zeepvat

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Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany (1853-84), is acknowledged to have been the most intelligent and probably the most interesting of Queen Victoria's four sons. He was the youngest and a strong-willed attractive character, with an immense thirst for life. He was also, however, the first haemophilia sufferer in the royal family and endured continual ill health; as if haemophilia was not enough, he was also epileptic. In this biography, Charlotte Zeepvat has drawn on sources to reveal a compelling human story which also touches on the wider worlds of late 19th-century Oxford and of literature, art and politics in the Victorian period. In particular, it examines the question of haemophilia and the royal family. There are many questions to answer, such as when did the Queen and Prince Albert realize their youngest son was ill and how much did they understand of his illness? Some of Leopold's early attacks were described as "rheumatism" - was this an attempt to keep the truth concealed or a genuine misunderstanding? The book also presents a full and balanced picture of Leopold's relationship with his mother. Letters already published provide snapshots of individual quarrels between mother and son but no one has yet considered the relationship as a whole. Finally it eamines Leopold's life at Oxford, the varied and interesting friendships he developed there (with, among others, Charles Dodgson - "Lewis Carroll" - John Ruskin and Oscar Wilde), his political views and the importance of his work as unofficial secretary to the Queen.

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Prince Leopold: The Untold Story of Queen Victoria's Youngest Son By Charlotte Zeepvat Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1460548 in Books
- Brand: Brand: The History Press
- Published on: 1998-01-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.56" h x .86" w x 6.40" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 224 pages

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