

Shmanners 408: Queen Victoria, Part 2

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[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to *Shmanners*.

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette.

Travis: For ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello dear.

Travis: How are you?

Teresa: I'm okay. Having mixed feelings, it's the end of the school year. In fact, today, our— is our children's last day.

Travis: [sings] "Although we've come!"

Teresa & Travis: [singing together] "To the end of the road."

Travis: [claps] So, isn't it weird that there's like four songs—

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: — that I would say people within the four-year range of like, let's see, I'm 40. So, let's say like, 38 to 42 is my bet. Like four songs that's like very much associated with like graduation.

Teresa: That one and then Vitamin C [sings] "As we—"

Travis & Teresa: [singing together] "— go on."

Travis: And strangely the ones like don't forget to wear sunscreen. Do you remember that one?

Teresa: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Travis: That was like the spoken word one.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And then there's "Pomp and Circumstance."

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: And those four songs are just totally generational.

Teresa: Well, there's one more I can't remember. Doesn't matter.

Travis: Is the Vitamin C one "Friends Forever," or is that a different one?

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Anyway.

Travis: Any who, that has nothing to do.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: As is grand tradition.

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: This was never intentional, but I've realized now that like part of our structure of the show is like one minute of just rambling, and then saying like, "That has nothing to do with what we're talking about."

Teresa: I mean it is now. We attempted for a long time to do like lead-in jokes.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Of the show, and it was too hard.

Travis: But then we reached like episode 1200 or whatever—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: — and I was like, “I’ve got no jokes left. All my jokes are gone.”

Teresa: But we are continuing our exploration of the life of Queen Victoria. If you missed, listeners, if you missed the first episode of that, go on back and listen to that, ‘cause this is a— it’s a three-parter.

Travis: What was the first episode?

Teresa: The one about Victoria’s birth.

Travis: Right. That tracks.

Teresa: And circumstances.

Travis: That tracks, yeah yeah yeah yeah.

Teresa: Up until her coronation.

Travis: Uh-huh, and then what was the second episode?

Teresa: This is the second one. This is the second one that I’m doing right now.

Travis: Three parts?!

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: I thought that this was the third part.

Teresa: No, [chuckles] we haven’t done the third part yet.

Travis: What day is it? Where am I?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It’s all happening again.

Teresa: But we do talk about her a lot.

Travis: We do.

Teresa: Right? As a very heavily influential person.

Travis: And we have talked about her before 'cause we talked about the love story of Queen Victoria, and I know— Man, there have been Christmas episodes—

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: — that 100% feel like a Queen Victoria episode.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Because much like Emily Post, and maybe even... I would say Emily Post had the biggest impact on like manners.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Her manners and—

Teresa: Especially in like a literary sense.

Travis: Yes, but I would say Queen Victoria, at least in like the European, Euro-centric world, mostly probably America and England. And Canada, I don't know. Has had the biggest impact on like traditions.

Teresa: Mm-hmm

Travis: And culture stuff.

Teresa: Yeah. So. We pick up our girl.

Travis: I picked her up.

Teresa: Where she is. [chuckles] Beginning her own life.

Travis: I put her back down.

Teresa: Living for herself outside of the rule of her mother and John Conroy.

Travis: She's out there drivin' around in— with the convertible top down, wind in her hair, livin' her best life.

Teresa: I mean, maybe. Probably not wind in her hair. I mean, but—

Travis: If it was a windy day and she was in a carriage maybe.

Teresa: Maybe. Alright.

Travis: Reaching speeds of up to 10 miles per hour. I don't know.

Teresa: [chuckles] So very quickly... Victoria becomes pregnant with the first of her several children. Many children, not just several, many. About a month—

Travis: Uh, her bushel of children?

Teresa: A bushel. Her barrel of children. [chuckles]

Travis: Her barrel of children. "You can hook all the children's arms together and hang 'em and swing 'em around like monkeys."

Teresa: I mean, which would heavily influence all of the crown heads of Europe. Anyway.

Travis: Barrel Of Monkeys would influence the crown heads of Europe?

Teresa: No. The barrel of children.

Travis: Ohhhh, okay.

Teresa: About a month after her wedding she became pregnant.

Travis: Huh.

Teresa: She was probably—

Travis: Now I guess my question would be—

Teresa: — pregnant for about half her life. Not half her life.

Travis: So—

Teresa: Half of her time with Albert.

Travis: — she conceived a month after her wedding.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Not a month after her wedding, she discovered she was pregnant.

Teresa: N— I mean—

Travis: Because timing wise, that would be intriguing.

Teresa: They got busy right away, is what we're saying.

Travis: Yeah, busy right away.

Teresa: Busy right away.

Travis: But not like, "Oh, she was three months pregnant—"

Teresa: No.

Travis: "— one month after her wedding."

Teresa: Probably—

Travis: You know what I'm talking about?

Teresa: Probably not.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: They didn't—

Travis: Hey, we're both grownups here, you get what I'm talkin' about, right?

Teresa: Yeah, I do.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: I do. I mean, it would be highly inconceivable because they spent a lot of—

Travis: Ha, literally.

Teresa: [laughs forcefully] They spent a lot of their engagement apart.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Lit— By literal oceans.

Travis: Okay. What does that have to do with getting pregnant?

Teresa: They could have— They could not have—

Travis: They could write a letter to the stork from anywhere.

Teresa: Ah. They could not have conceived out of wedlock. I mean, I suppose anything's possible, but that's not what history would report.

Travis: [sings] "Anything's possible."

Teresa: [chuckles] History reports. Okay. This was not an easy pregnancy. She suffered from constant pain and hormone fluctuations, and probably depression.

Travis: Mm.

Teresa: And we know this because not only are these things completely normal for people experiencing pregnancy, she also wrote extensively in her diary about—

Travis: Yeah, why would she stop writing now?

Teresa: Exactly, about her feelings, about how guilty she felt about being pregnant in general, about letting down the nation, not being—

Travis: Oh my god.

Teresa: Being incapacitated, being you know sick, being ill and letting down— Like there were just so many— Like the milieu of feelings.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right?

Travis: Not that— Hey listen. Not to speak on behalf of pregnant people, God knows, but... If it's bad now. After all the pushing and everything everybody's tried to do to change... you know, stigma and stuff of getting pregnant while having a job, and dealing with, you know, shortened maternal and paternal leave, and all those things. Imagine.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: It's like 18, what, '80s, 1870s, whatever. And it's like, "Oh yeah, you're also the Queen, holding the position that pretty much everybody's like 'Eh, should probably be a man', and you get pregnant like one month into your marriage, and then pretty much continue to be pregnant for the rest of your— you know, for a long time."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And it's like the pressure you would feel.

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: I can't even imagine.

Teresa: She knew that she was grumpy and quick to anger. I mean, which—

Travis: And no man has ever been like that.

Teresa: [giggles] And any person would be, growing a tiny parasite inside them. [chuckles]

Travis: I think that's fair. I think that... every President. Imagine this, folks. Every President, when you're like, "I don't think a woman, they're too emotional to be President." Now imagine that that pregna— President had to be constipated for nine months.

And then imagine how grumpy and emotional he would be. And then compare that to your standard pregnant person, and I think you might— I think y'all know who would come out ahead in that emotional battle. I'm just saying, I'm not saying being pregnant is as—

Teresa: It's not the man.

Travis: I'm not saying being pregnant's the same as being constipated, but I'm not not saying it.

Teresa: [chuckles] Oh boy.

Travis: I'm gonna get in trouble.

Teresa: Ohhh, you're gonna get in trouble. You need to stop this. Okay.

Travis: I'm just saying—

Teresa: [sighs]

Travis: — pregnant people have it hard, and that's a hill I'll die on.

Teresa: [chuckles] Okay. She constantly expresses remorse for being anything but sweet and tender towards her husband, and being not able to rule in the way that she had hoped she would, and all this kind of stuff.

Travis: I feel bad for her in a way that I didn't think I would.

Teresa: Oh yeah?

Travis: In all sincerity, just hearing that. Of like... There's something about— And I mean, you know, you could flower up a personal journal if you know it's going to be, you know, part of history or whatever, which I'm sure as a person raised to be queen, she knew.

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: But... I mean it— I think I would feel different if it was like, “Everybody’s being turds to me. I’m Queen and pregnant, they should be way kinder,” and instead for her to write like, “I feel terrible. I feel terrible, like I’m snapping at people, and I’m not committed, and I should be doing more.”

I don’t know man, you just don’t expect that from somebody who is like raised to be in power, raised, you know, with a silver spoon and everything.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: To be like, “I feel so bad.”

Teresa: But also, I mean, she was under the constant pressure of her mother and Conroy, and her German relatives, they wanted Victoria to stay pregnant. Because it meant that she would be weakened, and never get the opportunity to truly learn to rule on her own.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right? And she wrote constantly about how she wasn’t ready for children and how she didn’t like being pregnant. But like, you know... That is the only other side of the coin that was available, right? There wasn’t like contraceptive.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: There wasn’t like... If a person was doing the thing that adults do.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Then there was a high chance that you would— that a person could get pregnant.

Travis: Well, and once again, not just a thing, you gotta consider the royal aspect of it as well.

Teresa: Exactly, she had to produce an heir.

Travis: 'Cause when you're talking about heirs and family line, right. And especially during a time where, you know, the mortality rate is often inflated because babies.

And you gotta think of like getting pregnant and having a kid wasn't like, "Phew! Alright," so much as it was like, "Well, that's one chance." You know, which sounds very dark, but like that was the thing. You could have nine kids, and maybe three survived to adulthood.

Teresa: And she did go on to have nine children.

Travis: Oh! I was just— That was just a shot in the dark!

Teresa: Five girls and four boys, with 17 years between the oldest and the youngest. We've got Victoria, Albert Edward, Alice, Alfred, Helena or Helena, not sure what the English pronunciation is.

Travis: I'm betting Helena.

Teresa: Helena, Lousie, Arthur, Leopold, and Beatrice.

Travis: Those are very good names.

Teresa: They are.

Travis: Very Shakespearean names—

Teresa: They are.

Travis: — which then makes a lot of sense. I just wanna say one last thing, 'cause it also strikes me how unfair it is to be a queen in this circumstance, who's like the actual head of the country. You know, the monarch, let's say.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Is because when you're King, and you're like, "You gotta produce an heir," and you're like, "Oh, okay," and you get the Queen pregnant and you're like, "Nice!" right? And it's like then you get to—

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: — just keep being king, and you know, probably have affairs and stuff, and go out hunting, and drinking for nine months til the kid's born. And your duty as far as that goes is done. It's wildly unfair. It's just occurring to me. It seems to me that perhaps... people who aren't men have had it really hard for a long time.

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: Is that the case?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Oh man, somebody should do something about this!

Teresa: So, according to royal historian Daisy Goodwin, who is the creator of the PBS/Masterpiece drama *Victoria*, and the writer of a novel based on the monarch's writings, said that the idea of keeping Victoria pregnant completely backfired, because she was very, very strong-willed.

And after, you know, a huge line of old men, they now had a teenage girl running the country. And they were winning. Victoria and Albret made the monarchy respectable and popular, and it had been neither of those things for a very long time.

Travis: I also remember us discussing in the episode about Albert and Victoria's love story that— And this is debated right, because Albert helped a lot in running stuff.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Whenever her pregnancies would leave her like unable to attend a thing, he would go.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And it was like a stretch of his like actual powers.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: As like the Prince Consort or whatever. But— And so it's debated of like was he maybe grabbing a little power? Was he just being helpful and supportive? Up for debate, but they were a bit of a power couple in that respect, right?

Teresa: Absolutely. Absolutely. They were, you know, they were quote "public servants." They were the model of, you know, the bourgeois virtue, right.

Travis: Mm.

Teresa: And so like all of the children were complete— Like were like concrete proof of their strong and passionate union.

Travis: Yup.

Teresa: Right? And specifically Albert was aware of the good PR that a monogamous, devoted family life provided for the monarchy. And so... this is where you get that kind of like happy family portraiting, right.

Travis: Yeeeah. The Christmas card kind of deal.

Teresa: Yup.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: The Christmas card stuff, they wanted to restore respectability. A mistress free, God-fearing family, right, was a very important tool for their public image. Especially to the working class.

Travis: Do you think, and I'm sure that— As opposed to a lot of stuff that we talk about tracing back to a single source, right. But I bet that that had a big influence in like the trajectory of modern like politic—

Teresa: Oh yeah.

Travis: — campaigning now, of like, "I'm a good person, not like this philanderer. Not like this, you know, person over here."

Teresa: You would hope that that would be the case. It doesn't seem to be...

Travis: Well, I mean.

Teresa: Exactly what's happening in today's American politics, but.

Travis: Well, the façade of it tries to happen, for certain.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Right, that image of "I'll tell you what wins. What wins people over is a good God— Not a fun guy, you don't wanna be a fun guy. You wanna be a God-fearing man that people can have a beer with."

Teresa: Mm. Albert understood this image very well. He was very into the newly invented photography.

Travis: Yeah. He seems like a nerd.

Teresa: Definitely.

Travis: Not that photographers are nerds.

Teresa: [chuckles] But he... made it very clear that it was important that the British public see real pictures of their family.

Travis: Mm.

Teresa: Not just portraits.

Travis: And not just caricatures, I'm willing to bet.

Teresa: Indeed. Indeed.

Travis: Especially coming off of some of the previous Georges, where that was some very unflattering images drawn in the newspapers.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Travis: Then saying like, "Let's put a humanized face to us, that when people think of us, they think of us"

Teresa: Yup.

Travis: "And not of some drawing somebody did in a newspaper."

Teresa: Here's the thing, right. We're setting up Queen Victoria as really kind of like the beginning of the image, right? And that image to her was everything. They made sure that they were seen going to church, she dressed very demurely.

They didn't have affairs outside of the marriage, which was very common for the aristocracy before then, and you know, at the time, right? And so she set the fashions with all of these pictures, and seeing and being seen, and all that kind of stuff. We mentioned her in the historical makeup episode.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: For the quote "natural" look, right?

Travis: But it is important to note, along with this, it's interesting because as we've talked about before, what it really shows is like, "Hey, here's nine kids. Just— It's proof of passionate love." But it is like a passionate love contained within the boundaries of like the bedroom and the house and everything.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And then when we're out, best behavior, everybody's cool, we're not bringing it into the streets, you know. You know, I'm a lady in the streets, but a Queen in the sheets, you know what I mean?

Teresa: [provocatively] Mmmm.

Travis: And so, like, she's got that—

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: — kind of dichotomy going, which is indicative of the Victorian Era.

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: When we think about everybody was like, “Oh, the Victorian Era, they were so uptight and wore, you know, covered everything, couldn’t show ankles,” and it’s like, “Yeah man, on the street.”

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: But at a party? In the bedroom? In their own home? No.

Teresa: Absolutely not. So, she’s got this kind of like mother of the nation kind of feel about her, and a lot of the stuff that is reported about her kind of solidifies that image. The idea that she started giving Christmas presents to the servants of the household, right? And that she would be like photographed giving them this— the presents.

Travis: PR.

Teresa: PR, yeah. And that—

Travis: Prince Reagent.

Teresa: — it was—

Travis: Albert I’m talking about, yeah.

Teresa: [chuckles] It was reported that she did the servants’ Christmas before she did her own family Christmas.

Travis: Woah.

Teresa: So the working class was very important to her. She would give very personal gifts to her closest servants, like her dresses and her pages and things like that, right.

And so... this image... is certainly something that we get to see that side of, right? Like the newspapers and the pictures and the reporting and

things like that, but the reason that we know so much about the other side of the coin is the things that Victoria absolutely wrote, right?

Travis: I do think—

Teresa: In her diaries and stuff.

Travis: It's important to note, 'cause it just occurred to me, like we talk about PR.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: I joked about PR, but it wasn't like that was the expectation.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Right? It wasn't like there had been a precedent set of like, "You need to seem like somebody who gives presents to your servants. You need to seem like somebody who values your servants." That was not the precedent for royalty and nobles and stuff.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: So this was her saying— Even if it was PR to appeal to more folks outside of like the aristocracy, it still was a choice she was making, they were making, to appeal outside of the aristocracy.

Teresa: Right, right. We have a lot of her diary and stuff, so we do know that she had a lot of frustrations, Albert had a lot of frustrations, things that didn't go well. They fought, occasionally very bitterly.

Travis: That's love.

Teresa: [chuckles] I suppose. I suppose you're right.

Travis: If you love hard, sometimes you fight hard, but then you make up hard.

Teresa: And—

Travis: And then you get pregnant for some of the time.

Teresa: [chuckles] They did make up very hard, but one of the things that is for— that is very common in her diaries is she talks about how they would argue. Often because Albert was very frustrated, because at the point where their marriage was, there was supposed to be a kind of like hierarchy, right? Where the man quote “was the head of the family,” right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And he was supposed to be in charge, but she’s the Queen of England.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And so she was definitely in charge, and so there was a lot of those frustrations going on.

Travis: Can I stop you right there?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Can you clarify something? The man’s supposed to be in charge?

Teresa: At this point in time, not—

Travis: Oh, oh, okay. Phew! Okay, I don’t wanna be in charge.

Teresa: Please don’t.

Travis: It’s a lot of stress.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: No thank you.

Teresa: So they would occasionally have to go to separate rooms to calm down, and they would pass notes that would start as very angry, and then, you know.

Travis: That’s kinda cute.

Teresa: I mean it is kinda cute, but they would call each other terrible names. [chuckles]

Travis: Well that's not as cute, but they still would pass notes, and that's kinda cute.

Teresa: They'd still pass notes. And some people thought that Alberty kept getting Victoria pregnant on purpose, to keep her in need of his help.

Travis: Yeah, this is what we're talking about, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: There's a bit of like when she was pregnant and couldn't attend meetings and couldn't go to like stuff, he would go, which— [sighs] It's, you know, what's in someone's heart, right? I don't know.

Teresa: Right. But even though Victoria's pregnancies took their toll, and she did give Albert more power than she had thought that she would, right. You mentioned that earlier that he did end up taking over a few things that were not exactly as described in his role.

He was also her very important advisor and confidante. He supported a myriad of public causes, fighting for the military and educational reform, even for the abolition of slavery in the UK. He helped Victoria deal with foreign policy, and they formed a kind of unofficial dual monarchy, right?

Travis: Mm.

Teresa: So that he would be referred to as "the Uncrowned King."

Travis: Can I take control for just a second?

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: How about a word from another MaxFun show?

Teresa: [chuckles]

[transition theme music plays]

Christian Dueñas: In 1979, singer Miki Katusbara cut “Stay With Me,” a love song that hit big in her home country of Japan.

[audio clip of “Stay With Me” plays]

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Podcast Stinger: [sings] *Free With Ads*.

[pause]

Travis: Okay, you can have control back.

Teresa: Thanks.

Travis: You're welcome. Thank you for letting me feel important for just a sec.

Teresa: You're welcome.

Travis: I needed that.

Teresa: Albert was a pioneer of industry and culture, we've talked about the Great Exhibition of 1851.

Travis: Indeed.

Teresa: And this was in effect the first World's Fair, right? And you can see the fruits of this in several museums in London.

Travis: It's really funny to me, 'cause I was talking about I think the 1963 New York Fair, or something like that. World's Fair in New York. And I think it was Bebe was like, "I— Why didn't we get to go to that fair?"

Teresa: Oh. [chuckles]

Travis: And I was like, "Well, first of all, you weren't alive, and neither were your mother or I. Second of all, I don't think it's the kind of fair you're thinking of. And third of all, it was 61 years ago." I would like to go to a World's Fair, they don't do them anymore.

Teresa: They don't.

Travis: Not like that.

Teresa: Not with the internet.

Travis: No, not with the internet. Curse you internet! What good have you ever done? Thank you for listening to our podcast.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay, so. Politically speaking... things were not like smooth sailing, right, for Queen Victoria and the Uncrowned King Albert. For example, several attempts were made on her life.

Travis: What?

Teresa: In 1842, May 29th, Victoria was riding in a carriage and a man aimed a pistol at her, but the gun did not fire. The following day, they—

Travis: That— Can I say? If I found out that my life had been threatened, and it wasn't like somebody saved me or there was an intervening force, but just like the gun didn't go off.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I hate that.

Teresa: In an attempt to catch the assailant, the next day they drove the same road, albeit with, you know, more people and they were faster at it and all— They tried to be as safe as possible, but they wanted to bait the assailant to come back out, and he did. He attempted the next day, a second attempt.

Travis: And who popped up behind him but the real Queen Victoria.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: And she beat him up.

Teresa: And then he was seized and convicted of high treason.

Travis: Okay, can I just say?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Dude, listen. I don't mean to be a Monday morning quarterback. Maybe you didn't know you were spotted on day one. But it didn't work. Maybe... Maybe switch it up and go to a different tree or something? I don't know, man, but maybe don't do the exact same thing again.

Teresa: Two days later, another person attempted on Queen Victoria's life.

Travis: His twin brother.

Teresa: I am not certain of that.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: But his gun was filled with paper and tobacco, so.

Travis: He was— It was a jo— He was like smoking a cigarette?

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: Out of his gun?

Teresa: No. He loaded it improbabl— improperly because he was probably mentally unstable.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: In 1850, she was injured when she was assaulted by an ex-army officer who struck her with his cane. There— She was not perfect.

Travis: Did they not have like Secret Service and stuff?

Teresa: I guess not? I mean, they had soldiers.

Travis: Yeah, I guess.

Teresa: But like... when you are the Queen... you have to make a lot of difficult decisions, and you can very easily make the wrong one.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: In fact—

Travis: And even if you make that right one, doesn't mean everyone's gonna like it. It's like I've always said, you can please some of the people all of the time, you can please all of the people some of the time, but if you try to please all of the people all the time, you can't do it, unless you're me.

Teresa: Ahhh. And I mean, and we've talked about like the colonizing, and we've talked about like just the kind of like— the Victorian like bootstrap ideal.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: And asylums and things like that, right?

Travis: Yeah, workhouses and stuff.

Teresa: Workhouses and like that.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Politically speaking, there was a very large misstep in 1845, during the Potato Famine.

Travis: Oh yes.

Teresa: Irish farmers found their crops to be riddled with a kind of fungus that could make you very sick, even kill you, and it was not just the potatoes, right, that had the fungus. A lot of crops all across Europe

suffered, but... wealthier countries were able to continue a few seasons because they had other resources to sustain their populations. However.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Ireland did not, because under the control of the UK meant that their national government wasn't even in their nation. It was in London, right.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: And the UK regularly exported all of Ireland's other resources, like cattle and grain, leaving the working-class population of Ireland almost entirely dependent on the potato as a crop.

Travis: It reminds me a little bit, if I might get political for a moment, of learning that in Hawaii like if shipments stopped.

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: From, you know, bringing stuff over there, that they would— it would like starve in like a month right, because they were used primarily for growing, you know, like bananas and pineapples and very like limited crops, because people had come over and bought up all the land to grow tropical fruits and stuff, to ship back.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: To the— You know, to the contiguous— to the mainland US. And there was— they were working hard to try to expand agriculture in Hawaii to include things, like livestock and grain and stuff like that, but for a long time it had just been used as like one big farm for like bananas and pineapples and stuff like that.

Teresa: And all of it being exported.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right? So very little coming in to improve things. There's enough to sustain people for a while, but they rely on those imports.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Very similarly. So... there were some measures taken, but it was too little too late. In the four years following it, the one million Irish citizens died, and another million left the country.

Travis: Mm.

Teresa: To find better lives other places, right? And... Victoria was labelled "the Famine Queen" in Ireland.

Travis: Oh boy.

Teresa: There's a lot of anti-monarchy sentiment spread around there at that time, and the rumor developed that when she was distributing aid, she gave five pounds, which would've been about \$800 our money, to Irish relief.

Travis: That's it?

Teresa: And then she gave the same amount to Battersea Dogs Home, the very next day.

Travis: [whispers] Get out of town.

Teresa: That's the rumor, right.

Travis: That's the rumor, oh boy.

Teresa: It's not able to be proved. So... ru—

Travis: Alleged.

Teresa: Alleged.

Travis: That's what you say, allegedly.

Teresa: That's what you say, allegedly, right. But it's kind of fair.

Travis: In case she's listening.

Teresa: Victoria did not rise to the challenge.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: She did not protect the Irish people. She released a letter asking Protestants in England to raise money for their fellow Irish Protestants, but she... really had to be kind of like pushed to do that by the Prime Minister.

She made a donation— This is true. She made a donation to a British agency, that was supposedly supporting the cause, but her donation made things awkward. Because she gave about £2000, in their money. Today that's about 300,000.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: To this British agency that was gonna help Ireland.

Travis: Instead of just giving it to Ireland?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Huh.

Teresa: And... The awkwardness doubles, because no one wanted to be seen giving more money than the Queen, right. They worried that they would outshine Victoria, that there would be some kind of like political response, that, you know—

Travis: So by her saying like, you know, "This is how much I'm giving."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: It stopped anyone from giving more than that.

Teresa: Exactly. For example, the Sultan of Turkey wanted to donate—

Travis: Not just in the country?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: In the world!

Teresa: In the world.

Travis: I didn't think of those ramifications.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I thought you were saying like other nobles in England.

Teresa: No. People around—

Travis: But other leaders.

Teresa: Yeah, people around the world were hesitant to give more than the Queen of the country, right? He wanted to donate £10,000, but the British Embassy denied that desperately needed money, because it would be offensive to the Crown.

Travis: I know we don't curse on this show, but that is horse apples.

Teresa: I know, right.

Travis: It's bull hucky.

Teresa: Mm, to make matters worse, she... kind of put it on the back burner. She was more concerned with relations between France and Britain. Creating ties between them, and—

Travis: I take back a little of what I said earlier about feeling bad for her.

Teresa: Well, I mean—

Travis: A little bit.

Teresa: She's human. She's a— She was a human person.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: And the history of a lot of especially European countries, right, and now also the US.

Travis: And a lot of places.

Teresa: Is about this kind of like political give and take, right?

Travis: Oh see, I thought you were going to say a little bit of like second-class citizenry, of like—

Teresa: I was getting to that. [chuckles]

Travis: Yeah, okay. Of like, “Even though this is in my own area—”

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: “— they’re less important to me than my people.”

Teresa: Yes, yes. And politically, she was more interested in creating these ties with King Louis Philippe I.

Travis: She wanted to expand rather than strengthen.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Right? Is what we’re talking—

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: I mean really that’s what it is. And I say that like from a political standpoint, but mostly she didn’t care about the people that couldn’t help her.

Teresa: Yes. And this, rightfully so, spread revolutions.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Throughout Europe in 1848. In response to the potato failure, and also needing better working conditions, and greater freedom of the press, and all kinds of stuff, right?

And the French monarch, who [chuckles] really benefitted a lot more from the English intervention than the English did from the French, wound up actually seeking exile in England, from his own country.

Travis: Well.

Teresa: I mean seeking solace in England when he was exiled.

Travis: So, the person that she'd been trying to like strengthen ties with got exiled.

Teresa: Yessssss.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yessss.

Travis: Good move.

Teresa: And so, she did a bad job.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: With that Potato Famine, she really did.

Travis: To put it lightly, I would say. I— I wanna make it clear, we— this show often takes a light tone, but we're talking about like one million people dying.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: She F-ed up.

Teresa: Yeah, she did a bad job.

Travis: She was a little bit heartless there. A lot a bit heartless.

Teresa: And it didn't really pay off for England to do the whole like civil relationship with France either. Because there was a— So there was Napoleon III on the throne at the time, and he had been Britain's closest ally in the Crimean War.

And he visited London, and then they vi— then Victoria and Albert visited Paris, and then... once he was back in Versailles, there was attempt— an attempt on his life made with a British bomb. [chuckles]

Travis: Oh boy.

Teresa: It was a diplomatic crisis, right? But not the kind of crisis where a million people die.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: We've got all kinds of these things happening. She is then plagued by the resignation of the Prime Minister, she has another assassination attempt.

She is trying to marry their— her oldest daughter off to the Prince of Prussia, and you know, we were ho— Prussia is Germany, right. Modern day Germany.

She didn't like that her children were leaving her, and the dawn of the 1860s was really probably a very low point in Queen Victoria's personal and political life.

Travis: Is that where we're gonna leave it for this ep?

Teresa: That's where we're gonna leave it.

Travis: Okay. We got one more part coming. Thank you, this is— There's so much more that I didn't know that I didn't know. You know what I mean?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: That I didn't know that I didn't know.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: You know?

Teresa: I do know.

Travis: Do you?

Teresa: I didn't know, but now I do.

Travis: Ahhhh! Thank you so much for joining us, and thank you to our researcher Alex, without whom we could not do the show. Thank you to our editor Rachel, without whom we could not do this show, and thank you for listening. I don't wanna do the show without you, and sometimes Teresa tries to make me.

Teresa: That's not true.

Travis: And she's like, "Record the episode and we'll never publish it," and I'm like, "Baby, that doesn't make any sense. The people need this."

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: "They live for this, and we pass notes with angry names about each other through the wall."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But we're so glad to be here. Thank you for listening. We've got some *My Brother, My Brother And Me* live shows coming up, and some *Adventure Zone* stuff planned. And you can go check all of that out at bit.ly/mcelroytours.

You can also go to mcelroymerch.com for all the great McElroy merch. Now I kinda wanna make a sticker that's like the outline of Queen Victoria's face that says like, "Lady in the streets, but a Queen in the sheets."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I kinda like that. Kinda like that idea. What else, Teresa?

Teresa: We always thank Brent "Brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found.

Also thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners Fanners*. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today.

As always, we are taking your topic submissions, your questions, your idioms. Just, you know, say hi to Alex, she reads every email sent to shmannerscast@gmail.com.

Travis: And that's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

Travis: You've been listening to *Shmanners*.

Teresa: Manners, shmanners. Get it?

[outro theme music plays]

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