

The Little Princesses: The Story of the Queen's Childhood by her Nanny, Marion Crawford

Marion Crawford , Jennie Bond (Foreword)

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Once upon a time, in 1930s England, there were two little princesses named Elizabeth and Margaret Rose. Their father was the Duke of York, the second son of King George V, and their Uncle David was the future King of England.

We all know how the fairy tale ended; When King George died, Uncle David; became King Edward VIII- who abdicated less than a year later to marry the scandalous Wallis Simpson. Suddenly the little princesses' father was King. The family moved to Buckingham Palace, and ten-year-old Princess Elizabeth became the heir to the crown she would ultimately wear for over fifty years.

The Little Princesses shows us how it all began. In the early thirties, the Duke and Duchess of York were looking for someone to educate their daughters, Elizabeth and Margaret, then five and two years old. They already had a nanny - a family retainer who had looked after their mother when she was a child - but it was time to add someone younger and livelier to the household.

Enter Marion Crawford, a twenty-four-year-old from Scotland who was promptly dubbed Crawfie by the young Elizabeth and who would stay with the family for sixteen years. Beginning at the quiet family home in Piccadilly and ending with the birth of Prince Charles at Buckingham Palace in 1948, Crawfie tells how she brought the princesses up to be Royal, while attempting to show them a bit of the ordinary world of underground trains, Girl Guides, and swimming lessons.

The Little Princesses was first published in 1950 to a furor we cannot imagine today. It has been called the original 'nanny diaries' because it was the first account of life with the Royals ever published. Although hers was a touching account of the childhood of the Queen and Princess Margaret, Crawfie was demonized by the press. The Queen Mother, who had been a great friend and who had, Crawfie maintained, given her permission to write the account, never spoke to her again.

Reading *The Little Princesses* now, with a poignant new introduction by BBC royal correspondent Jennie Bond, offers fascinating insights into the changing lives and times of Britain's royal family.

The Little Princesses: The Story of the Queen's Childhood by her Nanny, Marion Crawford Details

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From Reader Review The Little Princesses: The Story of the Queen's Childhood by her Nanny, Marion Crawford for online ebook

Mary Playford says

This is a wonderful insight into Queen Elizabeth II and Princess Margaret's childhood. It was sad to see how cold they were towards their governess in the end. Her account about their upbringing was beautifully written. If this book was frown upon, I guess, the hint about Princess Margaret not being as smart as her sister is what the royals don't want us to know. I don't think that is a big deal.

I liked the bit during the war. I am not from that time period, so it was great to take a ride with the author to see what was happening back then.

Rosemary says

An inside look at the upbringing of the Princesses Elizabeth (current Queen of England) and Margaret Rose by their governess. This is a charming and intimate narrative of the life of England's royal family both before and after George VII became king, with an emphasis on the warm relationship between the parents and children. The abdication of Edward VIII, the transition to Buckingham Palace, the coronation of George VII, the difficulty of the war years, Elizabeth's engagement to Philip, and other large events are covered, but what is most interesting and touching are the stories of the little princesses' personalities and characters. Elizabeth, called Lilibet in the family, is dutiful and serious while Margaret is a bit spoiled, a brilliant mimic, and a girl with a flair for comedy. Margaret also has a creative side that shows in her talent for fashion, interior decoration, and music. Both girls are highly intelligent and love horses and dogs. How they are limited by their royal roles, how their privacy is impinged upon, and how duties take a toll on the entire family is made clear, yet the love of the British people for the royal family also comes through. This book, which has not a bad word to say about the royal family, was written in 1950 before those working for the royal household had to sign nondisclosure agreements, so the likes of this book will not come along again.

Leigh says

I couldn't believe it when I heard that Marion Crawford was shunned by the Royal Family after writing this memoir...it is nothing if not a beautifully written, complimentary and loving portrait of Queen Elizabeth and Princess Margaret Rose as children and of their family. I enjoyed it immensely.

Catherine Amos says

Anyone looking for a muck-raking tell-all about the British royal family, need not pick this one up. Though

it caused quite a scandal when it was originally published in 1950 *The Little Princesses* can best be seen as a love letter to then Princess Elizabeth and her younger sister Margaret. Crawford gives the public a rare peek behind the curtain usually reserved for palace insiders and family, and shows us what it was like to put her own personal life on hold to dedicated her time and talents to help raise the two royals. The memoir spans the years before their uncle's abdication and conclude with the birth of Prince Charles. We get the scoop on what daily life entailed, special events, and the educational routine of the heirs to the throne. On the whole this is a most positive portrait of the royal family that can satisfy the curiosity of many a hard-core Anglophile.

Jane says

I had wanted to review this for a long time and I found this is in an National Trust second hand book shop

This was written with tact, taste and in a different time.

The reader is saddened to think that the royal nanny was shunned by the royal family. I do believe she thought she was writing this with permission- why do I think that- during the war and the threat of invasion it is widely know that Elizabeth and Margaret lived at Windsor and there are some accounts that after a day in the East End - the king and Queen stayed at Windsor also- they would have wanted to be together if they needed to make a quick getaway. I think as a devoted family and for the dangers they may have encountered in blitz torn central London they would have been together. So if this was the case the nanny was writing what she was told to write.

The reader gains insight into the lives- but only just and written with a cosiness and professionalism- this was not intended to give away secrets or show the royal family in a different light- this was a member of staff who loved the family and I believed they did too, even Queen Mary confided in the nanny.

It is a beautiful book and looking at this now knowing of kiss and tell stories, royal family members airing their laundry in public, this has innocence written all over it.

Why this back fired on the nanny one will probably never know, and why she was so cruelly shunned.

The irony was on her death, she sent back all the letters she received - showing a devotion to the end.

Jamie Collins says

In 1933 Marion Crawford was hired by the Duke and Duchess of York to be a governess for their children, Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret. Crawford served the royal family for 17 years and after she retired, beloved by the royals but apparently not enriched by them, she wrote this memoir. They responded by shunning her for the rest of her life.

The book is undoubtedly a breach of their privacy, but a mild one by today's standards. There's nothing scandalous in it. Crawford appears to have been fond of the King and Queen and of the children, and is steadfastly complimentary about them, even if some of her comments on Margaret are of the sad, "bless her heart" variety. It's possible Crawford intended criticism by writing about the sacrifices she made in her

personal life - including postponing her own wedding for years -but it's hard to interpret these confessions. It's not clear if she was anxious to continue serving the royal family or pressured to do so.

The writing is simple and saccharine. Crawford seems overly anxious to ensure the reader of the royal family's regard for her, showing the text of numerous affectionate letters from Princess Elizabeth and Queen Mary. It's enough to make you wonder if she anticipated their reaction to the book or was shocked by it.

The beginning is fairly dull, as it's mostly cute anecdotes about the little girls. It gets more interesting after the Duke of York becomes King and the family moves into the inconveniently enormous Buckingham Palace. During the war Crawford lives at Windsor Castle with the Princesses, where they practice donning gas masks and put on pantomime shows to raise money for the war effort. We get a nice glimpse of the lives of the royal family during WWII. (Connie Willis listed this book in the bibliography for her WWII/time-travel novels *Blackout* and *All Clear*, which is how I heard of it.)

The book wraps up with the courtship between Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip, followed by their wedding (Crawford finally manages to find time for her own wedding, but doesn't yet get to live with her husband!) and the birth of Prince Charles. Rather sadly, Crawford ends by presenting a "cherished" letter from Queen Elizabeth (later the Queen Mother) thanking Crawford for her devotion to the Princesses and assuring her of their family's future friendship.

Christina says

This book caused quite a scandal when it was published 50 years ago. It was the first real expose on the royal family. I enjoyed reading about little Queen Elizabeth's upbringing, especially how the royal family coped during WWII. Marion was her nanny up until Elizabeth's wedding day, but she was banished forever from the royal family after she wrote this book, which was sometime after Prince Charles was born. She was able to witness extraordinary events in Britain's history and I think this document is an important record of royal memories from an outsider's point of view.

Kate says

A friend mentioned that this book meant a lot to her while she was growing up, which piqued my interest though I've never been an anglofile, have not watched the PBS shows about the British monarchy or Downton Abbey. (I don't watch TV in general, anyway). Told by Crawfie, governess to the young Elizabeth & Margaret, it's a fascinating look into the domestic life of this family. It follows them through WWII, the princesses' maturation as they begin to take on the responsibilities of their roles, and Elizabeth's courtship and marriage to Prince Philip, and birth of their first child.

Lisa says

Please don't think I didn't love this because it took me so long to read. Quite the opposite, I wanted to savour it!

I admit I am a tad daggy and into the royal family now. Yes it's because, like everyone else, I loved The Crown, but I defend myself by saying I was pretty into them before that. Now it's just... crazier.

Reading about young Elizabeth and Margaret was enchanting. Such normal, funny little girls. I cried my way through the chapter about Elizabeth and Philip (just let them be together!!) My one complaint is what happened to our governess, Crawfie, who wrote this charming and beautiful memoir. Because of cause, the royal family banished her after being part of their family (and giving up her own life) for years. I know this is their policy, such as the Queens recent scandal with her lingerie provider, but with crawfie it felt so cruel. She died a very lonely old lady, and they never reached out to her again. Very sad.
4.5 stars.

Veronica says

I loved this book!!! I couldn't stop reading it (i read it in 1 evening), it was so interesting. It is written by the Queen's nanny and gives an insight into the Queen's childhood. I loved the close relationship between the Queen, her sister and her parent's.

Jennifer says

3.5 stars. This was really interesting to hear about queen Elizabeth from her teacher. The writing was a bit repetitive because it was adapted from a journal. Recommend!

Elizabeth Prata says

I didn't finish the book. I read about half. It was sweet, clean, and innocuous. There was absolutely nothing objectionable in the part of the book I'd read as far as language, violence, or situations. But sadly, the book was also uninteresting.

While I do enjoy sweet and clean books, I know there is a way to write them without being boring. I had the strong sense that the author knew the impact the book would have, being the first "tell-all" on the royal family ever. Piercing that thick veil of privacy was a momentous event, and I believe the author deliberately wrote a simpering and sweet memoir in order to dampen the reaction. From reading about the results of her endeavor, her tactic did not work. She was effectively fired, evicted from the gift of a home the Royals had given her, shunned, never hearing from any royal again. As the inquiry to write the book was coming about, Queen Elizabeth wrote to Crawford explicitly asking her not to write about their life.

The book half that I read was filled with page after page of anecdotes about the girls (Elizabeth and Margaret) and their frocks. And their enjoyment of hobby horses. And their hijinks playing pantomimes with mummy and daddy after dinner. And how they loved cookies in the kitchen. And back to how cute they looked in their frocks. And how Elizabeth was serious and smart and Margaret was exuberant and playful. Page after page of this, over and over. I gave up. All that is fine, and I enjoyed it, but 150 repetitive pages of that was enough for me, so I quit.

I understand that the first print edition contained letters from the girls and more historical notes, beefing up the book and adding important context. Stripped of these, I think the book suffered.

Perhaps the story picks up after the war or later, but I made it to the abdication and afterwards, and nothing was mentioned of Wallis Simpson and barely anything of the abdication itself. A glaring omission rendering the book a simple story of a glossed over memoir from a governess who chose to remember, or to write, things only as perfect through an Instagram softening filter.

Georgina says

A fascinating account of the early childhood of Queen Elizabeth II and her sister Margaret, from the woman who took care of them. Although the publication of this book (which is rarely anything less than doting and affectionate) was considered an gross intrusion by the royal family, and caused a rift between them and Marion Crawford, it provides a valuable insight into the family at the time and remains a fascinating history of a way of life which has all but disappeared and the early years of the longest reigning British Monarch.

Amy Isham says

The first 'tell all' exclusive about the royal family was very tasteful and not at all salacious. The governess of the then Princess 'Lilibet' and Princess Margaret reveals the life in the fishbowl of royal children. I was interested in what sort of education a future queen of England receives and this didn't disappoint, as well as a cautious revelation of the little girls' characters. Also fascinating was the war time life of royalty, although referred to as 'frugal' by the governess as they moved from palace to victorian country house(in need of renovating), the girls enjoyed a lot of time outdoors, games and freedom after spending the morning in study.

Philip says

This is an incredible book. I had no idea of how "royalty" lived and this tells the tale. It is hugely adoring yet still the author was ostracized for it. That is also amazing. Details like castles being cold without central heat, for example, are fascinating. And the courtship of Elizabeth by Philip. Or Margaret's tempestuous personality. Just fascinating.
