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THE BOY WHO LIVES IN A PALACE

By **HELEN WORDEN ERSKINE**



He doesn't know it yet, but one day he'll rule Britain. Right now Prince Charles is like most six-year-olds — mischievous and curious

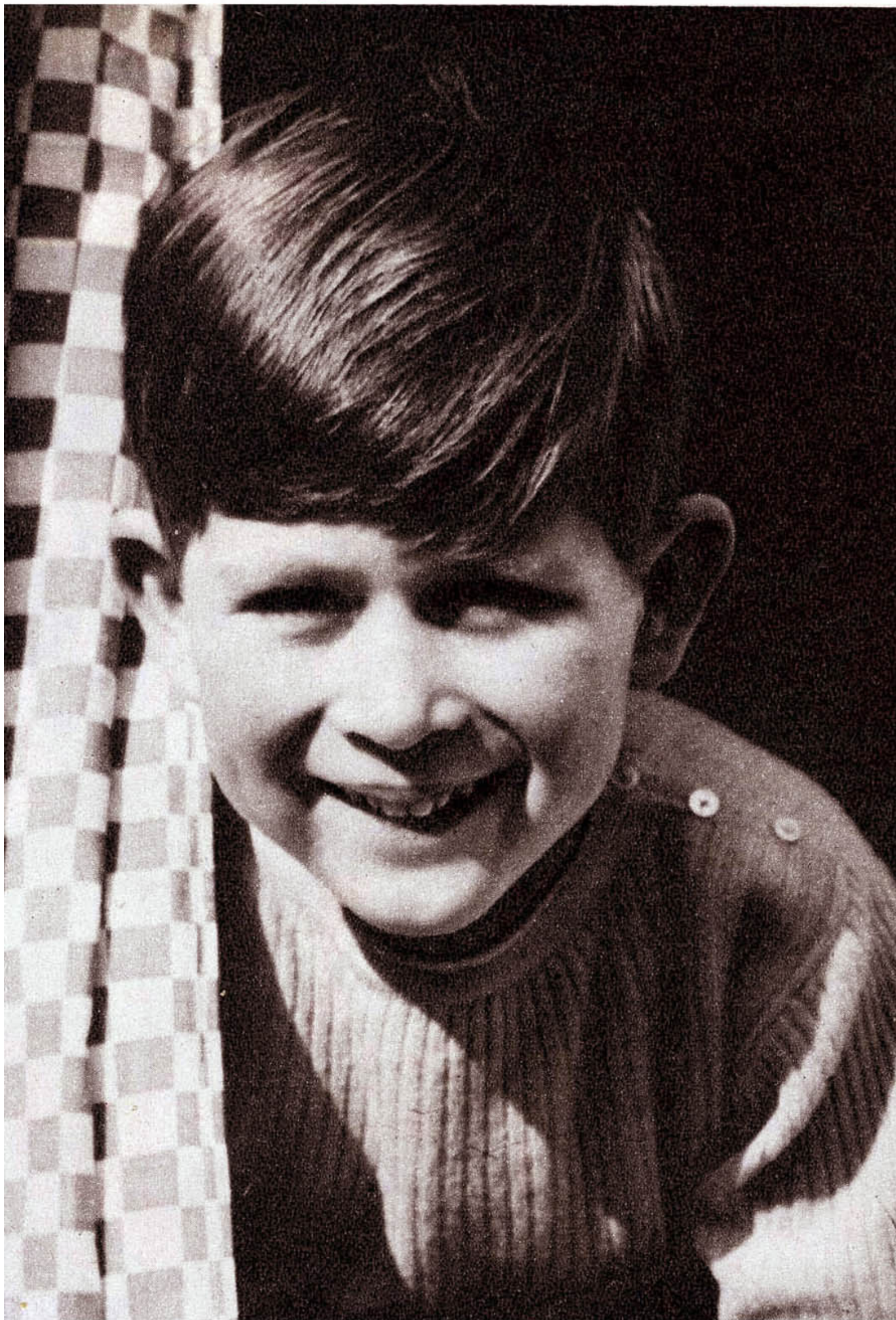
London

THE three children of Mrs. David Bethell, niece of the queen's Lord Chamberlain, got an extra hard scrubbing one day not long ago. A very special playmate was coming for an afternoon of games at their Basingstoke farm.

Punctual to the minute, an enormous black Rolls-Royce drew up at the door. Out jumped a sturdy youngster with pink cheeks and lively blue eyes, his head cocked eagerly. Hatless, he wore his thick brown hair parted on the side and brushed low on his forehead, much as the boys do at Eton. A double-breasted reefer, sleeves a bit short, fitted his solid frame oversnugly. His white socks had slipped down, his stout brown one-strap shoes showed wear and tear.

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Almost at once Mrs. Bethell noticed that he had something on his mind. She asked if there was anything he particularly wanted to do.

"Yes." His tone was businesslike. "Inspect the nursery."

The Bethells obliged, but their guest was not yet finished. "I hear you have chickens," he said. "May I see them?"

Under the eye of wary hens and a belligerent rooster, the chicken coop was toured. Only then did the youthful brigade halt. "I guess there's nothing more to inspect," said the visitor with obvious relief. "Now we can have some fun."

His Royal Highness, Prince Charles Philip Arthur George, Duke of Cornwall, Duke of Rothesay, Earl of Carrick, Baron of Renfrew, Lord of the Isles, Prince and Great Steward of Scotland and heir apparent to the British crown, was merely doing what he regarded as his duty. After all, didn't all his family—his mummy, the queen; his papa, the Duke of Edinburgh; his Aunt Margot, Princess Margaret, and his granny, the queen mother—inspect wherever they went?

Learning How a Hearing Aid Works

Prince Charles, who was six on November 14th, already senses the shadow of his future responsibilities. Even at this early age he is a definite personality, alert, poised, extroverted—and the possessor of an inquiring mind, as he demonstrated when he met the U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain, Winthrop Aldrich. All eyes, he stared at Mr. Aldrich's hearing aid. "What's that?" he asked. The ambassador took it off for the little prince to examine. "How does it work?" asked Charles. Mr. Aldrich fitted the hearing aid over the youngster's ear. "Thank you," Charles nodded, after a moment. "Now I know."

He is never at a loss for words. When he met Mr. Aldrich's predecessor, Walter Gifford, he said, by way of introduction, "I just found your country on the map today."

In recent years, the function of royalty has changed. The head that wears the crown is no longer strictly ornamental; nowadays, kings and queens work for a living. Charles's mother is at her palace desk by nine thirty each morning—when she isn't traveling about the world, with her Prince Consort, as a sort of supersalesman for the Empire.

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Charles's grandfather, George VI, astutely foresaw the trend when he said, "We've got to be a firm, not a family." Despite his scant years, Charles is already launched in his training for chairman of the board. In that training, the ancient and splendid trappings of British royal tradition still play a part, but in the main Charles is unmistakably a child of the mid-twentieth century.

In his five-room nursery suite at Buckingham Palace is a TV set; over his bed is a microphone so sensitive that it instantly registers, in the quarters of both the chief nurse and palace detectives, his slightest cough, as well as his breathing. He has a private telephone connected with the main palace switchboard. It holds no mystery for him; he began talking into it when he was so small he had to stand on a chair to reach it. At that age the calls were usually for Mummy or Papa in some far-off place. Now he has grown enough to use it normally, although he's still impulsively apt to ring the chef at odd hours and say: "Send Charles ice cream, quickly!"

Mechanical devices intrigue the little prince. He clammers over the fire engines which are part of the equipment on all the crown estates. He is keen about his mother's private plane and his father's helicopter, and begs to go out, rain or shine, to see Papa take off from the palace lawn. Once, when court photographer Marcus Adams was taking his picture, Charles climbed a chair and peered into the lens. "Everything's upside down," he reported, surprised. Then he ran back to the sofa where he'd been posing and stood on his head—"to make it right for Mr. Adams," he explained.

Despite his parents' air-mindedness, Charles has not yet flown. In his journeys among the half-dozen fabulous palaces and castles he can call home his choice of a coach-and-four may be either a Rolls-Royce or a special train bearing the royal coat of arms. On his recent trip to Malta, his first outside Great Britain, he traveled on the queen's new 412-foot, \$2,000,000 royal yacht Britannia.

On his travels, the young prince is always accompanied by his own retinue: Superintendent T. J. Clark of Scotland Yard, chauffeur Jim Cheevers, chief nurse Helen Lightbody, personal nursemaid Mabel Anderson, governess Katherine Peebles, a palace policeman and, as a rule, General Sir Frederick Browning, Comptroller of the Queen's Household.

As Duke of Cornwall (his most important title), Charles is entitled to an annual income from farm products and rents equivalent to around \$300,000 a year. He will draw only \$36,000 of the total annually until he is fifteen; from then until his eighteenth birthday he will get another \$90,000 a year, after which the entire income will be his.

The Duchy of Cornwall, the property which produces this fortune, lies in agricultural Cornwall in the southwest of England, and in Lambeth, the vast slum area in southeast London. I visited the duchy farms. Plump cattle grazed in the meadows and smoke curled from neat white cottages. Not a fence was out of order, not a crop unharvested. A Cornisher told me: "The duchy holdings stretch far as the eye can see. It's the best land in all of Cornwall."

Lambeth, by contrast, is a place of dark tenements, dim pubs and dingy alleys. Men with caps pulled over their eyes lounge against sooty brick walls, swarms of children play in bomb craters, women gossip in doorways.

He Saves Part of His Slim Allowance

Charles is not yet aware of being Duke of Cornwall or of the tremendous income that goes with the title. The only money he now sees is the allowance of three shillings a week (42 cents) his parents give him. Part of this he banks in a postal savings account; the rest he spends on sweets and little presents. Like his great-grandmother, the late Queen Mary, he is fond of browsing in the tiny antique shops of Windsor town. In 1953, in one of them, he found the china horse he gave his mother at Christmas.

Charles is also unaware that he is colonel in

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Prince Charles (right) and other members of the royal family return to London after Scottish vacation. Others are (from left) his mother, Queen Elizabeth; his aunt, Princess Margaret; his sister, Princess Anne, and his father, the Duke of Edinburgh

chief of the Cornwall Light Infantry, and that the Welsh are already calling for him to be created Prince of Wales—a plea his mother has not heeded because she thinks him too young for the elaborate ceremonial involved. He does know that his mother is queen, but takes the fact in his stride. Recently someone referred in his presence to Her Majesty. "Who is Her Majesty?" he asked. "The queen," he was told. "Oh," he said, "you mean my mummy."

The young prince was only three when King George VI died. Did that mean, the boy asked, that Grandpapa would no longer come to play with him?

"Yes," his grandmother answered.

"Where did he go?"

"To heaven."

"Is he happy there?"

"I believe so," said the queen mother.

Charles thought a moment. "I'll miss him," he said.

His mother's coronation, later, was the first important state ceremony the boy watched. Perched in the royal box at Westminster Abbey, he saw the Archbishop of Canterbury place the crown on Elizabeth's head. The memory lingers on in a game he calls "Coronation," which he plays with his little sister, Princess Anne. Taking the role of archbishop, he will pick up a stick and say gravely, "This is the scepter."

In his upbringing, the boy is being subjected to two powerful forces which are almost diametrically opposed. The queen, by rearing and inclination, is a strong traditionalist. Her husband, by contrast, is the product of a freewheeling early life and an unorthodox education at Gordonstoun in Scotland, a school which holds that it is good for the sons of the wealthy and powerful to experience some of the problems of life.

His papa is Charles's idol; he sits on his knee in preference to Mummy's lap. Mummy calls him "Charles"; Papa refers to him as "the kid." The Duke of Edinburgh says: "He must learn to mix with other kids." It was the duke who recently ordered boxing lessons for his son. It's a good guess that it was the queen who had the lessons put off on the ground that the prince was still too young.

The Duke May Establish a Precedent

The Duke of Edinburgh wants his son to go to a public school (in England, the equivalent of our private school). His wish contravenes previous practice; no heir to the throne has ever been sent away to boarding school. In theory, the queen and her ministers have the last word on Charles's educational future; in practice, her strong-minded consort may influence the decision.

The issue is not yet crucial. English boys do not start boarding school before they are nine, so Charles has three years of grace. But wherever he gets his training, it is certain in general to follow one basic guide line. "I hope," Prime Minister Winston Churchill once remarked, "that among those principles that will be instilled in him will be the truth that the sovereign is never so great as when his people are free."

At present the life of the royal heir is a curious intermixture. He follows the daily routine of any upper-class English youngster—but in a truly story-book setting. His London home, Buckingham Palace, contains 600 rooms, 10,000 pieces of fur-

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Charles tries to make friends with one of the apes at Gibraltar during royal family's visit

niture, 300 clocks, 250 telephones and a staff of 260 servants. Charles's own world within the palace is the nursery suite on the third floor of the right wing. It contains his bedroom and bath, Princess Anne's bedroom and bath, a schoolroom, sitting room and dining room.

The suite's color theme is duck-egg blue and white. The furniture is chintz-covered, the carpeting monotone gray. The walls are painted with a special dull lacquer; the moldings and ornamentation are picked out in gold. Included in the *décor* are some chests designed for storing toys. Charles has been taught to tidy up each day. Once, when a photographer was taking candid shots of him at play, he suddenly began collecting his toys. "I'll have to put these away before Mummy gets home," he explained.

His day begins at six thirty, when he is awakened by Bennett, the nursery footman, bearing a glass of fresh orange juice. It ends promptly at 7:30 P.M. Breakfast, with Anne in the nursery dining room, consists of porridge, an egg, sometimes bacon, and a glass of milk. For luncheon he has meat, fish or chicken, with vegetables and a steamed pudding. At four thirty there is a repast of milk or cambric tea (weak tea and milk), with bread-and-butter sandwiches, jam or cookies. The prince eats at a regular table in a chair adjusted to his size.

As a Pace Setter for Boys' Fashions

Although Charles still needs help with his morning bath, he can dress himself. He is already a pace setter in fashion. Shortly after the coronation the British magazine *Tailor and Cutter* listed him among England's ten best-dressed males. Its editor explained to me:

"His Royal Highness had already drawn sartorial attention with his baby bow ties and deerstalker caps. His double-breasted wool cardigan and crossovers were also good numbers, so in he went. It was impossible to exclude him. The *Sun News* in Melbourne featured our choice, and as a result millions of mothers were milling through Australia's stores clutching photos of Prince

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Charles and demanding clothes for their children like those he wears."

The queen is said to have designed her son's tie and cap, as well as his famous double-breasted buttercup-yellow reefer. The most recent addition to his wardrobe is a little white sailor suit, bound in blue, an exact copy of those worn by the crew of the royal yacht Britannia. I learned (although it's a well-guarded palace secret) that Charles's tailor is Rowes, outfitter to most of England's noble small fry, and his barber Emile of Sloan Street, hairdresser for the last 25 years to all the women of the royal family.

While it will be a few years before he starts going to school (if he does), formal education for Charles began last year when his father decided—and his mother agreed—that it was high time for him to be occupied at more serious pursuits than nursery play. He has an hour-and-a-half formal lesson beginning at nine thirty each morning in the nursery schoolroom. (He and Anne spend the previous hour with their parents.) His governess, Katherine McLean Peebles, a Scot whom Charles calls "Mispy," begins the lesson with a simple Bible story. Recently Charles proved that he pays attention. A family friend, just returned from Cairo, happened to mention Egypt. Charles dropped his blue plush Teddy bear and scampered across the room, catching the guest by the arm. "Did you see Moses?" he demanded.

Gentle-spoken Mispy carries the instruction of her small charge beyond the formal lesson period by drawing him into conversation, provoking his mind into action at table or on walks. She works jigsaw puzzles with him and reads to him of Eskimos, Indians and cowboys.

At three, Charles could recite the alphabet and print his name in bold, childish capitals; his parents taught him, through the use of A for Apple, B for Boy blocks. He learned to count with a counting frame made of beads strung on wires; he learned to tell time by running to the nursery window and studying the face of Big Ben, the famous Parliament Building clock, which is visible across Birdcage Walk. Wherever possible he learns by doing—his father's theory of education.

The TV set in the nursery was the queen's idea for another form of education. She hoped her small son would enjoy movies of the royal tour. Beyond a momentary surprise, he was unimpressed at the sight of his mummy and papa on the screen, but when he saw himself patting the monkeys at Gibraltar he was enchanted, and begged to view the film again.

His mother and father respect his questions. Before they left on their tour last year, the queen gave him a big map, explaining that if he studied it he might follow her and Papa every step of the way. Whenever they stopped they sent him picture post cards. With Mispy's help he found on his map the town from which each card came.

Tootling on Bagpipes Causes Anguish

The young prince shows an imaginative artistic sense, painting in vivid splashes of color and signing the masterpieces "Charles" in bold, printed strokes. His taste for music is limited to nursery-rhyme records, although he likes to tootle on some miniature bagpipes which were presented to him by the Balmoral Castle staff—much to the anguish of those within earshot.

His sister, being only four, is barred from the schoolroom. This discrimination pleases Charles, as it might any normal boy jealous of an older brother's prerogatives. He acts the older-brother role in other ways, too. Once, when he had carefully arrayed his toy soldiers in formation, she knocked them down. Eyes snapping, he smacked her. Chief nurse Lightbody—called "No-Non-sense" for good reason—sent him to his room, to be kept there until he apologized.

He refused to say he was sorry. "Why should I," he demanded of his father, "when it wouldn't be true?"

Anne's provocative blue eyes, flaxen curls and irresistible smile attract people instantly, a situation Charles often finds irritating. On one occa-

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Prince Charles and his sister, Princess Anne, stopped off at Malta in 1954 on their way to North Africa to meet their parents, returning from a world tour. Here the children are with "Uncle Dickie"—Earl Mountbatten—and Lady Mountbatten

tion Charles often finds irritating. On one occasion when he felt that she had held everyone's attention too long, the heir to the throne suddenly and loudly told the most preposterous fib he could think of. "I shave now," he said.

Brother and sister, together with children of court officials, take dancing lessons once a week in the big ballroom of the palace. Madame Marguerite Vacani, who taught the queen and Princess Margaret two decades ago, instructs the youngsters in the waltz, fox trot, one-step, rumba, square dance and Charles's favorite, a Scottish country dance called the Gay Gordon Reel.

Perpetual Motion in a Royal Palace

When he's not pinned down by lessons, Charles is always in action. He runs, rather than walks; madly tricycles through palace corridors; paddles vigorously, like a tadpole, as he and his father plunge in the palace pool. Around the 40-acre palace gardens he drives a miniature red electric-propelled automobile—a hand-me-down from the queen, given her by her father.

In his games and interests he is all boy. He has a quick eye for the uniforms of the numerous military units which are part of the pageantry of court life. He can tell at a glance whether a soldier belongs to the Household Cavalry, Coldstream Guards or Queen's Own. He is also quick on the proper salute; at the same time he shows the influence of his father's famous informality. To him, General Sir Frederick Browning, Master of the Queen's Household, is "old boy." Lieutenant Commander Michael Parker, R.N., his father's private secretary, is "Mike."

He has a weapons collection consisting of the pistol of the original Bonnie Prince Charlie, eighteenth-century claimant to the throne, and an ancient Arab dagger given him by Prince Hassan of Transjordan. A special palace favorite of his is Sergeant Kelly, his father's private detective, who enthalls him with tales of the exploits of the brave London police. The Duke of Edinburgh keeps him informed on adventurous news stories, such as the ascent of Mount Everest, and describes his own trips.

Charles enjoys pitching a tattered tent on the grounds at Balmoral Castle in Scotland, where he spends his summers, and playing at mountain climbing with his father. Like Papa, he enjoys pheasant shoots—which for him are limited to thrashing the bush, aided by a guide. His favorite outdoor sport is deerstalking, which he engages in at Richmond Park, an hour's drive by car from Buckingham.

He owns two ponies, Cloudy and Juniper, and a rabbit named Rex Ermine. When the family moved from Clarence House to Buckingham Palace after Elizabeth became queen, she noticed that her son was strangely silent. At Clarence House he had run around pressing bells, banging doors and singing at the top of his lungs. Now he was subdued. The queen asked if he felt ill. He shook his head. "But something must be wrong with you, Charles," she insisted. "You're so quiet."

Finally he said, "I miss Rex."

"Where is Rex?"

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"They left him behind." Tears filled his eyes. Within fifteen minutes the white rabbit was being whisked by royal courier from Clarence House to the palace—where he lives in splendor to this day.

Inexpensive Camera Is Favorite Toy

Gifts of pets and toys flow in from all sides. The queen accepts only those which are formally presented. When she was still a princess, she and her husband returned from their Canadian tour with 25 cases of toys for their children, ranging from tractors to Wild West outfits. After the world tour last year, the stock of toys again soared. The gift which made the biggest hit with Charles was an inexpensive box camera, presented by the photographers who covered the tour. He lugs the black box along wherever he goes. The results of his camera artistry aren't too clear, but all his pictures are action scenes—like the Mediterranean Fleet full speed ahead, which he photographed from the yacht *Britannia* as it steamed out of Malta harbor. His parents had to keep on the alert to prevent him from tumbling overboard; he was forever climbing rails to get a better shot.

The years ahead will hold much traveling for the prince. Within the British Isles, he has already established a circuit. Weekends are spent at historic Windsor Castle, 21 miles from London, where, in the Royal Park, he and Princess Anne have a miniature dreamhouse, gift of the Welsh people to the queen when she was a child. All its five rooms are charmingly furnished for children down to the last small chair and china dish. Above its front door is inscribed, *Y Bwthyn Bach*, Welsh for The Little House.

If the queen mother, or Granny, as Charles calls her, happens to be at Sandringham, her Norfolk estate, he may go there. With Princess Margaret (whom he calls Margot and regards as something of a contemporary), Granny is his great favorite in the family. Like grandmothers everywhere, she dotes on her grandson.

Not long ago she was guest of honor at a reception in the Middle Temple, a kind of law society in London. One of the barristers, an amateur magician, demonstrated a trick. "You must show me



Sir Gerald Creasy (right), governor of Malta, escorts Prince Charles to hotel at Malta. Prince and his sister went to island aboard their mother's new \$2,000,000 yacht *Britannia*

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how you did that," she exclaimed. "I want to learn it to surprise my grandson."

He explained that he would be betraying magicians everywhere if he gave away the secret in public, but offered to show her in private. "Come ahead," she said, beckoning him to the far end of the room. She mastered the trick, and astonished Charles with it not long afterward.

Of all the royal residences, Charles prefers Balmoral, the fabulous summer castle in Scotland. I watched his arrival at the railroad station near there last summer and saw an instance of his boundless curiosity. En route from train to royal automobile, he paused to examine the strange sporran—the fur purse attached to the kilt—worn by Captain Alwyne Farquharson, Laird of Invercauld and the queen's neighbor. The sporran was the head of a wildcat with glowing amber eyes. The prince stared at it fearfully. "What's that?" he asked.

A Lesson in Conquering His Fears

The captain bent down to explain. The wildcat had been shot on the Invercauld moors. He invited Charles to stroke it. Charles did so, at first hesitantly, then confidently. Having conquered his fear, he bowed gravely to the captain and his wife and climbed in the royal car after his sister.

Charles himself does not yet own a kilt. The Scots view this sartorial deficiency with approval, apparently reading into it an evidence of frugality on the queen's part. The royal gray, red and black plaid is expensive; there is no point in investing in a kilt for her son while he's shooting up like a young sapling. The queen measures Charles once a month by marking his height on the nursery wall. On his fifth birthday he stood three feet nine inches. Now he is close to four feet tall.

At Balmoral, as elsewhere, Charles is surrounded by reminders of his ancestors. At the castle entrance there is a statue of his great-great-great-grandmother, Queen Victoria, a solemn bronze effigy of great-great-great-grandfather Prince Albert by the steps, and another in the hall under the main staircase.

In Crathie, the nearby church, Charles is again confronted with the past; here his ancestors worshiped. The fact is apparently not oppressive to him. Though his manners are ordinarily good, one Sunday at church he stuck out his tongue at his future subjects. Another day a fascinated congregation watched the head of a small animal move across the railing of the royal pew. Then they saw the queen mother shake her head, pick up the animal, and place it on the seat beside her. Charles had been playing with her fox scarf.

An equally endearing glimpse of a normal, mischievous boy not too weighed down by royal raiment came during the prince's visit last spring to Malta, which he visited with his parents as they neared the end of their globe-trotting. The people of the Mediterranean island watched in admiration as Charles, with supreme poise on this his first trip beyond the home islands, waved greetings, gravely shook hands with gold-braid-decked officials, protectively helped his sister whenever she stepped uncertainly, and observed his mother through binoculars as she reviewed troops.

