

# CAST OF THE LATE QUEEN VICTORIA'S HAND



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## HOW A LITTLE LADY WHO LIVES IN ALAMEDA CAME TO HAVE A CAST OF THE LATE QUEEN VICTORIA'S HAND PRESENTED TO HER

**T**HE royal hand of Queen Victoria—the hand that signed more history-making dispatches than that of any of the world's monarchs—the hand that swayed the scepter of Great Britain—that hand is preserved in cast and belongs to a little Alameda girl.

The great Malherbi cast it. It was in the year 1847 that he received from H. R. H. Prince Albert the special command to come to Windsor Castle for the purpose of casting the honored and beloved hand which had been given to Prince Albert on the happy day of the great marriage ceremony. It was his hand, by rights, he said, and he wanted it modeled.

So Signor Malherbi betook himself to the castle and went to work with such pains that the cast was almost spoiled. Signor Malherbi owned afterward that he was what we call "rattled." In the end he rallied.

It was so beautiful a hand! His Italian enthusiasm gurgled and bubbled and gushed. It was indeed the hand of a queen.

White and dainty, he said it was, as befits aristocracy. Firm and forceful, besides, as befits the ruling power of a great nation. And the beauty of the hand appealed to the artist eye. It was so snowy and the nails were so delicately rosy and the flesh was so firmly plump. The fingers tapered, too—not quite so much as the artist eye would have delighted in, but there had to be some executive ability in the shape of the finger tips for the sake of the palmists. They could never have permitted Queen Victoria to be a dreamer.

The cast was entirely successful and the Prince Consort treasured it as long as he lived. Malherbi was wise enough to make another for himself, and it is that cast of his own that is now in California.

Like many artists, he had a checkered career, and his downs usually exceeded his ups. It was in the stress of one of these downs that he reached the point of parting with the beloved hand cast. It went hard with him—it was one of his works that he was especially proud of—but the landlady pressed.

He was just about wrecked physically in his late days and, unable to do new

work to support himself, he had to dispose of such of his old treasures as he could get any money for. Among them went the hand.

A brother sculptor bought both mold and cast of him. After Malherbi's death, which took place in 1855, the man destroyed the mold and so the cast was the only representation left, except the one which was made for Prince Albert. The cast has been preserved, although passed from hand to hand down the years, and at last it was presented to little Miss Charlotte W. D'Evelyn of Alameda.

She is a Queen's birthday girl, and she raised the British flag half-mast high at the memorial services to Queen Victoria held in this city last March. The cast of the hand was sent her as a birthday gift, and it is a gift that she will treasure as long as she lives.

The work on it displays the master craft of Malherbi, and the excellent state of preservation after its fifty-four years of adventure indicates the superior quality of the material used. It is found upon boring into the thicker portions of the model to have become crystalline in density.

The exact form of the finger nails, the delicate curves of the back and palm, the subtleties of the lines, even the hint of dimples, are all preserved. A palmist can take the cast as it is to-day and tell tales

of Queen Victoria's thought-world with almost as much precision as he could have done from her living hand.

Show it to him and tell him that it is the hand of Susan Smith, who was an unsuccessful seamstress, and he will tell you that he doesn't believe you. The owner of that hand could not have been unsuccessful, he will say. There is too much will power in the broad thumb joint—broad far beyond the average in woman. See it alone and it might be taken for that of a man.

The joint of logic is long, too. It is supplemented by a deep, clean-cut headline that keeps bravely away from the mount of imagination, whither other headlines of the sex are wont to tend.

These are all qualities more pertaining to a man than a woman. Add to them the tremendous ambition and independence in the forefinger, the determination in the back-turned thumb, the business ability in the little finger, and you might fancy that here was a "new woman" with a vengeance.

But in spite of all her masculine virtues she was essentially feminine. The hand is small. The fingers taper toward a love for the fine arts, and there is a woman's tact in their tips.

The most striking and significant thing about the hand-reading is in the "cutting edge" of the palm. There, says the palm-

ist, is a "lack, a total lack, of fight." The owner of this hand would be of a most peace-loving disposition.

How is that for a reading?

But, after all, what the palmist has to say matters very little now that the hand has written its own history and the time of prophecy is past. Victoria lived to show what the hand could do. It fulfilled the duties of the Queen and of the woman. It pinned medals of honor upon the breast of the soldier. It was outstretched to the poor and the suffering. It signed papers that directed national currents of affairs. Diplomats hung upon its gestures. Strong men were swayed by them.

If the little Alameda girl who has its counterpart thinks of all these things when she looks at it perhaps it will live to point many a moral, even if it is only a "cast hand."

When Mark Twain lived in Buffalo he made the acquaintance of some neighbors under peculiar circumstances. Leaving his house one morning he saw something which made him run across the street and remark to the people who were gathered on the veranda: "My name is Clemens. My wife and I have been intending to call on you and make your acquaintance. We owe you an apology for not doing it before now. I beg your pardon for intruding on you in this informal manner, and at this time of day, but your house is on fire."