

If the Royals come here to live

By Constance Scrafield

Meghan Markle, as a private person with a relatively 'ordinary' background, was never going to be prepared for either life as a Royal nor for the abuse of the British press. She was already a celebrity as an actress, starring in the popular series, Suits. This level of fame was minor, though, compared to the world-wide notoriety, along with the heavy-handed conventionality and etiquette of Royal life.

The house of Windsor no doubt needs the fresh blood that marriage with outsiders can bring into the centuries of a staid and interbred family. This may be partly why Charles married Diana, in a wedding that was televised and watched by hundreds of millions around the globe. Theoretically, Diana was a good match. Her father was an Earl and hers was an elevated education. As children, she and Queen Elizabeth's younger sons, Andrew and Edward, played together at Sandringham.

So, Diana was not a stranger to the Royal family nor ignorant of some of the protocols that applied to them.

Yet, her life in the Queen's court and the hounding she endured from the press throughout her life, while she was married to Prince Charles and, certainly, after they divorced, ended in her death, in an underpass, in the car in which she was travelling, chased by paparazzi, in 1997.

Diana brought glamour and light to the Royal family and they had mixed feelings about that. Once she and Charles divorced, she continued to be the centre of British and international attention, not always kindly and frequently extremely intrusively.

She was also Harry's mother.

Who can control where the heart will lead us? You can meet a person from across the room even before the introductions and know things will never be quite the same again. Harry fell in love with Meghan, so he said, when he very first met her. However much he was a most eligible bachelor, photographed in nightclubs around the world, he was also a 'prince of the Realm' and knew full well the dangers of such an environment for anyone not born to it.

Apparently against the advice of her friends, Meghan accepted Harry's proposal and went to London to learn how it is done 'being the Duchess of Sussex. Like Diana, who should have been her mother-in-law, it wasn't easy and it didn't go all that well.

Even so, she might have found a way to deal with it, for the sake of her husband and the knowledge that, in coming with him to be his Duchess, she was duty-bound to find her way.

Meghan is not a dewy-eyed girl, a head full of Disney fantasies; she is in her late thirties, married and divorced once already, an actress capable of handling her life in the world of show-business. She's a grown-up and, now, a mother. The pounding she has suffered from the irrational press in Britain: racist, sexist, critical of her every move, the 'intense scrutiny,' as she called it herself, has sent her fleeing from the U.K. to Canada, breaking all the protocols by breaking away from the family 'with Harry and Archie..

The depth of their anger must have gone deep because they told the world their plans to 'pull back from being senior royals' before they consulted with the Queen and the rest of the family. They planted a bombshell.

As an alternative, Canada is the obvious place for them to come. We are still very close to Britain, as much of our heritage demonstrates, but 'I hope!' our press is more considerate and less outrageous. We don't hound celebrities at restaurants: we let them have their dinner in peace. Vancouver (they seem to be looking in that direction at the moment) has weather that is less harsh than other parts of the country and it is very beautiful.

Yes, well, no matter how down-to-earth they might want to be, Meghan going off on her own to visit a women's shelter in Vancouver this week, she can never be just 'one of the people' again because her husband's royal status and, by extension, hers and their son's, is what it is, anywhere they are in the world. Harry cannot simply abandon all that he is. They can come to Canada and be welcome, but they necessarily come with conditions that keep them exceptional. It is hard to know what it would take for them to be excused from 24-hour security; from the pressures of international press; from being kept separate from the neighbours who might otherwise have become friends.

To just stroll in a public park with lots of other people ? throw a ball for their dog; fly a kite with little Archie ... with no watchful guards and lurking press ...

Perhaps, there are ways to let them come and live in peace; let them work and be part of this country's community.

And maybe not.