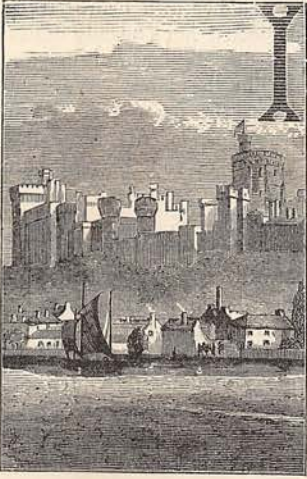


THE POWERS THAT BE: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN.



It is often forgotten that, though it is usual to speak of the Premier as the first officer of State, the Queen herself is entitled to that position. Her Majesty is, speaking literally, as much a Minister of State as any member of the Cabinet; she is not less the servant than she is the Sovereign of these realms.

Few people have any just idea of the work-a-day life that

the Queen leads; the popular notion that she has everything done for her, and does nothing for herself or others, is as far removed from the reality as anything can be. Whatever else Sir Theodore Martin's "Life of the Prince Consort" has done, it has, at any rate, made this point perfectly clear, that Royalty has its duties as well as its privileges, and that Queen Victoria, from the day of her accession onward, has never shrunk from the tasks which Sovereignty exacts.

What these tasks and duties consist of, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to describe in detail. As Mr. Bagehot says, "There is no authentic blue-book to tell us what the Queen does; the House of Commons has inquired into most things, but has never had a committee on 'the Queen.'" But from the biographies of eminent statesmen, and especially from the "Memoirs" and "Leaves" which Her Majesty herself has given to the world, we get glimpses and hints of "what the Queen does," which enable us to dispense with the aid of any "blue-book" on the subject.

We are apt to imagine that when the Prime Minister speaks of "taking Her Majesty's pleasure" upon any matter, he is merely using a figure of speech; but this is not the case. He actually does what the phrase implies, either in the course of a personal interview, or by means of a letter addressed to the Queen. Wherever the Court may happen to be, whether at Balmoral, or Osborne, or Windsor, telegraphic communication is maintained with all the great offices of State in London, and the messages received thence, and from other quarters, never reach a smaller daily total than fifty.

The Queen's letters are conveyed to her in despatch-boxes, by Queen's messengers, from all the chief Departments at Whitehall. The official autograph communications of foreign Sovereigns are enclosed to the Queen in these State-boxes. On the

arrival of any despatch-box, the contents are examined by the Queen herself.

It is well understood that no correction or erasure must appear in any paper which comes under Her Majesty's eye, and that no paper must be folded. Very frequently, private letters from the Premier, the Foreign Secretary, and other Ministers, accompany the despatches sent for the Queen's inspection. All such documents commence with one formula, which is as follows: "Lord —— (or Sir ——; or Mr. ——) presents his humble duty to your Majesty." If the Queen approves of the draft despatch, a note to that effect is appended to it, but it not seldom happens that Her Majesty wishes alterations to be made in the phraseology employed, or the arguments used. In that case, a memorandum, written either by her own hand or by her dictation, is enclosed to the Minister by whom the draft has been submitted.

It may interest our readers to have placed before them such a Royal memorandum as we now refer to. In the "Life of the Prince Consort," the original document is exactly reproduced; it is in the Prince's handwriting, but shows several corrections and additions made by the Queen herself before it was forwarded to the Foreign Office. An historical interest attaches to this document; it was the last thing the Prince ever wrote, and there is good reason to suppose that it had considerable influence in leading to a pacific solution of the difficulties which occurred between this country and the United States in connection with the *Trent* affair.

"WINDSOR CASTLE, December 1st, 1861."

"The Queen returns these important drafts, which, upon the whole, she approves; but she cannot help feeling that the main draft—that for communication to the American Government—is somewhat meagre. She should have liked to have seen the expression of a hope that the American captain did not act under instructions, or if he did, that he misapprehended them; that the United States Government must be fully aware that the British Government could not allow its flag to be insulted, and the security of her mail communications to be placed in jeopardy, and Her Majesty's Government are unwilling to believe that the United States Government intended wantonly to put an insult upon this country, and to add to their many distressing complications by forcing a question of dispute upon us, and that we are therefore glad to believe that upon a full consideration of the circumstances of the undoubted breach of International Law committed they would spontaneously offer such redress as alone could satisfy this country, by the restoration of the unfortunate passengers, and a suitable apology."

Although, during Her Majesty's lifetime, we may not see another despatch noted in her hand, or learn how far her advice has been given at critical periods in our country's history, it may safely be assumed that such a memorandum as the above is not unfrequently found in the despatch-box of the Queen's Foreign Minister. The fact is that the Queen's experience of State affairs is now more extended than that of any statesmen who sit at her Council, so that, while it is their duty to tender advice to Her Majesty, it is her Royal privilege sometimes to give advice to them, which they are thankful to receive, and often

glad to act upon. In this way the Queen performs a most important part in the work of the State.

The Queen has her own Parliamentary reporter, and whether she is in the far North, or at the Isle of Wight, she is acquainted with the proceedings of both Houses long before any of her subjects. On ordinary occasions brief abstracts of the debate are telegraphed to Her Majesty, but should the discussion be of exceptional importance, fuller reports are sent, and continued down to the close of the debate, and the taking of the division. Besides the telegrams received by Her Majesty from both Houses, the leader of the House of Lords and the Prime Minister in the House of Commons write her a short account of the debate. Outside the walls of Parliament, the Queen is probably the first to know that Ministers have gained a victory, or suffered a defeat. In time of war, too, the Queen is kept fully informed of the progress of events day by day, and hour by hour, and every despatch from the Commander-in-Chief to the War Office is forwarded direct to Her Majesty by special messenger.

When the Princess Royal was born, the Queen is reported to have said in a private letter, "I think our child ought to have, besides its other names, those of 'TURKO-EGYPTO,' as we think of nothing else!" But this, we believe, is a myth. The supposed allusion is, of course, to one of the first political difficulties which arose after the Queen's marriage; it is mentioned only to show how State affairs must constantly invade the sanctities of domestic life in a Royal household. It cannot be otherwise. As Mrs. Oliphant remarks, "Politics are the occupation and profession of the Royal worker, as literature is of the writer," and during the five-and-forty years of her reign the Queen has been a most diligent and con-

stant student of public affairs. Since the dark December in which the Prince was taken from her, she may have withdrawn from much of the bustle and many of the pleasures of life, but it is the universal testimony that, even when her own heart-burden was heaviest, she never neglected her Queenly duties, but did her work day by day as faithfully as any labouring man or woman in the land. We shall scan the *Court Journal* in vain for the record of Her Majesty's daily toil as Head of the State, but we know that her life is one of toil, of real hard work, like that of him

"Who binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house, or digs the grave."

One of the functions of Royalty—one which "becomes the throned monarch"—is that of speaking for the whole nation in times of disaster or special distress, and how well the Queen of England fulfils this high duty the daily press is witness. The words "message from the Queen," a "letter from the Queen," are as familiar to the reader as, alas! are the words "appalling disaster," or "terrible explosion." Simplicity and sincerity are the characteristics of these Royal messages; they are always looked for on the occurrence of a great calamity—and always welcomed!

But it is not to her own subjects alone that Her Majesty, speaking for the nation, sends grateful as well as gracious words of sympathy. It is no secret that the Queen's letter to Mrs. Lincoln gave greater pleasure to the American people than any single act of the British Government gave them all through their time of trial; there was no mistaking its motive or its import; it was a spontaneous act of intelligible feeling in the midst of confusion and dire distress, and it touched and bound together in a moment the hearts of two great peoples.

WHAT TO WEAR.

CHIT-CHAT ON DRESS. BY OUR PARIS CORRESPONDENT.



AS the winter season is upon us we begin to see what among the many materials prepared by manufacturers the public intend to regard with a friendly eye, for what the dressmakers propose is not always what the wearers approve. Skirts are considerably wider, and consequently show to better advantage the fashionable fabrics, which are really worth being seen. There never have been more gorgeous silks, velvets, and brocaded plushes,

which glimmer and glisten as the light catches their brilliant surfaces, and made up with plain stuffs they show up to much better purpose. You will be preparing all kinds of evening dresses for winter gaieties.

For parties there is nothing so durable as a net dress. White or yellow or black are most worn, but a disposition is shown for dark colours. Box-plaitings round the skirt, or a huge ruche and puffings, the tunic caught in horizontal folds across, and a waterfall drapery at the back, these are an easy and stylish arrangement. The bodices are low, and generally pointed back and front; with draperies in the way of a berth, or a full bodice with belt. Mouseline de laine, nun's cloth, India muslin, Surah, and many kinds of soft silks are in vogue, and make up into really useful gowns for evening wear. These have ruches, box-plaitings, or puffings at the edge, and then straight flounces gathered or plaited and embroidered, with much lace, draperies edged with lace falling at