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IN MEMORY OF QUEEN VICTORIA.

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INTRODUCTORY.



FTER a long career spent in the service of her people, our beloved Sovereign Queen Victoria has passed to her eternal rest. Her existence has been prolonged beyond the ordinary span, but the old are like a tower undermined, and "all the varied pathways of life lead to death."

In her has gone from us the most conspicuous figure of her time. Of all human beings on this planet no one has been better known, oftener spoken about and criticised, possessed of greater influence, or held in greater affection and esteem. The event has plunged us into mourning and left a great gap in our national life.

And not only has the Queen been of national importance as the central figure of the whole English-speaking race. She seemed to stand in a sort of personal relationship to each of us, so that our feeling now is a feeling of personal loss. We had read so much about her; she had herself, in fact, in her published writings taken us so much into her confidence that she appeared to be almost like a near neighbour who was friendly both in word and deed, and who gave herself no airs.

To women she has always been of deep and special interest. She was the greatest woman in position the world had ever seen, and more than that, was a model wife, one of the best of mothers, and a pattern to everyone whose wise ambition it is to be the leading spirit in a happy home.

As Queen, mother, and friend of her people, her Majesty commanded, so long as she lived, our loyalty, respect, and affection, and we willingly now pay tribute to her many virtues. No doubt it is difficult at the moment to realise the true proportions of things, and to speak of her with the calm and deliberate criticism which will be possible when she is farther removed from the living world. But it needs no gift of prophecy to predict that the verdict of history will be: Here was a great queen and a good woman, to have lived under whose rule was a blessing, and whose influence for good on all coming after her can hardly be exaggerated.

The reign of Queen Victoria will always be famous for its wonderful advances in nearly every line of progress. Whether we consider things material or intellectual, it has indeed formed one of the most memorable epochs of British history. It has been a reign inspired by ever-widening ideals, and added unceasingly to the sum of national happiness, national intelligence, and national morality. There has been a great growth of territory and population, an expansion of industry, an extension of commerce, an advance in science, united with an increase of prudence and tolerance and kindly feeling amongst all classes.

When her late Majesty came to the throne, railways and even steamships were in their infancy, there was no such thing as the electric telegraph, penny postage was unknown, innumerable inventions and discoveries, by which life in our day is made easy, had no existence.

With this immense progress the name of Queen Victoria will be associated in all time coming, and posterity will not unreasonably conclude that a great

deal of the prosperity of the Victorian era was due to the presence of a sovereign who in her public life was conspicuous by her good sense, and in her private life was remarkable for her good example.

CHAPTER I.

LEADING EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF QUEEN VICTORIA.

A STRIKING feature in the life of the Queen is that she was bountifully favoured by Providence. Everything seemed to turn out well for her. She was fortunate in her mother, in her husband, in her children, in her advisers, and she occupied the throne, as we have just said, at a period remarkable for progress, invention, and discovery. A lucky star shone on her birth and illuminated her path from her bright and simple girlhood to her venerable old age.

She had sorrows; yes, many of them; but what career was ever free from grief? Monarchs have to undergo the discipline of tears as well as humbler folk, and, if they are to enjoy good fortune, must be content to take it with an allowance of sorrow; they cannot get it without.

Apart from the duties discharged by her as Sovereign, the Queen led a life in which comparatively few events have been outstanding and conspicuous. A great mass of details, interesting because connected with a good woman and a great Queen, have been collected by the industry of countless observers, but as for the leading incidents, they are soon told.

Queen Victoria was born at a quarter past four on the morning of the 24th of May, 1819; "the little May flower," her German relations used to call her. She was the only daughter of the Duke of Kent, the fourth son of George III. Her mother was the daughter of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, and sister of Prince Leopold, who afterwards became King of the Belgians. It was a second marriage; the first husband of the Duchess of Kent was the Prince of Leiningen, by whom she had two children.

The fact that her mother was a German—the Duchess hardly knew any English when she first came to this country—throws considerable light on the disposition and tastes of the Queen, and should be kept in mind by all who wish to arrive at a just appreciation of the character of our late Sovereign.

The influences brought to bear on her childhood were all favourable. It might have been a misfortune that her father, the Duke of Kent, died when she was only eight months old; but if she never knew a father's care, she enjoyed the watchful guardianship of one of the most sensible and devoted of mothers.

It was not, however, to the Duchess alone that the Queen was indebted for her early impressions: she owed much to her grandmother, the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg, and to her uncle, Prince Leopold. The Prince was a man of conspicuous ability and long-sighted clearness of judgment. It was at his home at Claremont that his niece passed some of the happiest days of her childhood.

The grandmother, Sophia, Duchess of Saxe-Coburg, was equally remarkable for her energy and mental power. It was from her that in all probability the Queen inherited no small portion of her own abilities.

From her grandmother also, it has been remarked, her Majesty derived her love of natural scenery—her delight in the rugged heights of Scotland and Switzerland, in the sea-views of the Isle of Wight, and the union of sea and mountain on the sunny shores of the Mediterranean.

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The Princess reached her legal majority on the 24th of May, 1837, she being then eighteen years of age. Four weeks after that date William IV. died, and at a little after five in the morning of the 20th of June the Princess was roused out of bed to learn that the sceptre had passed into her hands. "Poor little Queen!" said Thomas Carlyle at the time. "She is at an age at which a girl can hardly be trusted to choose a bonnet for herself, yet a task is laid upon her from which an archangel might shrink."

True this undoubtedly was; but the fact remains that from the first the Queen discharged the duties and responsibilities of her position with dignity and discretion. Much interest was taken in her accession, and the critical eyes of the whole nation were upon her, but the youthful Sovereign soon won love and esteem even from the most exacting.

It quickly came to be recognised that, however inexperienced, she was well-meaning and high-principled. "Among her Ministers and her household," we are told, "the unaffected simplicity, the thoughtful kindness, and the quick sympathy of the young Queen, united as they always were with the dignity, discretion, and reserve that befitted her station, won the hearts and commanded the respect of all who came within the range of her personal charm. Outside that circle and among the general public, her prudence, deliberation, and self-restraint, her freedom from prejudices, her marked determination to listen only to the counsels of her responsible advisers, removed as time went on any misgivings that might have been entertained as to her acting as a wise head of a great nation."

The Queen went to dissolve Parliament for the first time on the 17th of July, 1837—a week after the funeral of William IV. A sentence or two may be quoted from the address which she delivered on that occasion, of double interest now that her work is done and the voice which uttered them is silent for ever.

"I ascend the throne," she said, "with a deep sense of the responsibility which is imposed upon me; but I am supported by the consciousness of my own right intentions and by my dependence upon the protection of Almighty God. It will be my care to strengthen our institutions, civil and ecclesiastical, by discreet improvement wherever improvement is required, and to do all in my power to compose and allay animosity and discord. Acting upon these principles, I shall upon all occasions look with confidence to the wisdom of Parliament and the affections of my people, which form the true support of the dignity of the Crown and ensure the stability of the constitution."

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The coronation of the Queen took place on the 28th of June of the following year in Westminster Abbey. It was an imposing ceremony, which has been so often described that we need not linger over it here.

At the beginning of her reign the Queen had by her side a sagacious councillor with whom King Leopold had provided her, Baron Stockmar. She was also fortunate in having the guidance of Lord Melbourne, who, in his conduct as guide to the youthful Sovereign, whatever might be his faults as a statesman, was scrupulously loyal to his Queen, his opponents and the nation.

But even with this advantageous tutorship, the first

two years of her reign were to the Queen a trying and perilous period. "A worse school for a young girl"—and the words are those of her late Majesty herself—"or one more detrimental to all natural feelings and affections, cannot well be imagined than the position of a queen at eighteen without experience and without a husband to guide and support her."

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The husband, however, was soon to come. It had long been a favourite project with the Queen's grandmother, the Duchess Sophia, a project formed when the parties concerned were mere children, that the Queen should marry her cousin—almost exactly of the same age as herself—Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. This hope was shared by the favourite son of the Duchess, Prince Leopold, and it was by him that in 1836 the idea of such a union was first communicated to the future Queen.

The affections of the Princess Victoria were engaged from the first, but on her coming to the throne she discovered that she was in no haste, and even talked about postponing marriage till she was some years older.

In her widowhood the Queen looked back with dissatisfaction on this inclination to delay. "The Queen," she said, "cannot think without indignation against herself of her wish to keep the Prince waiting for probably three or four years, at the risk of ruining all his prospects for life, until she might feel inclined to marry."

But all her objections had disappeared by the middle of October, 1839, for on the 15th of the month, we find her writing to Baron Stockmar that everything had been arranged that morning between herself and the Prince. "I feel certain," adds the Queen, "that he will make me very happy. I wish I could say I feel as certain of my making him happy, but I shall do my best."

The announcement of the projected marriage was well received by the nation, Sir Robert Peel giving expression in Parliament to the general feeling when he said, "I cordially hope that the union now contemplated will contribute to her Majesty's happiness and enable her to furnish to her people an exalted example of wedded bliss."

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And that is just what it did. The marriage was celebrated on the 10th of February, 1840, and the Queen entered on what was to prove a twenty-two years' companionship with a wise, amiable and affectionate husband.

Courts are not generally favourable to married happiness, but the Queen's married life was quite ideal—a perfect union of two in one. The relation in which the Queen and the Prince stood to each other was singularly beautiful, a model for all husbands and wives. The writer of the "Introduction to the Speeches of the Prince Consort" thus describes it:—

"The tastes, the aims, the hopes, the aspirations of the royal pair were the same. Their mutual respect and confidence went on increasing. Their affection grew, if possible, even warmer and more intense as the years of their married life advanced. Companions in their domestic employments, in their daily labours for the State, and, indeed, in almost every occupation, the burdens and difficulties of life were thus lessened more than by half for each one of the persons thus happily united in the true marriage of the soul."

The Prince had sound moral qualities, and his intellectual gifts were of the highest order and had been carefully trained. Making every allowance for exaggeration, it is clear that he was a man of singular

capacity, rare attainments, and with a genius for the art of modern kingship.

His purity of motive, largeness of view, and unselfishness of aim made him the best of all possible husbands, and the good influence exercised by daily communion with him has been acknowledged by no one with more frankness and earnestness than by her late Majesty. At the time of her marriage she was distinctly inferior to her husband in the qualities most needed in her high station. His aid and counsel came as a great help, and it may truly be said that the successful queenship of the Queen and her universal popularity with her subjects dated from the day of her marriage.

The Prince from the first acted with remarkable prudence, laying down a line of conduct for himself which only an unselfish man could have pursued. He determined to decline personal distinction and to sink his own individual existence in that of his wife, because in so doing he could best share and lighten her burdens. So far as State affairs were concerned, he put himself merely in the position of an assistant to her, as if she were everything and he himself nothing.

The welcome aid which he rendered may be seen from the following passage in a letter written by the Queen to King Leopold in 1852:—

"Albert," she says, "grows daily fonder and fonder of politics and business, and is wonderfully fit for both—showing such perspicacity and such courage, and I grow daily to dislike them both more and more. We women are not made for governing, and if we are good women we must dislike those masculine occupations."

Whilst the Prince acted thus sensibly in his relations to the Queen, the Queen acted by him no less wisely in her capacity of wife. In the domestic circle he was undisputed master. The Queen had always very clear views as to the right and duty of the man to be the head of the wife. She was of the opinion of Carlyle as expressed in a letter to the lady whom he afterwards married: "The man should bear rule in the house, and not the woman. This is an eternal axiom, the law of nature, which no mortal departs from unpunished."

The history of the twenty-two years which followed the Queen's marriage was full of incident. As the active head of a great country our late Sovereign during this bright period of her life was much before the public. Space would fail were we to try to enumerate all the ceremonies in which she took part, all the illustrious visitors whom she entertained, all the events on which she had a marked and lasting influence, the visits she paid with her husband to the Continent, to Ireland, to Scotland, the founding of her famous residence at Osborne and of her still more famous castle at Balmoral.

The Queen's home-life was a busy one. Children soon added to the liveliness and interest of the household, and the family of the Queen and the Prince at last numbered nine in all—four sons and five daughters. "We all have our trials and vexations," said the Queen in one of her letters, "but if one's home is happy, then the rest is comparatively nothing." She spoke from experience. Never in the history of this country has there been a happier royal household than that of which she and the Prince formed the head.

But how little lasting is happiness. The end of it all came in the winter of 1861. On the 14th of December of that year the Prince Consort, who had caught fever—how, it was never clearly made out—passed away into another world.

This formed the great calamity of the life of Queen

Victoria. She lost one whom she truly described as "my husband, father, lover, master, friend, adviser, and guide." It is difficult to conceive of a position of greater sorrow or one, indeed, more utterly forlorn than that which was now her lot.

All joy was shattered and all pleasure in work was gone. For a time she led a life of strict retirement, shrinking, as she naturally did, from all state ceremonial. For this the Queen was often most unfairly censured. With a mixture of cruelty and injustice it was once asserted at a meeting of working men that her Majesty was so absorbed in her grief as to have lost all sympathy with her subjects.

This baseless charge was met by Mr. Bright in a passage of much truth and pathos. "I am not accustomed," he said, "to stand up in defence of those who are possessors of crowns; but I could not sit in this place and hear that observation without a sensation of wonder and pain. I think there has been, by many persons, a great injustice done to the Queen in reference to her desolate and widowed position. And I venture to say this, that a woman, be she Queen of a great realm or be she the wife of one of you labouring men, who can keep alive in her heart a great sorrow for the lost object of her life and affection, is not at all likely to be wanting in a generous sympathy with you."

Two great events belonging to this period, events which will ever be remembered when the tale of her Majesty's life is told, are the Jubilees of 1887 and 1897. The first was held to celebrate the fiftieth year of her accession to the throne, the second—known as the Diamond Jubilee—in commemoration of her having completed the sixtieth year of her reign.

Both festivals—in 1887 Jubilee Day was the 21st of June, in 1897 it was the 22nd of the month—were celebrated all over the country, and indeed throughout the empire, on a scale of magnificence never seen before, the Queen's subjects uniting in enthusiastic demonstrations of loyalty, pride and exultation which the memories of her reign fully warranted. In London in 1887 there was a great national pageant, the Queen going in procession to Westminster Abbey; in 1897 she attended an open-air service at St. Paul's.

CHAPTER II.

QUEEN VICTORIA AS QUEEN, WIFE, MOTHER AND FRIEND OF HER PEOPLE.

THE character of kings and queens is always under observation, and they would need to be something more than human if critical eyes were not to discover a flaw sometimes. Regal office must, from this point of view, be uncomfortable, though the light that beats upon the throne is not perhaps so fierce as once it was. Prime Ministers and other members of the Cabinet get rather more gratuitous criticism nowadays than the monarch whom they serve. But however much our late Sovereign was watched and criticised, it may truly be said that she stood the test better than any monarch who had preceded her. She had those qualities in abundance which win personal respect and admiration. Persons who enjoyed the privilege of intercourse with her were always ready to praise, and those who knew her best invariably loved her most.

In her virtues and tastes, it has been observed, the Queen belonged to the middle class, and for that reason her Majesty was far more truly representative of the great English nation than if her characteristics had

been those which we only associate with high and exclusive aristocracy.

The outstanding feature which has struck everyone who has made a study of her career was her genuine common-sense. She was not exactly of the stuff of which heroines are made, but rather of the material that gives satisfaction for every day, and suits not only for grand occasions but for working times as well.

With her common-sense there was an unflinching loyalty to duty, an absolute and unflinching devotion to the work that lay ready to her hand. It was a quality she had inherited from her mother, who was remarkable for this rather than for any striking powers of mind.

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Of likes and dislikes the Queen had her share. In fact, she was by no means colourless in temperament, but possessed strong personal sympathies and antipathies. But no one ever heard of these influencing her judgment to any noticeable degree, at least, not after those early years when her character was only half formed, and it would have been an error to have expected too much.

She was a stern foe to all evil, and never could forgive anything in the shape of deceit and trickiness. "The Queen," said John Bright once, "is absolutely the most truthful woman I ever knew." To be straightforward and sincere was with her the first of virtues. For the small arts and double cunning which too often characterise the courtier she had nothing but contempt, and her Court, taking its inspiration from herself, was in consequence one of which we might well be proud and other nations envious.

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Having herself known sorrow, she had much kind feeling for others. Her many griefs deepened her character, impressing on her mind how all things are passing away, and how the burden is laid upon us of doing what good we can in the short time we have here.

She was a true woman in sympathy, and this it was that endeared her so much to her people. A friend once wrote to the Princess Alice, "God bless the Queen for her rare human love! for surely there is no one who in such a position as hers has preserved a heart like hers, so full of kindness and sympathy for others."

Quoting these words in a letter to the Queen, the Princess adds, "Dear, sweet mamma, your kind and sisterly words have been balsam to many a wounded heart, and many are the blessings that have been craved for you from above by hearts filled with thankfulness for your true sympathy."

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Queenship over a great empire never interfered with her Majesty's offering friendship to very lowly people amongst her subjects. This fact has been brought home to everyone who has read her journals or who has visited Deeside and interviewed her cottage neighbours there.

In August, 1869, for example, there are entries in her Majesty's *Later Leaves* of sundry visits paid to a poor old woman dying of dropsy:—

"On August 26 I saw her and gave her a shawl and pair of socks, and found the poor old soul in bed, looking very weak and very ill, but bowing her head and thanking me in her usual way. I took her hand and held it. On the 27th she died."

In the same work there is an account given by the Queen of her being present at a christening in the Highlands, when the child was named after her. After the Scotch baptismal service was over—a service with

the simple dignity of which she was much struck—"I gave," she says, "my present (a silver mug) to the father, kissed the little baby, and then we all drank to its health and that of the mother in whisky, which was handed round with cakes."

To these two instances many more might be added did space permit. The truth is that the Queen gave herself no airs whatever, and, whilst preserving her own natural dignity and self-respect, did not think it beneath her to recognise in such homely fashion the brotherhood and sisterhood of the whole human race.

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Her pleasures were sensible ones and her tastes simple and unaffected. She never had any liking for state shows, very hollow affairs at the best, and in her later years the air of palaces seemed to stifle her. It was a great delight with her to engage in outdoor pursuits, and she did her best to encourage a similar healthy taste in her children. There is something infectious in the enthusiasm with which she used to refer to her open-air excursions. A scrambling luncheon on the heather, tea in a hollow by the roadside, the homely fare of a farmhouse, are spoken of in her journal with all the relish which might have been expected from a lady as little dependent on artificial enjoyments as anyone ever known.

Here is a passage written when on a visit to the Dowager Duchess of Athole, at Dunkeld: "Excellent breakfasts; such splendid cream and butter! The Duchess has a very good cook, a Scotch woman, and I thought how dear Albert would have liked it all. He always said things tasted best in smaller houses."

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In the training of her children she showed wisdom. The spirit in which she set about it may be gathered from the following memorandum written by her own hand. "The greatest maxim of all," she says, "is that the children should be brought up as simply and in as domestic a way as possible; that (not interfering with their lessons) they should be as much as possible with their parents and learn to place their greatest confidence in them in all things."

Everything possible was done to fit the young people for the positions they were destined to fill. They were trained in a natural and healthy manner, their governesses and tutors being selected with great care as to character. They were taught to speak three languages, made familiar with the idea of duty, and accustomed to hear religion and politics discussed in a liberal spirit. They had manual labour to do as well as mental, and, according to the homely nurse we quoted just now, were not injured by too luxurious a diet. She used to tell that they were "fed very plain—only a bit of roast meat and perhaps a plain pudding."

We get a glimpse of the principles which governed the Queen's life in the instructions she gave for the religious education of her children. Here is a passage from a private memorandum written by her in 1844, in which her Majesty lamented that the pressure of public duty made it impossible to keep the religious training of the Princess-Royal wholly within her own hands:—

"It is already a hard case for me," she said, "that my occupations prevent my being with her when she says her prayers . . . I am quite sure that she should be taught to have great reverence for God and for religion, but that she should have the feeling of devotion and love which our Heavenly Father encourages His earthly children to have for Him, and not one of fear and trembling, and that the thoughts of death and an after life should not be represented in an alarming and

forbidding view, and that she should be made to know as yet no difference of creeds and not think that she can only pray on her knees, or that those who do not kneel are less fervent and devout in their prayers."

A wise tolerance in matters of faith, such as is here suggested, was much in harmony with the Queen's religious nature, and she had frequent opportunities of illustrating it in her person. One of the pleasing features of her career and one which had a good influence on the spread of Christian charity was her sitting as she did many and many a time at Crathie church side by side with the humblest and poorest in the glen, partaking with them of the symbols of our common redemption.

One of the best tests of character is the relationship which a mistress bears to her servants. If servants find it a desirable house to be in, we may be sure that a good woman—a woman of the right sort—is at the head of it. The Queen's relationship to her servants was always of the best. They were treated with kindness and courtesy, and the services they rendered were made a pleasure by the way in which they were received. The Queen was sincere with them and liked them to be sincere with her. In her lifetime she dismissed very few and seldom had a quarrel with them, the chief reason for which is to be found in her quiet firmness and in her never trying to exact the impossible.

The pleasing relationship between the Queen and her servants was most noticeable in her Highland home. It was quite of a friendly nature; and evidently one of the charms of life spent much in the open air and in absolute dependence upon the care, skill, and conduct of her attendants was that the peculiarities of the Highland character made such intimacy possible without any loss of that perfect respect which prevented its ever tending toward familiarity or rudeness.

The Queen is probably the only royal author who ever dedicated a book to one of her body servants, as she did her *Later Leaves* to John Brown, who acted as her personal attendant till his death in 1883, and who of all her attendants was the one best known to the public. What author ever lavished upon princely patron more fervent eulogy than this Highland servant had bestowed upon him by his mistress and Sovereign?

She had written of him, many years before, that "he has all the independence and elevated feelings peculiar to the Highland race, and is singularly straightforward, simple-minded, kind-hearted, and disinterested; always ready to oblige, and of a discretion rarely to be met with."

That was written in 1865. When in 1883 she published her *Later Leaves*, she put on the last page the following touching words, words which not only record the character of John Brown but throw a vivid light on the womanly features of the Queen.

"The faithful attendant," she says, "who is so often mentioned throughout these *Leaves* is no longer with her whom he served so truly, devotedly, untiringly.

"In the fulness of health and strength he was snatched away from his career of usefulness, after an illness of only three days, on the 27th of March of this year, respected and beloved by all who recognised his rare worth and kindness of heart, and truly regretted by all who knew him.

"His loss to me (ill and helpless as I was at the time from an accident) is irreparable, for he deservedly possessed my entire confidence, and to say that he is daily, nay hourly, missed by me, whose life-long gratitude

he won by his constant care, attention, and devotion, is but a feeble expression of the truth.

"A truer, nobler, truster heart
More loyal and more loving, never beat
Within a human breast."

Her earliest instruction in art was received from Mr. Westall, and she gained much insight into the practice of the best artists by intercourse with Sir Edwin Landseer, Mr. Lear, Mr. Leitch, and, late in life, from Mr. Green.

Amongst her art-studies was that of etching. During the first few years of her married life a room in Buckingham Palace was fitted up with everything necessary for printing etchings, and here the Queen and the Prince Consort would come and take impressions of their own work from the printing press. In memory of that far-back time the Queen permitted the reproduction of one of her etchings in a popular magazine about 1894. It represented her first baby, and is probably the earliest portrait known of the Empress Frederick of Germany, for it bore date February 22nd, 1841, when the Princess was but three months old.

Her late Majesty's reading was, of course, devoted a good deal to current events, which she always followed with the greatest attention. She found time, however, to make herself familiar with many great imaginative writers, poets and novelists. Amongst our English writers her favourite poets were Shakespeare, Sir Walter Scott, Lord Tennyson, and Adelaide Procter. The hymns of Bonar and Faber were those to which she was especially attached.

Her favourite novelists were all women—Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Mrs. Oliphant, Mrs. Craig, George Eliot, and Edna Lyall.

The Queen's acquaintance with French and German literature was considerable, and her intimate knowledge of these languages was very noticeable in the purity with which she spoke them.

The Queen may be said to have led a double existence. She was wife, mother, and housekeeper, and familiar with all that these honoured names imply. She was also the foremost figure in the greatest empire in the world, a state more mighty than any that ever existed before, not even excepting Rome in its best days. The care of her children and all her other domestic duties put together did not prevent her acting with conspicuous success as the highest representative of public authority and ruler of people of many nationalities.

As sovereign the Queen conducted herself with dignity, reserve and discretion. Her intellectual faculties were of a suitable sort. She had quick perception, great firmness and prudence, energy when that was required, in fact, all the qualities that go to make a good business woman.

There is no doubt that her name will stand as high in future times for political sagacity as it did during her lifetime for domestic virtue and womanly worth. In the life of the Prince Consort an instructive light was thrown on the relationship of her Majesty to the political life of the country. That work showed us the direct, decided and characteristic influence which a constitutional Sovereign exercises on the conduct of affairs. The reader saw that everything was done by constitutional means, that is, through the channel of Ministers,

but he also saw that the Queen, when she felt it her duty, did not hesitate to exhort, counsel and dissuade her Ministers, though she submitted her own judgment to that of the Cabinet, even in cases where their decision appeared to affect the immediate interests of the Crown.

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 During all her life the Queen was diligent in the discharge of her public duties. On this subject Lord Beaconsfield once gave the following emphatic testimony:—

“There is not,” said his lordship, “a despatch received from abroad, or sent from this country abroad, which is not submitted to the Queen. The whole of the international administration of this country greatly depends upon the sign-manual of the Sovereign, and it may be said that her signature has never been placed to any public document of which she did not know the purpose and of which she did not approve.

“Those Cabinet Councils, of which you all hear and which are necessarily the scene of anxious and important deliberation, are reported on their termination to the Sovereign, and they often call from her critical remarks requiring considerable attention, and I will say that no person likely to administer the affairs of this country would ever treat the suggestions of her Majesty with indifference; for at this moment there is probably no person living who has such complete control over the political condition of England as the Sovereign herself.”

Such was the testimony of Lord Beaconsfield, who as Prime Minister had every opportunity of knowing the character of the Sovereign. Similar conclusions were arrived at by every other statesman who had dealings with her Majesty. She gave the impression of being a shrewd woman, who kept her own views in the background and accommodated her personal wishes and inclinations to the demands of her subjects. When she started in life she had been biassed by party feeling—so she herself admitted—but she soon freed herself from that error, and so successfully that no one could say with certainty that she leaned either to this party or to that. The will of the people, not the desire of a party, became to her the first law. In this she showed her wisdom, for it is the one condition under which monarchy can exist in a democratic age.

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 Again and again she intervened with striking success to conciliate the rancour of party strife and to avert dangerous collisions between the two Houses of Parliament, and between the Government and the Opposition. How much she did in this way may never be known, but enough is known to give her an enduring claim to the loyal and grateful remembrance of all over whom she ruled.

She was a peacemaker, and to the preservation of peace all her efforts were always directed. Clearly, as in domestic life, so in politics, she was a good manager, not ruling by the strong hand, but by the silver tongue, influencing often and dictating and domineering never. No one in her time had studied human nature more closely, had read more correctly what it was, or better understood what might fairly be expected of it.

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 So far as legislation is concerned, the powers of the Sovereign in this country are certainly limited, but there are no limits to the royal power of doing good. To sit on a throne is a fine opportunity, if one only has the disposition to take advantage of it, and everyone knows the great moral influence our late monarch exercised,

and how firm a friend and patron she was to every enterprise for the relief of poverty and suffering. The country indeed owes her an enormous debt for the interest she took in many philanthropic schemes and for the encouragement she gave to every sound project which could assist the progress of the people.

That the example of the Queen led to a great improvement in manners cannot be denied by any who have studied the social features of her reign. The way she ruled her Court, and her discouragement of every objectionable practice, made good manners fashionable. The Court was not in high repute when she came to the throne, but it was by her made pure and dignified, a model for every other Court in the world.

She did a good deal to encourage sobriety, which was not much of a virtue in her early days; indeed, drinking habits imparted then not a little coarseness to social life even among the higher classes. Objectionable language also, common enough at that time, was frowned upon by her to such an extent that its use in good society went out altogether. Swearing was a common practice when her reign began. “Gentlemen certainly did not swear round a dinner-table in the presence of ladies, but they were only too ready to make up for lost time by profane volubility after the ladies had departed.”

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 And here appropriately we may bring this article to a close and cease for the present to speak of one who will ever live in the affectionate remembrance of us all. In history her place will be amongst the most illustrious of monarchs, and it will, we believe, be recognised that the greatest blessing that could have befallen this country was to be for so long under the rule of so good a queen. In our hearts we shall cherish the memory of her unceasing labours for the welfare of her subjects and of the sympathy with which she shared the joys and sorrows that fall to the lot alike of princes and people.

We shall do honour to her memory not only on account of the wise exercise of her political powers and the punctual discharge of her public duties—the tribute of affection will be paid because she also set an example of high and pure morality, and, in the midst of the splendours of her position, ever loved the simple pleasures of domestic life.

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 For those who choose to look for them, the career of Queen Victoria supplies some useful lessons. We can learn from her what power there is in devotion to duty and in the exercise of common-sense to carry us safely and successfully through the world; and not only safely and successfully, but with the respect of all who take trouble to understand us, and with an influence for good often so far-reaching that it cannot be measured. “On her fidelity in the discharge of her great office,” said Mr. Gladstone, the Liberal statesman, on one occasion, “and in the great pattern of character which she has exhibited, she has laid down what is in many respects a model for every man, every woman especially, and every child that inhabits her dominions.”

The qualities which brought love, respect and loyalty to the Queen are within reach even of the humblest of us, and will be striven after by all who are sensible. There is no girl but has a chance of becoming a queen in her own sphere, and whether her rule is to be a blessing or the reverse depends very much on whether she follows the same lines as our late beloved monarch, and distinguishes herself by her diligent pursuit of prudence and wisdom.