Some Personal Characteristics of Queen Victoria.

[The following article, which was written before the lamented death of the late Queen, was sent to Court in order that nothing might appear of which Her Majesty might not approve, and was received back with certain omissions in matters of detail. The article, in the form in which it now appears, may therefore be regarded as authentic.]

THE dearly-loved Queen who so lately passed away from us might well be described as "a wonderful woman." A wonder indeed she was. Ardent and impulsive as a girl, wise and dignified in middle age, she gathered in with these qualities after the age of eighty an added lovableness. And she was young in a sense to the last; for there remained a smile in her eyes, a tone in her voice which told you that, notwithstanding her weight of years, the British Sovereign still felt, still hoped and endured.

Never did she seem so happy as with her children, and it was good to see what love and simple devotion they bestowed upon her. A new light came into her face when either the Prince of Wales or Duke of Connaught entered the room where she was; and, for all her self-reliance, the Queen consulted both her sons, and, more, was ever ready to take their advice on matters of importance. The air of protection with which Princess Christian and Princess Beatrice hovered round their mother when the weakness of old age became apparent in her was more eloquent than any words, and the constant presence, not only of her daughters, but her granddaughter, Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein, tended to keep her cheery in mind and conversation. That she was fond of little children everybody knows. Prince Edward of York was her favourite of all, and she took the keenest interest and pride in him. As a mother the Queen was a disciplinarian, and as a grandmother sometimes described as "strict," but as a great-grandmother she was indulgence itself. A delightful story is told which, unlike many delightful stories, has the advantage of being true. The Duke of York's children have always been bidden to pick up their own toys. Little Prince Edward had been playing in the Queen's private sitting-room, when his nurse came to fetch him upstairs. The floor was strewn with bricks, tin soldiers, and go-carts, and the nurse made a sign that "David" (for so he is always called in the family circle) should put them away tidily. The little Prince was unwilling, however, and the nurse looked obdurate. "*You* help me," he said, turning to the Queen with an insinuating smile.

QUEEN VICTORIA AND HER GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN—THE CHILDREN OF THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF CORNWALL AND YORK.
From a Photo. by [*R. Milne, Aboyne and Ballater.*

Her Majesty frequently held long conversations with the Prince, and was much amused at his naïve remarks. His knowledge of "soldiering" is remarkable, and when asked how it was he could so minutely describe the uniforms worn by men of different regiments, he replied: "Gran-gran told me. You see, she and I often talk of soldiers." The time is long past since Prince Edward insisted: "I will be a policeman when I grow up," so dazzled was he by the prowess of the mounted police whom he had watched from the windows of Marlborough House on the day of the Diamond Jubilee. His one idea nowadays is to become a soldier.

"PLAYING AT SOLDIERS"—PRINCE EDWARD OF YORK AND HIS SISTER.
From a Photo. by The Biograph Studio, Regent Street.

The Queen, gentle and kind in her home life, was a stern woman when it came to any question of work. Her labours indeed were tremendous, and until the time when Her Majesty had to be careful to spare her eyesight it was estimated roughly that she signed about 50,000 documents a year. It has been said that the Queen was equal to the best statesman in Europe in her knowledge of State-craft, and had often surprised a Cabinet Minister by setting him to rights in a casual reference to a precedent dating, perhaps, forty to fifty years ago. As to State etiquette, she could settle the most delicate point, not only in her own but in any European Court. Her memory for faces was as marvellous as her knowledge of the relationships of the most distant, even of the members of her aristocracy.

That the Queen had musical talent we all know. Both Mendelssohn and Lablache considered her voice and style of singing charming, and she had real knowledge of music, reading admirably at sight. One of her greatest pleasures, when a younger woman, was to play duets with Princess Beatrice and Prince Leopold. All the musical artists I have met who have played or sung before the Queen declared her to be a most sympathetic audience. As is only natural, she preferred the music which was in vogue in her early days to the work of later composers. Of Mendelssohn, Bellini, and Donizetti she was very fond, but that did not prevent her from appreciating Wagner. Certain modern French *chansons* pleased her, but not so greatly as the German *lieder*, and in Scotch songs she delighted. Of these "The Lass o' Gowrie" was her favourite. With regard to vocalists, the Queen had the warmest admiration for Mme. Albani's voice and the expressiveness of her singing, whilst her personal grace and charm of manner much appealed to her. Mlle. Emma Calvé she considered a woman of genius; and for M. Jean de Reszke her opinion was of the highest, and she preferred him to any tenor since Mario. The latter's performance, by the way, of *Raoul* in "Les Huguenots" struck her as more beautiful than any she ever witnessed. Grisi impressed her less than Jenny Lind, whose singing she described as "the purest and loveliest." Miss Clara Butt and Mr. Kennerley Rumford and Miss Eisslers all charmed her as artists; and so, too, did the violinist, M. Wolff, who was frequently commanded to appear at Windsor or Balmoral.

To theatrical performances the Queen was less partial. In her early days she liked to go to the theatre almost every night with Prince Albert, but of late years it required all the persuasion which the Prince of Wales could bring to bear for her to command the performance of any play at Windsor.

Of painting and drawing the Queen was fond many years ago, and she both painted and drew well. A Royal Academician once showed me a pencil sketch she had done of Princess Beatrice, when anxious to indicate the style of picture she required of him. The little drawing was full of spirit and talent, he declared; and so indeed it seemed to me.

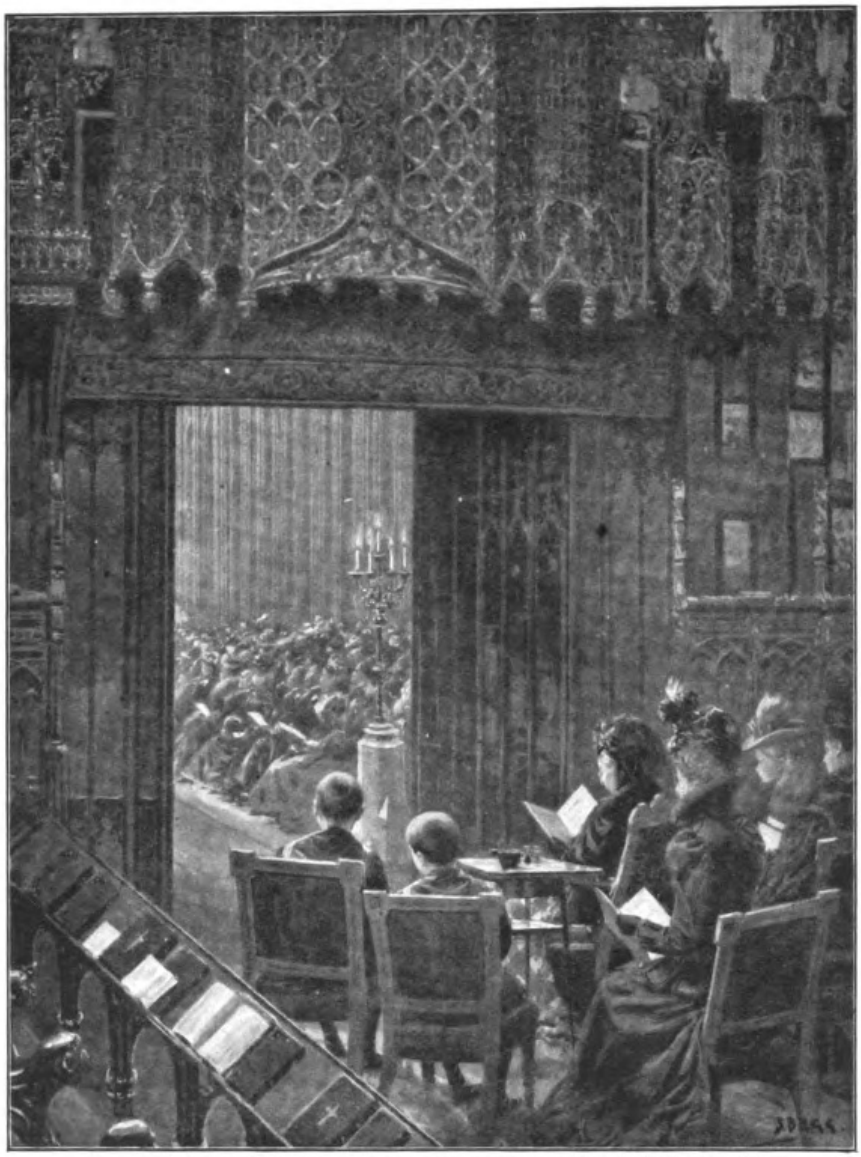
Few people are aware how nice a literary taste was shown by the Queen. She advanced with the times, and it is certain that she did not merely appreciate the works of Mr. William Black and Miss Marie Corelli, as some people would have us believe. It is said that the Queen, when Miss Cholmondeley's "Red Pottage" was read out to her, evinced the liveliest interest

in the story. For this I cannot vouch, but I know she was full of appreciation for the later poets, more particularly for Mr. William Watson, whose "Lachryme Musarum" was a special favourite of hers. All the newest books were sent to the Queen. Of these she made her choice, and had them read to her by her Lady-in-Waiting after dinner. She was very particular about reading aloud, as about everything else, and it may be interesting to recall that Lady Bancroft attributes her admirable elocution to the training she received as Queen's reader when a girl.

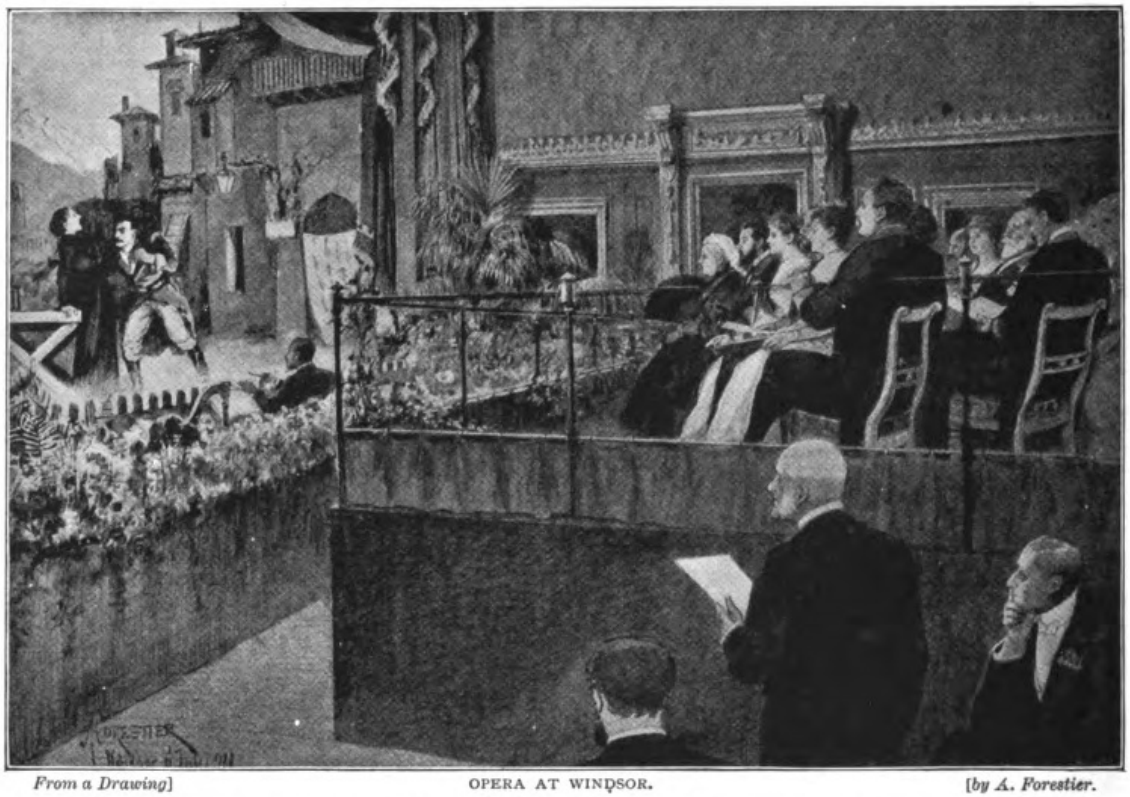
Her Majesty's day began early. Ordinary breakfast followed after she had made her toilet, and the meal, whenever the weather permitted, was enjoyed in the open air. Her private correspondence was then handed to her and received due attention, and the Queen rarely failed to consult a little book in which birthdays of all the members of her family, however distant, and of all her more intimate friends, were duly registered. A telegram of congratulation was then dispatched to the "Birthday Child." *Apropos* of telegrams and telephone messages, they reached the Queen all through the day. During dinner she would often receive quite a number, and it was rarely that a meal was got through without a communication reaching the Queen relating to some public or private matter. Portions of the *Times* and other journals were read out to her by a Lady-in-Waiting, and although she would express sympathy with any bereavement or grief at any calamity, the Sovereign scarcely ever made a comment on political or other public affairs. Illustrated papers were shown to her, and afforded her much amusement. The Queen was, however, annoyed if any inaccuracies appeared in the papers concerning herself or her family.

The Queen never undervalued the influence of the Press, and like her husband, Prince Albert, who was of opinion that "a really good article did untold good," she attached due importance to the power of journalism. Of "Society" papers with a scandalous gossiping tendency she had a perfect horror.

During the early morning the Private Secretary laid before the Queen any documents requiring her signature, and State business was faithfully transacted by her every forenoon ere she went for an outing in



QUEEN VICTORIA AT THE PERFORMANCE OF MENDELSSOHN'S "ELIJAH" IN ST. GEORGE'S, WINDSOR.
From a Drawing [*by S. Begg.*



From a Drawing] OPERA AT WINDSOR. *[by A. Forestier.*

her donkey-chair in the grounds of Windsor, of Osborne, or Balmoral. Luncheon at two o'clock followed.

A drive succeeded, and on her return home the Queen took a short rest, after which tea was served. Her Majesty then retired to her private apartments and answered any letters which required her attention. Alas! owing to the weakness of her eyesight, she was of late more often than not obliged to dictate what she had to say, and merely signed her name at the end of the letter. Princess Henry of Battenberg and Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein undertook the task when letters to the Kaiser, the Empress Frederick, and other relatives were in question, and a Lady-in-Waiting or Private Secretary was called in for others of a less intimate nature. All the epistles were written upon rather old-fashioned-looking writing paper, edged with a narrow black border, and her correspondence was conducted on lines which never varied by any chance. In all her ways the Queen was extremely business-like and punctilious, and she demanded that her children and those about her should be equally so. One of her soldiers told of her with a boundless admiration: "Whatever may happen the Queen is *always* the missus!" It would have annoyed her extremely, for instance, if any document was laid before her that was not unfolded or was in the least lined or creased, and she was a great stickler for the observance of every trivial ceremonial.

AN ETCHING EXECUTED BY QUEEN VICTORIA IN 1840.

For many years she directed what should be written in the Court Circular, and carefully revised the proofs that were brought to her. Her own letters, even those for public reading, such as the very beautiful and touching ones she penned after the death of the Duke of Clarence, scarcely ever required correction. Sometimes it has been said that the Queen's phraseology was slightly German, and it would not be strange if this were the case, as she was brought up by a German mother, married a German Prince, and was often visited by German relations. In talking Her Majesty made an admirable choice of words, and her voice, as everybody knows, was sweet as a silver bell.

On the way through the corridors to her dining-room at night the Queen exchanged words of greeting with those guests whom she was about to entertain at dinner. Conversation was carried on *à demi-voix* by the Royalties, and no one, of course, addressed Her Majesty unless invited to do so—a very rare occurrence. After dinner her ladies read aloud to her in her private apartment, and if so disposed she undertook a little knitting. At eleven o'clock, or thereabouts, a box of despatches arrived from London to Windsor by messenger, and the wonderful old lady was hard at work again before she retired to rest—often not until after midnight.

On the whole the Queen was blessed with wonderfully good health. She suffered every now and again from rheumatism (for which the cure at Aix les Bains combined with massage has proved very efficacious), and she was also plagued with occasional attacks of migraine—nervous headache. The real reason why she objected to driving through crowded streets in London was that the noise and general excitement affected her disagreeably and brought on, almost surely, her headache. "What am I to do?" she once exclaimed, pathetically, to Sir William Jenner. "My people want to see me, and I want to see them! But you know how I suffer afterwards if I drive through crowds, and that headache unfits me for work."

From a Photo. by] QUEEN VICTORIA IN HER DONKEY-CHAISE. *[Mr. A. Henderson, Photographer Royal.*

During her latter years, fortunately, Her Majesty suffered less from headache, and although her eyes troubled her a good deal she had nothing else of which to complain until within the last nine or ten months of her life. That she walked with great difficulty was apparent to all, but this was the result rather of an accident than of stiffness from rheumatism, as so many imagined. The black stick upon which she leaned was made from an oak in which Charles II. hid himself from.

a party of Roundheads in the good old days. And speaking of Charles II. reminds me of the simplicity which was one of the Queen's most charming traits. Some souvenirs of the gay Charles were brought to her a few years ago, and she was asked if she would care to purchase a few. The Queen did so; but she entered in her diary: "I bought these with reluctance, *for I do not like Charles II.*" Mrs. Crawford, the eminent Anglo-American journalist, once said of the Queen: "She is the most artless woman alive," and in that phrase she summed up her character.

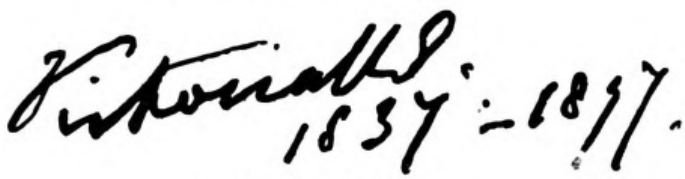
QUEEN VICTORIA AT LUNCHEON.
From a Photo. by Mary Steen.

An audience with the Queen, always dreaded by strangers, proved nevertheless far from formidable. Old soldiers and young soldiers, *débutantes* anticipating their first Drawing Room, American ladies and others of foreign birth who had married distinguished Englishmen, and who had been invited to dine at Windsor, artists, dramatic and musical, "commanded" to appear professionally at Court, have told me in their turn, "I trembled at the thought of coming before the Queen." But once in her presence all *gêne* and nervousness vanished. She made you welcome in a gentle way, asked you pertinent questions, and listened as you answered, with a face full of sympathy.

Few of her intimate friends and contemporaries, alas! remained to her in her last years. When the news reached her of the death of Mme. Van der Weyer, to whom she was much attached, the Queen, with tears in her eyes, exclaimed: "*There is no one left to call me 'Victoria,'*" and sadly, it is told, did she often feel the isolation of a throne. Among the younger women in English society the Queen had a maternal fondness for the Marchioness of Granby, daughter of her former Equerry, Colonel Charles Lindsay, whom she had known since as a child she played about the nurseries at Windsor with Princess Henry of Battenberg. Her Majesty had a warm regard also for the Duchess of Portland, and formed, it is told, a high opinion of Her Grace of Marlborough. The Queen, too, was fond of the Duchesses of Abercorn and Roxburghe and of Lady Hopetoun, the lively Irish wife of the Governor-General of Australia.

Brightness and cheeriness in those about her the Queen appreciated almost more than anything else. Gifted herself with a sense of humour, she admired wit in others, and delighted in being told amusing stories, provided they did not savour of any suspicion of scandal.

A great French writer not long ago said of Her Majesty that with increasing age she became "more of a Sovereign and less of a woman." To those who came in personal contact with her the criticism appeared misleading. It should in justice be said of our beloved Queen that she became more of a Sovereign and more and more of a woman. The sweetness and strength of her character were never so touchingly evinced as during the last years of that life which proved such a blessing to her country.



QUEEN VICTORIA'S SIGNATURE.