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# QUEEN VICTORIA

*by* ARTHUR PONSONBY  
(LORD PONSONBY OF SHULBREDE)

Great Lives

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## PREFACE

As time passes there appears to be an increasing desire to examine the events and personalities of the last century more closely. The first reaction against the Victorian era is giving place to a more sympathetic attitude towards so recent a period in history as fuller information becomes easily available. It is therefore not an inappropriate moment for the appearance of a brief notice of the central figure of that epoch. My object has been not only to estimate Queen Victoria's position as a monarch and the significance of her personal influence but to endeavour to view the events of her reign as much through her own eyes as through those of the historical chronicler.

Fortunately the nature and compass of this small volume have rendered out of the question any idea of competition with other works on Queen Victoria such as Sir Sidney Lee's careful biography or Mr. Lytton Strachey's brilliant study. Even since these were published a good deal more material has appeared bearing specially on the later years of her reign. The nine volumes of the *Letters of Queen Victoria* and political biographies which have recently been written have been the obvious sources of information. A few touches derived from more personal and direct or indirect

contact with the subject have been very occasionally and sparingly introduced in these pages, which have no pretence of being anything more than a sketch.

A. P.

*1932.*

## CHAPTER I

### QUEEN VICTORIA'S ACCESSION

George III's children – the succession to the throne – the Duke of Kent's marriage – birth of a daughter – the Duchess of Kent's relations with the Court – Princess Victoria's training and education – the announcement of her accession – her immediate popularity – the Coronation – the Bedchamber Plot – influence of King Leopold.

GEORGE III had no less than fifteen children ; nine were sons, only two of whom died young. This would seem to have made the succession to the throne very safe. Yet Princess Charlotte, daughter of George IV, was, while she lived, his only legitimate grand-child, and therefore direct heir to the British Crown. She married Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg and died with her newborn child in 1817. George III's second son, the Duke of York, had no children. On the death of Princess Charlotte his third and fourth sons, the Duke of Clarence (afterwards William IV) and the Duke of Kent, as well as his younger son the Duke of Cambridge, all immediately married. The Duke of Clarence had two daughters, both of whom died in infancy. The Duke of Kent had a daughter in 1819. At the time of her birth the child's grandfather, the King, although old, blind, and mad, was still alive, and George IV, the Duke of York and the Duke of Clarence,

as well as her own father, who might yet have a son, stood between her and the succession. Her birth, therefore, was not regarded as a matter of special importance. Nevertheless after her father died and two of her uncles had occupied the throne (George IV for ten years and William IV for seven years) she herself in 1837 at the age of eighteen became Queen of England.

The significance of these facts is not so much the sudden dwindling of the legitimate progeny of this large family but the consequence of this lack of children. The people had become accustomed to very elderly sovereigns. George III died at the age of eighty-two, George IV when he was sixty-eight, and William IV when he was seventy-two. A girl of eighteen was a novelty, rather a sensation, certainly a relief, and something of a romance. At her accession attention was focused on this lonely young figure to a very unusual degree because little was known about her by the general public owing to the comparatively secluded life she had led. From the first she showed a disposition to conform strictly to her own standard of conduct rather than adapt herself to some expected standard. This self-reliance – not the same as self-assertion which may quite well have a disagreeable element in it – remarkably displayed at so early an age became an abiding and dominant feature in her character throughout her life.

Her father, the Duke of Kent, though less

dissolute, was no more remarkable than any of his brothers. He was of a kindly disposition and a painstaking though not very successful soldier. Most of his career was spent abroad in the West Indies, North America and Gibraltar, and he therefore figured very little in British life. Something of his humane instincts can be gathered from his being the first to abandon flogging in the army, and of his liberal sympathies from the fact that he took the chair at one of Robert Owen's meetings. The Duke of Kent would in all probability have remained officially a bachelor had it not been for the scare with regard to the succession caused by the death of Princess Charlotte. As it was he hurried off to Germany and at the age of fifty-one married the widow of Prince Emich Karl of Leiningen, Victoria Mary Louisa of Saxe-Coburg, who already had two children. Although he had been granted £12,000 a year by Parliament, he was in debt all his life and his straitened circumstances made him seek a cheaper form of living than he could get in England, so he settled down at Amorbach in Franconia. When he knew his wife was going to give birth to a child he hurried her home to England, he himself driving the carriage on the journey from Bavaria. He very rightly judged it important that the child should be born in England; an exclusively German parentage might be mitigated by birth on British soil. In Kensington Palace, therefore, on May 24th, 1819, Victoria was born.

The Duke died in the following year with very little expectation that his daughter would succeed to the throne. She never knew her father, but she was always proud of the fact that she was the daughter of a soldier. In later years she made a point of paying off all his debts. Too little is known of the Duke's personal character for an estimate to be made of any characteristics which his daughter may have inherited from him. But undoubtedly through him she derived from her grandfather George III not only her longevity but certain noticeable attributes to which reference will be made later.

The Duchess of Kent, coming from her quiet Bavarian home, found herself entrusted, as a widow and a stranger, with duties of growing responsibility and extreme difficulty. Had she been mild and accommodating, had she been amiable and yielding, had she subordinated herself to the various influences brought to bear on her she might have been happier but her child would in all probability have been ruined. Very quickly does she seem to have gauged the atmosphere of the Courts of George IV and William IV and as rapidly made up her mind that on no account whatever would she allow her child to come within the range of these demoralised and licentious royal surroundings. To adhere to this decision required courage, of which she had plenty, failing tact, of which she had none. With spirit she stood up against George IV and never

concealed her contempt for his friends. She mortally offended William IV by refusing to let her daughter live at his Court. William IV, the bluff sailor King who became famous for his indiscreet public utterances, while openly antagonistic to the Duchess was, with Queen Adelaide, kindly disposed towards the Princess. "It will touch every sailor's heart," he declared, "to have a girl Queen to fight for. They'll be tattooing her face on their arms and I'll be bound they'll all think she was christened after Nelson's ship." The Duke of Cumberland was of all the brothers the Duchess of Kent's greatest enemy. He lost no opportunity of trying to influence opinion against her. Little wonder that in a reply to an address from the city of London congratulating her on the majority of her daughter the Duchess declared she had received kindness from the nation only, not from the royal family. So assiduously did she devote herself to the task of the moral and mental education of her precious charge that in 1830 she approached the Bishops of London and Lincoln submitting to them an elaborate and detailed report of her methods and observations, and asking them to examine the Princess themselves. These prelates conducted an examination and stated in reply that they considered that the Duchess could do no better than allow her daughter "to pursue her studies upon the same plan as has hitherto been followed and under the same superintendence."



The Duchess of Kent's régime was one of strict and constant discipline. No detail was neglected. Rigid and almost Spartan simplicity was the order of the day. Deportment, in view of the rôle the child was destined to play, was all important. A French dancing mistress taught her to walk, bow and curtsy ; and a bunch of holly was sometimes pinned under her chin to ensure her holding herself erect. The result of what may seem to be but trivial rules and exercises was that Queen Victoria, handicapped as she might have been by her small stature and lack of beauty through a life in which public ceremonial in view of gazing crowds necessarily occupied a considerable part, acquired a bearing, a carriage, and a freedom of movement which made a noticeable and positive impression on all who came into her presence. This was the physical discipline. The moral discipline, illustrated in the simple sentence she uttered on hearing she was to be a Queen : " I will be good "—also had a lasting effect. If on the intellectual side the concentrated efforts of masters and governesses were less successful, it must be remembered that intellect was not one of the strong points in the equipment of the members of the House of Hanover. There was no Ascham in the entourage of the Court and we cannot blame the early nineteenth century for not knowing what to teach and how to teach when that problem still remains unsolved to-day. The Princess's knowledge of the classics and of literature

may have been very sketchy, but she spoke two languages perfectly and had a useful knowledge of French as well as a little Italian. Intelligence she had, and for monarchs this is a greater asset than intellect – and perhaps not only for monarchs. The Queen, in later years, referred to her childhood as “rather melancholy.” Her recollections of the early days seem to consist of occasional functions and visits to or from her various old uncles ; but no games or fun with other children. Her half sister Princess Feodore, in a letter of reminiscences, even refers to life at Kensington Palace as “that dismal existence of ours.” There were intervals of enjoyment, however, in the visits to Claremont, which had been granted to her uncle Prince Leopold after the death of Princess Charlotte. Miss Lehzen, afterwards promoted to be a Baroness, became the governess when the Princess was five years old, and was a strict disciplinarian. The child was not allowed a room of her own until she became Queen, but always slept with her mother. Some of the people who surrounded the Duchess were not very congenial to her.

However, from all this she emerged curiously well prepared for the crisis which was to lift her from the schoolroom to the throne. First impressions are important. A false step at the outset may take a long time to retrieve. Had the announcement made to the young Princess of her accession to the throne been a rehearsed

ceremonial it would not have had anything like the same effect on the popular imagination as the homely scene at Kensington Palace at five in the morning on June 20th, 1837. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Howley, and the Lord Chamberlain, Lord Conyngham, who had found some difficulty in forcing an entry into the Palace at so early an hour, demanded that she should be roused from her sleep. She appeared in a dressing-gown, with her hair flowing over her shoulders, and was accompanied by her mother and Baroness Lehzen. On hearing the news of the death of the King and her own accession she quite naturally gave way to her emotions. But at the subsequent Council at which the various oaths had to be administered to high personages, she seems at once to have assumed the self-possession combined with tactful courtesy which ensured her popularity with her people from the outset. This was proved in the enthusiastic reception accorded to the young Queen in the many public functions in these early years in which she took part with high spirits and fresh youthful enjoyment. She bent herself to her task from the beginning. Even while her maid was combing her hair she was surrounded by official boxes, and almost daily conversations with Lord Melbourne kept her in close touch with public business. The many people she was now obliged to see were one and all captivated by her personal charm. Even the critical Creevey, who had known

her uncles and been friends with her father, wrote after seeing her : " She blushes and laughs every instant in so natural a way as to disarm anybody. Her voice is perfect and so is the expression of her face when she means to say or do a pretty thing."

Not only was she acclaimed on her own merits but relief was also felt that the Duke of Cumberland, who was intensely unpopular, would leave the country on his accession to the throne of Hanover, which henceforth became separated from the British Crown. And at a later date, when Queen Victoria bore children, his succession to the throne of England was thus fortunately prevented. On June 28th, 1838, the Coronation was celebrated with great rejoicing. The way the Queen played her part is best described in Lord Melbourne's words : " You did it beautifully - every part of it, with so much taste ; it's a thing you can't give a person advice upon ; it must be left to a person."

When she had hardly been two years on the throne the Queen came to cross purposes with one of her Ministers. The so-called Bedchamber Plot was a trivial incident which owing to tactless handling became magnified into a subject of public importance about which unnecessarily violent speeches were made both inside and outside Parliament. Lord Melbourne, the Queen's first Prime Minister, found his parliamentary majority dwindling and only succeeded in getting a majority of five for a Bill forcing on

Jamaica legislation for the better regulation of prisons. Melbourne resigned and was succeeded by Sir Robert Peel, who in forming his ministry insisted on a change in the ladies in attendance on the Queen, two of whom were closely associated with his opponents. The Queen declared in reply that she could not "consent to a course which she conceives to be contrary to usage and is repugnant to her feelings." Peel, unable to yield, accordingly resigned and Melbourne returned to office. Sides were taken by the contending political factions and in some quarters objectionable language was used against the Queen. She had shown spirit and this appealed to many on sentimental grounds. But she had not shown wisdom, for Peel's case was a strong one and there was a fairly large body of opinion which hoped and expected that interference in political matters by the Crown, of which they had had more than enough in the previous reigns, should no longer be tolerated. However, it was recognised that the Queen was concerned more about the human than the political side of the question, and although she might be wrong she had shown decision, a quality which the people of this country are always ready to admire. "You are for standing out then?" asked Lord Melbourne. "Certainly," the Queen unhesitatingly replied.

The Duchess of Kent may have been her daughter's adviser, although after her accession the Queen freed herself from her mother's disciplinary

influence. But the twenty-year-old Queen had shown uncompromising determination. That was the point. A critical observer at the time might have wondered whether the Queen's attitude did not betray an innate tendency to interfere in public affairs which might be repeated again and again. He would have been relieved to find in subsequent years that her actions so far as the public could observe them seemed always to be regulated by a desire strictly to observe the limitations of a constitutional sovereign. The correspondence and papers which have appeared since her death go to show, however, that his original misgiving was far from being unjustified.

The fuss, however, caused by the Bedchamber question passed away when in the following year a marriage was arranged for the Queen.

From an early age Princess Victoria had been drawn into a relationship of close friendship with her maternal uncle Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg Saalfeld, who had been the husband of Princess Charlotte and afterwards became King of the Belgians. With him she kept up for some years a continuous correspondence which has been preserved. The letters contain a great deal more than mere expressions of affection between uncle and niece. He became her adviser on public matters and more especially on foreign affairs. Fortunately he happened to be a man of considerable ability and shrewd judgment.

Appreciating the position of responsibility to which his niece had been called he took the utmost pains to guide her in her difficulties, warn her of her dangers, and instruct her in the intricacies of foreign relations. Before her accession and after, Victoria responded with engaging seriousness and warm affection. But even to the opinion of such a friendly mentor she was not invariably prepared to yield tamely. As one constitutional monarch to another, King Leopold certainly encouraged the young Queen not to allow "the power indispensable for the exercise of the functions" proper to a sovereign in her position to be weakened, although he admitted that "now-a-days the trade of a constitutional Sovereign, to do it well, is a very difficult one." "You are too clever," he wrote, "not to know that it is not being *called* Queen or King which can be of the *least consequence* when to the title there is not also annexed the power indispensable for the exercise of those functions." But as she became more accustomed to her position she did not think it wise always to take her uncle into her confidence on public affairs. With great tact she wrote at the end of 1838: "You must not, dear Uncle, think that it is from want of interest that I, in general, abstain from touching upon these matters in my letters to you; but I am fearful, if I were to do so, to change our present delightful and familiar correspondence into a formal and stiff discussion upon political matters

which would not be agreeable to either of us and which I should deeply regret."

She naturally became still less dependent on King Leopold after her marriage to Prince Albert, of which he entirely approved, and for which indeed he was largely responsible. But there can be no question that "Uncle Leopold" exercised a very strong and on the whole salutary influence over her in the years in which she was so conscientiously endeavouring to fit herself for her responsible duties.

It is not intended here to give any consecutive summary of the events of her long reign but rather to examine the relation of the sovereign with the various persons, sections of society and interests where the contact of her personality was noticeable. Thirty years after her death our historical perspective has widened and, although we still do not know all there is to be known, we are in possession of much information which was necessarily hidden from her contemporaries. The judgment of history may have little resemblance to contemporary impressions, but such impressions are none the less valuable in helping us to form an estimate of her character.



## CHAPTER II

### THE QUEEN'S HUSBAND

Choice of Prince Albert approved – his training and character – marriage celebrated – Prince Albert's allowance – his influence – Baron Stockmar's position – Prince Albert's work and duties – his unpopularity – the abolition of duelling – the Great Exhibition – the Prince's title – his political memoranda – his influence with Ministers – his illness and death – estimate of his position.

AN arranged marriage, to which so many members of a royal family have to submit, might have proved a disaster in the case of a girl with so pronounced a character. The Queen was exceedingly fortunate, therefore, in being able to combine a love match with an alliance to a Prince who from the official point of view was considered an eligible and desirable consort for her. In her engagement and marriage to her cousin Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg Gotha we find at the time official approval supporting personal rapture. William IV it is true in early days when the idea was first mentioned disapproved and had a candidate of his own. But Victoria was now Queen and the Queen was in love. She expressed herself with unrestrained enthusiasm and exuberance with regard to the looks, talents and charms of her future bridegroom. The girl of almost a hundred years later may ridicule and condemn

the rhapsodies in which the Queen indulged on this and other occasions. But absurd as it may seem to us now it was natural and it was sincere, whereas the studied suppression of all forms of sentiment, enthusiasm and emotion must always be a pose. In the eighty-two years of her life Queen Victoria was as unable to pose as she was to fly. Lord Melbourne approved of the engagement, and said she would be "much more comfortable" than if she remained standing alone in her position. But from the first Albert, who was passionately devoted to his own home, realised the nature of the task he was undertaking. "My future lot," he wrote, "is high and brilliant, but also plentifully strewn with thorns."

Prince Albert had like his cousin been carefully brought up, tutored and instructed. Nobody could have been better equipped for the position he was to hold. In conscientious application to public work he was the Queen's equal in the range of his knowledge, and in intellect he was her superior. He was handsome and accomplished, strictly moral and intensely domestic. He has been described as a combination of the troubadour, the *savant*, and the man of business. No more ideal match could be imagined, based as it was on deep mutual affection. Yet Prince Albert never completely endeared himself to the people of the country of his adoption. He was not an English gentleman, he was unmistakably a German, rather professorial, shy, cold, and formal.

He lacked the warmth and geniality which may often overcome adverse prejudices. People are apt to be suspicious of anyone who may be regarded as rather too exemplary. His industry and devotion as the Queen's secretary, in which task no detail was neglected and no pains spared, were not fully known, but when his influence was detected it was sometimes resented as interference. He made no endeavour to win popularity and was content that his wife should receive in full measure and without any competition the affection of her people. The arduous task to which he devoted himself and the sane advice he was ready to give were only appreciated by a small minority who recognised his worth. In twenty-one years of married life he established himself so deeply in the Queen's very existence as a rock of reliability and an indispensable and loving companion that when his death occurred, after only a third of her reign had passed, she was so completely stunned by the blow that her outlook on life for the rest of her long reign was changed fundamentally. The marriage took place on February 10th, 1840, in the Chapel Royal of St. James's Palace, and the Queen recounts in a letter to her uncle that the reception given to the couple by the vast crowds was "most gratifying and enthusiastic."

From the outset, however, there were murmurings and criticisms. The suggestion was even made, and had to be publicly refuted, that Prince Albert was not a Protestant. Neither the income

the Prince was to receive nor his position were settled without debate and objection. The allowance proposed was £50,000 a year. By a Tory amendment this was reduced to £30,000. Later, however, a Bill was passed without opposition naming Prince Albert as Regent should the Queen die on the birth of a child.

Prince Albert's assistance was required in the course of the next year when Lord Melbourne's Ministry was superseded by that of Sir Robert Peel. Of the many changes of administration which the Queen was to experience this was the first and the most acutely felt. She frankly disliked the Tories, a dislike which had been augmented by their attitude on the grant to the Prince ; she was far from being at her ease with Peel, but most of all she had come to regard Melbourne as a close friend and confidant, a sort of father. Parting with a Minister who had never allowed an interval of more than eleven days to pass without seeing her, upset her beyond measure. The change also meant losing from her surroundings figures to whom she had become accustomed. She was inclined at first to cold shoulder the Tories, and not only during the change of Government but even subsequently kept up a close correspondence with Lord Melbourne, expressing her feelings in unrestrained language and seeking his advice. Lord Melbourne was placed in an embarrassing position, but he was able to recommend her to rely on

Prince Albert, of whose " judgment, temper and discretion " he declared he had formed the highest opinion. He did nothing to undermine Peel's influence but on the contrary tried to strengthen it. It was through Prince Albert chiefly, with whom he became intimate and whom he found particularly sympathetic, that Peel eventually succeeded in breaking down the Queen's prejudices against himself.

The Prince, however, had got no certain hold yet over his opinionated young wife, whom Greville described as being " blinded by her partialities." After the change of government, the Queen on her own initiative invited Lord Melbourne to Windsor. One might expect a private word of caution from the Prince that such an invitation to the leader of the Opposition might in the circumstances be easily misunderstood. Not at all. There was much exchange of correspondence, interviews and the drafting of long memoranda between the Prince, Mr. Anson his secretary, Baron Stockmar and Lord Melbourne, in fact elaborate manœuvring which showed the reluctance – we might say, the fear – on the part of any one of them to approach the Queen direct in case of offending her. The misgivings arose not only with regard to the visit to Windsor but the continued correspondence between the Queen and Lord Melbourne.

Baron Stockmar was a punctilious German who was apt in his ardour to make mountains out of

molehills. Nevertheless in these early years he exercised a considerable influence over the royal couple. He had been secretary to King Leopold, with whom he had schemed to bring about the marriage. He became first a sort of tutor and then confidential adviser to the Prince and subsequently to the Queen. Lord Melbourne found it necessary, owing to the dislike on the part of the English public to the supposed German influences, to deny categorically that Stockmar was acting as the Queen's private secretary. The Prince relied on him and trusted him. But Stockmar's position was a delicate one. A man of great ability and knowledge and a profound student of political institutions he was too apt to depend on theoretical principles rather than on practical expediency. His exaggerated notions with regard to the powers and position of a constitutional monarch, derived no doubt from King Leopold's position, were not sufficiently tempered in their rigidity by any sympathetic understanding of the genius and character of the British people. He had no personal ambition ; he was content to be a devoted servant in the background. But as such he was able to make his influence felt more than was generally known and to induce the Prince to absorb himself over-much in the detail and minutiae of state affairs, which strictly speaking was not his function. The Baron's advice to the Prince was, "Never relax." The net result was that the Queen supported by her husband and his

adviser acquired a view of the duties of a constitutional monarch which involved a degree of consultation if not interference which was not always welcomed by her Ministers. Nevertheless the Prince's unprejudiced intervention from outside often had a salutary effect on the deliberations of the political experts.

Hours of the day were devoted by Prince Albert to dealing with correspondence, copying letters, and composing memoranda, neatly filing all the mass of papers and talking over and advising the Queen on matters of moment. It was the German industry which scrupulously and exhaustively examines trees, but in his case it must be admitted that seldom did he fail to see the wood. He made necessary reforms in the Queen's household and he was at hand also to undertake functions such as levées on the Queen's behalf. In time he so perfected himself in the English language that he became a fluent and capable speaker ; fortunately not an orator, as the gift of excessive eloquence is always liable to breed mistrust. The *Spectator* admitted that he had never made a speech "without suggesting matter for useful thought." Sport being a necessary adjunct of an English gentleman, it would have been a fatal handicap had he not shown a liking for it. The Prince, however was fond of shooting and indeed was ridiculed by *Punch* for the number of stags which fell to his gun. As to hunting, the Queen showed with some petulance her appreciation

of the popular prejudice when she wrote after he had hunted with the Belvoir: "I have no doubt that his having hunted well and boldly has given more satisfaction than if he had done Heaven knows what praiseworthy deed." But the Prince neither raced nor gambled. In fact, as we know, he was unredeemed by a single vice. He cannot have increased his popularity in Society, one may well imagine, by becoming a warm advocate of the abolition of duelling and by exercising his influence with the Duke of Wellington and the heads of the Services in favour of such a step. The duel at the beginning of the Queen's reign was an ordinary occurrence. "Honour" in certain circumstances could only be satisfied in this way; and for someone "to have killed his man" in a duel was nothing unusual. The abolition of what we now regard as an uncivilised absurdity was no doubt resented then as soft sentimentalism. At any rate, first in the Army and then elsewhere the practice was abolished and the Prince was on the right side. There were times indeed when his worth seemed to be appreciated, as for instance when he was elected Chancellor of the University of Cambridge.

Yet with all this conscientious endeavour in all directions Prince Albert continued to be regarded in many quarters as a foreigner and a pedant. Vigilant eyes were always on the look-out for an incident which might be interpreted as interference on his part. The mere fact of his being



present in the House of Commons to listen to an important debate on Protection in 1846 was described as a startling occurrence, and in 1854 there were newspaper attacks on "the influence behind the throne." In fact during 1846-7 both the Queen and the Prince encountered a wave of unpopularity, as the comic papers of the period, notably *Punch*, show. She shared it with him but he was the cause.

Greatly to the Prince's credit in this environment of ever ready critics he threw himself into the encouragement of science and art. Music and painting had specially occupied him in his youth. He was no mere dilettante but a real student. He was specially fond of playing the organ and it was said that nobody but the organ knew what was in him. These artistic inclinations of his were however in those days liable to be regarded as effeminate. In 1841 on the suggestion of Sir Robert Peel he was appointed Chairman of the Fine Arts Commission. He turned his attention particularly to the application of science and art to manufacturing industry and was the originator of the Great Exhibition of 1851 when what is now known as the Crystal Palace was first erected in Hyde Park. The project of such an exhibition, international in its character and without the smallest political significance, was neither undertaken nor pursued, as might be supposed with universal approval. On the contrary the Prince had to fight for every step

before he achieved his object. There was opposition in both Houses of Parliament and privately and publicly he was abused as a foreigner and even suspected of the lowest motives. As president of the Exhibition Commission he calmly persevered until he was rewarded by the tremendous success of his scheme. The Exhibition realised so large a surplus that there was sufficient to give a permanent endowment to the Museum now known as the Victoria and Albert Museum.

He had special talent for the management of landed estates and by improvements raised the revenue derived from the Duchy of Cornwall more than fourfold. He established a model farm at Windsor and laid out the grounds of Balmoral and Osborne, both of which were purchased by the Queen as retreats from the clamour of official life. In 1856 the Queen drew up a forceful memorandum objecting to the anomalous position held by the Prince, to whom special precedence had been given by Letters Patent but who still held no titular rank by law. Lord Derby was anxious not to raise controversy and prejudice in Parliament by the introduction of a Bill. The matter was therefore concluded by the title of Prince Consort being conferred on Prince Albert by Royal Letters Patent.

By far the best view of the Prince's self-imposed duties and tactful exercise of the functions of an adviser and confidant can be gained from a perusal of his political memoranda. These were

drawn up with the greatest care and accuracy on each political crisis or change of Government. They show a remarkable grasp of the peculiarities of the British Parliamentary system and of the particular political complications of the day from the point of view of a dispassionate observer who conceived it his duty to safeguard the position of the Sovereign. After most of the interviews and conferences he writes "we," taking the united point of view of the royal couple. But occasionally he asserts himself, writing from his own personal standpoint. It is not apparent except on one occasion that Ministers were aware that their opinions and even words were being carefully noted. Peel took strong exception to a six-sheet memorandum which the Prince had drawn up in 1846 after an interview with him. He did not regard it as a fair representation of his opinion and accordingly Prince Albert threw the memorandum into the fire.

The reason for the constant changes or threats of change in the Government were often of a more personal than political character. In one of his memoranda he summed up the causes of governmental instability : " In the present disruption of Parties the difficulty of obtaining any strong Government consists not in the paucity of men, but in the over-supply of Right Honourable Gentlemen produced by the many attempts to form a Government on a more extended base. There were now at least three Ministers for each

office from which the two excluded were always cried up as superior to the one in power."

The part he played in these interviews with Ministers, although never emphasised, is apparent. Nevertheless, it can be gathered too that the Queen was no silent spectator and sometimes the Prince had to smooth matters over. A good instance of this occurs in his account of an interview with Lord John Russell in 1850. Lord John was explaining Lord Palmerston's attitude and said that while he (Lord Palmerston) was aware he had forfeited the Queen's confidence he thought this was not on personal grounds. Here the Queen interrupted and said that it was on *personal* grounds that she distrusted him. The Prince Consort adds: "I remarked that Lord Palmerston had so far at least seen rightly; that he had become disagreeable to the Queen not on account of his person, but of his political doings, to which the Queen assented" – no doubt reluctantly. Again in 1851 the difficulty in forming a Government led to a long conference in which Lord Aberdeen, Lord John Russell and Sir William Graham took part and which was continued after dinner up to midnight. The Queen, exasperated by the humming and hawing and prolonged manœuvring, wound up the evening; "towards midnight we broke up with the Queen's injunction that one of the three gentlemen *must* form a Government." The absurd extent to which the suspicions of Prince Albert's interference were

carried was demonstrated before the outbreak of the Crimean War, when the Prince was accused by the peace party of wanting war and by the war party of plotting surrender. The Queen also became involved and Prince Albert wrote to Baron Stockmar : “ Thousands of people surrounded the Tower to see me and the Queen brought to it.”

On occasions the Prince spoke very openly to the Ministers. On household appointments for instance he told Lord Derby that the Queen must insist on two conditions : that the persons chosen must not be on the verge of bankruptcy and that their moral character should bear investigation. Lord Melbourne had been very careless and had declared “ that damned morality would undo us all.” But the Prince said they were determined to adhere to this standard. On one occasion he went so far as to present Lord Aberdeen with “ a list of the possible distribution of offices,” and with considerable warmth in 1853 he insisted that the Queen had been placed in a very painful position by the vacillations of the Government just before the outbreak of the Crimean War and described the position as “ morally and constitutionally a wrong one.” Again in 1855 he attacked Lord Derby after he had taken leave of the Queen and protested strongly at the lack of patriotism which was being shown by politicians. On foreign affairs the Prince’s memoranda were not only well informed but showed excellent judgment.

It may be imagined how the intervention or indeed presence of a man in the Prince's position might easily have been regarded as an intolerable nuisance by successive Ministers. Far from this being the case, they all, more especially Peel, Derby, and Aberdeen, commented on his abilities and praised his cleverness, his disinterested and his wise advice. Not only indeed did they regard him as a useful intermediary between themselves and the Queen, but they found his opinion especially on foreign questions was well worthy of attention. In the very last despatch submitted to him shortly before his death, a despatch to be addressed by Lord Russell to the American Government over the Trent affair, he suggested an alteration, by which he opened to that Government an honourable retreat from the aggressive attitude they had taken up. This led to the eventual peaceful settlement of the dispute, and is a good instance of his statesmanship.

As a father the Prince showed his accustomed German thoroughness in superintending the education of his elder children. But there was want of discrimination in his failure to recognise the differences in the dispositions with which he had to deal. The result was that while his eldest daughter responded to his intensive treatment and profited by her historical, literary and philosophical studies, his eldest son re-acted against the attempts to pump culture into him, having more social than reflective inclinations. Nevertheless

the royal family in contrast to the previous generation set a very high standard and presented an almost proverbial example of domestic harmony to the nation.

Just as the Prince Consort's value was being recognised by the advisers of the Crown and the popular mistrust of him was showing signs of abating he was stricken down with fever which turned to congestion of the lungs, and after a comparatively short interval he died at Windsor Castle on December 14th, 1861. He had undermined his health with overwork. He was a slave to duty and had over-taxed his strength. Not long before he died he said to the Queen : " I do not cling to life. You do ; but I set no store by it. If I knew that those I love were well cared for, I should be quite ready to die to-morrow. . . . If I had a severe illness I should give up at once, I should not struggle for life." In fact the effort of adapting himself to his surroundings, perpetually repressing his inclinations and effacing himself, led undoubtedly to a sort of inward melancholy.

On the announcement of the Prince Consort's death there was genuine grief throughout the country on the Queen's behalf. The loss of a husband in so closely united a family could be understood by all classes. But there could be full appreciation only by very few of what the loss of the faithful counsellor meant both to the Queen and to her Ministers.

No more difficult position can be imagined

than that of the husband of a Queen regnant under the British constitution. Under Queen Elizabeth the problem never arose. In the case of Queen Anne, her husband Prince George of Denmark was merely a figure of fun. That a foreign Prince of outstanding intelligence who could not accept the position of a cipher should have steered so careful a course and exercised such a salutary influence redounds greatly to his credit. It is more to be wondered at that he did not unwittingly rouse greater animosity by his obvious influence than that he should not have been acclaimed as a popular figure by the sensitive and critical people of the country of his adoption. In after years his reputation was hardly enhanced nor his memory more affectionately cherished by the mistaken attempts to canonise him as a paragon under the title of Albert the Good.

History however, with a wider perspective and therefore a better sense of proportion, may fairly accord to Queen Victoria's husband no high pedestal, but a well-merited testimonial for zeal, sincerity and ability and for the conscientious and successful discharge of difficult duties in circumstances which would be a high test for any man. It is almost impossible for the ordinary man to imagine the abnormal strain involved in doubling the parts of statesman and soldier ; in having to exhibit sportsmanlike qualities to please society and having to curb any excessive ardour for his natural inclinations towards the arts ; in being



the confidential adviser of a self-willed and impetuous young woman who held possibly the highest position in the world and at the same time to be her loving husband ; of having to assert his rank as Consort of a Queen while accepting the permanent position of a second fiddle. Where William III, who said he had no mind to be his wife's gentleman usher, refused, and George of Denmark, who was a cipher, failed, Albert of Saxe-Coburg succeeded.

## CHAPTER III

### THE QUEEN AND HER MINISTERS

Close intercourse with her ten Prime Ministers – special position of Lord Melbourne – Sir Robert Peel – change from coldness to appreciation – long acquaintance with Lord John Russell – serious disputes with Lord Palmerston – correct attitude of Lord Derby – Lord Aberdeen – very close relations with Disraeli – contrast of strained relations with Gladstone – confidence in Lord Salisbury – ecclesiastical appointments – brief Premiership of Lord Rosebery.

THE Queen's interest in politics grew originally out of a conscientious desire to discharge her duties completely and to master to the best of her ability the public questions of the day. Under the influence of the Prince Consort, Baron Stockmar and King Leopold she gradually gained knowledge and at the same time developed a determination to maintain to the full whatever power might safely be associated with the position of a constitutional monarch. In the fullness of time her experience of ten Prime Ministers and some twenty changes of Government gave her an authority based on intimate knowledge and keen observation of the curious vicissitudes of British politics. If she had accepted with tame acquiescence the changes as they passed; if she had, from indifference or lack of interest in the personalities so constantly changing round her, merely welcomed and discharged with

perfunctory correctness her Ministers as they came and went, it might have been easier for herself and far less troublesome for them. But apathy was not one of the Queen's faults. If error there was, it was in the opposite direction. Nothing was allowed to pass unnoticed, whether a principle or a detail. No one who was chosen or called into her Ministries or any of the public services, her Court or her family circle, failed to be subjected to her discriminating scrutiny or to escape what came to be known as her "drill eye."

The Queen's relations with her first Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, were of an exceptional character. He was regarded as an indolent, flip-pant and cynical politician whose private life was not above reproach, and who as a statesman lacked force or marked ability. But his indolence and indifference were a pose. Sydney Smith best summed him up when he wrote: "I am sorry to hurt any man's feelings and to brush away the magnificent fabric of levity and gaiety he has reared; but I accuse our Minister of honesty, and diligence; I deny that he is careless or rash; he is nothing more than a man of good understanding and good principle, disguised in the eternal and somewhat wearisome affectation of a political roué." Much can be said of the wise and tactful influence which the Prime Minister exercised over the young Queen and of the success of his guidance in the early years of her reign. They were a curiously assorted couple. But

obviously it was the character and outlook of the girl of eighteen entrusted to his charge which developed the best side of the statesman who was forty years her senior. The would-be careless trifler and man of the world found himself leant on as a father and implicitly trusted as a counsellor by a girl of transparent innocence who had never known her own father and who found herself called to a position of enormous responsibility, the full implications of which she could not be expected to understand. Other Ministers, specially those in the opposite camp, shook their heads. But Melbourne rose to the occasion. He may be said to have been captivated at the outset. As his affection increased and his genuine admiration developed he was able successfully to pursue his course of political instruction, find the right way of pressing his advice and form a just estimate of a character that had the pliancy of youth which could be led, but the waywardness and obstinacy of an imperious nature which could not be driven.

A perusal of the correspondence between the Queen and her Prime Minister not only during his period in office but after 1841 until his death in 1848 will suffice to show the very close and affectionate relations which existed between them. Entries too in the Queen's early diaries illustrate the confidence she reposed in him in even the smaller details. In 1839 for instance she writes :  
" I said I often felt so conscious of saying stupid

things in conversation and that I thought I was often very childish. 'You've no reason to think that,' said Lord Melbourne, and that I feared I often asked him tiresome and indiscreet questions and bored him. 'Never the least,' he replied. 'You ought to ask.'"

Embarrassed though Melbourne must have been by the attention she still insisted on paying him after the change of Government, he never took advantage of it so as to undermine the authority of his opponents, but did his best to persuade the Queen to give her confidence to her new advisers. To the Duke of Wellington at first she showed respect as to one who had been acclaimed a popular hero, but she was slow to forget the Tory attitude with regard to Prince Albert's allowance. The Duke was nearing the age of seventy at the Queen's accession and had grave misgivings at the succession to the throne of a very young girl. "I have no small talk," he remarked, "and Peel has no manners." On Lord Melbourne's advice the Queen sent for him on the resignation of the Government in 1839. But the Duke refused to form an administration and preferred to make way for Sir Robert Peel. In 1850 the Duke on his retirement from the post of Commander-in-Chief made the curious suggestion that Prince Albert should succeed him. The Prince wisely declined, but shortly after, in order to show her appreciation, the Queen asked the Duke to be godfather to her son (afterwards the

Duke of Connaught) who was called Arthur after him. When the Duke died in 1852 the Queen was quite overcome and referred to him as "the greatest man this country ever produced."

Peel's failure to form a Government owing to the Bedchamber question was an unfortunate start for him. When ultimately he succeeded as Prime Minister in 1841 he found his royal mistress's devotion to his predecessor and almost unconcealed animosity against himself very embarrassing. The Queen wrote: "He is such a cold, odd man she can't make out what he means." Nevertheless chiefly through the mediation of Prince Albert her prejudices were to a large extent overcome, and when she recognised that as a statesman he was markedly superior to his predecessor she became more at her ease with him. During his strenuous fight in Parliament over the repeal of the Corn Laws, the great turning point in his career, and the breaking up of political partnership which that involved, the Queen and Prince Consort gave Peel every sympathy and support. On his resignation in 1846 he wrote to Prince Albert and referred to the letters which had passed during his term of office between him and the Queen and the Prince: "I could not review them without a mixed feeling of gratitude for the considerate indulgence and kindness of which they contained such decisive proofs and of regret that such a source of constantly recurring interest and pleasure was dried up." Sir Robert Peel is one

of the great commanding figures of British politics. He ranks high in the series of the Queen's Prime Ministers. His outstanding abilities as a financier and administrator were universally recognised. When he died in 1850 the Queen went so far as to say that she regarded his death as "one of the hardest blows of Fate which could have fallen on us and on the country."

In the voluminous correspondence in which Queen Victoria's personal opinion of and relationship with her Ministers are recorded the name of Lord John Russell occurs very frequently, not only as her Prime Minister from 1846 to 1852 but in conjunction with other offices (he was leader in the Commons in Lord Melbourne's Government) and as a participant in the conferences on the frequent changes of Government. Her personal opinion of him and of his wife was friendly, but political differences prevented any close intimacy, although she eventually gave him signal marks of her favour. In conversation one day the Queen asked Lord John: "Is it true, Lord John, that you hold that a subject is justified in certain circumstances in disobeying his sovereign?" "Well," he replied, "speaking to a sovereign of the House of Hanover, I can only say that I suppose he is." She was ready to draw the Prime Minister up sharply when she saw a household appointment gazetted to which she had not given her approval: "she must insist upon appointments in her Household not being made *without*

her previous sanction." Again in 1859 she showed emphatic disapproval of the Italian policy which Lord John, who was then at the Foreign Office, was pursuing. Here, however, Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister at the time, was involved. With Lord Palmerston of all her series of Ministers with one exception the Queen found most occasion for constant and sometimes bitter dispute.

While in domestic affairs the Queen was content to be advised and guided, in foreign affairs she had considered and often well-informed views arising in some cases from her personal knowledge of foreign sovereigns and their representatives. On such questions therefore she was more difficult to steer and less inclined to accept without question the official opinion when her bias was in the opposite direction. It would be a mistake to suppose that Lord Palmerston ignored her more than he did everyone else. He was impulsive and had a passion for taking an active initiative. There may be two opinions about the wisdom of his somewhat aggressive policy on several occasions, but the Queen was justified in protesting when he acted not only without asking anyone's consent but also leaving everyone in the dark as to the action he intended to take or had indeed already taken. The consequence of his methods was that while he was at the Foreign Office friction between him and the Court was incessant. In 1850 the Queen wrote a very



severe letter to Lord John Russell laying down precisely what she expected of her Foreign Secretary, and told Lord John to show the letter to Lord Palmerston. The Foreign Secretary said afterwards that the document was written in anger by a lady as well as by a sovereign.

In the following year Lord John Russell as Prime Minister found himself obliged to remove Lord Palmerston from his office, much to the delight of the Queen, who wrote to her uncle King Leopold announcing the news "which I know will give you as much satisfaction and relief as it does to us and will do to the *whole* of the world." But whether in or out of office Lord Palmerston's vigorous personality, wit, charm, and popularity continued to make him a force to be reckoned with. In 1855, only about three years after his dismissal from the Foreign Office, he became Prime Minister and on the conclusion of Peace after the Crimean War the Queen conferred the Order of the Garter upon him. The expressions of attachment to the Queen which were communicated by him in subsequent years had the ring of sincerity and proved he was too big a man to harbour any resentment at the acute and bitter controversy which had taken place between him and his royal mistress in earlier days. Lord Granville, who succeeded Lord Palmerston at the Foreign Office, was a mild, pliant, and courteous statesman to whom the Queen became greatly attached. But even against him there was a

complaint that his tone was "too decided in writing to her"; and in 1882 in her wholesale condemnation of Gladstone's Government she writes: "Lord Granville behaves miserably; he is the only one *I know well* and he never *even answers* my remarks!"

Lord Stanley, afterwards fourteenth Earl of Derby, was three times Conservative Prime Minister – in 1852, 1858, and 1866 – besides holding many other offices. He was a man of brilliant parts, a great orator, and during a considerable number of years came into very frequent contact with the Queen. His attitude towards her was strictly correct; he kept her fully informed and avoided ever getting at cross purposes with her. But there was no particularly intimate note in their relations. His encouragement of the Queen's personal intervention in foreign affairs is noted elsewhere.

After holding important offices Lord Aberdeen became her next Prime Minister, heading a Coalition Ministry of Whigs and Peelites in 1852. Against his better judgment and owing to the pressure of Palmerston and Stratford Canning, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, he found himself forced into the Crimean War, which in its inception, its conduct and its results was not an episode which could add to the reputation of any statesman. But Aberdeen was guilty, in the middle of the war, when passions had necessarily to be inflamed against Russia in order to keep up

popular indignation, of making a speech in a House of Lords debate almost apologising for Russia. The Queen in an orthodox warlike spirit declared this utterance had given her "great uneasiness," and she expressed the hope that he would not "undertake the ungrateful and injurious task of vindicating the Emperor of Russia from any of the exaggerated charges brought against him and his policy at a time when there is enough in it to make us fight with all our might against it." Aberdeen before he was Prime Minister had on many occasions acted as adviser to the Queen and for him she developed a very high personal regard. She describes him as "so very fair" and "a faithful friend." This is an illustration of how the Queen in her relations with her Ministers was more concerned with their personal character or rather perhaps with their attitude towards herself than with their abilities or political accomplishments. After the death of the Prince Consort she naturally became more dependent on them, and personal sympathy therefore was important.

In the second half of the Queen's reign the two political parties became more clear cut in their differences and rivalries, and except for the very brief interval of Lord Rosebery's Premiership in 1894 the Queen for thirty-two years only had three Prime Ministers to deal with, Disraeli, Gladstone, and Salisbury.

The Queen's relations with the Prime Minister

who, even beyond Lord Melbourne, proved to be by far the most popular with her, seem to call for some special explanation. A brilliant young Jew novelist who by outstanding ability had forced himself to the front and by baffling cleverness accompanied by remarkable powers of oratory and a certain humorous cynicism had become an outstanding figure would not seem at first sight likely to be a *persona grata* with a middle-aged widow in her retirement. But we must remember that the Prince Consort was dead, and apart from the loneliness of her domestic life the Queen was instinctively seeking someone on whom she could lean in discharging her unceasing public duties and someone with whose political sympathies she could find herself in harmony. Having begun her reign as an ardent supporter of the Whigs and with undisguised mistrust of the Tories, in middle age the Conservative outlook seemed to her to lead to a safer road than Liberal policy, which could never be entirely dissociated from the radical influence which as time passed became stronger and which she greatly feared. Moreover just as her reliance on Melbourne was intensified by her early misunderstanding of Peel, and her readiness to listen to Russell and Aberdeen was increased by her deep mistrust of Palmerston, so was her marked preference for Disraeli further accentuated by her personal lack of sympathy with his great rival Gladstone and her fear of him politically. Disraeli came to the front as Chancellor of the

Exchequer in three of Lord Derby's administrations and as leader in the House of Commons. He had a short period as Prime Minister in 1868 but it was during his second Premiership from 1874 to 1880 that he gained his personal ascendancy over the Queen and ingratiated himself with her to an extent which was quite unprecedented with any of her other Ministers. He very tactfully and assiduously consulted the Queen and kept her informed on all political matters without burdening her with too much detail, and he avoided successfully ever giving her the smallest cause for offence. In 1876 she was personally affected and no doubt highly gratified by his proposal, which did not meet with general approval, that she should be styled Empress of India. In his turn he received an earldom in the same year and was made a Knight of the Garter two years later. Voluminous pages of correspondence unseen at the time reveal the height of the Queen's admiration for her Minister. Although Disraeli's style was naturally rather oriental and florid, a style which made his novels very readable, the extravagances of flattery in which he indulged seem almost to reach the pitch of farce. Yet there is nothing to suggest that he was laughing up his sleeve, except perhaps his cynical observation that the trowel was necessary in dealing with royalties. He seemed in this connection to be playing the part of one of the more fantastic characters in his novels. But on the Queen's side it cannot be regarded to

her credit that in her infatuation she swallowed all this quite seriously. Indeed it is a matter for surprise that one who could be so sharply censorious and severe, far from snubbing or checking, should have encouraged these superlatives of eulogies and grotesque exaggerations of language. Lord Beaconsfield's death in 1881 the Queen felt as a personal bereavement. "His devotion and kindness to me," she wrote, "his wise counsels, his great gentleness combined with firmness, his one thought of the honour and glory of the country and his unswerving loyalty to the throne make the death of my dear Lord Beaconsfield a national calamity. My grief is great and lasting." Not only did she make a pilgrimage to lay a wreath on his tomb but she had a special memorial tablet erected over his seat in the church at Hughenden and noted the anniversaries of his death in her journal.

The Queen being intensely human, the change from elaborate courtesies and the oriental sunshine in which she basked while in Disraeli's presence to the majestic periods and chilling northerly breeze of his great rival can have been anything but agreeable to her. Disraeli said : "Gladstone treats the Queen like a public department ; I treat her like a woman." So different indeed were the two men in upbringing, in method, in style, and in outlook that it would have been almost impossible for anyone to have extended to both the same amount of personal

regard. The Queen made no attempt to do anything of the kind. But the man she liked least was destined to be her Prime Minister no less than four times and to survive his rival by seventeen years. Gladstone regarded the Queen with friendly reverence, the Queen regarded Gladstone with unfriendly awe. The atmosphere thus produced was too cold for open and easy relations. The letters make this plain. In personal intercourse no doubt she succeeded in disguising her immovable prejudice, he in concealing his very excusable impatience.

Gladstone was already prominent in the political arena in the forties and was first Prime Minister in 1868. Except for minor criticisms which were usual on the Queen's part with all her Ministers there was no sign of a storm before 1876. It was during the period that he was in opposition to the Disraeli Government that the Queen, no doubt prompted by the Prime Minister, developed the strongest animosity and most unfair prejudice against Gladstone. So that on the fall of the Government in 1879 the suggestion that Gladstone should form a Government made her write : " I never *could* have the slightest particle of confidence in Mr. Gladstone after his violent, mischievous and dangerous conduct of the last three years." She was, however, obliged to submit, but she did not cease to criticise violently his policy abroad and at home, more especially with regard to Egypt and Home Rule. She spoke

of him as "a most dangerous man," she considered him "reckless," "without fixed principles," and compared him unfavourably even with Lord Palmerston. Again on the prospect of his return to power in 1885 the Queen referred to Mr. Gladstone as one "who can persuade himself that *everything* he takes up is right even though it be calling black white and wrong right."

Of course he noticed the Queen's antipathy towards him and felt it. He saw she was holding him at "arm's length" and that she never in their interviews up to the end of his life showed him more than cold civility. Not till after he died was it realised how deeply wounded he was by his Sovereign's mistrust.

Lord Salisbury, who took office as Prime Minister in 1885, was the first Prime Minister of the reign to be younger than the Queen. He also held the position of Foreign Secretary. There was a quiet sagacity about him which at once inspired trust. His political views suited the Queen, who gave him her most implicit confidence. Moreover Gladstone was still the alternative. Shortly after he took office in 1886 the Queen wrote: "Lord Beaconsfield raised up the position of Great Britain from '74 to '80 in a marvellous manner. Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville pulled it down again during the five years of their mischievous and fatal misrule, but already in seven months Lord Salisbury raised our position again." The Queen's estimates of her Ministers other than



Prime Ministers and of diplomatists and other official personages were very liable to be swayed by personal considerations without due regard to their abilities. Of amiable friends like Lord Iddesleigh she was inclined to over-estimate the capacity, while against more original characters like Sir Robert Morier the Ambassador she could not overcome her prejudice. It was on the question of her sanction to appointments that she sometimes came to cross purposes even with Lord Salisbury. He respected her long experience and her high sense of responsibility and he recognised her legitimate prerogative in this connection. Often he yielded to her wishes not out of courteous deference but because she was able to persuade him. There were times however when he made his own opinion prevail. In addition to Cabinet, military and diplomatic nominations the Queen was very particular about ecclesiastical appointments. She scrutinised the clergy as closely as she did any of the public services. Preachers were tested, and the testing must have been a nerve-shaking ordeal for them. At the Windsor Castle Chapel at the appropriate moment in the service the clergyman would retire, don a black Geneva gown with bands and ascend a little staircase into the high pulpit. Here he would find himself on a level with the royal gallery and with no cover whatsoever from the keenly critical and appraising gaze which shot from beneath the large white widow's cap. Conscious that his future career

depended on the judgment which would there and then be made not only of his sermon but of his appearance, voice and manner, he could hardly be blamed for his nervousness. If any divine preached *at* the Queen he was doomed. Here again her estimates were generally sound.

The three first Archbishops of Canterbury of the Queen's reign were not men of any special distinction. On the death of Archbishop Longley in 1868 the recommendations with regard to his successor made by Disraeli, then Prime Minister, did not please the Queen, although he was at pains to write very fully to her. Fortified by the advice of Dean Wellesley of Windsor, who became her chief adviser on ecclesiastical matters, she pressed the claim of Dr. Tait, then Bishop of London, and the Prime Minister felt himself obliged to yield. Archbishop Tait became a great favourite with the Queen, and was very helpful in exercising his influence to prevent a conflict between Lords and Commons on the Irish Church Bill in 1869. Although she disliked the Bill as far as she understood it she dreaded the possible consequences of a deadlock between the two Houses. Through Archbishop Tait she first made acquaintance with his son-in-law, Dr. Davidson. With Archbishop Benson, who succeeded in 1882, the Queen tried to reason with regard to the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill, of which she was a warm supporter. Dr. Benson refused to register his vote without a speech against the Bill, which

on that occasion was lost. It was probably on account of the Bishop's continued opposition that she remarked to Lord Rosebery at a later date that she thought there were too many Bishops in the House of Lords.

A controversy over an ecclesiastical appointment arose in 1890 between the Queen and Lord Salisbury. Dr. Davidson was then Dean of Windsor and for him from early in his career the Queen conceived a very high opinion. A vacancy having occurred, Lord Salisbury, among the various changes and promotions, submitted his name for the See of Rochester or of Worcester. The Queen replied with asperity that her personal wishes and convenience were being overlooked and that Dr. Davidson should be given the See of Winchester so that he might at once take his seat in the House of Lords. Lord Salisbury for various reasons refused to yield.

Again in 1896 he over-ruled the Queen's wish that Davidson, then Bishop of Winchester, should be Archbishop of Canterbury and his selection, Dr. Temple, was appointed. Lord Salisbury's preference was governed by consideration of age and university degree; the Queen was only thinking of character. Her choice was eventually justified by Dr. Davidson's long reign as Archbishop for twenty-five years, which did not begin however till three years after her death. Of all the ecclesiastics with whom the Queen came in contact he stood out as her closest confidant and

her most trusted adviser. It was his humanity rather than any ecclesiastical distinction which appealed to the Queen.

Always apprehensive of what a Liberal Government might do even after Gladstone had retired, the Queen welcomed Lord Salisbury's return to power in 1895, and for the rest of her reign, in spite of the troubles and the great conflict which disturbed the peace in the last years, her confidence in his sagacity was never shaken. Lord Salisbury on his side, while remaining firm in matters of moment in which he did not consider interference on her part justified, was ready to accept her view when it was backed by special knowledge which he did not possess. This is well illustrated by a passage in a letter to her private secretary in 1895. "As to writing to the Emperor of Germany about our supposed intrigue with Russia, the Queen knows best. From what I have seen of his character, I should rather dread giving him umbrage. He has not recovered from the intoxication of his accession to power ; it is rather growing worse. But I repeat that she knows him infinitely better than I do."

The Queen was nervous of people who were "clever." But Lord Salisbury was not clever, he was wise. A clever man might have ignored her and risked offending her. He began by respect for her position and acknowledgment of her experience. "I always thought," he said in his speech at the time of her death, "that when

I knew what the Queen thought I knew pretty certainly what view her subjects would take and specially the middle class of her subjects – such was the extraordinary penetration of her mind.” In the end Lord Salisbury developed a warm personal affection for her ; and it is indeed a high tribute to the Queen to learn from Lord Salisbury’s biographer that his deep friendship for her was “ outside the limits of his immediate family the warmest and closest of Lord Salisbury’s life.”

When Mr. Gladstone, because of his growing physical infirmities, resigned the office of Prime Minister in March 1894, he made no definite suggestion to the Queen with regard to his successor. On her own initiative therefore the Queen sent for Lord Rosebery, who then filled the post for the short period of fourteen months until the Government fell in June 1895. Lord Rosebery’s great gifts and charm attracted the Queen, who was frightened of the only alternative appointment, which was that of Sir William Harcourt. But it was with great reluctance that Lord Rosebery accepted the Premiership ; he found it difficult to work with any team and seemed always anxious to withdraw from politics.

The Queen hoped that Lord Rosebery would “ act as a check and drag on his Cabinet,” but his speeches alarmed her. Two years before, she had protested at his extreme views. In fact in earlier days her chief Ministers had seldom used

the platform, and the habit of increasingly doing so was very distasteful to her. Gladstone had offended her often in this way. In Lord Rosebery she suspected a different sort of danger. "In his speeches *out* of Parliament," she warned him, "he should take a more serious tone and be, if she may say so, less *jocular* which is hardly befitting a Prime Minister. Lord Rosebery is so clever that he may be carried away by a sense of humour which is a little dangerous." As to the Government the Queen wrote: "She does not object to Liberal Measures which are not revolutionary and she does not think it possible that Lord Rosebery will destroy well-tried, valued, and necessary institutions for the sole purpose of flattering useless Radicals or pandering to the pride of those whose only desire is their own self gratification."

On the question of ecclesiastical appointments the Queen objected to Rosebery's recommendation of Dr. Percival for the Bishopric of Hereford because he was in favour of the Disestablishment of the Church in Wales. It required a good many letters from the Prime Minister before he gained his point.

Over the reform of the House of Lords she came into prolonged and acute controversy with Rosebery but was relieved when the Government fell and nothing came of his projects. Otherwise their relations were good and Lord Rosebery, like his predecessors, genuinely felt the severance of his

contact with the Queen. On the resignation of the Government he wrote: "I can say with absolute truth that my only regret in laying down my office is the cessation of my personal relations with Your Majesty"; and the Queen replied: "I shall ever remember your personal kindness and sympathy on all occasions and shall ever take the warmest interest in you and yours."

The Queen's relations with some of the minor Ministers, were there space enough to describe them, would further show the very careful attention she devoted to the details of government and how closely she watched the personalities who were working in the public service, commenting in her journal on the impression they made on her. She was, so to speak, a department of the Government which, unknown to the outside world, was a continuous and exacting part of the official machine. Her letters and memoranda, not to speak of her demands for audiences, were a trial and strain on the time and attention of some of her Ministers who may have been inclined to consider them merely as a nuisance. Yet her frequent messages could not be ignored and her Ministers could never be sure that, cloaked as these communications might often be in elementary and simple language, some shrewd and discriminating view of the events under discussion might not be found, especially in the realm of foreign affairs. Strong as some of the expressions of opinion may be in the letters and

memoranda which have now been published, even so we can see that the official blue pencil has sometimes had to operate in order to present an expurgated version of Queen Victoria's opinions for the public consumption even of posterity.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE QUEEN AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Queen's foreign family connections – changes in France – disputes with Lord Palmerston – Napoleon III – the Crimean War – suspicions of France – the Eastern question – the Afghan War – Gladstone's policy in Egypt – the Queen's attitude towards Bismarck – his domination in Prussia – the Queen's meeting with him – the Empress Frederick and the Emperor William – general views on foreign policy – continued mistrust of France – effect of her death on foreign affairs.

NOTHING was more natural than that the Queen should take a special interest in foreign affairs. In her early upbringing her attention was more especially drawn to foreign questions. But her family connections brought her into personal contact with so many royal houses that before the end of her reign there was hardly a country in Europe to which she was not linked in this way. So widespread were the ramifications that the principal connections deserve to be recorded.

*Germany.* Her mother the Duchess of Kent was a Princess of Saxe-Coburg; her husband was Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg. Her sons-in-law were the Crown Prince of Germany, The Grand Duke of Hesse, Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein and Prince Henry of Battenberg; her daughter-in-law the Duchess of Connaught was a grand-daughter of the Emperor William I.

*France.* Her aunt the Queen of the Belgians was a daughter of Louis Phillippe ; her cousin Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg married the Duc de Nemours, son of Louis Phillippe.

*Russia.* Her daughter-in-law the Duchess of Edinburgh was a daughter of the Czar Alexander ; her grand-daughter married the Czar Nicholas.

*Belgium.* Her uncle was King Leopold.

*Holland.* Her daughter-in-law the Duchess of Albany was a sister of the Queen of Holland.

*Denmark.* Her daughter-in-law the Princess of Wales was a daughter of the King of Denmark.

*Portugal.* Her cousin Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg married the Queen of Portugal and was father of two subsequent Kings.

*Bulgaria.* Her cousin Augustus of Saxe-Coburg was father of Prince, afterwards King, Ferdinand of Bulgaria. And three of her grand-daughters became respectively Queens of *Greece*, *Roumania* and *Spain*.

Although these may be said only to be family connections, they undoubtedly stimulated the Queen's interest in the political affairs of the countries in question when they came under discussion. She became, as Disraeli described her, "the mother of many nations." On special occasions her visits and her letters to foreign sovereigns were encouraged by her Ministers ; and the time she occupied in discussion and correspondence on foreign affairs far outbalanced any deliberations with regard to domestic politics.

But in this restricted space only a bare outline of her views on a few of the questions can be given.

France within the period was the country destined to pass through the most serious upheavals. This in addition to causing the Queen an anxiety which every sovereign must feel at the disappearance of a neighbouring monarchy made the recognition of the various changes of Government no easy matter. Louis Phillippe was King of the French when Queen Victoria ascended the throne, and with him, as already shown, she had family connections. A good deal of embittered controversy arose out of the French intrigues with regard to the question of the marriage of the Queen of Spain, more especially as the Queen and Prince Albert were pressing the rival claims of their cousin Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg. However, the controversy subsided sufficiently for the Queen and Prince Albert to pay a visit to France and stay as the guests of the King and Queen at Château D'Eu in 1843. This visit was returned in the following year, although in the interval fresh dispute had arisen about Tahiti, over which the French had assumed sovereignty. The marriage of the Infanta of Spain was also settled by France in a way the Queen disapproved, and she said so to the Queen of the French in a letter which Lord Palmerston praised as "most judicious." In Portugal in 1847 the disturbed state of affairs made the Queen anxious for some form

of interference. But Palmerston by supporting the Queen of Portugal found himself supporting an absolutist Government and had to insist that the Constitution should be restored. It was about this time that the Queen's quarrels with Lord Palmerston began. Over Spain and Portugal they had not seen eye to eye. In the struggle between Austria and Italy the Queen and her Foreign Secretary had taken different views. She adopted definitely a pro-Austrian attitude and disputed with considerable heat Palmerston's continued efforts in favour of Italian unity. Lord Palmerston's reception of Kossuth awakened the Queen to a fury of remonstrance and when finally on his own initiative he expressed approval of Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* this brought matters to a head and led to his removal from the Foreign Office. The Queen in a memorandum to Lord John Russell expressed her views on the loss of British influence in Europe and objected to the "mere assertion of abstract principles." "The moving powers," she wrote in 1851, "which were put in operation by the French Revolution of 1848 and the events consequent on it are no longer so obscure ; they have assumed distinct and tangible forms in almost all the countries affected by them (in France, in Germany, Italy, etc.) . . . the Queen would hope that our Foreign Policy may be *more specifically defined* and that it may be considered how the general principles are to be practically adapted

to our peculiar relations with each Continental State."

The advent of Napoleon III to the throne of France as Emperor in 1852 was regarded by the Queen with some hesitancy. But an exchange of visits brought her into personal contact with the new Emperor and at first she was inclined to be captivated by his superficial charms and by his clever flattery. After his visit she made a memorandum of her impressions of this "extraordinary man. . . . I might almost say a mysterious man" in which she summed up his rather shallow abilities, his power of fascination and his curious superstition with regard to his "fulfilling a destiny which God had imposed on him." The bias on the whole is in his favour, although she had doubts about his possession of any "strong moral sense of right." With the Empress Eugénie she struck up a friendship which lasted during the Empress's exile in England until she died.

The Crimean War was followed by the Queen with keen anxiety. Its protracted nature, its mismanagement, and the changes of Government which occurred before peace was declared created opposition, criticism and misgiving which entirely damped down the enthusiasm with which it was originally undertaken. The Queen vigilantly watched every detail. She entered into correspondence with the King of Prussia with regard to his neutral attitude. She cross-questioned the Duke of Newcastle, who was Secretary for War,

as to the "effective state" and "not the state upon paper" of our military preparations. She hailed the victories and deplored the serious loss; and to Florence Nightingale she wrote a letter of the highest commendation for the part she had played in reforming and establishing the hospitals and so alleviating some of the suffering of the troops which, owing to neglect and mismanagement, had been the cause of great scandal. Subsequently Miss Nightingale was received at Balmoral. Throughout the Queen had no misgivings as to the righteousness of our cause, as she summed it up to the King of the Belgians: "England's policy throughout has been the *same singularly unselfish and solely* actuated by the *desire of seeing Europe saved* from the *arrogant and dangerous pretensions* of that *barbarous power* Russia." Hardly indeed at any time did she regard Russia with anything but the deepest mistrust.

After the conclusion of the Crimean War the Queen became suspicious of the designs of Napoleon III in his Italian campaign. Lord Granville in a letter to Sidney Herbert refers to the Queen's "detestation of the Emperor." In a memorandum which was submitted to the Cabinet she urged strict neutrality, and in 1859 she wrote on Lord Derby's suggestion a letter to Napoleon III counselling moderation in the interests of peace.

When war between France and Prussia was threatened in 1870 she was again ready to

intervene in an endeavour to prevent it. Greatly affected as she was by her close family links with Germany, the final defeat of France must have come as some relief to her, although she regarded the war as "iniquitous" and showed every civility to the deposed Emperor and his wife, who came over to live as exiles in England. To the German Emperor she wrote an appeal that Germany should show herself "as magnanimous in peace as she was invincible in war."

She had not been able to avoid meeting King William of Prussia in 1865 on a visit to Coburg ; his conduct over the settlement of the Schleswig-Holstein question she had very much disapproved. In the following year she was distressed by the outbreak of war between Prussia and Austria. While she sympathised with the German movement for unity, she distrusted Bismarck and Prussian intentions. This distrust was accentuated in 1875 when the rumour gained ground that Germany was preparing again to attack France. The Queen intervened with a letter to the Emperor of Russia asking him to use his influence to maintain peace, and subsequently, when Germany pretended that her intentions had been misconstrued, the Queen in reply wrote very frankly to the German Emperor. Under the Republic, after all personal links had been broken, the Queen's suspicion of France was never completely allayed. Later on in 1883 she wrote to Lord Granville : "Are we to let the

French go on taking what they like with impunity? First Tunis now Madagascar? It will have the very worst effect"; and to Mr. Gladstone: "This country has, she fears, been insulted by the French."

The Eastern question began in 1876 to occupy public attention and so absorbed did the Queen become in the various negotiations that she was in almost daily correspondence with Lord Beaconsfield, greatly disapproving Mr. Gladstone's agitation over the Bulgarian atrocities and his uncompromising anti-Turkish attitude which had brought him out of his retirement. War broke out and the greatest vigilance was necessary on the part of Great Britain, while there was hot dispute with regard to intervention. The Queen favoured the despatch of an expedition which was suggested by Lord Beaconsfield but was not favoured by the Cabinet. However, when the war continued a policy of mediation was approved and troops were sent out. This led to Lord Derby's resignation and the appointment of Lord Salisbury to the Foreign Office. The conclusion came with the Treaty of San Stefano and subsequently the Congress of Berlin from which Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury returned bringing "peace with honour." The Queen rewarded them by making them Knights of the Garter. Throughout, the Queen's attitude was strongly anti-Russian; she refers in her journal to "Russia's wicked aggression, ambition



and duplicity ” and in her letters urging “ action ” she seems to have been affected by the jingo fever which raged at the time.

In the many wars and expeditions outside Europe which took place during her reign, the Queen was ever ready with words of praise and commendation for the soldiers. She always emphasised the fact that they were the Queen’s Army and the Queen’s Navy ; the Government did not come into it. In fact on a later occasion she reprimanded her Ministers for sending a telegram of praise and congratulation to the troops in Egypt which in her opinion should only have been sent in her name. The Zulu War specially interested the Queen owing to the death of the Prince Imperial. Chiefly she mourned for her friend the Empress Eugénie as the mother of an only son. But it is interesting to note that she was not without hope of the restoration of the Empire in France, for she wrote in her journal that he “ would have made such a good Emperor for France one day.” Having magnified the incident out of all proportion, she was “ shocked and disgusted ” at the refusal of the House of Commons to allow a monument to the Prince Imperial to be erected in Westminster Abbey.

Lord Beaconsfield’s injudicious expression that he wished to see the Queen “ the dictatress of Europe,” which he repeated to her in a letter while he was Prime Minister in 1879, must have

encouraged rather than curbed her desire to interfere in questions of foreign policy.

In 1880, after the change of Government and the advent of Mr. Gladstone to power, the British troops were withdrawn from Afghanistan. The withdrawal from Candahar was mentioned in the Queen's speech in 1881. A speech council is normally regarded as formal business ; but the Queen before the council met addressed such a strong remonstrance to Mr. Gladstone that the Ministers assembled for the council were placed in a very awkward position. They were at Osborne while Mr. Gladstone was in London. Sir William Harcourt and Lord Spencer were obliged to take the view that the speech could not be altered and that they were not in a position to pledge the Cabinet to any future policy. The Queen was indignant that she had never been informed of the policy of the withdrawal of the troops and she expressed herself with considerable warmth through her private secretary, Sir Henry Ponsonby, who had his work cut out for him between the infuriated Queen and her confused and embarrassed Ministers. Of Sir William Harcourt she wrote : " His opinion has no weight whatsoever with *her* for he has never been in office before and she thinks that her experience of forty-three years more likely to enable her to know, *what is her position and standing* than he does. It is very condescending of him to allow her forty-eight hours' notice of the Speech, twenty-four

hours would be nearer the mark." Messages and memoranda were sent backwards and forwards and attempts made to modify the Queen's language. Finally she very reluctantly approved the speech and adds in her journal : " I spoke to no one and the Ministers nearly tumbled over each other going out." This was by no means the only occasion on which the Queen endeavoured to alter the wording of the royal speech from the throne, and there were occasions when she succeeded. In 1862 she had a paragraph struck out because it had a bellicose note in it against Germany ; and in 1893 the description of the Home Rule Bill as " a Bill for the better government of Ireland " had to be altered to the colourless phrase " a Bill to amend the provision for the Government of Ireland."

No part of Mr. Gladstone's policy did the Queen disapprove more than the conduct of the Egyptian campaign by his Government between 1882 and 1884. Arabi's revolt was checked by the bombardment of Alexandria and the victory at Tel-el-Kebir. But when it came to the proposed withdrawal of British troops, the Queen wrote to Lord Granville that she would " not give her consent " and refused to yield to " the cry of non-interference." The policy however of reconstruction with a small temporary garrison was carried out with the object of educating the Egyptians in self-government, and Major Baring (afterwards Lord Cromer) was sent out as Agent

and Consul-General. Serious trouble broke out in the Soudan and the indecision of the Government as to what course to take infuriated the Queen. Sir Charles Dilke, Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, at the time made a note that "the old stagers like Lord Granville and Mr. Gladstone waste a great deal of their time on concocting stories for the Queen, who is much too clever to be taken in by them and always ends by finding out exactly what they are doing. It is certainly a case where honesty would be a better policy."

"The conduct of the Government," the Queen wrote, "is *perfectly miserable*," and she told her private secretary that she felt aggrieved and annoyed that she was never listened to and that it was dreadful for her "to see how we are going downhill and to be unable to prevent the humiliation of this country." The necessity of evacuating the Soudan was followed by the despatch of General Gordon, the fall of Khartoum and the failure to rescue him in time. It may be imagined what the Queen's feelings were. She finally despatched to Mr. Gladstone an uncyphered telegram lamenting that the efforts to save General Gordon were too late. The Prime Minister and his Ministers resented this as being a public censure of the Government. It was explained that it was "a deep lament" and that "she with difficulty abstained from writing more strongly than she did."

Under Lord Salisbury the administration of foreign affairs was approved by the Queen, although she never hesitated to speak her mind. She strongly disapproved at first of the cession of Heligoland in 1890 but finally accepted Lord Salisbury's explanations. From whom the suggestion came in 1890 that she should receive King Milan of Serbia does not seem clear but there is nothing ambiguous in the Queen's reply : "The Queen would on no account receive King Milan, whose conduct to his wife and generally is very disreputable."

Her close links with Germany naturally gave the Queen very particular concern with Anglo-German relations and with the policy pursued by that country. Her personal intervention in 1863 when she visited Germany and herself saw both the King of Prussia and the Emperor of Austria was not successful in bringing about unity and conciliation between the two countries. Not long after, Bismarck came to the front as the dominating figure and made his speech declaring that the German question would have to be solved by "blood and iron." Henceforth and until his retirement dealing with Prussia (and after 1870 Germany) meant dealing with Bismarck. After the war with Austria in 1866 Bismarck accepted Napoleon III's mediation and drew up the constitution of the North German Federation in which Prussia was to be the dominant member. The Queen was distressed at the course of events.

She favoured German unity but she distrusted Bismarck and Prussian policy, which she considered purely aggressive, having been warned by Lord Clarendon, then Foreign Secretary, that before the war actually broke out Bismarck's case for war was "utterly groundless." Her fears were confirmed by a letter from King Leopold of Belgium in which he stated that he knew positively that Belgium had been offered by Bismarck to France. Although at first she had favoured the Prussian policy with regard to Schleswig-Holstein against Lord Palmerston, who took up strongly the cause of Denmark, when the eventual settlement of the question was concluded, she objected to the German solution.

The Queen's attitude towards Bismarck was further embittered by his positive dislike of her daughter the Crown Princess. At an early age the Princess had been married to the Crown Prince Frederick. She had been highly educated by her father Prince Albert and inherited from her mother a keen interest in politics. Such a Princess was a novelty in Germany, and her interference in public affairs was from the outset resented by Bismarck. Although intellectually better equipped than her mother, she was, unlike the Queen, entirely devoid of tact. The result was friction which increased greatly and culminated in positive enmity.

When in 1875 there was a threat of war breaking out again between France and Germany the

Queen's attitude was that "while remonstrating with Germany it becomes our duty also to warn France against aggressive movements." She wrote a letter to the Czar asking him to use his influence for peace and to the Crown Princess she expressed without restraint her opinion of Bismarck: "Bismarck is so overbearing, violent, grasping, and unprincipled that *no one* can stand it and *all* agreed that he was becoming like the first Napoleon whom Europe had joined in *putting* down. . . . Bismarck is a terrible man, and he makes Germany greatly disliked." When, however, in the following year Bismarck suggested acting with England in support of peace in the East, the Queen was ready to accept the proposal. Lord Derby on the other hand, who was at the Foreign Office, said he could not "possess implicit confidence in Prince Bismarck's desire of peace, remembering the events of last Spring." The Queen continued to press Lord Beaconsfield, explaining that acting with Germany might prevent Bismarck "from doing anything else and of going to war with France." Nothing definite was done and Bismarck kept in close touch with Russia. When Lord Beaconsfield returned from the Congress of Berlin the Queen gathered from him that "Bismarck though very Prussian was an extraordinary man, who talked very loosely and carelessly about everything, most original and peculiar." The suggestion of an alliance with Germany in 1879 the Queen regarded as a very

doubtful policy. Meanwhile Bismarck, to whom the old Emperor William yielded on every point, was by the absolute power he wielded becoming unpopular in his own country. Although at first he was suspected of wishing France to have Egypt, he made it clear to Lord Granville in 1882 that he would not oppose the annexation of Egypt by Great Britain.

The complications arising from Prince Alexander of Battenberg's acceptance of the principality of Eastern Roumelia and subsequently Bulgaria occupied the Queen's attention for several years. She was personally devoted to him. One of his brothers, Prince Henry, married her daughter Princess Beatrice, and another, Prince Louis, married her grand-daughter. Here again close family links gave the Queen a particular interest in the proceedings. Bismarck encouraged Prince Alexander to accept the position, but when in 1885-6 owing to Russian opposition and intrigue the Prince found it was impossible to retain his rule of the provinces, Bismarck, recognising the hopelessness of his position, refused to intervene. "Having forced him to go," the Queen wrote, "now he has deserted him." The Prince abdicated. Subsequently there was the question of his marrying one of the Queen's grandchildren Princess Victoria, daughter of the Crown Princess. The idea however put Bismarck "in a perfect fury," was opposed by the Emperor William and finally dropped.



In 1886 Lord Salisbury explained " that Prince Bismarck's leaning to England was now largely due to his resolution to continue in office after the death of the Emperor ; and his consequent recognition of the necessity of propitiating the Crown Princess."

Bismarck conceived the deepest dislike for Sir Robert Morier, our very able Ambassador at St. Petersburg. So strongly did he express his views, that in spite of Lord Salisbury's warning that all the gossip and reports came from Bismarck himself, the Queen went so far as to press for Morier's withdrawal. Lord Salisbury was reluctant, but later the Ambassador, who had certainly been wanting in tact, was transferred to Rome.

In 1888 these two leading European personalities met face to face. Queen Victoria visited Berlin on April 25th and granted Prince Bismarck an audience. The atmosphere in which they met must be taken into account. On March 9th the old Emperor William died (" for some years alas ! he was made a tool of for no good," the Queen noted in her journal). The Emperor Frederick was suffering from a mortal disease, and the intrigues which his position caused, as well as the controversies between the German and English doctors, made a very distressing setting for the advent to the throne of a man of wise judgment and good sense on whom high hopes had been concentrated. The position of his wife was even more difficult owing to Bismarck's undisguised

animosity against her. On April 8th, just before her visit, the Queen notes in her journal: "Bismarck is behaving disgracefully."

Bismarck as he entered the Queen's presence in Berlin was nervous. There could be no blustering and shouting here. Behind her Ambassadors and Ministers he had always felt the unseen but very recognisable influence of the Queen of England. The Queen, of course, was not in the least nervous. She was only surprised that he was so amiable, and after talking of Austria and Russia she appealed to him to stand by the Empress. He assured her he would. But he never had the remotest intention of doing anything of the kind, and when the Emperor Frederick died after a reign of only a few months the Queen refers to Bismarck as "untrue and heartless." But his own days as ruler of Germany were numbered, for the young Emperor William II soon dispensed with his services.

In no relationship throughout her life were the Queen's powers of self-restraint and calm judgment put to a more severe test than in dealing with her grandson the Emperor William. The political relations of the two countries could not be detached from the intimate family relations of the two individuals. Underneath there was a warm mutual affection between the two which on his part amounted to genuine devotion and admiration. But his inconsiderate treatment of his mother, the Empress Frederick, led to frequent

quarrels which the Queen by tactful intervention did her best to smooth over. On the Emperor's fortieth birthday she wrote in her journal : " I wish he were more prudent and less impulsive at such an age." He summed up her attitude towards him not inaccurately when he wrote : " The Sovereign will sometimes shake her wise head often over the tricks of her queer and impetuous colleague, the good and genial heart of my grandmother will step in and show that, if he sometimes fails, it is never from want of goodwill, honesty and truthfulness and thus mitigate the shake of the head by a genial smile of warm sympathy and interest."

In spite of these embarrassing family entanglements the Queen in her relation to him as one monarch to another showed surprisingly calm firmness. In the days of his popularity the Emperor had been made a British Admiral. It was further suggested that he should be given military rank. " This would never do. . . . The Queen thinks he is far too much spoilt already," was her comment. However, it was done. The telegram of congratulation despatched by the Emperor to President Kruger at the time of the Jameson Raid was bitterly resented in England. The Queen described it as " most unwarranted " and " very unfriendly " and regarded his reply to her letter of remonstrance as " lame and illogical." She knew his weakness was impetuosity as well as conceit but she deprecated

anything like snubbing him ; “ calmness and firmness,” she wrote, “ are the most powerful weapons in such cases.” Nevertheless she administered a calm and firm official snub in her message to him through Sir Frank Lascelles, the Ambassador in Berlin in March 1900. The Emperor had suggested intervention in the South African War in order to bring it to a conclusion. The Queen replied : “ Please convey to the Emperor that my whole nation is with me in a fixed determination to see this war through without intervention. The time for and the terms of peace must be left to our decision and my country which is suffering from so heavy a sacrifice of precious lives will resist all interference.” Lord Salisbury, who approved, said it would not have been *convenable* for him “ to have used such strong language ” ; and the Prince of Wales’s private secretary described the message as “ worthy of Queen Elizabeth.”

But these were only the major outbursts. The Emperor habitually talked at random against Lord Salisbury, and his intrigues and mischief-making caused the Queen on one occasion to appeal to the Czar to use his efforts to counteract the possible ill effects of the Emperor’s restless machinations. With the Prince of Wales the Emperor’s relations were never cordial. Several incidents contributed to a growing estrangement between uncle and nephew. So it was that when the Queen died a strong influence for the

maintenance of friendly relations with Germany was removed and in the twentieth century a markedly different policy was pursued.

During the last ten years of the Queen's reign although there was no actual crisis in our foreign relations there was occasional tension and unrest, notably in British relations with France. The Queen's complete confidence in Lord Salisbury's conduct of foreign affairs gave way to apprehensions when a Liberal Government was in office. In 1892 she wrote to Lord Rosebery, who was at the Foreign Office, giving her general views on foreign policy.

“The Queen's great anxiety is that there should be a continuity in the foreign policy which has been so well and so peacefully yet firmly carried on by Lord Salisbury. Lord Rosebery said he felt anxious about Constantinople. While we hold Egypt both Constantinople and India are safe ; but once we go out (unless in years to come Egypt should be strong enough to stand alone, which she is not now) the French will instantly step in and we shall be powerless to resist Russian and French intrigue.”

In the following year she addressed a letter to Gladstone which she wished him to read to the Cabinet. The French dislike of us and their alliance with Russia she regarded as menacing. She urged that both the Navy and the Army should be strengthened without delay. “The Queen is no alarmist ; but she thinks the state of

affairs very serious and there is great alarm abroad about the Mediterranean." The Queen really favoured the Conservative motion brought on by Lord George Hamilton asking for "a considerable increase in the Navy," but Mr. Gladstone explained to her that such a motion could only be regarded as a motion of want of confidence in his Government.

The Queen wrote an appeal to the Sultan when the Armenian massacres of 1895-6 had reached a pitch that roused a good deal of popular indignation in England. But Abdul Hamid, having returned no doubt a civil reply, continued his policy undeterred by representations from the Powers.

The French attitude in Siam and in Africa towards the end of the century continued to make relations strained and in 1898 the Fashoda incident very nearly led to a clash. Major Marchand had been sent out with a view to getting a footing for France in the Upper Nile and would not withdraw. The Queen strove to prevent war. Fortunately the French Government took a reasonable attitude, and in 1899 an Anglo-French agreement was drawn up defining the southern frontier of Anglo-Egyptian territory. Bitterness remained during the Boer War, when very objectionable caricatures of Queen Victoria appeared in Paris newspapers. In the next century relations rapidly improved until the inauguration of the Entente Cordiale. Queen

Victoria had seen quite wisely that special friendships and alliances were more dangerous and likely to produce more jealousy and suspicion than passing disputes with foreign Governments over particular questions. This indeed eventually proved to be the case.

## CHAPTER V

### THE QUEEN AND THE EMPIRE

Growth of the British Empire during the reign - Canada - Australia - trouble in South Africa - the Zulu War - the Queen's views on wars in the outposts of the Empire - Cecil Rhodes - the Boer Wars of 1881 and 1899 - the Indian Mutiny - the Queen's proclamation - Manipur - the Queen's opinion on Indian policy - Ashanti - Burma - the Queen and Imperialism.

THERE must be some difficulty in detaching Imperial from foreign affairs. But the growth of the British Empire and the rapid development of the Imperial idea fostered by Lord Beaconsfield and further extended and popularised by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain was so notable a feature of the Queen's reign that some account of it cannot be omitted. Moreover the various expeditions and conflicts in the colonies and dependencies were sometimes the cause of considerable anxiety. The Queen's personal knowledge did not extend in this direction. She accepted the policy of expansion, merely expressing very decided views at any sign of hesitancy or weakness once military operations had been initiated. There will be found therefore fewer causes of serious dispute between the Queen and her Ministers in connection with Colonial affairs.

A rough but striking idea of the growth of the



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## Chapter V

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### *The Squire of Derby House*

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"I shall never think the Navy capable of doing any great matters unless officered with sober, discreet and experienced seamen, . . . and that men may see advancement plain before them when they deserve it, and that instead of being industrious only to get friends to recommend them, . . . the officers and seamen shall be brought to an emulation who shall do best as being sure to be preferred that way and no other; when this is everyone will do his duty." J. Houblon to S. Pepys, April 23rd, 1675, *Pepysian MSS.* 2265, Paper 95.

At the beginning of 1674, Pepys removed his Admiralty Office from its temporary quarters at Whitehall to Derby House in Channel or Cannon Row, a few hundred yards southwards up the river. Here, where in less reputable days he had given Betty Lane lobsters, he now set up in state at the very heart of the national administration, half way between the Palace and the Parliament house, and within a few yards of Westminster stairs. £150 was allowed to his chief clerk, William Hewer, to buy furniture, maps and other necessities. On January 3rd the Secretary's first letter was dictated from Derby House.<sup>1</sup>

Here Pepys moved his personal belongings and took up his permanent abode. There was a great room above stairs with windows looking on the river, where his clerks could work, and lodgings for himself, where he could display his books, his prints and his gilded models of ships, his scriptor and his presses and the long mirrors in which his small energetic

form, crowned with its vast periwig, was so frequently reflected. Below was a sheltered garden, on which two men were at once set to work to make order out of chaos, and where before long Samuel was setting out orange trees.<sup>2</sup>

Here was the background where a great work was exactly performed. The duties of the Admiralty Office were the general supervision of the building, manning, provisioning, discipline, upkeep and finance of the Navy (the details of which were carried out by the Navy Board), the formal control of the jurisdiction of the Admiralty Courts, and the actual execution of the more peculiar functions of the Admiral—the appointment of officers, the issue of orders and warrants and the direction and movement of ships. Hitherto the Lord High Admiral's control of the Navy had been more or less a personal affair, and in peace time had usually dwindled into an occasional inspection of the work of the Navy Board, a spasmodic visit to the ports to launch a ship or inspect a new battery and the appointment (often with a good deal of Court intrigue) of flag officers and captains. Pepys set out to render the "Admiralty" a single controlling force for the whole Service, and to make himself the sole interpreter of, as he was the sole link between, the limited and carefully defined functions of the new Admiralty Board and the more general powers which the King did not delegate to the Lords Commissioners but retained in his own hands.<sup>3</sup>

Even before the War ended the new Secretary had begun to make his purpose felt. A month after his appointment he issued orders to the Navy Board to attend the Admiralty at 8 o'clock every Saturday morning, and set his late colleagues to work making statistical returns of the state of the Stores, the wages bills of the Yards and the debts of the Service. When the Muster Masters were slow to send up their books to Mark Lane, he intervened in person. Having

was made in the House of Commons that Sir Garnet Wolseley had been appointed to supersede them. She notes in her journal that Lord Beaconsfield had found it necessary to make the announcement before the Whitsuntide recess, "forgetting he had not answered my cypher." Lord Beaconsfield no doubt found that on occasions a lapse of memory saved a good deal of trouble.

The Zulu War which occurred concurrently with the Afghan War prompted the Queen to lay down with her usual emphasis her views with regard to wars in the outposts of the Empire. In a letter to Lord Beaconsfield dated July 28th, 1879, she writes : " One great lesson is again taught us, but it is never followed ; NEVER *let the Army and Navy DOWN so low as to be obliged to go to great expense in a hurry.* This was the case in the Crimean War. We were *not* prepared. We had but small forces at the Cape ; hence *the great amount* having to be sent out in a hurry. . . . All *this* causes great trouble and expense afterwards.

" If *we are to maintain* our position as a *first rate Power* – and of that *no one* (but people of the Bright or rather Anderson, Jenkins, etc., school) can doubt – we must, with our Indian Empire and large Colonies be *prepared for attacks and wars somewhere* or other CONTINUALLY. And the true economy will be to be always ready. Lord Beaconsfield can do his country the greatest service by repeating this again and again and by

*seeing it carried out. It will prevent war.*" The Queen, who made a special point of personally seeing the principal actors in any great events, whether military, diplomatic, or political, received Lord Chelmsford very cordially as well as Colonel (afterwards Sir Evelyn) Wood and Colonel (afterwards Sir Redvers) Buller ; and it can be seen by the note in her journal that she formed a high opinion of the two officers who had been in command under Lord Chelmsford. In 1882 Cetewayo, the Zulu chief who had been restored to his kingdom under restriction, visited the Queen at Osborne. "Cetewayo," she notes, "is a very fine man in his native costume or rather no costume . . . unfortunately he appeared in a hideous black frock coat and trousers but still wearing the ring round his head denoting that he was a married man."

The premature annexation of the Transvaal in 1877 led to a revolt in 1881, and a small British force was defeated at Majuba Hill. The settlement by which the Boers regained their independence under the suzerainty of Great Britain by no means pleased the Queen, who regarded it as a humiliating peace and informed Lord Kimberley, the Colonial Secretary, of her misgivings.

The eventual great conflict with the Boers took place in the very last years of the Queen's reign, and, although prolonged, its issue was practically decided just before she died. It is neither possible nor necessary here to recite the sequence

of events which led up to the final conflict between Great Britain and the Boer Republic. South African affairs had been engaging the Queen's attention for some years previously and in 1891 she was first brought into contact with the dominating figure of Cecil Rhodes, founder of the British South Africa Company, who was at that time Prime Minister of Cape Colony. She thought him "a tremendously strong man," and he expounded to her his grandiose schemes of Empire extension: "He said Great Britain was the only country fit to colonise, no other nation succeeded. He hoped in time to see the English rule extend from the Cape to Egypt. He thought everything would be arranged and the difficulties got over." When she was told that Rhodes had the reputation of being a confirmed misogynist she remarked: "Oh, but he was extremely kind to me."

She saw him in 1894, when again she was very much impressed by him: "He said he had had great difficulties, but that since I had seen him last he had added 12,000 miles of territory to my Dominions and that he believed in time the whole would come under my rule. He also believes that the Transvaal, which we ought never to have given up, would ultimately come back to England."

Hardly was the expedition on the North-West Frontier in India (1897-9) over, and the rebellion in the Soudan terminated by the battle of Omdurman, than the negotiations with the Transvaal in

1899 broke down and war was declared. The Queen was in her eightieth year and failing eyesight prevented her from studying in her usual careful way the course of events. But her confidence in Lord Salisbury and Mr. Chamberlain led her to accept the situation and to believe that peace could only be maintained on terms derogatory to the prestige of her Government. Her distress over the reverses in the early stages of the war and her anxiety at its continuance undoubtedly contributed to the undermining of her physical strength. But in the darkest days she stoutly refused to show any sign of depression. "Red-tapings and useless difficulties," she wrote, "must not be regarded at such a very serious moment." To Mr. Arthur Balfour, who visited her at Windsor, she remarked : " Please understand that there is no one depressed in *this* house ; we are not interested in the possibilities of defeat ; they do not exist."

A mere recital of the Queen's activities in the last eighteen months of her life and reign will be enough to show how her public spirit in even adverse circumstances buoyed her up to perform, and indeed to initiate, active work both public and private in support of her country in its hour of trial. She constantly inspected troops before their departure for South Africa, she wrote letters of condolence to the relations of the officers who had fallen, she herself worked woollen comforters and caps and was annoyed when she was told they

were distributed among the officers and not among the privates, she visited the wounded in the hospitals, she entertained the wives and children of non-commissioned officers in St. George's Hall at Windsor, and after the tide had turned and success came to the British arms she drove on two successive days through miles of London streets as a method of expressing sympathy with her people. In order to show her appreciation of the part Ireland had played, she spent three weeks in Dublin, which she had not visited for nearly forty years, and inaugurated the formation of the Irish Guards. Nor did she abandon other public functions such as the reception of the King of Sweden and Norway and the Khedive of Egypt, and she herself held a drawing-room at Buckingham Palace. Within the last few weeks of her life she received Mr. Chamberlain and gave two audiences to Lord Roberts, on whom she conferred an earldom and the Order of the Garter. He explained to her the details in the progress of the war, which was still drifting on. Peace was not finally concluded till after her death. Africa was the scene of fighting in many parts. The Queen always disliked withdrawals or what she condemned as vacillation. When in 1892 she thought the Liberal Government intended to give up Uganda she wrote very strongly to Lord Rosebery. "The public at large," she argued, "will think we are going to pursue a policy of giving up everything and lowering our position. . . . The

difficulties are great doubtless in Uganda but the dangers of abandoning it are greater."

Of all parts of the Empire, India was the cause of the most constant pre-occupation during Queen Victoria's reign. Only the major incidents can be referred to here. Of these the Mutiny in 1857 was by far the most alarming. It broke out in Meerut but rapidly extended to twenty-two stations in Bengal, North-West Provinces and Oudh. Sir Colin Campbell was sent out as Commander-in-Chief; troops on their way to China were diverted to India and re-inforcements despatched from England. It was some months before order was restored. Lucknow, which was besieged by the rebels, was not finally relieved till the end of the year. Lord Palmerston, who was Prime Minister at the time, received the full brunt of the Queen's urgent entreaties and demands. She emphasised repeatedly the inadequate preparations; she referred to the case of the Crimean War: "we are always most short-sighted," she declared, "and have finally to suffer either in power and reputation or to pay enormous sums for small advantages in the end - generally both." She went into details about the number of troops and reserves and complained of the Government's apparent indifference. The Prime Minister, who day by day was passing through a critical and anxious time, must have been driven almost to exasperation by the shower of admonitions from Osborne and Balmoral. But he



patiently dealt with her points, kept her closely informed and merely remarked how fortunate it was for him that she was not on the Opposition side of the House of Commons. The Queen was in close communication too with the Governor-General in India, Lord Canning, as well as with his wife.

When the settlement with regard to the future government of India was dealt with, first by a Bill but eventually by resolution, the Queen took strong exception to two points. The introduction of competitive examinations for appointments in the new Indian Civil Service cancelled the Crown's power of nomination, and the Indian Army instead of being under the authority of the Crown was to be placed under the Council. Lord Derby, who was then Prime Minister, refused to yield on either point and indeed threatened to resign if the Queen persisted. Although she lost the first point she gained the second two years later, when the British forces in India were amalgamated with the home Army under the nominal control of the Crown.

The Act for the re-organisation of the Indian Government was passed in August 1858. The question of a proclamation in the Queen's name then came under consideration. In this, as events proved, the Queen's influence and interference turned out to be of the highest consequence. When the Queen received the first draft she disapproved of it. It seemed to her unnecessarily

harsh in tone, and not calculated to conciliate native opinion. She reminded Lord Derby, who was Prime Minister, "that it is a female sovereign who speaks to more than a hundred millions of Eastern people on assuming the direct government over them, and after a bloody civil war, giving them pledges which her future reign is to redeem and explaining the principles of her government. Such a document should breathe feelings of generosity, benevolence, and religious toleration and point out the privilege which the Indians will receive on being placed on an equality with the subjects of the British Crown, and the prosperity following in the train of civilisation." She accordingly returned the draft, asking Lord Derby himself to re-write it in "his excellent language," introducing the special points she had emphasised. The result of this was that a proclamation was issued which has been described as "a masterpiece which will always be quoted as a perfect example of English as it ought to be written by a great statesman on a great occasion."

The Queen assumed the title of Empress of India in 1876 and the royal monogram, hitherto V.R., became V.R.I. Two years later, when there were rumours of war with Russia, Lord Lytton, the Viceroy, was able to report to the Queen that there had been a remarkable and spontaneous demonstration of loyalty on the part of the Indian Princes, who were anxious to place their troops at the Queen's disposal in the event of war.

Of the many minor troubles and events connected with India, one may be mentioned, as it was the occasion for one of the Queen's pronouncements on Indian policy. In 1891 Manipur, an Indian hill state, was the scene of the murder of a number of British officials. Order was restored and the assassins dealt with, the Queen counselling moderation and the avoidance of "bloody revenge." She placed her opinion on record in a memorandum: "Our dealings in India should be dictated by straightforwardness, kindness and firmness, or we cannot succeed. This disaster is most unfortunate and the effect may be very serious in other parts of India. Our system of sending out . . . people who merely get appointed for passing an examination must be altered or we shall have some much more serious trouble in India. There is no doubt from what the Queen hears from many sides that the natives (though they are very loyal to the Queen-Empress and the Royal Family) have no affection for the English rule which is one of fear not of love and this will not answer for a conquered nation."

Lord Lansdowne, the Viceroy, thought this an unfounded criticism of British Residents and communicated with Lord Cross, the Secretary of State, on the subject. It was thought that the Queen had been influenced by her Indian servant the Munshi Abdul Karim, who was in constant attendance on her.

The Queen unfailingly took a close interest in

all the smaller wars and expeditions, always giving a personal interview to the generals on their return. Other instances could be quoted showing the Queen's special solicitude for India. But perhaps the most emphatic expression of her views was written in 1889 just before the appointment of Lord Curzon as Viceroy. "The future Viceroy," she declared, "must really shake himself more and more free from his red-tapist, narrow-minded Council and entourage. He must be more independent, *must hear for himself* what the feelings of the natives really are and do what he thinks right and not be guided by the *snobbish* and vulgar, overbearing and offensive behaviour of many of our Civil and Political agents."

After the Ashanti War in 1874 she had a long interview with Sir Garnet Wolseley, who had brought his expedition to a successful conclusion. In 1886 Lord Dufferin intimated to the Queen the termination of the war in Burma, adding: "He cannot help feeling a certain amount of pride in thus placing a New Year's gift at your Majesty's feet in the shape of a Kingdom whose acquisition by the Crown of Great Britain at one time or another was already fated." The disaster in 1897 which befell the mission to Benin in West Africa and the consequent punitive expedition which had to be sent out, was an instance of the dangers attending expansion. But the Queen as she from time to time received news of the conquest of fresh territory and of the rapid extension of her

realm was never unmindful of the sacrifices involved.

Queen Victoria neither initiated nor pressed for the expansion of the British Empire which reached such enormous proportions by the end of her reign. But she realised perhaps better than some of her Ministers the critical responsibilities and the heavy burdens which such a policy must involve. She accepted the position of mistress of these vast dominions not without pride but never dwelling on the glories of Imperialism, and she received with pleasure the homage and loyal confidence not only of Princes and Chiefs but of remote peoples for whom the "Great White Queen" appeared as an almost legendary and semi-divine fountain of power. The promoters of the policy were fortunate in being able from the first to cap the great edifice with the crown worn by a monarch whose prestige and status were pre-eminent ; and to unite the vast heterogeneous mass of races under the rule of a Queen whose authority rested as much on her personal and domestic qualities as on the material power and riches of her kingdom. But in spite of the outward display of Imperial power and the far-reaching allegiance which was readily accorded to her, as exhibited in the assemblies at her two Jubilees, there is no justification for the contention that the Empire *made* the Queen and that its expansion and the spectacular manifestations it involved were the source of the popular regard and veneration which she

received in the closing years of her reign. Queen Victoria's hold on her people's affections and the special position she occupies in history can be accounted for by considerations quite other than any connected with the rapid expansion of the British Empire.

A memorial in which she is depicted as a monarch holding sway over vast populations and wide expanses of the earth's surface may be a record of fact and an emblem of the culmination of a particular policy, but it has little or no relation to the personality nor any accord with the character of the woman who occupied the throne.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE MONARCHY AND DEMOCRACY

Effects of the revolution of 1848 – the Chartists – democracy condemned – Prince Albert's attitude – the republican movement – Sir Charles Dilke – Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's speeches – protest against Gladstone's policy – anxiety for maintenance of monarchy – the Franchise Bill of 1884 – Death Duties – Women's Rights – social reform – the Queen's fear of Radicals.

THE people in early Victorian days, especially when they were inclined to make any political protest, were referred to generally as "the mob." The word "democracy" occurred seldom but when it did it often signified revolution. The word "Socialism" was not uttered in polite society in England till many years later.

The revolution of 1830 in France had few if any repercussions in other countries. But the revolution of 1848 was more serious; its shock was felt throughout Europe and there was some alarm lest there might be echoes of it in this country. The Queen had been on very friendly terms with Louis Phillippe and his Queen. King Leopold, her uncle, and the Queen of the Belgians wrote alarming letters. "Great efforts," wrote the former, "will be made to revolutionise this country; as there are poor and wicked people in all countries, it may succeed." But in spite of her sorrow at the plight of the French King and her

desire to afford him and his wife a place of refuge she kept her head and told her uncle that "if a Government which has the approbation of the country be formed we shall feel it necessary to recognise it, in order to pin them down to maintain peace and existing Treaties which is of great importance." The outbreak of rioting caused her no alarm. "Our little riots," she told her uncle, "are a mere nothing and the feeling here is good." In fact she explained in a subsequent letter: "I never was calmer, quieter or less nervous. *Great* events make me quiet and calm and little trifles fidget me and irritate my nerves."

The Chartist risings began to be serious two years after the Queen's accession, but she was too much engrossed in the change of Government and the prospect of losing Lord Melbourne to pay very much attention to the disturbances. The six points demanded by the Chartists were the ballot, universal suffrage, annual Parliaments, payment of members, the abolition of a property qualification for members and equal electoral districts. With the exception of annual Parliaments and certain still remaining inequalities in electoral districts all these objects now are practically accepted without question as part of the British political system. But their advocacy in 1839 amounted to rank revolution. The serious riots which took place as the result of general discontent were alarming and had to be put down by force of arms. Even in 1864 it is interesting to



note the Queen's attitude towards an extension of the franchise. Mr. Gladstone in a debate in the House of Commons on a Reform Bill remarked : " I venture to say that every man who is not presumably incapacitated by some consideration of personal unfitness or of political danger is morally entitled to come within the pale of the Constitution." The Queen was " deeply grieved " and hoped the " imprudent declaration " would not produce an agitation in the country, and Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister, remonstrated with his colleague. The Queen of course regarded Chartists as subversive revolutionaries and referred to " demagogues and Chartists " with contempt. Nevertheless in 1848, in a letter to Lord John Russell, Prince Albert, while condemning the Chartist movement, expressed great concern with regard to the unemployed and urged some very sensible opinions. He thought the policy of reduction of all work under the Government a mistaken one. " Surely," he wrote, " this is not the moment for the taxpayers to economise upon the working classes ! And though I don't wish the Government to follow Louis Blanc in his system of *organisation du travail* I think the Government is bound to do what it can to help the working classes over the present moment of distress." From the point of view of benevolent charity Prince Albert was eager to help the poorer classes of the community, as his institution of workmen's dwellings at Kennington showed.

But the word democracy spelt agitation and had to be condemned. This can be gathered from Prince Albert's memoranda. In 1852 he wrote that Lord Derby "knew that even many of the leading Whigs were very much dissatisfied with the company they find themselves thrown into and alarmed at the progress of democracy," and again later he notes that Lord Derby "was ready to support as far as he could any Administration which was sincerely anxious to check the growth of democracy." One gathers that this was considered a laudable ambition on his part.

The re-establishment of a republic in France in 1871 produced a republican movement among the radicals in England. It took the form of an attack on the Queen because of her continued retirement since the death of the Prince Consort, and a criticism of the Civil List and the expenses connected with the monarchy. Sir Charles Dilke, a private member of Parliament at the time, led the movement and delivered a series of speeches, sometimes to very hostile audiences. He received the support of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, Mr. Fawcett and a few others. A provocative speech of his at Newcastle attracted the Queen's attention. Mr. Gladstone, who was Prime Minister at the time, made a reference at the Mansion House to Sir Charles Dilke's speech. But the Queen complained that he had not used strong enough language; she asked for a more decided expression of condemnation. "At

present," she wrote, "and now for many days, these revolutionary theories are allowed to produce what effect they may in the minds of the working classes. Gross mis-statements and fabrications injurious to the monarchy remain unnoticed and uncontradicted." Mr. Gladstone excused himself by saying that although he regarded the speech as a matter of extreme gravity he thought that "a severe denunciation by him of Sir Charles Dilke's declaration, though doubtless it would gratify many, would have tended to exasperate and harden such persons as composed the Newcastle meeting." There was soon a revulsion of feeling in favour of the Queen, partly owing to her own ill health at the time and partly because of the dangerous illness of the Prince of Wales. When Dilke moved in Parliament in March 1872 for an inquiry into the Civil List there was a display of strong resentment and only two members voted with him in the division. While Sir Charles was away in France a motion was debated in the House of Commons, for which Mr. Dillwyn was responsible, condemning the intervention of the Crown in politics. Mr. Chamberlain in a letter to Dilke saw the danger of such a motion, it being impossible to prove the case. In view of the discussion, which still continues, as to how far Queen Victoria exceeded her strictly constitutional powers a few sentences from the very well-balanced opinion of Mr. Chamberlain, who was at that time a radical, are

worth quoting: "The Queen does interfere constantly," he wrote; "more, however, when Liberal Ministers are in power than when she has a Conservative Cabinet, because the Conservatives on the whole do what she likes, as she is a Conservative; whereas the Liberals are continually doing and indeed exist for the purpose of doing the things she does not like. But it is very doubtful how far her interference is unconstitutional, and it would be quite impossible to prove it. . . . The Queen is a woman of great ability . . . she writes to the Prime Minister about everything she does not like, which when he is a Liberal means almost everything that he says or does . . . she insists that administrative acts should not be done without delay for the purpose of consulting with regard to them persons whose opinions she knows will be unfavourable . . . her action to my mind is strictly speaking constitutional . . . it would be difficult to maintain that with her immense experience the Queen is not justified in asking for time in order that men of distinction should be consulted upon various acts."

But apart from the republican movement, which was negligible and more academic than practical, Dilke and Chamberlain organised and greatly strengthened the radical element in the Liberal Party and took an advanced view on social and industrial questions. Such a sentiment as Dilke expressed in one of his speeches must at

the time have made people tremble, although to-day it is a commonplace. He said : " I think working men should not make themselves too much the slaves of any political party " (that is to say Conservative or Liberal, the only two which existed at the time) " but should take care of the means of seeking representation in Parliament and when they have got the means in their hands they will then be able to use them so as to be favourable to their interests as a whole." The result of the General Election in 1880 was a blow to the Queen. She wrote to her private secretary : " The Queen cannot deny she (Liberal as she has ever been but never Radical or Democratic) thinks it a great calamity for the country and the peace of Europe."

After the new Government had been formed under Gladstone, the Queen was in correspondence with Beaconsfield in his retirement, who noted in his reply that her relations with her Ministers were " not those of entire confidence." He proceeds to summarise the Queen's position, expressing a view which all Ministers who came in contact with her in the last twenty years of her reign must have shared : " For more than forty years your Majesty has been acquainted with the secret springs of every important event that has happened in the world, and, during that time, has been in constant communication with all the most eminent men of your kingdoms. There must, necessarily, have accrued to a sovereign,

so placed, such a knowledge of affairs and of human character that the most gifted must profit by an intercourse with your Majesty and the realm suffer by your Majesty's reserve."

The Queen's misgivings were not confined to a strong disapproval of Mr. Gladstone's attitude on foreign policy while he was in opposition, but she was specially apprehensive of the radical element which she feared would be introduced into the new Government. She made a protest against Dilke's inclusion in the Government, but yielded on receiving an explanation from him that his republican views were mainly speculative and academic. He therefore came into the Government as Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and so far as he was concerned the Queen had no particular cause for apprehension. In fact she expresses a preference for him, owing to his knowledge of foreign affairs, over Lord Derby, whose speeches had annoyed her. In 1882 he entered the Cabinet as President of the Local Government Board. But Mr. Chamberlain, whom the Queen described as Gladstone's "evil genius," continued by his speeches to give great offence to the Queen not only while he was outside the Government, but when he was President of the Board of Trade. She complained to Mr. Gladstone of Chamberlain's "dangerous and offensive language," and insisted that "Mr. Chamberlain *must* restrain his language or *not*

remain in the Cabinet." In later years, after the Home Rule split, when Chamberlain broke with his former associates and approached towards Conservative Imperialism, of which he eventually became such a notable exponent, he came into high favour with the Queen. This is an instance in which opinions and not personality weighed most with her.

But in the early eighties the Queen was in despair at the complexion of the Government she had to put up with. The state of Ireland and the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish upset her and she felt that the Great Powers were losing confidence in this country and could not rely on us "who cannot keep our own country, or at least a portion of it, in order." She was in favour of drastic action, but her suspicion of the radical element in the Government caused her great misgiving. She wrote to the Prince of Wales in 1882 begging him to approach Lord Hartington and remind him "*how he asked you to tell me in '80 that if I took Mr. Gladstone I should certainly not have to take these violent and dangerous Radicals, instead of which, two days after I had most unwillingly taken this most dangerous man, all the worst men who had no respect for Kings and Princes or any of the landmarks of the Constitution were put into the Government in spite of me. The mischief Mr. Gladstone does is incalculable; instead of stemming the current and downward course of Radicalism which he could do perfectly,*

he *heads and encourages* it and alienates all the true Whigs and moderate Liberals from him," and she reminds the Prince how the Liberal Opposition had tried to "injure" Lord Beaconsfield. Yet when the Government was formed even Lord Hartington she feared "yields to this democratic cry without a word of resistance." She had stipulated from the outset that there should be "no democratic leaning," but she was doomed to disappointment. It was the weakening of the monarchy of which she was frightened. She begged that the moderates will resist "any policy which *strikes at the root and existence* of the Constitution and the Monarchy." "A Democratic Monarchy," she declared to Lord Granville, "she will *not consent to belong to*. Others must be found *if* that is to be and she thinks we are on a dangerous and doubtful slope which may become too rapid for us to stop."

The words "democracy" and "radicalism" seemed to the Queen insufficient to express her meaning. Before the General Election in 1885 she first introduces the word "socialism" and urges Mr. Gladstone to affirm publicly "that liberalism is not socialism and that progress does not mean revolution." After the election she urged Mr. Goschen to stand aloof from Gladstone and described the Liberal Party as "self and party *first* and Queen and Country *last*." She begged him to keep Lord Hartington up to the mark. "We want," she writes, "*all moderate men, all true*



patriots to support the Throne and Empire *irrespective* of party." Again in 1890 she said: "the Socialist Home-Ruling Party which really contains no one of respectability . . . should not be allowed the *failure* which their attempt at governing would entail because it would upset the whole country and the whole world and destroy all confidence in British policy abroad."

In fairness it must be said that the Queen had no conception whatever of what democracy meant. But democrats, radicals, republicans and socialists were expressions used by her to denote revolutionaries. Throughout, her concern was not the rise of the people as intelligent participants in the British political system but the possible weakening of the monarchy. More than once she had witnessed the fall of Sovereigns who had been her personal friends. And she was apprehensive lest an anti-monarchical movement might spread in Europe. Looking back at her own ancestors she felt a marked preference for and sympathy with the House of Stuart, called one of her sons Charles Edward, had a marble tomb erected over the grave of Charles I's daughter Elizabeth and restored James II's tomb at St. Germain. While she did not play with any fantastic notion of "divine right," the strongest conviction she held was that the British monarchy should so long as she wore the crown remain absolutely undisturbed. Even in the abolition of the post of Commander-in-Chief she suspected an attack on

the throne. "The Queen must consider her successors," she wrote, "and hand down to her son and her grandson her crown unimpaired and she feels more anxious for the future than even for herself."

It would be unfair to assume from the above extracts that the Queen's fears for the stability of her throne or the prestige of the country were always leading her to obstruct social reform and to set herself against Ministers of advanced opinions. There were several occasions on which by her timely intervention she managed to calm party strife and successfully achieve the passage of Bills which might otherwise have been lost. Notably in 1884, by bringing together the Liberal Government with the Conservative Opposition after the defeat of the Franchise Bill in the House of Lords, she succeeded in bringing about an agreed method of procedure by which both a Franchise Bill and a Redistribution Bill were passed into law. Her mediation had to be conducted not only with judgment but with considerable persistence owing to the obstinacy of the leaders. The negotiations occupied practically a whole year. She was bent on preventing a serious clash between the two Houses and she succeeded. When agreement was reached, even Sir William Harcourt praised the part she had played. He wrote: "The result shows how powerful is the influence of the Crown, constitutionally exercised to avert by its authority and mediation dangerous

political conflicts and to sustain the organic institutions of the country.”

The housing problem specially occupied the Queen's attention and a Royal Commission was appointed in 1884 on which the Prince of Wales served. In the very last years of her life she urged immediate action to remedy “ the disgraceful state of things ” exposed by a report on the shocking housing conditions at Windsor. Social reform, it must be remembered, did not occupy the attention of Parliament to anything like the same extent that it does to-day. The expression indeed was hardly used until towards the end of the century. Lord Shaftesbury, who was the leading and most active social reformer of the time, did not come within the Queen's purview, as he refused to take any office. Her opinions on his activities are not recorded. She vetoed Mr. Labouchère being given any office, but this was not so much because of his radical views as on account of his journalistic activities.

The middle class Conservative opinion which the Queen well represented meant doing things for the people but not allowing the people to do things for themselves. They were not yet to be trusted. So it was that she placed herself in opposition to many advanced measures from genuine fear of their subversive consequences. Moreover she adopted the view that Liberals were always actuated by party motives while only Conservatives served the national interest, a form of

argument very common with opponents of change. When Liberals were in office, therefore, the party system was condemned. In 1885 she wrote to Sir William Harcourt : " It was terrible to see the right thing not done or approved merely because ' the party ' required it or the party must go against it because the other side had brought it forward."

For independent disinterested liberal or radical critics she had no sympathy. She could not believe their motives were good, and criticism of the established order must be wicked. When Lord Palmerston in 1859 suggested a Privy Councillorship for John Bright, she refused her assent as " it would be impossible to allege any service Mr. Bright has rendered." Her attitude towards him, however, was very much softened in later years after he had defended her against the public attacks on her retirement after the Prince Consort's death.

With Lord Rosebery she argued long on his schemes for the reform of the House of Lords. She described his speeches as " radical to a degree to be almost communistic." She foresaw an encroachment on the royal prerogative and declared : " Fifty-seven years ago the Constitution was delivered into her keeping and that right or wrong she has her views as to the fulfilment of that trust." She regarded a second chamber as a necessity and thought it important to have " an independent body of men who have no need of being afraid of

the clamour of a noisy set of constituents who represent no party but only a temporary excitement."

With Sir William Harcourt she wrangled over his proposed Death Duties, a measure she considered highly dangerous. She begged him to modify his proposals, but Harcourt stuck to his guns and consequently lost the Queen's confidence. Early in 1895 she was "horrified" at a motion being passed for the payment of members: it would "lower the House of Commons, already so much spoilt, still more."

The question of Women's Suffrage did not come to the front in its more directly political sense till the next century, but in the form of "Women's Rights" the subject was keenly discussed as early as 1870. Ignoring the fact that her own position gave the advocates of "Women's Rights" one of their strongest arguments, the Queen condemned the movement in unmeasured language and wrote that she was "most anxious to enlist everyone who can speak or write to join in checking this mad, wicked folly of 'Women's Rights' with all its attendant horrors on which her poor feeble sex is bent, forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety. . . . God created men and women different - then let them remain each in their own position."

It was not many years before members of Parliament were paid and women were granted the vote. But the Queen did not live to see

the passage of two of the reforms she dreaded.

Surveying the whole field, however, it will be seen that generally speaking the Queen was much more pro-monarchy than she was anti-democracy. At the same time her autocratic inclinations showed themselves repeatedly in her desire for swift action and in her extreme impatience not only with parliamentary interference but with departmental hesitations which she denounced as "red-tapings."

Monarchy she understood in all its aspects and phases. It was her life-long *métier*, and safeguarding it for Great Britain she regarded as a sacred duty. Democracy she did not understand nor, one conjectures, was it ever explained to her, and indeed except for the extension of the franchise, legislation in her day hardly touched the fringe of the great social questions which concerned the status and conditions of the growing industrial population. Republicanism was a direct attack on the monarchy; House of Lords reform might mean an indirect weakening of the royal prerogative. Disestablishment she did not in the least comprehend; the very word suggested something which "the Defender of the Faith" ought to withstand, and Gladstone's elaborate memoranda did not enlighten her. Home Rule meant separation and consequently the loss of her authority over part of her dominions. Death Duties denoted the financial weakening of the aristocracy, which was part of the bulwarks of

the throne. But her strong prejudice against Liberals was primarily due to her personal antipathy to their protagonist, Gladstone, and to her strong disapproval of their foreign and Imperial policy, notably in Egypt and in Africa, the wisdom of which was doubtful to many besides herself. She consequently developed a predisposition to object to almost anything and everything her Liberal Ministers suggested and inclined to an equally unreasoning acceptance of their opponents' policy.

The trend of events no doubt made her suspicious and apprehensive that a political machine was in course of preparation which, although it could not yet find full scope, would before long assert the growing demands of a more educated people who had hitherto been inarticulate ; and that these demands would be the chief concern of Parliament, making the interference of the monarchy of little or no consequence. Even political leaders who are passing through a gradual but distinct and important transition from one system of social organisation to another are unable at such close quarters to observe the significance of the broad trend of events, occupied as they must be with the detailed and particular circumstances of change which are involved. Queen Victoria could not be expected to observe that the population of the United Kingdom was increasing at a rate which would mean over fifteen millions being added between the beginning of

her reign and the end of the century, nor to appreciate the far-reaching results of the growth of machinery, the enormous extension of industrial areas and the decline of agriculture. The surface movements of foreign relations which she could view from a distance attracted her more than any study of the conditions of her own people which would involve the mastery of much detail.

The extent of the necessary and constant intervention of Parliament in domestic and industrial questions was only beginning to be realised. Lord Shaftesbury and his friends, actuated by philanthropic motives, worked for the abolition of some of the worst abuses. The Mines Acts of 1842 prohibited the labour of women and children underground ; the Factory Acts of 1844 restricted the employment of young people in factories and authorised the appointment of inspectors ; the Education Act of 1870 set up a general system of elementary education ; there was an Employers' Liability Bill which was rejected by the Lords in 1894 and in the same year the first steps in the inauguration of Local Government were taken. The references to these subjects in the Queen's correspondence are very meagre ; her attention and indeed public attention was so unceasingly occupied by foreign and Imperial problems. It was not till after the dawn of the twentieth century that such questions as unemployment, pensions, compensation, hours



and wages, trade boards, housing, stricter factory inspection, trade union powers and increased educational facilities came in for constant and serious discussion in Parliament. Properly interpreted to her, solicitous as she was for the welfare of her people, the measures proposed and eventually adopted might not have provoked her opposition to any serious extent.

## CHAPTER VII

### CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY

Changes in the reign – love of children – the Queen's family – death of the Prince Consort – her prolonged retirement – travel abroad – assaults on the Queen – private secretaries – servants – society – quietness of the Court – music – acting – books – art – the Queen's journal – personal intercourse – her political position – her moral code – effect of her death.

So long a period did the Queen's life and reign cover and so varied were the circumstances both private and public through which she passed that marked changes in her development and outlook were inevitable. The Victorian era appears to be more or less of a piece as it shrinks into history, but the eighty-one years of her life and the sixty-three years of her reign cover an epoch in the nineteenth century of national and international events, of social changes and of scientific progress which must impress the most superficial student of history. In addition to this, and so far as she personally was concerned, the fortunes of her numerous family connections continually filled her life with anxieties, sorrows and joys which were all keenly felt.

Surveying the period we can see the changing pictures of Victoria fairly clearly; as the demure and strictly disciplined child closely guarded in her seclusion; as the girl Queen asserting herself

and acclaimed with enthusiasm by a nation accustomed to old Kings ; as the radiant wife and mother, crinolined and crowned or with sweeping habit and feathered hat riding beside her handsome Prince ; as the stricken widow withdrawing from public life, seldom seen and losing her popularity ; and finally as the old lady emerging from the shadows of her solitary retirement into the sunshine of the warm and affectionate appreciation of her people.

Apart from her official work and public duties the Queen's life was filled to an unusual extent by the interests and obligations arising out of her large family. Herself an only child, she had never known the close intimacies nor been subjected to the varying influences of brothers and sisters. Whether because of this or in spite of this, she possessed a deep and all-embracing love for children. They came first, they commanded her attention before all others, their ways and their outlook delighted her, and if she had to scold them it was with a hardly concealed smile. Examples of this are numerous but a couple of instances must suffice. In 1887 one of Lord Kilmarnock's little boys, who was ill, read a story in which the hero wrote to the monarch ; he accordingly made up his mind to write to the Queen. To his father's dismay the letter was posted. Lord Kilmarnock wrote off at once apologising profusely for this very youthful indiscretion. The Queen's note to her private

secretary was as follows : " Pray tell Lord Kilmarnock that the Queen was delighted with the little letter of his little boy, as nothing pleases her more than the artless kindness of innocent children. She has written him an answer and posted it to him."

In 1896 she sent her photograph to Catherine Smith, an invalid child of nine in Dumfries who had written her a letter beginning " Dear Queen," congratulating her that she had reigned so long.

Her own family grew, and between 1840 and 1857 she had nine children. Three of them died during her lifetime, Princess Alice Grand Duchess of Hesse, Prince Leopold Duke of Albany, and Prince Alfred Duke of Edinburgh and Saxe-Coburg. While her youngest daughter Princess Beatrice, married in 1885 to Prince Henry of Battenberg, became her mother's closest companion, the anxieties in the tragic life of her eldest daughter the Empress Frederick caused the Queen the most constant solicitude. Family events, whether births or deaths or marriages, increasing in frequency as her forty grandchildren and later her thirty-seven great-grandchildren grew up, loomed very large and occasioned an abundance of the ceremonial which is supposed to enhance the value of royalty in the public eye. But behind the outward display genuine human feeling was privately expressed and deeply experienced by the Queen herself. She inspired love but not without awe. To her

children she was "dear Mama," but none of them ever could forget that she was also "the Queen." Her anxieties as a wife, a mother, and a grandmother, while seemingly they belong to the more private and personal side of her life, had nevertheless public significance from the fact that simple human sentiments reached from the throne into the humblest homes of her people, making them realise that a Queen could be moved just as they themselves were by the trials and joys of domestic life.

With the Prince of Wales, who naturally as he grew from youth to middle age was forming his own Court and his own friends, there was no positive estrangement such as has so often existed in history between the sovereign and the heir to the throne. But there was much criticism of the way in which the Queen refused to allow her eldest son to see the most confidential papers or to participate in the inmost counsels of the country's Government. Many thought her attitude unreasonable and so it would seem to have been. But the Queen was particular; she would take no risks by entrusting State secrets to anyone whose interference might be an embarrassment and who as yet showed no particular disposition to absorb himself with diligence in the public affairs of the country.

The death of the Prince Consort affected her far more than any other event in her life. The sudden removal of a particularly well-informed

adviser, guide and secretary deprived her in her public business of reliable and constant sympathy and assistance. But the loss of the only person in the country whom she could regard as an equal increased to an almost unbearable degree her loneliness, while her heart was torn by separation from her adored partner. The deepest sympathy was felt for her and her withdrawal into private seclusion was understood. Nevertheless when that withdrawal, accompanied by the most extreme outward manifestations of mourning, continued not just for a few years but practically over a period of some twenty-five years, it was bound to affect her position and also the regard which her people had been so ready to show her. There can be no question that the Queen's sense of proportion was dislocated by her loss. She nursed her grief until woe became a luxury almost amounting to self-indulgence. As time passed there were murmurings, Press articles and speeches which became more and more vehement. But for the first five or six years she was obdurate and refused to emerge for any public function. Subsequently she consented on occasions to open Parliament and later to undertake drawing-rooms, but except for visits of a day or two she was never seen in London. Windsor Castle she considered near enough, but Osborne and Balmoral, away from the turmoil of public life, were her favourite abodes, specially Balmoral, where she could get complete seclusion from prying

eyes, and where she was free to wander sometimes incognita on visits to the cottagers.

The want of consideration for her hard-worked Ministers which this retirement involved never seemed to strike her. The long train journey to Scotland or the journey with sea-crossing to the Isle of Wight occupied a disproportionate amount of their time. Even Disraeli wrote from Balmoral : " Carrying on the Government of a country 600 miles from the Metropolis doubles the labour." Gladstone when he was almost breaking down from overwork in 1883 remarked to Lord Rosebery : " The Queen alone is enough to kill any man." He reasoned with her in an endeavour to make her mitigate her seclusion but in vain, and she turned a deaf ear to the pleading of her private secretary. Lord Salisbury too was sorely tried by the constant journeys he had to take. Nevertheless her official work was not for a moment neglected. In fact she explained in 1864 in reply to a protest which appeared in *The Times* : " There are other and higher duties than those of mere representation which are now thrown upon the Queen, alone and unassisted – duties she cannot neglect without injury to the public service which weigh increasingly upon her, overwhelming her with work and anxiety."

After the Prince Consort's death the expression of her opinions may have lacked the judicial and balanced tone which he had been at pains to give them. But the very crudity and even violence of

her language on occasions only showed her determination by diligent application to her public duties to assert her authority whenever possible over the successive administrations.

The Queen carried out at first punctiliously the ceremonial part of her functions in connection with Parliament. But the prorogation ceremony included a speech from the Speaker of the House of Commons giving a survey of the work of the session. The Queen who, it was said, disliked receiving instruction in public, thought it unnecessary to attend this ceremony in person, and ceased to do so after 1854. In later years the occasions on which she opened Parliament in person became more and more rare. But this was due to her dislike of ceremonial display, not to any mitigation of her interest in politics.

Up to the end London, partly from early association but chiefly because of her dislike of crowds and publicity, never attracted her for more than a few days at a time. To the annual routine of moves from Windsor to Osborne and to Balmoral she added in later years an almost yearly visit to the Continent. The south of France and Italy gave her the sunshine and relaxation she wanted, and she took no Minister with her. On different occasions she stayed for some weeks at Baveno, Aix les Bains, Hyères, Florence, Cannes, Nice and Cimiez and passed some days in Germany at Darmstadt and Coburg. Only four times did she visit Ireland : in 1849, in 1853 and



1861 and then not again until nearly forty years later in 1900, the last year of her reign, when she was given a noteworthy reception. The disaffection and troubles in Ireland had kept her away in the interval and on more than one occasion she had refused the suggestion of establishing a royal residence there.

The social and economic changes which took place during the reign are too far-reaching and complex for adequate recital here. But a striking illustration of one of the most remarkable developments is afforded in the case of locomotion. In the first few years of her reign the Queen travelled as her ancestors back in the remote past had travelled, in a horse-drawn vehicle. She took her first train journey from Windsor to London in 1842. The first railway had been opened in 1825 and the new system grew slowly at first in the teeth of strong opposition. But gradually the development spread all over the country. Before the end of the reign motor-cars were on the roads. But in her old age she did not trust herself to the latest form of locomotion, which was still in its infancy.

During the course of her reign no less than six assaults were made on the Queen's person. Fortunately in no single case was the Queen's life endangered nor had these attacks any political or public significance, as the assailants in each case were either mentally deranged or actually lunatics. The shots were either from blank

cartridges or missed her. After the third attempt in 1842 a Bill was passed through Parliament "providing for the further protection and security of Her Majesty's person." The assault by a retired officer in 1850, who struck her on the head with a cane just as she was recovering from a confinement, was a frightening and painful experience which she faced with great courage. The last attempt was in 1882, when a lunatic shot at her as she was driving through the streets of Windsor.

With the approach of her Jubilee in 1887 the Queen emerged more often from her retirement, and she became a more familiar figure to the public in the last twenty years of her reign. She opened Parliament in person for the last time in 1886. The following year the loyal manifestations in connection with the Jubilee celebrations were a proof that her popularity was on the up grade, and the Diamond Jubilee ten years later was the occasion for a tremendous demonstration of respect and congratulation from her people throughout the Empire. The Queen came to be regarded as the embodiment of a permanent order, exemplifying the stability of the British monarchy, attracting the awe and allegiance of remote undeveloped peoples, regarded with appreciative reverence by the monarchs and statesmen of foreign nations and most of all cherished with intimate affection by the humblest of her own people.

After the death of the Prince Consort it was

natural that the Queen should look for someone on whom she could lean and in whom she could place implicit confidence in the national controversies or official dilemmas which from time to time must inevitably arise. Although Lord Beaconsfield and less conspicuously although very surely Lord Salisbury gave her the feeling of confidence and security she sought, as representatives of political parties their close contact with her was necessarily governed by the duration of their terms of office. The post of private secretary consequently became one of greatly increased importance. For ten years General Grey, a younger son of Earl Grey the Reform Bill Prime Minister, fulfilled the functions with conspicuous success. "Good, excellent General Grey," the Queen writes ; " his discretion, sense and courage made him invaluable." He was succeeded in 1871 by Sir Henry Ponsonby, who occupied the position for twenty-five years. In her old age the Queen's prejudices were hardening and her long experience and remarkable memory were weapons she could use with effect in her intercourse with her Ministers. At the same time a growing Conservatism due to her increasing years was running concurrently with the growth of more openly democratic opinion in British political life. The task therefore of upholding her authority, successfully steering her round the more difficult corners and acting as intermediary between the sovereign and her Ministers, more especially those with

whom she was out of sympathy, was no light one. Nor was it always easy to overcome the marked obstinacy which she inherited from her grandfather George III and to translate her sometimes petulant expressions of opinion, adorned by an excessive amount of superlatives, into language which would convey her view accurately but less baldly and without giving offence. With indefatigable industry and deep devotion Sir Henry Ponsonby absorbed himself in this work with an ability which was very cordially recognised by successive Prime Ministers and with a self-effacement which he so successfully contrived that not till the Queen's correspondence was published many years after her death was it generally known that he had played so important a part by the exercise of his unwavering patience, tact and judgment. Sir Henry Ponsonby was succeeded by his assistant secretary, Sir Arthur Bigge (afterwards Lord Stamfordham), who held the office for the last five years of her reign. Again she was fortunate in having at her side a man of shrewd common sense, ability and discretion. Subsequently he devoted his services to her grandson, the present King, in the same capacity for the remainder of his life.

As old age advanced it was necessary for the Queen to have a physician of some eminence in constant attendance on her. Sir James Reid filled this responsible position for several years. As a clear-sighted Scot he gained the Queen's

confidence and was able to exercise considerable influence by timely advice even outside his strictly professional sphere. Physically the Queen was strong and like all strong people inclined to be inconsiderate. Some of her ladies-in-waiting may have flinched at the daily drive in all weathers, not to mention the hours of standing which their duties involved.

To the subordinate members of her household the Queen never neglected to show close personal attention. If in the middle years a disproportionate position was given by her to one of her domestic servants, with the result that his interference in minor matters owing to his domineering disposition became an embarrassment, other Queens could be quoted who in a similar way made favourites of their lackeys. On John Brown's part there certainly was devotion, and on the Queen's part gratitude and perhaps exaggerated esteem. Whatever disapproval and protest may have arisen from time to time were the cause only of little storms in the household tea-cup. At a later date the Queen promoted one of her native Indian servants to the position of "Indian Secretary," and began to study Hindustani with him. For this mark of favour there was no justification whatever. In official quarters it was regarded as highly undesirable, but nobody dared protest.

In the early years the Court was of course the centre of society, the Queen constantly appearing

at reviews, balls, operas and concerts. She also paid visits to several country houses. But after her retirement the flow of society's activities left the Court in a backwater, although links were kept up through the officials and the lords- and ladies-in-waiting. As time passed the Court was condemned as dowdy and dull, and a new society grew up and became out of sympathy and out of touch with the Queen's entourage. This society affected a contempt for the Court in order to conceal its annoyance at so rarely being able to penetrate into it. Quiet and indeed dull as life at Windsor, Balmoral and Osborne might be, it centred nevertheless round the dominating figure of the Queen herself and reflected her simplicity and hatred of display. The new society which eventually gained possession after her death was a change. The former distinction gave place to greater brilliance, not without the introduction of a strain of vulgarity and ostentation.

The Queen's hatred of display gave perhaps a rather drab tone to Court functions. After the Prince Consort's death she never wore anything but black and the special design of her widow's cap remained the same. But her dignity did not depend on costume. Neither dress, age, figure, nor features could deprive her of the astonishing genius of her carriage by which she could with calm assurance assert her presence and command immediate attention in any assembly. Lord Rosebery's suggestion in 1886 that she should

wear a crown at the opening of the Indian and Colonial Exhibition was probably not conveyed to her by those who knew what she would think about it. Even at both her Jubilees she wore a bonnet, and on full State occasions it was not the ornaments and decorations of the small diamond crown, the Koh-i-noor brooch and the Garter blue riband which attracted all eyes to her.

Just as the Queen refused to do things she did not like or countenance things of which she disapproved, so also did she refuse to pretend to know things of which she was conscious of being ignorant. When in very early days Prince Albert thought that the monotony of the "chess evenings" might be relieved by an occasional invitation to men of science or some of the literary lights of the day, the Queen turned down the suggestion. Either she would have to pretend she understood what they were talking about, or she would have to sit silent. Neither alternative appealed to her. Music she understood chiefly in the form of opera, and Mario, "the greatest tenor that ever existed," Grisi, Jenny Lind and others gave her the greatest pleasure. When in later years she could not go to the Opera she commanded the Opera with the de Reszkes and others to come to her. In her early married life Mendelssohn had visited her and played to her, and she sang to him.

For acting she had a very special taste, and made the personal acquaintance of many actors and actresses. When she no longer frequented

theatres herself, she commanded performances in her palaces and also encouraged private theatricals in her family and household, exhibiting the keenest interest even in the rehearsals.

In literature she was nervous of getting out of her depth, but she really found little time for reading. She had a visit from Dickens, liked him and liked his books. George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* pleased her, but when *Middlemarch* was published she wrote: "After all, fine as it is, it is a disappointing book. All the people are failures." *Jane Eyre* she thought "a wonderful book though very peculiar in parts." Carlyle of course she did not in the least understand. When she met him she just thought him "gruff tempered." He on the other hand hit her off exactly: "Impossible to imagine a politer little woman; nothing the least imperious; all gentle, all sincere . . . makes you feel too (if you have any sense in you) that she is Queen." Tennyson, the Poet Laureate who was always ready with an ode on great occasions, visited the Queen at Osborne. She greatly admired his *In Memoriam* and told him so. They talked together of immortality and condemned the philosophy of unbelief. She thanked him warmly for his sympathy, and as he left he said: "You are so alone on that terrible height. I have only a year or two more to live, but I am happy to do anything for you I can." In 1883 he was created a peer. Honours were also conferred on artists.



Sir Frederick Leighton, President of the Royal Academy, was made a peer, Millais a baronet and Watts offered a baronetcy which he declined. Winterhalter and von Angeli were favoured as painters of the Queen's portraits and there were numberless minor pictures of her and statues of her, none of which had any particular merit. She herself was fond of sketching and had taken lessons in her young days under Sir Edwin Landseer. The Queen's literary judgments are few, as her reading was not extensive. Of historians, philosophers and scientists we hear nothing. Indeed most of the scientific developments and the higher cultural movements of the time passed over her head unheeded. A survey of the sixty years from which all mention of Queen Victoria were omitted would be manifestly incomplete ; but not so incomplete as the survey which omitted the notable evolution of thought, the manifestations of which never commanded her particular attention, absorbed as she was in the routine of public affairs.

When *Leaves from a Journal of our Life in the Highlands* appeared in 1862 it was quite mistakenly supposed that the Queen had come out as an author. Disraeli addressed her as "we authors, m'am." As a matter of fact the Queen, like many other people who have never written a line for publication, was a life-long diarist. She began when she was thirteen and kept up the habit till the end, filling a hundred volumes. The *Leaves*

were extracts lifted out of her diaries, with everything of the smallest importance omitted. They were the record of simple pursuits in the Highlands. All the point of the diary was lost by the excisions and in the accounts of domestic life, visits, dances and expeditions, there could be no claim for literary merit. However, people were anxious to read how the Queen passed her time at distant Balmoral, and a book by a Queen was bound to sell. The £2,500 made out of the publication of the *Leaves* was devoted by the Queen to founding university and school bursaries for the people at Balmoral. This book and the second instalment which was published in 1883 gave an entirely false impression of the Queen's serious activities. Her unceasing political preoccupations were never revealed.

The Queen's vocabulary was restricted, but her meaning was never obscure and her sincerity was transparent. She did not make use of new words either in speech or writing ; she emphasised the old ones and underlined her superlatives. When in conversation she pronounced somebody or something to be "*most extraordinary*" she was able by the tone of her pleasant and rather flute-like voice to convert the simple words into an expression of the deepest disapproval. So arresting was her personality that inattention in her presence was impossible. So keen was her interest that monarchs, Ministers, courtiers and servants were put on their mettle. Indolence, apathy and

boredom could not exist in such an atmosphere. It has been said that indelicacy and impropriety offended her. This is true up to a point but not to a sanctimonious point. The Queen, being so entirely without pose, was greatly influenced by the personality of her interlocutor. Certain people were allowed far more licence than others, always within limits. Some few might be allowed to go very far and not only not shock but even amuse her ; while others if they strayed at all from the strict path of polite conversation would get a sharp rebuff. It was on such occasions that " We are not amused " would put an end to a conversation as effectively as Dr. Jowett's " Good-night, Mr. Simpkins." This is the natural attitude of spontaneous natures who are not merely guided by regulation. The Queen was never taken in by obsequiousness ; she hated it. Strangers were awed when there were signs of disapproval in her manner. But the cloud which sometimes soured the expression of her features would give way to the sunshine of a very pleasant radiance.

So far as public affairs were concerned it would be a mistake to over-estimate the Queen's statesmanship, or to attribute to her any political initiative. She was far from being intellectual ; she may often have been ignorant, but she was never stupid. She was capable of exercising quite independent judgment and this had value in public affairs. Politics after all consist not only in

framing policies, passing measures and administrations, but involve revision, correction, adaptation and suggestion. The former was not within her sphere but the latter she considered an indispensable part of her function as a constitutional monarch. At this she worked with an aptitude and determination and with a persistence which undoubtedly would have been condemned as interference had the contemporary public been aware of its extent. But the figure she presented outwardly roused no suspicions. The entire absence of display and ostentation inspired confidence and gave the impression of great stability. The coming and going of Ministers were regarded as mere formalities. Her conversations were not recorded; her correspondence was private.

The Queen developed perhaps rather a rigid code of what she considered "prudent." She was obedient to conventions because they conveyed to her a standard which it might be dangerous for her to disregard. She mistrusted the extravagant, she ignored the vulgar. She had no concern with the subtleties and delicacies of ethical values. Her creed was simple, her faith unquestioning. She never lost her early child-like acceptance of an unsophisticated belief in the more elementary canons of morality and she was never troubled by the morbidities of introspection. She understood no excessive elevation of morals nor any fastidious refinement of manners. Her

code was not thought out but innate. Life for her was public duty and domestic love. She saw her course clearly and pursued it persistently to the best of her ability, hampered as all human beings must be, in her case by the caprices of a woman, the prejudices of an impulsive nature, the limitations of a daughter of the House of Hanover and the isolation of a monarch.

She retained her faculties until her last illness, which was of comparatively brief duration. Her tone in her old age had become milder but her vigilance was never relaxed. In the later entries in her journal, which she kept up till within ten days of her death, there are no morbid reflections and no expressions of self-pity. Only once do we find a despondent note when on the death of one of her friends she writes : " All fall around me and I become more and more lonely." But for the most part there are just occasional references to her irritation at her increasing blindness and failure to sleep regularly. On January 22nd, 1901, the already expected announcement of her death was issued to the crowds which had been daily watching the bulletins. She was eighty-one and had reigned sixty-three years – the longest reign in British history. The vast majority of her subjects had never known any other Sovereign. She had become an established institution, and the sudden disappearance of that institution was at first difficult to grasp. For her people she had never been the traditional Queen of the fairy

tales, appearing resplendent with crown and sceptre; indeed she had not been like any other Queen at all. But she was their Queen for years beyond memory. As they looked at the oleographs of the little widow on their walls they felt they had lost a friend; her death was a personal bereavement. At such moments the effusions of journalists are liable to give an exaggerated idea of the profundity of public grief. It does not manifest itself openly by tears and lamentations on a particular day. But in this case a great change was to be expected. Not only a new reign and a new century but new times accompanied by new ideas were visible on the horizon, disturbing to the outlook of an essentially conservative people. Therefore on the threshold of a new epoch in the nation's history, unexpressed emotions and regretful affection moved them as they looked back for a moment and bade farewell to the figure who seemed to impersonate the familiar past.

From near and far representatives came to pay their last tribute. From her family, from her household, from foreign Courts and from the ends of the earth men walked in solemn procession behind the gun-carriage on which her coffin was drawn through the streets of London and Windsor. The royal yacht had carried it from Osborne past the fleet in the Solent, and it found its last resting-place beside Prince Albert in the Mausoleum at Frogmore, within sight of Windsor Castle but apart from her royal ancestors.

That Queen Victoria's life is a striking illustration of the triumph of character is obvious enough. But there is more in it than that. In her occupation of the throne of an expanding Empire, in the political changes she witnessed, in the public anxieties she suffered and in the unique position she held from her close relationship with so many ruling families in Europe, she displayed conspicuously both steadiness in her course and tenacity and constancy in her purpose. These qualities, combined as they were with deference to superior knowledge and sufficient but not excessive consciousness of her own personal limitations, were such as to secure for her the high place she will always hold among the monarchs of the world. We know far more about her than did they who lived and died in her reign. Not only can we see the panorama of her times as a whole but we can fill in details which were hidden from her contemporaries as to the actual part she played in public affairs. Few public or even private lives could bear so close a scrutiny without suffering damage. She emerges triumphantly not because of her power and glory, not because of any spectacular or sensational demonstrations nor because of any intellectual eminence, but because for over sixty years she fulfilled the difficult and exacting duties of a Queen with simple, natural, yet incomparable skill.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

ONLY a brief list of books exclusively concerned with Queen Victoria and Prince Albert is given here. Important information with regard to her is contained in a very large number of other works, such as the histories of the period, and more especially the biographies of all the prominent statesmen and ecclesiastics of her reign, besides many volumes of memoirs both British and foreign.

*Queen Victoria's Letters*, Series I, 3 vols. Series II, 3 vols. Series III, 3 vols.

*The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, Viscount Esher.

*Queen Victoria*, Sir Sidney Lee.

*Queen Victoria*, Lytton Strachey.

*Side Lights on Queen Victoria*, Sir Frederick Ponsonby.

*The Life of Prince Consort*, Sir Theodore Martin.

*Early Years of the Prince Consort*, General Grey.

*Albert the Good*, Hector Bolitho.



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