

on that dark December morning of 1878, was of satisfying completeness even in its shortness. Life had given her its best. She had not only "lived and loved," but been herself well and tenderly and deservedly beloved. Sorrow had touched her, not to embitter, but to raise and enlighten; her life-work was high and good and true, and it received a stamp of mournful dignity from the very manner of the death that cut it short, since she died fitly, a martyr to the beautiful womanly affections which had been the master-spring of her existence.

A certain harmony and grace, rather than any more striking qualities, mark the story of Princess Alice's early years, spent in happy seclusion even in the very heart of royal pomp and glitter. They were filled with the best childish happiness. "Fresh, blooming and healthy; cheerful, merry, full of fun and mischief; bold and fearless as a boy," the Princess, like most strong, high-spirited children, did not all at once unfold the intellectual powers and deep moral qualities with which her later life was to bloom. Her beautiful spring-time was, however, soon to pass into full summer.

In 1860 came her betrothal to Prince Louis of Hesse, to crown a love-story as simply-sweet as that of any lowly maiden; and in the midst of the preparations for her future household, fell that sudden illness, that startling removal, of the Prince Consort, through which Princess Alice was to win her really strong hold on English affection, as the tender nurse, the devoted daughter, the best support of her mother, the strong and gentle angel of the whole household.



DEATH OF THE PRINCE CONSORT.

Thus mellowed and softened by the touch of sacred sorrow, she entered on the serious duties of her new existence. In the following July her marriage closed the purely English chapter of her life; but that she remained still English in her sympathies, is plainly shown in the affectionate letters to the bereaved mother which now begin, and continue from year to year: a simple domestic chronicle, only to be closed at the bidding of "great Death." Through this story of wedded life and motherhood,