



THE QUEEN'S BIRTHPLACE: KENSINGTON PALACE—WEST FRONT.

OUR SOVEREIGN LADY.

(By the Author of "English Hearts and English Hands.")

CHAPTER I.—CHILDHOOD AND GIRLHOOD.

In a stately room, decorated with antiquated furniture, in the old palace of Kensington, a little new-born babe was laid in her soft white cradle, by her mother's side. She was tenderly welcomed and fondly loved by many; but although she was of the royal family of England, few could have dreamt that the 24th of May, 1819, had ushered in a destiny so brilliant as that which awaited the fair child—"the little May-flower," as her father loved to call her. But that devoted father, the good Duke of Kent, son of a king, and brother of a king, though never himself heir to the throne, appears to have had a presentiment of the splendid future of his only child, from her earliest infancy. He delighted in his baby-daughter—

"And rosy from her mid-day sleep
Would bear her to a smiling kin"

often saying to his friends, as he held up the blue-eyed, smiling baby, "Look at her well; she will yet be Queen of England!"

Tenderly guarded was the life of that little princess, destined to be of such priceless worth to this country; and yet within her first year she had a narrow escape of serious injury.

When the Duke and Duchess of Kent were staying in Devonshire, a boy who was shooting at sparrows, aimed so carelessly that a shot whizzed through the nursery window, and barely missed striking the Princess Victoria's little head, as yet crowned only with its soft golden hair. Again and again, in after years, when she was wearing the crown of England, she has been preserved from deadly peril at the hands of mad or dastardly men; and she has ever met the danger with the highest courage, showing no fears for herself, but anxiety alone for the safety of those who surrounded her. The King of kings has given his angels charge over her, and faithfully has that charge been kept!

Whilst the little Princess was still in happy unconsciousness of sorrow, a grievous loss befell her. The Duke of Kent, who could never see his child without lingering to play with her, was passing her nursery door, after having been caught in a heavy shower, and unable to resist her baby-charms he spent some time with her, unmindful of the risk he incurred from the chill. This ended in an attack of inflammation of the lungs, and in the following January the infant Princess was left fatherless.

Even in the first grief of her widowhood, the Duchess of Kent remembered that she had still a grand object to live for; to watch over and train the child he had left, for the high position which might possibly await her. The better to fulfil this sacred duty, the Duchess resolved, whatever the sacrifice to her feelings, not to return to her own country, but to make England her home, in order to bring up her royal daughter entirely in her native land. A plain and simple mode of life, early hours, orderly habits, obedience, punctuality, courteous manners

to all, kindly consideration for the feelings of others, and perseverance in overcoming difficulties, were daily and hourly inculcated upon the little Princess by her mother; who made it the business of her life to secure the most careful and healthful training for the child of so many hopes. Much of her time was spent in the open air, in the garden or the hayfield; or in the park riding on her donkey, decked with blue ribbons; and the beautiful child, full of gaiety and animation, and returning all salutations, was a centre of interest wherever she went.

The Princess sometimes showed a little self will, and on these occasions would refuse to walk when her ladies wished that she should do so. Then the old soldier, a retainer of the Duke of Kent's, who often led the donkey—proud to attend upon the royal child—would venture to try his powers of persuasion, saying, "Will my princess walk?" And, undeterred by the resolute shake of the little head, he would continue, "It will do my princess so much good; will my princess let me lift her down to run on the nice green grass?" until the small hands were stretched out to the kind old man, and with smiles of relenting, she gave up her will. The Princess never forgot this old soldier; from her childhood she was taught gratefully to consider all those who faithfully served her; a habit which has ever marked the after-life of our gracious Queen.

As the years went on, the little Princess might be seen, dressed in a large straw hat and a white cambric pelisse, playing in the palace garden, herself its fairest flower. When indoors, she flitted like a sunbeam through the long passages and from room to room, still dressed in white, which best became the healthful bloom of her rosy cheeks, white forehead, expressive blue eyes, and stately little head adorned with its fair curls.

Princess Victoria had a fine understanding, a ready wit, and great powers of observation, and the careful education she received developed these good gifts.

The little girl was expected to finish whatever she took in hand, whether in her lessons or at play; and even when scarcely four years old, while playing in a hayfield, she flung down her toy-rake, and was running away in search of fresh amusement, she was bidden to come back and complete the little haycock she had begun.

Another glimpse of the royal child, when she was a happy little guest at Claremont with her devoted uncle, Leopold, King of the Belgians, is given in a recollection of a Sunday service in Esher Church, by a Scottish lady, Miss Jane Porter, who was present, and sitting just opposite to the pew in which were the Duchess of Kent and the Princess Victoria, then about six years of age. The day was hot, and a wasp was skimming around the unveiled summer bonnet of the little girl, who, without taking any notice of it, fixed her eyes upon the old clergyman, nor once withdrew them whilst the sermon lasted. In alluding to this circumstance the next day to a friend who had the privilege of being personally intimate with the Duchess of Kent, Miss Porter expressed her wonder that so young

a child should be so rivetted in her attention, and the visitor explained that the little Princess was expected by her mother to remember the text and the leading heads of the sermon; adding, "Hence, she saw neither the wasp in front of her, nor heard the whisking of the protective handkerchief behind her, for her whole mind was bound up in her task; a rare faculty of concentration in any individual, therefore more wonderful in one hardly beyond infancy. And, with a most surprising understanding of the subjects, she never fails performing her task in a manner that might grace much older years."

The Princess very early learned economy in managing her own small allowance, and she was never permitted to get into debt. During a visit to Tuubridge Wells, when she was about seven years old, she had spent all her pocket money in a bazaar, in buying presents for her friends; when, just as she left the shop, she remembered another cousin, and saw at the same time a half-crown box, which she felt would be most suitable for a gift for him. The shopkeeper's kind offer to let her take the box and pay for it afterwards was refused; but the proposal to put it aside until she could pay for it was joyfully accepted; and at seven o'clock in the morning of her next "quarter day," the eager child appeared at the shop door on her donkey, to pay for, and carry off, her purchase.

From her earliest childhood she learned the pleasure and duty of giving, and especially of giving to the poor. The Duchess of Kent impressed this on her child's tender mind by the most forcible of all methods, example; and especially the example of her father. When the statue to the memory of the Duke of Kent was erected in Portland Place, the widowed mother took the child to see it, and told her, while she looked at it with reverent, admiring eyes, that her father's likeness was placed there "not merely because he was a prince, but also because he was a good man, and was kind to the poor; adding that he had caused poor little boys and girls to be taught to read and write; and had collected money

from good people to help to cure the sick, the lame, the deaf and the blind; and did all that he could to make bad people good." The lesson of her father's life, thus impressively given, sank deep into his little daughter's heart; and we are seeing its ripe fruit in her life devoted to the good of her nation, and in her ready and practical sympathy with the sorrows and the sufferings of her people.

(To be continued.)

TALE-BEARING.

Tale-bearing is a despicable habit, and rarely receives the censure it deserves. But Bishop F. D. Huntington, of western New York, in addressing some Syracuse school girls a while ago, on "Talking as a fine art," cut down pretty nearly to the quick of the subject. He said:

I say to you, weighing my own words, that you would be less depraved, less savage, would less disgrace your womanhood, would be less a curse to your kind, and, if God is rightly revealed to us in his Word and his Son, would less offend him by going to see dogs fight in their kennels at the Five Points, or bulls gore horses in Spain, than by putting on your bonnet and gloves and going from house to house in your neighborhood, assailing absent acquaintances, dribbling calumny, sowing suspicion, planting and watering wretchedness, stabbing character, alienating friends by repeating to one the detraction that you "heard" another has spoken. I believe that before the judgment seat of Christ the prize-fighting man will stand no worse than the slanderously gossiping woman.

GRANT that there are 10,000,000 truly evangelical believers in the world with an average income of \$500 a year. Let each give one cent a day, and we would have a fund of \$36,500,000 a year. The heathen could be evangelized before the end of the century.



THE LITTLE PRINCESS IN KENSINGTON GARDENS.