

PLEASANT HOURS

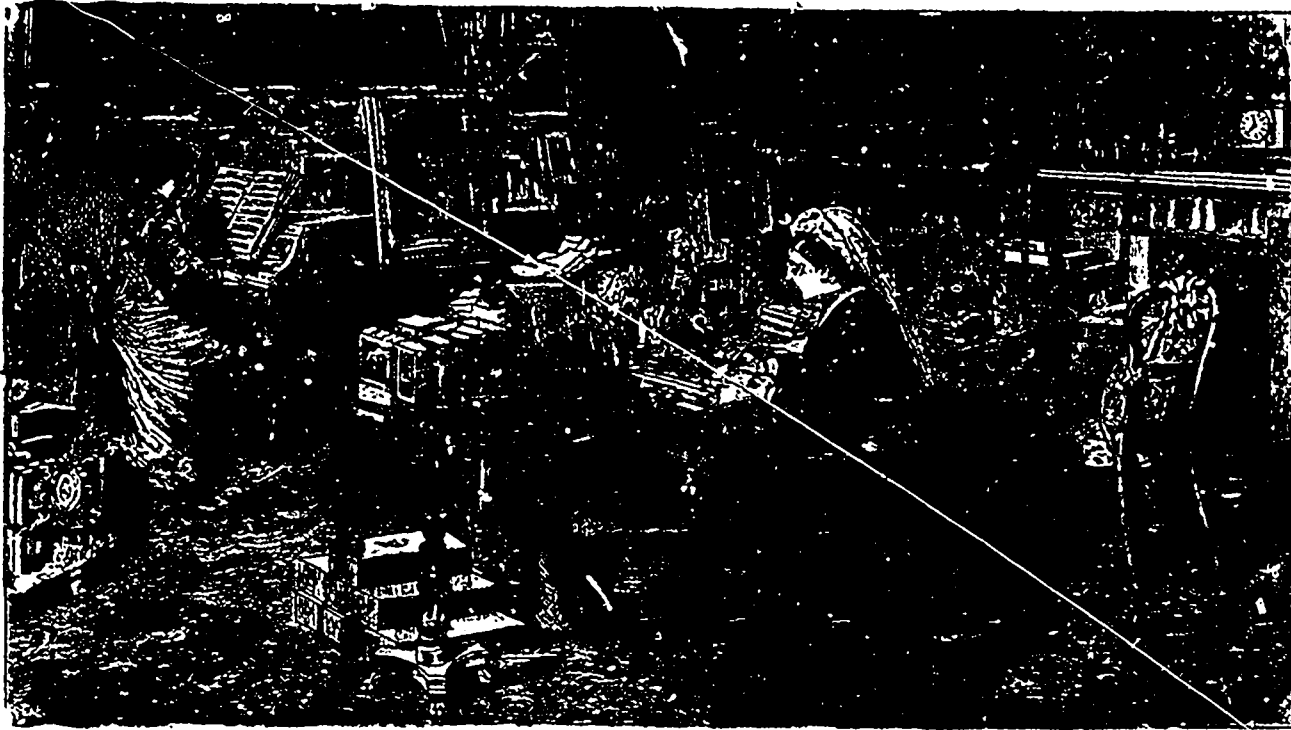
A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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THE QUEEN'S PRIVATE APARTMENTS, OSBORNE HOUSE.

THE ROYAL PALACES OF ENGLAND.

BY REV. WILLIAM A. DICKSON.

The Royal Palaces of England are so rich in historic associations, that they present special claims on general interest. They are not stained with the blood of revolution, as in France, nor yet splendid prisons, as in Russia. Aside from this they are inseparably linked with the Queen's life. Through their corridors have streamed not only solemn statesmen, hoary soldiers, and reverent divines, but renowned men of all lands whose rank or achievements procured for them the privileges of personal audience with royalty.

St. James' Palace dates back to the times of Henry VIII. From the walls of its picture-gallery, rows of kings and queens look down on the visitor. St. James' was found too small for the Queen's drawing-rooms, so the only State ceremonials now held there are levees.

Buckingham Palace has had the distinction of being the chief town residence of her Majesty. Costly evidences of Prince Albert's artistic taste here greet the visitor, in grounds so skillfully laid out that one's fancy is almost beguiled into the belief that the spot is "far from the madding crowd" of busy London. The Queen's start for the coronation, her second meeting with Prince Albert, the official announcement of her marriage, and the birth of most of her children took place here.

Windsor Castle is, undoubtedly, England's proudest possession among her many palaces. It is twenty-three miles distant from London, stands on the bank of the Thames, not far from Eton College, and is embowered amid venerable oaks. Its frowning embattlements point back to a time when strongly-fortified walls helped erring monarchs to look out upon an angry world with comparative composure.

That it is hard to so lay up treasures on earth where thieves cannot break through and steal, is borne out by the fact that an immense quantity of massive silver plate was mysteriously stolen from the castle in 1841.

Balmoral Castle is the title of the Queen's northern retreat, in the "land of brown heath and shaggy wood," "the

chosen home of chivalry, the garden of romance." Accompanied by Prince Albert she first visited Scotland in 1841.

At twenty-three years of age, and never having been out of England previously, the Queen's sense of novelty was fresh. After two more equally delightful trips, it was decided to buy or build a home among its heathery hills. So Balmoral, with its grounds four miles by seven in extent, and deer forest of 30,000 acres, was bought by the Prince Consort and became his private property.

It lies forty-eight miles west of Aberdeen, on the banks of the Dee, and is built of red granite in baronial style, with pointed gables and clock tower.

In this quiet mountain retreat the

Queen lives as free and easy a life as any private lady—shopping in the Highland store, visiting the poor and sick, handing to them comforts and tokens of remembrance, and by words of tender consolation and lofty promise alluring them to brighter worlds. The "Leaves from my Journal in the Highlands" reveal a happy family life and afford glimpses of very lovable attributes. A copy of this "Journal" was sent by her to Charles Dickens with the inscription: "A gift from one of the humblest of writers to one of the greatest."

One of her subjects, a Mr. Neild, who had lived most penuriously, bequeathed to her a legacy amounting to \$1,250,000. Whether this had anything to do with

the purchase of a new home or not we are not informed.

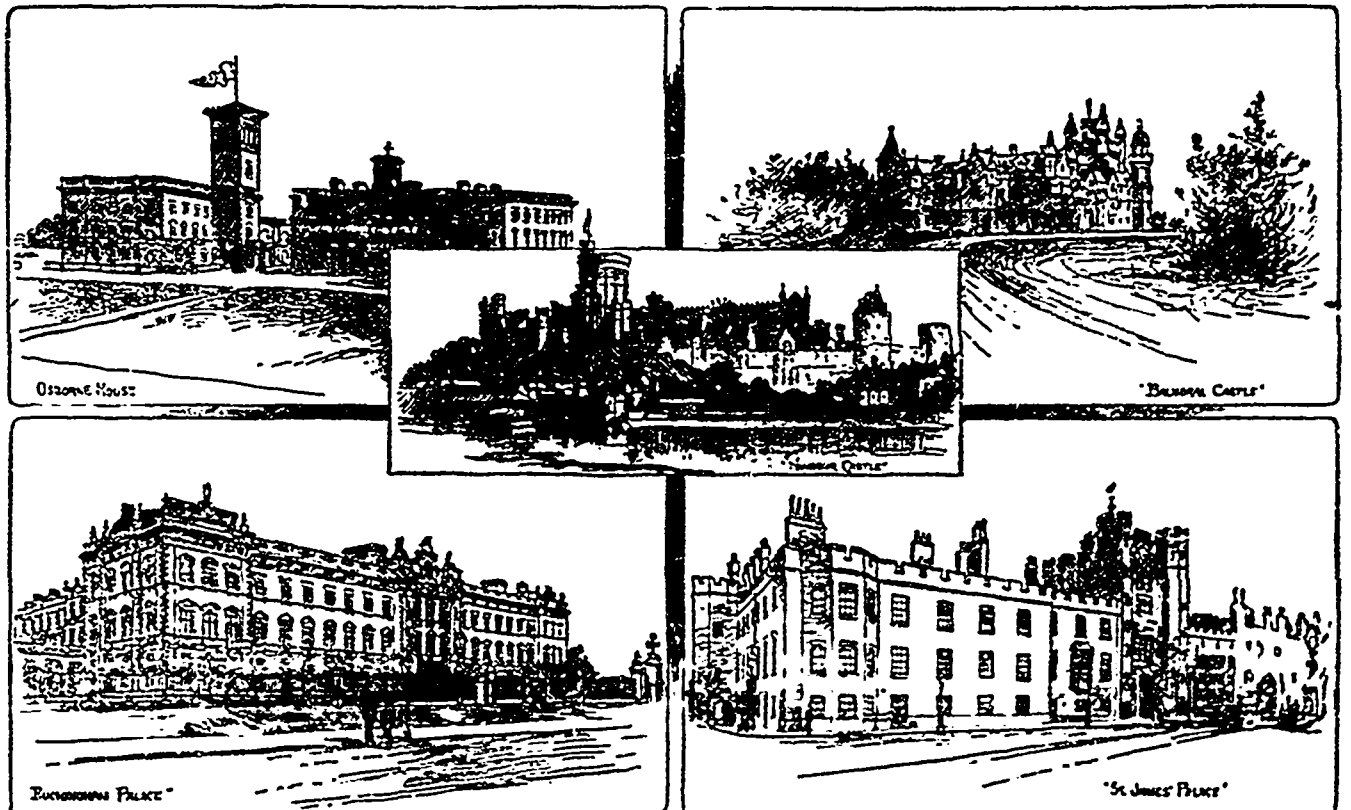
From maiden days she had loved the soft sea breezes of the Isle of Wight. In 1844 she bought a property within its borders, known as Osborne House and grounds, little anticipating its use as her chief domicile through years of sorrowing widowhood. As they entered it for the first time, the Prince reverently repeated a hymn of Luther's, one stanza of which reads:

"God bless our going out, nor less
Our coming in, and make them sure,
God bless our daily bread, and bless
Whate'er we do, whate'er endure;
In death unto his peace awake us,
And heirs of his salvation make us."

Reviewing her training, her friendships, and possessions, we can see ample materials for happiness. Her cup of earthly bliss was indeed full. Rejoicing in the progress and peace which marked her reign, proud of the achievements and popularity of her august consort, loved by him more tenderly after twenty years than in the first days of her married life, and loving him so as to pray that she "might be spared the pang of surviving him," taking comfort in the dutiful affection and promising careers of sons and daughters, what more could be needed to make life thrill with rapture? But a bright day is sometimes followed by a dark night. With the parting from the Princess Royal the shadows began to gather. A few months later she sped to Frogmore, and held her mother's hand while she crossed to the silent land. The royal sky was growing darker. For some years prior to 1860 the Prince Consort's health had been unobscurely giving way. In November of that year he drove in wet weather to Sandhurst, to inspect the new military academy, and contracted fever. He thought to conquer the ill-omened feelings by force of will. But the combat grew unequal. Bit by bit hope had to be exchanged for fear, and fear gave way to despair. His favourite hymn was "Rock of Ages."

He repeatedly addressed the Queen in German as "dear little wife." On December 14, with this expression on his faltering lips, and his head resting on the Queen's shoulder, the fond husband and father, the enlightened statesman, and the sincere Christian sank into the slumber that knows no waking. Soon after, the many widows of England presented their widowed Queen with a Bible in token of special sympathy.

(Continued on last column, next page.)



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