

OUR QUEEN AS A LITTLE GIRL.



OME seventy years ago, a little blue-eyed girl, called by her friends the "Little Mayflower"

because she came with the May blossoms, might have been seen playing in the garden of the old Kensington Palace, or driving in her little pony carriage, or running in the long halls if the day was too wet for outdoor exercise.

Before this fatherless little English maid lay a great future; for some day the Princess Alexandra Victoria would become Queen of England.

But as yet she knew nothing of this. And though the heiress of a throne and kingdom, it was a most quiet and simple life that the little princess lived at Kensington with her widowed mother, her older half sister, Feodora, and her teachers. A life full of hard study as well as healthful pleasure; for, while she was taught German and French, Latin and Italian, music, drawing, singing, and mathematics, a chapter of the Bible formed part of each day's study.

At this time her mother's brother, Leopold, afterwards king of Belgium, was living in England. Although the princess was happy at Kensington, the happiest days of her childhood, as she has since said, were her holiday visits to her uncle.

While there once, and at church one summer Sunday morning, just as the sermon was beginning, a wasp flew in at the open window. and after sailing round, anxiously watched by nearly every one, made for the little princess, buzzed about her, and finally settled on her bonnet. But she sat perfectly still, with her eyes fixed on the minister, and so absorbed in listening to him that she never saw the wasp, and to the great relief of every one, it finally flew away without offering to sting her.

It was well that she loved her uncle Leopold so dearly, for daily records of her progress and behavior were always kept by her governess and sent to him once a month. So, in a way, his eye was constantly on her, both as a stimulus and a restraint.

Her father, the Duke of Kent, had left to his family a high rank and many debts. And partly because her mother's income was not large, but more to teach her little daughter to use money wisely, Princess Victoria was trained in a strict and regular economy, such as the children of far

humbler parents seldom know; and taught, especially, that she must never spend more than her income, even though that was but a child's pocket money.

This story has been told more than once of the time when she was buying presents. After she had spent her last shilling, she remembered one cousin more, and selected for him a box, priced half a crown—about sixty cents. The shopman was putting this with her other purchases, when her governess said, "No, you see the princess has not the money; therefore, of course, she cannot buy the box."

"Then we will lay it aside till she can buy it," was the offer.

"Oh, if you will be so good as to do that!"

So the box was laid aside, and the day her next allowance was given her, the princess came on her donkey, before seven o'clock in the morning, to pay for and claim her purchase.

Holiday visits were sometimes made to the Isle of Wight, always, as now, a favorite residence, and to other seaside resorts. At the Isle of Wight there were often delightful yacht excursions. On one of these Princess Victoria had a most narrow escape. The yacht struck a sunken wreck with such force as to loosen the mast. The pilot instantly sprang to where she was standing, unconscious of her danger, lifted her in his arms and ran to a place of safety. A moment later the topmast and sail fell on the spot where she had stood.

For the moment she was quite calm, but when she saw how narrowly she had missed being crushed to death, she burst into tears, while thanking the seaman for his presence of mind. Nor was this his only reward. He was soon made master instead of pilot. When the little lady whose life he had saved became queen, she invited him to court, and on his death provided for his wife and family.

Till she was twelve the princess had been kept in ignorance of the destiny that awaited her. Then it was thought best she should know. Her governess, Madame Lehzen, who informed her, has described her reception of this astonishing news, and her first remark:

"Now many a child would boast, but they don't know the difficulty. There is much splendor, but there is much responsibility. The princess, having lifted up the forefinger of her right hand as she spoke, gave me that little hand, saying: 'I will be good. I understand now why you urged me so much to learn Latin. My coun-