POOR DOCUMENT

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THE MAN WHO WAS DEAD

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CHAPTER IX.—(Continued.)

"I will know, Normia, I swear I will. And if you won't tell me, I can force it from him. I saw the whole thing, and I know there was something in the handkerchief. I watched you afterward, and saw you put it away."

Rightly or wrongly, I did not strike the match, and so did not reveal my presence.

"You are mad to think of such a thing, Stephanie. It is only your insane jealousy, and you shame me. Jealousy! And with such a man as Gerard Provost!"

"That was not always your cry!"

"I did not know him then. I declare, on my honor, that nothing would ever make me stoop to such a baseness. Have you ever known me to lie?"

"Then what was in the handkerchief?"

"I have told you I will not even answer a question so dishonoring to me."

"I will tell the prince," said Stephanie spitefully.

"If it would but cause him to break this hateful match, I should be glad enough."

"Have a care how you anger and defy me."

"I know," replied Normia desolately, "you can threaten the lives of those who are dearer to me than life or honor even. But even to save them I would not falsely confess to the shame of an intrigue with such a man as Gerard Provost."

I had ears for no more. The contempt and scorn of the last words cut me like a sword-thrust, and I winced and flinched at the pain.

Never before had I fully realized all that Normia was to me. I had set her before all else in the world. It was only for her that I was willing to endure the shame and vileness of my present position. I had no thought but to serve her. And yet almost at the moment when I had been indulging the hope that she might glean enough from the old relations between us to trust me, this scathing, bitter, relentless condemnation had come.

Presently the scrape of feet on the balcony told me that others had come out. I heard Baron Von Epstein's self-satisfied tones and Stephanie's replies, mingled with light laughter, and then the soft frou-frou of silk as they all went in.

After a time I rose. I would take my misery back to the dingy lodgings which were my home. I would * * * but at that moment I saw I was not alone, as I thought.

Standing by the railing in front of the balcony, staring out vaguely over the lights of the great city, was a girl who, judging by her pose of dejection and the deep, deep sigh which escaped her as I approached, was well-nigh as desolate and wretched as I myself.

Then I saw that it was Normia, and I stopped.

The slight start I had given was enough to rouse her, and she looked round at me. Her eyes widened when she saw who I was. Then she drew herself up and shrank away. "Monsieur Provost!" she said, with a mixture of surprise, disdain, and suspicion in her tone.

I bowed, and moved by a blundering impulse to try to shake her distrust, I replied: "That most miserable of men, princess, who for the sake of the past would give his life to serve you."

She paused a second, and I was fool enough to hope that the sincerity of my offer had impressed her. But I was speedily undeceived.

"How dare you insult me by such a reference? Oh, if I had only known then what you were. I lowered my head in bitterness at the taunt. "You will be good enough never to address me again, monsieur. The services of such men as you I regard as an insult."

"For God's sake, listen to me!" I cried desperately, as I looked up. "Your own safety——"

But she would not hear me.

"Monsieur!" she protested indignantly, and with a look of disdain, as though I were less than dirt in her eyes, she turned her back on me and swept into the house.

With a groan of despair I dropped into a seat, feeling that at last indeed I had plumbed the lowest depths of misery and degradation.

CHAPTER X.

Normia.

As I left the house about an hour later—as black an hour as any man could pass—Vosbach joined me.

"I have been waiting for you, Provost. I want to speak to you particularly."

"I am in no very amiable mood," I replied.

"I can understand that. Grundelhof told me."

"Has he sent you now to find out what I think of him?"

"No. I shouldn't do that."

"Then, what is it?"

"Will you come to my rooms? We can talk better there."

For an instant I hestitated, suspecting some trap, but finally agreed. "Of course I will, if you wish," I said.

He guessed the reason of my hesitation. "You needn't doubt me, Provost. I sha'n't play you any tricks.

We walked on without speaking, and I saw him glancing at me every now and then in some perplexity.

"You're very quiet," he said

I understood the cause of his perplexity and played up to it. "I have had a serious talk with Grundelhof," I said, with a short laugh. He set down the absence of a bombast in me to cowardice, of course, and it was not worth while to undeceive him at present.

As I did not know where he lived, I made a mistake when we reached the house. I was passing it, when he said:

"Here we are man. Where are you going? You don't pretend not to know where I live?"

"No. It wouldn't be much good, would it?" And I laughed as he went in. Then I made another blunder. He closed the door, and I began to mount the stairs.

"Where are you going now?" he called, stopping at a door on the ground floor.

I mumbled some excuse about thinking I was in my own house; and then went on to commit blunder after blunder, until, had he not been thick-headed, he must have discovered the imposture. As it was, he commented on many differences between me and Provost, and actually referred to Arnheim's suspicion on the night of the murder.

At that I looked very serious, and asked him if he wanted to know the truth.

"It's all true about my having been nearly out of my mind; my memory has gone all to pieces. I didn't know where you lived, I can't remember half the things I ought to know; I—oh, don't let us speak of it—I can't bear it." And, clapping my hands to my head, I groaned and pretended to be overcome.

He seemed to have a streak of good nature in him, and then it came out that I had in some way rendered him a service, and that, being grateful, he wished to warn me not to go to the meeting on the next night.

I affected to be so distraught that I was heedless of what occurred. I was in fact, playing my "agony of mind" mood for all it was worth to work on his feelings and lull his suspicions. And in the midst of this he told me his reason.

To his intense surprise and consternation, I burst into a loud peal of laughter the moment I heard it.

Grundelhof and his companions were going to play a dirty trick on me, he said, and have the Greek girl Catarina at the meeting and a priest, and force me to marry her. The thought of Stephanie's amazement if I had to tell her that I could not marry her because her followers had already mated me to the amorous Greek, was too much for my gravity.

I am sure that Vosbach took my laughter for the proof of madness. His face showed it, and he was distinctly relieved when I rose and said I must go.

"You're worse than you think, Provost, he said sympathetically.

"Does Catarina know about this little plan?"

"Not yet, I think. He will see her tomorrow. If I were you I should bolt."

"Oh, I don't know. She might make as good a wife as another." And with another laugh, I went away, leaving him in a condition of absolute bewilderment.

I had been so tried that night, and my nerves were so highly strung, that I found intense relief in that laughter. It was, of course, largely hysterical, but it did me good, and I put off the consideration of the serious side of the complication until the morning; and thus succeeded in sleeping well.

One thing I was quite resolved upon. I would go to the meeting at any cost. I must get at Grundelhof's intentions in regard to Normia. And I must devise some means during the day of preventing the Greek from being present. She would inevitably recognize me, and that must be staved off as long as possible.

Time was more urgent now than ever, indeed. What I had overheard on the previous evening between Stephanie and Normia made clear the nature of the threat which held the latter in fear of Stephanie, and I knew that there was no foundation for it in fact. Get that information to Normia by some means I must; and I turned over a dozen devices in my mind.

Normia's attitude to me had greatly increased the difficulties. I could not blame her for her prejudice against me, but at the same time while she entertained it I could not hope to get her to listen to me. I could not write to her, because I was convinced that Stephanie would be careful to read all the correspondence that entered the Black House. Nor could I gain admission to her apartments. No one was admitted without a written order from either the prince or Stephanie.

It was exasperating to a degree to feel that I had the means of freeing her from the influences that were surely leading her to ruin, and yet could do nothing for lack of the mere opportunity of speaking to her. I was worrying with this problem when the unexpected happened.

Normia herself entered my room.

I sprang to my feet in such intense surprise that I almost forgot my manners as I stared at her. She was very pale, very nervous, and trembled in such agitation that she could scarcely speak at first.

"This visit surprises you, Monsieur Provost," she said hesitatingly.

I pulled myself together and placed a chair for her.

"I scarcely know what to augur from it, princess, after—after your words last night."

She did not sit down, but remained at one end of the table while I stood at the other. She paused, evidently at a loss how to approach the object of her visit.

"Yet you must surely know why I have risked coming to you?" she said.

"If you will only permit me to say what last night——"

"It is about the paper you brought to me," she broke in.

It was to secure my silence to Stephanie, then, I concluded.

"Let me assure you that you may rely absolutely upon my silence," I said.

She started and glanced at me suspiciously.

"Why do you say that?"

"I was on the balcony when Baroness Dolgoroff told you she had seen there was something in the handkerchief."

The color rushed to her face in a crimson flood, her eyes snapped angrily, and her hands clenched. Then, as the color ebbed, she replied, with a curl of the lip:

"I had forgotten. It is, of course, your business to listen."

It was my turn to wince at that, and I felt myself grow hot and cold in turn. But I made no reply. She saw how the words had stung me, but the reason, of course, she could not know.

"I did not wish to anger you, monsieur. Heaven knows I have no such desire at such a crisis!" She sat down then as if overwrought.

"You have not angered me. You have said no more than others believe, and I have lost the right to contradict them, or you. And if your coming here means that you will honor me by allowing me to serve you in any way, nothing else that you can say will count with me."

"You really wish to serve me?" she asked, with unmistakable earnestness.

"I ask no more than that you put me to the proof."

"You can prove it at once, monsieur. Explain the meaning of the paper you brought for me from my friends in Belgrade."

"Explain it," I echoed, in blank amazement.

Her face hardened, and her eyes filled with doubt and fear.

"Yes, monsieur. Explain it and the presence of this money." And she laid it down.

I was dumbfounded, and had no reply.

"Whom did you see in Belgrade, monsieur?"

Again I was silent, bitterly chagrined, as I felt how this silence must convict me in her eyes.

"You cannot have forgotten that Monsieur Provost," she said indignantly.

"I am aware that you must believe that," I answered feebly.

She rose. "And this is the proof of your desire to serve me! Heaven pardon you for this falseness! I see that I have risked this visit in vain."

"You must not go like this," I cried hastily, as she turned to the door.

"Monsieur!" she exclaimed, drawing herself to her full height and looking at me with eyes that flashed with anger.

I would have given my life to be able to tell her the truth then, but it was out of question. But go she should not until I had told her about her own danger; so I went to the door and stood between it and her.

"You must listen to me before you go."

"You dare to detain me forcibly."

"For God's sake, can't you see there is something I cannot explain?" I replied passionately. "Just as there is something I must tell you, for your sake."

She shrank away from the look in my eyes.

"Let me go, monsieur."

I paid no heed to her plea.

"Last night I overheard that the hold which the baroness has over you is the fear that she will betray your mother and sister to the Servian Government. I can tell you that you have nothing on that account to fear. The government knows where they are living, and so long as the government and you take no hostile action against them, they are safe."

"Yes, monsieur. Thank you. Now may I go?"

I tossed up my hands with a sigh of despair. Her tone showed me that she did not believe me.

"In Heaven's name, do try to understand that I am not all lies," I cried vehemently. "I know that I seem to you no more than a scoundrelly spy, and I cannot utter a word to undeceive you. But what I have told you is the truth. That I swear to you. And you are taking the actual steps in this fatuous conspiracy which will do the very thing you are risking everything to avoid."

"Yes, monsieur. Thank you. May I go?" she repeated, fear alike in her eyes, voice, and shrinking attitude.

I stepped from the door and threw it open.

"As you will. But Heaven help those who are dear to you if you persist in this terrible mistrust of my warning!"

She was partly reassured by my opening the door, and turned when she reached the threshold.

"How do you know this, monsieur?"

"I cannot tell you that. But it is true—as true as that there is now here, in this city, a scheme on foot to seize you and hand you over to the Servian Government. But no doubt, you will take that warning as lightly as the other because it comes from Provost, the spy," I said bitterly.

She returned to the table and sat down again, burying her face in her hands.

"If I could only make you believe in my good faith, princess, I could help you."

"Why did you refuse to answer my questions about these?" touching the papers.

"My lips are sealed, or I could explain it all."

"By the woman who has bought you and your silence, and whom you are to marry?"

"No doubt I seem to you to deserve that. You must think of me as you will," I replied with a sigh. "If you will but heed my warning, I am satisfied."

"What am I to think?" she cried with a gesture of perplexity.

"If you will be counseled by me you will communicate either with this government, or your own, and lay the whole facts before them."

She started in alarm.

"Turn triator?" she cried quickly. "You advise this! And against your—against the baroness? And directly after you have played me false with these?"

I could have cursed the papers for the effect they had had upon her. I picked up the blank sheet.

"If you judge me by this, and hold everything I say to you false because I cannot explain, you will walk straight to your ruin as surely as you are speaking to me; and will drag others down with you. I swear to you I have no thought but for your good; and if you can find a single grain of trust you once had in me, try to believe me for the sake of that time."

But this angered her. She rose.

"How dare you, monsieur."

"I dare not for my sake, but for yours. Heaven knows I have nothing to gain now except to save you from the fate you are so recklessly bringing on yourself!"

She fixed her eyes on me in a long steady stare, but at the close tossed up her hands and shook her head.

"In the face of this, no—no—no!"

I had been holding the paper in my hands, and now, as I glanced down at it, I noticed some faint marks. It occurred to me they had been brought out by the warmth of my hands; and as I had had plenty of experience with ciphers and secret inks, I guessed that there was secret writing on this.

It took me only a short time to test this, and I soon perceived that my guess was right.

"There is some secret writing here, princess," I said.

"Why did you not tell me that before?"

"I have but this moment discovered it."

She was greatly excited now, and trembled nervously as she watched the words come out gradually under the means I employed.

"Turn the paper up, that I my read it, monsieur," she said. I was intentionally holding it with the back toward us, so that I should not read the writing.

"It is to you—not to me. Whover wrote it did not mean me to read it. I do not wish to pry into your secrets."

"If you have not already done so."

I let the taunt pass, and when the writing was sufficiently clear, I gave her the paper. She read it quickly, and turned on me with an angry start.

"As I thought; it is only another proof of your deceit!" she cried, her eyes flashing with rage as she handed it to me:

We cannot understand your messenger, or why you want money. Why did you not write? We cannot send the amount you ask for, but do send all we can. Do you know that your messenger is not a Frenchman, but a renegade Englishman named Pershore?

I read the message in silence, and with an inward curse at the scurvy trick which fate had played me. It was the hardest blow I had yet endured.

"What message did you give them, monsieur?" Her voice was hard as steel.

I was once again dumfounded, and my eyes fell in confusion.

"Come, monsieur. You must know that. Explain, if you please."

"Unhappily, that is impossible," I said. "Heaven knows what it costs me to have to confess that!"

"Instead of giving my mesage you asked for money."

"It seems so," I admitted fatuously. I was at the end of my wits, dazed by this most unexpected turn.

"My friends—my mother, for that is her writing, monsieur—would not write what is untrue," she went on relentlessly.

"I do not even suggest that."

"Then how can I believe a word you say Oh, it is cruel—it is dastardly! By this deceit, in not carrying my message, you have cut from me the one hope I had. Go on with your work, Monsieur Spy! Tell your employer that I sent a message by you to my friends; that I plotted to have a friend sent here; that I tried to escape from her; and that I degraded myself today by coming here to beg you at least to do that for which you had been paid. You deceived me before by masquerading as an honest man whom I would have trusted with my life, and, of course, you would deceive me now with this treacherous suggestion that I should give myself up to the government. But you have opened my eyes in time."

I took it without flinching. The facts as she knew them warranted every one of the bitter words.

"I have no answer, expect to beg that if you can put this aside and give me a further test, you shall have proof of my sincerity."

"You have given me the proof, thank you," she cried bitterly. Then, as if overcome, she fell back in her chair and hid her face in her hands.

I was standing by the window and turned away to stare out into the street, while she recovered self-command. In the pause, infinitely distressing to me, a carriage drew up at the door of the house, and, to my dismay, Prince Lepova alighted and handed out Stephanie. And both entered the house.

At the same moment Normia rose to go.

"One thing you can do, monsieur. I wish this visit to be kept secret."

"It is too late for secrecy, princess. Prince Lepova and Baroness Dolgoroff are just entering the house. The test you would not make has come unsought. I am not the scoundrel you think, and I will prove it now. I beg you to appear composed, and leave it to me to explain the reason for your presence here. Take your stand there, please."

She was intensely agitated, but did as I wished. I crossed the room and set the door slightly ajar, listening for the footsteps on the stairs.

CHAPTER XI.

My Marriage Fixed.

Normia appeared to be scarcely more alarmed by the arrival of Stephanie and Prince Lepova than by my actions and sudden assumption of a swaggering manner.

"That letter must not be seen," I whispered hurridly, as I saw it still in her hands, "Quick—quick!"

She put it away with nervous haste.

There were two or three seconds' pause, and then I heard the rustle of Stephanie's dress on the stairway.

I burst suddenly into a loud, raucous-insolent laugh, and Normia shrank away a step in consternation.

"Well, I trust now, madame, whether princess or no princess, that I have taught you your lesson," I cried in a truculent, bullying tone. "You know now that Gerard Provost will brook no such insult as you gave me."

There was no need to give her a stage direction, to make the necessary show of indignation. She thought I was in earnest, and was referring to what had passed between us. Her face flushed.

"How dare you, monsieur?" she cried.

I laughed again.

"Your anger, madame——" I began just as the door opened and the two entered. "Ah, Baroness Dolgoroff! Monsieur Le Prince!" And I changed my tone to one of surprise. "You are welcome, indeed. You come in time to bear out what I have just told this lady: That Gerard Provost is not the man to let any one even princesses—trample him in the dirt."

Prince Lepova's surprise at seeing Normia there was genuine, but Stephanie's was obviously assumed. Her face was eloquent of suspicion and jealousy.

"How dare you address the princess in that way, monsieur?" cried Lepova.

But Stephanie turned on Normia.

"What is the meaning of this?" she asked, with an unmistakable threat in her voice.

"As it is my doing, I can best explain. The princess came here at my bidding."

"Monsieur Provost!" burst out the prince furiously.

I turned and stared at him slowly from head to foot.

"At my bidding, I said, Monsieur Le Prince—mine, Gerard Provost." And I tapped myself arrogantly on the chest "At somebody's dictation—your's perhaps, monsieur, or another's." And I looked meaningly at Stephanie and paused. "The princess was pleased to put an affront on me at the Black House last night. I did myself the honor, therefore, to write and inform her that if she would not come here—here, to this house, to my rooms, Monsieur Le Prince—and make me amends, I would revenge the affront by carrying such information as I possess to those who would be careful not to affront a French gentleman giving valuable information."

"A French gentleman!" sneered Lepova. "Infamous."

I paused and knitted my brows, like the bully I was playing.

"A French gentleman, Monsieur Le Prince, who does not use the presence of women to insult a man."

But Stephanie was not misled.

"Why do you not tell me" she asked Normia.

"Or me, Normia?" added the prince.

"If you will show them my letter, it will best explain that," I said coolly.

"I have not kept it, monsieur," answered Normia; and to the others: "I was frightened by the threats."

Good! Here was the beginning of an understanding. She had accepted the explanation I had vamped, and trusted me.

I laughed offensively.

"And, by the Cross! I'd have made them good. But my honor is satisfied; you have done what I required; and so far as I am concerned the matter is ended." And I made Normia an elaborate bow. "I intended it as a test, and it has answered its purpose."

A quick flash from her eyes seemed to signal a reply to this equivocal sentence, and at that the situation entirely changed its character to me. The prince believed my story, and with Stephanie I could deal afterward. She would not venture to speak out before Lepova, and as three of us had now secret cross-purposes, the position became divertingly artificial and unreal.

Normia had recovered her spirits the moment it was patent to her that I did not intend to betray the real reason of her presence, and I hoped she would accept this as a proof, despite the black evidence against me in the matter of the Belgrade business, that I was really anxious to serve her.

After her glance at me she looked across at Stephanie, and, with a contemptuous wave of the hand in my direction and a curl of the lip, she said:

"It seems that we are all to take our orders from this new favorite of yours."

This note of open antagonism was quite new, and it delighted me as much as it surprised Stephanie.

"It is true," I declared arrogantly, "that fortune has placed me on the center of the seesaw."

"It may prove a perilous position, monsieur," snapped Stephanie coldly.

But Lepova took everything very seriously.

"You did very wrong to come here, Normia. I will take you home."

"Have we this gentleman's permission?" she asked, in a bitterly scornful tone.

The prince's eyes glittered with suppressed passion.

"Enough of this," he cried.

I crossed to the door and opened it.

"Permit me." And I bowed low to Normia.

"Stay," cried Stephanie, taking a paper from her pocket. "There is still a matter to be discussed. A charge against Monsieur Provost."

"Another!" I said with a mocking laugh. "Upon my word, I though the indictment was about full enough. Poor Gerard Provost!"

"One of our adherents—your late serving maid, Normia, Catarina Machia—demands our aid as the leaders in righting this gentleman's betrayal of her."

The malice of this was as clear as the sun at noontide. She had come to consult with me about this Catarina complication, and, angered by what had just occurred, she was using the letter to blacken me further in Normia's eyes. But I managed to blunt the barb.

"Poor little Greek girl! And does she propose to force me to marry her, baroness? Is that the justice she seeks?"

And, hugely to my glee, Normia followed this with a thrust on her own account. She drew herself up, and with a nasty little laugh, said:

"I have no wish to listen to the discussion of this gentleman's love affairs. They concern you more than me, baroness. Your arm, prince, if you please." And with that she swept out, leaving Stephanie pale and furious at her discomfiture.

"That comes of meddling with your future husband's old love matters, Stephanie. If you will marry a blackguard you really must have more tact," I bantered; and throwing myself into a chair I gave way to unrestrained laughter.

I could afford to laugh now, indeed. Normia and I had a secret in common, and an understanding, and all Stephanie's malice had been unable to disturb it.

"Why did Normia come here?" asked Stephanie. She was pacing the room, her face set and angry. She flung the question at me with a searching glance.

"You heard me give the reason."

"I want the truth," she snapped hastily.

I tossed up my hands in affected protest.

"Stephanie! Stephanie! Such rudeness! And before marriage, too! Really! Really!

I looked for a further outburst, but instead, she grew cool and dangerous. She sat down to the table and drew some writing materials in front of her.

"You do not understand me yet, Guy. You think you can safely deceive me. You cannot. You are bantering me now to hide facts and plans. You will tell me, please, what sort of secret understanding you have with Normia."

It was clear that we were in for a little contest of will-power. I would not shirk it.

"A little plain speaking on both sides will do good," I agreed.

"That is not answering my question."

"I am not going to answer it, Stephanie," I said firmly.

Our eyes met in a long, steady stare.

"You set Normia before me?"

"Leave Normia out of this and settle our own relationship first."

"You set me at defiance, then?"

"I am going to be no mere marionette for you or any one else to pull the strings as you please. I don't dance to any one's orders—man or woman."

"You have not counted the cost?"

"Yes. You can do what you will." And again our eyes met fixedly.

She dipped a pen in the ink.

"If you will not answer my question I shall write to the police stating who you are."

I smiled. It was obvious that she dared not do that.

"Threaten something that you dare do," I said. "And when you threaten, remember how much I know."

Her eyes flashed at the word "dare," and, being a woman, the opposition drove her to persist in her mistake. She wrote a letter very deliberately, read it through, and addressed it.

"You are mistaking bluff for strength, Stephanie. Give me that letter if you dare, and I pledge my oath to take it to the police myself."

"You would betray even Normia then?" she said, rising. She was still white with passion, and her lips quivered.

"Oh, no. Last night I was on the balcony when I heard the nature of the hold you have over Normia, and I know that she has nothing to fear from her government when that fact is known to them."

"Have you told her?"

"Yes." I noticed her hands tighten on the letter and her brows came together in a frown. After a moment's pause she resumed her seat. "It is more serious than I thought," she said. Her tone was quiet and her passion gone.

"You take the wrong line with me, Stephanie," I told her. "You threaten me because you are angry, and perhaps jealous. I heard that last night. There is no cause. Normia can never be anything to me so long as I am under this terrible charge. I——"

(To be continued.)

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LATE QUEEN VICTORIA AGAINST WOMAN'S RIGHTS

(Westminster Gazette.)

Some six or seven years ago Sir Theodore Martin, who had enjoyed the intimate friendship of Queen Victoria for a long period, prepared on account of his relations with Her Majesty. For some reason permission was, it is understood, refused for its publication and it was printed for private circulation only. Now, however, Sir Theodore Martin has been allowed to make this little volume public and it is now issued by Messrs. Blackwood & Sons. Sir Theodore, it will be remembered, was the biographer of the late Prince Consort, and during the seven years that the work was in preparation was in constant correspondence with the late Queen. Her Majesty held Sir Theodore in the highest respect and in voluminous letters and in conversation gave him many opportunities of observing her "qualities of mind and heart." It is the glimpses he supplies of these qualities—he writes of Her Majesty as a woman, not as a Queen—that make his monograph so interesting.

Sir Theodore Martin has often been asked how he came to write the "Life of the Prince Consort." He tells here that the suggestion was due to Sir Arthur Helps, whom he had assisted in the preparation of the Collection of the Prince's Speeches and Addresses. It had been intended that the biography should have been undertaken by General Charles Grey, the Queen's private secretary, but neither his health nor his leisure would permit. Sir Theodore was not very keen about the task, but ultimately consented, and was summoned to Windsor to make the acquaintance of the Queen. Helps was ill and could not be present. On the same day the Queen wrote to Helps, who was, by the way, a great purist in regard to style:—

"The Queen is so grieved (perhaps Mr. Helps will scold her for that so!) to hear of Mr. Helps feeling so ill today, but she thinks he will be relieved to hear that the first interview with Mr. Martin passed off extremely well, and that the Queen is very much pleased with him. He is clever, kind and sympathetic, and it will be a great interest to her to work with him and Mr. Helps."

No time was lost in getting materials together for the work, which Sir Theodore stipulated at the outset was to be undertaken by him "without fee or reward of any kind."

The Queen's Thoughtful Kindness.

When at Osborne in 1868 Sir Theodore had an accident on the skating pond, and one of his limbs had to be placed in splints. The Queen immediately paid him a visit, and he writes:—

"Before nine o'clock next morning I was surprised by the appearance of Her Majesty in my room, when she expressed her warm sympathy with my suffering and gave orders for my having the constant attendance of one of her principal servants. The Queen had scarcely left my room when two unusually large pillows were brought to me. The Queen, I was told, thought the pillows I had were too small, and had ordered these large ones to replace them."

This thoughtful kindness, Sir Theodore says, was but the beginning of a care for his recovery on the part of the Queen, who left nothing undone that could minister to his comfort. Mrs. Martin had been summoned to Osborne, and to Helps the Queen spoke of her as "most pleasing, clever and distinguished—really very charming."

When "Leaves from a Journal" was published it was received with a burst of enthusiastic and affectionate loyalty which rather contrasted with much of a different tenor to which the Queen's close retirement after the Prince's death had given rise. Sir Theodore Martin had written to the Queen expressing satisfaction at the reception of the book, and Her Majesty replied as follows:—

"The Queen was moved to tears on reading Mr. Martin's beautiful and too kind letter. Indeed, it is not possible for her to say how touched she is by the kindness of everyone. People are far too kind. What has she done to be so loved and liked? She did suffer acutely last year she will not deny, but the sore feeling has vanquished entirely and the very thought of it has lost its sting . . .

A few days later the Queen again writes, saying she had been doing nothing but reading the reviews of her book in the newspapers. She asks Sir Theodore to get two things rectified and explained. It was not the Queen's sorrow but her work, she wished it to be known, that kept her secluded to a certain extent. Her Majesty on this point says:—

"It is her overwhelming work and her health which is greatly shaken by her sorrow, and the totally overwhelming amount of work and responsibility—work which she feels really wears her out. Alice Helps was wonderstruck at the Queen's room; and if Mrs. Martin will look at it she can tell Mr. Martin what surrounds her. From the hour she gets out of bed till she gets into it again there is work, work, work—letter boxes, questions, etc., which are dreadfully exhausting—and if she had not comparative rest and quiet in the evening she would most likely not be alive. Her brain is constantly overtaxed. Could not this truth be openly put before her people So much has been told them; they should know this very important fact, for some day she may quite break down."

Her Majesty took Mrs. Martin into her own room one morning and showed her "piles of despatch boxes, all of them full of work for her, and all requiring immediate attention." It was the Queen's great aim to follow the Prince Consort's plan, which was to sign nothing until he had read it and made notes.

"A Cruelly Misunderstood Woman."

Sir Theodore Martin thought that it was neither necessary nor desirable to make any public declaration upon this subject of the burdens which had been thrown upon the Queen's shoulders by the pressing remorse at the heartless, cruel death of the Prince Consort. Complaints ceased for a time, but during the year 1870 they were renewed in some of the leading journals, and again the Queen, Sir Theodore tells us, felt "deeply wounded." In the autumn of 1871 she had a serious illness, and many journals gave vent to expressions of devotion and sympathetic interest. To this change was due another letter from Her Majesty, who wrote:—

"The Queen cannot help referring to the article in Thursday's 'Times' and in Friday's 'Daily News,' which are very gratifying, as these go the length of ex-way in which they had attacked the Queen . . . Mr. Martin will recollect the Queen's distress for some years past and how little she was believed. The unjust attacks this year, the great worry and anxiety and the hard work for ten years, alone, unaided, with increasing age and never very strong health, broke the Queen down and almost drove her to despair. The result has been a very, very serious illness—the severest except one (a typhoid fever in 1835) she ever had—and more suffering than she has ever endured in her life. Now that people are frightened and kind the Queen will be kindly treated in future; but it is very hard that it was necessary that she should have the severe illness and great suffering, which has left her very weak, to make people feel and understand her . . . The sympathy in dear Scotland has been great, and their press was the first to raise their voice in defence of a cruelly misunderstood woman. She will never forget this."

After this time Sir Theodore says Her Majesty had no reason to complain that she was so "cruelly misunderstood" by any section of her people.

The Queen and Mr. Gladstone.

Some years ago, in an article in the "Quarterly Review," the statement was made, "with an air of assured knowledge," that the Queen's "prejudice" against Mr. Gladstone began from her "suspecting him of trying to overwork her." Sir Theodore says he has the best reason to know the groundlessness of this implication:—

"The Queen's distrust of Mr. Gladstone—not her "prejudice against him—was of a much earlier date than his first premiership. It was deeply seated and for reasons that grew more and more serious as the years rolled on . . . Instead of complaining that she was overtasked by Mr. Gladstone, Her Majesty's complaint more probably was that she was not kept fully and timeously informed by him of important matters to which she conceived her attention should have been called."

However this may be, Sir Theodore adds, the Queen was too fair-minded to allow "prejudice" to warp her judgment as to any of her ministers.

Of the Queen's ingenuousness Sir Theodore Martin saw many illustrations. One example is given in a letter which she wrote explaining why she could not send for the purpose of the Prince Consort's biography her letters during the first years after her accession:—

"The Queen's own letters between 1837 and 1840 are not pleasing, and are, indeed, rather painful to herself. It was the least sensible and satisfactory time in her whole life, and she must therefore destroy a great many. That life of constant amusement, flattery, excitement, and mere politics had a bad effect (as it must have upon anyone) on her naturally simple and serious nature. But all changed in 1840 (with her marriage)."

The Queen, indeed, made no secret to herself of her own faults and shortcomings. She showed Sir Theodore Martin a letter in which the Prince rebuked her "tenderly but firmly" for writing to him when he had gone from home on a public occasion in what she called "a very discreditable fit of pettishness, which she was humiliated to have to own," to the effect that he could do without her, and did not take her miniature with him.

"The Mad Wicked Folly of Woman's Rights."

Queen Victoria was clearly no believer in "Woman's Rights." In 1870, when there was an outcry on the subject, she wrote:—

"The Queen is most anxious to enlist everyone who can speak or write to join in checking this mad, wicked folly of 'Woman's Rights,' with all its attendant horrors on which her poor feeble sex is bent, forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety. Lady —— ought to get a good whipping.

"It is a subject which makes the Queen so furious that she cannot contain herself. God created men and women different—then let them remain each in their own position . . . Woman will become the most hateful, heartless, and disgusting of human beings were she allowed to unsex herself, and where would be the protection which man was intended to give the weaker sex? The Queen is sure that Mrs. Martin agrees with her."

This letter was written nearly forty years ago. Probably Her Majesty's opinion on the subject was somewhat modified in after years.

Dress and Fashions.

On extravagance and want of individuality in dress the Queen also held decided opinions. The Prince Consort, as the following letter of Her Majesty shows, felt no less strongly on the subject:—

"The Prince had the greatest possible dislike for extravagance in dress, and, above all, for always following in fashion . . . He would not have allowed me or any of our daughters to appear in any dress or coiffure or bonnet not becoming or proper, and he would have made us take it off. I never bought a dress or bonnet without consulting him, and his taste was always good. I remember so well when my French coiffeur came from Paris every year, and brought over things which were tried on, the Prince has come in and said, 'Das tragst Du nicht!' (That you shall not wear).

"The Queen and Princesses, the Prince said, 'ought never to follow foolish and ugly fashions only because they were new. This was entirely out of place.'"

Her Majesty took a great interest in the preparation of the "Life of the Prince Consort." Every chapter was submitted to and most carefully read and noted by her. Sir Theodore quotes an incident which serves to show how anxious the Queen was that the biographer's entire independence should be maintained:—

"When I came in 1876 (he says) to write the story of the Crimean War I felt myself in a difficulty. The second son of Her Majesty had married the daughter of the reigning Czar in 1874. It was impossible to say what I had to say of Russia without giving expression to views that could not be otherwise than unacceptable at the Russian Court. How was I to act, as my work of necessity must have the sanction of the Queen? I therefore sought an interivew with Her Majesty and explained my difficulty. What was her instant answer? 'Do not let the fact of my son's marriage into the Russian family weigh with you for a moment! Whatever conclusions you come to upon the facts and documents before you, express them as if no such marriage existed!'"

Here, as always, truth, Sir Theodore Martin adds, was the paramount consideration with the Queen.

There is much more that might have been quoted, but the extracts given will show the singular interest of this tribute to the late Queen from Sir Theodore Martin's pen. His narrative may not throw any really new light upon the character of Her Majesty, but it will confirm all that is already known of the kindly and noble woman who more tha nany other in a similar position won the affection of her people and the admiration of the world.

In its foreign commerce the port of Philadelphia stands fifth on the list, its total of $187,000,000 in 1907 having been exceeded not only by New York, but by Boston, New Orleans and Galveston