

THE ROYAL MEMOIR.\*

Since our last issue the literary and gossiping public has enjoyed a marked sensation. It was produced by the perusal of "The Early Years of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort," which, on this side of the water, was neatly issued by Messrs. Harper & Brothers, with the sign manual "VICTORIA R." on one side of the cover, and the Royal Arms on the back of the book, the sight of which, by our American cousins, is enough "to make their teeth water." What would they not give for the right to use these time-honored heraldic devices and the inevitable *Honi soit qui mal y pense*? The Memoir, itself, has, we dare say, been read with as much zest in the United States as in the British Isles, the New Dominion, and the rest of the world. When it is necessary to interest the ordinary mass of humanity in a tale it is safe to begin with such words as "There was once a lovely Princess," while Royal readers may be treated to tales of peasant boys and girls, even though it be true that "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin." To be particularly informed as to the manner in which princes and princesses enter this world, how they cry and laugh, eat and drink, and sleep and play, whether or not they are, at times, naughty like ordinary plebeian children—how their loves and courtships are carried on, etc., etc.,—such information as this ought to invest any book with interest; most of all ought it to invest with interest the book before us, of which the Hon. C. Grey is the compiler, "Albert the Good" the subject, and our most gracious QUEEN the editor, if not rather the author. And such, in point of fact, all readers who take up this volume will admit to be the case. Though it is understood that every mother believes, in regard to her first-born, at least, "that there never was such a child," and though some fond mothers and fathers, too, may be ready to affirm that if the biographical memoirs of their offspring were carried as far back as those of Prince Albert, to the cradle and beyond it, they could produce a record that would compare favorably with the Royal Memoir, yet no person who reads this volume can deny that Prince Albert, in the cradle, in school, and at college, was a very remarkable child, boy and youth, and that if he only occasionally got flogged, it was because he very seldom required to be treated to that *posteriori* mode of "teaching the young idea how to shoot," but was, altogether, such a model and exemplar that when we read his story and recall our own boyish days, we find that the sad

contrast has the effect of suffusing our cheeks with spontaneous blushes.

After a letter of the compiler to the Queen, and some introductory remarks, the book commences with a short account of the Saxe-Coburg family, and of the Prince's immediate relatives at the time of his birth, in 1819. The family was greatly distinguished in the great Reformation struggles, on behalf of which one branch of it suffered much. The most interesting of the family notices, however, refers to Prince Albert's mother, the Duchess (Princess Louise) daughter of Augustus, last reigning Duke but one of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg.

A memorandum, written by the Queen in 1864, gives an account of their mother and of her melancholy fate. She is described as "very handsome, although very small, fair, and with blue eyes; and Prince Albert is said to have been extremely like her." She was, moreover, full of cleverness and talent. But the marriage was not a happy one. The Duke and Duchess were separated in 1824, and divorced in 1826, and the Duchess died in 1831, in her 32nd year. She is always spoken of with affection and respect, and we are told that "the Prince never forgot her, and spoke with much tenderness and sorrow of his poor mother, and was deeply affected in reading, after his marriage, the accounts of her sad and painful illness." After her death in 1831, Duke Ernest soon married again; but, of course, under these circumstances, neither the mother nor the step-mother of the two young Princes had much control over their education. They experienced, however, no lack of motherly care; for two grandmothers watched over them from their earliest years, with the most constant anxiety. Their grandmother on the father's side, the Dowager Duchess of Coburg-Saalfeld, lived at only a quarter of a mile's distance on one side of Coburg, at a villa called Ketschendorff, while Rosenau, the summer residence of the Duke, was but four miles on the other side. On the birth of Prince Albert she was summoned at once to the bed side of her daughter-in-law, and we find her from there writing to announce the happy event to her own daughter, the Duchess of Kent, in England.

Why the marriage was unhappy, or why the separation took place, in consequence of which the mother never saw her children afterwards, we are not told. Indeed, the name of the unhappy lady is seldom mentioned afterwards, though, as above stated, always with respect and affection. It is mentioned that one of the

\* The early years of His Royal Highness the PRINCE CONSORT, compiled under the direction of Her Majesty THE QUEEN, by Lieut.-General the HON. C. GREY. Harper & Bros., New York.