

down some documents of great importance for her inspection, but as they would require to be examined in detail, he would not encroach on Her Majesty's time that night, but would request her attention the next morning.

"To-morrow is Sunday, my lord," said the Queen. "True, your Majesty, but business of the State will not admit of delay." The Queen then consented to look at the papers after church the next morning. The nobleman was somewhat surprised that the subject of the sermon next day turned out to be the duties and obligation of the Christian Sabbath. "How did your lordship like the sermon?" asked the Queen, on their return from church. "Very much indeed, your Majesty," was the reply. "Well, then," said the Queen, "I will not conceal from you that last night I sent the clergyman the text from which he preached; I hope we shall all be improved by the sermon." Sunday passed over without another word being said about the State papers, until at night, when the party was breaking up, the Queen said to the nobleman, "To-morrow morning, my lord, at any hour you please as early as seven, my lord, if you like, we will look into the papers." But the urgency of the matter had strangely abated, and his lordship said he would not think of intruding upon Her Majesty as early as that, and thought nine o'clock would be quite early enough. "No, no, my lord," said the Queen, "as the papers are of importance I should like them to be attended to very early; however, if you wish it to be nine, be it so." Accordingly at nine o'clock next morning the Queen was in readiness to confer with the nobleman about his papers.

PRIVY LIFE.

One of the earliest to congratulate Her Majesty on her accession was the young Prince Albert. While she was still a Princess he had been brought by his father, the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, to pay a visit to his aunt, the Duchess of Kent, and the two cousins, who met for the first time, evinced great friendship for each other, a friendship which grew into love at a second visit of the Prince some years later.

The Royal Wedding took place on the 10th of February, 1840.

Many years have rolled by since the troth of these Royal lovers was plighted, and the boys who followed the bridal pair to the Castle gates are boys no longer. They are old men now, or else are in their graves. But the central object of that day's rejoicings is still with us. The gentle Lady who wielded the sceptre of Britain then still wields it: nor is she less beloved by her people than in the day of her espousals.

Is it not a strange thing that a sovereign so much beloved should have been in danger of the assassin on six occasions during her reign? Yet these attempts on her life were not from hatred, but frequently the acts of madmen, with a morbid desire for notoriety.

Now that she had a husband by her side, the Queen found herself shielded from many worries and vexations which had hitherto tried her. Quiet happiness and contentment marked the even flow of Queen Victoria's married life. The good and wise husband made it his aim in life to be of the greatest possible use to his wife, and lightened all the cares of State by his helpful companionship. The Royal pair were happy in their mutual love, and were gifted with many grand accomplishments. They sang and played together, drew and painted together; and when the duties of State demanded the Queen's time and attention, there by her side was her faithful helper. If ever there was perfect happiness on earth, it was to be found in this Royal home at Windsor.

In March, 1844, the Queen and Prince Albert had their first separation from one another. The old Duke of Coburg had died, and it was necessary for the Prince to go to his Fatherland. We learn how much his helpful presence was missed, and that the Queen acted "as a pattern wife" during his enforced absence. It was about this time that Her Majesty purchased Osborne House, in the Isle of Wight, which became a haven of rest from the oppressive splendor of the Court.

We will briefly span the years which followed.

The year 1851 was rendered notable as the year of the Great Exhibition—that colossal structure erected in

Hyde Park, London, by Sir Joseph Paxton. The exhibition was the idea of Prince Albert, who had fought through bigotry and opposition to attain his end. The Queen naturally took great interest in the enterprise, and was gratified that it was such a triumphant success. She says, speaking of the scene of the opening day:—"It was one that can never be effaced from my memory, and never will be from that of any one who witnessed it."

Two years later the clouds of war were hanging heavily over England. Russia had proved obdurate and obstinate, and defied the Allied Powers, so a long and terrible war ensued.

LIFE AT HOME.

In addition to Osborne House the Queen had another private mansion—Balmoral Castle, situated on a commanding site by the River Dee, in the Highlands. It was purchased by the Prince Consort for £32,000. The old castle is said to have been built by a Highland chief, and at the time of the purchase it was barely more than a hunting-station in the wilds. The Prince razed the old castle to the ground, and had the present building erected. Here at intervals the Queen and her family dwelt year after year, enjoying drives and excursions, and occasionally taking *incognito* journeys of exploration for a considerable distance around. At her Highland home, as elsewhere, the Queen lost no opportunities of making herself acquainted with the people on and around her estate. She delighted to visit the sick poor, carrying with her necessities and little dainties from the Royal kitchen to strengthen them. On occasions like these she put aside her great and high degree, and became the kindly and sympathetic woman, freely talking to them and inviting their confidence.

SHADOW AND SUNSHINE.

The year 1861 was a most unfortunate one for our good Queen: the death of the Duchess of Kent, her devoted mother, in the spring of the year, and of the Prince Consort at the close, mark it as a memorable one with painful distinctness to Her Majesty.

Towards the close of the year the Queen and Prince Albert exerted their pacific influence in the settlement of the "Trent affair"—a difficulty with the United States which, through the policy of Lord Palmerston, would probably have otherwise developed into a war between the two nations. This was the last public service of the good Prince.

The days remaining to complete the year 1861 were indeed sad ones to the Queen, and it seemed for a time as if she were inconsolable. The Christmas came and passed; the spring, too, was over, when the Royal widow revisited her Highland home, for the first time since the death of her beloved husband.

In March, 1863, the fair Alexandra of Denmark came to be the bride of the Queen's eldest son, the Prince of Wales. The Queen warmly welcomed to her heart the fair Danish Princess, who at once became a favorite alike of the Royal Family and the nation. At the wedding the widowed Queen took no part in the proceedings, but sat alone in the Royal pew, looking down upon the ceremony.

Towards the close of 1871 the Queen and her people were closely united in a common anxiety on account of the alarming illness of the Prince of Wales. For many days the Prince was hovering between life and death, devotedly nursed by his wife the Princess of Wales, Princess Alice, and the Duke of Edinburgh. The feeling of the nation was acute as the daily bulletins were issued. Prayers were everywhere offered in churches and chapels on behalf of the illustrious patient and his distressed wife and mother. At length, on the 14th of December—a date which some dreaded as the anniversary of Prince Albert's death—the longed-for improvement began.

Much to the Queen's gratification that magnificent testimony of a nation's gratitude and a Sovereign's love, the Albert Memorial, was erected in Hyde Park, and unveiled by her Majesty in 1876; and the year following, amid much pomp and ceremony, she was proclaimed Empress of India.

In December, 1878, the Queen received a heavy blow in the death of her dear daughter, the Princess