Last Years of the Prince Consort.

SIR THEODORE MARTIN has accomplished a difficult task[1] with remarkable success. Everyone knew before that he was an accomplished literary artist; but important as literary skill is, especially in biography, there were many higher qualities required to do well such a task as he undertook. He has shown himself possessed in an eminent degree of such qualities—political penetration, moral enthusiasm, and above all, delicacy of intellectual tact and good sense. This is all the more to be noted because it is not the fashion in our modern literary world to appraise highly some of these qualities, and their very presence has been made the ground or occasion of unfavourable criticism, from certain quarters, of the 'Life of the Prince Consort.' Whatever may be the merits of our highly-charged intellectual era, moderation of judgment and mental sanity cannot be held among its characteristic virtues. There is a prevailing love of exaggeration in almost all departments of thought—political, religious, and artistic—which more than anything gives the note of success. And the balance of judgment—the fairness and yet the sympathy—with which our author has endeavoured to set forth certain personal and political topics; his evident wish to do justice to the great ideas which never failed to animate the Prince—whether in all respects these may be called characteristically 'English' ideas or not—has exposed him, as any biographer of Prince Albert was sure to be exposed, to the charge of what is called 'courtliness.' Critics who know very little indeed of what they write, have over and again supposed that they summed up the demerits of his successive volumes in this phrase. Now 'courtliness' may mean either of two quite different things. It may mean mere subserviency to the personal or royal interests which are necessarily the main theme of the book. Of this we trace nothing from beginning to end. Or it may mean sympathy with the atmosphere in which a royal person like Prince Albert, of course, grew up, and in which he lived, and the earnest attempt springing out of this sympathy to depict with full appreciation the influences which were constantly bearing upon his mind and character. Without some measure of this courtliness it would have been wholly impossible to do justice to the life of the Prince, or the ideas and events which were the subject of narration. If there had been nothing of this the book would have been an unintelligible misrepresentation. A certain measure of sympathy relative to the subject is just as necessary in depicting the life of a prince as of a peasant.

It is possible, however, that such critics mean something different

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. v. London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1880.

from either of these things. The surroundings of a life like Prince Albert's were, to a large extent, conventional. Even a mind so powerful and fresh and penetrating as his was, could not break through the superficial decorums, the well-drilled proprieties of mode, that bound all the expression of his inner as of his outer life; and so there comes to any such life a certain monotony. It stands before us, truly vital as it was, in something of full dress. The veil of dignity seldom drops from it; and we long in vain to get thoroughly behind the scenes, and see uncovered all the workings of the drama. It is needless to say that, whether this detract from the interest and freshness of the story or not, it is an element from which no biography of a royal personage can be free. Nay, all biography, even of the most unconventional type, is necessarily more or less veiled. It is not good for man, or woman, to wear their life uncovered before the world. Yet it may be said that there have been few lives—either high or low—which, in some respects, have been more bared to public view than that of Prince Albert; as there have been few, if any, which have ever stood its near searching with a happier result. If an element of monotony clings to the picture, and the breathing presence of nature is not always there, giving variety and movement and unexpected development to it, this is partly owing to the subject, and partly an inevitable accompaniment of all biographies of the kind.

If the 'Life of the Prince Consort' has any special fault, we are inclined to look for it not in any degree in the spirit and manner in which the work is executed. These appear to us throughout admirable, and to show, as we have said, in Sir Theodore Martin, the possession of qualities of a high order far beyond any mere skill of the *littérateur*. But in the 'Life of the Prince Consort,' as in all modern biography with hardly any exception, there is a tendency to enlarge the picture unnecessarily, and so to extend the background that in the width and confusion of surface the central figure, which is after all the real interest, is sometimes dwarfed, if not hidden from the view. We know how hard, if not impossible, it must have been to avoid this in such a biography as the present, where the figure is one of the most prominent in Europe, and the centre of endless human, particularly endless political, interests. The life became merged in these interests; they everywhere start to the front with the personality moving within them. Still we think they receive undue prominence when, as in the present and concluding volume of the 'Life,' the political affairs of two years of which Prince Albert was after all only one factor, almost entirely fill up the volume—the more personal aspects of the subject hardly filling up a hundred pages out of the four hundred and fifty. The author is well aware in the last three volumes that his canvas had a tendency to expand itself, and that his function of biographer ran the risk of being turned into that of historian of Her Majesty's reign. He has pleaded in excuse the ample materials placed at his command, and the value of the Prince's opinions and political labours in the great Eastern

Question from 1853 to 1857. We do not deny the necessity of the plea, and it is impossible for anyone who fairly appreciates the character either of the Prince or of his biographer to suppose that there was any other motive in the extended treatment of this question than to exhibit truly opinions which had at least the merit of being faithfully excogitated and deeply weighed, apart from partisanship. Nothing but the blindness of political zeal could have ever conjectured or hinted at anything else. But admitting all this, character rather than controversy, personality more than politics, even of the most exciting and important kind, is the true *motif* of biography, and we cannot help thinking that during the last ten years of the Prince's career public events are treated at too great a length, with the result, not indeed of obscuring his life—rather perhaps of making it more fully intelligible to any attentive reader—but of making it by itself less vivid and distinct. The figure is there, and all the accessories contribute to illustrate it, but nevertheless they often fill the eye of the reader till the central figure itself grows comparatively dim and unillumined.

In the following brief notice we shall endeavour to keep before us the figure of the Prince himself in his last years, and the most characteristic traits of a career 'so brilliant' and 'animated with noble energy' as his truly was.

The main political interest of Sir Theodore's concluding volume is the gradual alienation of the English and French courts, the ties between which had become peculiarly intimate during the preceding years, and the great events in Italy, which were at once the glory and the snare of the French Emperor. The Italian question, after many years of slumbering disquiet, had come to the front as the great European question whose settlement could no longer be delayed. Two years before, in July, 1858, an interview had taken place at Plombières between the French Emperor and Count Cavour, then at the head of the Sardinian Government, at which a secret understanding had been arrived at as to the liberation of Northern Italy from the domination of Austria, and the cession of Savoy and Nice had been virtually made by the Italian statesman as the price of Napoleon's assistance. This compact remained unknown even to the diplomatic world; but it became henceforth the key to all the Imperial policy in France. There were many reasons for the restlessness of the French Emperor, and the new turn which his ambition took from this date, till it led him onwards from stage to stage, and finally plunged him into the madness of war with Germany, in which his dynasty perished.[2] So far he was animated by the truly noble

[2] It is a remarkable instance of the Queen's political foresight that she distinctly recognised the connection between the Emperor's Italian projects and his further projects in the Rhenish provinces, which ten years later precipitated his downfall. Writing to King Leopold in Feb. 1859, she says that if Austria and Germany do their duty, 'France will not be so eager to attempt what I fully believe would end in the Emperor's downfall.'

desire to set Italy free from the foreign thraldom which had so long debased it. He had been closely connected with the Italian revolutionists before he ascended the throne, and shared in their enthusiasm. They were determined not to allow him to forget his old connections; and when they found that he took no steps to help them, they conspired to take vengeance on him, and the Orsini conspiracy to destroy him and the Empress on their way to the Opera House startled the world on January 25, 1858. The effect of this 'attempt' was powerful. It kindled the imagination of the Emperor once more with dreams of Italian liberation in which he was destined to play a part. It became known that other Italian revolutionists had banded themselves together, to succeed where Orsini had failed, unless he took some steps in the direction of their hopes. This was a goad applied to the fear no less than to the pride of the Emperor. Then 'Orsini's' plans had been concocted in London; and although the Emperor himself knew the English people too well to attach any blame to them on that account, the strong feeling excited in France on the subject, and the tall talk of his own 'colonels' tended to strain, if not break, the *entente cordiale* which had prevailed with England, both court and people, for some time. How far this alienation extended, soon became manifest in the vote by which Lord Palmerston's Conspiracy Bill was rejected on February 19.

These various influences combined to start the Emperor on his new career, without any of the moderating influence which would have come from a continuance of his frank intercourse with the English Court. The change in his manner was not at first apparent; and the friendly personal relations between him and the Prince remained unbroken for some time. But already in the beginning of 1859, from the famous New Year's speech to M. Hübner, the Austrian Ambassador, grave suspicions had been created in the mind of Prince Albert. He felt no longer sure of the Emperor's sincerity, and wrote to King Leopold that 'it is not well to correspond with him.' These suspicions were not allayed by an elaborate letter to the Queen from the 'Palace of the Tuileries' on the 14th of the ensuing February, in which the Emperor endeavoured to justify his warlike attitude, while still making professions of peace. By this time the Prince 'knew too much of the arrangements secretly concluded with Sardinia, as well as of what was being done in France to prepare for war, to accept without reservation the colouring given to both in the letter. He had, moreover, read the Emperor's character too thoroughly in the unreserved discussions which passed between, not to see that he was entirely dominated by his dream of a readjustment of the distribution of the European States, and that he was concealing his plans from one by whom, he knew, they were regarded as no less dangerous to himself and his dynasty than to the peace of Europe.'

Events moved rapidly forward. War was proclaimed in May between Austria, and France and Italy combined. The bloody

engagements at Magenta and Solferino had prostrated the Austrian power in Lombardy, but also greatly weakened and alarmed France. The untoward Peace of Villafranca had been patched up between the French and Austrian Emperors without the consent of Sardinia; and the Continental prospect remained nearly as unsettled as ever. England remained firm in the attitude of neutrality, notwithstanding the difficulties arising both from political sympathy with Italian aspirations and the incessant ingenuity of French diplomacy. At length, in the process of consolidating the Italian kingdom, the secret compact as to the cession of Nice and Savoy became a secret no longer, and the tide of popular feeling in England, which had previously run strongly in favour of the French Emperor and his Italian projects, took a decided turn. Indignation was general at what appeared the grasping selfishness of France,[3] 'in the face of her grandiloquent asseveration that she had made war "for an idea," and with no selfish object in view.' So stormy was this indignation that it retarded, and even endangered for a time, the completion of Mr. Cobden's famous Commercial Treaty, negotiated in the beginning of the year, and certainly served to colour the Prince's views as to the advantages of such a treaty. It prevented him from seeing in it all the good which it really possessed for binding the two countries together in interest as well as amity. It will be carried, he writes (March 15, 1860), but 'not without a good deal of grumbling on the part of the public. . . . Parliament has accepted it, but, while doing so, has rated the Emperor soundly, who is very indignant.'

This was the second year of the powerful ministry formed by Lord Palmerston on the retirement of the second Derby ministry, and the failure of the Reform Bill. A new Reform Bill was dragging its tedious length in the House of Commons, without exciting—the Prince writes on March 17—'as much excitement as a Turnpike Trust Bill.' Its fate is matter of history. The Prince evidently looked upon the Reform projects of both the Conservative and Liberal Governments with no special favour, but mainly because he saw in them the play of political ambition between the two parties in the State, rather than any grave and intelligent political purpose. 'It is generally to be desired,' he says, 'that this ministry may carry through a Reform Bill, and what its tenor may be makes little difference, especially as the Conservative Bill of last year was as democratic as any Bill could well be.' In the same letter he says, with reference to Mr. Gladstone's famous Budget of that year, and the great speech by which he introduced it, 'Gladstone is now the real leader of the House of Commons, and works with an energy and vigour altogether incredible.'

It has been said that the present volume of the Prince Consort's Life tends to bring into relief the occasionally embarrassing relations between Mr. Gladstone and the Prince and the Court. But it is

[3] Letter of the Prince, March 15, 1860, vol. v. p. 48.

difficult to see how these relations could have been stated at all without presenting them in their true character, and with the same degree of frankness as the relations between Earl Russell or Lord Palmerston and the Court are described. There is no evidence of *arrière pensée* in the one case any more than in the other. The Prince had his own opinions, which he held firmly all the more that they were the result of his own deliberate thoughtfulness. He evidently disagreed with Mr. Gladstone strongly as to his attitude on the Fortification Bill, and the general question of what was necessary for the defence of the country. He had not the same faith in the efficacy of the Commercial Treaty for preserving peace as Mr. Gladstone and the Manchester School had. They were right upon the whole; and the Prince's apprehensions were in some degree exaggerated. But Mr. Gladstone's foresight could not have been appreciated without a perception of the difficulties of his policy such as they appeared to other minds, and even to the thoughtful mind of the Prince Consort. The moral earnestness of a man like Mr. Gladstone, no less than his amazing energy, were least of all likely to be underrated by a character like Prince Albert's, combining in itself such high enthusiasm with such serious and self-sacrificing devotion to work and duty. The only thing in the present volume really depreciatory of Mr. Gladstone, and the publication of which might have been spared by the biographer, is a remark not by the Prince, but by Lord Palmerston, the chief of the Cabinet upon which Mr. Gladstone's famous Budget speeches cast so much honour. Lord Palmerston in a letter to the Queen on July 23, 1860, while informing her Majesty as to the objections of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the Fortification Bill, says that he reserved his freedom 'to take such course as he may see fit on that subject next year, to which Viscount Palmerston entirely assented.' 'That course,' he adds, 'will probably be the same which Mr. Gladstone has taken this year, namely, ineffectual opposition and ultimate acquiescence.'

The course of events in Italy, which had been interrupted by the Peace of Villafranca, resumed their march with redoubled vigour under the auspices of Garibaldi in Naples. The truth was that the time was ripe for the consolidation of the Italian peninsula into one kingdom; and as Garibaldi advanced with his conquering volunteers from the south, Cavour was compelled to throw his forces into Umbria and the Marches, in order to prevent anarchy in those states, and to extend the authority of a stable government throughout Italy. It was natural that the Prince should view with some distrust and alarm the arguments by which Cavour defended his ambitious designs for his country and sovereign. His position, as well as his habits of mind, here, as always, compelled him to look with favour at the more cautious and slowly progressive side of public affairs, rather than at the violent daring which knew, as in the case of Cavour, how to seize the fitting opportunity which might never return. This accounts for his lack of enthusiasm in the Italian cause. He felt urgently that no

consideration of expediency should ever override the claims of truth and fair-dealing. Cavour's pliancy in saying one thing and sometimes doing another[4] offended his sense of right. All his higher sympathies, however, were with the cause of Italian unity, and he therefore felt very bitterly the insinuation which appeared in the 'Times' in the spring of 1861, to the effect that the Italian policy of the Government was thwarted by the influence of the Court. Even if the Prince had less fully recognised than he did, the necessity of a United Italy as the only adequate fulfilment of the long-stifled aspirations of a great people, he had too long learned and too long practised his constitutional duties as the adviser of the Queen on foreign policy, to have interposed any obstacles to a policy approved of by the English nation and promoted by the Government. His consciousness of freedom from blame did not prevent him feeling acutely such public accusations. It would have been better for his happiness, and possibly shown more strength of mind, had he not taken so much to heart articles in the 'Times' or anywhere else. But it is the penalty of a nature like his, in its very strife to do what is right[5] amidst the powerful influences of duty affecting it on the one side and the other, to feel bitterly the sting which harsher natures, untroubled by any considerations save those of the moment, may inflict upon a complex and sensitive conscience.

It is evident, moreover, in these last years, that the Prince's health was losing its elasticity and strength long before the end came. Apparently healthy and capable of much fatigue both of body and mind, his brilliant, youthful beauty of face and figure having settled into a dignified and noble manhood, he was never really what physicians call 'strong.' In childhood he was called 'a delicate boy;'[6] and having brought a weak stomach into the world, he was never likely, as he says in one of his letters to his daughter, the Princess Royal, to get the better of this constitutional weakness. It was constantly making itself felt; and especially in the autumn of 1857, the strain of long-continued work seems to have begun to tell upon him, and his sufferings from this unhappy organ come out continually in his confidential communications. After his address to the philosophers of the British Association, at Aberdeen, in that autumn, he had a severe 'gastric attack,' which evidently alarmed those who knew his constitution—none more so than his ever-watchful friend, Stockmar, at a distance, who wrote to him in evident distress, and in a note of warning, which it is now rather pitiful to read, he attributed his illness to 'the worries both of body and mind' to which the Prince was daily exposed, and the difficulties which beset him in taking due care of his health. 'All around you,' he said, ominously, 'there is a

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[4] Vol. v. p. 287.

[5] 'We have gone through much, and *tried hard* after much that is good.' So write both the Queen and Prince Albert to Stockmar in the present volume. We do not know how it affects others; but we have seldom read, in all the circumstances, a more pathetic statement.

[6] Vol. i. p. 6.

want of a thoughtful care for the repose, the tending, and the nursing which are so necessary for the sick and the convalescent.' His old friend was, perhaps, disposed to be slightly querulous, and no doubt the chief reason of the Prince's want of rest was, his own sleepless effort to be always at the post of duty. There is reason to believe that Sir James Clark, who knew his system well and how much it needed periodical rest, had warned him to take a daily siesta. But the Prince was still in the prime of manhood, and many much older than he was shrink from habits that seem to suggest the approach of declining years. So he worked on, notwithstanding successive symptoms of want of sleep, as early as the end of 1859.[7]

In the beginning of the following year, and all throughout the concluding years of his life, chronicled in the volume, there is an evident decay of healthful vitality, and consequently of buoyancy of spirits. 'I am tired to death with work, vexation, and worry,' he says to Stockmar in January, 1860. The winter and spring of this year were cold and wet, and their influence was naturally depressing. With a brief gleam of fine weather in May, the spirits of the Prince rose; but there is a tone of weariness even in expressing his sense of pleasure in the change to his daughter at Berlin. He writes from Osborne on May 23 (1860):—

> Your letter of the 20th has found me in the enjoyment of the most glorious air, the most fragrant odours, the incessant choir of birds, and the most luxuriant verdure; and were there not so many things that reminded me of the so-called world (that is to say—of miserable men) one might abandon oneself wholly to the enjoyment of the real world. There is no such good fortune, however, for poor me; and this being so, one's feelings remain under the treadmill of ever-circling business. The donkey in Carisbrooke, which you will remember, is my true counterpart. He, too, would much rather munch thistles in the castle-moat than turn round in the wheel at the castle well; and small are the thanks he gets for his labour. I am tortured, too, by the prospect of two public dinners at which I am, or rather shall be, in the chair. The one gives me seven, the other ten, toasts and speeches, appropriate to the occasion and distracting to myself.[8]

It may surprise some that the Prince's work should have been so incessant; but one has only to remember the numberless duties, public and private, devolving upon him, and the high ideal which he set before him of shrinking from no burdens either of his own, or by which he could relieve the Queen, to see how inevitable was his round of work day by day. In one year (1848) we are told,[9] no fewer than 28,000 despatches were received and sent out at the Foreign Office, and all these despatches passed through the hands of the Queen no less than of her Ministers. The Prince shared in all the Queen's anxieties and advised with her in all difficulties. It had been his aim from the first 'to make his position entirely a part of hers—to fill up any gap which, as a woman, she would naturally leave in the exercise of her

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[7] Vol. iv. p. 572. [8] Vol. v. pp. 109, 110. [9] Vol. iii. p. 64.

regal function—continually and anxiously to watch every part of the public business in order to be able to advise or assist her at any moment in any of the multifarious and difficult questions brought before her, political, or social, or personal.'[10] If his life had been otherwise free, the tasks thus devolving upon him were enormous; but in addition to all such semi-regal functions, he had the endless details of his own personal and family affairs to manage; and how much it cost him at first to reduce the arrangements of the Royal household to such order and efficiency as he could tolerate, are told at length in the first volume of his Life. He was essentially conscientious and orderly in all things, and he took great pains that nothing should be wrong which he could put right. Sir Theodore Martin has described his 'habits of working' in the present volume. He rose early—as a rule at seven, summer and winter—and had made good progress with his work before other people were stirring. In winter, he worked, of course, with a fire and 'a green German lamp ready lit,' by the light of which he read and answered letters, 'never allowing his vast correspondence to fall into arrear;' and he 'prepared for her Majesty's consideration drafts of answers to her Ministers on any matters of importance.' Each morning he spent in the same way, or 'in the perusal of fresh relays of despatches and official papers which had been previously opened and read by the Queen, and placed by her ready for his perusal beside his table in his sitting-room.' Then the newspapers had to be examined. Sometimes he would read aloud 'good or important articles' to the Queen. 'A good article gave him sincere pleasure.' How much a mischievous one pained him has already been told. His hours of recreation were brief. He would say, 'I don't understand people making a business of shooting, and going out for the whole day. I take it as an amusement for a few hours.'

> The day was too short for the claims upon his attention. In every direction his counsel and his help were sought. In the Royal household, in his family circle, among his numerous kinsfolk at home and abroad, his judgment and guidance were being constantly appealed to. Every enterprise of national importance claimed his attention; and in all things that concerned the welfare of the State at home or abroad his accurate and varied knowledge, and great political sagacity, made him looked to as a leading authority by all our leading statesmen. Let those who worked with and for him do their best—and he could not have been served more ably or more devotedly—they could not prevent a pressure which constantly compelled him to do in one day what would have been more than ample work for two.

It was no wonder that all this fatigue of body and brain made serious inroads on his constitution, and tended to a steady depression of his vital energies. Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that the lack of cheerfulness and sense of weariness that appear not unfre-

[10] Vol. i. p. 74.

quently in his confidential letters during these years, showed itself in his daily manner and conversation. There has been a prevalent idea somehow that he was stiff and pedantic in his ways, taking even his pleasure sadly, after the manner of his adopted countrymen; but in truth he was, both as man and boy, 'full of *espièglerie*, and with a habit of viewing men and things in a droll and humorous way,' a characteristic which he is supposed to have inherited from his mother. Even in these last burdened years, the Queen herself tells us in a memorandum quoted by Sir Theodore in this volume,[11] he would keep the table at breakfast and luncheon 'enlivened by his interesting conversation, by his charming anecdotes and droll stories without end, of his childhood, of people at Coburg, of our people in Scotland, which he would repeat with a wonderful power of mimicry, and at which he would himself laugh most heartily.' In so far as his manner ever gave the expression of stiffness this seems to have proceeded, as it often does, from a sense of shyness, and a lack of those little acts of free and easy courtesy which, as they seem to belong by nature to some, sometimes mean little, and yet wear a charm which higher gifts do not have. Stockmar noticed, while he was yet a boy, the absence in the Prince of the perfection of *les belles manières*, adding what some others would have confirmed of the Prince long afterwards—'On the whole he will always have more success with men than with women, in whose society he shows too little *empressement*, and is too indifferent and retiring.'[12]

The strain upon the Prince's powers never relaxed in these last years, and gradually the effect became unmistakable in a growing depression both of mind and body. The death of the Queen's mother, the Duchess of Kent, in the spring of 1861, increased his cares and added in many ways to his labours. Besides the shock to himself and the necessity of subduing his own feelings for the sake of the Queen, in this the first great sorrow of her life, he was obliged for a time to do even more than usual with the view 'of lightening for her Majesty the daily and hourly duties of communicating with her Ministers.' Then all the painful and harassing labour which devolved on him, as the Duchess's executor, of examining the papers and correspondence accumulated during a long and busy life, and of arranging the claims of kinsfolk, of old retainers, and others, was no slight aggravation of his fatigue. 'He bore them,' Sir Theodore adds, 'without a murmur, and in this time of great family distress gave fresh proofs of the patient, cheerful, considerate spirit—thinking for all and feeling for all—which toil and trial and disappointment seemed only to ripen into fuller beauty.'

The ripening was nearer at hand than any then dreamed. The later spring was spent at Osborne, full of political as well as domestic anxiety. 'In politics the outlook is most melancholy,' he writes to a friend at Berlin on the 9th of May. The miserable 'Macdonald affair,'

[11] P. 276. [12] Vol. i. p. 34.

arising out of an insult offered to an English officer at Bonn, had added bitterness to our unfriendly relations with Germany at this time. A busy season followed with meetings, and prospects for the improvement of military education in connection with Sandhurst College. A significant entry in his diary on the 16th of the month shows how greatly his powers were overtaxed. 'Am ill, feverish, with pains in my limbs, *and feel very miserable.*' In the autumn there was another brief retirement to Osborne after a sad ceremonial visit to the Mausoleum containing the remains of the Duchess of Kent at Frogmore; then a visit to Dublin and Killarney, and finally in the beginning of September to Balmoral. The weather during the stay of the Court at Balmoral 'was all that could be desired,' and did both the Queen and the Prince 'good, as usual.' His letters from Balmoral breathe a more cheerful tone than those of the previous part of the year. But he 'had two foundations to lay' in Edinburgh on his way back on October 25. There was 'a keen autumn wind' blowing during the ceremony of laying these stones, and 'long extempore prayers formed an important part of the ceremony,' during which all stood in the open sunless air with uncovered heads. Many felt then how ill-timed the length of the prayers was, and how far from robust the Prince looked! After the return to Balmoral there was a new sorrow to both the Prince and the Queen in the death of the young King of Portugal, who had greatly interested the Prince. 'He was very fond of him,' says the Queen in her diary, 'loved him like a son; while he had unbounded confidence in Albert.'

The Prince had some anxiety and annoyance of a private nature at the very time the intelligence reached him of the King of Portugal's death. At any other time, or if his health had not been already shaken, he would not have allowed it to weigh unduly upon his spirits. As it was, however, he was unable to shake it off. It haunted him with the persistency with which even trifles haunt the mind when the nervous system is overtaxed. This torturing tyranny of ever-recurring thought is never more relentless than when sleeplessness has set in; and this was the Prince's case; for we learn by an entry in his diary, November 24, that for the last fourteen days his nights had been almost wholly wakeful.

It is sad to think that there was no one with authority to interfere in such a case as this, and to save the Prince, not only from 'unnecessary business,' but from all work of any kind for a time. Nothing but utter cessation from work and change of scene can meet a nervous crisis of this kind, which comes, sooner or later, to all overworked men and women who are not exceptionally gifted with stores of health. The Queen saw that he was 'low and sad,' and called the attention of the Prince's Secretary, Sir Charles Phipps, to the necessity of relieving him from all strain and undue fatigue in going backward and forward to London on public duty; but, as in many such cases, the full danger was not appreciated, even by one who saw so much of him as his secretary. The Prince bore up so

well that a slight return of better looks and better spirits was interpreted as a return to 'better health.'

Sir Theodore Martin tells us in the opening of his final chapter that the Prince contemplated the prospect of death with a singular equanimity for a man of his years. Not long before his fatal illness he said to the Queen, 'I do not cling to life. You do; but I set no store by it. If I knew that those I love were well cared for, I should be quite ready to die to-morrow.' 'I have no tenacity of life,' he added. 'He was ready to live,' the Queen says, in a memorandum of 1862, 'ready to die;' 'not because I wish to be happier,' as he often remarked, 'but because he was quite ready to go.' 'Death in his view was but the portal to a further life, in which he might hope for a continuance, under happier conditions, of all that was best in himself, and in those he loved, unclogged by the weaknesses, and unsaddened by the failures, the misunderstandings, the sinfulness and the sorrows of earthly existence.' The end drew rapidly on. His sleeplessness, which had begun on November 10, continued. Still he laboured at his post, driving over to Sandhurst on the 27th, during a 'terrific rain,' to inspect the progress of the works there. Two days afterwards he records in his diary, 'Am full of rheumatic pains, and feel thoroughly unwell. Have scarcely closed my eyes at night for the last fortnight.' Again, after travelling on the following day to Cambridge, on a visit to the Prince of Wales, he notes, 'Bin recht elend' ('Am very wretched').

It was in the midst of such suffering he performed his last public duty, and no nobler duty could close a public life. It was a fitting close to his great career. The well-known affair of the *Trent* had endangered the relations of this country and America, and might possibly have led to unhappy consequences in the excited state of popular feeling, both in this country and America. The Cabinet had drafted a despatch to be sent to Lord Lyons on the subject. On being submitted to the Queen, it was judged 'somewhat meagre,' and the Prince sketched, on December 1, certain suggestions calculated to remove from the despatch 'anything which could irritate a proud and sensitive nation,' and at the same time offer to them 'an opportunity of receding honourably from the position in which they had been placed by the indiscreet act of a too zealous navy captain.' Lord Palmerston thought the suggestions 'excellent,' and the despatch was recast in conformity with them. And this last act of the Prince's, there can be no doubt, was one of the chief means of averting a quarrel with the American Government at a critical moment. This is confessed by Lord Palmerston in a communication made to the Queen in the following January.

This, his last act of public duty, was speedily followed by increased suffering. Sir James Clark and Dr. Jenner both saw him the same day, and were 'much disappointed' with his condition. He came to dinner, 'but could eat nothing; yet he was able to talk and even tell stories.' Next day, after another sleepless night, 'symptoms of what

might prove to be low fever were beginning to be more marked.' Still he was able, if not to do business, to see Lord Methuen and Colonel Francis Seymour, who had returned from Portugal, where they had been sent by the Queen on a mission of condolence. 'He asked for all the details of the King of Portugal's death, and made the remark 'that it was well his own illness was not fever, as that, he felt sure, would be fatal to him.' Lord Palmerston seems to have realised his alarming condition more than his own physicians, who still 'saw no cause for alarm.' It was their hope even on December 4 that 'there would be no fever.' But the Prince's sufferings continued unabated. The same morning the Queen found him 'looking very wretched and woebegone.' 'I was dreadfully overcome and alarmed,' she adds; 'Alice was reading to him,' and 'while Alice was reading he seemed in a very uncomfortable panting state.' The same night Dr. Jenner sat up with him, and at eight next morning the Queen found him sitting on the sofa in his sitting-room. 'He did not smile or take much notice of me, but complained of his wretched condition. . . . His manner all along was so unlike himself, and he had sometimes such a strange, wild look.' Yet after he had slept for some time the Queen found him 'resting on the sofa, talking and seeming decidedly better.' In the evening he was pronounced still 'decidedly better.' The Queen writes, 'I found my Albert most dear and affectionate, and quite himself, when I went in with little Beatrice, whom he kissed. He quite laughed at some of her new French verses which I made her repeat, then he held her little hand in his for some time, and she stood looking at him.' On December 6 he was again up by eight, but 'looking weak and exhausted and not better.' In reference to his overwork he said 'It is too much, you must speak to the ministers.' Then he said that when he lay awake 'he heard the little birds, and thought of those he had heard at the Rosenau in his childhood. I felt quite upset,' the Queen adds. 'When the doctors came in I saw that they thought him less well and more feverish, and I went to my room and felt as if my heart would break.'

His illness had declared itself to be 'gastric or low fever,' and from day to day it clasped him more steadily in its fatal grip. It had caught him really from the day of his unfortunate drive to Sandhurst, on November 22, if not earlier; and there was nothing now but to wait its course. There were alternations of hope, as on the 11th, when the Queen records 'another good night, for which I thank and bless God.' On the 14th there was even ground for hope that 'the crisis was over.' The same morning, as the sun was shining brightly the Queen went in to see him; 'and never can I forget,' she records in broken accents, 'how beautiful my darling looked, lying there with his face lit up by the rising sun—his eyes unusually bright, gazing, as it were, on unseen objects, and not taking notice of me.' 'So things went on, not really worse, but not better.' The shadows gradually closed around him, and on the night of the 14th

his spirit went forth to God, whom he loved and had served with a true heart all his life.

We cannot better close this paper than in the closing words of as pathetic a narrative as we ever read:—

> In the solemn hearts of that mournful chamber there was such grief as has rarely hallowed any deathbed. A great light which had blessed the world, and which the mourners had but yesterday hoped might long bless it, was waning fast away. A husband, a father, a friend, a master, endeared by every quality by which man in such relations can win the love of his fellow-man, was passing into the Silent Land, and his loving glance, his wise counsels, his firm manly thought, should be known among them no more. The Castle clock chimed the third quarter after ten. Calm and peaceful grew the beloved form; the features settled into the beauty of a perfectly serene repose; two or three long but gentle breaths were drawn, and that great soul had fled to seek a nobler scope for its aspirations in the world within the veil, for which it had often yearned, where there is rest for the weary, and where 'the spirits of the just are made perfect.'

Larger, because more powerful and spontaneous, natures have mingled in public affairs and left their impress upon human history. But no nature more pure than that of Prince Albert, more endowed at once with spiritual insight and clear practical purpose, has moved in our modern political life. We may disallow his judgments, or even distrust his tendencies on some points; but he lived steadfastly, with an ideal always before him. He was animated by a passion of duty, for which he counted not his life dear. It is impossible to read Sir Theodore Martin's volumes without being elevated by the contemplation of his example, as it is impossible to close them without being touched to the heart by the evidence of a self-sacrifice almost painful in its exaltation.

J. T.