hearts of Charlotte of Wales and her morganatic successor, Karoline Bauer (not to speak of Louise d'Orleans, who subsequently shared with him the throne of Belgium), in one of the psychological problems with which every student of human nature is continually faced. Christian, Baron Stockmar, too, who effaced himself utterly in all dealings with his royal patrons, and of whom Lord Palmerston declared that he was the only "altogether disinterested" politician whom he had ever met, seems to have honestly loved him, or he would not have sacrificed his brilliant niece to the *blase* phlegmatic Prince, in exchange for a morganatic alliance as brief as it was miserable. It is true that Napoleon I. considered Leopold of Coburg to be the handsomest man in Paris in 1806, and probably the "large dark melancholy eyes" and calm self-possessed manner of the Prince had all the charm of contrast for the vivacious women; while his almost childlike dependence upon, and confidence in, Stockmar, would inevitably endear him to the man.

"Drizzling" *(parfilage)* seems to have been the only pastime in which His Highness took any keen interest, and it is not wonderful that the sprightly court actress soon tired of a man whose devotion to the gold-thread-picking fashion—imported into England by French refugees in 1792 — was as extraordinary as it was monotonous.

We read that during the ill-starred year, 1829-30, which Karoline, Countess of Montgomery *(nee* Bauer), spent in England, her husband, Prince Leopold, earned, by drizzling, enough money to purchase a handsome silver soup-tureen, which he solemnly presented to his niece, Victoria of Kent, on her eleventh birthday.

Nothing did the child princess know, and little could the woman queen guess, of the hours of torture which that gift had cost to the impulsive favourite of the Berlin Theatres, who had left the love of a populace for the short-lived, whimsical tenderness of Prince Leopold of Coburg.

For twenty-two years the life of the Stricklands was one of uneventful happiness. The quiet cathedral town of Norwich afforded much opportunity for culture and quiet pleasure, while at Reydon all the available excitements of the country lay within their grasp. But by the sudden death of the beloved husband and father in 1818 the family were plunged into "genteel" poverty,— possibly one of the most trying types which that relatively elastic incubus can assume. To be at the bottom of the ladder is hard enough, but surely it is harder still to begin to take a lower place— even though it be unnecessary to do so "with shame"— after having known the joys of social life, and the easy hospitalities of giving and taking which that life affords.

This was now, for a time, to be the added trial of the bereaved family. Rigid economy had to be practised, for the younger children had still to be educated, and all seemed to need and to miss the guiding hand of him who was gone.

Fortunately for all, Agnes had not only the capability but the perseverance necessary for achieving success in the literary world. If genius be "the gift of taking infinite pains," she possessed it pre-eminently, and at once began her career as a prose-writer, in conjunction with her sister Elizabeth, by writing a juvenile book called 'The Rival Crusoes,' which was followed shortly by 'Tales of Royal British Children' and 'Historical Tales,' all of which were very popular among the young readers of that day.

Elizabeth at this time was editing the 'Court Journal,' and having written for that paper some short biographies of female sovereigns which were much appreciated, Agnes suggested that a book devoted entirely to the lives of the English Queens would be a novel and welcome addition to the national history. This seemingly modest suggestion led to the production of that series of volumes which we know under the title of 'Lives of the Queens of England from the Norman Conquest,' and which, in its vast collection of data on the subject, is still matchlessly comprehensive.

An innate delicacy determined the sisters to con-

clude the memoirs with that of Queen Anne; and much as we may regret their decision, we cannot but realise that it would have been impossible to enter upon a detailed history of the House of Brunswick, without trespassing upon their devout loyalty to our late revered Queen. Her gracious acceptance of the dedication, and of the volumes as they appeared, rendered anything like a dissertation upon her family history impossible, and they continued immovable on the subject, though their publisher, Mr Colburn, did his utmost to persuade them to the task. An ordinary biographer might have hesitated to refuse a request which meant money and increased notoriety, but to derive pecuniary advantage from such an unchivalrous proceeding was out of the question with women who could proudly trace their ancestry to the ancient Norman family of Sir Adam de Strykelonde, who came over from France with William the Conqueror.

Elizabeth's aversion to publicity was on one occasion a most fortunate factor in the fortunes of both sisters. After the publication of the first two volumes, which were brought out by Mr Colburn on an agreement with Agnes of "a share account"— *i.e.*, the author risking nothing and dividing the profits of the sales with him— she fell dangerously ill, as the result of intense labour and disappointment at the paltry sum which he handed over to her after a long delayed settlement. The rapid sales of the most

popular work that he had ever published rendered Mr Colburn's conduct absolutely indefensible, and as fame was a secondary consideration to profit, we cannot wonder at the mental and physical prostration caused by receipts so different from those which the sisters had every right to expect.

Elizabeth's keenly perceptive mind saw a way out of the difficulty. When he insisted upon the continuation of the volumes, which in the case of Agnes was then absolutely impossible owing to the state of her health, Elizabeth, promptly realising that he had no legal claim whatever upon her own services, as her name had never been mentioned in the matter, first of all consulted an eminent barrister —Mr Archibald Stephens— and then, forewarned and forearmed, interviewed the importunate publisher. After stating her sister's precarious condition and the joint authorship of the work, she quietly informed him, "I shall do nothing for you having signed no document to that effect."

The puzzled publisher, thus baldly confronted with irrefragable facts, was much exasperated, but, knowing the value of the projected memoirs, he made her an offer of £150 per volume, receiving as his reply, "If my sister upon her recovery is willing to accept your offer, I shall not refuse my assistance, but I will not allow my name to appear on the title-page."

Finally Mr Stephens drew up a formal agreement

to that effect, and under the new deed no corrections or alterations were to be made by any one but the authors themselves, nor could the copyright be sold without their permission. When the enormous sums now given to writers of fiction is taken into account, we cannot but marvel at the modest remuneration of £1800 which the sisters received for their "monumental work." In this connection it may be mentioned that Rudyard Kipling is reported to have received two shillings a word for a story of 10,000 words; while 'Sappho,' which it would have been better for the world had it never been written, brought to Alphonse Daudet the gigantic sum of £40,000.

The labour and expense involved in the production of 'The Queens' was enormous, while the industrious and painstaking research necessary was doubly arduous in the early days of the nineteenth century. No pains were spared by the sisters to make the memoirs as faithful and as full as possible— there is no scamping work; and as we read the entrancing volume, we are filled with admiration alike at the pathos and the power of the writing and at the carefully marshalled array of interesting facts, culled from sources that varied from rare State papers to the private archives of old English families.

The influence of Mr Howard of Corby Castle and Sir George Strickland prevailed upon Lord Normanby to grant admission to the State Paper Office,

which had previously been denied to them by Lord John Russell; and in this historical treasury they spent many toilful hours, with results which have enriched their pages and made clear many events which were previously veiled in obscurity.

Agnes Strickland's account of the coronation of our late beloved Queen is full of interest, and to the enthusiastic historians it must have been a time of vivid impressions, recalling many a bygone pageant, and fanning the flame of loyalty to our reigning house, which even their staunch Jacobite predilections had never been able to quench. Her description of the scene is doubly interesting now, and affords a specimen of the writer's easy and flowing style:—

"Her fair hair, in plaits, was simply folded and arranged at the back of her head in a Grecian knot. She wore the picturesque garland-shaped diadem of the Plantagenet sovereigns, only in a lighter form, composed of very fine brilliants set transparently, which, from their absence of colour and pellucid brightness, resembled a wreath of hawthorn blossoms covered with tremulous dew-drops. Surely never did any British sovereign receive inauguration under circumstances so auspicious and imposing. Yet she appeared serene and self-possessed when she arose from her private devotions and seated herself calmly in her recognition chair, round which her lovely train-bearers were grouped in their perfect

costumes of white satin and garlands of blush-roses. There, too, were her maids of honour, in virgin white, in attendance on their Queen. The ladies of the bedchamber, in their matron dignity were not less attractive in a uniform costume of white satin and blonde, with trains of watchet-blue,[1] white plumes, and splendid diamond tiaras.

"That pause between the recognition of the young Queen and her presentation to the people by the Archbishop of Canterbury was broken by the whole body of the Westminster scholars rising up and saluting their sovereign with the chorus, 'Victoria, Victoria, vivat Victoria Regina!' Of this, their prescriptive right, they certainly availed themselves in good earnest, proud to be the first in the Abbey to hail their liege lady.

"The tender paleness that had overspread her fair face on her entrance had yielded to a glow of 'rosy celestial red,' and this brilliant flush added to the beauty of her countenance, and set off her jewels and regal splendour. In her right hand she bore the sceptre, in her left the orb, which, though large for the grasp of her fairy fingers, she carried with peculiar grace, moving with a firm majestic step, and acknowledging the rapturous applause of her people with gracious looks and smiles of satisfaction."

Another scene which afforded much pleasure was

[1] Sky blue, from A.S. *woad.*

the Opening of Parliament by the young maiden Queen, and we may notice in passing that Agnes Strickland, in common with many of her auditors, was struck by the silvery sweetness of that bell-toned voice.

In 1840 she had the honourable pleasure of presentation to the Queen and the Prince Consort, under the auspices of the venerable Lady Stourton; and the friendly look which the Queen gave on hearing her name was not a little gratifying to the essentially feminine nature of the daintily-clad historian.

We may feel sure that her Court costume on this occasion was carefully thought out, and can well believe that her tall and graceful figure, clear complexion warmed into colour with excitement, black abundant hair and finely-moulded bust and arms, would all appear to the best advantage in the violet velvet draperies, lined with primrose silk and lightened with Brussels lace, which she had selected as a suitable garb in which to pay her devout homage to the Queen Regnant of Great Britain and Ireland,

Later she attended several Drawing-rooms, and was fortunate enough to be present at that in which the royal bride— the "Sea-king's daughter from over the sea"— presided.

"She is very pretty," writes Agnes to her sister, "graceful and intellectual in appearance, smaller

than the Queen, but fairylike and exquisitely proportioned. She looked very royal and girlish too. She gave me a very gracious bow; so did the Prince of Wales, who is very handsome, though short in stature. He must have been proud of his beautiful wife."

Such is her description, and Tennyson's "Welcome" is no less enthusiastic.

"The sea-king's daughter as happy as fair,
Blissful bride of a blissful heir,
Bride of the heir of the kings of the sea—
O joy to the people and joy to the throne,
Come to us, love us, and make us your own;
For Saxon or Dane or Norman we,
Teuton or Celt, or whatever we be,
We are each all Dane in our welcome of thee,
Alexandra!"

The two last volumes of 'The Queens' were finished in 1849, and, though there is always a great satisfaction in completion, it is probable that both sisters felt a tinge of regret at finishing a work which must have become part of their daily life, and which had taken them into many scenes and circumstances which would otherwise have been unknown and impossible to them.

For twelve years they had laboured indefatigably at their self-imposed task, and we can well believe that it had become a labour of love. Much that had hitherto been but little known had been written of and verified with judicious care, and

Guizot, Lingard, and Alison united in praising the result.

Guizot's testimony was peculiarly gratifying, couched as it was in the graceful phraseology of France. "It is a charming work. You have studied from the source and presented your facts singularly exempt from dryness."

Lingard says frankly, "It afforded me great pleasure, bringing to my recollection many anecdotes which I had forgotten, and making me acquainted with many that I had never met with— at least, as far as I can recollect;" while Alison, who, as a historian, is perhaps more widely known than either, gives his opinion in these words: "I can safely say that I have acquired a much clearer idea of English history from your own than I ever did from general history— and so I never fail to say both at home and abroad. And the reason is, the history of each queen forms a separate cell in the memory in which to deposit the events of the past, and your genius has given an interest to the narrative which renders the storing no longer a labour, but a most agreeable occupation."

The 'Queens of England' finished, the sisters at once set to work upon the 'Queens of Scotland,' and in her life of the unfortunate Mary Stuart, Agnes found a ready vent for the pathos and enthusiasm of which her imaginative nature was

so capable. Every good point is accentuated, every frailty compassionated, and we feel throughout that the beautiful victim was more sinned against than sinning.

The storm of Low Church indignation which had been called forth by the life of Mary Tudor broke forth anew upon the publication of the life of Mary Stuart. Those whose bigotry prevented them from seeing the many noble qualities which, beneath her unbending hatred of Protestantism, Mary Tudor really possessed, now called Agnes a "Jesuitess"; and one Ipswich Churchman even went so far as to advise parents to prohibit their children from reading these frankly written unsectarian Lives.

It is refreshing to find that Dr Stanley, Bishop of Norwich, praises them unstintingly, and that the 'Edinburgh Review' had the perspicacity to discern that the author was "a staunch upholder and adherent of the Church of England, a stickler for all its constitutions, and attached to monarchical government and the right divine of kings."

It is worth noticing that Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, Dean of Westminster, inherited from his father the same large-hearted views. We find the Archbishop of Canterbury, Archibald Campbell Tate— no incapable critic— saying of him, in 1881, that "He became almost bigoted against bigotry and intolerant of intolerance. He threw himself with