the second visit of the cousins from Coburg. Three years had passed since they had been in England, and during most of this time Prince Albert had been carrying on his studies at Bonn. All that the Queen had heard of the Prince was most favourable, we are told; and, to use her own words, "she never had any idea, if she married at all, of any one else." Still she had desired delay—she was too young, the Prince was too young. Very likely the novelty of her dazzling position, the natural intoxication of youth, freedom, and power, made her reluctant to enter upon the serious duties and responsibilities of wedded life. She expressed, however, great regret afterwards that she had not after her accession kept up her correspondence with her cousin as she had done before it. "Nor can the Queen now," she adds, "think without indignation against herself of her wish to keep the Prince waiting, for probably three or four years, at the risk of ruining all his prospects for life, until she might feel inclined to marry! And the Prince has since told her that he came over in 1839 with the intention of telling her that if she could not then make up her mind, she must understand that he could not now wait for a decision, as he had done at a former period, when this marriage was first talked about."

And then, with noble frankness and perfect artlessness, Her Majesty continues, "The only excuse the Queen can make for herself is in the fact, that the sudden change from the secluded life at Kensington to the independence of her position as Queen Regnant at the age of eighteen, put all idea of marriage out of her mind, which she now most bitterly repents." All these maidenly doubts and scruples were to vanish, however, before the irresistible feeling inspired by the Prince when they met again. "The three years," as General Grey tells us, "had greatly improved both the young men." Prince Albert was eminently handsome. But there was also in his countenance a

gentleness of expression and peculiar sweetness in his smile, with a look of deep thought and high intelligence in his clear blue eyes and expansive forehead, that added a charm to the impression he produced in those who saw him, far beyond that derived from mere beauty or regularity of features. And the Queen herself writes to King Leopold: "Albert's beauty is most striking, and he is most amiable and unaffected—in short, very fascinating. The young men are both amiable and delightful companions, and I am glad to have them here."

"Happy the wooing that is not long a-doing," says the old adage. The Queen had given her impressions of her newly arrived cousins in these unaffected words probably on the very day of their arrival—October 10th; but on the 15th she writes a far more conclusive letter to her old friend, Baron Stockmar. She had so recently expressed to him her resolution not to marry for some time, that she touches on the subject with girlish embarrassment. "I do feel so guilty," she writes, "I know not how to begin my letter, but I think the news it contains will be sufficient to ensure your forgiveness. Albert has completely won my heart, and all was settled between us this morning. . . . I feel certain he will make me very happy. I wish I could say I felt as certain of making him happy, but I shall do my best."

Then we have the Prince's touching account to his aged grandmother: "The Queen sent for me alone to her room a few days ago, and declared to me, in a genuine outburst of love and affection ('*Ergusse von Herzlichkeit und Liebe*'), that I had gained her whole heart, and would make her intensely happy *(überglücklich)* if I would make her the sacrifice of sharing her life with her—for she said she looked on it as a sacrifice; the only thing that troubled her was that she did not think she was worthy of me. The joyous openness of manner in which she told me this quite

enchanted me, and I was quite carried away by it. She is really most good and amiable, and I am quite sure heaven has not given me into evil hands, and that we shall be happy together." Could anything be more idyllic in its simplicity and guileless reality than this betrothal of the "sweet Flower of May " to the princely Sir Galahad, so true to the motto of his house, "*Treu und Fest*" "With the exception of my relations to the Queen," he writes to his stepmother, "my future position will have its dark side, and the sky will not always be blue and unclouded. But life has its thorns in every position, and the consciousness of having used one's powers and endeavours for an object so great as that of promoting the welfare of so many, will surely be sufficient to support me." But even as he writes these brave words there is a shadow over the bright prospect —the thought of leaving the beloved land of his birth, with all he loved so deeply.

But in spite of shadows and future partings, the betrothed couple were very happy. They had many tastes and sympathies in common. The Prince, we are told, had considerable facility as an artist, and still more as a composer; he also sang well and played with skill, and during his stay at Windsor Castle "her Majesty frequently accompanied him on the piano, and at a later period they sang together the admired productions of Rossini, Auber, Balfe, and Moore."

The Princes remained a month at Windsor, and when they left the Queen felt her loneliness sadly. There is a touching sentence in a letter of the Prince to the Duchess of Kent. "What you say about my poor little bride sitting all alone in her room, sad and silent, has touched me to the heart. Oh, that I might fly to her side to cheer her!" And the Queen herself afterwards wrote: "For 'the poor little bride' there was no lack of those sweet words, touched with the grateful humility of a manly love, to receive which

was a precious foretaste to her of the happiness of the years to come."

Very lover-like were the letters that came to her. Once he writes, "How often are my thoughts with you! The hours I was privileged to pass with you in your dear little room are the radiant points of my life, and I cannot even yet clearly picture to myself that I am indeed to *be* so happy as to be always near you, always your protector." And then, with the pious reverence that was already so inherent in his nature, he tells his *fiancée* that he was about to take the Sacrament, adding, with affectionate solemnity, "God will not take it amiss if in that serious act even at the altar I think of you, for I will pray to Him for you and for your soul's health, and He will not refuse us His blessing." Strangely beautiful words to be written by a young Prince not quite one-and-twenty!

The public Declaration of the intended marriage was postponed until it had been communicated to the Privy Council, and on November 20th the Queen came up to Buckingham Palace with her mother, and on the 23rd made her Declaration. It was a trying ordeal for the young Sovereign. "Precisely at two," the Queen writes in her journal, "I went in. The room was full, but I hardly knew who was there. Lord Melbourne I saw looking kindly at me, with tears in his eyes, but he was not near me. I then read my short declaration. I felt my hands shake, but I did not make one mistake. I felt most happy when it was over." The Queen always wore a bracelet with the Prince's portrait: "It seemed to give me courage at the council," she wrote in her naïve way.

A Bill for the naturalization of Prince Albert was at once passed through both Houses of Parliament, and Her Majesty shortly afterwards conferred upon her future husband the title of Royal Highness, as well as the rank of Field Marshal

in the British army. The question of the Prince's annuity excited a good deal of discussion in the House of Commons, and the sum of £50,000, proposed by Lord John Russell, was finally reduced to £30,000.

The marriage was fixed for February 10th, and on the 8th the Prince arrived, accompanied by his father and elder brother. There is an interesting little anecdote told of the Queen. It is said that the Archbishop inquired if it were her wish that any alteration should be made in the Liturgy with regard to the word "obedience." Report informs us that the Queen replied "that it was her wish to be married in all respects like any other woman, according to the revered usage of the Church of England; and that, though not as a queen, as a woman she was ready to promise all things contained in that portion of the Liturgy." We cannot vouch for the truth of this, but it is extremely probable that this answer was given.

The wedding ceremony was solemnised at St. James'. As the Royal bride entered her carriage, it was observed that she looked extremely pale and agitated; she wore a dress of Honiton lace over white satin, the material having been manufactured at Spitalfields, and the lace made by two hundred poor lace-workers in the village of Beer, near Honiton; a wreath of orange blossom and a veil completed her bridal attire; she had round her neck the collar of the Garter, but wore no other jewels. Her train was borne by twelve young ladies, the daughters of well-known peers. Her responses, made in low, clear, silvery voice, were audible at the extreme corners of the chapel; and as she said "I will," we are told "that she accompanied the expression with a glance at his Royal Highness which convinced all who beheld it that the heart was with her words." The Dowager Lady Lyttelton, who was an eyewitness of the marriage, wrote later on: "The Queen's look and manner were very pleasing, her eyes much swollen

with tears, but great happiness in her countenance; and her look of confidence at the Prince when they walked away as man and wife was very pleasing to see. I understand she is in extremely high spirits since: such a new thing to her to dare to be unguarded in conversation with anybody; and with her frank and fearless nature the restraints she had hitherto been under from one reason or another with everybody must have been most painful."

In the afternoon the bridal couple left for Windsor for their brief honeymoon of three days, the Queen in a white satin pelisse trimmed with swansdown, and a white satin bonnet and feather.

For only one day were the Queen and Prince alone together; and on this day she wrote to Baron Stockmar, "There cannot exist a dearer, purer, nobler being in the world than the Prince." On the 12th the Duchess of Kent, the Duke of Coburg, the hereditary Prince, and the whole court joined them, and after two more days they returned to London.

On the 28th the Duke of Coburg left England. The parting with his father was very painful to the Prince. The Queen writes of it in her Journal in her own womanly, pathetic fashion : "He said to me that I had never known a father, and could not therefore feel what he did. His childhood had been very happy. Ernest, he said, was now the only one remaining here of his earliest ties and recollections; but that if I continued to love him as I did now, I could make up for all. . . . Oh! how I did feel for my dearest, precious husband at that moment! Father, brother, friends, country, all has he left, and all for me. God grant that I may be the happy person, the most happy person to make this dearest, blessed being happy and contented! What is in my power to make him happy I will do."

Another heavy trial was in store for the Prince, when he

bade his brother good-bye. "They bade farewell German student fashion, singing together the parting song, 'Abschied.' The brothers embraced affectionately, Albert being pale as a sheet and his eyes full of tears."

The Queen and Prince Albert spent their first Easter together at Windsor, and here they received the Sacrament together for the first time. About this time the Duchess of Kent retired to a separate establishment, and removed to Ingestre House, Belgrave Square; but this separation did not interrupt her close and loving intercourse with her beloved daughter.

And so the ideal married life began; the maiden monarch no longer stood alone—she had now a strong arm on which to lean, and a discreet and faithful adviser ever beside her. No one who saw them could doubt that it was a marriage of profound happiness and true sympathy, and the good Queen had her peerless knight—*sans peur et sans reproche.*

A few touching verses written by a well-known song writer, Helen Marion Burnside, may fitly close this chapter. It is supposed to be the recollection of a Scotch peasant girl on the day of the Coronation.

"I mind how the cannon thundered, how millions shouted as **one,**
An' a' was a dazzle o' splendour spread under the summer sun,
I'd heard she'd be blazin' with jewels, an' wear her crown on her head
An' I went to London to see her wi' the lad I was bound to wed;
But when she came by i' her carriage I saw but a lassie fair,
Wi' a smile on the lips that trembled, an' a glint o' gowd i' her **hair.**"

"She seemed so young an' so gentle, an' i' spite of her state so lone,
Wi' a look of prayer 'neath her eyelids that brought the tears to my own;
That I loved her, that sweet bit lassie, and set her image apart,—
For a' she was Queen o' the nation, i' the core o' my leal heart.'

MARRIED LIFE

CHAPTER III

WIFE AND MOTHER

"Her court was pure ; her life serene,
God gave her peace; her land reposed;
A thousand claims to reverence closed
In her as Mother, Wife and Queen."

LORD TENNYSON.

"IN that fierce light which beats upon a throne and blackens every blot," the wedded bliss and blameless life of the royal pair seemed only to be thrown out in stronger relief; and in spite of the trammels of etiquette and the wearisome routine and burdensome duties of a court, they enjoyed hours of quiet unalloyed happiness.

From the very beginning of their married life the youthful pair set a noble example by their untiring devotion to those high duties entailed on them by their station; and their industry, their method of utilising their moments of leisure, were indeed admirable and worthy of imitation.

There is a very interesting sketch of the occupations of their daily life in the "Early Years of the Prince Consort," which deserves to be quoted.

"At this time the Prince and Queen seem to have spent their day much as follows: They breakfasted at nine, and took a walk every morning soon afterwards. Then came

the usual amount of business (far less heavy than now) besides which they drew and etched a great deal together, which was a source of great amusement, having the plates 'bit' in the house. Luncheon followed at the usual hour of two o'clock. Lord Melbourne, who was generally staying in the house, came to the Queen in the afternoon, and between five and six the Prince usually drove her out in a pony phaeton. If the Prince did not drive the Queen, he rode, in which case she took a drive with the Duchess of Kent or the ladies. The Prince also read aloud most days to the Queen. The dinner was at eight o'clock, and always with the company. In the evening the Prince frequently played at double chess, a game of which he was very fond and which he played extremely well." And three years later, Mr. Uwins, one of the artists employed in decorating a pavilion in the garden of Buckingham Palace, wrote a most valuable letter, an extract from which is given in the "Life of the Prince Consort."

"It has happened to me in life," he writes, "to see something of many royal personages; and I must say, with the single exception of the Duke of Kent, I have never met with any, either in England or on the Continent of Europe, who have impressed me so favourably as our reigning Sovereign and her young and interesting husband Coming to us twice a day unannounced and without attendants, entirely stript of all state and ceremony, courting conversation, and desiring reason rather than obedience, they have gained our admiration and love.

"In many things they are an example to the age. They have breakfasted, had morning prayers with the household in the private chapel, and are out some distance from the Palace, talking to us in the summer-house, before half-past nine o'clock, sometimes earlier. After the public duties of the day and before their dinner they come out again, evidently delighted to get away from the bustle of the

world to enjoy each other's society in the solitude of the garden.

"Our peaceful pursuits are in accordance with the scene; and the opportunity of watching our proceedings seems to give a zest to the enjoyment of those moments snatched from state, parade, and ceremony. Here, too, the royal children are brought out by their nurses, and the whole arrangement seems like real domestic pleasure."

Could any description be more idyllic in its sweet simplicity? What an example to those frivolous butterflies of fashion always seeking after pleasure, and frittering away precious time and strength in their search for what they call happiness. Very different was our young Queen to these jaded worldlings; for, as Mr. Uwins says in another passage: "The Queen, too, is full of intelligence, her observations very acute, and her judgment apparently matured beyond her age."

The Queen's influence on the stage was wonderfully beneficial; as Mrs. Oliphant observes, "she was in the foreground of the national life, affecting it always for good, and setting an example of purity and virtue. The theatres to which she went, and which both she and her husband enjoyed, were purified by her presence; evils which had been the growth of years disappearing before the face of the young Queen."

On November 21st, 1840, the Queen gave birth to her first child, the Princess Royal, at Buckingham Palace; and Mrs. Lilly, the nurse, presented the little stranger, "a beautiful plump and healthy infant," to the Privy Councillors assembled in the ante-room.

The Prince's care and devotion were most admirable. While the Queen was laid up he refused to go to the play or to amuse himself, and always dined quietly with the Duchess of Kent. We are told, "that no one but himself ever lifted her from her bed to her sofa, and he always