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STUDIES
OF THE
SOVEREIGN
AND
THE REIGN



*Victoria R.
1837-1897.*

BY
W. T. STEAD



SIXTY YEARS' AGO.

After the Portrait of the QUEEN painted by FOWLER at BUCKINGHAM PALACE.

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

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By W. T. STEAD

A MEMORIAL VOLUME OF THE
GREAT JUBILEE

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PREFACE.

THESE Studies, now collected and republished by the request of the highest authority but one in the Realm, originally appeared in the *Review of Reviews*. No one can possibly be so conscious of their shameless inadequacy than the writer, who nevertheless has received sufficient assurances from competent authorities to justify their republication. If it be true that they contribute to the better comprehension of the actual working of the modern Monarchy in a Democratic age, it may do the State some service amid the closing splendours of one reign to recall for the guidance of the next a realized ideal of a Sovereignty much more real and practical than is generally imagined.

Instead of undertaking this task myself, the proper person, who alone is competent adequately to set forth the usual history of the Reign, is the author of "The Life of the Prince Consort." But it was impossible to induce Sir Theodore Martin to resume the pen with which he had so faithfully displayed the inner workings of the Crown and the Constitution down to 1861. He did me the honour to write me a letter, from which the following extract is at once an explanation of his position and the best introduction I could desire to these Studies of the Sovereign and the Reign.

"31, ONSLOW SQUARE, 23rd January, 1897.

"DEAR SIR,—I have read your article on 'The Queen and Her Reign' with the greatest interest and am in fullest sympathy with the objects you have in view. But my position is a peculiar one. In 'The Life of the Prince Consort' I have said all that I feel at liberty to say about Her Majesty's influence upon the national policy, domestic or foreign. Of course there is much else to tell of that influence both before and since the Prince's death. But of what I have learned about it I have purposely kept no memoranda of any kind, as it was given to me in confidence. It is only those who have been Cabinet Ministers who could speak with authority of the ever-wakeful interest of the Queen in everything that concerns the welfare of the nation, of the immense value of Her Majesty's sagacity, of the importance of the knowledge accumulated during a long reign in a memory which forgets nothing, and of the truly royal courage and counsel which guides and strengthens the decisions of her Ministers in times of difficulty. Many of the men who could have borne the strongest testimony to these qualities are gone, but if their successors were free to speak I have no doubt they would have the same story to tell. I am not, and never have been, officially connected with the Court, and my position there has been, and is, one of perfect independence. But it has been my great privilege to have had unusual opportunities of studying Her Majesty's character, both as Woman and as Queen. All I can say is, you cannot in my opinion place it too high. It seems to me, if I may say so, that you have struck into the right line in the estimate you have formed of Her Majesty's qualities and of her influence. Well may other nations envy us a Sovereign who presides over the freest nation in the world, and whose whole life shows what Monarchy, worthily presented, can do for the good, not only of its own subjects, but also in helping on the cause of Christian brotherhood among the nations,

"Believe me, dear Sir, truly yours,

"THEODORE MARTIN."