

SIR ARTHUR HELPS AND THE ROYAL CONNECTION : II

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V

The book was about to appear, evidently, on 10 January, a date "she is looking forward to with interest", the Queen wrote to Alice on 5 January 1868¹⁵¹. "I have had directions *given* that they shall be received at and *instantly* forwarded from Buckingham Palace". With characteristic practicality she added: "If Mr Smith will only have his name placed on the outside of the Parcels. They should be sent in 2 or 3 *relays*, or even more, else the Packages will be too bulky".

The Queen was pleased with the reviews, especially with that of the *Times*, she wrote Alice on 10 January.¹⁵² "I have not felt so cheered for *long* as I was by the kind expressions used". She also proposes corrections for "the *next Edition*". One of these is of a misspelling, "an *old oversight*". This had been continuously adjacent to the Brown note from edition A. She now wants the correct "P. Coutts" instead of "P. Cotes". It is interesting to observe that the completed page in the "Supplementary Appendix" has "Coutts", as does the second edition, unlike the first which, indeed, had "Cotes"¹⁵³. Also, the Queen observes in her letter to Alice that "the Charlie Christie [footnote, p. 21] is a decided misprint"¹⁵⁴.

The Queen did not object to Helps's sending her the "kind reports & the many reviews wh. are very gratifying", she wrote to him on 13 January 1868¹⁵⁵. She also found the accompanying letter "most satisfactory". It is from "Ld. Torrington, who sees every sort of person & particularly of the upper 1000 & *cynical class*, but who is much devoted to the dear Prince and Queen". Then "with respect to the corrections, tho' Alice said she did write *Charlie* Christie she *never did*, for the man is never called so!

¹⁵¹ RA Vic. Add. MSS. A32/13.

¹⁵² Ibid., 14. *The Times* review is of the same date.

¹⁵³ See published edition, p. 129.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁵⁵ RA Vic. Add. MSS. A32/15.

Then she *wld.* suggest a slight alteration in the placing of a word in the note about *Brown*. The Queen perceives that in *one* of the newspapers they place the December as if half of the note *was* written in *Dec*: whereas he was promoted to be upper servant in *Dec*:65. Will Mr. Helps alter this?¹⁵⁶ It was Brown who said the 2 notes, & the remarks to Grant were so little defined that he was *sure* many people *wld.* misread it [the Brown note]. This being the case—the Queen thought many *like him* might make a mistake, wh. Alice disagrees in”.

The Queen was much interested in a cheap edition and “earnestly hopes that it will be a *well* & not too *closely* printed edition so that the *poor* people may read it clearly—not too long or too close lines”. She declares that this letter was intended for Alice as well as Mr. Helps.

The mutual concerns between the Queen and Helps during these years sometimes transcended preparations for her publications. Of great importance to her was the problem of proper exposure to her subjects. Her prolonged seclusion after the death of her husband in December 1861 had brought an increasing demand that she should assume in full the public responsibilities of a monarch, which was by no means pleasing to her. She wanted Helps’s advice on 13 March 1868¹⁵⁷: “When the Queen said that she would *do things in the day* like laying *1st stones* it was in the hope that she would thereby be *spared* other *duties* which she felt, and indeed feels herself unequal to”. Indeed, “She showed herself *more than usual* last year, and yet (a *class*) of her people behave *infamously*. To try and satisfy these people the Queen consented, as a last *resort*, to hold these Drawing-rooms under *certain* conditions and probably to give a breakfast in the summer”. Such would be “*instead* of these *other* public things. And she wishes to observe that *laying 1st stones* is *not at all* a thing for the Sovereign to do except in very rare cases. The Queen *must not make herself common*”.

Helps’s reply of the same date (13 March 1868)¹⁵⁸ declared that “it would be an immense advantage politically *speaking*, that Your Majesty should appear in *London* on some great

¹⁵⁶ In the 2nd published edition it read: “He has since (in December 1865), most deservedly been promoted to be upper servant, and my personal attendant”.

¹⁵⁷ RA L25/98 (copy).

¹⁵⁸ RA L25/105.

public occasion, *this year*". It would arouse "a great deal of loyal feeling which is only longing for an occasion to express itself".

On 14 March Helps was "delighted to hear of the very warm, hearty, and affectionate reception which Your Majesty had met with".¹⁵⁹ However, in reference to this, in connection with the laying of the first stone of St. Thomas's Hospital, he wishes her to be aware that "It was mainly from the upper ten thousand or rather (for that is a foolish phrase as applied to England) from the upper fifty thousand". What he requires now is for her to "give the million a chance of expressing their feelings, and you will have such a reception as cannot be surpassed". He adds, "The wonderful sale of the book (Mr. Helps means especially the People's Edition) is a very significant fact pointing in the same direction as Mr. Helps's preceding remarks". And in a postscript, evidently referring to the Queen's enthusiastic reception, he declares: "How pleased good Brown must have been"!

In her Journal on 28 March 1868¹⁶⁰ the Queen notes a talk with Helps about "the fine illustrated edition, which Mr. Martin has been arranging with Mr. Smith about". A change in government later in 1868 (Gladstone was now Prime Minister) elicited another letter from Helps to the Queen (10 December):¹⁶¹ "The new ministry seemed, as Shakespeare says, to be 'shut up in marvellous content' with Your Majesty's greatness; and it struck Mr. Helps that Mr. Bright was particularly pleased though he said but little". (Bright was to be President of the Board of Trade as well as Privy Councillor).

That the Queen was also interested in the financial aspects of being a published author, especially in the disposal of her royalties, is indicated in her letter to Theodore Martin on 1 January 1869. Martin had sent her a cheque "which she has this day sent to Mr. Helps. She quite approves of what he [evidently Martin] intends doing" with the remainder. She wants most of the money to be given to charity and asks that Martin

¹⁵⁹ RA L25/106. *The Times* of 14 March describes the laying of the first stone at St. Thomas's Hospital: "The occasion was marked with fitting pomp and ceremony, such as now distinguishes the very rare occasions when Her Majesty appears before her loving subjects".

¹⁶⁰ RA Queen Victoria's Journal.

¹⁶¹ RA C32/176. It may be noted that on 22 November 1868 Helps sincerely felt that he had won her respect and admiration. See above n. 23.

keep a careful account: "The Queen will keep a copy with the names which she does not wish others to know"¹⁶².

The illustrated *Leaves* was due to appear in January 1869. The Queen, in writing to Martin on 4 January concerning proofs of engravings for it, declared: ¹⁶³ "She sends in strict confidence 2 touching letters from Mr. Helps. The Queen fears the eldest son [Charles Leonard Helps, traditionally considered a black sheep of his family, although the exact nature of his escapades has never been disclosed, at least to this writer] is not likely to be very fit for a good living [he was a clergyman]. What does Mr. Martin think?"

There was no report as yet on the sale of the Illustrated Edition, according to Helps's letter of 10 April 1869: ¹⁶⁴ "He is quite grieved to hear how much Your Majesty has suffered during your recent visit to London. It is a great comfort to know that Prince Leopold's indisposition is not serious and, therefore, that your Majesty will not be detained on that account". He is pleased about the Queen's first visit to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, which was made on 6 April. On her way there she had passed by the New Meat Market in Smithfield, and at the hospital was greeted by Sir William Jenner, among others. She had a complete tour, in the course of which she saw several well-known paintings.¹⁶⁵ In view of all this, Helps declares his belief that she is "only too energetic, and goes through too much, when [she] comes to London".

VI

The high regard in which the Queen now held both Helps and Theodore Martin is revealed in her letter to Martin of 5 June 1869: "In him & Mr. Helps she has found impartial friends, who can tell her many important things wh. her own not unbiased servants cannot hear or tell her".¹⁶⁶ The closeness

¹⁶² *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 2nd ser., ed. George Buckle (New York, 1926), i. 575. See also Victoria to Theodore Martin, 22 December 1868, that "Lord Granville will undertake charge of the money ... Now she highly approves what he proposed relative to the £2000 for Mr. Helps" (RA Y166/88).

¹⁶³ RA Y167/1.

¹⁶⁴ RA L15/119.

¹⁶⁵ A full account is to be found in *The Times*, 7 April 1869.

¹⁶⁶ RA L18/29.

of Helps's ties with her as well as the quiet power he now held over her is expressed in his handling of the George Peabody affair. Helps wrote to her on 19 June 1869¹⁶⁷, that, before his recent departure for the United States, the great philanthropist, in poor health, had requested an interview with her because he knew that he would be asked on his return home whether he had seen Her Majesty. If such were not possible "it might occasion some unpleasant remarks, and might, in some minds, diminish the affectionate respect with which Your Majesty is regarded in the United States". Such an interview not having been arranged, the American had himself suggested a letter from the Queen, a draft of which Helps now sent to her. In his characteristically self-deprecatory manner, he writes: "Mr Helps knows that this sketch is a feeble and imperfect one—he is dissatisfied with it himself—and he knows that Your Majesty can write a much better letter. But he sends it as giving the main topics which he thinks Your Majesty might like to touch upon". Helps was able to write her on 27 July that Peabody was pleased by the letter and that it "will do much good in that country".

The Queen wrote Martin on 27 September¹⁶⁸ regarding Lord Granville's belief that "Helps undervalues the position he holds [Clerk of the Privy Council] & is quite foolish in supposing that his is less than many other places. This one is widely sought after". Then: "How cd. she be so stupid as to forget the £2000 to Helps". This money would evidently be his share of the proceeds from the sales of her books, as mentioned above. Also, she had written to Helps that she wanted "after all" to add "to a new edition of her book descriptions of her visit to Dunkeld—the ascents of the Rigi and Pilatus". This may well be an indication of early stirrings of labours on *More Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands* (1884).

On 6 November¹⁶⁹ she joyfully tells Helps of the great success of the "Ceremony and long progress thru' (she thinks) nearly a million people of *all* classes today [the opening of the new Blackfriars Bridge and Holborn Viaduct]; and there *was not one single cry or word* which would *annoy or startle anyone*" [*The Times* dutifully observed that the "'rowdy' element ... was

¹⁶⁷ RA L18/29.

¹⁶⁸ RA Y167/91.

¹⁶⁹ RA L25/157 (copy).

less conspicuous than usual”].¹⁷⁰ And this is the greatest ordeal in the very heart of London, which can be gone thro’ and this *at a time* when people *pretend* that there is such a Democratic feeling and God knows what! The Queen was *deeply touched* at the great enthusiasm shown by many present. The carriage stopped occasionally, and if there had been any intention it might easily have been attempted, if only from *one* vulgar or ill-disposed person. But no; *nothing* of this kind was heard. This will, the Queen thinks, remove all nervous apprehension on her part for the future”.

In a letter written the same day from Cambridge,¹⁷¹ Helps expressed his concern about her public ordeal, but knew that she “always goes through any thing well that she has once determined to go through”. Indeed, on the day following (7 November) he wrote from Croydon,¹⁷² where the Helps family lived briefly after its removal from Vernon Hill, that he was “delighted to hear of the great success of yesterday’s ceremony and progress”.

Two days before, Peabody had died in London. Just before his death the Queen had invited him to Windsor and, indeed, had expressed her willingness to visit him herself. Helps believed that this message, which Peabody did not actually receive because he was so close to death, should perhaps, be published. He states in this letter that the Queen is, indeed, the “chief link between Great Britain and America; and your kindness to Mr. Peabody, if known, will tend to unite the two nations more than 50 diplomatic notes”.

In his letter of 6 November, referred to above, Helps acknowledged receipt of the “Visit to Dunkeld, which he will read immediately”. Two chapters on this subject were to be published in *More Leaves* in 1884.¹⁷³

Letters from Helps to Her Majesty of 8,¹⁷⁴ 10,¹⁷⁵ and 12,¹⁷⁶ November 1869 describe plans for the funeral and temporary

¹⁷⁰ *The Times*, 6 November 1869.

¹⁷¹ RA Q11/80.

¹⁷² RA L25/151.

¹⁷³ *More Leaves*, pp. 30-65.

¹⁷⁴ RA Q11/81.

¹⁷⁵ RA Q11/82.

¹⁷⁶ RA Q11/85.

burial of Peabody in Westminster Abbey.¹⁷⁷ He mentions in the 10 November letter that the letter is being dictated to Alice, his daughter, "without whose assistance he would be totally unable to get thro' his work". Alice, he states, wants the Queen to know how pleased she was with her "progress to the City, and at the Ceremonial of the 6th inst".

The Queen was still enthusiastic about her authorship. She had (Journal, 5 February 1870) seen "Mr Helps about the addition to my book & the extracts I have given him for that purpose",¹⁷⁸ and on 6 February "about the Journal, some of which I wish to have privately printed, & added to the published Leaves".¹⁷⁹

A few days earlier (26 January 1870)¹⁸⁰ she had written to Helps in response to some gentle criticism, with good humoured indulgence, but mingled with some firmness: "She is much amused by the description of the *so'es* and *such'es*!!" Then, in reference, evidently, to a proposed Gaelic and English version of her earlier work: "She wishes the English & Gaelic should be printed in columns opposite to each other".

Helps had evidently resisted inclusion of the Swiss tour made in 1865 in a proposed new book. "Now, however", she continues, "the Queen comes to a new view of the Swiss tour wh. she is anxious to *press* on Mr. Helps tho' she will not be *unconvincable*. In reading over, & preparing, the Lake Country Acct: [*More Leaves*, pp. 116ff.] she finds *constant references to Switzerland* & particular parts of it—[the references are not so numerous in the finished book, perhaps because of the insistence of Helps] & the Queen (& in fact Pcess. Christian, who Mr. Helps seems to treat a little as tho' she were no longer in favour with himself is of this opinion too), thinks *really* that an *exception* might be made with respect to the extracts from *that tour*, as it partakes so much of the character of the Scotch or rather more Highland ones. Mr Helps might observe upon *this*, & say *why* it was inserted. She wishes him *therefore* to leave this *one* point undecided until he has seen the acct.

¹⁷⁷ For a full account of the funeral obsequies see Franklin Parker "The Funeral of George Peabody", *Peabody Journal of Education*, July 1966, pp. 21-36.

¹⁷⁸ RA Queen Victoria's Journal,

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ RA Vic. Add. MSS. A32/17.

of the last year's visit to the [Scottish] Lakes. Then Pcess. Christian thinks (& so does the Queen) that these additions shld appear in the shape of a smaller 2nd *Volume*, in wh. the Queen also agrees".

It is interesting to note the statement in this letter that "The dozen or 16 copies of the Swiss Tour and Séjour, when privately printed *wld.* only be given with the strictest injunction & only to those who *really wld* value them [the present writer has not been able to discover any copies of this printing]".¹⁸¹

She also tells Helps that "she has been very unwell again. Indeed her health is becoming more & more uncertain & requires more & more care. The Queen thought it *wld* be far better to *let the truth be known. Age will make itself felt & this stupid & selfish 'world' will learn to see that the Queen is made of flesh & blood like other people*".

She writes to Helps with some trepidation on 2 March 1870¹⁸² concerning some financial transactions with Smith, the publisher: "She is quite shocked that Mr. Smith has not been paid. Will he send the Bill to her in that instance?" Although she is at work on her new book, she "is in no great hurry about the extracts but can wait a little while. She will send the last to-morrow". And then: The Queen hopes that "he will look back at her letter from Osborne¹⁸³ in wh. she mentions what she wishes done with her M.S.—so that she may not have to repeat herself & *then to prepare* after it is in shape for the published additions wh. she is anxious shld *not be lost sight of*. Possibly—if *we live*—something more may be added of Scotland this year. The Queen *wld* like nothing to be altered *except* in pencil & then herself to be asked & suggestions made as she can explain *what* she means. Mr. Helps remembers that she herself pointed out that there was *no* mistake in one sentence wh. he thought was *nonsense*, & that it was only too long. She is glad to hear her letters were satisfactory & she hopes to hear of the *result* of them".

¹⁸¹ Neither the Royal Library nor the catalogue of the British Library can provide any information concerning such a publication.

¹⁸² RA Vic. Add. MSS. A32/19.

¹⁸³ Perhaps the letter of 26 January (no. 17).

VII

The interview of March 1870 between Dickens and the Queen might never have taken place without the involvement of Helps. In the classic accounts of this visit, such as those of Forster and Dolby, his participation was recorded but perhaps not fully understood or appreciated.

Helps brought before the Queen many distinguished literary guests additional to Dickens, such as Carlyle and Browning, but the latter two interviews were perhaps arranged with the assistance of Lady Augusta Bruce.¹⁸⁴ We know, too, that a bond of mutual respect existed between Helps and Dickens as early as 3 January 1854, when the novelist wrote in commendation of Helps's "Thoughts for Next Summer", a pamphlet written to prevent a threatened cholera epidemic.¹⁸⁵ Undoubtedly a shared concern for the solution of social and economic problems and a mutual admiration for one another's writing contributed to their congeniality over many years, and by the time of the 1870 interview with the Queen they were good friends. Helps prepared the *mise en scène* for it, the immediate occasion being some photographs of American Civil War battlefields presented to Dickens during his recent visit to Washington. These the Queen wished to see, and after receiving them she expressed a desire to meet the great novelist¹⁸⁶.

The details of the preparations for the interview are portrayed in letters. In a letter to the Queen of 14 February,¹⁸⁷ for instance, Helps enclosed one from Dickens expressing his pleasure at the prospect of a visit to Her Majesty and other manifestations of Royal recognition, and in a letter of 4 March,¹⁸⁸ he stressed the importance to both participants of the impending interview [the "MSS." referred to are probably references to the Queen's new book]:

March 4, 1870

Mr Helps presents his humble duty to Your Majesty; & encloses a letter which he has received from Mr Dickens. Mr Helps thinks

¹⁸⁴ Paul Emden, *Behind the Throne* (London, 1934), p. 120.

¹⁸⁵ *Letters of Charles Dickens*, Nonesuch Edition, ed. Walter Dexter (London, 1938), ii. 531.

¹⁸⁶ George Dolby, *Dickens as I Knew Him* (New York, 1912), p. 454.

¹⁸⁷ RA W80/17. The letter from Dickens to Helps is RA W86/416.

¹⁸⁸ RA L18/33.

the Queen will be pleased with this letter. It really would be right that the author, whose name will hereafter be closely associated with the Victorian era, should have been presented to Queen Victoria. And Your Majesty would like the man: he, too, has the most anxious desire to raise what we call 'the lower classes'; & would sympathize with Your Majesty in many of the Queen's views and aspirations.

Mr Helps will attend to Your Majesty's wishes, most carefully, about the MSS. He has to acknowledge the receipt of the last MSS.

Mr Helps will write to Your Majesty a private letter, which he will enclose in this box.

Your Majesty must excuse Mr Helps if his letters are sometimes brief & curt. He has so little time to himself at the office. There is a constant stream of persons wishing for interviews with him.

Helps promptly acknowledged the Queen's reply on 5 March ¹⁸⁹ declaring that "he has received the Queen's letter of yesterday's date". He proceeds with suggestions for the conduct of the interview:

First, as regards Mr Dickens. His Christian name is Charles. Mr Helps forgets what is his last work; but he will ascertain that point before he sees Your Majesty. One of his best works is *David Copperfield*; and it is supposed that it gives or at least gives a hint of the author's early life. Your Majesty might say that Your Majesty's many cares and duties have prevented your reading all the works of your most eminent authors, & might playfully ask Mr Dickens's advice whether *David Copperfield* would be the work of his which he would wish Your Majesty to read next. The Queen might also allude to his readings; and reading is a subject which, in Mr. Helps's judgment, the Queen thoroughly understands. The Queen might naturally say that she would like to have a pleasure which so many of her subjects have enjoyed, & might ask him whether he would read to her at Windsor. If this were to be done, Your Majesty might have an opportunity of treating this really eminent man as a guest and not merely as a reader. But all these are merely suggested for Your Majesty's better judgment in such matters. Mr Helps has no doubt whatever that Your Majesty will manage the interview very well. The Queen always does go through these things well ... With regard to the time of seeing Mr Dickens—whether Wednesday or Friday—of course depends on Your Majesty's pleasure & convenience.

Helps, in turn, guided the sometimes faltering footsteps of Dickens, who referred to himself as Helps's "Godson", as they

¹⁸⁹ RA L18/34. Material not pertinent to the interview has been omitted.

prepared for the interview, which was to take place on 9 March. The Court Circular published in *The Times* briefly announced: "Mr Charles Dickens and Mr. Arthur Helps had the honour of an interview with Her Majesty this afternoon at Buckingham Palace". But an authentic account of the visit was given by Dolby, and subsequent biographers have made these particulars very familiar. Dickens, as was customary in such interviews, was required to stand, and one of his feet was painfully swollen. The Queen remained standing for the entire visit also, though "leaning over the head of a sofa", according to Dolby.¹⁹⁰ After some initial shyness, the conversation embraced such topics as the Queen's visit to see *The Frozen Deep* and her disappointment "at not having heard one of the Readings". Dickens's account of his American experiences,¹⁹¹ and Lincoln's dream on the night of his assassination;¹⁹² even the "servant question", "the price of provisions, and the cost of butcher's meat and bread" were discussed. Before he left, the Queen insisted on Dickens's accepting a copy of her *Highland Journal*, duly inscribed, and asked for a complete set of his works.¹⁹³ Helps wrote to his daughter "Mellie" later in the same day: "The interview between Her Majesty and Dickens was interesting and amusing, and I was sorry when it ended".¹⁹⁴

Although the Queen's own account in her Journal is rather brief, it suggests that she appreciated the significance of the interview and that she had been well rehearsed. She wrote:

BUCKINGHAM PALACE, 9th March 1870—I saw Mr. Helps this evening at half past six, who brought and introduced Mr. Dickens, the celebrated author. He is very agreeable, with a pleasant voice and manner. He talked of his latest works, of America, the strangeness of the people there, of the division of classes in England, which he hoped would get better in time. He felt sure that would come gradually.¹⁹⁵

Accounts of the interview disagree. Dickens apparently ex-

¹⁹⁰ P. 456.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² John Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, ed. J. W. T. Ley (London, 1928), p. 832.

¹⁹³ Dolby, pp. 457-8.

¹⁹⁴ The original letter is in the Helps Papers.

¹⁹⁵ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 2nd ser., ii. 9.

pressed satisfaction to Dolby, but an associate of Helps reported that Dickens "was a conversational failure at the Palace".¹⁹⁶ Dickens wrote to Helps on 26 March of the delay in having his works bound for the Queen. He was, in the meantime, forwarding to her a copy of "the first number of my new story [*The Mystery of Edwin Drood*] ... If Her Majesty should ever be sufficiently interested in the tale to desire to know a little more of it in advance of her subjects, you know how proud I shall be to anticipate the publication".¹⁹⁷

On 9 June Dickens was dead. In her Journal (Balmoral, 11 June 1870) the Queen wrote concerning "notice of the death of C. Dickens. Mr. Helps telegraphed it. He is a great loss. He had a large, loving mind and the strongest sympathy with the poorer classes. He felt sure that a better feeling, and much greater union of classes, would take place in time. And I pray earnestly it may".¹⁹⁸ Dickens never saw the letter Helps had written telling of the honoured place the complete set of books had been awarded in the Queen's library at Balmoral.

VIII

Helps, in the meantime, had shown concern to the Queen regarding the serious illness and subsequent death of General Grey, her Private Secretary. He wrote to her on the subject, for instance, on 26 March 1870.¹⁹⁹ Essentially more cheerful is the substance of a letter of 9 April,²⁰⁰ enclosing a copy of "this day's 'Saturday Review'",²⁰¹ in which was published an article about the late General, but containing praise of Her Majesty. Helps writes that "there are several parts of it which go to the root of the matter, and express the truth in excellent language". He proceeds to point out passages which he considers to be "true or just"—describing her true knowledge of "public business" and her not excessive indulgence in grief. Some possible explanation for Helps's complete approval of the article is found in the statement in this letter: "The writer of it spent

¹⁹⁶ H. Preston-Thomas, pp. 51-2.

¹⁹⁷ Nonesuch *Letters*, iii. 278-9.

¹⁹⁸ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, ii. 208.

¹⁹⁹ RA C78/96. Grey died on 31 March 1870.

²⁰⁰ RA L26/12.

²⁰¹ "The Queen's Private Secretary", *Saturday Review*, 9 April 1870, 416-67.

an hour on Thursday with Mr Helps—cross-examining him—and receiving information from him”. Alice herself has suggested that the Queen should write one of her “gracious little letters” to the writer of this article, “who is one of the best writers of the present day”.

On 9 June²⁰² he writes to the Queen to relieve her despair concerning certain letters recently published in the press. To do so, he forwards an extract from *The Times* indicating that certain letters purporting to have been written by the Duke of Edinburgh to the Prince of Wales, having appeared in Ireland and on the continent, are forgeries and definitely a hoax. This disclosure is important because Europeans might not otherwise realize that they were not genuine.

Critical problems now closing in on the Queen are lightly touched upon in a letter of Helps on 22 July.²⁰³ The question of the Royal seclusion was becoming increasingly pressing, and particularly its treatment in the press. Helps declares that the Queen is quite right not to take notice of *The Times* article (20 July 1870), which stated that “If anything can mar the satisfaction [of everyone doing his duty at time of stress] which all must derive from such reflections, it is the regret which we all feel at the fact that at such a crisis, when the Ministers are worn out with fatigue and anxiety, Her Majesty should find it necessary for the state of her health to leave the neighbourhood of the metropolis for her main residence at Osborne”. It was very important for her to be in London at a time when momentous decisions must be made, and the hope is expressed, therefore, that she will soon return. He then mentions a “counter-article in the Standard, which, doubtless, Your Majesty saw”. This rejoinder (*Standard*, 21 July 1870, p. 4, cols. 5-6) had stated that an “officious article” had appeared yesterday concerning the Queen’s staying at Osborne for such extended periods. This article defends the right of the Queen to be away at will and states that her being at Osborne in no way impedes the conduct of public affairs.

As for himself, Helps is “dreadfully depressed. He cannot help thinking over this horrid [Franco-Prussian] war at all spare times”. He then goes on to state his own feelings con-

²⁰² RA Z449/102. See *The Times*, Thursday, 9 June 1870, p. 7.

²⁰³ RA 163/143.

cerning the horrors of war and the sufferings that it brings. He praises a letter from the Crown Princess of Prussia, evidently also about the war, as well the person herself, when he again writes to the Queen on 24 July.²⁰⁴ Her letter is "so clear ..., so kind, so fair, so dignified, so *unrevengeful*, that Mr Helps, who, as an historian, is somewhat versed in noble letters, can honestly say that he hardly ever, if ever, read the like". He believes the Queen knows how much he admires the Crown Princess, "an admiration by no means resulting from gratitude, because he does not think the Princess likes him particularly; probably because he wished her to be pleased with him. And when one wishes anything of that kind, one seldom succeeds". The Queen's children "are sure to behave so well, in truth so royally, in times of difficulty". He knows that she will be pleased with the refutation of what the Prince of Wales is supposed to have said about the war.²⁰⁵ Helps declares concerning an article in the *Daily Telegraph* that "he did not write it himself (that would not be prudent); but he twice put what might be said before the man who was to write it, and who was most kind and sympathetic". The article referred to (*Daily Telegraph*, Saturday, 23 July 1870, p. 5) was in answer to continuing complaints about the Queen's not being present in London in these critical times. In truth, the writer declares: "At no time has Her Majesty shown herself indifferent to the responsibilities devolving upon her position, but at a moment like the present, when, while her heart is saddened by the horror of war, the country of her husband and the court of her kinsman are engulfed in the terrible conflict, it cannot be needful to say how much her attention and feelings are engaged. If, therefore, being so deeply moved—having, as everybody knows, already been in imperfect health—she seeks a little repose to strengthen her for duties to come, it must be cruel to her womanhood as well as disloyal to her dignity, to assail her retirement with these complaints. Her Majesty does well to reinforce herself for the serious cares which may come upon her. Her person, always dear to her people, is precious to-day in the eyes of Peace itself; and she may be assured that these unbecoming assaults upon her judgement and excellent feeling are nowhere echoed in her realm, which knows

²⁰⁴ RA I63/156.

²⁰⁵ It has not been possible to identify this statement.

that the Sovereign has never yet proved wanting at the call of queenly duty”.

An important statement in this letter concerning the affairs of Helps has reference to the house at Kew provided for him by the Queen after his family's forced departure from Vernon Hill. He is certain that she “would be delighted to see what a charming house & garden the Queen's judicious kindness has placed him in”.

He does not want the Queen to think, according to his letter of 28 August,²⁰⁶ that he is “unsympathetic as regards the letter he wrote yesterday [this is not presently available]. He always endeavours to put aside, as it were, his private feelings of duty, and to look at every matter which concerns the Queen in the ‘dry light’ of the intellect, as Lord Bacon would have said”. He has, therefore, “been often disposed to be very cautious in making counterstatements, knowing that writers in the public press have such an advantage over the rest of the world in their freedom from responsibility and their being able to take up the discussion of any subject when they please, or to ignore it altogether, when they are likely to be worsted in the argument”. They are, therefore, “‘Masters of the Situation’” so that it is “very undesirable to descend into the lists against them”. There evidently had been some criticism in the press of the Queen for not having been properly appreciative of the “attendance” of her ministers upon her. In a postscript he tells her that he has just seen Granville, who confirms what Helps has just told her, that it is not advisable to make any counter-statements at this time.

Continued expressions of concern about the war appear in Helps's letter to her on 30 August.²⁰⁷ He is writing about a letter received from Mr. Levy (Joseph Moses), editor and publisher of the *Daily Telegraph*, and an article which had appeared in that newspaper.²⁰⁸ Helps does “not think for a moment that Mr Levy meant the word ‘wicked’ to apply to the part which the Germans had in the causing of the war; for, in fact, as everybody must admit, it was forced upon them, as Your Majesty says; and when Mr Helps first read this passage

²⁰⁶ RA L26/22.

²⁰⁷ RA L64/171.

²⁰⁸ It has not been possible to identify this article.

in Mr Levy's letter, he had no doubt that it was censure of the French that was meant". Helps remarks that "The losses among the officers of the Germans are terrific. It is evident that they are exactly like ourselves; and are ready to advance, with the utmost coolness, into the jaws of death". He notes that the Queen's recent letter is "very eloquent in its denunciation of the causes which have led to the war".

The Queen had forwarded to Helps on 31 August "letters from the Crown Princess".²⁰⁹ These, Helps declares on 2 September,²¹⁰ are "indeed beautiful, and show a toleration which is quite marvellous". He praises her fairmindedness to the other side, "the other side, in this instance, being so outrageously and wickedly in the wrong". He then explains his "*seeming* want of sympathy" concerning a recent incident, evidently an attack on her in the press. He felt "grief and vexation" but "did not dwell upon the nature of the thing itself, simply because it was painful to do so and might only increase Your Majesty's vexation".

The Queen expresses on 29 September²¹¹ her "satisfaction & at the same time her sympathy with his son's appointment to Ceylon". This was E. A. Helps, his second, and favourite, son, who, having failed to find satisfactory preferment in Britain, had taken a post as inspector of schools in the Far East. The relation between father and son was a close one, and the parting had been very painful.

She is, of course, still "distressed" at the continuation of the war, but "Strasbourg and Genl. [Ulrich]²¹² have surrendered, & it is earnestly to be hoped that the mad, fickle French may take the lesson wh. God has sent them as they ought to come to terms!" She grieves, however, for the "loss of so many distinguished men & the sorrows to so many families has grieved the Queen much". The weather at Balmoral is "splendid"; but the "worry & anxiety try the Queen very much" so that "she keeps every body near her in a fright often". However, "the

²⁰⁹ These letters are not printed in the *Letters of the Empress Frederick*, ed. Sir Frederick Ponsonby.

²¹⁰ RA I65/7.

²¹¹ RA Vic. Add. MSS. A32/20.

²¹² Ulrich had surrendered on 27 September 1870. See *The Times*, 29 September 1870, p. 9.

quiet, the pure air & glorious scenery—the lovely mts. & lakes” do “enable her to bear up with it wh. otherwise she cd. not”.

Helps “felt certain that no one would more deeply and sympathisingly deplore the evils & miseries of this dreadful war than Your Majesty would”. This he wrote in his next letter of 11 January 1871.²¹³ “Then he begins to fear that he has been unjust to Bismarck [he evidently sympathized with the Queen when Bismarck rebuffed her for her pleas to save Paris], now that Mr Helps finds that the great Count would have been inclined to make peace after Sedan. At the same time ... he feels the full force of the argument urged by the Crown Princess—namely, that popular opinion in Germany would not, at that time, have endured the making of any such peace”. However, “It is now only an historical question whether, or not, a better (or rather, a less bad) state of things might have ensued, if great efforts had been made, after Sedan, to bring the matter to a peaceful issue—and the lowest terms that could be accepted, had been clearly set forth. There can be little hope of any stopping now; and the evil must proceed to Extremity—to what the newspapers are so fond of calling ‘the bitter end’”. He does not believe that “either of the combatants imagines how much the British people cares for, and sympathizes with, the misery entailed upon both of the contending nations. Her Highness’s remarks are very much to the point and tend to explain much of the painful misunderstanding which often arises between the Germans and the English”, Helps writes on 13 January,²¹⁴ having just seen an extract from a letter from the Crown Princess. Now, he adds: “The same thing occurs with the French. For instance, few Englishmen know that, on entering a French shop, they ought to take off, or raise, their hats in deference to the mistress of the shop. The truth is, we are not taught manners. Your Majesty sees many people—great officials such as your ministers, small officials such as your Clerk of the Council—distinguished soldiers—men eminent in science or literature—how few of us have what may be called good manners!”

On 10 May²¹⁵ Helps writes a letter marked “confidential”

²¹³ RA I68/26.

²¹⁴ RA I68/32.

²¹⁵ RA L13/75.

and "encloses a newspaper with a marked passage, which the Queen may like to see". It is the *Drawing Room Gazette*, for Saturday, 6 May 1871, and the marked passage is evidently written in opposition to the Match Tax. He remarks that "he is glad to see such a statement, although he would have liked to put it forward himself".

Helps was pleased that the Queen had been "very well received outside, as well as inside the building", according to his letter of 22 June 1871.²¹⁶ This was a state visit to St. Thomas's Hospital, described in considerable detail by *The Times*²¹⁷ of the same date. The latter stated that the Queen, who in May 1868 had laid the foundation stone, "yesterday opened the new buildings erected for this noble charity on the South Embankment of the Thames, directly opposite the Houses of Parliament". The main purpose of this letter, however, is to tell the Queen that he has been offered the C.B., and he encloses copies of both the letter from Gladstone and his reply²¹⁸. With characteristic modesty, Helps declares that "he is not *elated* by the prospect of the honour; but he accepted it without any hesitation, as he should always accept anything of this kind that was sanctioned & approved by his Sovereign". Then he generalizes: "Government, in modern times, makes too little use of honours; there are men who are to be influenced by these honours (childish as they are to a certain extent) who are not to be influenced in any other way. At least that is Mr Helps's opinion".

Helps had "accompanied Prince Arthur to Dulwich College yesterday", he wrote to the Queen on 28 June.²¹⁹ There his two speeches "were exceedingly good, both in matter and manner". According to *The Times*,²²⁰ the first address of the Prince was after the distribution of prizes, a "short speech, urging those who had not been successful this year to look forward to better fortune another year, and to remember that good fortune generally comes to those who do their duty best".

²¹⁶ RA L26/35.

²¹⁷ *The Times*, 22 June 1871.

²¹⁸ Helps wrote to his son E. A. Helps on 22 June that the "tone of G's letter is a little excusative. I believe that it was suggested to him that a K.C.B. ship would be the better thing to offer to me. I suppose when I am 83, it will be *offered*" (original letter in the Helps Papers).

²¹⁹ RA Add. MSS. A15/1779.

²²⁰ *The Times*, 28 June 1871, p. 5.

The second speech was at the very end of the proceedings when the Prince "asked for and obtained an additional holiday for the boys, who were not slow to acknowledge the favour". Helps declares that the Queen "knows how nervous one is when anybody has to speak whom he cares anything at all about"; hence he "must own that he felt a little timid when Prince Arthur rose; but all fear was dispelled". Helps predicts that "Prince Arthur will be a remarkably good speaker, if he continues as well as he has begun". He wishes the Queen "could have been behind a curtain, & heard it all. Prince Arthur's allusions to his Father were very well expressed & were very well received". Helps concludes that all the Queen's children, "taking after their Royal mother in this respect, have a clear and distinct utterance ... which has a great effect in public speaking".

There is no further correspondence known to exist between Helps and the Queen for the remainder of 1871. There is, however, a description of the latter's agitated feelings in a letter from Helps to Lord Ripon on 19 August,²²¹ although with no exact explanation of the circumstances: "The Queen is in a state of excitement and tribulation such as I have never seen her in before. She cried, she sobbed: She was in the highest degree hysterical when I saw her yesterday; and today she is really unwell".

Her feelings were evidently under firmer control when she wrote her Journal entries for 3, 4, and 5 November.²²² Helps had been at Balmoral. She saw him "after tea about some further extracts from my Journal, which I am thinking of having printed". This might well not be *More Leaves* but the separate publication *Leaves from a Journal*,²²³ pertaining to mutual visits in 1855

²²¹ B.L., Ripon Papers. Theodore Martin (*Queen Victoria as I Knew Her*, p. 40) mentions that "In the autumn of 1871 [the Queen] had a serious illness, which occasioned general alarm, and the journals teemed with expressions of the devotion and sympathetic interest which lay in the heart of all Her Majesty's subjects" He quotes from a letter of the Queen of 17 September in which she writes of her recovery from "very severe illness". Of the actual illness Helps had written to his son on 24 August, upon his return from Balmoral, that the Queen "has been seriously unwell, and was not able to see me for some days, & this detained me. It was strange to hear her, usually so distinct & emphatic, expressing herself in low tones & with feeble manner" (original letter in the Helps Papers).

²²² Queen Victoria's Journal.

²²³ This was later published: Queen Victoria, *Leaves from a Journal*: A

of Napoleon III and Empress Eugenie and Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. It was privately printed in 1880.

Visiting Lord Northbrook at Stratton, Helps wrote to the Queen on 22 January, 1872²²⁴ expressing his pleasure at the improvement of the condition of the Prince of Wales, who had been seriously ill with typhoid the preceding month. Concerning the proposed thanksgiving for his recovery, Helps sympathizes with the Queen's "thought and feelings". However, "the *indirect* object to be gained, the gratification of the people, is a very important one; and, as the Queen observes, no other public occasion seemed to offer itself to take the place of it". Then, "Tomorrow or the next day, he hopes to write to Your Majesty more fully on the subject of the Ceremonial". He is pleased that she "has insisted on the service being a short one. He looked at that which had been used on a former occasion, and it looked to him terribly long".

Helps is sending Her Majesty a copy of his new book, *Thoughts upon Government*,²²⁵ and is "rather nervous about the criticism which she may pronounce upon it", since he knows that she "really has great knowledge and good judgement with respect to all matters pertaining to Government".

When he writes the next day, 23 January,²²⁶ he suggests that the proposed ceremony of Thanksgiving for the "Mercies of God to the Royal Family" shall be like that at the opening of Blackfriars Bridge. He agrees that the "open carriage ... would be preferable to the other, and would give more satisfaction to the people". It is this appearance of the Queen that is referred to in his letter of 28 February:²²⁷ "Mr Helps was in Fleet Street, and witnessed the Queen's reception there. From all quarters he heard the same story". *The Times* gives a graphic account

Record of the Visit of the Emperor and Empress of the French to the Queen and H.R.H. the Prince Consort to the Emperor of the French, 1855. With an Introduction by Roger Mortimer (London, 1961).

²²⁴ RA L26/112.

²²⁵ He had written E. A. Helps on 13 October 1871: "My 'Thoughts on Govt' will be a very daring work. Perhaps I shall be turned adrift for having written it. If so, you must look out for something for me in Ceylon" (original letter in the Helps Papers).

²²⁶ RA L26/43.

²²⁷ RA Z451/143.

of the splendours of the National Thanksgiving celebration of 27 February.²²⁸

IX

The publication of the *Memoirs of Baron Stockmar* by his son, Baron E. von Stockmar, first in German (in May)²²⁹ and then in England (in November),²³⁰ caused considerable Royal consternation because of what would seem to be its too frank revelations concerning the private affairs of the Royal family. The English version, it might be added, was edited by F. Max Müller and translated from the German by his wife. Helps's involvement with this publication and its problems, which occupied much of the year, will here be treated as far as possible as a unit. Theodore Martin wrote to the Queen on 12 July²³¹ that Henry Reeve wanted her to know "that he should do his utmost to neutralise the objectionable passages. Reeve will review the book in the October number of the *Edinburgh Review*, of which he is the editor".²³² Martin also declared that "Mr Helps is naturally much concerned about this untoward affair". On 16 July, in writing again to her, Martin stated that "the question ... is not only one of Baron E. Stockmar's *intentions*, which no one dreams of impugning, but of his *discretion*. In his desire to do justice to his father, once the Queen's friend and adviser, he has done what his father's whole practice in life condemned". Helps "has now read the chapters of the book, which

²²⁸ *The Times*, 28 March 1872, pp. 5-10.

²²⁹ *Denkwürdigkeiten aus den Papieren des Freiherrn Christian v. Stockmar*. Zusammengestellt von Ernst Freiherrn v. Stockmar. Braunschweig, 1872.

²³⁰ *Memoirs of Baron Stockmar by his son Baron E. von Stockmar*. Translated from the German by G.A.M. Ed. Max Müller. 2 volumes. London, Longmans Green, 1873.

²³¹ RA Y155/4.

²³² See *Edinburgh Review*, cxxxvi (October, 1872), 374-407, a review of the original German edition. Reeve wrote (p. 376): "There is certainly nothing to be ashamed of in this publication, and but little to give pain to any one now living. But we confess that we have not read it without some sense of the indecorum of the compiler, who, in order to make good his father's claim to the notice of the world, has torn aside the veil which shrouded his father's memory. He has sometimes let slip an insinuation against illustrious reputations; he has sometimes revived the memory of disputes and differences which have long been forgotten by those they most nearly touched, and were unknown to the younger generation".

bear upon England, and is loud in their condemnation". Helps himself wrote to the Queen on 17 July: "How people can make up their minds to publish, without authority from those most nearly concerned, these essentially confidential things, is to Mr Helps very surprising, to say the least of it".²³³ On 10 October he again wrote to Martin²³⁴ that he agrees entirely with his view of the book: "If there had been nothing more in his father's mind than 'So man sagt' about the Palmerston pamphlet,²³⁵ [the so-called "Suppressed Pamphlet", indicating that Prince Albert was responsible for ousting Palmerston as Foreign Secretary in December 1851, finally published in *The Times* on 24 January 1854] it would have been still more unjustifiable to have published the story. But, of course, as you say, the good Baron Stockmar, if it had been mere hearsay that he was dealing with, would never have alluded to the story at all—at least in the way he did allude to it".

Max Müller, editor of the English version of the book, wrote to Helps on 20 October:²³⁶ "I want your advice. I am preparing Stockmar's Memoirs for publication in England. There are some passages in it which might certainly have been omitted, and which are supposed to have given pain to H.M. It is now proposed to alter & omit some of them in the English translation. What do you think of this? Those who are likely to take a personal interest in such matters will most likely refer to the German original. If comparing the English with the German text, they would at once perceive the intentional attenuations and alterations". He foresees some difficulty of one kind or another, perhaps some "unpleasant discussion might arise in one or another of the newspapers. My own opinion is that nothing should be altered". He will, however, "at once bow to your judgement in such a matter". Helps, in turn, wrote to Müller on 28 October²³⁷ that he had read the Editor's Preface. He had found, however, only one objectionable passage (on

²³³ RA Y155/12.

²³⁴ RA Y155/37.

²³⁵ Reeves declares (p. 377) that "Palmerston (who did not like him [Stockmar] for several reasons) justly and candidly affirmed that Stockmar was the most disinterested individual whom he had met with in the course of his life".

²³⁶ Original in the Helps Papers.

²³⁷ A copy of the original is in the Helps Papers.

p. 8),²³⁸ but “I certainly think that the Court of England, or to speak more plainly the Queen, should have been consulted before certain portions of the book were published”. Müller’s reply of 29 October²³⁹ could have referred to this as well as to other letters from Helps that he had destroyed. (“Few men I believe”, he here writes, “destroy letters as ruthlessly as I do. Why not invent an ink that would last only for a week, or why not make it a rule that every letter should be returned to the writer?”) He acknowledges that “In one or two places ... he might have considered the feelings of other persons, and it would have been quite natural if the ms. had been previously submitted to the different Courts”. And yet, “One has, however, only to look at the book in order to see that this could not have been done, for, if it had, certain indiscreet remarks would not have been allowed to stand. (So much for the Editor)”. But asking “whether there is really any harm done, we say No; for the book itself gains immensely as an historical authority, and the Courts may be grateful for the ordeal through which they have passed, unpleasant as the ordeal itself may have been to them”. He continues: “This was the drift of my remarks [evidently in reference to the “Editor’s Preface”], and they were, I thought, as carefully worded as possible. However, the fact remains that you did not see the thread running beneath, and I must alter accordingly. Would it not be enough to leave out *could*? [possible reference to a passage which in the published work, p. viii, reads “It must, indeed, have been a difficult task for a son, who, before all, wished to fulfill a filial duty, and to place before the historian a portrait of his great father, such as he really was, to decide in every case what *ought* (*italics mine*) to be made public, and what, for various reasons, ought to be suppressed”.] Indeed, the curious thing is that he wrote me a letter to say that he did not think it fair in an editor to give such a *slap* to the author”.

²³⁸ Here (p. viii), in the completed published version, is written: “It has been said that, in one or two cases, the feelings of those who still survive might have been more fully considered, and it is not difficult to see, for instance, that none of the courts in which Stockmar’s life was passed, the courts of Saxe-Coburg, Belgium, England, and Prussia, has been consulted, or allowed any censorship on the volume now before us”. This, as well as other additions and emendations, may have been made at the suggestion of Helps.

²³⁹ The original letter is in the Helps Papers.

X

Earlier in 1872 (29 February)²⁴⁰ John Brown had heroically rescued the Queen from the threat of assassination by a fanatical Irishman, Arthur O'Connor. Concerning this incident Helps wrote the Queen on 7 March (the present text is a copy in her own hand).²⁴¹ Helps was "exceedingly grieved at this vile and idiotic attempt and delighted to find that Your Majesty's health has not suffered". Then, "As for the good Brown, he acted just as Mr Helps was sure he wld. act upon any such occasion—namely with dutifulness, promptitude, and vigour. He has well deserved the honour with *wh.* Your Majesty has publicly marked his services on this & other occasions".

The death of the Scottish clergyman, Dr. Norman Macleod, on 16 June 1872 elicited further correspondence between Helps and the Queen. On 19 June²⁴² the former wrote enclosing a copy of the *Pall Mall* of Monday, 17 June: "The reason why the substance of Your Majesty's telegram appeared there was that it was the only paper that was then going to press—for a fourth edition! [the British Library has only the second edition of 18 June, where the telegram is quoted] and Mr Helps thought that the sooner it was seen what were the Queen's feelings upon the loss of this excellent man the better". "My accession day 35 years ago", wrote the Queen to Helps on 20 June 1872.²⁴³ Reflecting on the death of Macleod, "She felt in religious things she could ask him *anything*; in trials and sorrows, doubts and anxieties, she could ask him his opinion and advice, and it was ever lovingly, wisely, and kindly given". Also, she sends Helps a copy of her letter to Donald Macleod, the brother, "she hopes without many faults".²⁴⁴ This Helps returns the next day with the comment that it is "very touchingly expressed". In another letter to her of the same date,²⁴⁵ he notes that "there was a remarkable coincidence of thought in Your Majesty's letter and Mr Helps's. The most impressive part of Dr Macleod's character

²⁴⁰ Full accounts of this event and official reactions thereto are found in *The Times*, 1 March 1872, pp. 88 ff.

²⁴¹ RA Add. MSS. C31/13.

²⁴² RA D3/15.

²⁴³ Copy RA D3/15.

²⁴⁴ RA D3/18.

²⁴⁵ RA D3/27.

and nature seemed ... to be, that one could say anything to him, without any reticence, upon the most serious and vital subjects, being sure at the same time that he would not misconstrue anything one said". Helps returned to the Queen on 25 June²⁴⁶ the "narrative of Dr Macleod's last days. It is, indeed, a most affecting narrative, touchingly written". This "narrative" was perhaps the article by Dean Stanley which had appeared in *The Times* of 21 June.²⁴⁷

On 12 July Helps received the K.C.B. No further Journal references by the Queen survive nor any correspondence between the two for the remainder of the year. Helps was, however, much occupied during this time with cattle plague, cholera epidemic, and other pressing concerns of the Council Office.²⁴⁸

Napoleon III died at Chislehurst on 9 January 1873 and the next day the Queen wrote to Helps:²⁴⁹ "Cannot you try and prevent by a hint to the great people the continuation of the shameful and disgusting publication of all the most intimate details concerning the poor Emperor's suffering and death?" Indeed, rather too lurid accounts of his illness are found in, for instance, *The Times* of 4 and 6 January.²⁵⁰ Helps, who agreed with Her Majesty, "was commenting upon the subject yesterday, & expressing his opinion pretty strongly when someone exclaimed 'Yes, but it is the medical men who are to blame. If they did not communicate these details, how could such things come before the public'?" He continues in this letter of 11 January 1873²⁵¹ that "One's doctor ought to be at least as confidential as one's solicitor", and that he "has done the best he can in suggesting to those whom Your Majesty calls 'the great people', the propriety of discontinuing the publication of these disgusting details". Still revelling in the delights of authorship, the Queen wrote in her Journal on 3 March²⁵² that "she saw Sir A. Helps & discussed the new 'Leaves of my

²⁴⁶ RA D3/34.

²⁴⁷ A letter (RA W80/9) from Delane, editor of *The Times*, to Helps of this date indicates the authorship. This Helps forwards to Her Majesty with a note (RA Z449/92).

²⁴⁸ The technical aspects of these subjects would no doubt not have been of great personal interest to the Queen.

²⁴⁹ Copy RA J84/22 and 23.

²⁵⁰ January 4, p. 7; January 6, p. 9.

²⁵¹ RA J84/24.

²⁵² RA Queen Victoria's Journal.

Journal', which I wish to commence by having printed privately" and on 4 March²⁵³ "saw Sir A. Helps again on the same subject".

Helps expressed to Lady Churchill on 4 April his satisfaction at the success of the Queen's visit to a less favoured section of London, Hackney:²⁵⁴ "I envied your accompanying the Queen. I do not know of any sight in the world more interesting than to see the poorest inhabitants of a great metropolis come forth into the streets on an occasion where their sympathies are for a good cause". The fall of the Liberals and the rise of the Conservatives under Disraeli in February 1874 brought a personal blow to him in the defeat of his son-in-law, William Stone, husband of his daughter Mellie. Helps wrote to the Queen on 5 February²⁵⁵ that he is "much vexed at his son-in-law's defeat at Portsmouth. Mr. Stone is a young man of great ability, and probably would have soon held office which he would have filled most efficiently. He is beaten by Mr. T. Bruce, who, however, as Sir Arthur hears, is a very able & very agreeable man, & a very fit person to be in Parliament". Although Helps, as we have seen, had a markedly Liberal bias, he could not, especially in view of his office, show any noticeable political preference. For instance, in discussing Richard Cross, Home Secretary in the new government (Helps to the Queen, 25 February 1874),²⁵⁶ Helps declares that he had heard that "Mr Cross is a most able man. His countenance confirms the good opinion which those who know him have of him".

Helps sent the Queen a portrait of himself, according to a letter of 19 May,²⁵⁷ and was glad that she "finds some likeness in the engraving". "The dress", he declares, "is a fond imagination of the artist (Mr. Frank Williams), for Sir Arthur was never so neatly and sprucely dressed in his life". He now refers to a banquet of 19 May given by the Queen in honour of the Emperor of Russia, at which, according to *The Times*, he was a guest. With customary flattery, he writes: "It was truly regal. Sir Arthur had expected to see great magnificence, but it exceeded his expectations. Then it went off so well: the waiting was excellent". He now touches on one of his deepest antipathies: "Sir Arthur

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ RA L26/89.

²⁵⁵ RA C33/12.

²⁵⁶ RA C33/104.

²⁵⁷ RA H41/156.

has an absolute horror of long dinners—a feeling with which he suspects Your Majesty thoroughly sympathizes—but the banquet moved on rapidly, which gave an additional charm to it”. As for appearance, “The Queen looked very well : indeed for several years, Sir Arthur has not seen her look better. The crown, or tiara, or whatever it is called, was most becoming”. He concludes : “And then Your Majesty played the part of the gracious hostess admirably. Altogether it was a great success : & every one who talked to Sir Arthur afterwards about it, said that it was so”.

Although he mentions his concern about reports of Prince Leopold's health, his letter of 23 July 1874²⁵⁸ is essentially about the new Endowed Schools Bill²⁵⁹ (an earlier one had passed in 1869). This would give support, additional to tax revenues, to grammar schools and upper elementary schools, with academic enrichment a principal goal. Helps is

much puzzled as to what answer he should give. He feels that, what with the amendments that have been made and the contradictory statements that are put forward as to the meaning of certain clauses in the Bill, he cannot profess to have a clear understanding of its merits and demerits. Most confidentially he may tell Your Majesty that, some months ago, he ventured to suggest to one of the prime movers of the Bill, that a very different course should be adopted from that which has been adopted. He was well aware—no man more aware—that the present Commissioners had sometimes failed from want of judgement, or of courtesy, or from too much pedantry, to give satisfaction to those with whom they had dealings. Nevertheless they were active, energetic, zealous men, and had by this time acquired a thorough knowledge of the subject. Sir Arthur's proposal was to correct their faults and increase their efficiency by adding to the number of the Commissioners.²⁶⁰ He would have added two paid

²⁵⁸ RA D5/24.

²⁵⁹ See W.J. Reader, *Life in Victorian England* (London, 1964), pp. 165-6, and Disraeli to the Queen, 26 July 1874, *Letters of Queen Victoria*, ed. G.E. Buckle, 2nd ser. (London, 1926), ii. 349-50, where (p. 350, n. 1) it is stated that “The clauses in the Endowed Schools Bill, which restored some of the Endowed Schools to the Church of England, were abandoned by the Government in face of the determined opposition of the Liberal party”.

²⁶⁰ Disraeli (above, n. 1, 259), declared that the reason the Bill “excited so much attention was in consequence of its proposal to supersede the existing commissioners, a proposal sanctioned by the House of Commons by the large majority of 85”.

and two unpaid Commissioners; and he even ventured to suggest that his son-in-law, Mr. Stone, should be one of the unpaid Commissioners, for Sir Arthur has never met with any man who has such an intimate knowledge of schools and their management as Mr. Stone possesses. Mr. Helps thinks that if his plan had been adopted, the present troubles about the Bill would have been avoided, and he feels sure that if four new men, very carefully chosen, had been added to the Commission, its faults and errors would have been nearly sure to have been corrected. It must not be supposed that the present Commissioners have, substantially, done their work ill. On the contrary, they have done a great part of their work very well, but there has been a certain want of tact, and of conciliatory management which have occasioned their unpopularity. No one knows better than Your Majesty how far tact goes in the conduct of public business.

The conversion of Lord Ripon to Roman Catholicism caused considerable Royal consternation this year. On 7 September Helps acknowledged the Queen's telegram concerning the affair with the statement that he could not give her "any information as regards the cause of Lord Ripon's cession to Rome".²⁶¹ He declares that "he was as much astonished as any body could be. Indeed, when Lord Ripon, about a fortnight ago, wrote to Sir Arthur to tell of his intention, Sir Arthur looked again and again at the handwriting, hardly believing that it could be genuine". When he had written to Helps on this matter on 20 August, as he had done to many of his closest friends,²⁶² Ripon had declared: "The sight of your handwriting the other day & the memory of your often experienced kindness prompt

²⁶¹ RA D5/51.

²⁶² Original in the Helps Papers. Other letters were written on the same subject to Thomas Hughes, Dean Liddon, and the Earl of Carnarvon. Helps's reply to Ripon is in Lucien Wolf, *Life of the First Marquess of Ripon* (London, 1921), i. 346-7. A copy of a confidential letter addressed to "My Lord Duke [of Richmond?]" in the Helps Papers on 5 September declares: "Are you not astonished? Is not Ripon about the last you would have expected to go over to Rome?—I do not know how you would feel about such matters, but I must confess that I rather admire a man (not his intellectual powers) but the total man for this change of religion. At any rate he shows that he thinks more deeply & more earnestly, though perhaps not more wisely, about these all-important subjects than the rest of us". Similar sentiments are expressed in a letter to his brother William of 10 October 1872 in the Helps Papers. In addition, "The two people he has most lived with of late years are [W.E. Forster] & myself. Perhaps, as we are, both, very stout Protestants, he may have been induced to take exactly the opposite line".

me to write to you", He stated that he believed that Helps "has already more than half suspected that my opinions on religious subjects have undergone a change during the last few years. If so, you will not perhaps be much surprised when I tell you I am about to become a Catholic, though you will doubtless blame me none the less". With distinctive candour Ripon declares that he "will not enter into any defense of the step I am determined to take; I would not hope to deprecate your censure, scarcely even to explain to you my feelings—but I feel confidence that you will give me credit for honesty; & I would fain hope that you will allow me to retain a friendship which I praise as greatly as yours". He asks that Helps for the moment keep this confidential disclosure to himself because "I am anxious to announce my intentions to a few of my intimate friends before it becomes generally known—". In writing about this matter to the Queen, Helps declares that he did not know what she "would feel upon the subject" and that "he would have thought that Lord Ripon was the last man in the world to go over to Rome"²⁶³.

All through this period the Queen still followed the gleam of her insatiable literary aspiration. In her Journal (2 October 1874),²⁶⁴ for example, she wrote: "Saw Sir A. Helps after tea about various things & the new little volume of my journies which is to be printed".

XII

Helps tells Mellie on 5 December, 1874²⁶⁵ that he is going to review the first volume of Martin's *Life of the Prince Consort*. "I hate reviewing; it does not suit me; but I was sure to be asked from all quarters to review the book: so I chose to do it for the Quarterly at once, & so get rid of the other tormenters". Because of his total knowledge of the subject, Helps was well qualified for the task. Indeed, he had followed the progress of the book, had been in Martin's confidence, and had read the proofs. Several existing letters from Martin to Helps serve to

²⁶³ See above, n. 247.

²⁶⁴ RA Queen Victoria's Journal.

²⁶⁵ Original in the Helps Papers.

confirm the latter's involvement. On 11 October 1873²⁶⁶ Martin had written to Helps for advice about the Prince's role as private secretary: "I feel what you mean about the Private Secretary. But I do not see my way to stating the matters otherwise. In the fact that he was not from the first H.M.'s recognized private secretary lay much of the embarrassment of his position for the first 2 or 3 years of the marriage. Lehzen was the political Private Secretary as well as Secretary for all H.M.'s private affairs. The results were most mischievous and kept the Prince out in the cold in a way that became intolerable. Besides the Prince himself [concerning himself] ... uses the very phrase, 'The Queen's *Private Secretary* & Permanent Minister'. So I think I must let it stand—but it shall be well considered". He wishes Helps to read the whole chapter in proof before it is submitted to the Queen.

Martin gives his "thanks for the trouble you have taken with my proof" in his letter of 11 December.²⁶⁷ He is pleased that Helps finds "interesting" what Martin felt "had a look of threads and patches". He wants to show the "many sidedness of the Prince, & the guiding principle of his life—& this is difficult to get [into] a good coherent narrative". On 20 September 1874²⁶⁸ Martin realizes that he "cannot finish the life in two volumes. It will scarcely be possible to get the year 1848 into the first volume. I am sorry for this—for I fear nobody will care for three volumes on the subject".

On 4 October²⁶⁹ Martin declares that he "shall mitigate the passage about Austria", and on 13 October²⁷⁰ appreciates that Helps is "so prompt with my proofs. I wish H.M. were equally so; but she is apt to linger over them, altho, I am bound to say, that she gives me no trouble: She seems pleased with the way I have got through thus far".

Helps's lengthy review, which appeared in the January 1875 issue of the *London Quarterly Review* (pp. 56-73), contains nothing but praise. He had been so much involved in the preparation of the book and could scarcely do otherwise, and, having known the Prince well (Martin had never met him), he

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

proceeds to make his own analysis of his character, based, in part, on materials presented in the book. One might observe that, without mentioning his own authorship, he quotes from the "author of the Introduction of the Prince's Speeches".²⁷¹ In addition, in telling of "one drawback against which the author has to contend", he alludes to a subject with which he is very familiar,²⁷² the drawback that Albert's character is such that "it does not admit of any of those violent contrasts which are wont, especially at first sight, to make a character interesting". For instance, "A hero such as Cortes [with whom Helps, as we have seen, had dealt extensively in his own works], pious and unscrupulous, polite and cruel, admirable and fierce, inevitably amuses, astonishes, and attracts us".²⁷³ Helps does find one quality "that relieved its noble gravity and consistency", namely, his English humour (not wit).²⁷⁴

XIII

Of all Helps's royal connections, that with the Prince of Wales and the Princess Alexandra was perhaps the warmest and most intimate, as much social as political. However, there was a degree of seriousness in their relationship. We have already noted that from time to time Helps expressed to the Queen feelings of anxiety concerning her son's welfare and well-being. In addition, one might observe that on 11 September 1874²⁷⁵ Ponsonby, the Queen's Private Secretary, had written to Helps that "Paragraphs have been lately appearing about the Prince of Wales' debts", but stated that there was "not a word of truth in any of the above statements". Indeed, "If the Prince of Wales at any time exceeded his annual income on account of his building operations or from similar causes, he has met the extra call by falling back on his capital. He is certainly not in debt. But the Queen thinks that the repetition of this scandalous assertion may lead to its being believed" and "would like some friendly hint given to the *Daily Telegraph*, whose editor I believe

²⁷¹ Review, p. 70.

²⁷² See above

²⁷³ Review, p. 70.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, ii. 252.

you know, as he might expose the falsehood of the whole story”.

Earlier, on 26 September 1870,²⁷⁶ the Prince had confided in Helps concerning his views on the Franco-Prussian war: “This war is a terrible calamity and I wish to God that Peace could be made. The French are however so obstinate that I fear that every day that prolongs the conflict will make the terms for peace more hard for them to endure”.

Perhaps no greater demonstration of the Prince’s regard for Helps exists than in his letter to him of 11 August 1867:²⁷⁷

Private

Marlborough House

August 11/67

My dear Helps,

Many thanks for your very kind letter—& I shall certainly make a point of reading the little book—but after you have revised it—I shall probably not have many remarks to make on it—You may be sure that nothing has touched me more than the great frankness with wh. you have written to me—& treating me quite like a friend—as alas! it is not an easy matter to know who is your true friend—I have had some little experience in that—I cannot sufficiently thank you, my dear Helps, for all the good advice you have given the Queen—as you must easily imagine that after that of my wife—my principal object in life is to secure the happiness of my beloved mother—This has certainly been a trying year for the Queen—but I am in great hopes that she will come out more next year—& *till* next year it is certainly no use broaching the subject. The Princess thanks you very much for your kind message—& hopes to see you before we leave town—I go to Sandringham.

[Letter unsigned]

E. A. P. Helps, Sir Arthur’s grandson, declares that “making due allowance for the occasion there was a genuine ring in the Prince of Wales’ letter to Lady Helps on the occasion of her husband’s death”:²⁷⁸

As I was on terms of the greatest intimacy with your poor husband, I cannot refrain from writing to express to you how deeply and sincerely

²⁷⁶ The original is not now in the Helps Papers. The quotation is from E. A. P. Helps’s unpublished manuscript.

²⁷⁷ The original is in the possession of the present writer.

²⁷⁸ This statement, as well as the text of the letter, is in E. A. P. Helps’s unpublished manuscript.

the Princess and myself console with you at the irreparable loss you have sustained. There is no one for whom I entertained a greater regard and I may say affection as there were so many matters about which I had occasion to consult him, and his advice was of the greatest value to me.

Helps was a frequent visitor to Sandringham, where the quality of life was quite informal. He wrote to Mellie on 8 December 1872:²⁷⁹

Princes are just like other people, so fond of letting you see things. Here I have been looking at pigs & cows & dogs & kangaroos for the last 2 hours.

Something of the ease of the relationship of Helps with the Prince is revealed in a letter he wrote to Francis Knollys, the Prince's Secretary, on 23 January 1871.²⁸⁰ It refers to another visit to Sandringham: "The Prince, who knows what an official slave I am, will not be surprised to hear that I am not able to profit by all his kindness; but I am fortunately able to come on Wednesday the first of February and stay till Saturday". He continues:

It is very self-denying of the Prince to honor me with this invitation. He cannot quite like to be cut out, as a sportsman, by a wretched clerk in a public office. And he assuredly will be, if he honors me by inviting me to accompany him in a shooting expedition (an honor, by the way, I greatly deprecate), for certainly I shall bag a much nobler creature than a bird, namely a human life,—a feat which has not yet been accomplished by His Royal Highness.

Then, too, as regards hunting. When I last went out hunting with H.R.H., who was it who saw a little brown creature steal out from a wood, and sneak along the side of it, while the *other* sportsmen, stupid fellows, were looking the other way?

I did not say anything, and indeed tried to make them all continue to look in the wrong direction, for, in the great case of *Huntsman v. Fox*, I am always on the side of the defendant.

XIV

It was from a chill contracted during a levée of the Prince of Wales that Helps's fatal affliction (pleurisy) developed. He died on 7 March 1875.

²⁷⁹ Original in the Helps Papers.

²⁸⁰ A copy of the original is in the Helps Papers. It is published in *Correspondence*, pp. 296-7.

Expressions of concern in letters and telegrams suggest the agitated feelings of the Queen at the prospect of losing her devoted servant. She can scarcely contain her grief when she hears that he is dead: "What can I say! my tears are falling fast?", she wrote to Alice on 7 March 1875,²⁸¹ "I can hardly command any words. I *cl*d. not *think* that there was no hope tho' after receiving your Telegram I felt the danger was extreme! I will not speak of what I have lost! You know it well enough! I ought only to think of you & your Mother & Brothers & Sisters & you will excuse *self* appearing in this letter wh. is far more genuine than the Expression of deepest sympathy! But I have experienced during the last 13 years too much kindness & too great devotion to me, not to feel overpowered with this sudden blow wh. deprives me of so much help & friendship. God's will be done!" She commiserates further with Alice and her family and then says: "I was just reading his admirable review on my dear Husband's life & I hoped soon to write him about it". Writing on the same day to Theodore Martin, she expresses regret that "It is more than a month since the Queen last saw him—& to think she should never see him again!!"²⁸² In the same vein she wrote to Alice on 16 May²⁸³ that at the first meeting of the Privy Council after his death "how painful it was to see *another* in your dear father's place, as a total stranger". She also says that she "finished" *Ivan de Biron* (his Russian novel and final work) "yesterday & read with a sad interest & which I much admire! How I wish I could have told him this! How I am vexed I had no time to read it before & how often I recognise in it *his* feelings, & views & what true, fine sentiments it contains. I thought I *cl*d. hear his fine kind voice!"

Sir Thomas Biddulph, Keeper of the Privy Purse, wrote to Lady Helps on 10 March²⁸⁴ expressing the Queen's wish for "the continuation of the House at Kew out of regard to your Husband's service to Her Majesty". Biddulph also wrote to Alice²⁸⁵ that the Queen had made a special gift to her. Recently she had "granted an annuity of £100 to your Father. I believe

²⁸¹ RA Vic. Add. MSS. A32/21.

²⁸² RA Y170/48.

²⁸³ RA Vic. Add. MSS. A32/23.

²⁸⁴ RA Vic. PP 18194 (1875).

²⁸⁵ The original, undated, is in the Helps Papers.

it was done with the view of enabling you to be more continually with him. The Queen wishes to increase this to £200 a year to be paid to you, & desires me to inform you of it, which I have real pleasure in doing". The reason is "in recognition of your poor Father's very valuable service rendered to the Queen".

XV

Although never officially in the employ of the Queen and never a lady-in-waiting to Her Majesty, Alice continued to assist her and visit her long after the death of her father. Letters from the Queen to Alice survive from as late as 21 January 1877.²⁸⁶ Expressions of sympathy and concern, however, are soon replaced by suggestions that Alice should return to her work on *More Leaves*, for, on 16 May 1875,²⁸⁷ the Queen wrote that "I must think again of the Extracts wh. he [her father] corrected & you copied wh. were to make another book & to be privately printed & later to be perhaps published". This letter suggests that the Queen was about to make considerable additional demands on Sir Arthur's eldest daughter. On 29 August 1881 she wrote to Martin, "Will Alice Helps never help in any way anymore?",²⁸⁸ and on 15 November 1883, "Has poor Alice Helps not made herself at all useful?"²⁸⁹ Finally, on 30 May 1892,²⁹⁰ shortly after the death of Lady Helps, she wrote to Martin: "Has Sir Theodore heard anything of poor Alice Helps & what she is going to do? There was no sympathy between her & her mother formerly. The Queen trusts it was better at the last".

The interesting possibility of a biography of her father had evidently been suggested to Alice, but her reactions were negative. She wrote to E. A. Helps,²⁹¹ "I was besieged with offers of a life", but evidently she had promised her father that she would not undertake such a project because it would involve "many things related to the Queen's confidence".²⁹²

²⁸⁶ RA Vic. Add. MSS., A32/29. This letter largely concerns revisions of *More Leaves*.

²⁸⁷ RA Fic. Add. MSS. A32/23.

²⁸⁸ RA Y/165, 72.

²⁸⁹ RA Y/165, 88.

²⁹⁰ RA Y172/104.

²⁹¹ Quoted, in part, in E. A. P. Helps's unpublished manuscript.

²⁹² In a letter to Alice of 15 August 1875 (RA Vic. Add. MSS. A32/25)

The notion that Alice was a "creature" or slave of her father, emancipated only by his death, is dispelled by the disclosure²⁹³ that she was not pleased with the prospect of Theodore Martin's assuming the authorship of the biography of the Prince Consort. Her father had to give reassurances to her: "You ask 'Do you think she will really take him at his own terms to do her work, and at such times and seasons as will suit him and not interfere with his holiday?' Yes, I do, and if I did not think so, I would advise him not to take it ... she has expressly said that she, General Grey, Mr. Helps and Miss Helps will do the work of preparing the document for him, she will not be at all fussy; it is not in her nature".

the Queen wrote: "I think you *cd.* exert *yourself* in trying to write something about *him*, his views & feelings, it *wd.* be an occupation' & an interest. *You* knew him so well,—We had so high an opinion of you & your power of writing. We *wd.* all help you & it *wd.* be such an object of interest in grief".

²⁹³ E. A. P. Helps's unpublished manuscript.