

has been taken from us.—But we must turn again to matters more specially within our province to refer to.

Of the many functions which pertain to the sovereignty of Great Britain, there are none more honorable, none more important than those which are concerned with the administration of justice. The Sovereign is the fountain of justice, as well as the fountain of honor, and to the Sovereign alone belongs the prerogative of mercy. In early and primitive times the "king sat in the gate," hearing the complaints of his subjects, redressing their wrongs, settling their disputes and awarding punishment to malefactors. So sat David and his illustrious successor, and such is the practice to-day in Eastern countries, and from this practice grew by slow degrees the courts by which in our day justice is administered. In the name of the Sovereign all writs run, and were such a thing as an interregnum to arise all legal proceedings would come to a standstill. More directly than any other officials our judges represent the Sovereign. The Lord Chancellor is "the keeper of the King's conscience," and it is as directly representing the Sovereign that his great functions are performed. In feudal times the "King's Justiciar" was one of the great officers of State, and the courts as originally established, or, as by degrees they were extended and enlarged, were the King's courts. As the King could appoint the judges, so he could remove them, until this power was so frequently abused in later times that the Sovereign was compelled so far to limit his prerogative as to forego the power of removal.

Lawyers are officers of the courts; and though the changes in our constitution have made the supremacy of our Sovereign a matter of form rather than reality, we naturally feel a special interest in the person of the Sovereign. During the reign just ended there is no doubt that the opinion of the Queen had a decided influence in the appointment of the judges. No doubt a negative, rather than a positive influence, for it cannot be supposed that she would have permitted the appointment to the Bench of any man whose character was open to suspicion in any particular. And it is one of the glories of Queen Victoria's reign that the judges of her courts have been of the highest reputation for probity as well as ability.

The accession of Her Majesty found our juridical system freed from many abuses which had grown up around it, and the criminal law deprived of many of the terrors which previously weakened its powers by inflicting penalties so severe that juries failed to convict. In later years still further changes have taken place. The distinction in procedure between law and equity has