

and glory to the people under such a sovereign. If I mistake not, such was the character of Queen Victoria, and such were the results of her rule. It has been our privilege to live under her reign, and it must be admitted that her reign was of the grandest in history, rivalling in length, and more than rivalling in glory the long reign of Louis XIV., and more than the reign of Louis XIV., likely to project its lustre into future ages.

If we cast our glance back over the sixty-four years into which was encompassed the reign of Queen Victoria, we stand astonished, however familiar we may be with the facts, at the development of civilization which has taken place during that period. We stand astonished at the advance of culture, of wealth, of legislation, of education, of literature, of the arts and sciences, of locomotion by land and by sea, and of almost every department of human activity. The age of Queen Victoria must be held to be on a par with the most famous within the memory of man. Of course, of many facts and occurrences which have contributed to make the reign of Queen Victoria what it was, to give it the splendour which has created such an impression upon her own country, and which has shed such a luminous trail all over the world, many took place apart and away from her influence. Many events took place in relation to which the most partial panegyrists would, no doubt, have to say, that they were simply the happy circumstance of the time in which she lived. Science, for instance, might have obtained the same degree of development under another monarch.

It is also possible that literature might have flourished under another monarch, but I believe that the contention can be advanced, and advanced truly, that the literature of the Victoria age to a large extent reflected the influence of the Queen. To the eternal glory of the literature of the reign of Queen Victoria be it said, that it was pure and absolutely free from the grossness which disgraced it in former ages, and which still unhappily is the shame of the literature of other countries. Happy indeed is the country whose literature is of such a character that it can be the intellectual food of the family circle; that it can be placed by the mother in the hands of her daughter with abundant assurance that while the mind is improved the heart is not polluted. Such is the literature of the Victorian age. For this blessing, in my judgment, no small credit is due to the example and influence of our departed Queen. It is a fact well known in history, that in England as in other countries, the influence of the sovereign was always reflected upon the literature of the reign. In former ages, when the court was impure, the literature of the nation was impure, but in the age of Queen Victoria, where the life of the court was pure, the literature

of the age was pure also. If it be true that there is a real connection between the high moral standard of the court of the sovereign and the literature of the age, then I can say without hesitation that Queen Victoria has conferred, not only upon her own people, but upon mankind at large, a gift for which we can never have sufficient appreciation.

But there are features of the reign of Queen Victoria which are directly traceable to her influence, and if I were to give my own appreciation of events as they have made their impression upon my judgment, I would say that in three particulars has the reign of Queen Victoria been most beneficial.

It has been stated more than once that she was a model constitutional sovereign. She was more than that. She was not only a model constitutional sovereign, but she was undoubtedly the first constitutional sovereign the world ever saw—she was the first absolutely constitutional sovereign which England ever had, and England we know has been in advance of the world in constitutional parliamentary government. It may be said without exaggeration, that up to the time of the accession of Queen Victoria to the Throne, the history of England was a record of a continuous contest between the sovereign and the parliament for supremacy. That contest was of many centuries duration, and it was not terminated by the revolution of 1688, for although after that revolution the contest never took a violent form, still it continued for many reigns in court intrigues and plots; the struggle on the part of the sovereign being to rule according to his own views; the struggle on the part of parliament being to rule according to the views of the people.

Queen Victoria was the first of all sovereigns who was absolutely impersonal—impersonal politically I mean. Whether the question at issue was the Abolition of the Corn Laws, or the war in the Crimea, or the extension of the Suffrage, or the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, or Home Rule in Ireland, the Queen never gave any information of what her views were upon any of these great political issues. Her subjects never knew what were her personal views, though views she had, because she was a woman of strong intellect, and we know that she followed public events with great eagerness. We can presume, indeed we know, that whenever a new policy was presented to her by her Prime Minister she discussed that policy with him, and sometimes approved or sometimes, perhaps, dissented. But whether she approved or disapproved no one ever knew what her views were, and she left the praise or the blame to those who were responsible to the people. That wise policy upon the part of our late sovereign early bore fruit, and in ever-increasing abundance. The reward to the Queen was not only in the gratitude and affection of