

THE POWER OF EDWARD

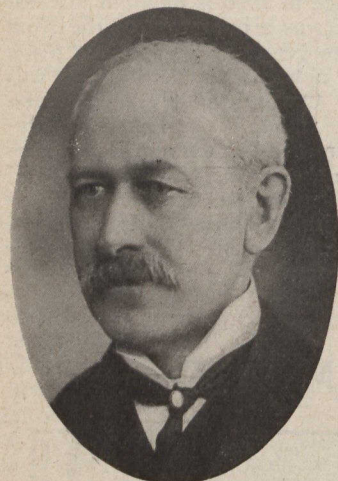
By MR. JUSTICE LONGLEY

On May 14th, 1909, Mr. Justice Longley of Halifax sat on the same platform with Hon. James Bryce—before the Canadian Club of New York. Each was to deliver an address. Judge Longley spoke first, on "The Relations between Canada, Great Britain and the United States." Having to catch a train he left before Mr. Bryce had spoken ten minutes. Next morning the "yellow" newspapers

scareheaded a story—that Judge Longley had advocated the separation of Canada from the Empire; and that in a fit of disagreement with the speech of the British Ambassador he had left the platform. Judge Longley was naturally indignant. He has his own views on kingcraft—as may be gathered from the following article. But he is not a separatist—is he?

THE WORLD'S PEACE BASED ON PERSONALITY

EDWARD VII. reigned only a little over nine years, and yet there is ground for believing that he will appear in history as one of the greatest monarchs who ever occupied the British throne. Appreciations of his work and character have been without number since his recent



Mr. Justice Longley.

death, most of which would have been uttered if he had been a commonplace person—such is the tendency to exalt kinghood. I have seen no appreciation which exactly embodies what I conceive to be his ultimate claim to be ranked among great kings, and, therefore, I shall attempt to express my own conception of the qualities which give him a secure place among the immortals.

In one sense the circumstances surrounding his accession were favourable to a successful royal career, and in another unfavourable. His mother had occupied the throne for over sixty years, and comparatively few were living who had known any other sovereign. It had always been Victoria, and it seemed as if it would always be Victoria. I recall the first occasion when I took part in singing the National Anthem, a few days after her death. No one could get his lips to use the words "King" and "him," and, not long afterwards, at a dinner at Government House, a guest, who sat next to me, when the King's health was proposed, in responding exclaimed ardently, "The King," adding reverently, "God bless her." Victoria had achieved a very large and a very high place in the estimation of her country and of the world. Her court was pure; her character was perfect; she reigned a long time, and during this protracted sovereignty Great Britain made immense progress materially, the Empire had been enormously increased and strengthened, and science, art and literature flourished, with many illustrious exponents. These had created a tendency to the apotheosis of Victoria, and it was in a sense hard for the average and unthinking person to be reconciled to the reign of any except Victoria.

This was the inauspicious circumstance which attended Edward's accession.

The Influence of Victoria.

It is an ungracious and thankless task to even raise a question as to Victoria's just title to exceptional renown as a sovereign, but, sooner or later, history will be compelled to face the problem, and it may not unfittingly be considered any time. It has been already said that Victoria lived a highly moral life, maintained a pure court, and exerted a large influence in her kingdom and throughout the world in favour of high ethical standards of sovereignty. She was, of course, a constitutional monarch. She could have been nothing else and retained the throne. Her personal influence was everywhere good. She encouraged literature, though not excessively. She had the good fortune to be at the head of a nation when its statesmen, soldiers and sailors were establishing and expanding the Empire, to which her individual efforts, it must be said, contributed only slightly. The Victorian age means simply the age in which Victoria reigned, not in any sense the age she created.

On the other side of the account, it must be admitted by all that in the highest kingly functions she was altogether deficient. During her long reign she never set foot in Ireland until she was past eighty, though there was no part of her Dominions which needed the subtle influence of the Royal pres-

ence more to recall a considerable portion of the population to their loyal sense. She finally, when nearing the grave, was compelled to visit this important kingdom by the exigencies created by the Boer war, which, at one time, assumed a serious aspect, and an outbreak in Ireland would have given the *coup de grace* to a dangerous situation. While it is true that her intercourse with the sovereigns of Europe was always with the aim of avoiding war and preserving peace, yet in this role it cannot be truly said she achieved any great advantages to the British nation. At, and previous to her death, England had not an ally and scarcely a friend among the great powers of Europe. The sentiment of the people of Europe, from end to end, was generally hostile to England and the English, so that the most enthusiastic Imperialists were driven to a new role and talked of "splendid isolation." It was by no means a splendid isolation. It was a very dangerous and uncomfortable isolation, and caused daily anxieties to the responsible statesmen and military commanders of the Empire.

England in 1901.

This situation constitutes the promising incident attending Edward's succession.

Edward had served a long apprenticeship in public affairs, though his mother persistently refused to allow him the slightest participation in the serious political affairs of the State; but this experience in no way accounts for his remarkable exercise of the kingly functions. An average man, lacking all special endowments for the kingly office, might be Prince of Wales for a half century and acquire little or nothing essential to make him a potent factor in the affairs of the world. Edward was endowed from the beginning with the precise qualities required to enable him at once to restore to his Empire and race the friendly regard and good will of Europe and the world.

To define with clearness and exactitude these qualities is no easy task. The greatest attributes possessed by all men are the spiritual and impalpable. Many monarchs, both in ancient and modern times, have been better endowed intellectually than Edward VII., have possessed greater powers of logic, higher imagination, finer literary instincts, and, perhaps, profounder views of statecraft. It was not by dint of these that Edward achieved his unparalleled work in his kingly office. It was by an indescribable personal charm, an unerring tact, that rendered it possible for him to journey over Europe and make friends for Britain.

It is not enough that monarchs themselves be placated. In this age no monarch is absolutely master of the affairs of his state. All sovereigns, in civilised countries, are limited in their powers and subject to the body of opinion among the people over whom they reign. Even the Czar of Russia, though constitutionally unfettered by any limitations, is nevertheless largely under the control of his advisers, and unable to disregard the pregnant sentiments of his people. The work King Edward accomplished in his visits to European courts, and such visits count tremendously, is that he was able by some subtle means to capture the hearts of the people he was visiting. If the people of one nation are bitterly hostile to the people of a neighbouring nation, and *vice versa*, it is in vain that the monarchs exchange friendly professions. When Edward came to the throne, France was not only the traditional enemy of Great Britain, but the incidents of the Fashoda affair were fresh in French minds. Other causes of friction existed. It was not the President of the French Republic through whom the King could hope to secure the friendship of France; it was the hearts of the French people that he must capture. No visit to a European capital was wanting in some, or many, little acts of delicacy, courtesy and tact, which in an instant appealed to the imagination and hearts of millions, and King Edward made a host of friends not only for himself, but, of vastly more importance, for his nation.

In a very few years King Edward, simply by his kingly power, and his supreme personal qualities,

without any official status in diplomacy, which under our system belongs exclusively to his ministers, captured the hearts and good-will of nearly every nation in Europe. When he died, it could be as truly affirmed that Great Britain had not an enemy in Europe, as that she had not a friend when he began his reign. In the delicate moment, when foolish people, mostly in Great Britain, were seeking to create ill-feeling and national panic over German designs, King Edward made a visit to his Imperial nephew, was cordially received by the Berlin populace, exchanged kindly sentiments privately and publicly with the Emperor, and thus contributed enormously to dispel the tension of feeling which had been—as many think—unjustly created. His visit was deprecated at the time by the extreme Jingoists, but he went, nevertheless, and his mission was eminently successful.

The Empire in 1910.

In like manner he secured the friendly sentiment of the Italians, the Spanish and the Portuguese, and drew to him the hearts of the Swedes and Norwegians. The ablest Foreign Minister, with all possible skill and adroitness, could not have pretended to achieve anything like this. It was only a personality, endowed by nature with special qualities, who could bring about such results. For years to come the Empire will enjoy the fruits of his extraordinary power.

Again, he must be regarded for a moment from the standpoint of his own Dominions. The power of the Crown is a phrase which it is not easy to elucidate. It means much in one sense and it may come to mean little. It is intangible, yet potent. It may be compared to the flag of a country—only a bit of cloth with a few emblems on it, but representing the might and pride of a nation. An insult to this piece of cotton may rouse the people of a country to war. In a republic the president may, for a time, represent the whole people and speak in their name, but his office derives its potency from the power which its occupant is able to wield. In a constitutional sense the King of Great Britain has no political power. He is the fountain of honour and may confer titles, the highest and most coveted, but, strictly speaking, these are bestowed upon Ministerial advice. In theory, the King can do no wrong. If an act or appointment meets with popular condemnation, it is not the King who is held responsible, but his Ministers who advised him.

The Indefinable Power.

There are said to be three Estates in the British system of government, the Crown, the Lords and the Commons. Everyone knows that real political power is vested finally and ultimately in the Commons. The Commons represent the people and the people rule. The King assents to this in the fullest degree. The word he takes to himself is: "Fundamentally, the people rule. I must act on the advice of my Ministers, and these must have the confidence of the Commons."

Throughout his reign King Edward respected these recognised principles, and we have no instance of his personal interference in any act of government. He acted strictly as he was advised. Therefore, in the usual sense, power he had none, and sought to exercise none. Yet, is it not accurate to say that no British King who ever wore the crown really possessed so much power?

All this is trite and the most commonplace, known and appreciated by everyone, yet there is an indefinable power in the Crown which cannot be ignored and which constitutes, in proper hands, an overshadowing influence in the Empire, and yet capable perhaps of sinking to a quite negligible quantity in weak or unworthy hands. The King is in the fullest sense the head of the nation. Government is carried on and justice administered in his name. He is Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy. In his name all treaties with Foreign Powers are made and ratified. He stands for the majesty of the nation and to him all his subjects swear allegiance.

An Imperial Influence.

Extraordinary as were King Edward's achievements in diplomacy, and mighty as was his influence among the nations of the world, perhaps the most notable feature of his reign is the marvelous height to which he raised the power of the Crown. Monarchs have exercised greater direct power in public business. Henry VIII. was a despot, and Queen Elizabeth was really her own prime minister. Edward made no pretense of exercising such functions, yet up to the hour of his death he exercised all over his Dominions, to the ends of the earth, a subtle power which made the Crown the greatest centralising force of the Empire. He had the hearts of his people, the confidence of his people, the admiration and devotion of his people to such a degree