

second spring, as exemplified in the works of Cowper and Burns. This era was closely followed by a grand outburst of poesy and unrestrained passion, the result of changes in the social, political and religious aspect of things, as sung by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Moore and Shelley.

This brings us to the Victorian Age, which is far more notable for the extent and excellence of its prose work than for its poetry.

To-day the English language is the most widely spoken as it is the most progressive; its literature is the greatest of any modern or European tongue.

At the beginning of the present century twenty-one million people spoke English; thirty-one millions, French; thirty millions, German; thirty-one millions, Russian; twenty-six millions, Spanish; fifteen millions, Italian.

To-day one hundred and twenty-five millions speak English; fifty millions, French; forty millions, Spanish; seventy millions, Russian; thirty millions, Italian.

Eighty or ninety years ago English, in this respect, stood lower than French, German, Russian and Spanish, and only a little above the Italian. Now, the English language leads with one hundred and twenty-five millions, and this number is below rather than above the truth.

Now, this fact goes far to lead us to infer that the continuance and destiny of the English language will be long and remarkable. Its phenomenal extension and use in the United States of America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Africa and India guarantee it a wonderful length of life. In front of it lie stretched new countries and new peoples; behind it, centuries of development and culture that have fitted it to be the language of civilization and progress the world over. If its native islands were swallowed up by the Atlantic to-morrow it would still in respect of the numbers who speak it have a commanding lead over any other European tongue. It shows no sign of decay, or of abatement in its marvellous growth and diffusion. On the contrary, it seems fully capable of meeting the requirements and demands made upon it by science, art, discovery or any mundane development.

By the enterprise and propagation of English-speaking people and their lasting antipathy to learning new tongues, it has spread to such an extent that it has gradually grown to suit the conditions and requirements of many peoples. If not absolutely the language of diplomacy, it is of commerce; and, just as commerce extends, so, according to present conditions, will the English language and English literature spread towards universality wherever civilization is or advances.

English literature taken in its length and breadth and depth has never had a superior. It may fairly and safely be stated that it has no equal. It stands out as far ahead of all other literatures in the dimensions enumerated, as it does in the number and variety of its readers. As a necessary consequence its market value is correspondingly great; and it is constantly being enriched by other literatures that aim at increasing the number of their readers. Another very strong guarantee of the continued and extended use, cultivation and preservation of the English language and literature is this: They are heir-looms of nations and peoples. National animosities cannot easily assail them. The immense library of English literature contains the literary treasures not