

no doubt two or three wars, for in those days European wars were sadly common; but had they any great importance, had they any unity, so that we should regard the period as a great and striking stage in the development of England? Perhaps you might not be disposed to think so.

I have been led to see just in this period a remarkable unity and importance, and I find in it a character in some respects strongly resembling, in other respects strongly contrasted with, our Victorian age. By dwelling a little on its principal features, I think I may be able to bring out indirectly, through the resemblances and through the points of contrast, many of the leading features of our own age.

The occurrences of this period are apt to escape our attention, because they took place for the most part outside England. They were very imperfectly reflected in those parliamentary debates which form, as it were, the mirror in which England sees herself. They were indeed on a vast scale, but they were remote. If, as I have said, in the Victorian age the brightest side is the growth of the colonies, this period is broadly similar to the Victorian age. In history the Victorian age will be marked as the opening era of the Australian Continent, and the era of the foundation of the Dominion of Canada. In like manner the period now before us stands out as the age of the first conquest of Canada, and of the creation of British India.

And here, at once, by the side of the resemblance a great point of contrast appears. For that period witnessed another event of the same order, equally vast and equally remote, but tragical for England—the great secession of the American Colonies. The Victorian Age has seen no such catastrophe. A happy difference, yet a difference which brings almost into

stronger relief the resemblance of the two periods. For throughout the Victorian age too the possibility of a new disruption has been contemplated, and for some time at least that possibility was regarded as even a probability, if not an eventual certainty. Thus in both periods the general conditions have been the same; there has been advance in the same direction, and there has been apprehension of the same dangers.

In both centuries it is the same England acting on the whole in the same way, annexing easily vast regions beyond the ocean, but finding it less easy to hold than to grasp, to keep than to acquire. A law has evidently been at work. Nor did this law begin to operate in the eighteenth century, though then for the first time it operated on a vast scale. In the seventeenth century also it was at work, though hidden then behind civil disturbances and movements that affected us more strongly. For if the eighteenth gave us Canada and India, the seventeenth century gave us those great American colonies which we afterwards lost. From the time of James I. we have been colonizers of the New World. The propensity to colonize which first showed itself when the charter was given to Virginia in 1606, has since grown upon us. We have sent out successive waves of colonization, and in this respect the Victorian age does not differ from the ages that have preceded it since that time, but only surpasses them.

In this process of expansion I seem to distinguish four great waves. Under James I. there were founded Virginia and New England. Under Charles II., New York, the Carolinas, and Pennsylvania were added. The third wave marks the period of the eighteenth century to which I have called your attention. This time, however, there is less colonization than conquest. The founding of