

QUEEN'S ENGLISH.

IN the current number of the "Review of Reviews" a subject of the highest importance is raised—that of the conservation, in its present form and purity, of the "Queen's English." It is pointed out with great force that this year of the Jubilee must be considered a crucial one as regards the permanence and diffusion of the English language. There is nothing more remarkable in modern record than the prevalence of our mother tongue over the earth during the auspicious reign of her Majesty. Some of the leading facts are thus given. At the beginning of the century there were not more than twenty millions of people in the whole world who spoke English. In 1801, one hundred and sixty million people spoke seven European languages—English, French, German, Russian, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian. The population using these seven languages has now grown to four hundred millions, and of these one hundred and thirty-five millions speak English. At the beginning of the century English speakers were less than thirteen per cent., of the total. They are now over thirty per cent., and outnumber those speaking any other European language. By the end of the century it is probable the English speakers of the world—that is to say, the persons who habitually use English as the vehicle for expressing their thoughts and ideas—will be one hundred and fifty millions, or more than seven times as many as used that instrument of conversation one hundred years before. This immense preponderance of English speakers tends naturally to increase enormously the diffusion of a language. It is more and more coming into use as the "lingua franca" of the world.

Nowadays it is possible to touch at every seaport on the planet, and to transact business without speaking a word of any language but that of Shakespeare. This is very notable, and very momentous; and while so marvellous an expansion of Shakespeare's tongue is manifesting itself over land and sea elsewhere, the silent conquest of all India by English speech is slowly progressing, as, of yore, that of Rome progressed in Italy, Spain, France, and Britain. English is year by year becoming the "free language" of the East, uniting all portions of the Indian Continent, and gradually establishing itself as the universally current speech of Oriental commerce and intercourse. Even in Africa the Germans, French and Portuguese have practically abandoned their struggle against the dominant use of English. "Whether it be Pigeon English," writes our contemporary, "as in some parts of the far East, or the curious compound that is spoken in tropical Africa, everywhere the Queen's English, however mutilated and defaced, is the recognized currency." Grimm, the renowned philologist, among many others, foresaw this result of the ubiquity of British enterprise and commerce, and did not even as a linguist regret it. He wrote: "The English tongue, which by no mere accident has produced and upborne the greatest and most predominant poet of modern times, may be with all right called a world-wide language, and, like the English people, seems destined to prevail with a sway more extensive even than at present over all regions of the globe; for in wealth, good sense, closeness of structure, no other language now spoken deserves to be compared with it." This is a significant tribute to come from a