

Messenger and Visitor

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Queen Victoria.

On Tuesday afternoon of last week, the 22nd instant, the tolling of church bells and the flying of flags at half-mast announced to the people of St. John—as to those of other cities—the news which had been sadly awaited, that our noble Queen—revered and beloved by the nation—had passed beyond the bounds of time. Never has the death of a monarch called forth more sincere and reverent sorrow, and never has there been mingled with a nation's grief a larger sense of thankfulness for a great life nobly lived and for a long reign richly filled with such valuable service as a wise and faithful Christian Queen may render to her people.

The Princess Victoria, daughter of the Duke of Kent, third son of George III., was born on the 24th of May, 1819. She was crowned Queen of Great Britain and Ireland June 20, 1837; she was married to Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg on February 10th, 1840, and died on January 22nd, 1901. Her reign of 63 years and seven months has been the longest, as well as the most illustrious, in the annals of the British nation. The early training of the Princess Victoria was adapted to fit her for the high station she was to occupy, and her wedded life was ideally happy. Her marriage to Prince Albert was no politic union of titled houses for reasons of statecraft, but a genuine love match, hallowed by the reciprocal affection of two pure, honest hearts, and blessed of Heaven. No simple maiden ever loved her swain more truly than the Queen loved her Prince, or was more truly loved again. And seldom indeed has Queen or simple maiden found a man more worthy of wifely affection than Victoria found in Albert. The Prince Consort's life and love were a benediction to the Queen, to the Royal Family of England and to the nation. When his death occurred suddenly in 1861, the English people had begun to comprehend how truly great the man was, and what modest but invaluable service he had rendered to the nation. The London Times then spoke of him as "the very centre of our social system, the pillar of our State, . . . an adviser of the utmost sagacity, a statesman of the rarest ability and honesty of purpose," and estimated his death to be the greatest loss that could possibly have fallen upon England. To those nearly twenty-two years in which the Queen lived in great happiness with the Prince Consort, and saw the older children of their large family grow to manhood and womanhood, there succeeded the sad days of lonely widowhood, when to the Queen, crushed by the sense of irreparable loss and deprived of the strong arm on which she had leaned, the duties connected with royalty seemed almost too heavy to be borne. But this and other sorrows incidental to her life as wife and mother doubtless nourished in her heart a keener sympathy for her subjects in their griefs and served to bind the hearts of her people in loving, sympathetic loyalty to the throne.

In respect to the development of natural resources, the enlargement of trade and commerce, the extension of empire, advancement in popular education and constitutional government,—in a word in respect to progress in all things material, intellectual and spiritual, which mark a virile and advancing civilization, it seems far within the mark to say that no reign in the history of the nation is to be compared with that which has just closed. Under the sway of Victoria the British Empire has grown until it now comprises one-fifth of the habitable globe, and one-fifth of its population—an Empire upon which the sun never sets—including within its ample bounds such great and rapidly growing semi-independent states as the Dominion of Canada and the Commonwealth of Australia,—and all bound to the central throne by bonds of loyalty no less

strong and no less promptly responsive to the Empire's call than those which hold the people of the United Kingdom in allegiance. Great constitutional developments have taken place peacefully, without revolution or any dangerous jar to the social fabric. The advancement has been made naturally, as a boy passes through stages of growth to manhood, discarding the outworn garments and assuming those which comport with his increasing years and stature. "The British nation," says a leading American paper, "has been warlike and aggressive, as of old, yet has led the world in the industrial and commercial arts of peace, and, above all, has attained in intellectual and spiritual life the highest standing which nineteen centuries of the Christian Era have made possible to man. There are few as fine chapters in the history of civilization as that which records the doings of the elder branch of the Anglo-Saxon race in the last two-thirds of a century. There is not one comparable with it comprised within the limits of a single reign. And there is record of no other sovereign who could so truly say, with respect to anything like comparably great achievements 'all of these things I saw, and part of them I was.' If Victoria did not say that of herself, it is but truth and justice that the world should say it of her."

In all the seriousness of sober, thoughtful speech, it may be confidently affirmed that the Sovereign, whom the British people so reverently and sincerely mourn was a great, as well as a good, Queen. The very essence of greatness in human character is indeed always goodness, but there is much that passes under the name of goodness which is not great. Some monarchs have been great in war, and some in statecraft. But there is a royal greatness apart from the strenuous activity of the battlefield or the Council Chamber. A part of the late Queen's greatness lay in her wisdom—a wisdom that dwelt with prudence and with patience. She was wise to understand her true relations to her ministers and her subjects. She recognized clearly her limitations as a constitutional monarch, and prudently trusted her constitutional advisers and her people. She had patience to wait, and wisdom

to know when silence was worth more than speech. She had the womanly tact that discerns the vulnerable point of a difficult situation and avoids taking bulls by the horns. But more than her wisdom, her prudence and her tact, was the goodness of her heart,—her love of purity, truth and righteousness. And above all was her faith in God, her fellowship with Christ, her trust in a supreme and gracious Power unseen, unto whom she could commit all interests personal and national. The Queen's will was strong, and within her own proper domain, it was doubtless imperious, but she willed pure things and good, things which have made immeasurably for the moral health of England and the world. Her personality was strong, and outside the circles in which she could command absolutely, her influence upon the affairs of her own Empire and of the world has been incalculable. More than once it has been her hand that has held in leash the rampant dogs of war. We are not likely to over-estimate the beneficent influence of this wise and noble Christian woman on the world. Probably it has been far greater than would have been possible to a King of corresponding powers of brain and heart. Her goodness and her wisdom have commanded admiration, her womanly sympathy has called forth sympathy in return, the greatness of her position as ruler of the British Empire has received full recognition, and beyond all that, her character, as a most queenly woman and a most womanly Queen, has awakened a sentiment of chivalry in the hearts of men, and of affectionate regard in the hearts of women, far beyond the bounds of her own wide Empire. Throughout the neighboring Republic to-day our departed Queen is mourned with almost as keen a sense of loss as is felt in our own Dominion, and nowhere are there discordant notes in the chorus of the nations, which ascribes praise to the name of Victoria. It was only simple truth that Tennyson wrote:

"Her court was pure; her life serene;
God gave her peace; her land reposed;
A thousand claims to reverence closed
In her as Mother, Wife and Queen."



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