

The Victorian Era.

BY PETER W. GORDON.

Time in its passage along down the centuries is fittingly and naturally divided into eras. No more suitable name could be found for the age, which necessarily must now be nearing its completion, than that of the Victorian Era. No English monarch has wielded for so long a time the imperial sceptre. No English monarch at the beginning of the regal career held to a greater extent the minds and hearts of the people, and no one has so amply fulfilled the pledges of early youth as Her Majesty Our Gracious Queen Victoria.

"Nothing of the lawless, of the despot  
Nothing of the vulgar or vainglorious,  
All is gracious, gentle, great and queenly."

Over a nation which is continually increasing in wealth and extent of territory she has ruled for sixty long years and they have been years of remarkable progress in every direction.

At the opening of the era science was still in its beginning, the ground had only just been cleared away for work. There were many distinct and separate sciences, but scarcely any idea of science as a completed and connected unit. Zoologists, geologists, chemists and astronomers maintained their distinct isolation, and all these sciences with the possible exception of astronomy were in their infancy. Physics embraced a wide and poorly known field of facts. Psychology and biology were scarcely known, and the sciences of language, man, society and religion, had not emerged from chaos.

The fight for uniformity of nature was commenced and vigorously carried out, yet this struggle for unity was but a part of the great evolutionary movement, which forms the acknowledged mainspring of all living and contemporary science. In astronomy the doctrine of evolution had been formulated some time before the opening of this era, the nebular hypothesis of Kant and La Place being the first attempt to explain the genesis of the world, by a continuous action of physical and natural principles. Geology then having this earth given on trust by astronomy has traced it in its different aspects until it is shown in the present form.

The impetus given by evolution to the sciences which deal especially with man is almost impossible to compute. The science of language has been presented in an entirely new manner. The sciences of man and society have been given a place and a distinction of their own.

The theory of conservation of energy has also done a great deal to bring science up to its present status. In astronomy it has affected all ideas of the sun's heat, the formation of planets and the nature of meteors. In all mechanical arts it has produced and is producing immense changes.

These two great principles, evolution and conservation of energy form the main bulk of our ages scientific additions to the world's accumulated knowledge, but among separate sciences wonderful advances have been made during sixty years. Chemistry and astronomy by the use of spectrum analysis have been brought nearer to that stage of far-reaching fundamental truths, which is the especial function of this era to bring forth.

The age has often been called the reign of steam and electricity, so great has been their progress. The telegraph, telephone, electric railway and light and the ocean cable are products of Victoria's reign. When she ascended the throne steam navigation was derided as an impossibility, now Britain possesses beside 30,000 miles of railroads, a fleet of steamers far superior in tonnage to the sailing vessels, she owned at that time.

So it might be said that the advance in practical science during Her Majesty's reign is greater in many ways than the advancement from the beginning of civilization to that time.

Although this age has been called by many the Realistic Era and men of science have claimed its literature as peculiarly their own, yet it is no less distinguished by its aspirations and its anxious search for spiritual order. As an era it has been one of moral and intellectual truth seeking, of a breaking down of old idols and a setting up of new ones.

At the opening of the era English poetry had seemingly withdrawn from the country which it had made brilliant by its splendid and musical songs at the earlier part of the century.

After the death of Keats there was for some time no poet with a peculiarly marked character. For almost twenty-five years there was a period of comparative calm, but after that came the social and spiritual revolutions, affording themes for the poets and subjects for almost numberless writers, so that the peculiar characteristic of the literature of the Victorian period is a continual laboring at the solution of certain problems of existence, which also forms the marked point of contrast between the Elizabethan and our own age. Our era is in a far greater sense than that of the Commonwealth an era of revolution and the social and political forms suitable for such an epoch are as yet unorganized.

The two Brownings, Arnold, Swinburne and Tennyson are, no doubt, the poets of the age, and although there is

considerable doubt as to which one would receive the support of the majority of readers yet there can be no doubt that Tennyson is essentially the poet of the Victorian Era. His feelings kept pace with those of his generation. During the period of the Chartist upheaval he expressed, through the hero of his Monodrama "Maud," the fears and doubts which oppressed his own heart. He, who dreamed of peace and the federation of the races, found in the battle ardours of righteous war deliverance from the selfishness and supineness of spirit which made social life no better than an internecine strife during days that were styled days of peace. But now again at this time there has appeared the same, one might almost say characterless poetry, which marked the first of the period. How long it may last it is impossible to say. The future of a literature can never be truly prophesied.

Both in quality and quantity of work the prose writers of the era easily carry off the palm since prose is essentially the language of a Realistic Era and there has been an ever increasing tendency to give up the drama as a field for literary effort. No successful plays have been written by men of genius, although Browning, Swinburne and Tennyson have each attempted the task. The probable cause is the fact that the means for amusing the public have become greatly enlarged, the novel and newspaper taking to a great extent the place of the drama.

The principal writers who have advanced and defended the new doctrines of science have been Darwin, Huxley, Spencer and Steward. Prose, chiefly the essay, has been written by such men as Arnold, Froude, MacAulay, and that greatest master of English prose, John Ruskin.

The newspaper which has achieved such wonderful results and which wields such immense power, is chiefly a product of the nineteenth century. Napoleon is reported to have said: "Four hostile newspapers are worse than a thousand bayonets." With this as a standard the British press is far more formidable than her standing army.

The novel, which has reached its present development chiefly in our own era, comes next to the newspaper in distribution and influence. A large number of names might be given of those who have attained distinction in this style of writing, but Lord Lytton, Thackeray, Dickens, Eliot and Meredith should be named as bright, particular stars.

These names are not given so much on account of their being masters of technique in their own provinces as being seekers after truth, which it seems is the distinction of the Victorian Era. A literature of a time of spiritual trial, difficulty and danger and its greatest representatives have been those who before all else were seekers in matters moral, social and religious for some coherent conception or doctrine of life which would bring unity to our emotions and impulse to our will.

The progress made in science and literature is but a small part of the entire advancement of sixty years. The whole of that system of legislative reform which is founded on a recognition of the principles of humanity may be said to belong to our time. The educational system of the whole empire has been reorganized and placed on a proper footing. In short, there has been great progress in all those things which tend toward the uplifting of the races and the advancement of civilization.

Should we not then congratulate ourselves that we live in such an era, an era which has seen Britain placed, by the sagacity of her statesmen and the bravery of her soldiers, firmly on the topmost pinnacle of Fame. The waves and billows of opposition have dashed against that pinnacle in vain, but like an oak shorn of its leaves and shoots by the pitiless axe, she draws strength and nourishment from the steel itself. Treaties have been formed against her, plots for her destruction have been contrived within and without, yet to-day all these humbled Britain stands triumphant, still the mistress of the World.

"Are there thunders moaning in the distance?  
Are there spectres moving in the darkness?  
Trust the Hand of Light will lead her people,  
Till the thunders pass, the spectres vanish,  
And the Light is Victor, and the darkness  
Dawns into the Jubilee of the Ages."

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Delightful Studies in the Word.

THE GLORY OF THE LORD.

1. We get the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. 4:5, 6.
2. Pathetic picture of the departure of the "glory" from the temple. (a) The glory seen by the river Chebar, Ezek. 3:12. (b) The glory seen in the plain, Ezek. 3:23. (c) The glory seen between earth and heaven, Ezek. 8:4. (d) The glory leaves the Cherubims and horses over the threshold, Ezek. 9:3; 10:4. (e) The glory returns from the threshold and again rests over the Cherubims, Ezek. 10:18. (f) The Cherubims mount and depart with the glory to the mountains by way of the east, Ezek. 10:19; 11:22, 23.
3. Marvellous return of the glory to the temple by way of the East. The temple had been cleansed. The glory returned suddenly, Ezek. 43:2, 5.
4. Where God's glory can be seen. The conditions man must fulfill in order to behold the glory. (a) Must stand close beside God, Ex. 33:21. (b) Must stand on a rock, Ex. 33:21. (c) Must be in a cleft of the rock, Ex. 33:22. (d) Must be covered by God's hand, Ex. 33:22. M.B.S.

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If bodily filthiness is horrible to us, what must the filthiness of sin be to the pure and holy God.—Spurgeon.

Sanctus Spiritus.

BY PASTOR J. CLARK.

Holy Spirit! Source of light!  
Full of mercy, full of might!  
Worthy Thou of endless praise!  
Hear the grateful songs we raise.

One with Christ, our glorious Head,  
Sacred Dove, with wings outspread!  
Come, with loving swiftness down,  
All His wondrous gifts to crown.

Fount of true, celestial fire!  
Purge away each low desire:  
Make us glow with holy love,  
Like the seraph bands above.

Viewless! Changeless! Faithful! Free!  
Very God! We worship Thee;  
Great the wonders Thou hast wrought,  
Far transcending human thought.

Make us steadfast; make us strong;  
Make us hate the thought of wrong;  
Prompt to duty; grace impart;  
Dwell henceforth in every heart.

God the Father's love reveal;  
Our complete redemption seal,  
Cheer the heart when tears must flow:  
Sweeten every cup of woe.

Give us zeal that never tires;  
Give us gracious, pure desires;  
Give us more abundant faith;  
Give us love that conquers death.

Where a soul, grown tired of sin,  
Seeks the peace of God to win,  
Struggling, sorrowing, sore, dismayed,  
Mighty Spirit! lend Thine aid.

Calm each aching, troubled breast;  
Give the heavy-laden rest;  
Sanctify the chastening rod;  
Glorify the Son of God.

When, before the mercy-seat,  
God's enquiring people meet,  
Gracious, promised Comforter!  
Bless each lowly worshipper.

Free our hearts from anxious care;  
Give us greater power in prayer;  
Testify of sin forgiven;  
Lead us on from earth to heaven.

All Thy saints in every place,  
Magnify Thy power and grace;  
Led by Thee, they cannot stray;  
Kept, they cannot fall away.

Truth's Revealer! Lord of mind!  
Sway the thought of all mankind;  
Let Thine empire still increase;  
Fill the world with joy and peace.

Far outdo Thy works of old;  
Be Thy triumphs manifold;  
On the thousands locked in death,  
Breathe, O breathe, Thy quickening breath.

Working out the Father's plan,  
Evermore the Friend of man  
Quell our bosom's painful strife;  
Bring us more abundant life.

Saints and seers of olden time,  
Rapt in ecstasy sublime,  
Awed, beneath thy Majesty,  
Spake and wrought as moved by thee.

Voice Divine! O let Thy Word  
Through the whole wide world be heard;  
Speak in varied tones to all,  
Every human heart enthral!

Power, whom none can comprehend!  
On Thy waiting saints descend;  
Messenger of peace and rest!  
Heal our woes and make us blest.

Sun of suns! undimmed! unmade!  
Godhead's self in light arrayed!  
Shine, with rays of glory shine,  
On this darkened soul of mine.

All the ransomed round the throne  
Thy transforming goodness own;  
Filled with gladness ever new,  
All proclaim Thee just and true.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord!  
Angel hosts, with sweet accord,  
Praise the Father, praise the Son,  
Praise the Spirit,—Three in One.

Holy Spirit! Source of light!  
Full of mercy, full of might!  
Worthy Thou of endless praise!  
Hear the songs of joy we raise.

Bass River, N. S.

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In Canton, China there are four Baptist chapels—two where there is daily preaching to the heathen, one where there is occasional preaching during the week, and one where there is regular instruction for Christians on Bible themes.