

A RETROSPECT OF HALF A CENTURY.

More than fifty years have passed away since the young princess Victoria, became queen of the most powerful nation in the world. Her two old uncles first knelt before her, and kissed her hand, and the aged Duke of Wellington, the victor of a hundred battles, bowed his good grey head in her presence; she but a mere child received the homage of the greatest men in the world. No wonder is it then that her course has been watched with the greatest eagerness from the first, and now after the lapse of more than half a century, she still controls with steady hand the fortunes of her great people.

England's name is heard the wide world over; her language falls upon our ears wherever we may turn, in the savage islands of the far Pacific, or where African mothers croon their infants to sleep with its sound.

England is the richest nation in the world, she is the bravest, the best. She is the Queen of the Seas, the restrainer of Europe, the civilizer of the world. And yet fifty years ago she had but started on that glorious course in which to day she stands without a rival.

In those far-off days, the court of princes differed but little from the aspect of a modern tavern if we judge by the manners of those who frequented them. In both would be seen the same whole-sale debauchery, and rank prodigality, in both the same coarseness, and debasement. The highborn of the land prided themselves on the companionship of gamblers, bullies, black-legs and even the King would frequently be seen arm in arm with some noted prize-fighter or horse-jockey. At another time we read, that the King having shoved a noted statesman into a dirty pond, stood by, and shouted with laughter as the half drowned spluttering victim attempted to crawl out. Every morning the Gentlemen of England betook themselves to the boxing saloons, and in the laudable desire of battering opposing gentlemen's faces and ribs, disposed of their time until noon; and in the evenings we hear, how in an obscure Holburn tavern, the king and train would come to listen to the tales and boisterous choruses of the fighting men, and amid cursing and drinking prolong these orgies far into the night. Such was England fifty years ago. And to whom more than to our Queen belongs the honour, of the morality and

refinement which we now see on every hand, who by her own womanly and restraining influence has set the nation an example it has not been slow to follow. It is a true as well as an old maxim as the court so the people and as the sovereign, so the court.

Half a century ago, America and England were distinct countries, lying thousands of miles apart, and months of travel; kinsmen across the sea were strangers—friends leaving one country for the other said goodbye as if they should never meet again. Strange wild tales went from the new world to the old. This country was thought to be but a boundless forest, peopled by bands of savage Indians with whom the few white men dwelt in daily terror of their lives and scalps. To-day England and America have drawn together. The months of dreaded travel have dwindled down to days. The mighty ocean has become but a lake for a pleasant cruise. Then the jaunty little packets that left the Old Country for the New scarcely dared trust themselves to the vast Atlantic surges. Now magnificent floating palaces, relying on the gigantic force of mighty engines, hurl the great masses of dark green water over and down their sides, like playful leviathans in their natural element. The ponderous machinery throbs and beats, the huge propeller turns,—the great ship leaps forward like an arrow, and we are off for a six days trip to London.

At the beginning of this century, the stage coach was the only means of communication by land. When the Queen summoned her ministers, they had to travel behind horses, and hours and even days were spent in the journey. The stage coach was the wonder of the time, and when its arrival was heralded by the postilion's horn, the people flocked to see the prodigy. Off again it started, the fleet thoroughbreds dashed along, the harness rattled, the guard shouted orders, the passengers hallooed in unison with the rhythmic beats of the horse's hoofs on the hard highway, and under all their united efforts the great distance of ten miles an hour was accomplished. At certain stopping places the coach pulled up, the streaming horses were replaced with fresh ones in the miraculous time of ninety seconds, and then the wild gallop was resumed again. To us neither space nor time are ever thought of. The great Atlantic and Pacific are as one. A vast net-work of iron lines cover the country—huge snorting engines, drawing load on load of human freight steam by—where one