

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps no other sovereign ever wielded so great an influence upon a people and upon the world as Her Majesty, Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland and Empress of India. Her influence was moral rather than political, and she was as much the mother of the nation as its respected and illustrious sovereign.

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.
—Tennyson.

For nearly sixty-four years she was the head of the British nation, and with the progress of the years she gained more and more of the respect and love of her subjects. "The Queen" was a Mother and a friend to millions of people who knew her face only through her pictures. Moreover, she won the respect of the nations of the world. Surely these are tests of greatness! But even if history does not term her great, it will say she was wise and good. "And perhaps wisdom is greatness, and goodness even better than greatness." Her influence on the social life of her people was certainly wonderful and unique.

Much of the Queen's goodness was due to her parents. Edward, Duke of Kent, was a noble man. Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg was a noble woman. Victoria was the child of their old age, and their home was hallowed by family affection. Early bereft of a father, she was brought up under the tender care of a sensible mother. The latter never forgot that she was rearing the future sovereign of a great nation. Victoria's training was carefully regulated so that she should admire virtue of every kind, be gentle and unaffected, thoughtful and natural. Great Britain owes much to the Duchess of Kent.