

PREFACE.

Summary of Paragraphs.

1. Lack of respect changed by Victoria's reign to great love and loyalty.
2. Present-day personal affection for Queen Elizabeth.
3. Slight decrease in size of Empire compensated by gain in prestige through liberty of member-nations.
4. Position of the Sovereign greatly strengthened by Statute of Westminster. Commonwealth a practical example of free co-operation among nations. Sovereign rules equally over each member.
5. Queen Elizabeth looked to for assurance in time of insecurity. Failure of Victorian age to achieve peace.
6. Heavy burden of duties imposed by position. More public demands on Elizabeth than on Victoria.
7. Position of British Monarchy, and the value of personal association. Sovereign more than a symbol of the Commonwealth.
8. Victorian age just concluding at the Diamond Jubilee, while we are beginning a new age. Future comparison of this new Elizabethan Age with the first Elizabethan Age and the Victorian Age. Our need to achieve peace, and the Queen as a symbol of the hope and courage which enable us to do so.

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THE POSITION OF THE SOVEREIGN AT THE DIAMOND JUBILEE OF  
VICTORIA AND THE CORONATION OF ELIZABETH.

Shelley. When Victoria became queen in 1837, personal respect for the sovereign was at a low ebb. Since the beginning of the century there had been three kings of England, of whom the first was an imbecile, the second a profligate, and the third little better than a buffoon. A poet could write of 'princes, the dregs of their dull race - ' and be justified. Sixty years later, the love and loyalty of every member of the British Empire, not only for the monarchy, but <sup>also</sup> for the person of the monarch, were demonstrated in a celebration unequalled in its intensity and splendour. The simplicity and sincerity of the Queen had won the hearts of her people.

To-day, when England is ruled once more by a Queen, personal admiration and even affection, with its implications of intimacy, are felt for our young Queen. The sovereign is no longer the remote and august figure of a time even so near as Victoria's reign. To-day, the public love to see the Queen pictured with her children, or in some setting which emphasizes her domestic life; people like to think of their Queen living a simple and ordinary life in the midst of the pomp and ceremony which are attached to her position as sovereign. That is perhaps the most beloved trait in the Queen's character - simplicity. Every speech made by her rings with simple sincerity - a rare quality in this complicated and artificial age.

Greatly loved as Victoria was, Elizabeth occupies a greater place in the hearts of her people. Victoria in the latter years of her reign, became a remote figure, to whom the people offered their sympathy and loyalty from afar. Elizabeth is well-known to her people, not only in



England, but <sup>also</sup> in parts of the Commonwealth which were only names to Queen Victoria, and where there can have been no real personal love for the sovereign. It is a fact that one of the Maori chiefs who in 1840 signed a treaty promising loyalty to Queen Victoria had a vague idea that Victoria was the name of the fence which the British settlers used to mark off their property; and though the situation must have improved considerably by 1897, there still can have been <sup>in this country little</sup> ~~none~~ of the love and honour for the Queen which is shown to-day by New Zealand's eager preparation for the Royal Tour.

In regard to the actual possessions of the British sovereign at these two dates - 1897 and 1953 - it might seem at a first glance that our present Queen rules over smaller dominions than Victoria. Certainly in 1897 the British Empire, as it then was, was at its greatest in extent, and Britain's influence was paramount in a very large section of the globe. Since that time some countries have left the Empire, Burma, the Irish Free State, Egypt - these former British possessions are no longer ruled by Britain's sovereign. However, a little thought shows that Britain has gained rather than lost by their exclusion: for Ireland was a source of trouble and anxiety throughout the whole of Victoria's reign; and Egypt has been a centre of disturbance from the early part of this century. In regard to Burma, what Britain lost in acres was fully compensated by her gain in prestige, when the freedom of her dominions was demonstrated. To-day, every member-nation within the British Commonwealth is occupying its position by its own free choice, and consequently there is none of the dissatisfaction and internal strife which formerly <sup>we've</sup> ~~was~~ inevitable in colonial relations.

The constitutional position of the present Queen is much more important than was that of Victoria at the time of her Jubilee. By that time the power of the sovereign had been so curtailed as to be almost nominal, though the duties entailed by the position remained onerous, as they still are. The last sovereign to employ his power to dismiss Parliament was William IV, Victoria's predecessor; the results were not beneficial to his prestige. To-day, Parliament wields all the power formerly exercised by the sovereign; but there is one very important difference between the position of the sovereign in 1897 and the position to-day. For the Statute of Westminster, which severed all connection between the Parliament of Great Britain and the governments of the Dominions, strengthened the position of the sovereign immeasurably. Nothing links the members of the Commonwealth now but the Crown; yet the bonds between them are stronger to-day than ever before. At the time of the Coronation, the newspapers pointed out that never before had there been such a feeling of unity in the Commonwealth; and even allowing for the newspaper habit of speaking in superlatives, it is the simple truth that the British Commonwealth to-day is a more compact entity than Victoria's Empire. The difference is well expressed in the names. 'Empire' is a splendid word, full of grandeur and dignity; but it belongs to an era which is past; Commonwealth better expresses the knowledge we have to-day that only understanding and co-operation between nations can obtain the peace which imperial ambitions have shattered.

Speaking at the time of Victoria's accession, Lord John Russell said: "Let us hope that we are going to



Lord John Russell  
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have a reign illustrious in its deeds of peace!"

He realised that conquest and expansion of empire were less desirable than peace; but it was a false peace which Victoria's reign enjoyed - a deceptive security. To-day we no longer have the complacent sense of safety which distinguishes the outlook of so many Victorian writers and statesmen; we have only an intense desire for peace, and a conviction that, since former methods have failed, we must find a new foundation for a new world. The British Commonwealth is a symbol of what co-operation between nations can achieve; it took many years of trial and experiment before the Commonwealth grew to its present form; but it has emerged triumphant, a society built on the foundation of common love for the sovereign. That perfect love which casts out fear - it is the last hope of a world tired of war and hatred; and that it can be achieved is shown by the union which binds the Commonwealth and Empire together in a way which no rigid laws could have done.

Victoria was first and foremost Queen of England; the Empire was merely a number of subject countries which were like small satellites of Britain's sun. The Statute of Westminster changed that. Anthony Eden spoke at that time of Britain as 'the youngest Dominion; now one of a number of autonomous communities equal in status, and united by a common allegiance to the Crown. Still the Crown of England, but equally so of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, and Pakistan. If, by some quite impossible revolution, England became a republic, Queen Elizabeth's position would not be changed, except that the Commonwealth would be smaller. She would still rule with undiminished authority over the other Dominions. It is possible, though very difficult, to

imagine this position; but it is quite impossible to separate the identities of Queen Victoria and England; for her reign does not seem to exist apart from England.

The Victorian Age was an age of great progress; scientific discoveries opened up a new world, even as exploration had done in the time of Elizabeth I. It was an age, too, when democracy, long ignored or crushed, began to fill the minds of thinking men with a new conception of the task of government. Yet in spite of scientific and political progress, in spite of the growth of new humanitarian ideals, the Victorian age failed. It failed to secure that peace which is the goal of progress. Even during Victoria's reign, the threat of approaching conflict hung over England; and the insecure peace which continued until the end of her reign lasted little longer than a decade more.

To-day we have again an insecure peace; but we no longer ignore its insecurity, as so many Victorians did. We dare not look far into the future, for fear that we may see greater disasters than have already befallen this century. As always in a time of trouble, the people of the British Empire - and many outside it - look to the sovereign for assurance and hope. And Elizabeth, whose shoulders surely bear a greater weight than Victoria ever knew, gives that assurance and hope. The responsibility of the sovereign is very great, but we have a Queen who does not fear to assume it, with the help of God and the love of her people. If our age, too, should fail to achieve lasting peace, as every preceding age has failed, it will not be our leader who has failed; for our Queen excels in every quality which a leader must have.

After the death of her husband, Queen Victoria retired to a great extent from public life. She lived in seclusion, and took no part in Court festivities. The duties of the Sovereign to-day would make such a retirement impossible. The late King, who regarded himself as the servant of the nation, constantly overworked himself in his desire to discharge all the duties which he felt his position imposed on him. His daughter was brought up to the same conception of the duty of a ruler, and her people can be assured that never has there been a sovereign more completely and unselfishly devoted to the welfare of the nation. Queen Victoria was a deeply conscientious ruler; but public life made on her none of the demands that it makes on Queen Elizabeth. There are countless state functions to be attended, public appearances in all parts of the country; and, in recent years, comprehensive tours of other parts of the Empire, involving a most exhausting programme of travel and appearances. All this demands constant and strenuous activity at which the bravest heart might quail, and it is all gladly undertaken by a sovereign who has inherited a tradition of unstinted service to the people.

Such are the duties imposed on the sovereign. The British monarchy is in a unique position, for the monarch reigns, but does not rule. A monarchy, yet a democracy, involving no conflict of powers, no disunion of loyalty. The British Empire has discovered the one form of government which can unite the age-old principle of an hereditary ruler with man's inherent desire for free self-government. 'The Crown' says the Statute of Westminster, 'is the symbol of the free association of the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.' What, then is the sovereign? The sovereign brings an



abstract conception to life, gives it a warm human personality to appeal to the hearts of people whose minds are too tired of grappling with life to grasp an abstract idea. That is, perhaps, where Communism makes one of its greatest mistakes. Human nature demands more than the ideal of the State, to be willing to sacrifice everything for it. It was ultimately the state for which the British soldiers gave their lives in the war; but it was as the King's men that they fought, and as his men that they died, more moved by the memory of the simple words which George the Sixth addressed to the troops than by long perorations about the duty of the individual to the state. Napoleon I, who was by no mean statesman, realised the value of personal association when he made himself Emperor of the French, instead of Emperor of France. The difference is more than nominal; it is the difference between an abstraction and reality. The Sovereign of the British Empire is the Sovereign of the British, and every British subject feels a kind of reflected glory in the honour paid to his Queen by his fellow-subjects. Queen Victoria was honoured by her people; but I do not think they ever had that feeling of closeness and personal affection which greets our present Queen in every part of the Empire.

There is one other difference between the position of Victoria in 1897 and the position of Elizabeth to-day. The Diamond Jubilee of Victoria marked almost the end of an era. It had been a long era, with its share of trouble and war, and its share of progress and victory. The most remarkable thing about the Victorian age, looking back from to-day, is its self-sufficiency. It seems completely cut off from our age. We can look back and admire its achievements, regret its follies; but somehow there is no sympathy of thought between our age and the



age which ended with the death of one of England's greatest Queens. Perhaps it is our age which is out of focus; whatever the reason, the Victorian era is separated from us by a void which cannot be bridged. We do not need to bridge it, however. We have a new Queen, who has already set us the example of looking fearlessly towards the future; a new Elizabethan age, which in time will inevitably be compared with the first Elizabethan age, and the Victorian age. There is no reason why it should be found less noble. True, the discoveries which made the first Elizabethan age great have all been made. Instead of making the world greater, modern discoveries tend to make it smaller. Radio, electric power, supersonic speed - all have brought the peoples of the earth into close contact. There is no longer the hope of finding new lands to spur on modern adventurers, as it did Drake and Raleigh. The achievements of the Victorian age, too, belong only to that age. Science continues to make great advances; but there are no revolutionary discoveries; the universe and existence remain wonders only dimly realised; and disease continues <sup>in some cases</sup> to defeat every resource of medicine. Whatever the advances made in these spheres, they will never have quite the ~~small~~ same thrill of unexpectedness which so often surprised the world of Victorian science.

What then is to be the achievement of our new Elizabethan age, one achievement worthy of our new Elizabeth? There is one field which has been attempted by previous generations, and has remained unconquered. Our ancestors have seen the magnitude of the task, and turned instead to conquer the sea and the sky, to take wild lands, and probe the mysteries of science, because all these things were less difficult than uniting all mankind in peace. Peace - the aim of every generation, achieved by none. Is it too ambitious <sup>an</sup> aim to be adopted by the new Elizabethan age

under a Queen who has declared to the world her faith in God for the future? Instead of wondering about new worlds to conquer in space, it would surely be wiser, if more difficult, to try and conquer our own. While the tide is at the flood, we should take it, and hope it may lead on to fortune. It is true that peace seems further off than ever, that what could not be achieved by earlier ages is unlikely to be achieved now. So we may fail. But men have died gladly for less noble causes, and counted their failure more glorious than the greatest success. To fail in such an aim would at least be better than to drift unresisting towards the war which the future must bring, if no serious attempt is made to stop it. Peace is not a matter for politicians to settle; it vitally concerns every person, and everyone has a part to play in achieving it. Before there can be peace among nations, there must be understanding; and it is the duty of every person to forget the boundaries of race and colour in an effort to make such understanding possible. Peace is a matter for faith and hope, and charity - love for all mankind. We are beginning a new age, led by a Queen who loves her people and is loved by them. Under her reign we may look forward to the future and to the common wealth of nations.

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