

The Saturday Review

of LITERATURE

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

VOLUME II

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, MAY 22, 1926

NUMBER 43

Notes on a Bookshelf

SOME years ago, when Local Color was still a fashionable term with critics, it was a common practice to prepare a map on which writers' names were printed instead of staples and manufactured products. Thus Cable was written large across Louisiana, Wister upon the cowboy region, Miss Wilkins and Miss Jewett upon New England, Hardy upon old Wessex, and so on and so on. It would be interesting to make today, not a map of geography, but a chart of society, and place upon it not the writers but the kinds of readers provided for in a typical shelf of new books. The result would surprise those who talk familiarly of "The American reader" and "the American audience," as if we all had the same last name.

We still read far more for instruction than for pleasure. Seventy million copies of Noah Webster's spelling book were sold in the early days of the Republic. Probably no one has calculated how many copies of school and college books are published annually now, but the figure would be astonishing. And among these books are an extraordinary number of educational books upon education. We are conducting the world's largest educational experiment with low-paid, partly trained teachers in the majority of the positions, and in giving them text-books on teaching and text-books so contrived as almost to teach themselves, we are following American industrial practice which provides machinery so efficient that it can be run by unskilled workers. Whether the educational product is as good as the machine product is another question.

A great and increasing variety of books on religion, philosophy, ethics, behavior, and everything that has to do with attitude toward life, is not so easy to explain. There is little evidence in ordinary conversation, and still less in the newspapers and in contemporary fiction, of the extensive interest in the eternal human problem which these represent. We are said to talk only of business and sports, of children, fashion, and the humanities of gossip. But these books seem to indicate that more thinking is going on under the surface than comes to the top. To be sure the volume of sales is small by comparison with novels or elementary text-books, but the readers must count in influence, must propagate ideas, must color thinking. In the long run it is not the number of new houses, new Fords, new radios, new silk stockings, but what we think, or, more accurately, how we feel, about them that affects the course of civilization, and if deep-lying social movements are of primary importance, nevertheless the touch that sets the ball rolling this way or that comes from a man or a woman with an idea. Talk about the "influence" of the milk, water, and sugar fiction that is read in such vast quantities by so many people is idle: such writing has no influence except to debase taste; it runs in the system and out again without leaving a trace. Not so with the better and the fewer books.

The end of the shelf thickly packed with new books of poetry has a different significance. These little volumes are published, in most instances, for the writer not the reader. This does not mean that they are bad poetry, although many may be; it means that for some obscure reason almost as many people write poetry as read it, and these collections of verse are the tiny remnant that reaches the sanctity of covers. It is a verse writing age. Why it is not a verse reading age is a puzzle, to be explained perhaps by saying that the writing of verse is the greatest of escapes from boredom or triviality, but that

Sonnet

By BABETTE DEUTSCH

IS the stout whale who shakes the sea's loud towers
As ghostly as his spume? Those elephants:
Grey hills of flesh, parading down the hours
Of Caesar's triumph in a torchlit dance,—
Were they less than the dust their thunder stirred?
What is this stone whereon our quick heels hit?
What, all these atoms, seized or smelt or heard?
This asking brain,—what is the truth of it?

Man fades like grass even now, and like slow sand
New empires shift; suns char in viewless skies;
And science gnaws on its own empty hand;
The while Reality as softly lies
Upon the cheek of our known world as light,
Impalpably, inalterably bright.

This Week



"The Letters of Queen Victoria." Reviewed by *Wilbur C. Abbott*.
"Havelock Ellis." Reviewed by *J. DeLancey Ferguson*.
"The Home Town Mind." Reviewed by *Lyman Bryson*.
Books on Business Standards. Reviewed by *Douglas Fryer*.
"Short Stories." Reviewed by *Frances Newman*.
"Hangman's House." Reviewed by *Grace Frank*.

Next Week, or Later

The Gentleman from Verona. By *Elmer Davis*.
"The Advancing South." Reviewed by *Archibald Henderson*.
"The Rosalie Evans Letters from Mexico." Reviewed by *Ernest Gruening*.

the reading of verse will accomplish the same ends only when verse becomes poetry.

The number of travel books would seem to need no commentary. We are rich, we travel constantly, we like to read of other's experiences. Yet before the war the usual travel book was a pleasant, rather sentimental narrative of dallies in Europe, and now it has become a record of exploration or adventure in the difficult places of the earth. Perhaps we travel too much now for the old-fashioned variety of pleasant journeyings to interest us. Moving through nearby lands is so easy that it is impertinent to write about what anyone of us expects to see next month or next year. And the familiar ports of travel have lost their glamour. The war changed them from summer resorts into items in the great struggle to conquer. We will see Italy for ourselves, and if we read, read the facts of the world's far corners, not sentimental maudlinings about a Europe which we know to be hard.

As a last observation, note that politics seems to be
(Continued on page 807)

On Swinburne

By WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

BEFORE me lies half of the new Bonchurch edition* of the complete works of Algernon Charles Swinburne, namely six volumes of the poetical works and four volumes of the tragedies. And in connection with a reperusal of the remarkable writing contained therein I have been reading Mr. Harold Nicolson's admirable monograph† upon the poet. Sir Edmund Gosse has, of course, as Mr. Nicolson says, "once and for all set the key or tone for all future study of the poet." His "Life of Swinburne" is the master-work upon that writer. For a thorough study of Swinburne as man and as artist, therefore, one has only to turn to Gosse; for a concise handbook to Swinburne comprising a most sensitive and justly-balanced estimate of the poet in perspective and in his relation to the present day, one now has Nicolson. And this new Bonchurch edition of the complete works, which will run to twenty volumes, includes, in the first volume of the poems, a selection from the papers first discovered in 1918. Beginning with this volume one is able, more thoroughly than ever before, to trace the development of the extraordinary genius of one who remains perhaps the greatest purely lyric poet in the English language.

The publications of this year may therefore possibly be said to set the capstone to the critical study of Swinburne. From W. M. Rossetti to Max Beerbohm the commentators upon the poet and the man have included J. W. Mackail, Sir Edmund Gosse, Edward Thomas, John Drinkwater, Hake and Rickett, Welby, Mrs. Disney Leith, Drayton Henderson, Coulson Kernahan, and, since Beerbohm's inimitable picture of "No. 2. The Pines," "L'Oeuvre de Swinburne," by Paul de Reul, published in Brussels. Nor are these, of course, all the many commentators.



Swinburne is but a name in America today. The present tendencies in the prosecution of the poetic art consciously take of him but little account. He is now among the classics, from the study of which all new modes and manners constantly derive sustenance, though perhaps grudgingly. What Mr. Nicolson speaks of, and rightly, as "the perfections of his prosody" are a weariness to this generation. It is an unprosodic age. We are hasty, careless, and unscholarly. Poetry as an art is regarded as an artifice. More than ever before, such poetry as Swinburne wrote to the end of his days seems to us simulacral. Experience is vital, we say; what matters is that it be conveyed. Recurrent rhythms are obnoxious. Any form rigid and symmetrical is to be deplored. Swinburne elaborated metres and cadences. "A series of such stanzas produces a sort of hypnosis," as Mr. Nicolson says. And that is all there was to Swinburne. His language, his phrase, it is true may be studied warily, but his elaborate manner, and more than all his fundamental conception of poetry are not for the age.

Which, of course, is nonsense; but we have slipped into this loose habit of thinking of a great poet who was thoroughly a master of his craft. His faults are patent. Mr. Nicolson's analysis of the reasons

*THE COMPLETE WORKS OF ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE. Edited by SIR EDMUND GOSSE, C. B. and THOMAS WISE. In 20 Volumes. New York: Gabriel Wells. Bonchurch Edition. 1925-1926.

†SWINBURNE. By HAROLD NICOLSON. (English Men of Letters Series.) New York: The Macmillan Company. 1926.

for lethargy toward the bulk of his work, of the obstacles which obstruct communication between this poet and the modern reader, are thoroughly set forth. They exist, in his "insistent metrical stress," in his "absence of outline," in his exclusive method, in the early ossification of his emotional receptivity, in the many aspects of his temperamental abnormality. Mr. Nicholson's first chapter, in fact, "The Approach to Swinburne," is in the nature of an apologia with the avowed purpose of putting this age again in touch with a poet of whom Mr. F. L. Lucas says succinctly, "at the present day he is not popular."

"His rhythms," continues Mr. Lucas, "are obviously and unashamedly beautiful, they do not coquette with the ear; and modern affectation dislikes that. The development of metre has followed other lines, partly because on his it could go no further; and thus his very success has been against him." I have italicized a clause in that statement because it is a true remark. The mere metrical ingenuity of Swinburne remains an astonishing phenomenon. His experimentation in metres was extraordinary in its scope. He is still of the greatest technical interest to any poet, if it were only for this reason—except that "the development of metre has followed other lines." Yet I have observed a great deal of experimentation along the "other lines" in the past fifteen years, and venture to wonder whether we shall proceed very far along them.

Not that for an instant anyone could hope to "fall back on Swinburne." Swinburne, in fact, is one of the worst influences for the young poet. And he will probably remain an abiding fascination to generations of young poets. At a certain date in the development of the poetic faculty the manner and the music of Swinburne draw minor talents as a magnet iron filings. Imitation almost immediately sets in. And unless it be sturdily overcome there is real danger to a barely formed or to a half-formed style. The more, inasmuch as the music is so marvelous, such a siren strain; the greater danger, inasmuch as Swinburne at his best is inimitable and has gathered absolutely to himself some of the most sonorous measures in the language. Indeed, from such a craftsman, from such a scholar, from such a master of ringing phrase there is much always to be learned, far more than the illiterate bungler may be expected to admit.



Swinburne's revolts, it is obvious, are not the revolts of today. His assaults upon religion, his almost studious interest in Italy, where "today Mazzini has given place to Mussolini," his celebration of liberty, even his early Bacchic outbursts of 1866 in "Poems and Ballads: First Series," are only historically interesting to this age. "The unconventional young," says Mr. Lucas, "think he made too much noise about liberty and too much fuss about libertinage." It is a matter of perspective. But, if so, this "noise" and this "fuss" were, after all, responsible for such organ music as

When, with flame all around him aspirant,
Stood hushed, as a harp-player stands,
The implacable beautiful tyrant,
Rose-crowned, having death in his hands;
And a sound as the sound of loud water
Smote far through the flight of the fires,
And mixed with the lightning of slaughter
A thunder of lyres.

and, yet again, in "Super Flumina Babylonis":

Whoso bears the whole heaviness of the wronged world's
weight

And puts it by,
It is well with him suffering, though he face man's fate;
How should he die?

Seeing death has no part in him any more, no power
Upon his head;
He has bought his eternity with a little hour,
And is not dead.

For an hour, if ye look for him, he is no more found,
For one hour's space;
Then ye lift up your eyes to him and behold him crowned,
A deathless face.

These accents fall with a certainty, this music thrills with an ecstasy that are qualities of only the greatest lyric poetry. It is hardly astonishing that a mind filled with such burning images, a soul concerned with such almost (as Mr. Nicholson uses the word) "astral" exaltation should be absolutely eccentric to the whirl of the world about him. "Shelley," says Mr. Nicholson, "Shelley alone of poets, though with greater self-consciousness, was equally disembodied." We may take exception to the monographist's qualifying clause concerning Shelley, but

no exception may be taken to this characterization of Swinburne; his faults as a singer are so entirely those of a genius living entirely in the world of imagination. In this connection Mr. Nicholson brings out excellently the fact that Swinburne's excitement about the *Risorgimento* was almost "purely cerebral." "This impression," he goes on, "can only be increased when we compare the Songs before Sunrise with the *Giambi ed epodi* of Carducci which were written on identical subjects and during the same years." Carducci's "dominant note . . . is . . . one of fine restraint, of powerful concision, of sorrowing satire. . . . This deeper feeling, this higher seriousness, this wider comprehension, give to Carducci's poems a strength and durability in comparison to which many of the 'Songs before Sunrise' appear but as wind and air." The point is well taken, yet "Super Flumina Babylonis" from which we have quoted, remains to us a poem with whose spiritual splendor we could but ill dispense. The nature of its inspiration may have ceased to be important, but we are thankful that it was inspired, if only by an almost purely cerebral enthusiasm for the false dawn of the Roman Republic.



Swinburne was, it is axiomatic, a hero-worshipper in excess. And toward the objects of his admiration his was a superbly generous spirit. This hero-worshipping was, except in the case of Mazzini, almost solely applied to great literary figures. As Mackail said in his Oxford lecture of 1909, "Letters were to him three-fourths of life; the poets were, in a closer sense than the rest of mankind, his own flesh and blood. His early reverence for Landor, his lifelong worship of Victor Hugo, are but two of the most striking instances out of many. Of our own Elizabethan poetry his knowledge was enormous and his appreciation searching. The Study of Shakespeare, published in 1880, is one of those works of illuminating and creative criticism which take rank as classics, and this in spite of a prose style which would damn any work of less genius."

After five years of the Pre-Raphaelite interlude and the publication of "Atalanta" in 1865, we know the story of the fevered years of high accomplishment interspersed with alcoholic indulgence that resulted finally in Swinburne's "redemption" by Watts-Dunton and the retirement to Putney in 1879. Of his life at "The Pines" Mr. Nicholson speaks with justice to Watts, and yet with a proper estimation of the deleterious factors in his influence. "It was under Watts's influence that Swinburne attacked Whistler, that he repudiated Baudelaire and Walt Whitman, and that in the final years he committed the most distressing of all apostasies, those jingo 'Songs after Sunset,' in which he attacked the Home Rule movement and welcomed the South African War. It is not surprising that such a caging of the 'light white seamew' should provoke resentment."

Swinburne remained a child in many ways. There are other instances of great poets who might almost be cited as cases of arrested development. But Swinburne's case is perhaps the most noticeable. "Handwriting," says Mackail, "if not an index to character, is often very characteristic; and Swinburne's handwriting throughout his life was like that of a schoolboy. Like a child's, his intelligence was swift and clear. But language intoxicated him."

Here too are similarities to Shelley. And also, in his poetry, in "the sheer splendor of the workmanship," though the atmosphere created was so different. Shelley, indeed, (and it is strange) remained one of Swinburne's most intense literary admirations, even to the extent of his dragging poor Shelley into what is otherwise a most negligible poem, "Eton: An Ode." If one clearly recalls Eton's treatment of Shelley there is a certain deep irony connected with the following stanza appearing in a poem composed for the four hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of that college, "since Eton arose in an age that was darkness . . . as a star that the spell of a wise man's word bade live and ascend and abide."

Shelley, lyric lord of England's lordliest singers, here
first heard

Ring from lips of poets crowned and dead the Promethean
word

Whence his soul took fire, and power to outsoar the sun-
ward-soaring bird.

Yet no other quotation illustrates quite so succinctly how alien to Swinburne was the real world of men, how alive and quick to him were the great spirits of literature, how freely he moved in a rarer and clearer element than surrounds our actions on earth. His hate, like his love, partook of the astral. His invective could be so exaggerated as to astound

and then to amuse. Yet Lady Burne-Jones left a description of him, which we know from comparison with other descriptions to have been the true one, in which she said of him: "He was courteous and affectionate and unsuspecting, and faithful beyond most people to those he really loved."

As a scholar his reputation is constantly gaining more recognition where, as a singer, it is already eminently established. He was a tragic writer of the study whose "Erechtheus" is well-nigh a masterpiece on the Aeschylean model and whose poetic dramatizations of the many-sided story of Mary, Queen of Scots contain marvelous passages. "Atalanta in Calydon," of course, shines above all his work in poetry or tragedy like a star of exceptional brilliance. "Tristram of Lyonesse" he "intended to be his masterpiece." We take this from the Prelude "with its jewelled enumeration," as Mr. Nicholson calls it, "of the Zodiac of famous lovers:"

and the star that watches flame
The embers of the harvest overgone
Is Thisbe's, slain of love in Babylon,
Set in the golden girdle of sweet signs
A blood-bright ruby; last save one light shines
An eastern wonder of sphery chrysopras,
The star that made men mad, Angelica's;
And latest named and lordliest, with a sound
Of swords and harps in heaven that ring it round,
Last love-light and last love-song of the year's,
Gleams like a glorious emerald Guenivere's.
These are the signs where through the year sees move
Full of the sun, the sun-god which is love,
A fiery body blood-red from the heart
Outward, with fire-white wings made wide apart,
That close not and unclosed not, but upright
Steered without wind by their own light and might
Sweep through the flameless fire of air that rings
From heaven to heaven with thunder of wheels and wings
And antiphones of motion-moulded rhyme
Through spaces out of space and timeless time.

This prelude was written "almost at a sitting" eight years before the retirement to Putney, but the whole poem was not published until "The Pines" had closed around him for three years. It is perhaps natural that the poem as a whole does not altogether maintain the level of the prelude. Yet it remains a most remarkable work.



Mr. Nicholson has noted that Swinburne is a poet whom it is absolutely necessary to read in judicious selections. He holds a higher opinion of "Poems and Ballads: Second Series," as compared with the first and more famous series, than do I. But certainly the second series, in "Ave atque Vale" and "A Forsaken Garden" contains two of his finest poems. And in "At a Month's End" appears what is to me one of the most vivid passages of natural description that Swinburne, who was not ordinarily remarkably observant of nature, ever accomplished. Here is his sea by moonlight, from that extraordinary poem:

Hardly we saw the high moon hanging,
Heard hardly through the windy night
Far waters ringing, low reefs clanging,
Under wan skies and waste white light.

With chafe and change of surges chiming,
The clashing channels rocked and rang
Large music, wave to wild wave timing,
And all the choral water sang.

The ghost of sea that shrank up sighing
At the sand's edge, a short sad breath
Trembling to touch the goal, and dying
With weak heart heaved up once in death.

That last description of the sigh of the surf as it ebbs from the sand seems to me a surprising achievement, wrought marvelously with short and simple words.

"Thalassius," in the later volume "Songs of the Springtides," Mr. Nicholson regards "as constituting a very illuminating and intensive disclosure of the central core of Swinburne's temperament," though the poet was "the least self-conscious of men, the least self-analytical." It should certainly be given due attention by any reader interested in arriving at the true Swinburne.

And so an end. My only hope is that these few fugitive remarks, temerarily made, have not proved too flagrant concerning the work of a poet for whom I have always cherished the most intense admiration.

The Hawthornden prize, given annually in England for the best work of imaginative literature published during the previous year, has been awarded to Sean O'Casey for his play, "Juno and the Paycock." This is the first time the prize has been awarded to a dramatist.

The Widow of Windsor

THE LETTERS OF QUEEN VICTORIA.
Second Series. Edited by GEORGE EARLE
BUCKLE. New York: Longmans, Green & Co.
2 vols. 1926.

Reviewed by WILBUR C. ABBOTT
Harvard University

NO time could be more opportune—such are the ironies of circumstance—to review the second series of the letters of Queen Victoria than the moment when the country over which she ruled so long and well has been facing the greatest crisis in its history, to use the phrase of a newspaper for once inspired to historical reminiscence in its headlines, “since the fall of the Stuarts.” For we know now, in a limited sense, how the story came out. All the great development of commerce and industry, of wealth and population, of leadership in a score of lines of human achievement which was the product of the years when she occupied the throne, all the great Age of Victoria, has come to this, that the people and the government are now face to face with the sheer problem of existence. The new Georgian era is reaping what the Victorian era sowed; the fat forties of the nineteenth century are followed by the lean twenties of the twentieth, and the very forces which lent strength to her reign are those which threaten the lives of her successors.

It has now been almost exactly twenty years since there appeared the first instalment of the “Letters of Queen Victoria,” edited by Mr. A. C. Benson and Viscount Esher. Those volumes were, in a sense, something of a literary and historical sensation. They offered for the first time to the world a picture of that “wiser, gentler, happier Elizabeth” of Tennyson’s fulsome phrase, who had during the sixty years of her reign become something more than a sovereign to her people. Their extraordinary popularity witnessed not merely their value as a historical but as a “human” document. They revealed her not merely as a queen but as a remarkable personality; and in no small degree they explained her hold upon her people, a hold based upon her lesser as well as her greater qualities, upon her weakness as upon her strength. The very idiosyncracies which aroused the amusement of the *intelligentsia* of her time—if one can introduce so alien a word into those great days—the very homeliness, the obvious limitations which these letters revealed, showed why the common interests of the Queen and the “common” people in whom she took such interest and who took such interest in her, ran so nearly in the same channels.

It cannot be truly said that the present volumes fill precisely the same place as those earlier revelations. Revelations, of the great, the near great, aspirants for greatness and even for mere notoriety, are more common than they were twenty years ago. There has been a flood of “revelations” in that time which has taken the edge off of such material, and has lowered the quality almost to the point of nausea in too many instances of “indiscretions.” It cannot even be said that the present volumes alter in any marked degree the impression of the Queen left by their predecessors, however much they may emphasize that impression. It is not probable that, apart from other considerations, they will become a mine from which any later Strachey will draw such an entertaining, gossipy, if misnamed a chronicle as his. Yet this much seems certain; they do not yield in interest or in importance even to their predecessors. They are, if possible, more interesting. They are filled with great events. They show the mature Queen, secure in place and power, experienced in the duties of her station, wise in events, skilled in the business of constitutional sovereignty, capable, hard-working, fulfilling her duties, absorbed in the good of the country as she conceives it—and it was no bad conception in the main—devoted to her family and to her country, and carrying her heavy burden alone.

For in another way these volumes differ from their predecessors, as the editor points out. Those earlier letters covered the period of prosperity, for the people and their Queen. They ended with the greatest blow she ever received, the death of her adored husband, the Prince Consort. These volumes begin with the aftermath of that tragedy and the tragedy of the years. She was peculiarly alone; it was the penalty of long life. Not merely was her husband, her most trusted adviser, dead; her earlier friends and ministers had gone. Melbourne, Well-

ington, Peel, and Aberdeen were dead; Stockmar was in retirement; and her shrewd and devoted uncle, Leopold of Belgium, was aging fast. Broken as she was by her husband’s death, deprived of his constant and sympathetic support, those public functions, which make the lives of the great one long trial of nerves, became all but insupportable for her. She withdrew as far as possible from the sight of that public which first embraces, then pities, then endures, then finds fault. There were years when it seemed that Dilke’s idea of the overthrow of monarchy might find followers enough to succeed; there were years of unpopularity even for the Queen herself.

Yet no one can read her letters without realizing how unjust were the views held of her in certain circles. “My weakness,” she writes to her uncle in 1863, “has increased to that extent within the last two months, as to make all my good doctors anxious. It is all the result of over-anxiety, and the weight of responsibility and constant sorrow. . . . I feel like a poor hunted hare, like a child that has lost its mother, so lost, so frightened and helpless.” Two years later she writes again: “I am going, alas! to Town for my last Reception, which I am truly thankful for. I shall have had six.” Yet little by little she turned again to the routine which pressed upon her, and her interest in public affairs revived with the years.



GENERAL REO SIAO

Illustration from “Breeze in the Moonlight,” by H. Bedford Jones (Putnam)

It was perhaps fortunate for her that the times were so stirring. The decade from 1860 to 1870 was one in which the nerves of all those in authority were continually on edge. As early as 1863 she writes that “Things are not in a satisfactory state in America. . . . I earnestly trust that there will be no cause for anxiety in Mexico”—a hope not destined to fulfilment. As the European drama developed with the ambitions of Prussia and the policy of Bismarck she naturally became absorbed in it. “I need not tell you that there is only one voice here as to the conduct of Prussia”—in regard to the Danes. “Prussia seems inclined to behave as atrociously as possible, and as she has always done. Odious people the Prussians are, that I must say.”

By the time of the Alabama arbitration claims and the Franco-Prussian war, she was urging upon Mr. Gladstone’s government the great seriousness of the situation between Great Britain and the United States and suggesting means to avert a breach. With regard to the strained relations between France and Prussia she was naturally bombarded with letters from her German relatives, especially her daughter, the German Empress, and—with the rest of the world—deplored the “insistence of the French in seeking for further grounds of quarrel,” urging strongly that the rulers of Russia, Austria, Holland, Belgium, and Italy join with her in a combined appeal to the Prussian king and the French Emperor to avert war.

Whatever her opinions once the war broke out these letters preserve a proper diplomatic reserve. Whatever the Queen may have thought of the war, of the many exculpatory letters sent her from her German relatives, or of the screen from the French

Empress’s boudoir at St. Cloud sent to the Queen by her daughter, with explanations and apologies, either the Queen or her editor was too wise to commit any replies to print. With her position as the head of the state, as a relative of the conquerors and a friend of the conquered, with the resentment against Prussia in England, with the wave of anti-monarchical feeling, and the Prussian resentment against England, it was certainly no time to commit one’s self. And no one can read the chronicle of these years in particular without perceiving that the situation of a monarch is far from being the sine-cure, much less the bed of roses, which the popular imagination too often pictures, not even the situation of the most constitutional of monarchs in the most modern of states. The words which occur most frequently in these letters are not “leisure and pleasure in ample measure,” but “duty,” “anxiety,” “work,” and “responsibility.”

Yet however anxious, laborious, and filled with the spirit of duty and responsibility, can a sovereign in these days of democracy have any effect upon government? What is the sphere of a constitutional monarch? Since the fall of the Stuarts what can a king or a queen of England do? Very little, no doubt, openly and officially; perhaps nothing at all to stem the tide of public opinion or even much divert it, even though that tide threatened to sweep away monarchy itself. Of this there is no better illustration than the incident of Sir Charles Dilke’s speech at Newcastle in 1871. In that famous utterance Sir Charles allowed himself an attack upon the Queen’s savings which must be so great as to be regarded as almost “malversation” of public funds, and an allegation that in defiance of her promise she did not pay income tax.

To those charges—which were untrue, as was soon proved—there were three replies. The first was a mild disclaimer from the Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone. The second was a vigorous letter from the Queen to that minister, taking him to task, in effect, for not rebutting the charges more sharply, and a reply from Mr. Gladstone explaining that he thought it unwise to magnify the incident and thus make it an important issue. The third was the popular repudiation of the views expressed by Dilke, and a great revival of sympathy and support for the Queen.

But in general the crown was chiefly interested in the older prerogatives—foreign affairs, the army and navy, the church, Society, and the general welfare of its subjects, without too specific reference to the particular measures taken by ministers to that end. In all of these the hand of the Queen is to be seen. She is essentially concerned with peace and insuring it by every means in her power, with perhaps one striking exception—Russia. Nothing, she writes in 1876, “must deter us from doing what really is right, viz., to prevent Russia from having the upper hand in the East, and to make it clear that any occupation of Turkish territory will be instantly followed by a like act on our part, as we can never allow Constantinople to be occupied by Russia.”—in which doctrine she found her ministers in full accord.

As to the army, the *coup d’état* by which Mr. Gladstone secured reform of the old system of purchased commissions through the exercise of the royal prerogative finds less attention than one might expect in these papers, while the elaborate reports of Mr. Cardwell on army reform seem to have affected her chiefly in her concern for the position in which it placed the Duke of Cambridge. But it was in the church that she found the chief field for the exercise of her influence. That institution which was regarded as a legitimate perquisite of politics by her favorite minister, Disraeli, was looked on in a very different light by his mistress, and the establishment owes her much for her careful consideration, and her almost invariably good judgment in appointments. And, finally, throughout runs a constant stream of what for want of a better word may be called “sympathy,” with the poor in her own country, with the oppressed and massacred Christians of the Balkans, with the difficulties of her official servants in the Empire, with such cases of injustice as came to her notice. It was, the cynic may say, her *métier* to sympathize, as it is that of any politician. Yet it might have been different. And it is perhaps that quality, as part of her nature so closely attuned to that of her people, which, despite her high place and the element of pride and even vanity which it must breed in the strongest nature, gave her the high place she held in their affections.