ON

THE NOBILITY

OF THE

BRITISH GENTRY.

ON

THE NOBILITY

OF

THE BRITISH GENTRY,

OR THE

POLITICAL RANKS AND DIGNITIES

OF

The British Empire,

Compared with those on the Continent;

FOR THE USE OF FOREIGNERS IN GREAT BRITAIN, AND OF BRITONS ABROAD;

PARTICULARLY OF THOSE WHO DESIRE TO BE PRESENTED AT FOREIGN COURTS, TO ACCEPT FOREIGN MILITARY SERVICE, TO BE INVESTED WITH FOREIGN TITLES, TO BE ADMITTED INTO FOREIGN ORDERS, TO PURCHASE FOREIGN PROPERTY, OR TO INTERMARRY WITH FOREIGNERS.

—

Nobiles sunt qui arma gentilicia antecessorum suorum proferre possunt.
Coke upon Littleton.

—

SECOND EDITION, ENLARGED.

BY SIR JAMES LAWRENCE,
KNIGHT OF MALTA.

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1827.

TO

THE GENTLEMEN OF GREAT BRITAIN.

WHETHER

PEERS, KNIGHTS, OR ESQUIRES,

THE COUNTRYMEN OF SIR PHILIP SIDNEY,

AND

THE TRUE NOBILITY OF THE EMPIRE,

THIS WORK IS INSCRIBED.

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ON THE

NOBILITY

OF

THE BRITISH GENTRY,

ETC. ETC.

It has been asserted by envy or ignorance, that the peers are the only nobility in the British empire. This assertion has been repeated on the Continent, and particularly in France, by those who wish to inculcate the inutility of the ancient noblesse. This assertion, however unfounded, has done injury to individuals, and is derogatory to the honor not only of the gentry, but of the peers themselves. For the gentry being the nursery-garden from which the peers are usually trans-

planted, if the peers were to date their nobility from the elevation of their ancestors to the upper house, what upstarts would their lordships appear in the opinion of the pettiest baron on the Continent!

Russia is said to contain 580,000 nobles; Austria, on a late enumeration, 239,000 male nobles; and Spain, in 1785, contained 479,000 nobles; and France, at the revolution, 365,000 noble families, of which 4,120 families were of ancient gentility.

A French author has asserted there are only about 300 nobles in Great Britain. Had he said there are only 300 peers, he might have been tolerably correct; but there are, according to the statement produced in 1798, when the subject of armorial bearings was before Parliament, in England, 9,458 families entitled to bear arms; in Scotland, 4,000: now all these families are noble. "Nobiles sunt (says Sir Edward Coke), qui arma gentilicia antecessorum suorum proferre possunt."

Gentility is superior to nobility; gentility must be innate; nobility may be acquired: noblemen

may be only persons of rank and distinction; but gentlemen must be persons of family and quality. —*Fit nobilis, nascitur generosus.*

Nobility means notability; noble is worthy of notice, or of being known. Any individual, who distinguishes himself, may be said to ennoble himself. A prince, judging an individual worthy of notice, gave him letters patent of nobility. In these letters were blazoned the arms that were to distinguish his shield. By this shield he was to be known, or *nobilis*. A plebeian had no blazonry on his shield, because he was *ignobilis*, or unworthy of notice. In an age when a warrior was cased in armour from head to foot, he could only be known by his shield. (1) The plebeian, who

(1) The squire was not less noble than the knight, and changed not his helmet on being knighted. Armour was expensive, and lasted not only during the life of the warrior, but descended from father to son; but a squire, having distinguished himself by some brilliant action, opened his vizor to be identified, before his chief conferred on him the honor of knighthood. Hence the helmet of the squire is painted with the vizor closed, and the helmet of the knight with the vizor open.

had no pretension to be known, was *clypeo ignobilis albo*. Hence arms are the criterion of nobility. Every nobleman must have a shield of arms. Whoever has a shield of arms is a nobleman. In every country in Europe, without exception, a grant of arms or letters of nobility is conferred on all the descendants. In the northern countries, Germany, Hungary, Russia, Sweden, Denmark, the titles also of baron or count descend to all the male posterity, and to all the unmarried females of the family: but in the southern countries, France, Spain, Portugal, and Great Britain, the titles of duke, marquis, count, viscount, or baron, descend only according to the rules of primogeniture. In Italy the titles conferred by the Emperor descend in the German fashion to all the branches of the family; those conferred by the Pope, and the Kings of Naples and Sardinia, descend only to the eldest sons in succession; but the cadets of all these houses, though they possess neither the same titles nor privileges, are not less noble than the heads of their respective houses.

The British gentry have not only been distin-

guished by coats of arms, but have given liveries to their retainers from time immemorial. When Henry the Fowler wished to polish the Germans, he sent commissioners to England to observe the regularity and order with which the tournaments there were conducted; and they brought back with them the rules of the tournaments, almost word for word, translated into German. These rules may be found in Edmondson's Heraldry, and in Rüxner's Turnierbuch. In Rüxner is the list of all the combatants at the grand national tournaments in Germany; and every German gentleman is not less proud in showing the name of his ancestors, in these lists, than our families of French origin at finding their names on the roll at Battle Abbey. Every German or English gentleman, who, without being able to prove his descent from four grand parents of coat armour, or, as the Germans express it, to prove four quarters, should offer himself as a combatant, was obliged to ride the barriers among the hisses of the populace, as the punishment of his presumption.

The English gentry were knights Templars,

and, till Henry VIII. abolished the English tongue, every English gentleman of four quarters was admissible in the order of Malta, or of Saint John of Jerusalem. In Portugal and Italy also only four quarters were requisite; though in Germany sixteen quarters were required. The English knights of Malta were chosen among the gentry: the prior of England had a seat in the House of Lords. In Germany the knights were chosen among the barons, or *nobiles minores;* and the prior of Germany had a seat in the Diet of the Empire. In the reign of Queen Mary, Sir Richard Shelley was the last grand prior of England.

In later times the British gentry have produced admirals, generals, governors. They have held noble posts at the court of Saint James, and have, as ambassadors, represented their sovereign at foreign courts. They therefore, even if they had never been styled nobility, as they possess all the essential qualities of nobility, might be considered on a footing with the *noblesse* of the Continent. But numerous quotations will show that they are not only noble in *fact*, but in *name;* and as those

officers, who are authorized by law, still pronounce them noble, they have never ceased to be so.

But it were the height of absurdity to deny the nobility of a class in society, to record whose births, alliances, and deaths, the Heralds' Office was established. In every country plebeians are below the notice of a court of honor.

The landed proprietors are in every country the natural nobility; hence, in the opinion of the genealogist, those families who are named alike with their estates, such as the Hoghton of Hoghton, the Ratcliffe of Ratcliffe, the Fitzakerly of Fitzakerly, and the long list of landholders that appears in Gregson's Antiquities of Lancashire; and the Titchborn of Titchborn, the Wolseley of Wolseley, the Wrotesley of Wrotesley, the Brogham of Brogham; and the Scottish families of *the ilk;* and the German families von und zu (of and at), as the von und zu Hardenberg, the von und zu Hahnstein, etc. are the noblest families in their respective provinces. Could any title of the peerage add to the nobility of the Hampden upon whose

sarcophagus is inscribed — "John Hampden, twenty-fourth hereditary lord of Great Hampden?"

Under the feudal system there were immense privileges attached to the soil; and consequently the sovereign, in granting a fief, granted nobility with it. At that period there was no necessity for letters patent. The proprietors, when summoned, must appear, cased in arms from head to foot, and in this military masquerade the herald could only distinguish the individual by the blazonry on his shield. But when the sovereign had no more lands to grant, he, either to reward services, or as a financial speculation, granted letters patent of nobility, with a coat of arms described therein. When in Latin, the words were, *In signum hujus nobilitatis arma damus:* when in French, *Nous donnons ces armes en signe de noblesse.*

In England these patents were styled letters of nobility, or grants of arms, indifferently. Several books, containing a series of them by either name, are in the British Museum. They are in Latin,

French, or English. The following, which is also in Rymer, v. 132, is from a Harl. MS. (1507.)

Ann. D. 1444. An. 22 H. VI. vas. 22 H. VI. m. 8.

Rex omnibus, ad quos, etc. salutem.

Quia principibus cujuscumque interest suos subditos, præcipue illos, qui servitia eis impendant, gratiis, libertatibus, privilegiis, et immunitatibus præmiere, ut ad hujusmodi servitia impendenda promptiores valeant et citius animentur.

Hinc est quod nos considerationem habentes ad bona et gratuita servitia, quæ fideles legii nostri, Arnaldus de Bordeu et Grimondus de Bordeu ejus filius, burgenses civitatis nostræ Burdegaliæ, diversi modi nobis impenderunt et impendant in futurum.

Eosdem Arnaldum et Grimondum et eorum procreatos et procreandos, de gratia nostra speciali, nobilitamus et nobiles facimus et creamus.

Et in signum hujusmodi nobilitatis arma in hiis literis nostris patentibus depicta, cum libertatibus, privilegiis, juribus et insignibus viris nobilibus de-

bitis et consuetis eis damus et concedimus per præsentes. In cujus, etc.

Teste Rege apud Westmonasterium vicesimo octavo die Martii—Per breve de privato sigillo et de data prædicta, etc.

The same Harl. MS. No. 1507, contains the following:—

"To all Christian people these present letters reading, hearing, or seeing, I Richmond Clarenceux, principal herald and king of arms of the south part of this realm of England, send due and humble recommendation and greeting.

"I the said king of arms, not only by common renown, but also by my own knowledge, and report of many other credible and noble persons, verily ascertained that Nicholas Mattok of Hichim in the county of Hertford hath well and honorably guided and governed himself, so that he hath deserved and is right worthy, he and his posterity, to be in all places of worship admitted, renowned, accounted, numbered, accepted, and received, unto

the number and into the company of our ancient gentle and noble men perpetually from henceforth; and for remembrance and consideration of the same his gentleness, virtue, and ability, by the authority and power of my office, I the said king of arms have devised, ordained, and assigned unto and for the same Nicholas and for his posterity the arms here following: [Here the arms are described] as more plainly it appeareth in the margin depict.

"In witness thereof, I, the said king of arms, have signed the same presents with my own hand, and sealed the same with my seal of authority, at London, 23rd day of July in the ninth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King Henry the Seventh.

"Per me, Richmond, Roy d'Armes dit Clarencieux."

It may be observed in the above that gentlemen are placed before noblemen, but in more modern patents noblemen are placed the first. Places of worship signified places where the nobility assembled.

The landholders considered these patents of nobility an innovation, and dangerous stretch of prerogative, and affected to look down with contempt on those who built their pretensions on a sheet of parchment. Yet landed property was still so far considered an essential to nobility, that the new-made noble endeavoured immediately to purchase a manor, and this manor he either named after himself, or named himself after this manor.

Those, who possessed not an acre of land, endeavoured to pass for landholders by tacking, in Germany *von*, in France *de*, before their names. This was frequently absurd in the extreme. An individual named Taylor, Smith, or Miller, called himself, as it were, Mr. of Taylor, of Smith, or of Miller, as if Taylor, Smith, or Miller were the name of a manor; or endeavoured to lessen the absurdity by adding to his mechanical name a local termination. Hence in Germany, the ennobled Mr. Schneider (Taylor) called himself Baron von Schneidersdorf (Taylor's thorp or village); Mr. Schmidt, Baron von Schmidtfeld; Mr. Muller, Baron von Müllersbach (Millersbrook),

and so forth; though it would have puzzled them to say in what circle of the holy empire Schneidersdorf, or Schmidtfeld, or Müllersbach were to be found. In some provinces in Germany nobles only are permitted to purchase noble estates, or knights'-fees (*rittergut*). In other provinces a plebeian purchaser must have himself ennobled. And in the course of things, to those families in America, that have inherited landed property from generation to generation, will be paid that respect, which will compensate for the European system of nobility.

During the feudal system all countries were divided into fiefs, and these again into arriere-fiefs. In Germany the holders of the first are styled princes, of the second, barons. Spain had its grandees and hidalgos—Hungary has its magnates and equites. In France and England the grand vassals of the crown, or the greater barons (afterwards peers) composed the first; and the lesser barons (afterwards knights and squires) the second order. In all these countries the second class are styled noble as well as the first. At what period,

or for what reason, have our gentlemen ceased to be so? The following citations will prove their rights, which may be dormant, but cannot be lost.

Sir Thomas Smith, died 1577.

"The Commonwealth of England, compiled by the Honorable Sir Thomas Smith, knight, one of the principal secretaries unto two most worthy princes, King Edward and Queen Elizabeth: printed 1601.

"The first part, of gentlemen of England, called *nobilitas major*.

"The second sort, of gentlemen, which may be called *nobilitas minor*.

"Esquire betokeneth *scutiferum* or *armigerum*, and be all those which bear arms, which is to bear as a testimony of the nobility or race from whence they do come.

"Gentlemen be those, whom their blood and race doth make noble or known. The Latins call them all *nobiles*, the French nobles.

"*Gens* in Latin betokeneth the race and surname. So the Romans had Cornelios, Appios, Fabios, Æmilios, Pisones, Julios, Brutos, Valerios. Of which, who were *agnati*, and therefore kept the name, were also *gentiles*, and retaining the memory of the glory of their progenitor's fame, were gentlemen of that or that race.

"Yomen be not called masters, for that, as I have said before, pertaineth to gentlemen, but to their surnames men add Goodman.

"Wherefore to speak of the Commonwealth of England, it is governed by three sorts of persons; the prince, which is called a king or queen — the gentlemen, which are divided into two parts, the baronie or estate of lords, and those which be no lords, as knights, esquires, and simple gentlemen. —The third and last sort of persons are named the yomen."

Sir John Ferne.

"The Blazon of Gentry and Nobility divided into two parts, the Glory of Generosity and Lacyes nobility, compiled by John Ferne, gentleman, for

the instruction of all gentlemen bearers of arms, whom and none other this work concerneth.—Printed 1586.

"If a duchess, countess, or baroness, marry with but a simple gentleman, she loseth her dignity; we say the reason is this, *Quando fœmina nobilis nupserit ignobili, desinit esse nobilis;* but in so doing we misquote the text, which means that if any gentlewoman, which in our laws is called *nobilis*, do marry a man of no coat armor (whom also we call *ignobilem*), her state and title of gentleness is in suspense, and no man knoweth where it is; but yet the law preserveth the same, until God send her a husband of a better kind, and then it shall appear again. In the time of Queen Mary (continues Sir John Ferne, whose language I shall take the liberty to modernize), the lawyers in two cases consulted with the heralds, if the widows of peers, being married to gentlemen, might retain their names and titles of dignity, the law having said, *Quando fœmina nobilis, etc.;* but the heralds answered, that they misquoted the law; but that nevertheless these widows must lose their

titles, though not from any want of nobility in their second husbands, for no one without injustice could deny that they were gentlemen, being enregistered as such; but the reason why, is deducted from nature: and it were monstrous, if a wife, in the enjoying of titles should be superior to her husband, who is her head; and this would be, if the wife be honoured as a duchess, and the husband be entertained but according to his inferior state."

Such was the opinion of the heralds. The law of arms and the law of the land judged with reason on their side. But the courtesy of England is not less complaisant than the second husband, who by permitting his other half to bear the title of his predecessor, acknowledges himself the acquirer of only second-hand goods. Great is the astonishment of foreigners at this custom. They know not which most to admire, the want of dignity in the husband, or of delicacy in the wife. So much for the second marriages of dowagers. Of the misalliances of damsels, Sir John Ferne says:—

"It were well, if gentlewomen of blood and

of inheritance would have better regard to their matching; for by marrying with a gentleman, she is a help to sustain his noble house: but by marrying a churle, she barreth both herself and her progeny of nobleness."

Lord Chief Justice Sir Edward Coke, died 1634.

The above quotation from Sir John Ferne explains the only passage in Coke upon Lyttelton, which might lead one to imagine that this great law authority confined the nobility to the peerage of England; whereas in the other volumes of his Institutes, he says that all who bear arms are noble.

Statutum de Militibus, anno primo Edw. 2.

"He that is destrained ought to be a gentleman of name and blood, *claro loco natus*. Of ancient time, those that held by knight's service were regularly gentile. It was a badge of gentry. Yet now *tempora mutantur*, and many a yoman, burgess, or tradesman, purchaseth lands holden by knight's service, and yet ought not, for want of gentry, to be made a knight. At this time the

surest rule is, *Nobiles sunt qui arma gentilicia antecessorum suorum proferre possunt.* Therefore they are called *scutiferi, armigeri.*

"A knight is by creation, a gentleman by descent; and yet I read of the creation of a gentleman. A knight of France came into England, and challenged John Kingston, a good and strong man at arms, but no gentleman, as the record saieth, *ad certa armorum puncta, etc. perficienda. Rex ipsum Johannem ad ordinem generosorum adoptavit, et armigerum constituit, et certa honoris insignia concessit.*" The King made him no knight, as his adversary was, because he was no gentleman.

So great an interest was attached by our ancestors to every circumstance of chivalry, that this anecdote of John Kingston has been reported by a variety of writers. Selden, however, in his Titles of Honor, says not, that he was created a gentleman, but that he was received into the state of a gentleman, and made an esquire. This might be done by giving him a coat of arms. A king might

thus ennoble him; but in those days, when the word gentleman was so well understood, he would no more have thought of creating him a gentleman than of creating him a giant. We shall in another place hear the opinion of James the First on the subject.

The Lord Chief Justice continues. "And great discord and discontentment would arise within the realme, if yeomen and tradesmen were admitted to the dignity of knighthood, to take the place and the precedency of the antient and *noble* gentry of the realme.

"It is resolved in our books without contradiction that a knight batchelor is a dignity, and of the inferior degree of *nobility*. Britton styleth a knight honorable, and in the record 9 Edw. I. Sir John Acton, knight, hath the addition of *nobilis;* but gentlemen of name and of blood had very rarely the addition of *generosus* or *armiger,* being sufficiently distinguished by their knight's service from yomen, who served by the plough. But it was enacted by the statute 1 Hen. V. that in every writ ori-

ginal of actions, personal appeals, and inditements, to the name of the defendants, addition be made of the state, or degree, or misterie; and hereupon addition was made of *generosus* or *armiger*.

"An unmarried gentlewoman is improperly styled spinster; she ought to be styled *generosa*." —2 Institutes 668.

In the fourth volume the Lord Chief Justice quotes Cicero and Pliny, *Nobilis est qui sui generis imagines proferre potest:* and adds, that what images were to the Romans, coats of arms are to us—*Arma seu insignia gentilicia ex antiquo habuerunt locum imaginum*: so now the best way of discussing of antiquity of gentry is *per insignia*.

He says that all disputes about precedency among Peers must be decided in the House of Peers; that the like disputes among the members of the lower house, must be decided in the lower house: but that such disputes among all others must be decided before the Lord High Constable or Earl Marshal.

He ends, as the subject would carry him too far, by referring the reader to the works of Camden,

and particularly to the *series ordinum*, or table of precedency therein.

They must be ignorant indeed of the laws of honor, and of the nature of nobility, who could suppose, that any ignoble persons would presume to refer their disputes to the Constable or Earl Marshal.

In France, before the revolution, all disputes among gentlemen were referred to the Marechaux de France.

Camden, Clarencieux King of Arms, died 1623. He wrote his Britannia in Latin; it afterwards appeared in English. He says:

"Nobiles vero nostri dividuntur in majores et minores. *Nobiles* minores sunt equites aurati, armigeri, et qui vulgo generosi, et *gentlemen* vocantur.—The lesser *noblemen* are the knights, esquires, and those whom we commonly call gentlemen."

In his History of Queen Elizabeth, Camden says:

"By her mother's side her descent was not so high, albeit *noble* it was: her great grandfather was

Sir Jeffery Bolen, a man of *noble* birth in Norfolk, Lord Mayor of London 1457; who matched his daughters into the *noble* houses of the Cheineys, Heydons, and Fortescues; his grand-daughters married to Shelton, Calthorp, Clere, and Sackvill, men of great wealth and *noble* descent.

"In 1559 some *noblemen* voluntarily departed the kingdom, of whom those of better note were Henry Lord Morly—Sir Francis Englefield, Sir Robert Peckham, Sir Thomas Shelley, and Sir John Gage."

Thus Camden not only considered the above knights as noblemen, but *nobiles melioris notæ*.

A Harleian manuscript (No. 1359) contains a confirmation by Camden of twenty quarterings to Sir Ralphe Boseville of Bradborne in Kent, a gentleman of quality, blood, and fair and ancient coat armor, and of pure and undoubted lineal descent, and an uninterrupted derivation from ancient *nobility*, and from divers *noble* knights and esquires of this kingdom, his ancestors, as well of his own surname, as also of other *noble*

surnames, and right worthy families, as appeareth by the quarterings of this achievement.

"Wm. Camden alias Clarencieux Rex Armor."
"20th Sept. 1621."

Thomas Milles published, 1608, his *Nobilitas Politica et Civilis,* and 1610 his Catalogue of Honor, which is the translation. He says:

"The division of the orders and degrees of men which the English commonwealth or empire well beareth, is exceedingly well set down by those who have divided the same into a king, into nobilitie of the greater and of the lesser sort, citizens, men liberally brought up, and labourers.

"These are the orders and degrees of both our sorts of nobility, named and unnamed (titled or untitled.)"

In the table of precedency follow in degree

"26. Esquires.

27. Gentlemen."

He describes the order of the procession at the coronation of Edward VI.

First of all, the king's messengers two and two together: deinde *nobiles* minorum gentium, vel generosi bini.

The esquires of the king's body: *nobiles* corporis Regii custodes, quos pro corpore armigeros nuncupamus.

The gentlemen of the privy bed-chamber: *nobiles* Regi in privato cubiculo astipulantes.

The gentlemen pensioners: stipendiarii *nobiles*.

This *series ordinum*, cited by Lord Chief Justice Coke, and inserted by so many writers two centuries ago, constitutes the table of precedency printed at present in the Court Calendar. They, who were then styled the noblemen of lesser note, the *nobiles minorum gentium*, are now styled the gentlemen entitled to bear arms.

The following account of the different Classes in France, given by the Comte de Montlosier in his *Monarchie Française*, bears a remarkable resemblance to the foregoing extracts from Milles and Sir Thomas Smith; except that the Comte divides the Peerage and Noblesse into two distinct classes,

whereas these English authors unite the Peerage and Gentry in the same class.

"In the later times of our ancient Monarchy we might have counted four classes of persons:—1. The peers or grand officers of the crown.—2. An order of nobility.—3. The body of roturiers or burghers.—4. Hired servants.

"In observing the population of the first races (Gauls and Francs), I find, 1. The Grands, who might correspond perhaps to our peers—2. An order of free men, or *ingenus,* who correspond to our order of nobility—3. An order of tributaries, who correspond to our *roturiers*—4. The slaves, who seem to correspond to our servants."—*Montlosier,* I. 81.

Matthew Carter, esquire, in his Honor Redivivus, or an Analysis of Honor and Armory, published in 1654, says:

"Since others, as Sir John Ferne and Sir Wm. S[illegible]ve been so punctual in discussing the pri[illegible] gentility (gentlemen), I pass to the next [illegible]*ness,* which is the esquire.

"The division of these dignities of honor was anciently but into twelve; but the addition of knight baronet has made them into thirteen. The six first are only noble, as the gentleman, esquire, knight bachelor, bannerct, baronet, and baron.

"The other seven princely, and are allowed crowns and coronets—viscount, earl, marquess, duke, prince, king, and emperor. Sir John Ferne places the viscount in the first division, but, I think, improperly, in regard to his coronet."

The barons also having been allowed coronets by Charles the Second, Mr. Carter would probably have placed them also among the princes. Though perhaps another distinction might have separated them from the viscounts; the barons are only styled trusty and well-loved, as other knights and gentlemen, whereas the viscounts are styled the cousins of their sovereign.

At the court of Charles the Fifth there used to be perpetual disputes about precedency between the German princes and the grandees of Spain; and in catholic times an English peer was considered equal to a German prince at the

court of the Pope. In those times the princesses of England could find husbands at home; and what may be the consequence of our foreign alliances? the mongrel descendants of a Corsican may eventually pretend to the throne of Great Britain.

Silvanus Morgan, in his Sphere of Gentry, published in 1661, divides them into native, dative, achieved, and created nobility.

John Guillim, poursuivant, published the fifth edition of his Display of Heraldry in 1679. He says:

"By the course and custom of England, nobility is either major or minor. Major contains all titles and degrees from knighthood upwards—minor all from barons downwards."

He says, page 154—nobles are truly called gentlemen.

He treats, page 71, of yeoman, or ignoble persons.

"Women in England, according to their hus-

bands' quality, are either honorable and noble, or ignoble.

"Their honorable dignities are princesses, duchesses, marchionesses, countesses, viscountesses, and baronesses.

"The *noblesse*, as the French call them, are all knights' ladies, who in all writings are styled dames. All esquires' and gentlemen's wives, only gentlewomen.

"The third sort comprehends the plebeians, and are commonly called good wives."

It is remarkable that Guillim places the epithet honorable before noble.

Joseph Edmondson, Mowbray Herald, published in 1780 his Compleat Body of Heraldry, the last though most important work of the kind, as it contains the armorial of all England. It may be found in several public libraries, and particularly in the court libraries on the continent. It was deserving of the patronage of George the Third, and it may be useful to Englishmen abroad; as any gentleman, whose nobility was doubted, might show the arms of his family. The

account that he gives of the immediate nobility, or the *tenentes in capite*, of Germany, of the continental orders of knighthood, and of the rules at tournaments, places the British gentry on a level with the *noblesse* of the continent. But in order to avoid repetitions, I shall make few extracts from him, as he has only repeated the arguments of Selden in his Titles of Honor, and of preceding antiquaries and heralds. He not only declares that the English gentry are noble, but from the following account of two of the most noble orders in Germany, it is evident that Edmondson considered gentility the most exalted word for nobility.

"A candidate for the order of Saint George at Munich is obliged to prove his *gentility* for five generations, on his mother's side as well as on that of his father.

"Some German *gentlemen* erected a most sumptuous hospital at Acre, and assumed the title of Teutonic Knights."

Douglas. The same service that Edmondson renders to the gentry of England, Douglas may render to the barons or gentry of Scotland.

But not only in the works of heralds and antiquaries, but in proclamations, state papers, and monumental inscriptions, the gentry have been styled noble.

The ravages committed by the Welsh in 1283, are styled in Rymer, "strages magnatum, *nobilium*, et aliorum:" the slaughter of lords, nobles and others.

This is correctly expressed; but in a modern newspaper the cart would be put before the horse; and it would probably run, "the slaughter of nobility, gentry, and others."

Barnes, in his History of Edward the Third, styles Sir Miles Stapleton a man of great nobility; Sir Nele Loring a knight of great valor and nobility.

The names of the Englishmen of the *noblest* at the battle of Cranant are thus given, Harl. MS. 782:

The Earl of Salisbury,
Sir de Willoughby,
Sir Edmond Heron,
Sir John Trafford,
Sir Gilbert Halsal, etc. 21 names in all.

And the same MS. contains the names of the princes, dukes, earls, barons, bannerets, and bachelor knights, with other *nobles* of the household and retinue, under the right mighty prince, John Regent of France, Duke of Bedford. The Register of Ely (Harl. MS. No. 5828) mentions some meeting anno 1458.

"Presentibus Wmo. St. George et Joh'ne Colville militibus, Laurencio Cheyne,..... Peyton et Thoma Lockton armigeris, et multis aliis *nobilibus*."

Two centuries later, Sir Simon d'Ewes used to direct his letters to a descendant or kinsman of one of the above esquires:

"Edwardo Peyton, *nobilissimo* baronetto."

Lord Verulam, in his History of Henry the Seventh, inserts the proclamation of Perkin Warbeck, who thus accuses the King:

"First, he has caused divers *nobles* of this our realme to be cruelly murdered, as our cousin Sir William Stanley, Lord Chamberlain; Sir Simon Montford, Sir Robert Ratcliffe, William Dawbeny, Humfrey Strafford, and many others."

Of the above nobles none was a peer.

Heylin, in his History of the Reformation, dedicated to Charles the Second, says:

"1546. In the next place came Sir Thomas Wriothesley, a man of a very new *nobility*."

According to a Harleian MS. No. 801, is inscribed in Doncaster church:

"Here lyeth of *noble* extraction, John Harrington, a famous squire, and *noble* Isabel his wife, chief founders of this chantry; which Isabel died on St. George's day 1462, and the foresaid John on the nativity of the Virgin 1465."

At Romaldkirk in Richmondshire, even so late as 1664, a simple knight is inscribed, Nobilissimus Dominus Franciscus Apelby de Lartington:—(Whitaker's Richmondshire.)

"John Lord Viscount Welles married Cicely daughter of Henry the Sixth; she afterwards married a gentleman of the *noble* family of Kyme of Kyme Tower." See Thompson's Boston and Gent. Mag. Sept. 1821. John Viscount Wells, son of Lionel Lord Wells, married the daughter of Ed-

ward the Fourth. See Thoroton's History of Nottinghamshire. The above passage therefore is incorrect; but it shows, that not only our lords, but our squires, have intermarried with the royal family.

Peacham published, in 1634, his Compleat Gentleman, fashioning himself in necessary qualities that may be required in a *noble* gentleman. More than a third of the book treats of blazonry, and he gives the list of the heraldic works in different languages that should compose his library. In his questions on nobility in general, he discusses whether advocates and physicians may be ranked with the *ennobled.*

"Coats of arms, he says, are sometimes purchased by stealth, shuffled into records and monuments by painters, glaziers, carvers, and such; but so good an order has been lately established by the Earl Marshal, that this sinister dealing is cut off from such mercenary abusers of *nobility.*

"Gentility is lost by attainder of treason or felony, by which persons become base or ignoble."

In Jacob's Law Dictionary we read, under the word Herald, Garter is to marshal the funeral of peers; the next is Clarenceux—his office is to marshal the funeral of all the lesser *nobility*, knights or esquires, south of the Trent.

There are several volumes of burial certificates both in the Herald's Office and in the British Museum. From the following certificate (Harl. MS. 7029) one may judge of the solemnity with which our lesser nobility were interred. "Sir Francis Hinde died at his manor-house of Madingley the 21st of March 1595, being 65 years of age, and was worthily buried in the parish church of Madingley aforesaid on the 6th of April next following; chief mourner was William Hinde, esquire; the four assistants, Sir John Cutte, knight, Edward Radcliffe, esquire (son-in-law), Edward Hinde (second son), and Thomas Chicheley. The standard was borne by Humfrey Gardener, and the pennon of his arms was borne by Mr. Saney. The officers of arms, that solemnized the said funeral, were, Mr. Clarenceux King of Arms, and York Herald of Arms.

In witness hereof we whose names are underwritten have subscribed these presents.

" William Hinde.
" Edward Radcliffe.
" Edward Hinde."

The books to form an opinion of the dignity of an old English gentleman are the county histories; and these seldom come into the hands of foreigners. His baronial castle, or his not less sumptuous mansion of a more modern date, is there depicted. A stately avenue conducts to his residence, and a coach and six, escorted by a troop of outriders, the usual appendage of his quality, is seen driving into his gates; and when at length his numerous tenantry have accompanied the heraldic pomp of his funeral to the neighbouring cathedral, the next print represents him there sleeping in dull cold marble, but blazoned with all the escutcheons of his house. Such are the halls that embellish Whitaker's History of Richmond; such, in Nash's History of Worcestershire, are the monuments of the Sheldons, of the Vernons, and the Talbots, whose numerous

quarterings would not have disparaged an elector of Mayence or a prince bishop of Wurtzbourg.

The late King of Wirtemberg used to say, that he could form no idea of an English gentleman, till he had visited several at their family seats, and seen their manner of living in the country. And it is remarkable that the author who at present seems to take the most pleasure in doing justice to the character of an English squire, is an American—Washington Irving.

In Johnson's Dictionary, it is true, a gentleman is said to be "one of good extraction, but not noble;" and in so saying, he rendered the English gentry considerable injury, as his work is translated into foreign languages, and this unintentionally; for he was a conscientious man, and though no gentleman himself, he bore no envy towards his superiors; he was a friend of all aristocratical institutions; but however profound an etymologist, he was neither herald nor antiquary, and he committed the modern blunder of confounding nobility with peerage; and on points of honor, Lord Ve-

rulam, Selden, Camden, etc. and the statutes of the Garter, are better authorities.

In Bailey's Dictionary, of the edition of 1707, we find "a gentleman, one who received his nobility from his ancestors, and not from the gift of any prince or state."

And in the second volume of Bailey's Dictionary, printed 1728 (I specify the edition, because in later editions variations may be discovered, and these variations show the progressive degradation of the British gentry), we find, "a gentleman is properly, according to the ancient notion, one of perfect blood, who hath four descents (1) of gentility, both by his father and his mother."

"In chusing of magistrates, the vote of a gentleman was preferred before that of an ignoble person.

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(1) Four descents of gentility are in Germany called sixteen quarters, or parents;—one descent requires two—two descents four—three descents eight—four descents sixteen, great-great-grand parents, and which qualify a gentleman to be chosen a prince-bishop, or knight of the Teutonic order.

"It was a punishable crime to take down the coat-armor of a gentleman, or to offer violation to the ensign of any noble person deceased.

"The reasons why those that are students in the inns of court are esteemed gentlemen, is because anciently none but the sons of gentlemen were admitted into them.

"But the students of law, grooms of his Majesty's palace, and sons of peasants made priests and canons, though they are styled gentlemen, yet they have no right to coat-armor. If a man be a gentleman by office only, and loses his office, then he loses his gentility.

"Gentry—the lowest degree of nobleness—such as are descended of ancient families, and have always borne a coat of arms."

This dictionary represented to foreigners the gentry of England in an honorable light; and being used at schools, inspired our youths with a respect for their own families. This dictionary pronounces nobility to be acquired; gentility never. This also was an axiom in France. The acquirer there of letters patent is styled an *ennobli;* his son a

noble: but it is undecided among French heralds, whether his grandson, or his great-great-grandson, be the first gentleman in the family; some heralds requiring only three, others five generations of *noblesse* to make a gentleman.

If the foregoing explanation of gentry be correct, that their families must *always* have borne arms, the deseendants of a yeoman can never be gentlemen; they however may make very respectable lords.

Not only the two words, but this pre-eminence of gentility over nobility, is derived from ancient Rome.

When to the first hundred patrician families, a second hundred were added, the senators of the first were styled *patres majorum gentium;* those of the second, *patres minorum gentium.* The two classes united were styled *patres conscripti.* Hence the *gentilitas* of the patricians.

But when the capacity of being admitted to all public offices was acquired by the plebeians, this new class of men were styled *nobiles* and *nobilitas.*

So Livy after that period calls those men and families that were at the head of the state.

Both their children and grandchildren were styled *nobiles;* but their *nobilitas* (as is stated in the French Encyclopedia under the word Patrician) descended not farther.

Are we then to suppose that the fourth generation lost their pre-eminence? No; they were not longer considered noble, because they were at length sufficiently well-born to rank with the *gentilitas.*

The citizen, that had the pictures or statues of his ancestors, was termed *nobilis;* he that had only his own, *novus;* and he that had neither, *ignobilis.* So that their *jus imaginis* resembled our right of bearing a coat of arms; and their *novus homo* is equivalent to a French *ennobli,* or to our upstart gentleman.

See Kennet's Antiquities, De Lolme, etc.

As the word "Gentleman" has at different periods had so many different meanings, no correct historian nor biographer, particularly if desirous of not puzzling his translator, should employ it.

Mr. Taylor, in his History of England, lately published, very properly styles the Gentry the Minor Nobility.

Let us hear what intelligent foreigners say of our peerage and nobility.

Scutifer apud Anglos penultima est nobilitatis descriptio inter Equitem et Generosum.—*Du Cange.*

De Lolme says of the King:—"He creates the peers of the realm, as well as bestows the different degrees of inferior *nobility.*"

Ferri de St. Constant, in his "Londres et les Anglais," published 1814, says:

"The title of gentleman answered formerly to *gentilhomme.* The nurse of James the First, who had followed him from Edinburgh to London, entreated him to make her son a gentleman: (1) 'My good woman,' said the King, 'a gentleman I could never make him, though I could make him a Lord.'

(1) Selden, in his Table-Talk, says that God Almighty cannot make a gentleman.

"Some persons have pretended that there are no nobility in England, because the peers, the only body of citizens who enjoy any political privileges or rights, are properly only hereditary magistrates. Those who have made the assertion, appear not to admit that the peers represent the ancient feudal nobility; but only keep in mind the composition of the present peers, among whom are found very few nobles by descent (extraction). It is by courtesy, they say, that one gives to the members of their families the titles of Lord and Lady. Is it also by courtesy, that one acknowledges the knights of the different orders, as well as the multitude of baronets, that the king creates every day? The king creates these titles and orders in virtue of his prerogative. Consequently he creates a nobility, which, though it enjoys no political right, is not less constitutional. Thus there exists a nobility, besides the peerage, and which is derived from the same source.

"As the chief part of the new peers are monied men, nabobs, merchants, or bankers, who have bought boroughs, and seconded the views of the

ministry, and who, instead of shedding their blood for the state, have sucked up its marrow (en ont pompé le suc nourricier), so the title of baronet, which was formerly conferred on military exploits, is now given to the plunderers of India, to army agents and contractors, to shopkeepers and apothecaries.

"But, beside the nobility that enjoys political rights, and the nobility that has merely a title, one may distinguish still another nobility, the only true one according to the prejudices of nobility, the most generally received, the nobility of extraction. People are very particular in England about the proofs of this nobility. They are deposited at the Heralds' Office. There are many peers, who, in the eyes of the college of arms, are not more gentlemen than were in France many dukes and blue ribbons; (1) among whom Monsieur de Beaufremont, who was neither a duke nor a blue-ribbon himself, was surprised to find himself the only gentleman in the company.

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(1) Knights of the Holy Ghost.

"The Welshman, the Scotchman, the Irishman, who are noble by extraction, whatever may be their present situation, think that the king may make as many peers as he pleases, but that he cannot make a gentleman, nor give to the lords of his creation the arms of known houses.

"Several of these gentlemen have refused a peerage, preferring to be the first of the gentry rather than the last of the peers. Of this number is Sir Watkin Williams Wynne, of an ancient family in Wales, who commands five votes in the house of Commons."

So far Monsieur Ferri de St. Constant.—He has in one passage given loose to satire, for the composition of the House of Peers is generally respectable; and if some few of its members are of low origin, which would be the case also if the new peers always owed their elevation to merit and never to intrigue, on the other hand, there are other members, whose origin is truly illustrious: but what he has said of our untitled nobility or gentry is perfectly correct.

But if titles in England have been disgraced by

being conferred on unworthy objects, Monsieur de Marchangy (in his Gaule Poétique, iv. page 284) informs us, that the abuse was at one period more general in France, for the king by granting *noblesse* or coats of arms, without discrimination, conferred on the vilest persons the right of purchasing baronies and marquisates. "What must have been the nobility in Paris, when Charles V. granted it to all the burghers of this capital? an ill-judged favor, which several kings confirmed, but which Henry III. thought proper to confine to the mayor and sheriffs. What must have been the nobility in our provinces, when whole corporations, nay the inhabitants of some counties, pretended to be ennobled by some chimerical privilege; when dukes and counts assumed the right of granting nobility and coats of arms? What must have been the nobility, when usurers, capitalists, heavy financiers, and the scum of the earth, were seen to buy baronies, marquisates and lordships, and thus ridiculously to deck themselves out with titles, lately so respected, but now resigned to these clownish and insolent upstarts? as court-dresses,

which have figured at a birth-day, pass to the old-clothes shop to tempt the vanity of some blackguard: and must it not excite our pity to see these purchasers of nobility puffed up with a comical pride, and after some years think themselves noble and privileged?"

Thus we see a king of France revoking the inconsiderate gifts of his predecessors. This is an example not to be proposed to a king of England. But the king is only the first gentleman in his dominions; he ought therefore to protect the honor of the gentry. If plebeians were prohibited from usurping a coat of arms, the sovereign might sufficiently reward their services by a grant of arms; by so doing he would place them at the end of the squires; but now he has no honor to confer on them less than knighthood, or by putting them above their betters. Thus, he cannot be gracious, without being unjust. The system proposed would render to chivalry its ancient lustre.

After listening to a foreigner's opinion on our nobility, it may be curious to hear an old English

gentleman express himself on the nobility of the continent.

Sir John Eresby's Travels in 1654.

"That which we call a parliament in England, was, when in use among the French, called an assembly of the Three Estates, or Conventus Ordinum; which are, first, the Clergy; secondly, the Nobility and Gentry; thirdly, the Plebeians or Tiers Etat. (Page 4.)

"La petite noblesse, or the lesser sort of gentry. (Page 5.)

"Trading in France both procures and forfeits gentility. Persons, that have got good estates, easily obtaining being ennobled by the king at cheap rates; when, at the same time, a gentleman born is thought to degrade himself by traffic." (Page 43.)

Sir John Eresby knew his own dignity; he felt himself the countryman of Sir Philip Sidney, who, though a mere gentleman, was not only chosen king of Poland, but in the spirit of gallantry refused the crown, to serve Queen Elizabeth as a true knight. And how great would have been the in-

dignation of any English gentleman of quality in Sir John's days, had he read in the Paris newspapers the following advertisements:—

"An English Gentleman, who has had considerable experience as a Teacher, and can show respectable certificates, gives private lessons in the Greek, Latin and English languages: terms 20 francs a month. Address, post-paid, at the office of Galignani's paper." May, 1823.

"Un *gentleman* anglais d'une famille honnête, désire la place d'un gouverneur dans une famille respectable." Les affiches, 1 Août, 1822.

If this individual were really a gentleman by birth, he was more than of *une famille honnête;* yet being reduced by misfortune to turn tutor, he ought to have concealed his quality. If not, he ought to have styled himself *un anglais d'une famille honnête*. This would have expressed a decent, creditable person, if his modesty forbade him to style himself *un homme de lettres.*

Any Englishman, *gentilhomme de nom et d'armes,* who, in a French document, suffers himself to be styled "un *gentleman* anglais," either ex-

poses his ignorance, or seems to acknowledge the superiority of a *gentilhomme français*, and thus degrades the class to which he belongs.

So many trades-people, shop-keepers, etc. have lately, instead of going to Margate in the hoy, swarmed over to France in the steam-boat, and have presumed to call themselves gentlefolks, that the police at Calais and Paris have been puzzled what to style them on their passports. They therefore adopted for every nondescript of this kind, the English word *gentleman*, as if the word would not admit of a translation. This, however flattering to a pseudo-gentleman, is an insult to which no real *gentilhomme* should submit.

King Edward III. in 1300, gave the following answer to a petition of Parliament:—"Such as call themselves gentlemen and men of arms or archers, if they cannot so prove themselves, let them be driven to their occupation or service, or to the place from whence they came." And King Edward VI. nearly two centuries afterwards, complains that "the grazier, the farmer, the merchant, become landed men and call themselves *gentlemen*, though

they be churls." (King Edward's Remains in Burnet's Reformation, page 71.)

It was to remedy these abuses, that the heralds went on their visitations in the different counties.

These visitations were conducted every thirty years, by Norroy in the north, and by Clarenceux in the south of England. On these occasions each of these kings, their provincials and marshals, came attended by draughtmen, and summoned the neighboring gentry to their county-town, to have enregistered the births, deaths and marriages, that had occurred in their families since the last visitation. Such persons as had usurped titles or dignities, or borne ensigns of gentility, which belonged not to them, were obliged under their own hands to disclaim all pretence and title thereunto, and for their presumption were degraded by proclamation, made by the common crier at the market-town nearest to their abode. Under the names of these plebeians, who had assumed coats of arms, was written *ignobiles,* which sufficiently proves that those who are entitled to arms are *nobiles.* The earliest

visitation was in 1529; the latest in 1686. Visitations nearly similar were usual also in France.

What an admirable subject for a humorous chapter in a novel would one of these visitations offer to Sir Walter Scott! What a fuss and bustle must the approach of the heralds have caused in the families of those churls of whom King Edward complains! What an exultation must have reigned in the halls of their right worshipful neighbors, at seeing these usurpers of nobility called over the coals!

But that the heralds would not be unwelcome to the real gentry of England, we may conclude from the readiness with which they, within a century, received an adventurer who assumed their functions. The London Journal (Sat. April 22, 1727) contains the following:—

"Ipswich, 15 April. One Robert Harman, an Irish dancing-master, was convicted as a notorious cheat and impostor, in assuming the title and functions of a king of arms, and alleging that he was authorized by government to inspect the arms and quarterings of the nobility and gentry of this and

14 other counties; whereby he demanded and received considerable sums. He was sentenced to stand in the pillory, in three several market-towns in this county, on their market-days, to suffer an imprisonment, and to pay a fine."

The re-establishment of the visitations would replace the gentry on a footing with the *noblesse* of the Continent.

Those who deliver passports for the Continent, ought to give the quality of gentleman to those only who are entitled to it; but those, who are entitled to it, should not suffer it to be omitted. The disuse of the word may be of the greatest disadvantage. If arrived at the place of his destination, his letters of recommendation may indeed prove who and what a traveller is; but he may be induced to alter his route, his carriage may break down, he may have a dispute at a table-d'hôte, he may be mistaken by the police-officers, who are in quest of some offender. Every one who has travelled on the Continent knows how great a recommendation the quality of a *gentilhomme* is to the

protection of an *amptmann*, or justice of peace, or to the hospitality of a lord of the manor.

At Göttingen, where a succession of Englishmen have studied, the Prorector usually asks them if they are esquires at home? and on their answering in the affirmative, they are entered as Nobles. But at the other German universities, which have less communication with Great Britain, several young Englishmen, on being asked the usual question, if they were noble? unluckily knew as little about nobility as Dr. Samuel Johnson, and, like him, always confounded the idea of noble with the idea of a Peer, and consequently answered, no. Thus they, though perhaps of the most ancient families, have been inscribed in the matricule-book as the sons of the lowest burghers or mechanics.

On continuing his travels into Hungary, a stranger's French passport is translated into Latin; thus the *gentilhomme anglais* appears as *nobilis anglus*. And an accidental omission of this title might occasionally prevent his receiving those civilities

and that hospitality which he otherwise would receive.

From their having forgotten what was so well known to their ancestors, that nobility and gentility are synonymous, Englishmen run into two extremes. The Scotch and Irish, to do them justice, know their dignity better, and to this may be attributed their better reception on the Continent. But, while the lowest Englishman presumes to style himself a gentleman, the Englishman of the first quality, having unaccountably renounced the ancient pre-eminence of his blood, hesitates to style himself a nobleman. What respect can he claim from foreigners, who scarcely knows his own place in society? Formerly his dignity was esteemed abroad, because it was protected at home.

In 1350, during the wars of the Black Prince, a number of French gentlemen, having agreed to fight the *Combat de trente* against the like number of English gentlemen, Argentrè, in his History of Brittany, says, "both parties had sworn, that only gentlemen should combat on either side; but Bem-

bow could not complete his number; he therefore took a soldat de condition *roturière*, named *Halbutié*."

This soldier was probably a yeoman. There are other derivations of the word yeoman, but may it not signify a bowman, and be derived from the yew of their bow? Lord Verulam relates, that Henry VII. formed a body of archers, called the yeomen of the guard. It might also signify a ploughman, from *jugum*, a plough, which the Germans pronounce *yugum*. In those days, when the rank of every one was so defined, no Frenchman would have spoken irreverently of a *gentleman anglais*, nor have disputed his nobility. When, at the meeting of Henry and Francis, on the Plain du *Drap d'Or*, every Englishman, whose shield had been examined by the heralds, was admitted into the lists.

It is only since the gentry permitted the plebeians to encroach on them, that the peers began to disdain the title of gentleman, a title which the first peers, nay, princes of the blood, would have not disdained. The haughty Lord Verulam says,

in his History of Henry the Seventh: "The king dispatched Sir Robert Willoughby for Edward Plantagenet, son and heir to George Duke of Clarence. In case of the bastarding of Edward the Fourth's issue, this young *gentleman* was to succeed.

"About this time the Lord Woodville, uncle to the Queen, a valiant *gentleman*, and desirous of honour....."

Godwin, in his Annals (page 163), says: "Courtenay Marquis of Exeter, deriving himself from the blood royal of France, participated of the blood royal of England, being son to Catherine, daughter of Edward IV. The king became jealous of his greatness, and glad of any occasion to cut off this noble *gentleman*."

A Harleian MS. says: "These sundry coats appertain to the right honorable and most noble *gentleman*, Henry Earl of Derby, Lord Stanley, Strange, and Man, companion of the Garter, lieutenant of Cheshire and Lancashire."

The Duke of Lauderdale was styled first *gentleman* of the bed-chamber to Charles the Second;

as the Duke of Hamilton was first *gentleman* of the bed-chamber to George the Second. Some Duc et Pair of France is still styled at the French Court "le premier *gentilhomme* de la chambre;" but in England, the word gentleman has of late become so contemptible, that the same officer is now styled first lord of the bed-chamber.

Formerly, while all persons of coat-armour were styled noblemen, all gentlemen were styled persons of quality.

A peer is only a person of rank, unless he be a gentleman; but every gentleman is a person of quality, for, in the opinion of a herald, quality and gentility are synonymous.

Lord Verulam says (page 119): "At the same time there repaired unto Perkin, divers Englishmen of *quality*, Sir George Nevile, Sir John Taylor, and about one hundred more."

(Page 122.) "Upon All-hallowes day the king's second son Henry was created Duke of York; and as well the duke as divers other noblemen, knights bachelors, and gentlemen of *quality*, were made knights of the Bath."

Fuller's Church History, anno 1546. "The last person of *quality* who suffered martyrdom in this king's reign, was Anne Ascough, alias Kyme. She was worshipfully extracted; the daughter of Sir William Ascough of Kelsey in Lincolnshire, of the age of twenty-five."

The gentry of Yorkshire thus begin a petition to Charles the First, 1643:—

"Those members of parliament lately employed to attend your Majesty from both houses, being all of them gentlemen of *quality* and estate in this county."

During the civil war was published, a catalogue of all Lords, Knights, Commanders, and Persons of *quality* slain, or executed by law martial to March 25, 1647.

Proclamation against duelling, Whitehall, 9th March, 1679:—

"Whereas it has become too frequent, especially among persons of *quality*, to avenge their private quarrels by duel."

Bamfield Moor Carew was born 1693. His Life originally began—"Never was there known a

more splendid appearance of gentlemen and ladies of rank and *quality* at any baptism in the west of England. The Honorable Hugh Bamfield, esquire, and the Honorable Major Moor, were both his illustrious godfathers."

The Life of Bamfield Moor Carew appeared, 1807, in the Eccentric Mirror. The above passage was thus altered :—

"Never was there known a more splendid appearance of persons of the first distinction at any baptism in the county. Hugh Bamfield, esquire, and Major Moor, of families equally ancient and respectable as that of Carew, were his godfathers."

The epithet illustrious, applied to two country squires, was exaggeration, and therefore properly omitted; but it shows the high estimation in which our gentry were held so late as in the eighteenth century. But rank and quality were words more expressive of their meaning than that equivocal word distinction. We can form an opinion of what ladies and gentlemen of rank and quality were in the reign of William the Third, but it

will puzzle our descendants to divine what were the people of distinction or fashion in the reign of George the Third; and as these worthies were styled honorable during their lives, it is hard to deprive them of it after their deaths. Quality (according to a dictionary printed 1735), is a title of honor and noble birth; hence, in the New Atalantis, and in the plays and novels of Fielding, Smollet, etc. and in the magazines, newspapers, and periodical papers, till very late in the eighteenth century, every gentleman and gentlewoman are persons of quality. The Memoirs of Mrs. —— are entitled the Memoirs of a Woman of Quality; Sir Charles Grandison and Lovelace are both men of quality.

The title "honorable" was, till lately, given to all persons of quality; hence the use of it in all parliamentary debates; though it was undoubtedly confined at first to the knights of the shires, and not conferred on the citizens and burgesses. Out of parliament it is at present only given to the children of peers. But custom only has dictated

this courtesy, which is probably prescribed by no statute. To others, particularly to colonels in the army, it has been discontinued. This title probably followed the course of other things. Being given to so many, it flattered no one, and fell into disuse. It is a title unknown on the continent, and as little understood as the title of a baronet. The daughter of an Irish peer having, at Paris, styled herself on her visiting-tickets "l'honorable Madame ***," called down on her character many ill-natured remarks, which she otherwise would have escaped.

Other titles have fallen into discredit through their general indiscriminate abuse.

Dedication of Virgil's Æneidos by Thomas Phaer, Esquire, and Thomas Twyne, Doctor in Phisicke:—

"To the right worshipful Maister Robert Sackwill, Esquire, most worthy son and heir apparent to the Right Honorable Sir Thomas Sackwill, knight, Lord Buckhurst; the rare hope and only expected imp of so noble roots, and heir of so antient a family."

This dedication, dated 1st January, 1584, concludes—

"Your worship's most bounden and willing
"THOMAS TWYNE."

Thus the title of "your worship" was given to the son of a peer, for lords and gentlemen then enjoyed the same honors, and all persons of quality were styled indifferently noble, gentle, honorable, or worshipful. Afterward "your worship" fell to all the gentry; but when it was given to mayors and trading justices, the gentry preferred "your honor." Soame Jenyns, in his Modern Fine Gentleman, written 1746, says:—

His Honor posts o'er Italy and France,
Measures Saint Peter's dome, and learns to dance.

Another remark on the foregoing dedication: a peer being a knight is styled Sir, and his son Master. Under Queen Elizabeth the whole body of the nobility, or the peers, knights, and squires, were styled lords, sirs, and masters. Every rank had its particular title, and the plebeians then being styled goodmen, master was a title of honor;

but it ceased to be so, when given to the lower orders. In Spain the nobility are styled *don*, which also means master; for from *domus*, a house, is derived *dominus*, master of a house.

It is possibly to be attributed to this circumstance, their being sufficiently distinguished by the titles Sir or Master, that the gentry under Edward III. thought it superfluous to retain the *de* before their names, which, on the continent, distinguishes the nobles from the roturiers.

Mr. Hallam, in his Middle Ages, says: "that ceorl meant originally a man of noble birth, and in the Anglo-Saxon times was opposed to ceorl, as noble is opposed to *roturier* in France." But as king Edward VI., long after those times, applies the word churl not only to peasants, but to burghers, the erudite historian is premature in congratulating us on any glorious deficiency in our language of any word to convey the full sense of *roturier*. Lands in France were either *terres nobles* or *terres roturières*, as in England they were held in scutage or in soccage, that is, held by those who had a shield of arms, or by those who fol-

lowed the plough; and from the plough both the words soccager and *roturier* are derived. But though soccager was never opposed to noble as a reproach, yet the contradistinction of Eorl and Churl was replaced by that of Gentle and Simple.

How absurd is of late years the gradation of our honorific titles: worshipful, honorable, noble! An individual is styled worshipful, or worthy of adoration, who is not allowed to be honorable, or worthy of honor; and another individual is allowed to be honorable, though not acknowledged to be noble, or worthy of notice. Thus without knowing, we are to honor; without honoring, we are to adore. God only is worshipful: but, strange! the English gentry, the most vilified *noblesse* in Europe, disdain a title that should only be given to the Divinity.

The whole system should be reversed; the new families, the *novi homines,* should be styled the noble; for *novitas* and *nobilitas* are derived from the same root.

The antient gentry should be styled the honorable, as they at different periods have been.

And the peers, the hereditary senators, might be styled the worshipful, if some other title, less objectionable, could not be selected.

The commons; les communes; — and could the English knights, a body of warriors so hardy, so proud of their descent, so full of their own importance, so desirous of distinction, submit to have formed a part of the House of Commons? No, never, if the House of Commons had signified the house of the *ignobles.* But the word commons signified not, in parliament, common people, in contradistinction to the nobility, but communities. The House of Commons therefore signified the house of communities.

The *communitas terræ,* or community of the kingdom, was anciently only the barons and tenants in capite. (1)

In 1258, a community thus composed sent a letter to Pope Alexander. These "litteræ missæ à communitate Angliæ" (2) conclude, "communi-

(1) Brady, Glossary, page 27.
(2) Ibid. 81.

tas comitum, procerum, magnatum aliorumque regni Angliæ," kiss the feet of your holiness.

In 1258, also, *tota terræ communitas* chose twenty-four of its members to treat for an aid for the king.

" Ce sont les 24, qui sont mis par le commun, à traiter de aid de roi." (1)

This *communitas terræ*, or *le commun de la terre*, was sometimes styled *tota nobilitas Angliæ*, or *universitas baronagii*, and signified the body of the nobility of the realm: *le corps de la noblesse*. (2)

This *communitas terræ* was equivalent to the House of Peers, or rather to the Diet of the German Empire. Several of its members, Simon de Montford, de Bohun, de Bigod, were as powerful as a duke of Wirtemberg, or an elector of Hesse.

On other occasions the sheriff convoked the *communitas comitatus*, or the body of freeholders, (3) tenants in capite, in his county. At length, in 1265, the citizens and burgesses were first sum-

(1) Brady, 628. (2) Ibid. 84. (3) Note.

moned to parliament to represent the *communitates civitatum,* the bodies of citizens or corporations.

Communitas, like *societas,* means people partaking the same rights, and was equally applicable to the most exalted and to the most humble classes. Therefore, that their assembly was styled the House of Commons, could not offend the haughtiest knight that ever displayed his shield at a tournament.

The assembly of knights might possibly have been called the House of Commons *(communitates comitatum),* though the plebeians from the towns had never been summoned. When, at his coronation, (1) Edward II. was asked, "Do you promise to hold the laws and customs, which the community of your kingdom shall have chosen *(elus)?*" there were no citizens nor burgesses present. The community was composed of abbots, priors, earls, barons, great men, and the whole body of the tenants in capite. (2)

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(1) Glossary, 36. (2) Brady.

It is to be observed that a general assembly for the whole kingdom was always styled in the singular *la communauté,* or *le commun;* but when different communities sent deputies, they were styled in the plural *les communautés* or *les communs,* or properly *les communes.*

Thus Edward II. in 1318, "Notre Seigneur et Roi, par assent des prélats, comtes, et barons, et communautés de son royaume." (1)

Our Norman barons soon forgot the genders of words in French, and their lawyers frequently made, in two following lines, the same word both masculine and feminine. Thus they wrote *le commune, la commun,* or *les communes,* indifferently. But the French always translated the English House of Commons into *la chambre des communes* (communities), and not into *la chambre des communs* (common people).

By a statute of Henry VI. none but gentlemen born, *generosi à nativitate,* were capable of sit-

(1) Rymer.

ing in parliament as knights of the shire; and in 1460 an election was set aside, because the person returned was not of gentle birth.

"As the knights of the shire," says Mr. Hallam, "corresponded to the inferior nobility of other feudal countries, we have less cause to be surprised that they belonged to the same branch of parliament as the Barons, than at their subsequent intermixture with men so inferior in station as the citizens and burgesses." A complete list of the sheriffs and knights of the shires would form one of the most distinguished *nobiliaires* in Europe, and though it might offer some exceptions, yet it might vie in purity with the Golden Book of Venice, or with the *Fasti Consulares* of ancient Rome.

The knights in one respect resembled the citizens; they appeared not on their own account, but as deputies of other tenants in capite. They therefore were assembled with the citizens, who were the deputies of other citizens. But in other respects the knights or little barons resembled the great barons. Like them, they held by a military tenure; therefore, when the citizens paid a twen-

tieth of their goods, for the expenses of the war, (1) the knights, like the great barons, only paid a thirtieth of their goods to defray the expenses of the knighting of the king's eldest son. (2)

Though the knights condescended to sit under the same roof with the citizens and burgesses, they were summoned to appear *gladio cincti,* and they always maintained the dignity of the equestrian order. The most trifling distinction suffices to destroy the idea of equality, and the distinction of the spur is still observed. The military members appear no longer in armor, but they alone may wear their spurs as a mark of knighthood. The citizen or burgess, who after a morning ride should inadvertently approach the chamber with his spurs on, is stopt by the usher, and must retire to divest himself of this mark of knighthood. And to this humiliation any gentleman of the first quality, any Irish peer, nay the Chancellor of the

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(1) Brady, Appendix 30.

(2) Edw. I. 34.

Exchequer himself, who, whatever might be his authority or dignity elsewhere, should sit in the house in the humble character of a citizen or burgess, must submit.

In all human institutions there are contradictions, and what contradictions strike the foreigner in the honorable house! Evil communication corrupts good manners: and it seems that neither gentle nor simple have been improved by their approximation. Now the haughty spirit of chivalry seems to have taken possession of citizens and burgesses, and they, by insisting that a Briton should on his knees beg pardon at their tribunal, degrade the people that they represent; and now the knights, as if degenerated in the society of the representatives of plebeians, seem to have forgotten the glory of their race, and however proud of their spurs on their own dunghill, submit in a conference of the two houses to sit cap in hand, while the peers are permitted to sit covered.

When the ancient Cortes assembled in Spain, or the national Diet in Hungary, or when a German prince convoked a Diet of his vassals, two members

of the knighthood or Ritterschafft were deputed from every canton. These deputies are equivalent to the knights of the shire; these must be all noble, but no gentleman ever represents the towns or plebeians.

And great was the cry against Mirabeau for becoming a member of the Tiers État in the National Assembly. It was indeed an innovation; Mirabeau was a gentleman, and ought to have represented the *noblesse* of his canton; but our gentry, who, instead of becoming knights of their shire, first deigned to represent cities and boroughs, were also innovators.

The three estates of France, which Sir John Eresby has already explained, had, except the number three, no analogy with the three branches of the English legislature. Still the three estates of France subsist, but they were never legislators; the legislature there consists at present of three branches like our own.

They who, whatever their motives may have been, have been active in spreading the unfounded opinion, that the peers are the only nobles in Great

Britain, take a pleasure in applying to all who are not peers, the term commoners, thinking thereby to degrade them. But first let them explain what they mean by commoners. The word commoner has three significations.

In a parliamentary sense, as the counts and barons used to style themselves the common or community of the kingdom, they might be styled commoners of the upper house; but in being styled the peers, they have gained nothing, for a commoner, a fellow, and a peer, mean the same. As to the counties and towns, those only who choose, or are chosen, are commoners. They only are active citizens, or members of the commonwealth.

In a legal sense, all are commoners who are subject to the common tribunals; the peers are not commoners, as they are their own judges. This is a privilege, but no proof of exclusive nobility; for many persons, who have precedency over peers, are subject to the common courts of law. Not only the younger, but elder sons of dukes and marquesses, who are ranked above half the peers, but the princes of the blood, and the sons of the king,

would, if accused before they were created peers, be tried by the common juries also. Therefore, as nobility is not confined to the peerage, being a commoner is no stain to nobility, and no reproach to a gentleman. The prince Leopold of Saxe-Cobourg, having refused a peerage, is the first commoner.

The word commoner has only of late years crept into circulation. Our ancestors did without it. Neither Sir Thomas Smith, nor Camden, nor Milles, introduced it into their accounts of England. I see not why in the Court Calender it has been intruded into the table of precedency, or why it has been placed where it is. A duke's eldest son is not less a commoner than the Speaker, though the Speaker be the first within the House of Commons. If any chief of opposition affects the character of a commoner, it is to ingratiate himself with the rabble; as the late Duke of Orleans, to gain the affections of the *canaille,* styled himself Citoyen Égalité.

In a humiliating sense, the word commons, in contradistinction to birth, rank, nobility, dignity, etc.

is not applicable to the gentry, though it may be to the plebeians or citizens.

To show that the gentry are distinct from the commons or plebeians, the following citations may suffice.

In one of the battles between the houses of York and Lancaster, the king (Richard III. but I write from memory) ordered that quarter should be given to the commons, but that all gentlemen should be put to the sword.

LINDSAY of PITSCOTTIE'S Hist. of Scotland.

"Henry VIII. wrote to the Earl of Surrey, that he should raise the whole body of England, both gentlemen and commons."

"Lord Lindsay, in his speech to the Scotch lords before the battle of Floddon, says, For if we lose the king, we lose the whole nobility thereof, for none, my lords, have remained but gentlemen; the commons are all departed from us for lack of victual."

In these two passages commons mean yeomen.

The necessity of the British gentry's asserting their nobility increases as the connexion of Great

Britain with the continent increases. The Seven Islands are under British protection. They have a numerous nobility, and when a governor or lord commissioner arrives at his post, without doubt the first question that the inhabitants ask is: "Is his excellency noble?" He is possibly of one of the most illustrious families in Europe, but he may be no peer; and people have taken it into their heads, that in the British Empire the peers only are noble. The inhabitants, conceiving the appointment of a roturier or plebeian an insult offered to themselves, scarce stifle in public that disdain, to which they give loose in their coteries. If this be disadvantageous to the governor, what must it be to those who hold military or civil posts under him? Every petty noble in every paltry office will hold himself superior to our gentlemen, the antiquity of whose families would have qualified them for Doges of Venice.

Hanover now is an independent kingdom, and subject also to our king; and under his authority Hanoverian bourgeois are ennobled with the same facility, with which a wealthy citizen or nabob may

purchase a coat of arms; and these new-baked barons, though they would not be received into gentle company in Hanover, have been by ignorant people directed to take the precedence over our most ancient gentry in London; and this forsooth because these men of yesterday are styled barons, and our gentry are merely squires. But the manors of these squires may be in the Doomsday-book, and consequently their ancestors were ranked among the lesser barons several centuries ago. And a German baron, even an ancient one, is only a lesser baron, and may not be classed with the *magnates* and *proceres*, as a British baron may.

The Hanoverians are an enlightened and a hospitable people. Our travellers who have visited not only their capital, but their provinces, must do justice to the good qualities of every rank of their society: and consequently Hanoverians of every rank have a claim on our esteem, benevolence, and hospitality. In every polished company the place of honour should be given to the stranger; but this distinction is the mere dictate of courtesy, and the foreigner, if a man of sense, would attribute it to

the politeness, and not to the inferiority of the company. But should he settle in England, this deference should cease, and German letters of nobility should be considered equivalent with a British coat of arms of equal antiquity. A German baron whose ancestor flourished under Henry the Lion, may rank with the English gentleman whose ancestor fought under Richard Cœur de Lion; but the new baron of yesterday should have no precedence over the parvenu, who had purchased a coat of arms at the Heralds' Office.

The noblesse of Europe may be considered on a level; but one title is common in one country, another in another. If in a number of individuals, in Germany, Russia, etc. there are fifty barons and a count; and in the same number of individuals, in Great Britain, there are fifty squires and a baronet; and if the title of a baron is as easy to be acquired on the continent as a coat of arms here; and the title of a count as easy to be acquired there, as a baronetage here, a continental baron is not superior to our squire, nor the continental count to our baronet.

A Sicilian Comte cannot be classed with an English Earl, who is a peer of the realm; and the Pope's banker, the Duke of Torlonia, had he accumulated his immense fortune in England, might possibly have been created a baronet.

If neither Britons visited the continent, nor foreigners Great Britain, it would be indifferent what titles they bore. The common people in England pay as much respect to their superiors as the common people in any other country. The shopkeepers in London are as civil behind their counters as the shopkeepers in Paris or Vienna. In the inns his honor or his worship is waited on with as much servility as his grace in Germany, or his excellency in Italy. A landlord in England, with the title of baronet, is of not less importance among his tenants, than a landlord in Sicily with the title of prince among his vassals; and a squire in his ancient hall in Lancashire, might vie with any baron in his moated castle in Languedoc; but should they travel, the advantage would always be in favor of the continental noblesse. A foreigner in England usually passes for a person of greater dignity than he is; and

the Englishman abroad loses of his importance. And this because our gentry bear more modest titles, and seem to have forgotten that they are nobles.

The knights and squires of England, without doubt, preferred being styled the gentry, to being styled the nobility; and being men of birth, no one could contest their right to the superior denomination. They were logicians enough to know the axiom, *omne majus continet minus;* and they, being allowedly gentlemen, could never dream that their nobility could be contested. And the peers were styled the nobility, not because they were the only nobles, but because, as there were many peers who were not gentlemen or men of quality, they could not collectively be styled the gentry of the upper house. They however were all persons of distinction, though they all were not persons of quality. A plebeian could be raised to the peerage, and this very justly, because the peerage compose a council or tribunal, and the state may require his advice. He is summoned not so much for his own sake, as for his country's sake. He thus became of

higher rank, though he remained inferior in quality to the ancient gentry. Every gentleman of eight quarters was admissible into the order of the Garter, for a knight of the Garter must undoubtedly be sufficiently well born to break a lance at a tournament. Therefore, "when Lord Paget was in 1552 degraded from the order for divers offences, and chiefly because he was no gentleman of blood, neither of the father's nor the mother's side; (1) or as it is expressed in the Latin, *quoniam a neutro parente nobiles habebat natales;* he still continued a peer of the realm. (2)

The statutes of the order (Henry VIII. an. 1522) thus describe "a gentleman of blood:" it is declared and determined that he shall be descended of three degrees of *noblesse,* that is to say of name and of arms, both of his father's and his mother's side.

When, on the death of a knight, a chapter of the

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(1) Hayward's Hist. of Edw. VI. Ashmole's Ord. of the Garter, page 621.

(2) On the accession of Queen Mary, Lord Paget was reinstalled into the order.

order was convoked to give away his garter, every knight received a paper, on which he was to write the names of nine candidates; these names were distributed in three columns; the first column consisted of sovereign princes and earls; the second of barons; the third of gentlemen of quality.

The Duke of Buckingham, in 1451, voted thus:

Principes.	*Barones.*	*Milites.*
The Emperor,	Lord Hungerford,	Sir Edw. Hall,
The Duke of Exeter,	Lord Lovell,	Sir Edw. Hungerford,
The Earl of Wiltshire,	Lord Lisle,	Sir Robt Shotesbroke.

The relative importance of every rank in society may be judged from the following distinction. On the grand festival of the order, the knights received a robe powdered over with embroidered garters, and the motto of the order wrought in gold. The sovereign's robe was powdered with an unlimited number of garters, the duke's with 120, the marquess's with 110, the earl's with 100, the viscount's with 90, the baron's with 80, the banneret's with 70, the gentleman's with 60 garters. Thus

the distinction between a banneret and a baron was not greater than between a baron and a viscount. So little was the idea of any exclusive nobility in the House of Lords.

If untitled gentlemen are no longer knights of the Garter as formerly, it is not because they are less eligible, but because the peerage now being more numerous, the individual, who is invested with the ribbon, has probably been already promoted to the peerage.

Lord Paget remained a nobleman, because any individual can be ennobled; but presumed not to style himself a gentleman, gentility being an hereditary quality.

Mr. Hallam says, II. 477—"No restraint seems ever to have lain on marriage, nor have the children, even of a peer, been ever deemed to lose any privilege by his union with a commoner." Mr. Hallam will allow me to observe, that restraint has seldom been laid on marriage by any government whatever. In no country would a man be sent to prison for contracting a misalliance, but in several he would be sent to *Coventry*: and this

would have been the case, not only in France, but in England a century ago. Sir John Ferne, in 1586, has expressed his opinion on this subject, which was, without doubt, the opinion of his contemporaries; and the contempt with which, during the Commonwealth, the republican Mrs. Hutchinson, in her Memoirs, mentions her relatives, who had married beneath themselves, is not less decided. But I wish that the learned historian had used a word less equivocal than Commoner; but whatever he meant by the word, he would have been right so far as the peerage was concerned; for as it was not necessary that a peer should be a gentleman of blood, his children would have succeeded to the peerage, though he had married a yeoman's daughter; but if their mother was not a gentlewoman, the children of a peer would neither have been received as a Templar, a knight of Rhodes, a knight of the Garter, nor even admissible at a tournament.

"In France," says Mr. Hallam, I. 209, "an offspring of a plebeian mother was reputed noble for the purposes of inheritance, and of exemption from

tribute; but they could not be received into any order of chivalry, though capable of simple knighthood; nor were they considered any better than a bastard class, deeply attainted with the alloy of their maternal extraction." This account of the ancient French *noblesse* would have equally resembled the British gentry two centuries ago; but since the *fermiers généraux* and Mississippi adventurers have amassed extravagant wealth in France, and since Nabobs have returned to England with the plunder of the East, things have altered, and misalliances are frequent in both countries. But not so in Germany. Should a Count or Baron there, after having been married to a plebeian, re-marry to a woman of quality, though the children of both marriages would all inherit his titles, and equally share his possessions, yet the children of his second wife would consider those of his first nearly in the same light in which a West Indian considers his mulatto brothers. While the children of the second marriage might be figuring at every court, no man of quality, with any regard to his sixteen quarters, would form an alliance

with their half-sisters; and their half-brothers might vegetate on their manors: but to represent these manors they would not be permitted to sit or vote at the provincial diet, more than a plebeian would have been eligible formerly in England as a knight of a shire, or a mulatto, at present, be admissible into the assembly of Jamaica.

An English plebeian, who should settle on the continent, might in France solicit for letters of nobility, or in Germany for the title of a baron; but no gentleman of ancient coat armor should in Germany accept any title inferior to that of a count, for by being created a baron, he would only be placed on a level with the new-baked barons, as they are called. If however, though of ancient gentility, he be unable or unwilling to support the dignity of count, he, by proving his pedigree, may have himself received on a level with the ancient barons; as a graduate from one of our universities may be received *ad eundem gradum* at the other.

A German lawyer, having acquired a fortune during the existence of the imperial chamber at Wetzlar, was about to marry the only daughter of

a brother lawyer. He sent therefore to Vienna a hundred ducats or a hundred Louis (for people desire to make with the Heralds' Office the best bargain that they can), and solicited for letters patent of nobility. The father of the bride, being also ambitious of having his daughter a baroness, sent another sum to another agent at Vienna, who also procured letters of nobility for his future son-in-law. The ceremony being over, bride and bridegroom, equally impatient to produce an agreeable surprise, presented each other their respective diplomas, bound as usual in crimson velvet, printed on vellum, and furnished with arms, coronet, and supporters; "Je vous salue, Monsieur le Baron"—"Je vous salue, Madame la Baronne," they cried in one breath, each expecting the thanks of the other; when, to the mortification of both parties, to the amusement of the wags of Wetzlar, and to the emolument of the heralds at Vienna, it was ascertained that the bridegroom had been ennobled twice over.

The respect paid to ancient gentility can in Germany only be equalled by the contempt of new

nobility, particularly that nobility which has been purchased for money. An exception is sometimes made in favor of that which was conferred on merit. A foreigner dining once at a castle in Franconia, complimented the landlord on the age of his hock. "True," answered the baron, "they are both old, my wine and my coat of arms." *(Ja wohl, alle beide sind alt, mein wein und mein wappen.)* And whenever in any German theatre Schiller's celebrated drama, "Cabal and Love," is performed, and the son of the minister protests against the imputation of a dishonorable act, by asserting that his coat of arms is five hundred years old, the words "*mein wappen ein halb Jahrtausend*"—almost electrify the boxes; and a skilful physiognomist might perhaps divine, by the different degrees of approbation that they express, the century from which every baron, or baroness, no less susceptible of all noble enthusiasm, deduces her escutcheon.

In one of the German towns, a plebeian who had purchased nobility, was pointed out to the stranger. Without being admitted into the society of the *no-*

blesse, he either disdained the bourgeois, or they, jealous of his newly acquired pre-eminence, avoided him: he was generally seen alone in the most crowded streets, communing with his own thoughts, and was humorously compared to the elephant in the menagerie, the only animal of his kind.

In France, when a plebeian wished to be ennobled, he purchased the place of secretary to the king. This gave him the right of soliciting for a coat of arms. At the revolution there were 206 secretaries to the king, beside 46 honorary or titular secretaries: so that the facility of acquiring nobility may be conceived. Hence the place of *secrétaire du roi* was styled in derision *une savonnette au vilain,* or a wash-ball for a blackguard. He, however, was only an *anobli,* though his son was noble, and his *grandson* a *gentilhomme;* nor could his descendants for several generations be admitted as officers into the army.

But when in France the gentility of an individual was acknowledged, it was a matter of indifference whether his title was marquis, comte, vicomte, or baron; or whether he had any title or

not. Frequently the eldest son was comte, the second marquis. In several families that possessed the titles both of marquis and comte, they succeeded alternately; so that the father, being styled comte, styled his eldest son marquis; which marquis styled his eldest son comte, and so forth; the two titles being considered so equal, that it was not worth while to change them; and this prevented confusion, as every individual retained the title by which he was known in the world, or presented at court. In other houses the titles succeeded as in England. These variations were optional, and depended on caprice. The only important question was, not what title any individual bore, but whether he really was a *gentilhomme,* or man of ancestry.

When, about the beginning of the reign of Louis XVI. an ordinance appeared, that no individual should be presented at Versailles, unless he could prove four hundred years of gentility, or that his ancestors were already noble before the year 1400, a multiplicity of comtes and marquises were rejected; though many an untitled gentleman, ancient

as our squires in their halls in Lancashire and Northumberland, left their towers and chateaux in Britany and Languedoc, and posted up to Paris to show their pre-eminence. Every gentleman, his pedigree being certified, was, on the first hunting-day, invited to mount with the king into his carriage, and accompany his majesty to the spot where the hounds were turned out. This privilege was termed *le droit de monter dans le carosse du roi*. The plain squire, to whom this right was allowed, was considered as superior to the count or marquis, whose claims were rejected. Were this ordeal of gentility introduced at Carlton Palace, while the old English squire and the lairds and Highland chieftains would bear away the palm of ancestry, many a noble peer would, as at a tournament, be obliged to ride the barriers.

The profusion of counts and barons has always been increased in France by brevet titles. Officers in their commissions of colonel or general are styled counts, as in England justices of peace are styled esquires. These titles however are only for life. The canons also of the cathedral at Lyons were

styled counts: and the chanoinesses of several noble chapters are likewise comtesses; and frequently, when a *demoiselle de qualité* has no desire or prospect of marriage, the king confers on her also the title of comtesse. She henceforward is styled Madame instead of Mademoiselle, and in company can serve as chaperon to other unmarried ladies.

The whole body of the ancient *noblesse,* it is true, are distinguished by the particle *de* before their names; but without these brevets there would be no title for unmarried women, however exalted their rank or quality. The daughter of a duke and peer, as well as the daughter of a plain gentleman, is only Mademoiselle; as Mademoiselle de la Rochefoucault, Mademoiselle de Montmorency.

When Buonaparte composed his new nobility, (1)

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(1) Those who would form an opinion of the birth, parentage, and education of this Imperial Nobility, I may refer to the "Prisoner of Peace, or Englishman at Verdun," a drama which I wrote during my detention there. *Facit indignatio versus:* and who could abstain from satire, when

he usually conferred the title of count on the lieutenant-generals, and that of baron on the major-generals, and colonels of regiments. As he never created a marquis or vicomte, these two titles are the most respected since the return of the Bourbons.

In France the heralds might not grant nobility or coats of arms to every postulant. It was necessary, that the petitioner should hold some place under government; but as these places were avowedly to be purchased, the only difference was, that the chief part of the fees in France went to the state, whereas in England they go entirely to the College of Arms.

Since the new formation of the House of Peers in France, the French have learned to comprehend the British constitution; and to Louis XVIII. the

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a ci-devant hair-dresser was elevated to a Duke, a postilion to a Grand-Duke, and as to the Princesses,

> ——— 'Twas but a step between
> Palais-Royal and the Tuileries.

British gentleman on his travels is much indebted for the heterogeneous materials of which he has composed his upper house. Before the revolution, the French called every British gentleman a milord, and if his modesty disclaimed the title, they set him down as a plebeian; but at present there are so many noble French peers, who have not the least pretension to be *gentilshommes,* and in the Chambre des Députés so many persons of quality, that the French now say of our two houses of parliament, *apparemment c'est comme chez nous.*

The Chambre des Députés contains a number of marquises, comtes, barons, and untitled gentlemen; these, though inferior in parliament, consider themselves equal elsewhere to the peers; and toward those peers that were not noble before their elevation to the peerage, the ancient gentleman affects the same contempt that Squire Western expressed for an upstart lord.

Of the relative importance of French titles, some idea may be formed from the Majorats, or property that, by an ordonnance of 1824, is entailed on every titulary. In future a title is to be

granted to a French subject only for life, unless the grantee makes a settlement in favour of his successor, in which case it is to be hereditary. The settlements may be fixed at any amount, but the minimum of each title is

	Peers.		*Not Peers.*	
	Francs.	Sterling.	Francs.	Sterling.
Duke	30,000	1248l.		
Marquis or Comte	20,000	832l.	10,000	416l.
Vicomte or Baron	10,000	416l.	5,000	208l.

Thus every peer must inherit a property double to that of a mere noble of the same title.

But, lest his vanity should sacrifice his younger children, an individual can only settle the third of his property on the title. Thus the baron, who constitutes a majorat of five thousand, must possess a revenue of fifteen thousand francs; and the comte, who constitutes a majorat of ten thousand, must possess a revenue of thirty thousand, and so forth.

An individual may be created Comte for life, but if not rich enough to settle on the title a majorat of Comte, he may constitute a majorat of Baron, in which case his successors will be only barons.

The immense overgrown fortunes of several Englishmen have proceeded, not from entails, but from the want of strict entails. When the eldest son has only a daughter, he cuts off the entail, and deprives his brother, or the next male heir, of the property acquired by their common ancestor. The daughter carries it into another family; and as heiresses usually marry heirs, the fortunes of six families are frequently united. Thus, to swell one family to a Leviathan, five have been disinherited by a fiction of the law, as if justice should ever descend to fiction. Five mansions, once the seats of hospitality, now belonging to non residents, have become farm-houses, or are falling into decay; and the proprietor, with a string of names, and drawing his revenues from a multiplicity of counties, is considered a stranger by his tenants in them all. In Scotland it is different: there the

strict entails ensure to every one his own. Every one has a sufficiency to support his rank in society. Hence, to whatever country he may emigrate, the Scotchman remains attached to his own. He never loses sight of the Laird. He knows that his patrimony must eventually fall to him. Majorats, such as in France, should be attached to every British title, particularly to peerages. From this want of strict entails, while one peer is powerful enough to bully the minister, another peer is a pensioner of government, and a burden to the state.

The British House of Peers is the most illustrious senate in existence, and the peerage and gentry ought to bear each other a mutual good-will: the privileges of the peerage are the highest reward for the exertions of the gentry; but the peers cannot deny the nobility of the gentry without degrading their own. For, beside that there is not a duke who is not by some alliance related to some private gentleman; nor any gentleman of quality, who is not related to some peer; if the gentry are not noble, the ancestors of the peers were not noble: and if all the generations anterior to their elevation to

the peerage were lopt off from their genealogical trees, few peers would be considered as gentlemen in the opinion of the continent; and is it probable that a multiplicity of nobles of the first families in Europe, nay of princely origin, such as the Percys, the Courtenays, the Fieldings, would, in a century, when so much respect was paid to birth, have settled in England, if their nobility was to lie dormant, till some accidental circumstance raised them to the peerage?

The honor of the peers is in this question not less interested than the dignity of the gentry. Would any of the peers prefer a nobility of fifty, of a hundred, or of two hundred years, to a nobility of eight centuries, and whose origin is lost in the clouds of antiquity?

The first families in Germany pride themselves on their *uralt adel*, or aboriginal or ante-documental nobility. Every candidate for the order of Saint Michael of Bavaria must not only prove sixteen quarters of nobility, but that his own paternal family had been noble from time immemorial, and that no document recorded at what period

they had been ennobled. Several French and Italian gentlemen have been received, and the antiquity of many an Englishman's family would qualify him to present himself as a candidate; but not a peer of the realm could presume to offer himself, if his elevation to the peerage was considered as an *anoblissement*. Every Grosvenor or Fortescue, descended from the Grand Huntsman or Shield-bearer of the Conqueror, might pretend to the cross of Saint Michael; but the Earl Grosvenor and the Earl Fortescue, were their nobility only coeval with their peerage, would be rejected with contempt. Let therefore every new peer, if by birth a gentleman, protest against the expression of several ignorant journalists, that he had been ennobled; raised to the peerage, ought to be the term.

As our own writers fall into such mistakes, similar blunders may be excusable in foreigners. In fact, our system of rank is not less puzzling to them than theirs is to us.

Hence we read in "Londres en 1820:" Sir Joseph Banks "reçut du roi, en 1779, les hon-

neurs de la noblesse, et la qualité de chevalier baronet;" and in "Les Contemporains" we find "William Eden, d'une ancienne famille, anoblie par Charles II."

The first writer might possibly not have known, that Sir Joseph was of an ancient family, and consequently was noble before he was raised to the baronetage; but the absurdity of the second writer was greater: if Willam Eden's family was ancient, why should Charles ennoble it, though he might raise it to the baronetage? To say that a sovereign ennobles an individual, is to say, that he was not a gentleman before.

If a foreign herald were asked, whom he considered as the noblest families in England, he would answer, first, those that were settled there before the Conquest; those that accompanied the Conqueror; those that engaged in the crusades; those that had produced Templars or Knights of Rhodes; those that had combated at tournaments. Many descendants of these families are members of both houses of parliament. When in the house of Peers, should they date their nobility from their elevation

to the peerage, may the spectres of their iron ancestors haunt them in their dreams! But more descendants of these families have remained as their ancestors were, untitled gentlemen, and they require no parchment to ennoble them. But not only a respect to their ancestors, but a love to their posterity, should induce the peers themselves to protest also against any exclusive nobility in the House of Peers; for if their ancestors were not noble till raised to the peerage, their children will not be noble unless they succeed to it. There would not be a noble family in the three kingdoms, though individuals of this or of that family might be noble. We must then cease to say, the noble house of Howard, of Hamilton, of Fitz-Gerald, etc.; each of these illustrious families must consent to be considered as a herd of *roturiers,* with a Duke at their head.

Such must be the consequence of styling the peerage the nobility.

The hereditary shield that belongs to every individual of a family, is a sufficient proof of its nobility.

But the peer is not always at the head, he may be at the tail of his family. Many a younger brother has been promoted to the peerage, while the elder remained a knight or squire. These gentlemen would bear their arms without any diminution, whilst the peer, as cadet of his house, must consent to bear a mullet, a cinq-foil, or any other mark of inferiority. A peer, without any dishonor, might allow the superiority of an untitled gentleman; but to bear a mark of inferiority to a plebeian would indeed be a heraldic anomaly.

Mr. Hallam conceives it particular to a British peerage, that its privileges are confined to the actual possessor; but this is the case with a French peerage also. The son of the Duc de Montmoreney enjoys no privilege beyond any other French gentleman. Both he and the son of the Duke of Norfolk are destitute of any legal right beyond a barren precedence: but precedence and not privilege is the essential of Nobility.

It is only in Great Britain, that trades-people recommend their shops to the nobility and gentry; in other countries they address their customers or

the public in general. But if it be necessary to recommend their lucky lottery-offices, or patent blacking, to every rank in society, according to the precedency of the realm, let them in future adopt the style, "the peerage and the nobility;" or, as their design is to flatter their customers, "the peerage, the gentry and nobility;" as by this address they would flatter the ancient gentry, by distinguishing them from the new nobility, who had lately received their arms from the Heralds' Office. A petition to Parliament from any county might begin, "We the peerage, nobility, clergy, and others." A magnat of Hungary is styled a magnat; a grandee of Spain, a grandee; a peer of France, a peer. None of these are styled the nobility; for the equites, the hidalgos, the chevaliers, are noble also; as in ancient Rome, the equestrian order was noble, as well as the senate. The British peerage ought likewise to be called the peerage, and no title could be more dignified or expressive. Two centuries ago, ere the title gentleman was so profaned, that title might have been refused occasionally to individuals among them; but now, to

style the peers the nobility, is not only to detract from their dignity, in the eyes of foreigners, among whom nobility is so common, but, if meant exclusively, is an insult and an injustice to all their countrymen entitled to bear arms.

The peerage very properly enjoys so many privileges, that it is *ponderibus librata suis;* it requires no epithet to raise its importance; but if any epithet be requisite to his dignity, let the peer be styled the illustrious; this epithet would distinguish him from every other noble; it would be respected on the continent. It has been given to the Order of St. Patrick, and cannot be thought too exalted for an hereditary Senator of Great Britain, when it is allowed to a Senator, Counsellor, or Judge, in the Ionian Islands.

Learned etymologists have given the derivation of the word Lord; may I venture to suggest a new one? May it not be derived from the French *Lourd, gravis?* A count, in Germany, is styled a Graf or Grav, which some authors derive from *grau,* grey or old, as *seigneur* is derived from *senior,* and *senatus* from *senex;* but others derive

graf from *gravis*, a man of gravity, or dignity. While the Saxon was the language of England, the magnats were also called *grav*. From this word, corrupted into *reeve*, is derived Sheriff, Borough-reeve, etc. But the Normans, whatever might have been the origin of *grav*, concluded that it signified *gravis*, and translated it *lourd*. The modern signification of *lourd* would, it is true, be "heavy, unwieldy;" and would be an epithet of derision, rather than of honor; but other words in the process of centuries have changed their meaning. *Gros*, in ancient French, meant *grand*. Thus Grosvenor meant le Grand Veneur, and Charles le Gros meant Charles the Grand; but whatever Louis le Gros, two centuries afterwards, might have meant, it would mean, in modern French, Louis the Fat. Thus the word *lourd* might evidently have meant *dignified*, or *of importance;* and as the Optimates in Spain have been called the *Grands*, in Hungary the *Magnats*, in Germany the *Grossen*, all which words signify also physical qualities, why should they not have been called in England the Lourds? But the contempt, which our Norman entertained

of our Saxon ancestors, is admirably depictured in the romance of Ivanhoe; and they might have styled the Anglo-Saxon Count *lourd,* out of *persiflage.* But in the course of a revolution, a name of reproach often becomes a boast; and as the American republicans, in their successes, gloried in the nickname Yankee, so, when the Anglo-Saxons recovered their importance, *lourd* became a title of honor.

I perfectly agree with Mr. Hallam, that "no part of the British constitution is so admirable as the equality of civil rights;" nor is it desired that a single privilege be added to the privileges to which the gentry are by law entitled. A modern peer can no longer be compared to a Simon de Montfort, or to the king-making Earl of Warwick; but an English squire is of as great, or in many respects of greater importance, than a squire five centuries ago. His nobility, which, no one knows how, when, or where, has slipped through his arms, is no favor to be obtained, but a right to be maintained. The title may have lain dormant, but no statute

has cancelled it. It is invested in him. If, as has been shown, an English gentleman was considered noble in the reign of James I., he must be equally so in the reign of George IV. In the days of Cressy and Azincourt, when our Angevin Sovereigns possessed so much of France, the English gentry and the French noblesse were equal, not only in power but in title, at the courts of Bordeaux or of Poitiers; and have their descendants not the spirit to maintain their equality with the Hanoverian noblesse at the court of a Guelph?

The present degradation of the British gentry was accidental, and, by a strange fatality, chiefly proceeded from the great privileges that they formerly enjoyed. There is an ebb and flow in all human affairs; let them hope that the tide will turn in their favor. Two centuries ago, all the honorable posts in the law and army were, as was then the custom all over Europe, confined to the gentry. A gentleman only could be an officer in the army, or a barrister in the inns of court; hence the coats of arms that decorate the halls of the Temple and of Lincoln's Inn. But in other coun-

tries, when the *tiers état,* or plebeians, were become too important to be excluded from these offices, the law that excluded them was usually repealed; but in England a different course was pursued: the law was maintained, but broken through on every occasion; and as officers and lawyers still maintained, that none but gentlemen could be admitted, barristers and captains were at length styled esquires, and ensigns and attorneys gentlemen. These, however, were not considered noble by the heralds, unless they had procured a grant of arms.

Nor should this grant of arms have been refused, for every family must have a beginning. As ancient houses become extinct, new ones arise. And though honors should rather be conferred as rewards of actions achieved, than as a testimony of a desire to achieve them; yet the warrior, who fights the battles of his country, and the lawyer, who consecrates his exertions to the cause of justice, is as deserving of nobility as any of the phalanx of the king of France's secretaries. The only absurdity in the English system is, that these indi-

viduals are styled gentlemen, whereas they should be styled noblemen. *Fit nobilis, nascitur generosus.* "Noble" ought to be the word used in patents. It is so comprehensive, that though it may be without disrespect applied to the Sovereign, it is merely the due of every individual worthy of notice.

Thus their ancient privileges have been turned against the gentry; but the estimation in which they formerly were held, has also contributed to diminish their present estimation. Some centuries ago, the higher orders alone were distinguished by a suavity of manners. Hence a polished man was said to have the manners of a gentleman; and no doubt the barbarity of the lower ranks might have induced the higher ranks to maintain, that there was no polished man but a gentleman. When, however, the benefits of education had descended lower, and plebeians had become polished, the saying should have been disused; but here again, the inferiors turned the tables against their superiors, by retorting, that if there were no polished man but a gentleman, every polished man

was a gentleman. Had the axiom been, that every polished man was a nobleman, it would have contained some truth; for elegance of manners may render a man worthy of notice, but cannot alter his birth. He ought, as in other countries, to have been styled a polite, elegant, agreeable man, but not a gentleman. But not only in regard to manners, but to morals, we abuse the word. A man of laudable conduct or sentiments is called a *gentleman*. Are we to conclude from this, that the lower classes are rascals? Other nations would call him an honest, a virtuous, upright, respectable, worthy man.

On the continent, the title of a man of letters is sufficiently honorable; but in England, we are informed, that a work is to be published by a set of literary *gentlemen*.

Physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries, are now styled medical *gentlemen*. Why is not a man-midwife styled a gentleman-midwife, as in several kitchens a man-cook is styled a gentleman-cook?

I would not insinuate, that a profession so beneficent to mankind, that requires so much talent,

and for which some persons are born with particular dispositions, would degrade a man of birth; but the word gentleman can only be used, or abused, in three senses—in regard to manners, morals, or birth. In the two first senses, may it not be taken for granted, that a man, who has had an academical education, is both a moral and a polite man? but in the last sense, what can it signify, in the common occurrences of his profession, whether a medical man be a man of birth or not?

If, indeed, a marriage had been concluded between him and any young lady or dowager, it might be some satisfaction to her relatives to hear that the doctor was a medical *gentleman*.

It is only in London that we see advertised, lodgings for single gentlemen: in other countries, it is for single *messieurs*. And shoes or stockings, etc., for ladies; and shoes, stockings, etc., for gentlemen: these articles, in Paris, are *pour les femmes*, or *pour les hommes*.

When the King of France holds a court at the Tuileries, it is thus announced:—

"Demain matin le Roi recevra les hommes, et le soir les femmes."

Among these *men* are the first dukes and peers; among these *women,* the first duchesses and ladies of quality.

There is no degradation to persons of quality to be called men and women; but by following a different system, and calling a mixed society gentlefolks, low people in England have been put on a level with persons of quality.

How superior to our ladies and gentlemen is this designation, *les hommes et les femmes:* it is like the *arma virumque* of Virgil. We have ladies and gentlemen in the shilling gallery.

The King of England addresses the two Houses of Parliament, "My lords, and gentlemen."

The members address their constituents, and the promiscuous rabble at the hustings, Gentlemen!

The rabble return to their pot-houses, and address each other, Gentlemen!

The word gentlemen re-echoes from one end of the kingdom to the other.

We have gentlemen of the whip, gentlemen of the quill, gentlemen of the scissars, gentlemen of the razor, gentlemen of the comb.

All these ranks in France, from the highest to the lowest, would answer to the word messieurs. The king of France addresses the united peers and députés, Messieurs.

Properly to translate into French the word gentleman, may be considered the proof of an Englishman's knowledge of the two languages. How various its significations,—Galant-homme, homme aimable, gentilhomme, monsieur!

Every rider who travelled with his book of patterns, has, during his stay in England, so often been called a gentleman, that on his return to Hamburgh or Frankfort, he considers himself on a footing with every Englishman of the first quality, and would accost him, hail fellow, well met!

A German baron, in London, having waited for his barber, a journeyman arrived in his stead, and informed him, that the old *gentleman* had been taken ill, but that he would have the honor of shaving him! This anecdote the baron used to relate whenever any Englishman was presented at his master's court, to insinuate that the English gentry were a set of barbers.

But it is rather from the lower rank abroad, who are not competent judges in the matter, than from persons of quality, that our travelling gentry are likely to be treated with disrespect; who, should this happen, would not forget that their ancestors were not only admissible at courts, but at tournaments.

Should, however, the title of a gentleman thus become more prostituted every day, to give it to a man of family might at length be rather an insult than a compliment. In this case what must he do? he must reassume the title of nobleman, to which he has a lawful right, and which his ancestors, two centuries ago, only laid aside, because, at that period, they preferred the title of gentle-

man, which is incontestibly the superior title, though a train of unforeseen circumstances have, in this kingdom alone, raised the title nobleman above it.

As, in France, a *gentilhomme* must be born noble, Bonaparte, in the plenitude of his power, though he created dukes and grand-dukes and kings, never ventured to make a gentleman. Only persons of ancient noblesse are there styled gentlemen. Yet these persons in England, when they see the quality of a gentleman so degraded there, make up their minds, during their stay, to style themselves noblemen. The gentry of the united kingdom should follow their example.

And let it not be thought impossible, that the title of gentleman could, in the course of things, become an insult: a change nearly similar has occurred in Germany.

The German nobility are composed of two ranks, counts and barons. If an individual be created a baron, all his descendants become barons and baronesses. If a baron be raised to a

count, all his descendants become counts and countesses, and this to the most distant posterity. Every count was styled in the directions of letters and other documents, the high-born count: every baron, the noble-born baron.

At length, plebeians were admitted into offices, which were usually confined to the nobility, and some persons directed to them also, to the noble-born counsellor, to the noble-born chancellor. The barons at this took fire: they assembled, and agreed to assume a new style; and leaving to the plebeians the style of noble-born, determined that their letters should be directed, to the high-well-born baron.

Thus plebeians, who made not the least pretension to nobility, were styled noble-born; and gentlemen, whose birth was uncontestably noble, would have challenged any man who should direct a letter to them, noble-born.

In process of time, the title noble-born fell so low, that even the higher plebeians became ashamed of it; and they were indulged by the court

with a new style, well-born, which, without encroaching on the gentry, distinguished them from their inferiors among the burghers.

Thus at present the different ranks in Germany are styled:—

Counts,	High-born.
Barons,	High-well-born.
Counsellors, Professors, Physicians, Judges, Clergymen, Burgomasters, etc.	Well-born.
Surgeons, Apothecaries, Merchants, Shopkeepers, etc.	Noble-born.

An English gentleman at a German court, having received from the prince a letter directed to the well-born Mr. ——, directed his answer to His Excellency the Duke. On the next court-day, the duke asked him, if he knew so little of etiquette. "By no means," answered the Englishman, "but I consider myself equal to your barons; so, when you style me high-well-born, I will style you serene highness."

Many an Englishman would be not displeased at being styled the well-born, and would be highly flattered by the style noble-born; an insult for which a German gentleman would run the writer through the body.

There are absurdities in every country; but I have been more particular here, because every Englishman on the continent runs the risk of being told, that *la noblesse anglaise n'est qu'une canaille:* but if, in Germany, it should be thrown in his teeth, that in England every barber styles his master a gentleman, though he cannot deny the abuse, he may retort by citing a similar abuse in Germany, that every barber there receives his letters addressed to him, to the noble-born.

This treatise may be useful to Britons, who visit the continent, particularly to those who may purchase property there, who may enter foreign service, or may be candidates for foreign orders of knighthood; nor is it perhaps entirely undeserving of the attention of our countrywomen. It would inform them to what degree of distinction different foreigners are entitled. In their arrangements

of assemblies and invitations, they pay too much attention to some, too little to other strangers. A German baron, a French count, an Italian marchese, are nearly equal in rank; and when of good quality, are all highly respectable; but not more so than an English squire was, even since the Restoration; and would still be, if the visitations of the heralds, and the regulations of the courts of honor, were properly enforced. Consequently, when a British gentlewoman marries one of them, she only marries her equal. On the continent, more respect is paid to quality than to rank. An ancient gentleman, without a title, looks down on a new count without a pedigree; and yet an Englishwoman often hopes, by giving her hand to any man with a title, to become a high and mighty dame: in this, however, she will be disappointed. In countries where only equals associate, noblesse is an essential, but no distinction. In Germany, for instance, every man that she will meet in company, is a baron, every woman a baroness; but only an ancient baron will be considered a gentleman. She, if of a good family, will be received

there on a footing of equality; if not, they may possibly refuse to receive her.

As every plebeian in England, who lives above the vulgar, has of late years presumed to style himself a gentleman, plebeians from the continent have, on their arrival in England, been, to their great surprise, styled gentlemen also; and this quality they afterwards assume without further scruple. These foreigners have sometimes paid their addresses to Englishwomen, perhaps to ladies of rank, or to gentlewomen of quality; and many a bride, without inquiring the real rank of her suitor, or no doubt imagining that every individual on the continent is at liberty also to style himself a gentleman, gives him her hand: but on her arrival at his home, how grievous is her disappointment! She has married a *roturier,* a mere plebeian; all his connexions are *bourgeois.* At no court on the continent the wife of a plebeian would be received, though she were the daughter of a duke. Nay, the more elevated her birth, the greater the contempt to which such a mis-alliance

would expose her. Day after day offers some new mortification. She reads in the court gazette, that some of her compatriots have been *fêted* according to their rank; that Lady —— has dined at court; that Mrs. —— had been invited to the whist-table of some potentate; that Miss —— had danced at a gala, or figured at a *traineau* party. She, alas! poor madame, *tout court*, must renounce all these pomps and vanities; but however she may affect to despise them, she, if not strongly-minded, will feel their loss. Amid the dissipation of Paris, Vienna, or Naples, she might indeed find some resource; but in a provincial town, or the residence of a prince, her privations would be aggravated. Some countrywoman, perhaps of her own neighbourhood, of her acquaintance, perhaps her relative, has there married to a count, a baron, or to an untitled gentleman of quality; this countrywoman would perhaps turn her back on her, or receive her with an air of protection, or perhaps only receive her at all, when the noble relatives of Monsieur le Comte, and all persons of quality, were

absent from her hotel. Such would be her mortifications who should marry a plebeian. It may therefore be laid down as a rule, that no female of family, who wishes on the continent to be received into company, should marry any man who is not of noble birth, it matters not with or without a title.

But would her chagrin be less, who has given her hand to a new noble? In Germany, every gentleman is styled a baron, as in England every gentleman is styled an esquire; but though, in Germany, no individual presumes to style himself a baron without being noble, yet every noble is not a gentleman, and, consequently, is neither presentable at court, nor admissible into every company. Any plebeian, who has made a fortune by trade, a lucky speculator, a winner in the lottery, may, by sending from fifty to one hundred pounds to Vienna (or, since the establishment of the German confederacy, to other courts), procure the title of noble or baron, which are almost synonymous; but his grandson, or, in places where

the gentry are tenacious of their pre-eminence, his great-grandson would scarcely be considered as a gentleman. Even at those courts, where the etiquette was the least severe, there would, during a length of time, be some distinction between him and the ancient gentry. These distinctions, however trifling in the eyes of philosophy, would be sufficient to mortify his vanity, and to keep alive the memory of his inferiority. At one court, the new noble is permitted to make his bow at the levée, but will not be invited to dinner; at another court, he will be invited to dinner, but neither he, nor his wife, would be invited to appear at the card assembly in the evening, among the quality of both sexes. At a third court, they might even be invited to the card assemblies or balls, but neither he nor she would be selected to compose the card party of the sovereign; nor would he be invited to dance with any royal or serene highness, to which honor every gentleman of blood may pretend. There have been instances of persons lately ennobled being introduced into the assemblies of

the noblesse, by the sovereigns of the country, who honored them with their countenance; but no gentleman, no gentlewoman would speak to them. For a man in this predicament, if it be difficult for him to find a partner at a ball, it must be still more difficult to find a partner for life. A gentlewoman, by giving him her hand, must consent to participate in his equivocal nature, neither fish nor flesh; and should he marry a bourgeoise, he would retard, by a generation, the gradual progress of his descendants to gentility; he therefore comes to England to look for a wife, and is too successful in his search after some gentlewoman of quality.

A squire's daughter, ignorant of the comparative value of titles, thinks, by marrying a baron, to become a peeress of Germany; for as a baron is a peer in Great Britain, no doubt a baron is a peer all the world over. Poor woman! she has married a baron, but a *new-baked* baron; for such is the nickname given to ennobled plebeians. She leaves the ancient hall of her ancestors, the envy of the bride-maids; and arrives in Germany, confident in

the length of her purse, hoping to show off, and charitably disposed to eclipse all the baronesses of the holy Roman empire; but if an opportunity is allowed to her, as a special grace, of displaying the court dress that had figured at St. James's, far from attracting the admiration of a German court, the elegance of her toilette, and the value of her jewels, would only awaken the jealousy of some high-born dame, who would have the good-nature to let her into the secret, that *Monsieur le baron n'était qu'un parvenu*, only tolerated at court, to the honors of which he had no right or claim.

Disgusted by these repeated humiliations, this couple would make up their mind to fix their residence in England, where they would mount an equipage, with a coronet and supporters, and on the strength of their baronial title, would pretend to a precedency above the first gentry in the land.

When a titled foreigner, having married an Englishwoman, settles in England, they probably, on account either of his or of her want of birth,

have been ill-received abroad. A British gentlewoman, who marries a roturier; or a low-born Englishwoman, who marries a foreigner of quality, are equally liable to disappointment.

Since the restoration of the Bourbons, a number of such marriages have taken place, together with several suitable alliances that offer greater prospects of happiness. The marriage, when in England, ought always to have his ambassador's sanction, lest the bridegroom should not be what he pretends to be.

Several of our richest heiresses of long-descended names and estates, have married foreigners, recommended by a splendid title. Could the squires, whose ancestors might have been lords of the neighboring manors before the conquest, have conferred on their brides the title of Altesse or Excellenza, their immense fortunes would have remained at home. What damsel would become a sheriff's wife, as her mothers during centuries have been, when she may be saluted princess? What daughter of a wealthy citizen or nabob would give, for a

bloody hand, the plum which can procure her a coronet?

It would be no bad speculation, for an adventurer to purchase, at Rome or Naples, the title of prince or duke, as a bait for an heiress in Great Britain.

It may not be without advantage for our countrywomen, to inform them, that the laws on the continent are more favorable to married women than in England. In France, the disposal of her own property is usually secured to the wife, by the marriage-contract, during her life, and descends immediately to her children during the father's life, or, if she leaves no children, it reverts to her family, unless she bequeath it elsewhere; for a married woman in France may make a will. If their property were well secured to our heiresses, fewer foreigners would be dying in love for them, or, at least, would find it their interest to treat them well after marriage.

Unless the gentry of the British empire be assimilated to the continental noblesse, these advan-

tages will be favorable to foreigners; but at any rate, our persons of quality ought to know the value of foreign titles, as our bankers know the value of foreign coins; and a French comte is as inferior to an English earl, as a livre tournois to a pound sterling.

THE END.