

A royal family defends England from internal as well as foreign ambitions. By gathering the supreme social lustre around a non-political centre, political offices are thrown into a sort of atrophy, so far as glory is concerned. No politician will seek office for the sake of any social splendour. It cannot be found there. The statesman or the minister must depend on his services for his renown. Only by intellect, toil, patriotism, can he be great. The tinsel and the powers of chieftainship are bestowed in separate estates. The artificial glories are permanently monopolised; there remains open to personal ambition only the lustre that emanates from personal qualities and deeds. Thus, while the British throne is the gilded sepulchre of monarchy, its occupants,—non-elective, alien, depositories of all fictitious honours,—guard that sepulchre against any resurrection of monarchy from without or within.

Carlyle raised his lamentations over this grave of kingship, but it was an intolerable evil in England, chiefly because it could only exist by preserving the militant age in which it originated. The resources of England were of old seen to be immeasurable could it only enter on an industrial age. What it needed was domestic peace. It mattered not how many of its roughs and plumed captains might go off to fight in Russia, India, Africa; the more the better for itself; England was drained of them and left free to develop its science, literature, and arts. England's two literary ages bear the names of women, and alike were the products of peace. The greatness of the Elizabethan age was based on its forty-five years of rarely interrupted peace at home, and therein the Victorian age is like it. An age of great generals cannot produce a Shakespeare or a Darwin. Elizabeth, more a king than a queen, was yet not really interested in anything outside of England. She compelled religion to speak English and to respect an English Pope. From her time the people were left but one throne to deal with—their own; this they have steadily shaped to their own ends, however rough-hewn to others by this or that occupant; and all the thank-offerings now surrounding it are really to an island divinity, ideal embodiment of the average comfort of England. It is this divinity the Archbishop of Canterbury has addressed the jubilee thanksgiving for "the abundance of dominion with which Thou hast exalted and enlarged her empire." The Gods of other nations are idols. The cost of maintaining this composite English divinity is considerable; it is, however, not mere commutation money; it is a bribe by which the imperial wolf, which used to ravage the fold, has been domesticated, induced to accept a jewelled collar, and to guard the flock against invasion of the wild race from which it sprung. The English throne has long been the traitor to the European family of crowned heads; it has harboured and protected the conspirators against them; it has patronised a literature and science which undermine every throne. It has equally betrayed the privileged class it originally created, signing away its powers, until the House of Commons, once petitioners at its lordly door, now holds the purse and the sword of the nation. Nothing but the divinity that doth hedge about a legitimate member of the royal fraternity of Europe could have restrained these powerful classes at home and abroad from arresting this steady reduction of their privileges, and transfer of their powers to the people.

As to the mere pecuniary cost of the throne, it must be borne in mind that the greater part of it returns to the people. The castle, the palace, the park, the royal paraphernalia, besides supporting many lives, constitute a distributed museum of antiquities with many useful and agreeable adjuncts. But a few closets are reserved for individual persons amid the magnificence. Emptied of political power, the throne is turned to the functions of landscape gardener, social impresario, and festive masquerader for their Majesty the People. The only serious cost of the throne is moral—the snobbery it engenders. But, if distance lends enchantment to some views, it may occasionally lend horror to others. The traditional American prejudice against the aristocracy of birth is derived from a period when there existed in England an hereditary legislature. The House of Lords has now been reduced to a debating society; its power to alter or defeat an act of the Legislature has been changed to a mere right of demanding reconsideration. It cannot even require that the measure it temporarily suspends shall be repassed by an increased majority. Now and then, indeed, the peers are permitted to exercise their antiquarian privilege in defeating some non-political measure of infinitesimal interest, such as marriage with a deceased wife's sister. The exception proves the rule. The hereditary political and legislative power being thus extinct, we may view with impartial calmness the English aristocracy.

An aristocracy of birth is, at least, not so vulgar as that of wealth, which seems the only alternative in a democratic age. In the natural influence of high breeding there is something scientific, at any rate, something Darwinian; it will be easier to evolve an intellectual aristocracy out of that than from an upper-tendom of millionaires. Just now, when the English nobility are ignobly fighting for a landlord interest with which their class is historically identified, to the sacrifice of humanity, they appear to the worst advantage. It cannot be forgotten, however, that many members of the aristocracy have espoused the cause of Home Rule, and that even Lord Salisbury has brought in a land bill for Ireland which would have been deemed radical by his ancestors.

An aristocracy of birth, relieved of any discredit on account of political or landed privileges, would be a phenomenon not without philosophical interest in this time when the "survival of the fittest" has become a familiar law, while survival of the unfittest seems a no less familiar fact. The conjunction of the Queen's jubilee and our Constitution's centenary may remind us that some things which the English have found unfit to survive, save in name, survive among ourselves in all except name. As regards snobbery, it is doubtful whether we can safely throw stones.

A member of the English aristocracy, also of the House of Commons, familiar with and friendly to society in America, expressed the opinion

that more attention is paid to precedence in Washington than in London. Such is my own impression after residence in both cities. Recently an eminent American author, lecturing before a fashionable audience on "Literature in the Republic," spoke with almost passionate horror of the precedence given to title over scholarship on ceremonial occasions. He seemed to think that literature must deteriorate under such conditions. Apart from the non-justification of his theory by the facts, the lecturer showed an amusing unconsciousness that he was manifesting an interest in "precedence" unknown to English scholars. The fact that such ceremonial etiquette in England has been settled for ages, that for centuries it has ceased to be any test of merit or esteem, while conveniently relieving hosts of the responsibility of making distinctions, deprives the arrangement of such serious interest as that which attaches to it in this country. The same lecturer, when presently referring to complaints of under-payment among American authors, admonished them that they ought not to expect to attain the wealth gained by those who devote themselves to making money. Business men have their reward, literary men theirs, and these ought not to ask the gains of the others. An English author would have paralleled the reasoning. The hereditary nobleman, he would say, has his reward; he goes in to dinner first. But that is not the kind of advantage we are seeking. That does not interest us. For a lord to precede Browning to dinner is, if anything, a compliment to the poet; if he were supposed to be so commonplace as to aspire to the first place on that plane of baubles, he would not be invited. Not only Carlyle, but many literary men, might have had such decorations for the seeking. Tennyson refused title for many years, accepting it at last only because it seemed selfish to withhold the social advantage from his son and daughter-in-law,—his expressed wish to have the title pass to them first being inconsistent with the regulations.

The right way in which to estimate England is to study it as a development out of certain conditions of its own. It can no more be transmuted to our America than its chalk cliffs can be changed to granite hills. Its political and social system has been built by slow working ages, and refashioned by the genius of the people in necessary obedience to the material given them to work on. Inside feudal walls they have cultivated the fruits of liberty, they have established a republic with decorations of royalty, they have evolved a free-thinking church amid symbols of ecclesiasticism. These facts have become recognised, and have been assured, mainly during the last fifty years; and, because they represent the genius of the English people, in whose face no individual can glory, they are all the more strikingly symbolised in the homely representative of a disfranchised sex whose common sense and unostentatious character have left her nation free to govern itself without interference for this memorable half century.—*Moncure D. Conway, in the North American Review.*

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### THE ART UNION LOTTERY.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—When the Ontario Society of Artists obtained special legislation from the Local Assembly to enable them to establish an Art Union, and hold annual drawings for prizes, no one objected, but on the contrary everyone thought that the impetus given to art financially would result in the holding of regular exhibitions, and would in various ways benefit the public. The Art Union tickets, sold at five dollars each, were exchangeable for a sketch nominally valued at the price of the ticket, and four admission checks to the Annual Exhibition of the then current year. In addition the purchaser of a ticket had a chance of obtaining a prize at the Annual Drawing, and the number and value of the prizes given were in fixed ratio to the number of tickets sold. Up to last year this plan worked satisfactorily, but at the Industrial Exhibition of 1886, the Committee of the Society of Artists inaugurated a scheme which is nothing more nor less than a lottery, and a lottery without any guarantees or restrictions at all. An unlimited number of tickets are disposed of at twenty-five cents each by agents who make any representations they like, and the prizes, very few in number, are over-valued to an absurd extent. Though very numerous complaints were made by persons who were deluded into taking tickets last year by the previous good record of the Society, it is announced that the same thing is to take place at the Combined Exhibition in September next.

This action of the Ontario Society of Artists in prostituting their Charter to cover the common lottery scheme, is unworthy of the original aims of the Society, and is distinctly detrimental to the cause of art in Canada. When people win a picture marked \$500, with a twenty-five cent ticket, they are not likely to have a very high opinion of the value of the prize or the discrimination of the persons who marked the high figures on it.

Some of the members of the Artists Society were much opposed to the idea of the lottery, and one at least of the oldest and most prominent members resigned rather than countenance such a proceeding. It is to be hoped that the artists will realise that the policy they are pursuing, though seemingly remunerative now, will do a lasting injury to the progress of true art, and the growth of art-feeling; and that even from a pecuniary point of view the present clap-trap style will result in destroying all confidence of the public in the reliability or true value of Canadian works of art.

Yours truly, A LOVER OF THE FINE ARTS.

From 1800 to 1820 the poetry of Wordsworth was trodden under foot, from 1820 to 1830 it was militant, from 1830 and onward it has been triumphant.—*Thomas De Quincey.*