

are extinct, or until called out of abeyance, in favour of one of the co-heirs, by the sovereign. Most of the older baronies now giving seats in the House of Lords have been derived in this manner, as those of De Ros, De Clifford, Clinton, Hastings, Camoys, Willoughby d'Eresby, and Willoughby De Broke, the peers of these names being descendants in the female line of the original grantees.

But for a long time baronies, as well as peerages, have been created by patent, and the honour descends according to the limitation contained in the patent, which in England commonly restricts the succession to the male descendants of the first peer, though occasionally it is extended to collateral and female heirs. In Scotland peerages were generally granted to the heirs general, so that it is morally impossible for some of them ever to become extinct.

The foreign title of Viscount, which ranks next above that of Baron, was introduced in the fourteenth century. It has never been very popular, and was very little conferred until the reign of George III. The Viscounty of Hereford, conferred in 1550 on the Devereux family, is the oldest one giving a seat in the House of Lords. Next, at a long interval, comes that of Bolingbroke, conferred by Queen Anne on the celebrated statesman.

The title of Earl is the oldest in the peerage, and was, as we have stated, the official name for the governor of a county or province, though not since the Conquest. It has long been the favourite title in England, and in Scotland the earls outnumber all the other peers together. The oldest earldom is that of Shrewsbury, conferred on the Talbots in 1442.

The title of Marquess, next above that of Earl, was seldom conferred until the reign of George III. The oldest marquessate is that of Winchester, enjoyed by the Paulets, upon whom it was conferred in 1551. Next in the English peerage is Lansdowne, created in 1784. In the Scotch peerage there are four marquessates; in Ireland, they are more numerous.

The title of Duke was introduced into England by Edward III., who created his son, the Black Prince, Duke of Cornwall,—a title which descends to all his successors, and gives the Prince of Wales a seat in the House of Lords. The dukedom of Norfolk, created in 1483, is the oldest after Cornwall. That of Somerset dates from 1546. This great title was rarely conferred, except upon princes of the blood, until the reign of Charles II. He and some of his immediate successors were very liberal in bestowing it. Of late, again, it has been bestowed charily, and the number of peers bearing it has actually decreased. The last created were those of Sutherland and Cleveland in 1833. It is understood that it was offered to the late Marquess of Lansdowne and the Earl Fitz-William, but declined by those eminent men.

The House of Lords did not contain more than fifty or sixty persons in the time of the Tudors, and was comparatively small until the accession of Mr. Pitt as Prime Minister in 1783. That statesman recommended a great number for the honours of the peerage,—his peers included the wealthy county families of Lowther, Vernon, Bagot, and Lascelles, and many Scotch and Irish lords; and his successors in office have also generally been liberal in