

Order of Merit vs. Nobility

A Democratic Method for rewarding Public Spirit---By D. C. Harvey

An order of merit for Canada is a favorite dream of many who are opposed to the bestowal of hereditary titles as a means of stimulating and rewarding public spirit. They favor it not only because it would be an exclusively national institution but also because it would be more in harmony with the spirit of democracy which Canadians are helping to revive in its immemorial haunts. They favor it because it would be a constant stimulus to patriotic effort alike in peace or war as well as a stirring call to enquire what a particular individual himself, rather than his ancestor, has done to merit distinction. They favor it because they believe that even the citizens of a thorough-going democracy require public recognition and commendation in order to rise to a conception of disinterested public service.

But the champions of a personal order of merit in contrast to an hereditary nobility, find themselves in opposition to all the conservative instincts of the Anglo-Saxon race. Their opponents claim, either that an hereditary nobility is designed to meet the same need as an order of merit, or that what was good enough for father is good enough for them. They demand whether a nation has ever grown to greatness and produced a class of citizens eager to contribute to the world's work without an hereditary order of social distinction as an incentive to meretricious deeds. They point to the Patricians in Rome, the Noblesse in France, the Peerage in England, and summarily consign to outer darkness all those whose faith in hereditary honors is weak.

The Example of Rome

It is true that in the past, nations have developed some sort of an hereditary nobility whether social or political or both. Rome, "The Niobe of Nations," had its Patricians and Plebeians, the former being a self-styled nobility or pioneers, or a caste of early settlers who tried to exclude all new arrivals from places of trust or profit in church or state. In fact, the Patricians had been the whole people at first, and had not been ennobled until the new peoples sought shelter among the Seven Hills, or were subjugated by the arms of Rome. Then, the whole group of sordidness assumed the privilege of nobility to the exclusion and disadvantage of the Tenderfeet. But as time passed, the Plebeians gained admission to all offices of importance, and their officials, in turn, built up a new nobility of service, cutting across the old Patrician nobility of birth and ultimately became more important than the old nobility itself.

This evolution of a nobility of service in opposition to a nobility of birth was characteristic of the nations which followed the decline and fall of Rome; and was particularly true of England where the Anglo-Saxon thegn arose to vie with and supplant the old Teutonic earl who had lived in the plains of Germany from time immemorial, and according to tradition had had a separate creation from the ordinary freeman as well as from the slave. This Anglo-Saxon thegn was a land owner in close association with the king and in return for his special services of defence, counsel, and consent he had special privileges conferred upon him. He was essentially a noble because of his contribution to his community. He could

be promoted from a thegn to an earl just as the coal or ordinary freeman might become a thegn by performing certain services of national importance. Early laws record several ways in which promotion might result, e.g., "If a coal thrives so that he had fully five hides of land, church and kitchen, bell-house and borough-gate, seat and special duty in the King's hall, then was he thenceforth of thegn-right worthy," and again, "If a merchant thrives, so that he fared thrice over the wide sea by his own means, then was he thenceforth of thegn-right worthy."

A Nobility of Service

Anglo-Saxon nobility then had become practically a nobility of service on the eve of the Norman conquest, and in this respect was not materially affected by that event. The military adventurers upon whom the conqueror now bestowed large grants of land owed suit and service to the king as head of the nation and so long as their descendants were nobler by tenure they might be called a nobility of service since their tenure was a tenure by service, that is, military service for defence of the king and deliberate service for the guidance of the king in national administration.

The nucleus of our modern nobility so-called, is to be found in this nobility of service rather than in a nobility of birth. From time to time, it has renewed its vigor by fusing red blood with blue. Henry II. was accused of "raising men from the dust." Henry VIII. had to raise men from the commercial classes to the Peerage in order to repair some of the waste of the Wars of the Roses. James I. continued this policy with a view to increased revenue rather than with an eye to service. After the restoration when the idea of a tenure by military service was entirely superceded, membership in the peerage became a reward for personal or political service and the numbers began to increase rapidly. But from George III. to George V., nobility in title has been confined almost exclu-

sively to men of wealth, and recently it has been felt that it is much more important for a prospective nobleman to render a service to the party funds than to the nation or Empire as a whole.

of merit or of real public service. It is this faith that influences men of distinction to accept a title and a seat in the House of Lords along with others who have purchased these distinctions, thereby enabling the British peerage to retain a measure of vitality, and this constant infusion of new life is one of the factors which has preserved the British nobility from the fate of the French noblesse. The most important cause has been the fact that the British nobility has not been really a noble caste, since the essence of nobility consists in some privilege to be inherited by all descendants in the male line; but the British peerage transmits its privileges to only one member at a time and he is supported to perform political duties of national importance. This law has saved England from a continental noblesse. For example, in France of the Ancient Regime, all members of a noble family were ennobled and inherited special privileges to the exclusion of the non-privileged orders. Though high offices in church and state were restricted to those who were ennobled for four generations, it could hardly be maintained that the French nobility was a nobility of service, and when it was attacked in the French Revolution it received a blow from which it cannot recover. It fell because it forgot that even nobility has its obligations which can only be neglected at its peril. It fell because its own motto, noblesse oblige, had become nought but base cant.

Caste System Must Disappear

With the progress of democracy, the attractiveness of nobility and its trappings is bound to diminish in all countries. With the broadening of national ideals, the spread of education through school and press, the superstitious and undiscriminating reverence for a lord will gradually disappear like the belief in witchcraft. Nobility will cease to exist as a social caste, and will become either a personal distinction for merit only, or an epithet used to describe a rare moral quality.

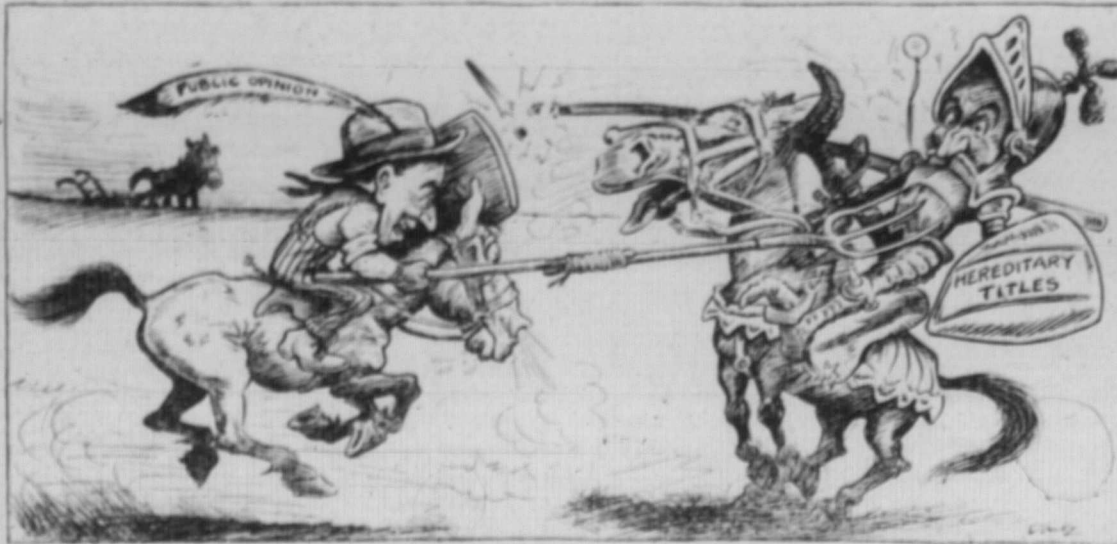
It should be much less difficult for

tain institutions. Their attitude is akin to that of the Falkland islanders during the Boer war. Though England itself was sharply divided in regard to the justice of the war to the Falkland islander it was "my country always right," and the doubter was promptly mobbed. This sentimental reverence, on the fringes of the Empire, for what is of doubtful validity, at the centre, illustrates well the attitude of Canadian advocates of nobility. They forget that nobility is a survival of feudal days when the ordinary man was a dumb ox so far as political life was concerned. They forget that only in England could such an anomaly exist as an oligarchic form for a democratic spirit, and that to transplant such an anomaly to a democracy of the Canadian type would be to court disaster by putting new wine into old bottles. When Sir John Willison says that in Canada those who have titles are just as democratic as those who have not, he is surely making sport of Canadian intelligence or making a new definition of democracy. The new nobility may be great mixers with the ready manner and the muscular jaw of the demagogue; but certainly they are not democratic in spirit, for in spite of all affirmative to the contrary, those who favor the creation of a social or political caste frankly prefer an oligarchy to a democracy and strive with all their power to establish the one and traduce the other. Amongst their friends they define democracy as merely the right to choose one's rulers from the governing classes to which those who have titles of nobility or notoriety belong, and they look forward to the time when their numbers will be sufficient to enable them to proclaim in public what they whisper in private. But true Canadians cannot be convinced either that hereditary titles are democratic or that the first-born of a Canadian who has paid the fees of a gentleman will of necessity inherit either the traditional culture, or the spirit of service which are said to characterize both the noble lords who deliberate regularly on the banks of the Thames and the "backwoodsmen" who are whipped up to vote when their interests are at stake.

The Edict of United States

The more one reflects upon this problem the more one regrets that the statesmen who made our constitution did not settle this matter once and for all, as the American statesmen did when they ruled that "No title of nobility shall be granted by the United States and no person holding an office of profit or trust under them shall, without the consent of Congress, accept of any present, emolument, office or title of any kind whatever, from any king, province or state."

It will be observed in the first place that the United States will grant no titles; secondly, that no prominent official can accept one from a not her sovereign without the consent of congress, a body strongly opposed to such distinctions; and lastly, that the ordinary citizen is free to accept a title for the reason that a foreign potentate is hardly likely to recognize the common herd in this way. In a word, the male citizen of the United States must become a citizen of another country in order to be a candidate for a title, while an American woman in marrying



Public opinion in Canada is determined that no privileged aristocracy shall be imposed on our democracy.

sively to men of wealth, and recently it has been felt that it is much more important for a prospective nobleman to render a service to the party funds than to the nation or Empire as a whole.

A Healthy Sign

This very self-criticism, however, is a healthy sign and shows that the heart of Britain feels that admission to the status of nobleman should be a reward

Canada to deal with an incipient nobility than for Great Britain to abolish a long-established institution, but, unfortunately, many Canadians think it unpatriotic to use discrimination in adopting institutions from the Mother country. They have a fear that to criticize is to be disloyally forgetting that in Great Britain itself there is the utmost diversity of opinion in regard to the character and value of cer-

It is to be expected that a considerable broken up this so be scarce on the the following suggest best method to follow new lands in shape to give maximum yield, this time.

New breaking or give high yields if it prepared. In order, the best condition some factors that yields. It is very is and when turned by well rotted as soon as is plowed. When grain, wheat, oats, as other crops may be abundantly.

There is a proper time and the time is limited weeks, from about 1 week in May until Many new-comers acquainted with the Canada, are under the almost any time will prairie lands. Often sun is extended too and the effect is so unsatisfactory yields following season, but sons.

Why Seasonable

The most satisfactory when the work is done and not later than July. After that time so favorable to the There is a big prairie sod broken that broken in July, early and throughout the sod has every pe quickly while condition When broken late in out and while, on the no great difference server, there is a big yield the following sonal examination or will be seen. When time the under por police will be found, pulverize, the grass posed, while that br will be dry as w may not mean menced at that time the following season in crop growth and sod is plowed late effect is very noticable after. No matter put on the land it w as when the breakin

In the early days prairie in the spring or oats. The crop and the bad effect When broken up sown the growing moisture necessary it simply dried out