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LORDS AND COMMONERS.

Mr. Sidney Low, writing to the Forum says that if as has been said, it is the chief function of the United States to choose a despot every four years, the chief political duty of the British vote is to elect an oligarchy. Proceeding in his article, the writer treats in a most interesting manner of the mode of government in England. "The road" (to a cabinet position) is open to all British subjects, and it should be no more impossible for a rail splitter or a country attorney to become prime minister of England than for a person of the same condition to attain the presidency of the United States," but, he adds, such instances are rare in England.

"Fortunately for itself and for the country, the aristocracy in England has never been a caste. The younger son of a lord is only 'The Hon. Able' and his son is plain 'Mr.' Thus the scion of a noble house merges into the upper stratum of the commonalty. At the same time the wealthy and successful member of the *haute bourgeoisie* is not debarred from entering the ranks of the aristocracy. The process is usually performed in the second or third generation. The son of the rich contractor, or manufacturer is sent to Eton, marries the daughter of one of the territorial families, enters Parliament, and in course of time may receive a peerage himself. The governing class has assimilated him."

Going on to show how the system works he says: "Its strong point is that it provides a class of public men who, taken altogether, are very adequately fitted for their business. Their wealth and standing place them beyond all suspicion of the coarser kind of corruption."

Politics to be well managed must, as a rule, be in the hands, of those who devote a good deal of time and attention to it. The difficulty of a democracy lies in inducing a sufficient number of fairly honest and fairly capable men to undertake public duties without the temptation or the hope of unlimited spoils. The English system at least goes some way toward overcoming this difficulty."

It will be noticed that the aristocracy of England is a thing of itself, entirely different from similar classes in other lands. *Prima facie*, as the lawyers say, there seems little in its favor, and it appears out of place in this stage of the world's history, and out of keeping in a country making such grand strides to material prosperity as England.

But it works all right. And it works right because as Mr. Low points out, there is constantly going on a influx of new blood and a letting out of old blood. The younger sons disappear and become commoners, and the commoners' sons take their places in the aristocracy. It has been said that a very small percentage of the peers of England today have a long ancestry. As far as long descent goes many a tenant farmer can beat the record of a large percentage of titled folk. Two Canadians sit in the House of Lords, Lord Mountstephen and Lord Mountroyal and Strathcona. A few years ago both were plain "mistress." Both were born poor, both earned their own fortunes, and made their own names, and are now enrolled among the nobility. On the other hand there are in the larger cities of Canada, the grandsons of peers, who are working for the day's and week's wage, and accept the change with the utmost good humour.

So goes the wheel of fortune!
"While Bishop Colton, of Calcutta, visited Bombay on a visitation, the occasion was marked by the delivery of a charge in the cathedral which did not err on the side of brevity. Later in the day, the Bishop was taken to the schools, and addressing a sharp-looking lad, he said: "My boy, can you tell me what a bishop's visitation is?" "Please, sir, yes," said the boy. "What is it?" "Please, sir, an affliction sent by God."

Rev. Sandy Seventhly (to invalid deacon) "I'm sorry ye missed my saimron on predestination last Sawbath deacon; I spoke wi' great freedom twa hours and feefy meenutes." Deacon (sympathetically): "Eh mon, but ye must hae been tired." Rev. Seventhly: "Na, na: I was as fresh as a rose; but ye sth hae seen the congregat-ion!"

Japan intends sending to the Paris Exhibition a huge house, hexagonal in shape, and composed entirely of porcelain. It measures several yards in circumference, and its weight will not be less than seventy tons. From the artistic point of view, according to the several models already finished, it will be exquisite. It is estimated that the cost of making it will be about £2,000.

Old Million (with a scowl)—You want my daughter, eh? Now, sir, tell me in what single instance have you ever exhibited any business tact?

Jake Fellows (grinning)—Well, that's easy enough. I picked on you for a father-in-law.

Some Geographical Names.

Chili is a Peruvian word denoting "land of snow."
Quebec is an Algonquin term, signifying "take care of the rock."
Mexico denotes the seat of Mexitti, the "Aztec god of war."
Bolivia perpetuates the name of General Bolivar, "liberator of Peru."
Manitoba traces its origin from Manitou, the Indian application of "the Great Spirit."

Argentina, now the Argentine Republic, owes its name to the silvery reflection of its rivers.

Pernambuco means "the mouth of hell," in allusion to the violent surf always seen at the mouth of its chief river.

Brazil is a Portuguese term derived from braza, "a live coal," relative to the red dyewood with which the country abounds.

Peru received its name from its principal river, the Rio Paro, upon which stands the ancient city of Paruru. The Brazilian term para, however modified, is at all times suggestive of a river.

Yucatan is a compound Indian name meaning, "What do you say?" which was the only answer the Spaniards could obtain from the natives to their inquiries concerning a description of the country.

Kentucky, "at the head of the river"; Mississippi, "the great and long river"; Missouri, "muddy river"; Minnesota, "white water"; Kansas, "smoky water," and Arkansas, the same, with the addition of the French prefix arc, a bow.

The name California, derived from the two Spanish words *caliente fornalli*—i. e., "hot furnace"—was given by Cortes in the year of 1535 to the peninsula now known as Lower California, of which he was the discoverer, on account of its hot climate.

MARRIAGEABLE AGES.

What the Law lays Down in Different Countries.

London Tit-Bits: "The 'marriageable' age varies greatly. In Austria a 'man' and 'woman' of fourteen are supposed to be capable of conducting a home of their own. In Germany the man must be at least eighteen years of age. In France and Belgium the man must be sixteen and the woman fifteen. In Spain the intended husband must have passed his fourteenth year and the woman her twelfth. The law in Hungary for Roman Catholics is that the man must be fourteen years old and the woman twelve; for Protestants the man must be eighteen and the woman fifteen.

In Greece the man must have seen at least fourteen summers and the woman twelve. In Russia and Saxony they are more sensible and a youth must refrain from matrimony till he can count fourteen years, and a woman until she can count sixteen. In Switzerland men from the age of fourteen and women from the age of twelve are allowed to marry. The Turkish law provides that any youth and maid who can walk properly and can understand the necessary religious service are allowed to be united for life.

Bilkins (of Kansas City): "Come, have a drink with me old man. This is my lucky day." Filkins: "What's up?" Bilkins: "You know that 160 acres I own out in Western Kansas?" Filkins: "Yes. Bilkins: "Well a granger came into my office today and wanted to trade a horse and wagon for 80 acres of it. In making out the papers I found the fool couldn't read or write so"—gleefully—I shoved the whole 160 on to him.

"What was that Dawson story you told the other day, Hicks?"
"Why, I pleased Mrs. Dawson very much by asking her if she was herself or her daughter. Couldn't tell 'em apart."
"Well, it's strange, but I worked the same scheme on the daughter, and she didn't like it a bit."

Englishman (producing old coin): "My ancestor was made a lord by the king whose picture you see on this shilling." Yankee (doing same): "What a coincidence. My ancestor was made an angel by the Indian whose picture you see on this cent."

Mexican — "Big earthquake to-day." American Tourist: "Was there one? I didn't notice it." Mexican: "Not you see people rush out from the churches?" American: "Oh, yes, I saw that; but I thought maybe the contribution box was going round."

An Irishman got out of a train at a railway station for refreshment, but unfortunately the bell rang and the train went off before he had finished his drink. Running along the platform after the train he shouted: "Hould on there; hould on! You've got a passenger aboard that's left behind!"

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The Heavenly Meeting.

By JAMES BUCKHAM.

Tell, oh! tell me, Book of visions, bright with promise, sweet with prayer, Shall I know the angel faces that are waiting, over there?

Shall I find my children, children? Will my gentle mother lay Her dear hand upon my forehead in the old, earth-loving way?

Father, keep them as I loved them?—or, if changed to other guise, May the Heavenly transformation dawn but slowly on mine eyes.

Let me take them to my bosom, once, upon that shining shore, As I saw them when we parted, in the love-lit days of yore.

No chance to get old.—Mrs. Wicks: "Why is old china so valuable?" Mrs. Ricks: "On account of its rarity." Mrs. Wicks: "But I don't see why it should be so very rare." Mrs. Ricks: "Well, with my experience of servants, I must confess that a piece of china that lasts a month is a wonder to me."

"What is an abstract noun, Nellie?" asked the teacher of a bright little girl "Don't know," was the answer. "You don't know!" exclaimed the teacher. "Well, it's the name of something you think of, but can't touch. Now, can you give me an example?" "A red-hot poker," was the prompt reply.

A friend of ours who is in the habit of introducing his 'expressions of opinion by observing that "most sensible people think so and so," was asked the other day how he found out what "most sensible people" thought. His answer was natural enough: "Most sensible people think as I do." All he has to do is to find out what he thinks.

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