devising new forms.@@1 It was not until the 17th century that they became fixed, under the influence mainly of the newly organized international diplomatic service (see Diplomacy). But meanwhile they had developed from the simplicity of the early feudal age@@2 into a Byzantine pomposity, the exuberance of which bored even the ceremonious court of Spain into a free use of the pruning knife.@@3 Honorary styles are, for the rest, now mere stereotyped formulae; the words that compose them have become—to use Emerson’s phrase— “ polarized ” and deprived of meaning. Not otherwise could a German journalist, late in the 19th century, have recorded, without exciting surprise, that “ to-day their All-highest majesties went to church to give thanks to the Highest.”@@4 The same is more or less true of all titles. They are traditional, and are mainly valued for this reason. An imaginative person might devise a dozen styles in themselves better fitted to express the peculiar eminency of a successful money-lender or a wealthy brewer than the feudal title of baron, or than that of knight to indicate the qualities of a Radical apostle of the gospel of “ peace at any price.” But the instinct in these matters is to put new wine into old bottles; and, on the whole, the bottles bear the strain. The process is, indeed, very old. William Harrison, in his inimitable style, has left a description of it in the 16th century (see Gentleman), and it was older far than his day. In all ages the new nobility has been looked down upon by the old; but the ancient titles have always in the end adapted themselves to their new users. Long before the *bourgeois* age was dreamed of, dukes as such had ceased to “ lead ” *(ducere),* marquesses to guard the “ marches,” *Ritters* to “ ride,” and no one marked the incongruity of their styles. The process is but continued if, for instance, in the 20th century the title of baron often suggests, not the feudal power of the sword, but the international power of the purse.

Titles have therefore in themselves a world of historical significance. In some the significance is obvious, the history comparatively recent. In others the significance is veiled under obscure etymologies, which carry us back to the very beginnings of social life. We find in these words, too, most singular con­trasts of fortune. Caesar, a nickname *(caesaries)* given to some long-haired Roman, grows into a surname which the founder of the empire chanced to bear, and so remains to this day the title of German kaisers and Slavonic tsars, of the king of England as Kaisar-i-Hind and of the sultan of Turkey as Kaisar-i-Rum. The first of the German Caesars bore the name of Karl,@@5 which in itself means no more than “ man ” and in English speech has sunk to the base meaning of “ churl ” (see Charles) ; for the barbarians beyond the eastern borders of his empire, the Slavs and Magyars who felt the weight of his arm, his name became identified with his office, and remains to this day in the sense of “ king ” (Mag. *Király,* Slav. *Kral,* Russ. *Korol).@@6* On the other hand, we have the contrary process. The proud title of “ count of the stable,” once borne by the highest official of the Byzantine court, is now associated in the public mind

mainly with humble police officials, in the United States with the humblest of all, the village constable only (see Constable). Less impressive perhaps is the fate of the title “ valet,” which, once that of a gentleman, has sunk to be that of a “ gentleman’s gentleman ” (see Valet). The same word, too, develops differently in different languages. The German *Knecht* remains a servant; in England the *cniht* has developed into the knight, just as the *serviens* (servant) survives in the very various modern uses of the title serjeant *(q.v.).* In one exalted case at least we even have a title based on a mistaken etymological deduction. The title “ Augustus,” *t.e.* sublime or sacred, used originally of persons or places consecrated by the auguries, is derived ulti­mately, in a passive sense, from *augere,* to increase. This led to the rendering of the Latin title “ semper Augustus,” borne by the Holy Roman emperors until 1806, in German as “ at all times augmenter of the empire ” *(zu allen Zeiten Mehrer des Reichs),* a style as ill-grounded in etymology as it was lamentably untrue in fact.@@7

The fortunes of individual titles are outlined in the separate articles devoted to them. Here it only remains to discuss them generally from the point of view of their classification according to origin and general character. Of the styles that are mere attributes—like serene, honourable, reverend—enough has been said; they are but stereotyped courtesies. Most titles proper, on the other hand, have in their origins a deeper significance. The title king, for instance, recalls a remote time when it was borne by right of kinship, as head of a tribe (see King). Other titles recall that forgotten stage of society in which it was the rule for age to command and youth to obey: such as the French *seigneur, sieur, sire, monsieur, monseigneur;* the Italian *signor, monsignore;* the Spanish *señor,* and the English “ sir,” all derived from *senior, “* older ” (sec Monsieur and Sir), itself a Latin translation of a type of title which in the Teutonic lan­guages appears to survive only in the English alderman *(q.v.). Seigneur, sire* and the rest developed, of course, into the equiva­lents, not of *senior,* but of *dominus* (lord). But the idea of the title originally must have been the same as that of “ elder,” like the Arab *sheikh (q.v.)* or the *starostas* and *slarshinas* of the Russian village communities; the *seniores,* in early feudal times, were the full grown fighting men as opposed to the *pueri* (boys), the un­fledged squires and valets. Other titles are derived from the idea of command or rule: such are those of emperor *(q.v.);* the Latin *rex (regere,* to rule, guide)—whence the French *roi,* Italian *rè* and the English attributive style “ royal ”—and from the same common Indo- European root the Indian titles of *raja* and *maharaja;* the title of duke *(q.v.);* the Latin *dominus, domina* (originally, a master or mistress in the house, *domus),* whence the modern *dame, madame, mademoiselle, don* and *dom;* the German *Herr* (cf. *herrschen,* to rule); or, to take an Oriental instance, that of *sultan* (Arabic *salat,* to rule). Some titles again are derived from mere ideas of precedence, like that of “prince” *(q.v.),* which may be described as the generic sovereign title; the Spanish title of “grandee ” (*q.v.*); or that of “master” *(q.v.),* which as a title of honour survives in Scotland. Very rare are the titles of honour that have their origin in the idea of gentle birth, which indeed, in earlier times, was predicated of all wearers of titles in Europe. The only modern equivalent of the Anglo-Saxon *ætheling (q.v.)* in Europe would appear to be the Austrian title of *Edler,* which means, strictly speaking, no more than “ noble,” though it implies a rank higher than that of the untitled *Adeliger.* The English title “earl” *(q.v.)* has a similar origin, but passed through the stage of an official style as the equivalent of “ count.” The word “ gentleman ” *(q.v.)* is not a title, any more than the French *genlilhomme;* it is, in so far as it is used in any definite sense at all, an attribute, like the German *hochwolgeboren* or the Russian *barin—*the equivalent of the Latin *generosus,* “ well-born.” In the Mahommedan East its equivalent, in the sense of well-born, is the Arabic title *sherīf,*

@@@1 The papal chancery, however, seems early to have established definite rules. Those sovereigns who had special titles, bestowed or recognized by the pope, such as “ Most Catholic King ” (Spain) or “ Most Christian King ” (France), were so addressed. The rest were “Illustrious” *(illustres).*

@@@2 The only title of mere honour would, *e.g.* in the 12th century, seem to have been *dominus (Sire, Lord),* which in the Anglo-Norman poem of *Guillaume le Maréschal* is applied to any one of birth, from the king’s son of France down to the humblest noble (see Sir).

@@@3 By the *Pragmatico de los titulos y cortesias* of the 8th of October 1636 King Philip III. decreed that he was to be addressed in letters only as *Señor,* while at the end was to appear no more than “ God guard the Catholic person of your Majesty.” (Selden p. 103.)

@@@4 Die Allerhöchsten Herrschaften sind heute in die Kirche gegangen dem Höchsten ihren Dank u.s.w. The sentence is fixed in the writer’s memory, but the exact reference is forgotten.

@@@5 Known traditionally as Charlemagne *(Carolus Magnus,* Karl the Great), the unique instance of a posthumous title of honour being absorbed into a name. Modern English historians have tended to dissolve this immemorial union in the interest of historic accuracy. But “ Charles ” is only a degree less conventional than Charlemagne.

@@@8 A parallel case, but more obscure, of a proper name developing into a title is that of the curious title of "Dauphin,” ultimately borne only by the heir-apparent to the French throne (see Dauphin).

@@@7 So Rigord, the monk of St Denis, says in his *Gesla* of Philip Augustus, king of France, that he was so styled after the Caesars, who bore the name of Augustus because they augmented the empire. *Unde iste merito dictus est Augustus ab aucta republica.*