

Out of the Depths

By Robert W. Chambers
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DUST and wind had subsided; there seemed to be a hint of rain in the starless west.

Because the August evening had become oppressive, the club windows stood wide open as though gaping for the outer air. Rugs and curtains had been removed; an incandescent light or two accentuated the emptiness of the rooms; here and there shadowy servants prowled, gilt buttons sparkling through the obscurity, their footpats on the bare floor intensifying the heavy quiet.

Into this week's-end void wandered young Shannon, drifting aimlessly from library to corridor, finally entering the long room where the portraits of dead governors smirked through the windows at the deserted avenue.

As his steps echoed on the rugless floor, a shadowy something detached itself from the depths of a padded armchair by the corner window, and a voice he recognized greeted him by name.

"You here, Harrod?" he exclaimed. "Thought you were at Bar Harbor."

"I was. I had business in town."

"Do you stay here long?"

"Not long," said Harrod slowly.

Shannon dropped into a chair with a yawn which ended in a groan.

"Of all God-forsaken places," he began, "a New York club in August."

Harrod touched an electric button, but no servant answered the call.

Presently Shannon, sprawling in his chair, jabbed the button with the ferrule of his walking stick, and a servant took the order, repeating as though he had not understood: "Did you say two, sir?"

"With olives dry," nodded Shannon irritably.

They sat there in silence until the tinkle of ice aroused them, and—"Double luck to you," muttered Shannon; then, with a scarcely audible sigh, "Bring two more and bring a dinner card." And turning to the older man, "You're dining, Harrod?"

"If you like."

A servant came and turned on an electric jet; Shannon scanned the card under the pale radiance, scribbled on the pad, and handed it to the servant.

"Did you put down my name?" asked Harrod curiously.

"No, you'll dine with me—if you don't mind."

"I don't mind—for this last time."

"Going away again?"

"Yes."

Shannon signed the blank and glanced up at his friend. "Are you well?" he asked abruptly.

Harrod, lying deep in his leather chair, nodded.

"Oh, you're rather white around the gills. We'll have another."

"I thought you had cut that out, Shannon."

"What?"

"To stop you."

Shannon regarded him in sullen amazement. A servant announcing dinner brought them to their feet; together they walked out into the empty dining room and seated themselves by an open window.

Presently Shannon looked up with an impatient laugh. "For heaven's sake let's be cheerful, Harrod. If you knew how the infernal town had got on my nerves."

"That's what I came back for, too," said Harrod with his strange, wide smile. "I knew the world was fighting you to the ropes."

"It is; here I stay on, day after day, on the faint chance of something doing." He shrugged his shoulders. "Business is worse than dead; I can't hold on much longer. You're right; the world has hammered me to the ropes, and it will be down and out for me unless—"

"Unless you can borrow on your own terms?"

"Yes, but I can't."

"You are mistaken."

"Mistaken? Who will—"

"I will."

"You? Why, man, do you know how much I need? Do you know how long I shall need it? Do you know what the chances are of my making good? You! Why, Harrod, I'd swamp you! You can't afford—"

"I can afford anything—now."

Shannon stared. "You have struck something?"

"Something that puts me beyond want." He fumbled in his breast pocket, drew out a portfolio, and from the flat leather case he produced a numbered check bearing his signature, but not filled out.

"Tell them to bring pen and ink," he said.

Shannon, perplexed, signed to a waiter. When the ink was brought Harrod motioned Shannon to take the pen.

"Before I want to Bar Harbor," he said, "I had a certain sum—"

He hesitated, mentioned the sum in a low voice and asked Shannon to fill in the check for that amount.

"Now blot it, pocket it, and use it," he added listlessly, looking out into the lamp-lighted street.

Shannon, whiter than his friend, stared at the bit of perforated yellow paper.

"I can't take it," he stammered—"my security is rotten, I tell you—"

"I want no security; I—I am beyond want," said Harrod. "Take it; I came back here for this—partly for this."

"Come back here to—to help me!"

"To help you, Shannon. I had been a lonely man in life; I think you never realized how much your friendship has been to me. I had nobody—no intimacies. You never understood— you with all your friends—that I cared more for our casual companionship than for anything in the world."

Shannon bent his head. "I did not know it," he said.

Harrod raised his eyes and looked up at the starless sky; Shannon ate in silence; into his young face, already marred by dissipation, a strange light had come. And little by little order began to emerge from his whirling senses; he saw across an abyss a bridge glittering, and beyond that, beckoning to him through a white glory, all that his heart desired.

"I was at the ropes," he muttered; "how could you know it, Harrod? I—I never whined—"

"I know more than I did—yesterday," said Harrod, resting his pale face on one thin hand.

Shannon, nerves on edge, all a quiver, the blood racing through every vein, began to speak excitedly: "It's like a dream—one of the blessed sort—Harrod! Harrod! the dreams I've had this last year! And I try—I try to understand what has happened—what you have done for me. I can't—I'm shaking all over, and I suppose I'm sitting here eating and drinking, but—"

He touched his glass blindly; it tipped and crashed to the floor, the breaking froth of the wine hissing on the cloth.

"Harrod! Harrod! What sort of a man am I to deserve this of you? What can I do—"

"Keep your nerve—for one thing."

"I will—you mean that?" touching the stem of the new glass, which the waiter had brought and was filling. He struck the glass till it rang out a clear, thrilling, crystalline note, then struck it more sharply. It splintered with a soft splashing crash. "Is that all?" he laughed.

"No, not all."

"What more will you let me do?"

"One thing more. Tell them to serve coffee below."

So they passed out of the dining room, through the deserted corridors, and descended the stairway to the lounge room. It was unlighted and empty; Shannon stepped back and the elder man passed him and took the corner chair by the window—the same seat where Shannon had first seen him sitting ten years before, and where he always looked to find him after the ending of a business day. And continuing his thoughts the younger man spoke aloud impulsively: "I remember perfectly well how we met. Do you? You had just come back to town from Bar Harbor, and I saw you stroll in and seat yourself in that corner, and because I was sitting next you, you asked if you might include me in your order—do you remember?"

"Yes, I remember."

"And I told you I was a new member here, and you pointed out the portraits of all those dead governors of the club, and told me what good fellows they had been. I found out later that you yourself were a governor of the club."

"Yes—I was."

Harrod's shadowy face swerved toward the window, his eyes resting on the familiar avenue, empty now save for the policeman opposite, and the ragged children of the poor. In August the high tide from the slums washes Fifth avenue, stranding a gasping sotsam at the thresholds of the absent.

"And I remember, too, what you told me," continued Shannon.

"What?" said Harrod, turning noiselessly to confront his friend.

"About that child. Do you remember? That beautiful child you saw? Don't you remember that you told me how she used it in that corner, and because I was sitting next you, you asked if you might include me in your order—do you remember?"

"Yes," said Harrod. "That, too, is why I came back here to tell you the rest. For the evil days have come

to her, Shannon, and the years draw nigh. Listen to me."

There was a silence; Shannon, mute and perplexed, set his coffee on the window-sill and leaned back, flicking the ashes from his cigar; Harrod passed his hands slowly over his hollow temples: "Her parents are dead; she is not yet twenty; she is not equipped to support herself in life; and—she is beautiful. What chance has she, Shannon?"

The other was silent.

"What chance?" repeated Harrod. "And, when I tell you that she is unsuspecting, and that she reasons only with her heart, answer me; what chance has she with a man? For you know men, and so do I, Shannon, so do I."

"Who is she, Harrod?"

"The victim of divorced parents—awarded to her mother. Let her parents answer; they are answering now, Shannon. But their plea is no concern of yours. What concerns you is the living. The child, grown to womanhood, is here, advertising for employment—here in New York, asking for a chance. What chance has she?"

"When did you learn this?" asked Shannon soberly.

"I learned it—tonight—everything concerning her—tonight—an hour before I—I met you. That is why I returned. Shannon, listen to me attentively; listen to every word I say. Do you remember a passing fancy you had this spring for a blue-eyed girl you met every morning on your way downtown? Do you remember that, as the

face as they halted. "Answer me, Shannon, where are we going?"

"To—her. You know it! Harrod! Harrod! How did you know? I—I did not know, myself, until an hour before I met you—I had not seen her in weeks—I had not dared to—for all trust in self was dead. Today, downtown, I faced the crash and saw across tomorrow the end of all. Then, in my journey hellward tonight, just at dusk, we passed each other, and before I understood what I had done we were side by side. And almost instantly—I don't know how—she seemed to sense the rub before us both—for mine was heavy on my soul, Harrod, as I stood, measuring damnation with smiling eyes—at the brink of it, there. And she knew I was adrift at last."

He looked up at the house before him. "I said I would come. She neither assented nor denied me, nor asked a question. But in her eyes, Harrod, I saw what one sees in the eyes of children, and it stunned me . . . What shall I do?"

"Go to her and look again," said Harrod. "That is what I have come back to ask of you, Goodby."

He turned, his shadowy face drooping, and Shannon followed to the avenue. There, in the white outbreak of electric lamps, he saw Harrod again as he had always known him, a hint of a smile in his worn eyes, the well-shaped mouth edged with laughter, and he was saying, "It's all in a lifetime, Shannon—and more than you suspect—much more. You have not told me her name yet?"

"I do not know it."

friend with whom, unknowing, I have this night wrestled face to face. His name is Harrod."

"My name!" She stood up straight and pale, within the circle of his arms; he rose, too, speechless, uncertain—then faced her, white and appalled.

She said: "He—he followed us to Bar Harbor. I was a child, I remember. I hid from my governess, and talked with him on the rocks. Then we went away. I—I lost my father." Staring at her, his stiffening lips formed a word, but no sound came.

"Bring him to me!" she whispered. "How can he know I am here and stay away? Does he think I have forgotten? Does he think shame of me? Bring him to me!"

She caught his hands in hers and kissed them passionately; she framed his face in her small hands of a child and looked deep, deep into his eyes: "Oh, the happiness you have brought! I love you! You with whom I am to enter paradise! Now bring him to me!"

Shaking, ailed, stunned in a whirl of happiness and doubt, he crept down the black stairway, feeling his way. The doors swung noiselessly; he was almost running when he turned into the avenue. The trail of white lights starred his path; the solitary street echoed his haste, and now he sprang into the wide doorway of the club, and as he passed, the desk clerk leaned forward, handing him a telegram. He took it, halted, breathing heavily, and asked for his friend.

"Mr. Harrod?" repeated the clerk. "Mr. Harrod has not been here in a month, sir."

"What? I dined with Mr. Harrod here at 8 o'clock!" he laughed.

"Sir—I beg your pardon, sir, but you dined here alone—tonight—"

"Send for the steward!" broke in Shannon impatiently, slapping his open palm with the yellow envelope. The steward came, followed by the butler, and to a quick question from the desk clerk, replied: "Mr. Harrod has not been in the club for six weeks."

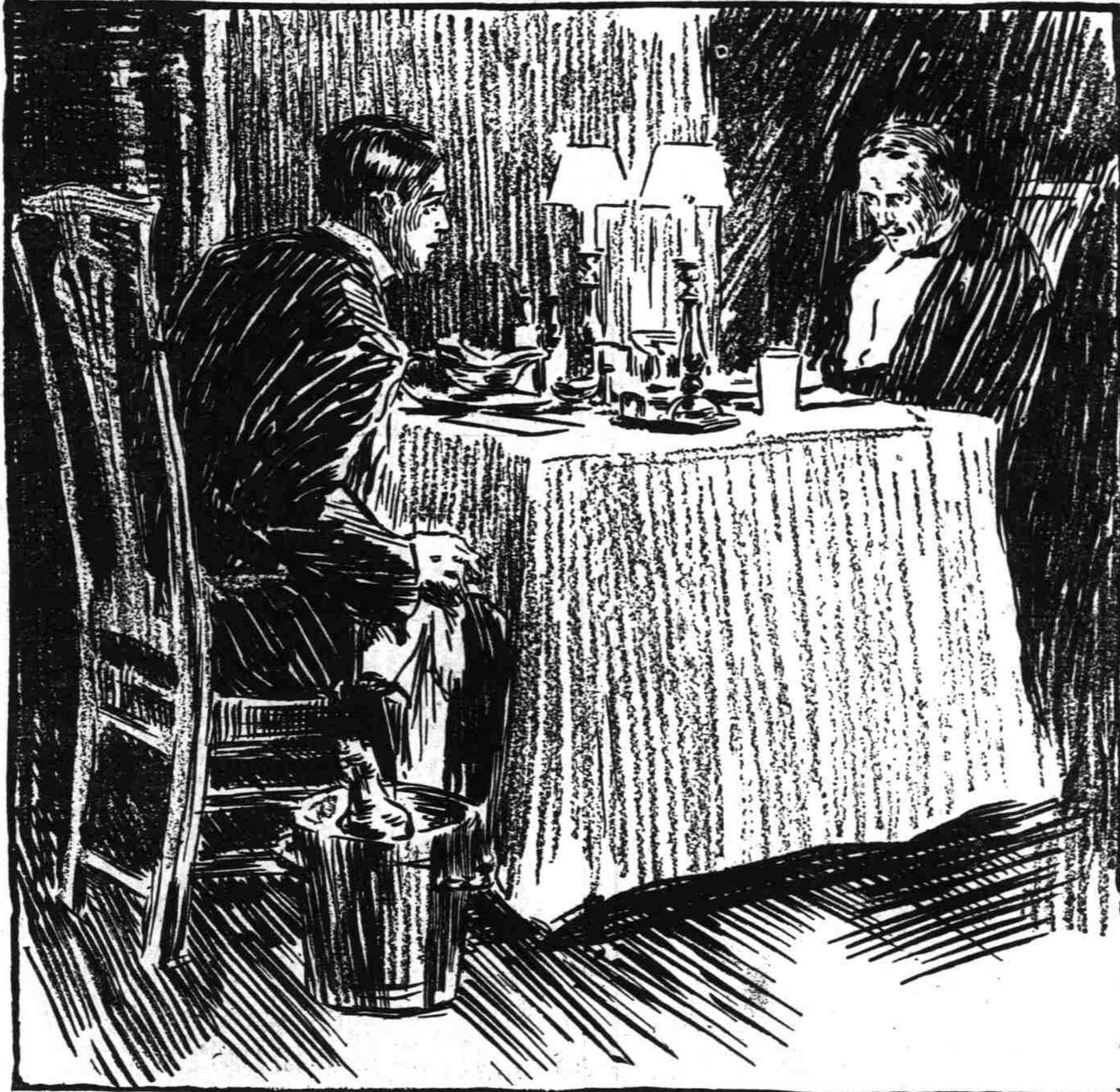
"But I dined with Mr. Harrod at 8! Wilkins, did you not serve us?"

"I served you, sir; you dined alone—"

The butler hesitated, coughed discreetly; and the steward added, "You ordered for two, sir—"

Something in the steward's troubled face silenced Shannon; the butler ventured: "Beg pardon, sir, but we—the waiters thought you might be—ill, seeing how you talked to yourself and called for ink to write upon the cloth and broke twice glasses, he was a ghastly visage from one to another. Then his dazed gaze centered upon the telegram crushed in his hand, and shaking from head to foot, he smoothed it out and opened the envelope.

But it was purely a matter of business; he was requested to come to Bar Harbor and receive a check, drawn to his order, and perhaps aid to identify the body of a drowned man in the morgue.



"Her hands fell from her face and their eyes met"

"Cut what out?"

"Drinking."

"Well, I haven't," said Shannon sulkily, lifting his glass and throwing one knee over the other.

"The last time I saw you, you said you would cut it," observed Harrod.

"Well, what of it?"

"But you haven't!"

"No, my friend."

"Can't you stop?"

"I could—now. Tomorrow—I don't know; but I know well enough I couldn't day after tomorrow. And day after tomorrow I shall not care."

A short silence and Harrod said: "That's why I came back here."

"I can't take it," he stammered—"my security is rotten, I tell you—"

days went on, little by little she came to return your glance—then your smile?—then, at last, your greeting? And do you remember, once, that you told me about it in a moment of depression—told me that you were close to infatuation, that you believed her to be everything sweet and innocent, that you dared not drift any further, knowing the chances and knowing the end—bitter unhappiness either way whether in guilt or innocence—"

"I remember," said Shannon hoarsely. "But that is not—cannot be—"

"That is the girl."

"Not the child you told me of—"

"Yes."

"How—when did you know—"

"Tonight. I know more than that, Shannon. You will learn it later. Now ask me again, what it is that you may do."

"I ask it," said Shannon under his breath. "What am I to do?"

For a long while Harrod sat silent, staring out of the dark window; then, "It is time for us to go."

"You wish to go out?"

"Yes; we will walk together for a little while—as we did in the old days, Shannon—only a little while, for I must be going back."

"Where are you going, Harrod?"

But the elder man had already risen and moved toward the door; and Shannon picked up his hat and followed him out across the dusky lamp-lighted street.

Into the avenue they passed under the white, unsteady radiance of arc lights which dropped like huge lilies from stalks of bronze; here and there the front of some hotel lifted, like a cliff, its window-pierced facade pulsating with yellow light, or a white marble mass, cold and burned out, spread a sea of shadow over the glimmering asphalt. At times the lighted lamps of cabs flashed in their faces; at times figures passed like specters; but into the street where they were now turning were neither lamps nor people nor sound, nor any light, save, far in the obscure vista, a dull hint of lightning edging the west.

Twice Shannon had stopped, peering at Harrod, who neither halted nor slackened his steady, noiseless pace; and the younger man, hesitating, moved on again, quickening his steps to his friend's side.

"Where are you going?"

"Do you not know?"

The color died out of Shannon's face; he spoke again, forming his words slowly with dry lips: "Harrod, why—why do you come into this street—tonight? What do you know? How do you know? I tell you I—I cannot endure this—this tension—"

"She is enduring it."

"Good God!"

"Yes, God is good," said Harrod, turning his haggard

The Queer Titles of Kings

WHEN Theodore Roosevelt and the King of Spain recently met, a striking contrast was afforded those who happened to think of the titles which the two men bore. It was a contrast arising from the opposition of democracy and monarchy and dependent upon the great claims which royalty levels upon a grandeur-loving people. The American, who had been the chief executive of a land beside which Spain was a fraction, was known as plain "Colonel." Perhaps some of the more dignified nobles presented him as the "ex-president of the United States," but usually he went by the title of Colonel. King Alfonso, on the other hand, is the proud possessor of forty-two independent and separate titles. His list of suffixes would form the major part of almost any letter which he might write. Whatever his predecessors might have been, whatever claims they made in their dignities, he has preserved as trailers to his individual name of Alfonso.

Quite amusing in his claim to territories which have long since passed from under the Spanish domination. For instance, he is, along toward the last of his outlay of pretenses, "King of the East Indies," "King of the West Indies," "King of Gibraltar," "King of India" and, with a bombast and sweeping magnificence, "King of Oceania." Such pretentiousness lends an almost operabouffe flavor to the resonant terms such as "King of Castile," "King of Arragon," "King of Navarre" and "King of Galicia."

To the Spanish don this pomp and show appeals with worship. Nor is it peculiar to the Romance nations, this worship of grandeur. The emperor of Austria boasts sixty-one extra titles, and the sultan of Turkey eighty-two.

The sultan has by far the most laughable list of names. He starts out by being high prince and lord of lords. Then he specifies in great detail practically all of the states and cities and even districts of the Orient, and explaining after each of the various names that he is ruler of "all the forts, citadels, purlieus and neighborhood thereof." Nothing is presumed to belong to any one else. A land may have never belonged to Turkey, except in some transient raid or invasion, but that matters not to the sultan; he adds it to his string, calm and indifferent to the progress of other nations. He loves to proclaim his religious prominence. "Head of the Faithful," "Supreme Lord of all the followers of the Prophet," "Direct and only Lieutenant on Earth of Mahomet" are some of his most extravagant phrases. His more nearly valid title of "King of Jerusalem" is also claimed by his more civilized brother rulers. The emperor of Austria, the pope and the kings of Spain and Portugal all announce in their titles that they have under their thumbs the Holy Land.

The Kaiser with his love of publicity has seventy-two. Most of the states of Germany are included in the list of the Prussian king, and have been ever since the union of the states.

King George of England has a very modest outlay in comparison. It merely reads: "George V, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India. Some of the lesser nobles in Britain boast of long live the president of Argyle leading with twenty-seven titles.

The people who have been reared under the shadow of divine-right worship have become so used to the high-sounding phrases and lofty titles that they would regard any lopping off of titles as a sacrilege. They do not, however, as some free Americans think, really believe that their rulers are rightfully lords over all they claim. It is merely their way of giving dignity and royalty to their kings, and they delight to mouth the oratorical phrases and delight themselves with the remembrances that once they possessed the control of countries and sections long since gone into the power of younger nations.

The people of the United States are not so used to the needs of the moment. Ex-President Taft is a college professor, and is not hailed with "long live the president of the United States" every time he ventures forth into public view. Yet such a title would be far more valid than President Roosevelt's claim to being "King of Jerusalem."

Theodore Roosevelt will be plain "Colonel" while Alfonso will be "King of India."