



“THE SCIENCE OF FOOLS.”

**H**ERALDRY, or, as it has been disparagingly called, “The Science of Fools with Long Memories,” seems in this age of progress to be coming to the front again. It is certainly a subject for congratulation that a science which is so interwoven with the history of the civilised world should be thus revived.

Although the system of heraldry, as it is in the present day, was not arranged until the middle of the twelfth century, still we find traces of it as far back as history can tell—not of the heraldic system of to-day, but of something which might almost be called the primeval heraldry.

In the early times when surnames were unknown, it became necessary to give to each family an ensign or symbol by which they could be distinguished, and it is these ensigns or symbols which may be regarded as the first steps towards heraldry.

The early poets afford numerous instances of these symbolic ornaments and devices. Æschylus gives many examples, but one will suffice:—

“On his proud shield pourtray’d: ‘a naked man,  
Waves in his hand a blazing torch;’ beneath,  
In golden letters—‘I will fire the city.’”

Virgil says of Aventinus that—

“ Proud of his steeds, he smokes along the field ;  
His father's hydra fills his ample shield.”

It is supposed by some that the standards which the German princes had carried before them into battle during the centuries immediately preceding the Conquest first gave rise to heraldry, and that it was afterwards advanced by Henry L'Oiseleur (the Fowler), A.D. 920, who commanded all combatants (in tournaments) to be distinguished by a kind of mantle, or livery, made of narrow stripes of coloured cloth of contrasted colours, from which may have originated the pale, the bend, the bar, &c. The arrangement of the tinctures and charges into a system by the French may be regarded as the third and greatest stage in heraldry. Who it was that arranged and devised this simple and yet most perfect system is a matter of uncertainty. The honour is generally awarded to France, and that is all that is positively known ; but as it was arranged in those early days, so it has continued through war and peace, and has finally come down to us in the same simplicity in which it was originated. It was not until the reign of Richard I. that this science assumed a more fixed character.

Speed and other writers have furnished long lists of arms from the Anglo-Saxon times down to the Norman Conquest. Other early writers go still further back—indeed, until the fall of Lucifer, providing him and the hosts of heaven with appropriate bearings ; and it was undoubtedly through this, their mistaken zeal, that heraldry in after-days suffered much ridicule. These enthusiastic writers invented a complete roll of Biblical arms, mostly formed upon the symbols borne by our ancient fathers.

To Adam they gave two shields : the first borne in the Garden of Eden, and the other after his fall ; the former Morgan describes as gules (red), with Eve's arms argent (silver), borne as an escutcheon of pretence (she being an heiress !), the latter paly-tranche (divided every way and tintured every colour).

Sir John Ferne, a clever though too enthusiastic a writer, also seriously proposed “the coats of skins” worn by Adam and Eve after their expulsion from Eden to have been the origin of the furs used in heraldry.

The lists of antediluvian arms are too long to be inserted here, therefore only the most striking are mentioned. Morgan gives the arms of the twelve tribes in the following uncouth lines :—

“ Judah's bare gules, a lion couchant or ;  
Zebulon's black ships like to a man of war ;  
Issachar's asse between two burthens girt ;  
As Dan's sly snake lies in a field of vert ;  
Asher with azure a cup of gold sustains ;  
And Naphtali's hind trips o'er the flowery plains ;  
Ephraim's strong ox lyes with the couchant hart ;  
Manasseh's tree its branches doth impart ;  
Benjamin's wolfe in the field gules resides ;  
Reuben's field argent and bleu bars wav'd glides ;  
Simeon doth beare his sword ; and in that manner  
Gad, having pitched his tent, sets up his banner.”

Not content with this fabrication of Biblical arms, the eighteenth-century writers compiled a roll of arms

for the ancient heroes ; Master Gerard Leigh ascribes to the great Alexander, “a shield gules, a golden lyon sitting in a chayer, and holding a battaye-axe of silver.”

The reigns of Edward III. and Richard II. have been called the “palmy days of heraldry,” for under the favour of these monarchs the science made great advances. Then every hall and chancel was coloured with heraldic forms and symbols, and every one was proud to bear aloft the colours of his ancestors. In fact, so great became this enthusiasm for arms, that at the commencement of the fifteenth century many assumed the bearings of ancient families to which they had no right whatever, and this practice became so common that in 1419 a royal command was given to the sheriff of every county “to summon all bearing arms to prove their right to them.”

The nobles during the reign of Richard II. first claimed the right to confer arms upon such of their followers as they thought worthy ; until this time arms were strictly confined to persons of a military profession. Arms were sometimes embroidered upon the garments, whence doubtless originated the term “coat of arms.” It is with regard to this custom, Nisbet tells us, that in Spain, in former years, it was the fashion for single women to divide their shield per pale, placing their paternal arms on the left side, leaving the right blank for those of the husband they hoped to get ; these were called arms of expectation.

During the thirteenth century we find heraldry had become a science of high repute. Our ancestors used to bear any number of quarterings. There is a shield still in existence at Fawsley Hall, co. Northampton, which contains 334 quarterings.

Richard III. did much to promote heraldry by forming the Heralds into a corporate body, which has ever since been known as the Heralds' College. In 1483 Richard III. granted by Letters Patent the “right fair and stately house” called “Pulteney's Inn” to be their permanent official residence. This “fair and stately house” was situated in Cold Harbour, London, but the Heralds were driven thence by Henry IV., and took refuge at Bounceval, near Charing Cross.

Queen Mary, by a charter dated 1554, granted Derby House for the safe depositing of their rolls and records. This college was destroyed by the great fire in 1666 ; fortunately, the books and records were all saved. The college was re-built in 1683, chiefly at the cost of the Heralds themselves, as it now stands.

The management of the heraldic affairs of the kingdom was under two officers, who, to facilitate the work, divided the kingdom into two parts—namely, north and south of the Trent. These officers, in the reign of Edward III., were called Norroy King-of-Arms and Surroy King-of-Arms. Surroy King-of-Arms was, however, changed into Clarenceux King-of-Arms by Henry V., out of respect to his brother Clarence, whose herald the first King of that name had been.

*En passant*, an error of the day may be noticed, namely, the appellation of King-at-Arms instead of King-of-Arms. It would be difficult to account for this strange mistake, which has now become so

common. Over Norroy and Clarenceux there was Garter King-of-Arms, as principal of the establishment. Next in order to Norroy and Clarenceux came the Heralds and the four Pursuivants of Arms, or Students. These could not be admitted to any higher office until after several years of probationary study and practice. These four degrees still exist.

The officers of the college are in the present day much the same as of old; there are, first, the Earl Marshal and Hereditary Marshal of England; secondly, the Kings-of-Arms—Garter, Norroy, and Clarenceux; thirdly, the six heralds—Somerset; Chester, Genealogist and Blanc-Courser, Herald of the Order of the Bath; Richmond, Registrar of College Arms; Windsor; Lancaster, Gentleman Usher of the Red Rod and Brunswick Herald, Herald of the Order of the Bath; and York, Secretary to the Earl Marshal; fourthly, the four Pursuivants—Blue-Mantle, Rouge Dragon, Rouge-Croix, and Portcullis.

Garter exercised a concurrent jurisdiction with the other Kings-of-Arms in granting armorial ensigns, but he alone had the privilege or right to order all the funerals of the peers, archbishops, Bishops of Winchester, and of the Knights of the Garter. He could demand fees at all funerals, marriages, coronations, creations of lords, baptisms, &c., incident to any king or noble, always provided he was present. He could also claim largesses, or rewards, for proclaiming the styles and titles of the nobility. The fees for the privilege of bearing arms was—for a bishop, £10; a dean, £6 13s. 4d.; a gentleman, 100 marks per annum in land (£6 13s. 4d.); and for a gentleman of inferior rank, £6.

The Heralds had power to enter any house, church, mansion, &c., to inspect the arms, and if they found any fault, pull down or deface them; to reprove, control, or make infamous by proclamation at the assizes all persons unlawfully claiming to be esquire or gentleman; to prevent persons of insufficient rank using velvet palls at their funerals; and to forbid all engravers, masons, and painters representing ensigns, except such as were under their direction. Their charges were generally, if they went out of the county—for Garter King-of-Arms, 8s. a day; the other Kings, 7s.; each of the Heralds, 4s.; and for the Pursuivants, 2s., besides their ordinary expenses.

If a Herald saw a carriage in the street with any defect in its armorial ensigns, he could at once command it to stop whilst he defaced the error.

Nothing injured the college so much as the disgraceful tribunal before which all delinquents were cited, namely, the Earl Marshal's Court of Chivalry, an institution as arbitrary and irregular as the Star Chamber itself. This court had the power to imprison or fine any one for "mere words spoken against the gentility of the plaintiff." Hyde (afterwards Lord Clarendon) says: "A citizen of good quality, a merchant, was by this court ruined in his estate and his body imprisoned for calling a swan a goose."

This arbitrary court was abolished at the Revolution,

to be revived, however, at the restoration of Charles II., after which it continued, though rather feebly, to exercise its functions until 1732.

A few words on heraldic mottoes. Perhaps the earliest instance of a motto anywhere is on the seal of Sir John de Byron, appended to a deed dated 21st Edward I. The motto is "Crede Beronti," modernised into "Crede Biron," from which the Corporation of Rochdale have adopted their motto, "Crede Signo," Lord Byron having at one time been Lord of the Manor of Rochdale.

Heraldic mottoes are generally divided into three classes: enigmatical, sentimental, and emblematic.

The enigmatical are those whose origin is involved in mystery, as the Duke of Bedford's "Che sara, sara"—"What will be, will be"; Lord Ellesmere's "Sic donec"—"Thus until"; Lord Gray's "Anchor fast Anchor"; Cuninghams "Over Fork Over"; and that of the Dakynses of Derbyshire, "Strike, Dakyns," &c.

The sentimental may be sub-divided into religious, loyal and patriotic, and philanthropic.

Amongst the first are "Mors Christi, mors mortis mihi," "Spes mea in Deo," "Sub cruce," and "Sola virtus invicta."

Loyal and patriotic: "Vincit amor patriæ," "Non sibi sed patriæ," and "Patria cara, carior Libertas."

Under the third, or philanthropic head: "Homo sum," "Non sibi solum," and "While life lasteth."

The emblematic are classed into punning, truisms and cockneyisms.

The first are after the following style:—The crest of the Martins of Dorsetshire was an ape; their motto, "He who looks at Martin's Ape, Martin's Ape shall look at him." Jefferay of Sussex—"Je feray ce que je diray;" Cave of Northamptonshire—"Cave"; Fairfax—"Fare, fac"; Onslow—"Festina lente, on slow"; D'Oylie of Shottisham, Norfolk—"Do no yll, quothe D'Oylie"; and Fitton—"Fight on, quoth Fitton."

Truisms are not so common; one good example is the motto of the Slacks of Derby—"Lente sed lerte."

Cockneyisms much resemble the first of this class. Wray of Lincolnshire—"Et juste et vray"; Smith—"Smite"; Dr. Cox Macro—"Cocks may crow."

In conclusion, the study of heraldry is a subject which strongly recommends itself to ladies, as it seems particularly adapted to their tastes. It is a subject which requires patience and neatness to enable the student to emblazon creditably. It is in one point entirely different from any other study, namely, that it has an end—an end which may soon be reached.

If the student possesses but a slight knowledge of French or Latin, his greatest difficulty is surmounted, and he steps at once into the pleasant paths of heraldry.

The terms and descriptions need no impressing on his mind, and, after all, he finds them simple and easy, and he cannot help admiring the grand yet simple system in which our ancient fathers formed the heraldic code of laws.

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