

**AN ESSAY
ON HERALDRY**

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An essay on heraldry by Jacob Frederick Y. Mogg

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JACOB FREDERICK Y. MOGG

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DEDICATION.

Midsomer Norton, Somerset,

May 1st, 1858.

MY DEAR SIR,

Allow me the pleasure of testifying my esteem,
by requesting you to accept the dedication of this Essay on
Heraldry.

I remain, my dear Sir,

Yours very faithfully,

JACOB FREDERICK Y. MOGG,

Member of the British Archaeological Association.

To

EDWARDS BEADON, ESQUIRE,

Highlands, near Taunton.

INTRODUCTION.

ALTHOUGH since the visitations of the Heralds have been discontinued, the bearing of arms has ceased to be the privilege of any particular class in this country, it may not be altogether unprofitable to inquire what are the principles on which the science is based, and very shortly to elucidate the rules of blazoning and marshalling, on the knowledge of which the art of Heraldry nearly entirely depends.

Sir John Fern is of opinion that we derived the art of heraldry from the Egyptians, from their hieroglyphics; Mr. Leigh, in his *Accidents of Heraldry*, speaks of the Jews as adopting the use of arms, and doubtless the different tribes did use badges or cognizances; but the general opinion is, that the use of armorial ensigns in England, as a distinction of honour, was not adopted until the time of Henry III., although many coats of arms were borne as far back as the time of the Conqueror,—as Hugh Lupus, Earl of Chester, who bore azure, a wolf's head erased, argent, and Roger Montgomery, Earl of Arundel, who bore azure, a lion rampant, within a bordure, or. (See *Union of Houses*, pp. 57

and 104.) This last opinion seems to possess more weight, for, as during the crusades, and the early wars with France, the Barons and Knights fought in complete armour, the crest attached to the helmet, or the badges embroidered on their flags, were the only means by which a chief could be known to his retainers, or one baron could be distinguished from another. As time advanced, the heralds, who had long been established in England, although not incorporated until the time of Richard III., were intrusted with the entire management of the rules relating to the bearing of arms; and they were ordered "to enter into all churches, castles, houses, and other places, to survey and revise all coats of arms and crests, to make visitations, and to register the pedigrees and marriages of the nobility and gentry; and, at their visitations, to punish, with disgrace and fine, all such as should usurp other men's achievements, and to make infamous all such as should unduly take upon themselves the title of esquire or gentleman."

The visitations of the heralds were continued until the beginning of the last century, when they were entirely done away with. Since this time there has been no restriction whatever to the bearing of arms, and they have ceased to be the privilege of esquires, armigeri, or in fact of any particular class. One relic of earlier times remains, which is, that no person in this country, be he a nobleman or a commoner, can obtain a similar coat of arms

to any which is already registered at the Herald's College; but a difference either in the charge, the colour of the shield, or in the bearing of an ordinary, is added. During the period when the feudal system prevailed in this country, the distinctions in the coat armour of the barons and knights were watched with the greatest jealousy; and, to usurp the armorial ensigns of another person, was an offence of great magnitude, punishable with a fine and other penalties.

The heraldic visitations are still received as evidence of pedigree, for, besides the blazonry of arms which was inserted, an authentic pedigree of every family entitled to bear arms was added; thus the visitations were of more utility than would at first appear, and they have often been serviceable in the trials of actions relating to the real property of this country.

The necessity for heraldic ensigns having ceased, this science, if it may be so called, has lost that interest which it formerly possessed; yet, as the nobility and landed proprietors still continue to use the arms borne by their ancestors for many generations, it may, perhaps, be profitable to be able to enunciate a coat of arms in heraldic language, and to understand the rules on which the science rests.

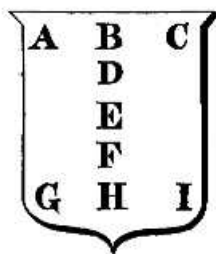
As auxiliary to the study of antiquities, heraldry must ever be of some value; for there is scarcely a castle, a monastery, or a college, which is not decorated with the arms of the founder. Again,

the sealing of deeds was long anterior to the signing of them, for at that early period, few, except ecclesiastics, were able to write their names ; they were, however, most scrupulous about their seals, and rarely used any other than those on which their arms were engraved. We are enabled, by deciphering the old seals, on deeds, often to know by whom they were executed ; and by referring to the visitations, we can see where they resided, and what property they possessed.

HERALDRY.

THE ESCUTCHEON.

THE escutcheon, or shield, derived from the Latin word *scutum*, means the shield used in war, on which the arms were originally borne; the surface of the escutcheon is called the field, and on this are certain places called the points and abatements of an escutcheon, which are named according to their position in the field. This can only be clearly understood by a diagram of the shield :—



- A, is the dexter chief.
- B, the precise middle chief.
- C, the sinister point.
- D, the honour point.
- E, the fess point.
- F, the nombril point.
- G, the dexter base.
- H, the dexter middle base.
- I, the sinister base point.

An abatement is an accidental mark annexed to coat armour, showing some dishonourable quality