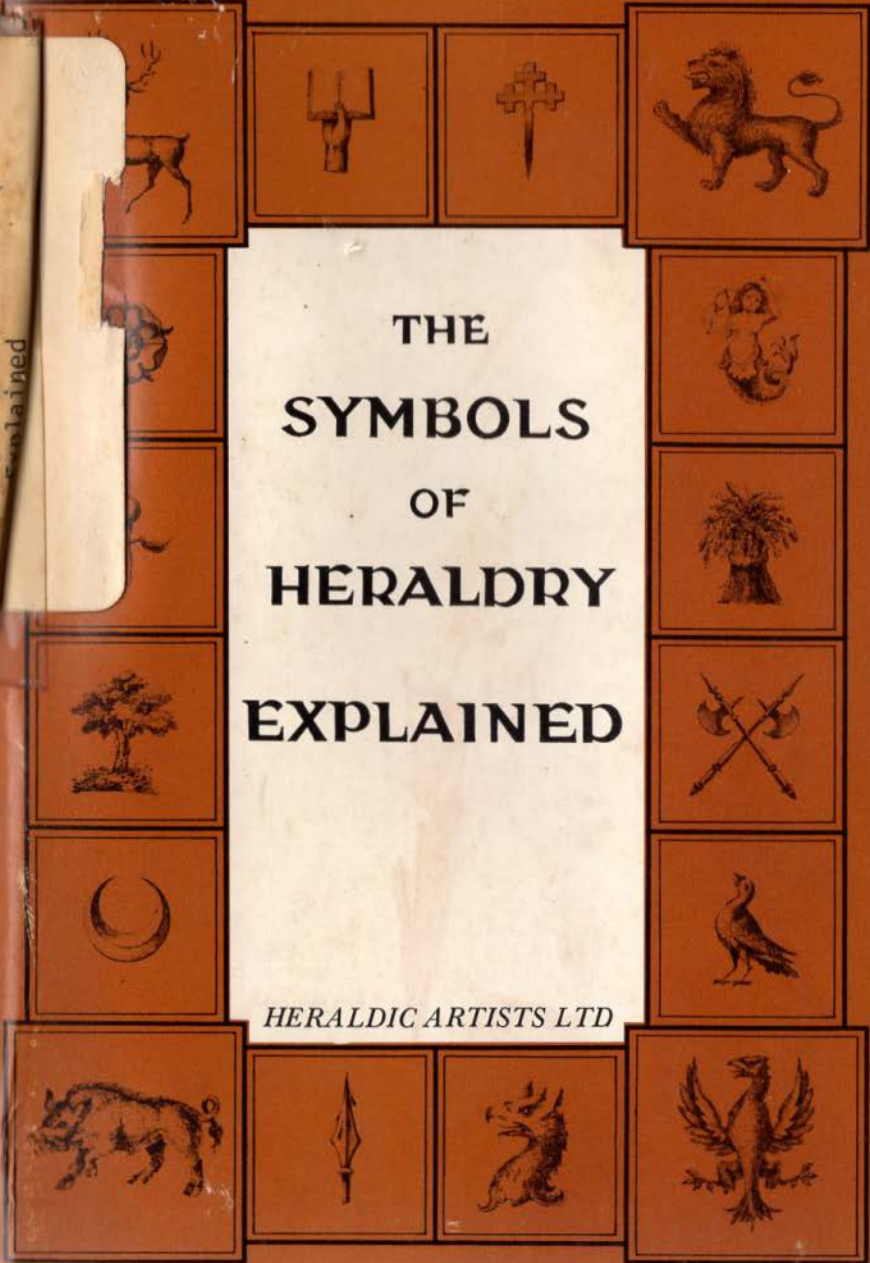




The Symbols of Heraldry  
Explained

THE  
SYMBOLS  
OF  
HERALDRY  
EXPLAINED

HERALDIC ARTISTS LTD



©Heraldic Artists Ltd. 1980

I.S.B.N. 0 9502455 5 0

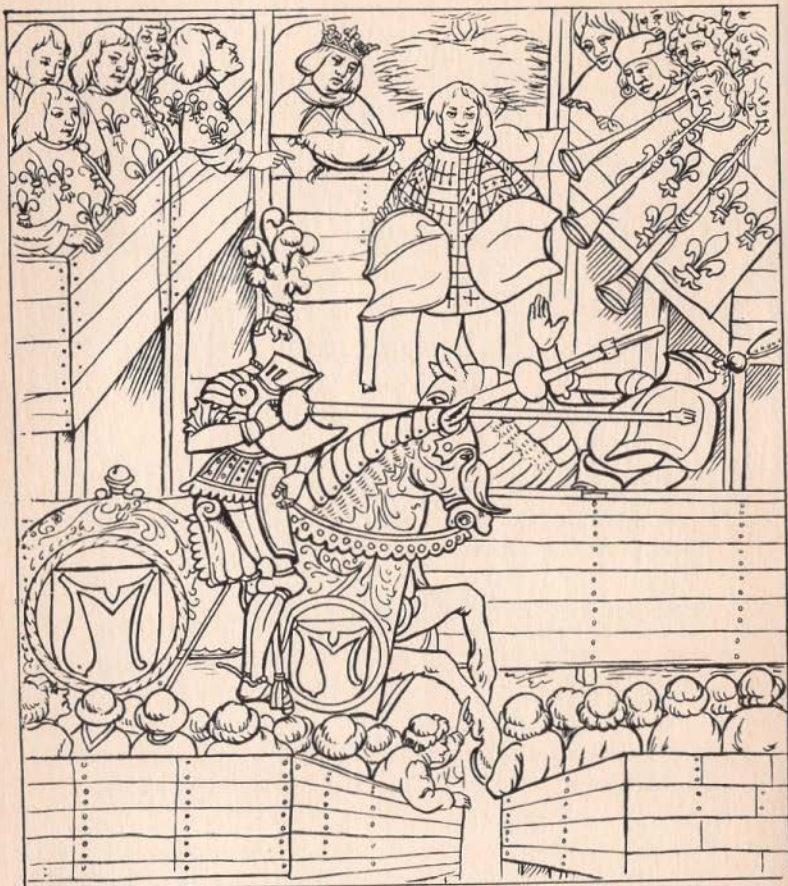
Library of Congress Washington  
Copyright Certificate

A Publication in The Heraldry and Genealogy Series by  
HERALDIC ARTISTS LTD., Trinity Street, Dublin 2.

Printed in Ireland by Mount Salus Press Ltd., Dublin 4.

## CONTENTS

1	<i>The Origin and Development of Heraldry</i>	1
2	<i>Symbolic Aspects of Heraldry</i>	7
3	<i>Tinctures and Furs</i>	13
4	<i>Heraldic Lines and Ordinaries</i>	17
5	<i>Partition of the Shield</i>	25
6	<i>Meaning and Significance of Heraldic Symbols</i>	27
7	<i>Background to Irish Heraldry</i>	73
8	<i>Principal Irish Heraldic Symbols explained</i>	75
	INDEX	97

*The Origin and Development of Heraldry*

*When one champion knight challenged another to a feat of arms, a joust or equestrian duel invariably followed. The action took place in a specially constructed stockade with spectators shouting encouragement from a podium or raised platform. Above is a representation of a joust (c. 1410) based on a near contemporary manuscript in the British Library, London.*

Europe in the fifth century experienced the fall of the Roman Empire. Land-hungry German tribes on its eastern frontier burst westwards over the Rhine into imperial territory. The progress of the Franks through Gaul was described by St. Gregory of Tours as "one long funeral march". In the year 410, Rome itself fell to Aleric the Goth. Imperial organization was about to give way to the chaos of the dark ages.

In the circumstances of the times the ordinary people literally threw themselves at the knees of the local strong man, imploring him to protect them. He, in his turn, allowed them to become his tenants on condition that they became his soldiers as often as the need arose. This mutual agreement between tenant and landlord provided the social and economic framework for the next five centuries in Europe. That system, as the reader will undoubtedly be aware, was known as feudalism.

Since feudalism was primarily concerned with the defence of life and property, great emphasis was naturally placed on the preparation of individuals for war. Mock battles called tourneys were frequently staged in which two fully-armed troupes of horsemen would ride into each other, often resulting in the deaths of several of the participants. Gradually, such over-enthusiastic rehearsals for war gave way to the more civilized tournament at which knights, using blunted weapons, would challenge each other to jousts, tilting and other feats of arms. In a word, the

tournament became, in effect, the feudal military training school presided over by rather conspicuous officials known as heralds.

The word "herald" is believed to be related to the German *haren*, meaning to "cry aloud". At the mediaeval tournaments,



*Heralds in mediaeval times served as royal messengers, being a closely-knit diplomatic and trusty corps who relayed information between the princes and kings of feudal Europe. Many of them began their careers as jugglers, jesters and minstrels to barons and lords and so gained an intimate and widespread knowledge of all facets of life in the great fortified houses of the Middle Ages. Those who made it their special interest to acquire a thorough knowledge of all devices, emblems and symbols, widely in use in those days, were destined to serve their royal masters as heralds and kings of arms.*

the heralds with fanfare and pomp would introduce the contestants, remind them of the regulations, relate their past achievements and describe to the spectators the bearings on their shields, personal apparel and horse trappings. Heralds were normally in the private employ of wealthy knights who rewarded them for their service with gifts of horses and armour. They would journey from region to region and from country to country proclaiming the venues and dates for future tournaments at which they themselves were sure to be in attendance.

Improvements in defensive armour about the middle of the twelfth century quickly created a situation which greatly enhanced the status of heralds. In place of chain or link mail, knights were henceforward covered from head to foot in multi-piece fine plate armour with the head completely encased in a helmet. The long curved shield, which in the days of mail extended from shoulder to toe, gave way to the smaller triangular styled shield. In the changed circumstances of warfare the only means of telling one combatant from the next was by means of the markings on his shield. The heralds, because of their long association with the tournament, were ideally placed to tell the identity of a knight from the bearings on the shield he carried.

Demand for the services of heralds became universal in Europe. Barons, dukes, princes and kings all eagerly sought to make use of their skills in recognizing patterns and devices on banners and shields. A battle might be won or lost depending on how quickly an approaching steel-grey mass of warriors could be identified from their shields and banners. Devices and marks on armour were far too important to be dealt with except by professional heralds. In order to be at hand to carry out their work of identification and recognition, heralds were often stationed in the royal apartments and were accorded a place in front of the royal banner on the field of battle. They acted as ambassadors, counted the fallen on the battlefield, supervised the exchange of prisoners, gave eye

witness accounts of battles to chroniclers and reported to their royal masters the outcome of military encounters.

A further important function of heralds was to assist at the dubbing or creation of knights on the battlefield. Chivalry was actively promoted by the church in an effort to counteract the barbarism of the mediaeval world. During the ceremony of knighthood the newly-created knight would lay aside his plain shield and be given a new patterned one. A record of this new shield would be made by the herald who was paid an appropriate fee for his service.

Aside from his other functions, by far the most important work of the mediaeval herald was the regulation, creation and recording of armorial shields. A glance at the early heraldic records or rolls of arms, as they are known, shows that the oldest armorial shields were simply bi-coloured and tri-coloured and divided into two or more compartments by vertical, horizontal, diagonal or intersecting lines. The resulting geometrical patterns were, from their frequent appearance, known in heraldic language as ordinaries. (See page 24.)

The ordinaries were not abstract inventions but had a concrete origin in the structural requirements of the long kite-like shields in use in the days of mail. Since wood was the principal element in the composition of the service shields they required to be strengthened by wooden or iron clamps, strips, crossbars, studs, rivets, boss-nuts and protective rims of metal. Such stays, knobs and obtrusions on the face of the shield, even in pre-heraldic times, were on occasion gilded or silvered. There is scarcely any doubt but that a refinement of such features by the heralds produced the ordinaries of the heraldic era. (See pages 16, 18.)

When the ordinaries were brightly coloured the result was what the heralds intended and indeed was militarily desirable, i.e. a clearly recognizable shield, even at a distance. Shields so designed were susceptible of easy verbal description in Norman-

French, the first language of heraldry to be duly noted in the record rolls of the heralds. The technical term for such a verbal description is "blazon" from the Latin *blasona* meaning a "shield".

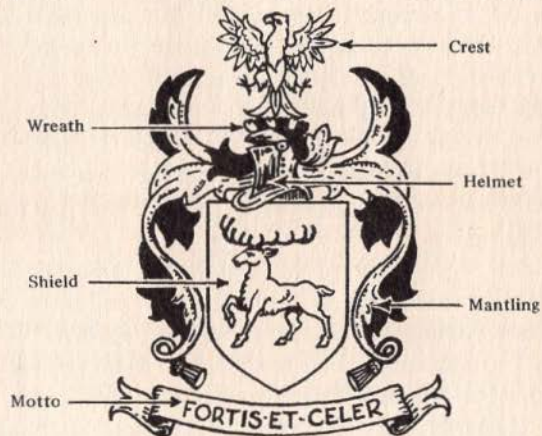
Initially (c. 1150) only the higher nobility used armorial shields. Gradually, however, over the following hundred years the practice spread downwards through the various strata of feudal society to the knightly class. The number of knights, of course, greatly increased in the course of the crusades and, consequently, there was a corresponding need to diversify armorial bearings. This diversification was effected through the adding of emblems such as lions, stags, boars, birds, trees, flowers and the like to the various compartments of the shield. Duplication and triplication of such emblems was a notable feature of early armorial shields. This phenomenon was probably due to the curved and elongated nature of many of the mediaeval service shields which demanded that emblems be at least duplicated if not triplicated to enable them to be seen from the sides and from the front. (See page 26.)

Devices on war-shields were painted flat and unshaded. A characteristic of early armorial bearings is the simplicity and boldness of design and the strong contrast of colours. Thus, they fulfilled the primary purpose of readily indicating, even in the confusion of battle, the identity of the bearer. It goes without saying that no two individuals could bear the same shield since such duplication would completely defeat the purpose of armorial bearings.

In addition to being displayed on shields, armorial designs were frequently enamelled on the breastplate and embroidered on the mediaeval surcoat or great-coat whence the terms "coat-of-arms" and "coat-armour". The term "arms" is often used as an abbreviation for armorial bearings because the latter were originally displayed on the most conspicuous part of the defensive armour, namely, the shield.

In summary, heraldry could be defined as the system of scientific symbolism under official control which had for its objective the identification of leading combatants in the peculiar conditions of mediaeval warfare. Since a son would naturally step into the armour of his fallen father and pick up his shield, armorial bearings quickly tended to become hereditary. Furthermore, as merchants, yeomen, archers and footmen generally were not allowed to have a coat-of-arms, armorial bearings were seen as the badge of social position.

Finally, just as it was an improvement in military technology that gave rise in the first instance to heraldry, so also it was a further development in the same technology which led to its decline. The second half of the fifteenth century saw a widespread use of gunpowder in Europe and against a cannon-ball an armorial shield was of little avail. In the changed circumstances of warfare, military heraldry was nearing the end of the road. Its golden age had extended from about 1150 to 1450. Henceforth, heraldry had to find a new direction and heralds a new job.



The Composition of a Heraldic Achievement.

## Symbolic Aspects of Heraldry

THE question is very often asked, Is there any particular meaning in the figures shown in the coat of arms? Almost every one possesses the idea that the figures of heraldry are, or ought to be, symbolical, and up to a recent date they were generally so received by all the chief writers who have made any reference to the subject.

I shall endeavour to maintain that true symbolism is often to be found in arms of the earliest period, and that many arms of the same date bore no reference to the names or offices of their assumers, and were evidently not adopted as strengthening parts of the shield. On the other hand, it must be admitted that there exist a large number of ancient arms which do exhibit a distinct reference to the names or offices of their owners, and such examples of "canting arms," or "armes parlantes," are well known to everyone who has given close attention to heraldry. Bearing in mind that arms were at first all self-assumed, and not granted by any authority, it is not surprising to find that some men whose names had shone like stars in a firmament of glory, as well as those who had no particular sentiment or deed to commemorate, should have preferred to symbolise their own names rather than anything else. In just the same way some manufacturers to-day prefer to register their names as trade marks, rather than to assume any distinctive devices. It may by some persons be questioned, if he who

punned on his own name in his heraldic bearings was possessed of the highest chivalric sentiment, although doubtless, he was accepted as the "practical common-sense" man of his age. It should be remarked that canting arms are still borne by many very distinguished families (some of these bearings being among the most ancient on record), and it is important to note that the colours of heraldry, as well as its figures, were held to be symbolical, so that these canting arms are obviously not devoid of heraldic emphatic sentiment. The following bearings were imported into heraldry as tokens of the Crusades, which commenced almost simultaneously with the rise of heraldry itself — namely, crosses of various kinds, crescents, pilgrims' staves and water-bottles, escallop shells — which were the ancient badges of pilgrims — bezants or coins of gold, annulets or rings, swords, battle-axes, and arrow-heads.

Is heraldry then symbolical? It would have been deemed quite unnecessary to have asked this question seventy or eighty years ago, when Sir Walter Scott,—who was the most deeply read scholar in mediæval lore that literature has ever owned,—in his novels and poems, drew the attention of the world, to the deep and dignified symbolisms which lay hidden beneath the devices and neglected escutcheons of our ancient families. Scott makes many beautiful and striking allusions to the emblematical side of heraldry throughout his works. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Sydney also afford many poetic references to the symbols of heraldry, and we may safely assume that they all faithfully reflect the culture and knowledge of the periods in which they lived. Although, by common consent, heraldry, or the regular bearing of coats of arms, or garments bearing symbols, cannot be traced before the period of the Crusades, the custom of

bearing various symbols on shields, helmets, and ensigns or standards, extended to the remotest antiquity. It is probable that to ancient Egypt — the birthplace apparently of all the arts and sciences — may be ascribed the first use of symbols. Dr. John Macdonnell in his recent eloquent lectures before the Royal Institution on "Symbolism in Ceremonies, Customs, and Art," ably defined the original use of symbols as having been to supplement defects in language before writing was generally practised. "Some symbolisms," he remarks, "like some phrases, have travelled all over the world, and are to be met with in varying climes. As there were dead languages, so there were dead symbols and ceremonies handed down, whose tradition and origin are unknown. Words having a sacred association, as a rule, have escaped mutation. The same held good with the sacred symbols, the Crescent as a symbol of one faith, and the Cross of another, having for many centuries preserved their precise significance."

He concluded one of his lectures by referring to the vastness of the whole subject of symbolism, "which began and ended only where life itself began and ended."

We read of the Lion borne as an ensign of the tribe of Judah, the Eagle of the Romans, the two-headed Eagle of the East — still borne by two great European Empires; of the White Horse of Wodin, borne by Hengist when he invaded Britain — which the shield of Hanover still bears; of the Raven, borne by the ancient Danes; of the Crescent and Star, borne by the followers of Mahomet, and now retained by the Turkish Empire as its national device.

It is to the time of the earlier Crusades, in the early part of the twelfth century, that we can ascribe the establishment

of armorial bearings in their present form, when the necessity of quickly recognising each of the numerous leaders seems to have compelled the princes and knights to adopt a methodical arrangement of various distinguishing devices, borne on surcoat and banner, and at first by them only occasionally displayed upon the shield itself. There is no account extant of the particular usages connected with the first adoption of heraldic devices. Indeed, the first work in English on this subject did not appear until 1485 when Wynkin de Worde printed the Book of St. Albans, in which Dame Juliana Berners had translated an earlier work, on what she calls "Cote Armuris," from the Latin, by Nicholas Upton, Canon of Salisbury. This lady states emphatically, that arms were at first all assumed by their bearers, without heralds or other authority, and she considers such arms as good as those granted by the heralds themselves. Heralds' College was only constituted in the reign of Richard III, in 1483, so that the foundations of heraldry were established in the arbitrary assumptions of arms by various individuals. It arises from the fact that there was at first no authority to regulate the bearing of arms, that so much uncertainty surrounds the whole subject, and that so many different opinions have to be examined and, if it be possible, reconciled. We find in connection with many ancient crests and coats of arms, a number of surprising or incongruous objects, which defy modern heralds to explain them satisfactorily, and the legendary origins of which have become shrouded by the mists of many ages. Dallaway, writing on this subject, says, "Certain it is that many of the oldest families in Wales bear what may be termed legendary pictures having little or no analogy to the more systematic armoury of England; such, for instance, as a wolf issuing from a cave;

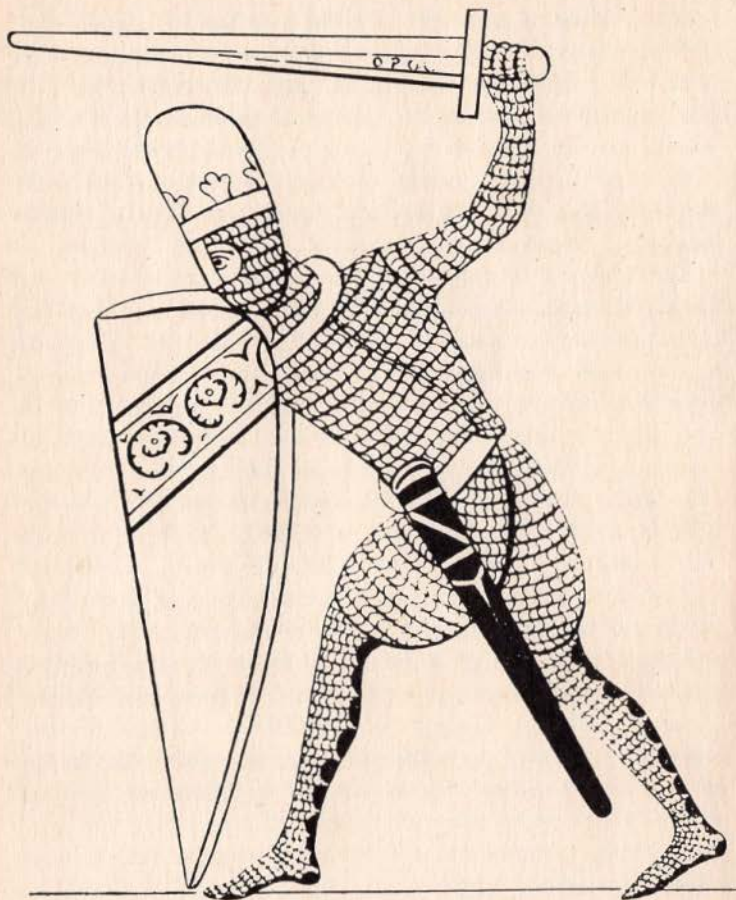
a cradle under a tree with a child guarded by a goat, &c." The most simple coats of arms are usually the most ancient.

It is in many cases difficult to assign the exact reason for the original assumption of a particular coat of arms. In the case of any ancient family, in order to arrive at the actual or even a presumptive reason, it would be necessary to study the early history, traditions, and feudal associations of such family.

The bearing of animals is undoubtedly one of the most ancient forms of symbolism. The lion, lamb, and hart are often admiringly spoken of in the Old Testament. The wolf was a sacred emblem in Egypt, and Lycopolis was named after it, because of the worship offered to it in that city. A wolf was also one of the oldest military ensigns of Rome, in reference to the fabulous history of the origin of the city. The boar's head was often the fee mentioned as due to the king, or to the great lord, as the condition of feudal tenure.

If heraldry may be said to be in one sense a survival of the ages of the deluded alchemist and astrologer, and of the witch and heretic hunter, it is also a memorial of the brave and true hearts and great names, of those really downright-in-earnest and picturesque times, and a monument to the men who, by their energy, love of liberty, and valour, very largely contributed to make this realm what it is for us to-day. It therefore follows that while armorial bearings are interesting relics of bygone men and times, they also now form fitting ornaments, full of rich associations, for an historic people.



*Tinctures and Furs*

The coat of mail consisted of a long leather garment, upon which metal rings were sewn in regular patterns. The helmet, with its protective nasal band, was worn over the chain hood. The long kite-shaped shield, often with a simple device, was secured by a broad belt over the shoulder.

THE following definitions of armorial colours will be found to agree with those of the majority of the leading authorities:

**OR**, yellow or gold. — Called *Jaune* by some old writers, is represented in engravings by dots. It denoted Generosity and, according to Sir John Ferne, Elevation of Mind. This and the next colour represent the two **Metals** of Heraldry.

**ARGENT**, white or silver. — Represented in engraving by a white space, unless a “diaper” pattern be introduced for the purpose of adding to the effect. Signifies Peace and Sincerity.

**SABLE**, or black. — Represented in engraving by closely crossed lines or by a deep black. Denotes Constancy and sometimes, but more rarely, Grief.

**AZURE**, or blue. — Represented in engraving by horizontal lines. Signifies Loyalty and Truth. It was the colour devoted to the Virgin by the Roman Church.

**GULES**, or red. — Represented by perpendicular lines. Denotes Military Fortitude and Magnanimity. It is also “the martyr’s colour.”

**VERT**, or green. — Represented in engraving by oblique lines from the dexter\* or right hand corner of the shield to the sinister base, or left lower part. Signifies Hope, Joy, and, sometimes, Loyalty in Love.

\* The dexter side of the shield is really the left side as one looks at it,

**PURPURE**, purple. — Represented in engraving by diagonal lines from the sinister or left corner to the dexter base. Denotes Royal Majesty, Sovereignty, and Justice. It is called by the old heralds the most majestic of colours.

**TENNE** or **TAWNY**, or orange colour, sometimes by old heralds called **Brusque**, is little used in British heraldry. In engravings it is represented by lines from the sinister chief to the dexter base, crossed by horizontal lines. It was said to signify "Worthy Ambition."

**MURRAY**, or sanguine. This, like Tawney, was seldom used in English coats of arms, but both have often been used as party or livery colours. It is represented in engraving by diagonal lines crossing each other. The meaning of this has been stated by Leigh to be "Not hasty in battle, and yet a victor."

The old heralds used to say when a coat of arms bore only black and white it was "most fair," when black and gold it was "most rich," but when of green and gold it was "most glorious." Although argent is frequently depicted in its proper colour of silver, it is more generally borne of a plain white colour, and this is due to the fact, as Robson points out in his useful work on heraldry, that silver will quickly become tarnished and turn black.

For the purpose of giving greater prominence to heraldic bearings, the rule has been generally adhered to, that colour should not be borne upon colour, nor metal upon metal. The various furs ranked according to their colours in applying this rule, excepting the compound-coloured furs, which were treated like metals.

**THE FURS** of heraldry are borne of various colours, and in each instance would have the particular signification attached to its colour, in addition to the fact that the wearing of fur, in ancient days, was considered a particular mark of dignity,

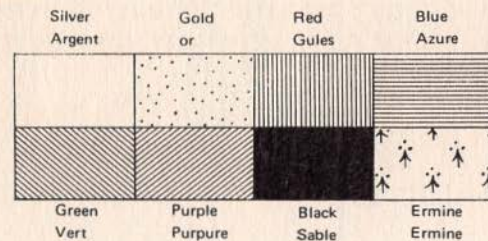
and such would not have formed part of "the coat" of any person of an inferior degree in rank. The fur called **Vair**, which is represented by lines of bell-shaped objects, generally of blue alternating with white, is said to be the skin of an animal of the weasel kind, named *Varus*, which was once used for the lining of military cloaks. It is stated by old heralds that it was first brought into armory because Signor de Cancis, when fighting in Hungary, succeeded in rallying his retreating army by displaying his Vair cloak, and thenceforward adopted it as the ensign of his signory. Another compound-coloured fur, something like Vair, is called **Potent**. It is composed of figures shaped like the ends of a crutch, arranged in rows, and of alternate colours.

**ERMINE** has so long been associated with the robes and crowns of royal and noble personages, that it is easy to understand why it should be considered as a perfect emblem of dignity in any coat of arms. It is probable that the colour black or sable was first found on the actual sur-coat in the shape of a fur. Fur is still worn on the hoods of collegiate graduates as a bearing of honour.

**Ermines.** Is a black fur with white spots.

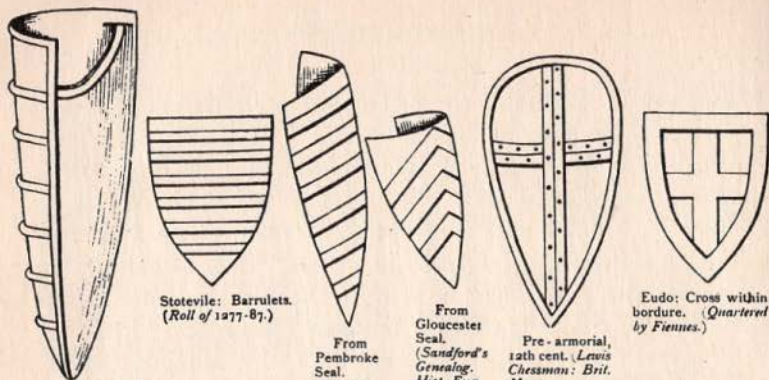
**Erminois.** Is yellow with black spots.

**Pean.** Is black with yellow spots. But the above are of rare occurrence.



Heraldic Engraving System (See page 66)

## Heraldic Lines and Ordinaries



Stoteville: Barrulets.  
(Roll of 1277-87.)

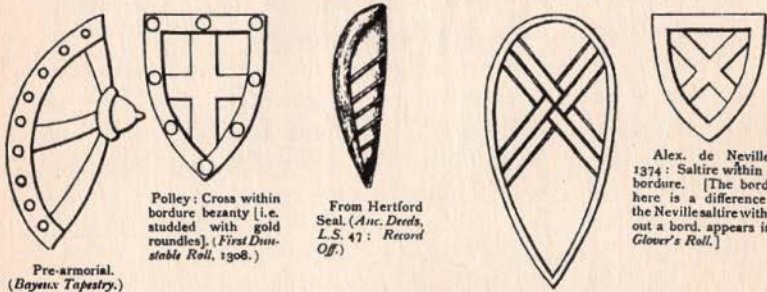
Pre-armorial, 11th cent. (*Jeremias Apocryphis: Darmstadt lib.*)

From Pembroke Seal. (*Bysshe's Upton, 1654, Notar, 89.*)

From Gloucester Seal. (*Sandford's Genealog. Hist. Eng. 1707, 139.*)

Pre-armorial, 12th cent. (*Lewis Chessman: Brit. Mus.*)

Eudo: Cross within bordure. (*Quartered by Fienes.*)



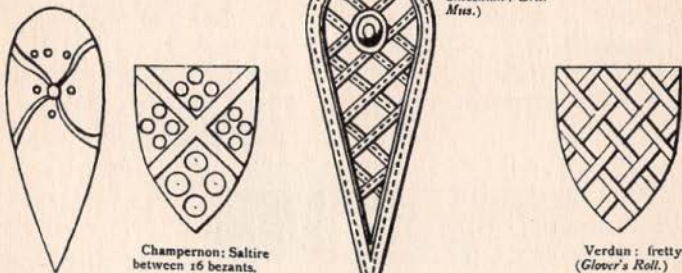
Polley: Cross within bordure bezanty [i.e. studded with gold roundels]. (*First Domesday Roll, 1208.*)

From Hertford Seal. (*Anc. Deeds, L.S. 47: Record Off.*)

Alex. de Neville, 1374: Saltire within a bordure. [The bord. here is a difference: the Neville saltire without a bord. appears in *Glover's Roll.*]

Pre-armorial. (*Bayeux Tapestry.*)

Pre-armorial, 12th cent. (*Lewis Chessman: Brit. Mus.*)



Champernon: Saltire between 16 bezants.

Verdun: fretty. (*Glover's Roll.*)

Pre-armorial. (*Bayeux Tapestry.*)

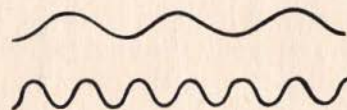
Pre-armorial, early 12th cent. (*From pax found in Temple Ch.*)

THE following lines are used in armory, in addition to straight lines:—

The Nebulé or Nebuly line denotes clouds or air:



The Undée or Wavy line represents the sea or water, and is represented in two ways:



The engrailed and invecked lines signify earth or land:

Engrailed 

Invecked 

The indented represents fire:

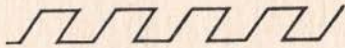


Dancetté is also attributed to mean water:

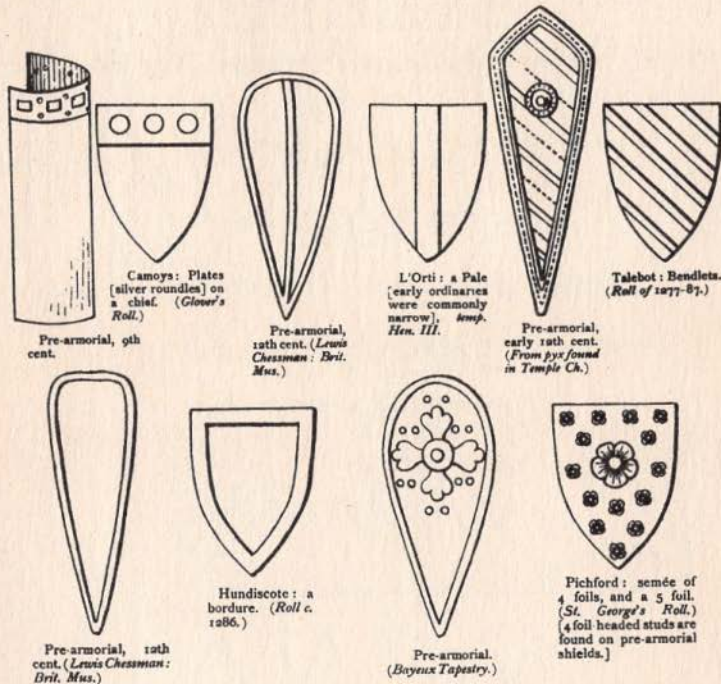
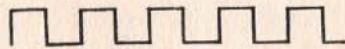


## The Symbols of Heraldry Explained

Ragulée or Raguly signifies difficulties which have been encountered.



The above are Guillim's definitions, but he holds that the Embattled line, here shown, is also an



Pre-heraldic and Heraldic shields.

emblem of fire, but it will be found that Nisbet and all the other ancient authorities state that it denotes the walls of a fortress or town.

THE colour of the Ordinary was held to be symbolical, as well as the colour of the field or ground of the escutcheon. The first in importance is called a "Chief," which, as it occupies the whole of the top and one-third of the total surface of the shield of arms, is the best position in which any device can be represented — unless we except the most central point of the escutcheon. It is said to signify Dominion and Authority, and it has often been granted as a special reward for prudence and wisdom, as well as for successful command in war.

The large plain cross is another of the so-called "Honourable Ordinaries." This was first adopted in general heraldic use by those who had actually served in the Crusades. The smaller crosses borne in coats of arms are not considered to be Ordinaries, but simple charges. When the Cross was borne "Flory" or "Fleurettée," *i.e.* flowered at each end, it was held to signify one who had conquered, but when borne "Raguly," *i.e.* drawn with lines Ragulée, it denoted that very great difficulty had been encountered. (Guillim.)

The Cross Patoncée or Cross Flory is a somewhat frequent bearing, and means the same as the fleurettée cross. The above are generally only borne as "Ordinaries," but other forms of crosses, excepting Saltires, are usually borne as common charges. The cross, says dear old Guillim, is the most honourable charge to be found in heraldry, and its bearing is the express badge of the Christian.

The large crosses are also borne engrailed, invecked, &c., while as common charges they are found borne in arms in a variety of forms, which may be found depicted in most

heraldic text-books. In heraldry every form of the Cross had a direct reference to the Church and its Risen Head.

The **SALTIRE** or St. Andrew's Cross, which is another of the Ordinaries, is the symbol of Resolution, and Guillim says it was the reward of such as have scaled the walls of towns. The Saltire crossed at each point is called a St. Julian's Cross.

The **CHEVRON** signifies Protection, and has often been granted in arms as a reward to one who has achieved some notable enterprise. It is supposed to represent the roof-tree of a house, and has sometimes been given to those who have built churches or fortresses, or who have accomplished some work of faithful service. **CHEVRONELS** are small chevrons, and these are the military stripes of merit worn by our gallant soldiers and sailors.

The **FESS**, or band borne in the centre of the shield, is the military belt or girdle of honour.

The **BAR** is of the same form as the Fess, but of lesser breadth. It is said by Guillim to be suitable as a bearing for one "who sets the bar of conscience, religion, and honour against angry passions and evil temptations." The same significance would be given to the **BARRULET**, which is again less than the Bar.

Speaking of the Fess, Guillim says, "It is a military girdle of honour, and signifies that the bearer must be always in readiness to undergo the business of the public weal." Upton, speaking of the bearing of a Bar Nebulée, *i.e.* formed with the Cloud lines says, it denotes some high excellence in its first bearer. Of the bearing of "Barry Wavy," *i.e.* bars composed of the waved lines, Guillim says, "They may put us in mind that as in a tempestuous storm one wave succeeds high above the other in immediate

succession, so God has ordained that one trouble should succeed another to keep His chosen in continual exercise, and that His faithful may have manifold experience of His great providence and Fatherly care in preserving them in all their troubles, giving them a comfortable event and happy end in all their afflictions."

The **PALE** is said to denote Military Strength and Fortitude, and has been bestowed on those who have impaled or otherwise defended cities, or who have supported the government of their sovereigns, and "for standing uprightly for their prince and country." (Guillim.)

The **PALET** is a diminutive of the Pale, and the **ENDORSE** is a still further diminutive of the Palet, and would in each case signify the same as the Pale.

The **PILE** is supposed to represent the large pieces of wood used by engineers in the construction of bridges, or of buildings on insecure or marshy ground. It is therefore well fitted, Guillim states, for an engineer or for one who has shown great ability in any kind of construction. It has also occasionally been adopted as a "difference" in the arms of members of one family. When only one pile is found borne on a shield it very much resembles a pennon or small pointed flag, and it may be that this was intended when only one is represented.

The **CANTON** stands very high among honourable bearings. Like all the other "Ordinaries," it is sometimes found borne plain, and at other times with charges on it, and it may be said to be like a flag introduced at the top corner of the shield. When it is borne charged it often contains some special symbols granted by the sovereign in reward for the performance of eminent service. Of this kind of reward many ancient examples are to be found.

The QUARTER is as large again as the Canton, and occupies exactly one-quarter of the shield. This has also at times been directly granted, charged with special bearings, as a reward from the sovereign for brilliant military service. It is considered, says Francis Nichols in his "British Compendium of Heraldry," in the light of a banner specially conferred.

The BEND is also a bearing of high honour, and probably represents either the scarf or the shield suspender of a knight commander. It is held to signify Defence or Protection. It was, like most other bearings, at first assumed by men of knightly and military rank, and it has since often been granted by the heralds to those who have distinguished themselves as commanders.

The diminutive of the Bend Dexter is the BENDLET. A still further diminutive of the Bend is the COST, which is usually borne in couples, and then called Cotises. These often enclose or protect the Bend, which is then said to be "cotized." When a bend or bendlet is borne placed above a lion or other similar charge, the latter is said to be "debruised by such bend or bendlet."

The RIBBON is still less than the cost, and, according to Nisbet, was borne by Abernethy as follows: On a gold shield, a red lion rampant, surmounted by a black ribbon. I have slightly translated the heraldic language for the convenience of the reader, and shall here generally follow this course. The Ribbon, like the maunche or lady's sleeve, was probably a tournament *gage d'amour*, and thence adopted into heraldry.

The Bend Sinister is equally as honourable as the Bend Dexter, as also is the "Scarfe," or diminutive of the bend sinister, which latter is also the "badge of honour for a

commander." A great many people who have paid no attention to heraldry speak of "the bend sinister" as though it meant the mark of illegitimacy, but it is really nothing of the kind.

The BATTUNE SINISTER, or baton shortened at each end, has often been, and is still, used as marking a royal descent that is barred by illegitimacy from succession to the throne. In ancient times other heraldic devices were sometimes employed to express the same meaning.

The ORLE or TRESSURE is classed as an "Ordinary," and is considered to be a diminutive of the Border. It is borne in the arms of Scotland, and was held to be the emblem of Preservation or Protection.

The tressure "fleury counter-fleury" was adopted by one of the Scottish kings to commemorate that close alliance which existed between France and Scotland for so many ages. Sometimes charges are borne around the shield in the form of an Orle, when they are described as being "in Orle."

FLASQUES. This reward, says Leigh in his "Accedence of Armory," is to be given by a king for virtue and learning, and especially for service in embassy. FLANCHES, Leigh considers to be a degree under Flasques, yet, says he, are they commendable armory. Nisbet considers both these figures to be really the same as Voiders.

VOIDERS. Such, remarks Leigh, are given to gentlewomen who have deserved highly.

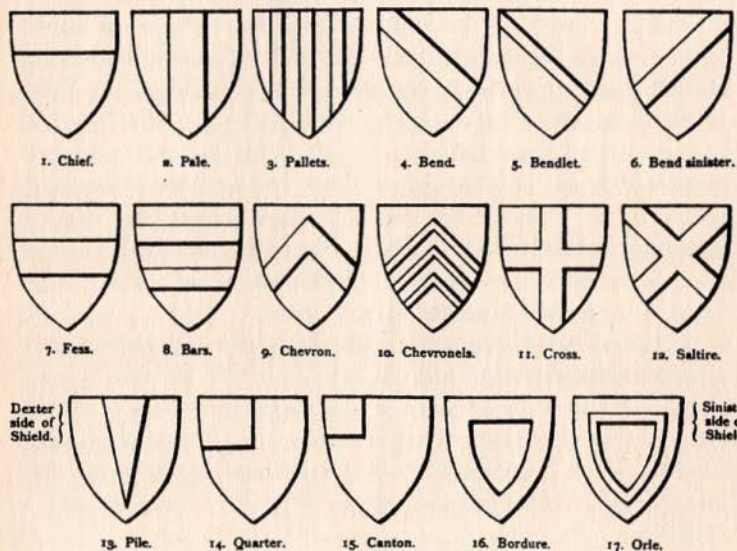
The BORDURE or Border is another "Ordinary." This form of bearing is of great antiquity, and was frequently adopted as a "difference" between relatives bearing the same arms. In other cases it was used as an augmentation of honour.

The INESCUTCHEON. This is seldom found borne as an

Partition of the Shield

Ordinary, being generally a coat of arms borne as an escutcheon of Pretence, superimposed upon a shield of arms, in testimony of the claim of a prince to the sovereignty of the country so represented, or if by a private personage, then as the sign that he had married the heiress of the family indicated, and that their joint descendants might subsequently claim to quarter these arms with their own.

The GYRON is said to be typical of Unity. It is never borne singly, but two or more occupy a large portion of the shield. The Campbells bear Gyrons in their arms, as also do many other families.



Examples of Heraldic Ordinaries.

WHEN a coat of arms is divided by an oblique line, it is termed parti *per* Bend, because the line is the same as that of the bend. If a shield be borne divided by a horizontal line, it is called parti *per* Fess. If there be a perpendicular line in the centre of the shield, it is parted "*per* Pale." The same rule applies to lines in the form of a Saltire or Cross, only in the latter case the lines may be caused by the conjunction of four coats in one shield, when the term employed would be "quarterly," and not "*per* Cross."

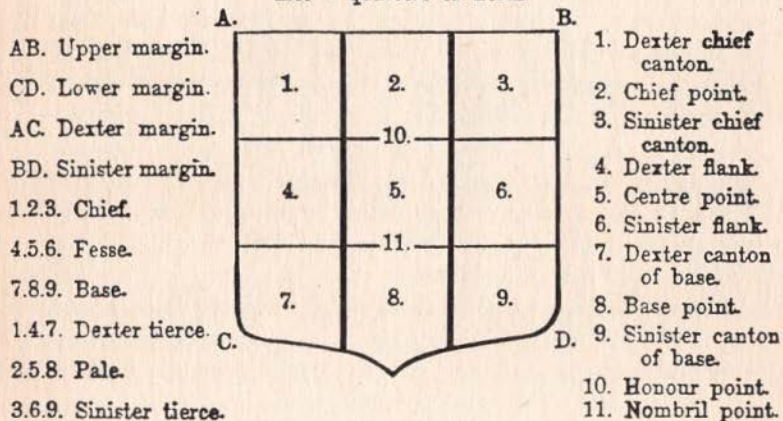
If there are several bend-shaped lines, the term applied is "Bendy of so many pieces," distinguishing the alternate colours, commencing with the first metal or colour at the Dexter or left-hand highest corner of the shield as it faces the spectator. If there are several Bar or Fess-like lines, then it should be called "Barry of so many pieces," naming the colours, commencing with the colour at the top of the shield. If the lines are perpendicular, it is called "paley," and the colours must be described commencing from the Dexter or left side of the shield as it faces the one who views it. The SINISTER side is always that which appears at the right of the shield as one faces it, because this would really be the sinister or left side of its bearer.

The object in parting a shield by the various lines, seems to have been to thereby employ two colours conspicuously either as symbolic or livery colours. Many examples of arms are to be found which bear simply two colours parted by one

or more lines. Unless the symbolism of the colours be recognised, such arms would be perfectly meaningless.

The learned Nisbet clearly points out, in his valuable work on Scottish Heraldry,—which was another of Sir Hildebrand Osbaldistone's favourite volumes, — that the arms divided by the above partition lines, took their origin simply from the parti-coloured coats which were actually worn as garments when heraldry first arose. The favourite emblematical colours of different princes were thus displayed, in striped or banded patterns, on which symbols were occasionally embroidered or spangled, in gold, silver, or other colours. The custom of wearing heraldic badges embroidered on liveries, was continued in England to a late period, and even till to-day, in the case of the "Beefeaters"; while livery colours are still retained in use for men-servants, any heraldic devices being presented only on the coat-buttons.

Partition of the Shield  
into 9 quarters or fields.



Meaning and Significance of  
Heraldic Symbols

THE colours of the common charges were usually disregarded from a symbolical point of view, unless there was evidence of a special intent in the colour of any particular charge. The colours of gutté, roundless, frets, and roses are, however, exceptions to the first-named rule. Examples of "counter-changed" arms are very common, and while these show that the colours of the shield as a whole were fully regarded, the colours of the smaller charges were often a matter of indifference. The aim of heraldry was to produce the most striking effect at a glance, and not to dwell upon the minutiae of each bearing. Animals were represented in their natural, or of other colours, the variations of their colour or of their attitude being adopted merely as a means of distinction between one coat and another.

The main colours of the shield and of the "Honourable Ordinaries" supplied sufficient colour symbolism, while the particular attributes of the Ordinaries and common charges added further interesting emblems. The apparent contradictions sometimes observable in the symbols of one shield are not more at variance than man's own nature, which may impel him to war when his heart inclines to peace, and lead him to hope even amid afflictions and against desperate odds.

The LION has always held a high place in heraldry as the emblem of deathless courage. Some of the old heralds give



some variations in the meaning of the Lion when borne *PASSANT* or walking, or if *SALIENT* or leaping, &c., but as they did not agree as to these definitions, we may now be spared from considering them. There can be no doubt that all such differences of attitude were introduced for the sake of variety, and because so many persons were anxious to obtain the lion as an emblem. Guillim, speaking of the lion, says, "It is a lively image of a good soldier, who must be valiant of courage, strong of body, politic in council, and a foe to fear." It is the emblem of St. Mark. In Venice it is borne with wings.

The *Heads of Lions and other Animals* are borne either erased, *i.e.* apparently torn off with jagged pieces at the neck, or *couped*, *i.e.* cut off cleanly. These severed heads really denote the same as the bearing of the whole animal.

The various nations of Europe have held different standards as to what constituted superiority in heraldic bearings. In the north of Europe the Lion was most esteemed, and especially so in Great Britain, and this animal now occupies three quarterings of our royal arms. In Germany, Austria, and Southern Europe the preference was given to the Eagle, and in France to the *Fleur-de-lis*, for a similar reason.

The *TIGER* was held to signify great fierceness and valour when enraged to combat, and symbolises one whose resentment will be dangerous if aroused.

The *BEAR* was said to possess policy equal to its great strength, and to be the emblem of ferocity in the protection of kindred. It was highly valued as an heraldic device, so that the Baron of Bradwardine was justified in his pride in regard to the "blessed bear," as Scott tells us in "Waverley."

The *WOLF* is a very ancient and uncommon bearing. It is said by Morgan to denote those valiant captains that do

in the end gain their attempts after long sieges and hard enterprises. Macedon, the grandson of Noah, bore this ensign, as also did the Romans. It was also the Egyptian symbol of Anubis the Conductor of the Dead, and the city of Lycopolis derived its name from the veneration in which the wolf was there held. Sir Gardiner Wilkinson states that mummies of wolves have been discovered at O'sioot, on the site of the ancient city of Lycopolis.

The *RHINOCEROS* is of immense size and strength, and of great ferocity when aroused. It never seeks combat, but in defence of itself, or its fellows, will fight at all odds. It may be regarded as denoting this character in heraldry, but it is a very rare bearing.

The *ELEPHANT* is of huge strength and stature, and very sagacious and courageous. Guillim says it is of "Great strength, greater wit, and greatest ambition." The heraldic signification may be drawn from its courage and strength. The Elephant was the ensign of Cyneus, king of Scythia, and of Idomenes, king of Thessaly.

The *LEOPARD* is said to represent a valiant and hardy warrior, who enterprises hazardous things by force and courage. The lions borne in the English Royal arms are said to have been derived from two leopards borne by Richard I.

A *LEOPARD'S HEAD* "*jessant*" or *swallowing a fleur-de-lis*. This bearing is said by Newton in his "Display of Heraldry" to have been conferred by Edward III. during his wars in France, as a reward to some of the leaders who served under him in his victorious campaigns — the idea of the device being, that the lion of the English arms is swallowing the lily of the French coat! Fluellen's reference to the swallowing of the leek, in Shakespeare's "Henry V.," occurs to one

in connection with this bearing.

The PANTHER is rarely found as an heraldic bearing. It is usually depicted "insensed," a term applied when flames appear to be issuing from its mouth and ears. Guillim says, "As a lion may be said to signify a brave man, so may a panther a beautiful woman, which, though fierce, is very tender and loving to her young, and will defend it with the hazard of her life."

The HORSE. "Of all beasts the most noble and most useful to man, either in peace or war." It signifies readiness for all employments for king and country, and is one of the principal bearings in armory. A white horse was the ensign of the Saxons when first they invaded England.

"A steede, a steede of matchless speede,  
A sword of metal keene,  
All else to noble minds is dross,  
All else on earth is meane,  
And O the thundering press of knights  
When loud their war-cries swell,  
Might serve to call a saint from heaven,  
Or rouse a fiend from hell!"

The MULE. This bearing, Guillim says, may well be borne by abbots and abbesses, who bear the mitre and cross, which are the emblems of pastoral jurisdiction, but have not the actual exercise of such.

The ASS is the emblem of patience and humility. The arms of the Askew family, of which Anne Askew, the gentle martyr, was a member, were, on a white or silver shield a Fess, between three asses passant, or walking, all of sable or black.

The BULL or Ox. Guillim says: "The bearing of a bull

or the head thereof is a note of valour and magnanimity." An ox was borne by the Athenians on one of their coins, and it was also worshipped as a god by the Egyptians, under the name of Apis, "the soul of Osiris." A specially marked living bull was always kept as the object of this worship.

The BOAR, Guillim says, "is a fierce combatant when at bay, and ceases fighting only with its life, and therefore may be properly applied as the armorial bearing of a warrior." A white boar was the badge of Richard III.

BOAR'S HEAD. It was accepted as an emblem of hospitality, besides being a most important feudal offering.

The GOAT. Guillim says that this animal is the emblem of that martial man who wins a victory by the employment rather of policy than valour. "It may betoken one that is willing to fare hard, so he may be in high employment honoured." (Sloane Evans.\*)

The LAMB is symbolical of gentleness and patience under suffering. This is certainly often borne with a scriptural allusion in view.

The HOLY LAMB or AGNUS DEI. A lamb depicted carrying either a crossed staff or a banner of the cross of St. George, and with glory above its head. This is the emblem of faith, being typical of the gentle-natured founder of the Christian Church. This kind of bearing, Guillim says, "may well befitt a brave, resolute spirit who undertakes a war in Christ's cause."

The RAM is the Duke or leader of the flock, and signifies authority. Sloane Evans mentions that it was highly esteemed by the Thebans. Count D'Alviella states that the ram was one of the Egyptian symbols for the sun. Its signification in

\* "A Grammar of British Heraldry," by Rev. W. Sloane Evans, B.A., London: J. Russell Smith, 1854.

heraldry would be "a leader."

**LAMB'S FLEECE.** This is appropriately borne by the Jason family. The knightly order of the Fleece of Gold indicates the ancient honour of this symbol, and it is proved by Miss Ellen Millington in her interesting work on Heraldry (London, 1858), that, in founding this order special reference was made to the fleece of Gideon.

**HARES and RABBITS** (the latter are heraldically termed *Conies*). These animals were probably introduced into heraldry to betoken one who enjoys a peaceable and retired life. It is also quite likely that a scriptural reference to conies was intended.

**The SQUIRREL.** A lover of the woods, and therefore emblematical of sylvan retirement being the delight of its bearer.

**HEDGEHOG.** Sloane Evans says that the signification of this bearing is a "Provident provider."

**The BEAVER.** Denotes industry and perseverance, and is borne in the arms of Canada.

**The FOX.** The application of this symbol in heraldry denotes one who will use all that he may possess of sagacity, wit, or wisdom in his own defence.

**The TALBOT, MASTIFF, and GREYHOUND.** It has been observed that there is scarcely any virtue possessed by man that is not shared by the various kinds of dogs. The signification of either of these would be courage, vigilancy, and loyal fidelity.

**The CAT, or CAT-A-MOUNTAIN.** Sloane Evans says this was once the emblem of the Dutch nation, and signifies liberty, vigilance, forecast, and courage. Among the Egyptians the cat was held sacred to the goddess Pasht or Bubastis, i.e. Diana the huntress.

**The CAMEL.** Sloane Evans gives the symbolism of this bearing as being "docility, patience, and indefatigable perseverance."

**The BEE** was reckoned by the Egyptians as an emblem of regal power. In armory it is used to represent well-governed industry. Bees were adopted by Napoleon I. in his arms, and have since been used by his family. They are also found borne in British heraldry.

**The ANT,** Guillim says, "may signify a man of great labour, wisdom, and providence in all his affairs." It has been occasionally borne in armory.

**The SPIDER.** This insect, Guillim says, may signify wisdom, labour, and prudence.

**The GRASSHOPPER,** among the Athenians, was held as "a special emblem of nobility, and therefore they used to wear golden grasshoppers in their hair, to signify that they were descended from a noble race, and home-bred, for where this insect is bred, there it will live and die." Solomon reckoned it as "One of the four small things in the earth that are full of wisdom." (Guillim.)

**The HOUSE SNAIL.** Although this little creature moves slowly, it can by perseverance ascend to the highest places, where even the lion cannot go. It is an emblem of deliberation and perseverance. (Guillim.)

**The DOUBLE EAGLE.** Borne in the arms of Russia and Austria. In that recent very interesting and most valuable work, "The Migration of Symbols," by Count Goblet d'Alviella, it is pointed out that the first example of this emblem is found in a bas-relief at Eyak, which dates back to the civilisation of the Hittites. Count d'Alviella considers that this figure was first introduced into Europe at the time of the Crusades, and it would appear that there is an entire

absence of proof of any example of this singular bearing being used in Europe at an earlier period.

The EAGLE, which is usually represented with wings "displayed," signifies "a man of action, ever more occupied in high and weighty affairs, and one of lofty spirit, ingenious, speedy in apprehension, and judicious in matters of ambiguity." The displayed wings signify protection, and the gripping talons "rending and ruin to rebels and evil-doers." (Guillim.) The Eagle was an ensign of the ancient kings of Persia and Babylon; and Marius, 102 B.C., made the Eagle alone the ensign at the head of the Roman legions, but previous to this they had borne the Minotaur, horse, wolf, and boar. The emperors of the Western Roman Empire used a black eagle, but those of the Eastern or Byzantine Roman Empire adopted a golden one. Since the Romans, many empires and kingdoms have taken the eagle for their ensign, viz., Austria, Prussia, Russia, Poland, France, the Republic of America. The two-headed eagle signifies a double empire. William Rufus adopted as a device an eagle looking towards the sun, with the motto "Preferro," or "I can endure it." (Timbs.) Sloane Evans remarks that the Egyptians paid the Eagle high honours at Heliopolis. I think he meant the vulture or hawk, which was sacred to their highest god, Ra, or the Sun god. The Eagle is also held to be typical of a noble nature from its strength and innate power, and has been very generally preferred in Continental heraldry as a high device. Guillim says that true magnanimity and fortitude of mind is signified by the Eagle, which disdains to combat with smaller birds. The Scriptures make constant reference to the Eagle as a symbol of power. It is also the emblem of St. John the Evangelist.

ALERION. This is an eagle "displayed," but without beak

or claws. The origin of this bearing is a matter of doubt. Nisbet says it might refer to one who having been maimed and lamed in war, was thus prevented from fully asserting his power.

WINGS are hieroglyphics of celerity and sometimes of protection or coverture. (Guillim.) When wings are borne they are supposed to pertain to the eagle, unless otherwise described. A pair of wings is termed *conjoined*, and is shown either with the tips of the wings turned upwards, called "elevated," or turned downwards, called "inverted," or "in lure," as in the arms of Seymour or St. Maur, Duke of Somerset.

The LEG OR CLAW OF A BIRD is always taken to be that of an eagle, unless otherwise expressed. It seems to say, "Behold the prey upon others has been preyed upon." If the bird be not one of prey, this symbolism would be changed accordingly. Griffins' legs and those of animals of prey are also occasionally borne in arms, and possess the same signification as that given to the eagle's claw.

FEATHERS. Those used in heraldry are usually of the Ostrich, and signify willing obedience and serenity. Guillim recites that King Stephen bore a plume of feathers with the motto "No force alters their fashion," referring to the fold or fall of the feather recovering itself after being ruffled by the wind. When a feather is borne with its quill transfixing a scroll of parchment, it is called an *escrol*. The latter was borne as a device by Roger Clarendon, natural son of the Black Prince.

The PLUME OF FEATHERS borne as the crest of the Prince of Wales would signify "willing obedience and serenity of mind." The legend as to this crest having been captured in war by the Black Prince lacks support, and is far less

likely than that he adopted it as a crest because so many of his family and predecessors bore either one or two feathers as a badge or cognisance. The original bearing of feathers in heraldry is said to have been derived from the Crusades, but it is highly probable that these and a great many other ancient Eastern symbols, subsequently used in heraldry, were at an early period derived in Western Europe from Egypt, either through the Romans, or later through the Gnostics of the second or third centuries. I have elsewhere remarked, that to biblical references and to associations connected with religion belong a very large number of the emblems found in arms. If one considers the influence of religious sentiment in Europe at the time when heraldry flourished, this conviction is sustained, and one is quite justified in seeking for Scriptural passages in explanation of any ancient coat of arms, in which symbols appear that are capable of being interpreted by such reference. For centuries after the introduction of crests, feathers were often preferred for the decoration of the helmet, and are still retained in military wear in the hats of generals and staff officers.

The FALCON or HAWK was an Egyptian hieroglyphic of the Sun god. In heraldry it signifies one eager or hot in the pursuit of an object much desired. (Sloane Evans) It is represented either close, rising, or volant, *i.e.* flying. Guillim says of the bearing of a hawk seated on its "rest," it may signify a bearer who is ready and serviceable for high affairs, though he lives at rest and unemployed. As to the bearing of *Hawks' or Falcons' lures*, these are supposed to typify one who was fond of the highest pursuits, such as hunting and falconry were considered to be in the palmy days of heraldry. The "lure" was constructed of a pair of wings, so fashioned

as to resemble a bird, and which was thrown up to call back the falcon when it had flown too far afield after the quarry. It would therefore be a "signal to recall the absent from afar."

The KITE was held in honour among the Egyptians in their auguries and predictions.

The PARROT is found in several British arms, and was also frequently borne by Swiss families. I have met with no symbolism for this bearing.

The OWL betokens in arms one who is vigilant and of acute wit. It was the favourite bird of Minerva, and was borne by the Athenians in their standards. Guillim says it intimates that the true and vigilant man never sleeps.

The PEACOCK is the most beautiful and proudest of birds, and might perchance have been first used in heraldry on account of its beauty and pride of carriage. It is the bird of "Juno, Queen of Heaven," and might perhaps have been borne on shield or helm at the tourney or joust, by some favoured knight in reference to his "fair lady Dulcinea of Toboso," whose beauty, he considered, overshadowed that of other dames. It was believed by the ancient races that the peacock was a destroyer of serpents. There are many examples of its use in English heraldry, and English knights would sometimes swear "by the peacock." It also formed one of the principal dishes at State banquets.

The PELICAN feeding her young adorned the altars of many of the temples of the Egyptians, and was emblematical of the duties of a parent. She is represented either "vulning" or wounding her breast with her beak; or, "in her Piety," when surrounded by her young who are being fed by the parent. This symbol has often been used by the Church as the emblem of devoted and self-sacrificing

charity, with the motto "Sic Christus dilexit nos."

The STORK, Guillim states, is the emblem of filial duty, inasmuch as it renders obedience and nourishment to its parents, and it is also the emblem of a grateful man. Sloane Evans mentions that the ancients paid divine honours to this bird. In Egypt the Ibis was sacred to the god Thoth. I think that heraldry has taken the Stork and Heron in the place of the extinct Ibis, which was a similar but smaller bird.

The SWAN, Apollo's bird. The ensign of the poets, and the hieroglyphic of a musical person, because of its anciently supposed habit of singing sweetly in the hour of death. Its heraldic meaning would stand for "a lover of poetry and harmony," or, as Nisbet says, for a learned person.

The CYGNET is a young swan. The Swan's head and neck, gorged with a crown around the latter, is a bearing of high dignity, and has the same signification as the swan itself, and the same may be said respecting the bearing of the heads of other birds and animals.

The GOOSE and DUCK. Guillim says, by flying, running, and swimming under water, these birds have many ways of eluding their enemies and beguiling their hopes. They may therefore be held to signify a man of many resources.

The GANNET is a duck represented without beak or legs and the ancient heralds may have intended this to represent the same meaning which Guillim gave to the footless swallow or *Martlet*, viz., that it represented one who had to "subsist by the wings of his virtue and merit, having little land to rest upon." For this reason he says the *Martlet* is the "difference" given on the shield of a younger brother. Some have supposed that the *Martlet* derived its footless representation in heraldry from the appearance

of the bird of Paradise to ancient Eastern travellers.

The SWALLOW is the harbinger of Spring. "It is a good bearing for one who is prompt and ready in the despatch of his business," says Guillim. It is also an emblem for the bringer of good news.

The COCK is a bird of great courage, always prepared for battle, and it frequently fights to the death. Being the herald of dawn, it is often used as an emblem of watchfulness, and may be used in armory to signify either a hero in the field or an able man in the senate. (Guillim.) It was used in ancient times in Asia Minor as a symbol of the sun. (D'Alviella's "Migration of Symbols.")

The DOVE is a symbol of the Holy Spirit in the Church, and it represents in armory "loving constancy and peace." It was an ensign of the Syrians. When represented with an olive branch in its bill, it is intended to symbolise a harbinger of good tidings, in reference to the dove which returned to Noah. It is found as a symbol of worship, on a jewel discovered at Mycenae by Dr. Schliemann. Doves or pigeons have often proved most useful messengers.

The RAVEN was esteemed as a symbol by the Romans, and it was an ensign of the Danes when they invaded England in circa A.D. 870. The Danes regarded the Raven as being consecrated to Wodin, their God of War, and they held that it possessed necromantic powers as an augur, in determining by its attitudes in flight whether any expedition would be successful or otherwise.

The Cornish Chough is called "the king of crows." "A noble bearing of great antiquity, and may betoken the bearer thereof to be a man of stratagems to the disadvantage of his enemies." This definition is not in direct contradiction to Guillim's other statement, that the Chough might

betoken "watchful activity for friends," as the two qualifications might well be combined. Cardinal Wolsey bore Cornish Choughs. This bird has a red beak and legs in the English variety, which differs from the Austrian Carinthian Chough, the legs and beak of which are yellow.

FISHES are not, says Guillim, of so high a nature as a bearing in coat armour when considered by themselves, but being borne by many persons of royal or noble families, are so ennobled that they are to be preferred before many that are formed of beasts or birds. On the subject of the comparative value of various bearings in armory he observes, "Forasmuch as the living things before named have their virtues worthy of imitation, that it is a chief glory to gentlemen of coat armour to have their virtues displayed under the types and forms of such things as they bear, it is to be wished that each one of them would considerably examine the commendable properties of such significant tokens as they do bear, and do his best to manifest to the world that he hath the like in himself; for it is rather a dishonour than a praise for a man to bear a lion on his shield, if he bear a sheep in his heart or a goose in his brain, being therein like those ships which bear the names of "Victory," "Dreadnought," and the like, though sometimes it speed with them contrary to their titles. A true, generous mind will endeavour that for his self virtues he may be esteemed, and not insist only upon the fame and merit of his progenitors, the praise whereof belongs to them and not to him."

The DOLPHIN was said to be an affectionate fish, and fond of music. It was the crest of the "Dauphin," or heir to the throne of France, who is said to have taken this title from his cognisance. Guillim says, "In this fish is proposed to us an example of charity and kind affection towards our

children."

The LUCE or PIKE is frequently in arms, but I have not found any particular heraldic signification applied to it. This is very probably one of the symbols borrowed from the early Christian Church, in which a fish was used as one of the symbols of Christ, and fish are often found borne in threes in reference to the Trinity. It is often used to show the name of the bearer.

The TORTOISE signifies invulnerability to attack, according to Washbourne's "Heraldry of Crests." Instances are obtainable of the bearing of crabs, lobsters, and of fishing nets, hooks, and baskets. The particular meanings of these have not been defined by any writer, and such bearings may be generally applicable, like hunting gear, to indicate lovers of such forms of useful employment.

The UNICORN is one of the heraldic fabulous beasts. Some writers believed the rhinoceros was changed by tradition into this horned horsé, while others have thought that the narwhale gave rise to the idea. The old writers relate that the Unicorn was famous for its virtue, courage, and strength, and that its horn was supposed to be the most powerful antidote against poisons. It is much used in heraldry, and signifies extreme courage.

The GRIFFIN. This chimerical creature has the head, wings, and talons of an eagle, and the body of a lion. It is one of the principal bearings in heraldry, but chiefly as a crest. Guillim says that it "sets forth the property of a valorous soldier whose magnanimity is such that he will dare all dangers, and even death itself, rather than become captive." It also symbolised Vigilancy, and is found to be as old as the time of the Phoenicians, as shown by Count D'Alviella.

The DRAGON. Our poets feign that Dragons sit brooding on riches and treasures, which are committed to their charge because of their admirable sharpness of sight, and that they are supposed of all other living creatures to be the most valiant. (Guillim.) It therefore stands as the symbol of a most valiant defender of treasure. Hovedon tells us that Cuthred, King of Wessex, bore a gold dragon at the battle of Bureford. King Arthur, it is stated, bore a red dragon. This beast is always represented as being encased in stout scales representing armour. The Tudor sovereigns bore a red dragon as a cognisance, but Queen Elizabeth changed the colour to gold.

The heads of the griffin and the dragon are very frequently used in armory, generally as crests, and each would signify the same as the bearing of the entire body of one of these grim monsters.

The WYVERN is a dragon, represented with two legs only, and with a long tail armed at the point. The tail is "nowed" or twisted into a single loop or knot. Its signification is the same as that of the dragon.

The COCKATRICE was the fabulous king of serpents, although some held that it was only a foot long. It was supposed that its breath and sight were so poisonous and deadly as to kill all who came within their range. It was the emblem of "terror to all beholders." The *Basilisk* is a similar device.

The SPHINX. An ancient statue highly esteemed by the Egyptians, having the face and breast of a woman, and the body of a lion. It was supposed to represent omniscience and secrecy. The Thebans bore a Sphinx in memory of the monster overcome by Ædipus.

The SALAMANDER is an animal resembling a small dragon,

and represented as living in flames of fire. Mr. Andrew Lang states that a Salamander was used as a device by Francis I. of France.

The PEGASUS. Typified "exceeding activity and energy of mind whereby one may mount to honour." (Guillim.) Nisbet presents it in the arms of M'Quin, Scotland. It is well known as an emblem of poetic genius or inspiration.

The HARPY is represented with a virgin's face, neck, and breast, with the body of a lion, and wings and talons of an eagle. It signified Ferocity under provocation.

The MERMAID exhibits the face, neck and breast of a woman and the body and tail of a fish. It is usually represented with dishevelled hair and holding a mirror. It was used as a symbol of eloquence. (Sloane Evans.)

The CENTAUR. This, like many other heraldic figures, was taken from the ancient classics, or more remotely still from ancient Egypt, as it is one of the Egyptian signs of the zodiac. Old writers state that the first warrior seen on horseback was taken to be half man and half beast, and so terrified the enemy that they took flight. Its use in arms is supposed to be applicable to those who have been eminent in the field.

HYDRA. A dragon with seven heads. It is seldom or never found in heraldry, but would signify the conquest of a very powerful enemy.

The PHOENIX. This bird was represented to be as large as the eagle. It was held that only one existed at the same time, and which, according to the ancient writers, lived 500 years, and when her end approached she made her nest, which latter, igniting by the heat of the sun, destroyed her, but out of her ashes arose another phoenix. It was often used of old as an emblem of the Resurrection, sometimes with the motto "Resurgam." It is often used in heraldry.



STAG, HART, BUCK, and DEER. According to Guillim and Upton, these animals are symbolical either of one skilful in music and a lover of harmony, or of one that is politic and well foresees his times and opportunities; or again, of one who is unwilling to assail the enemy rashly, but rather desirous to stand on his own ground honestly than to annoy another wrongfully. These definitions may be summarised briefly to signify Policy, Peace, and Harmony.

HORNS and ANTLERS. The same authority states that these denote in arms, strength and fortitude. They are much used in heraldry, and especially so throughout Germany. A Scriptural reference is, I think, manifested in their being so extensively used in armory. "The horns of the righteous shall be exalted," may well have been the mediaeval intent in bearing such symbols. Count D'Alviella, in his "Migration of Symbols," points out that horns were used as symbols of the Divine power in Assyria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt from the earliest times. There can be no doubt that many of such emblems have found their way into British and Continental heraldry from the remotest times, having been handed down as talismans from antiquity by family and tribal traditions. Although their original symbolisms had been completely forgotten, they were still proudly borne in arms, and new meanings, derived from scriptural or other sources, were attributed to them.

The ESCALLOP SHELL attached to the hood or hat was the pilgrim's emblem in his expeditions to holy places. It was afterwards introduced into armory as signifying one who had made long journeys or voyages to far countries, who had borne considerable naval command, or who had gained great victories, (Washbourne's "Heraldry of Crests.") Guillim speaks of its signification in the latter terms only,

but it is borne for either symbolism, and especially for a successful commander. It was the emblem of Santiago or St. James, and is of frequent occurrence in arms.

OTHER SHELLS, Guillim says, may be regarded as signifying the goodness and wisdom of God to His creatures, in protecting them against dangers, or in other words, they signify the Protection of Providence.

The HEART, Guillim remarks, was regarded by the ancients as signifying a man of sincerity, and such a one as speaks the truth from his heart. It is sometimes used in heraldry in this sense, but more often as the emblem of Charity.

FLAMING HEART. This, says Morgan, is a type of ardent affection.

The HAND is the pledge of Faith, sincerity, and justice. *Two right hands conjoined* denote Union and alliance.

The hand is found as a symbol on a Chaldaen cylinder, as well as at Carthage. (D'Alviella.)

*A red hand* is the usual mark for a baronet if borne on a small inescutcheon.

The ARM signifies a laborious and industrious person. An arm encased in armour denotes one fitted for the performance of high enterprises. (Guillim.)

GAUNTLETS also signify a man armed for the performance of martial enterprise.

The LEG is emblematical of strength, stability, and expedition, especially of the latter, and Guillim assigns the same meaning to the bearing of a Shoe or Foot.

The HUMAN HEAD stands for honour. The heads of "blackamoors" or negroes generally refer to deeds of prowess in the Crusades.

SKULLS and *crossed thigh-bones*, the well-known emblems of mortality, occasionally are found borne in heraldry. The

skull was an emblem borne by the Thracians.

The EYE signifies Providence in Government.

MILLSTONES. Guillim thinks these may signify "the mutual converse of human society," since they are never used singly, but in couples, each standing in need of the other's aid for the performance of its work. The Cross Moline is supposed to represent a mill-rind, and is often called the Miller's Cross or a "Cross Miller."

SCEPTRE. The emblem of justice. (Guillim.)

TRIDENT. The symbol of Maritime dominion.

CROWN. Royal or seigniorial authority; or if a celestial crown is intended, the reference would be to a heavenly reward. (Guillim.)

PASTORAL CROSIER. The emblem of a shepherd's watchfulness over his flock, and denotes episcopal jurisdiction and authority. (Guillim.)

The FINGER RING or the ANNULET is well known as the emblem of fidelity. Joseph was highly honoured by the one given to him by Pharaoh. The Romans are said to have worn a ring as a sign of knighthood, and one is still used at coronations and in some institutions of knighthood.

The LOZENGE, like all other square figures, represents honesty and constancy, and it was also held to be a token of noble birth.

BILLETS. These oblong figures, Guillim states, are representative of letters folded for transmission. He quotes an ancient heraldic manuscript, which defines their signification in the following words: "That their first bearer was a man who obtained credence, knowledge, and faith in his words and deeds, and who was secret in his affairs."

TEXT LETTERS are sometimes borne on shields and I think these may stand for the initials of great battles or tourna-

ments, such as Ascalon, Tournay, or Ashby-de-la-Zouche in the case of the letter Z. Modern heralds have sometimes inscribed the whole name of a battle on the escutcheon of arms.

The PEN, Guillim remarks, is the emblem of the liberal art of writing and of learned employments. He quotes a curious old couplet which refers to the power of parchment, pen, and wax in binding all men in the affairs of life:

"The calf, the goose, the bee,  
The world is ruled by these three."

He says that the INKHORN would bear the same signification as that of the pen. Both have been borne in armory.

The HARP and LYRE. Guillim states the harp was anciently used to signify "one who was of a well-composed and tempered judgment." It is held to mean "Contemplation" when referred to as a poetic symbol, and would have the same meaning in armory. We have various Scriptural references to this instrument, such as

"I will open my dark saying upon the harp."—*Psalm* xlix.

"We hanged our harps upon the willows."—*Psalm* cxxxvii.

Tennyson's lines might also here be fittingly recalled:

"And love took up the harp of life,  
And smote on all the chords with might."

AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS. Guillim, speaking of these, says, 'Agricultural pursuits have always been reckoned in high esteem by all nations, and such implements as are used in husbandry. The artificial and mechanical sciences or

professions are as necessary for man's use and support and traffic of society, as the liberal arts and sciences. These (Agricultural Implements), therefore, are not to be condemned, since they are the express image of trades very behoveful to man, and their exquisite skill issued out of the plentiful fountain of God's abundant spirit. No special signification has been attributed to the bearing of the Harrow, Plough, &c., but the remarks quoted above of our old heraldic philosopher would give to each of these agricultural bearings the meaning of "labouring in the earth and depending upon Providence for the event."

The *Scythe* and *Sickle* express the hope of a fruitful harvest of things hoped for.

LEVELS and PLUMMETS. Guillim says of these, that they are "the type of equity and uprightness in all our actions, which are to be rectified by the rule of reason and justice; for the plummet ever falls right howsoever it be held, and whatever betide a virtuous man, his actions and conscience will be incorrupt and uncontrollable."

CARPENTERS' SQUARES, he says, "are used by workmen, that in all their works there shall nothing be found done either rashly or by adventure, and which teach that men should use the same moderation in the performance of those actions of virtue wherein man's happiness consists." These, then, denote as a symbol, that the bearer would desire to conform all his actions to the laws of right and equity.

HAMMER. He says, "This is an honourable emblem, and may be borne crowned, as in the arms of the ancient London Company of Smiths, inasmuch as the use of iron is more precious and necessary for a commonwealth than gold is, for which reason the Philistines would not allow a smith to dwell among the Israelites, lest they should make them

# Illustrated Heraldic Terms



## BLAZON

**SHIELD:** Azure a cross calvary on three griecees argent, the dexter arm terminating in a sun in splendour or, the sinister in a decrescent argent.

**CREST:** An estoile or.

**MOTTO:** Auxilium meum a Domino.

# Charges

# Illustrated Heraldic Terms

# Beasts of Prey



Fesse



Pale



Bend



Bar



Cross



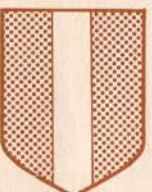
Saltire



Chief



Chevron



Pallet



Pile



Closet



Bendlet



Orle



Chevronel



Inescutcheon



Canton



Gyron



Lozenge



Flaunches



Border



Label



Fret



Bars Gemel



Double Tressure



Bend Cotised



Rampant



Salient



Passant Guardant



Passant Reguardant



Statant



Passant



Lodged



Rampant Combatant



Couchant



Sejant

# Beasts of Chase



Trippant



Statant Guardant



Lodged



Demi



Courant

# Cadency



Label  
1st Son



Crescent  
2nd Son



Mullet  
3rd Son



Martlet  
4th Son



Annulet  
5th Son



Fleur-de-lis  
6th Son



Rose  
7th Son



Cross Moline  
8th Son



Double Quatrefoil  
9th Son

## Tinctures

Or

Argent

Azure

Gules

Vert

Purpure

Sable

Ermines

Ermine

## Furs

## Heraldic Patterns

- A Barry of four
- B Paly of four
- C Bendy of five
- D Barry Bendy
- E Cheveronee
- F Paly Bendy
- G Checky
- H Lozengy

## Divisions of Shield

- A Party per Fesse
- B Party per Pale
- C Party per Bend
- D Party per Saltire
- E Quarterly
- F Per Chevron

swords and spears." The *hammer*, *anvil*, and *pincers* are the chief emblems of the smith's trade. The Martel was a military hammer used in conflict. The double headed Hammer was the chief emblem of Thor.

The ANCHOR signifies succour in extremity, and is also the Christian emblem of hope, in which latter sense it is usually borne in armory. Cosmo de' Medici, Duke of Etruria, bore as a device two anchors, with the motto "Duabus," meaning, it was good to have two holdfasts to trust to. Richard I. once bore as a device one anchor, with the motto "Christus Duce." Other bearings relating to ships, such as rudders, masts, sails, boats, &c., are borne in arms, especially in foreign heraldry. I have not found any symbolisms assigned to these bearings, but there can be little doubt that they were adopted with the intent of commemorating some special action performed, or danger escaped, in connection with the "world of waters."

SHIP, LYMPHIAD, or GALLEY. Such bearings are often met with in British heraldry, and the remarks in the preceding paragraph are also applicable to these. All such symbols would point to some notable expedition by sea, by which perhaps the first bearers had become famous. In the case of the more ancient bearing of all these kinds of simple emblems by old families, they may have been derived by tradition from the earliest times, long anterior to any written records of such families, or to the wearing of coats of arms.

CUBES, SQUARES, or DICE. Guillim says of these bearings, that as they fall right however they be cast, they are emblems of constancy, but he adds, "Dicers who trust their fortunes to them find it otherwise." He says elsewhere that *all square figures*, such as lozenges, signify Constancy. *Chequy*, *Lozengy*, *Gobbonny*, and *Compony* are therefore to be

classed under the same signification. Morgan in his "Sphere of Gentry" says, "Square figures are symbols of Wisdom, and signify Verity, probity, constancy, and equity. The phrase as to "square dealings" perhaps arose from such symbols.

The AXE is the symbol of the execution of military duty, and is also referred to symbolically in the Scriptures.

The PURSE, Guillim ascribes to be the emblem of a frank and liberal steward of the blessings that God has bestowed upon him. It is the official emblem of a treasurer.

TOWER or CASTLE is the emblem of grandeur and society, and has been granted sometimes to one who has faithfully held one for his king, or who has captured one by force or stratagem. There may also be a scriptural reference intended.

BRIDGE. This, according to Guillim, may signify the cares and patient stability of men in magistracy, who must endure the assaults, taunts, and envy of the discontented and vulgar. It may therefore be said to signify a governor or magistrate.

The PILLAR or COLUMN, signifies, says Guillim, Fortitude and Constancy. A serpent coiled round a column would mean wisdom with fortitude.

The SNAKE is the emblem of Wisdom. The Egyptians represented the world by the figure of a serpent biting its tail. The brazen serpent erected by Moses, proves the remote antiquity of the snake as a symbol.

A SCALING-LADDER denotes one who was fearless in attacking, as such is used in warfare only by extremely brave soldiers. Where it is represented placed against a tower, Guillim says it "may put us in mind to stand carefully on our guard who live in this world, as in a castle continually assailed by our spiritual and corporal enemies." Castles and towers are often borne in English heraldry.

CROSSES. These are borne as charges in an infinite variety of forms. The special meaning to be attached to some of the various kinds of crosses can scarcely be determined unless one knows the history of each first assumer. That the Cross in almost every instance had reference to some Christian experience or sentiment, cannot be doubted. Speaking of the Cross, *Potent*, Guillim says, this is formed as the handle of a crutch or support for the aged and feeble, and might therefore indicate one whose support is the Cross. Of the Cross on three degrees or steps, called the Cross of Calvary, he says, that the three steps signify the approach thereto, being by Faith, Hope, and Charity. The Cross Crosslet being crossed at each of the four points, is said to signify "the fourfold mystery of the cross."

TRESTLES and STOOLS. Guillim says these may be taken as a special note of hospitality. Guillim states that the bearing sometimes called a "fess humée" is really a table and not a fess.

CUSHIONS. F. Nichols states that these have been looked upon as marks of authority, and have been borne by several noble families.

ANGELS, CHERUBS, and SERAPHS. Celestial charges in armory denote dignity, glory, and honour. Guillim considers such charges should be borne by an ambassador, or by one who has been the bearer of joyful intelligence, and especially by one who has first planted religion in any country.

The CHERUB is represented as a human or angel's head, supported by a pair of wings, but the seraph possesses three pairs, the pair above the head and the pair beneath being crossed "in saltire," and there is one wing at each side of the head. Guillim adds, "Cherubim are above ordinary angels."

ESTOILLES, or stars with six wavy points. Guillim terms these the emblems of God's goodness, or otherwise of some eminence in the first bearer above the ruder sort of men.

The MULLET is a star of five points, and Guillim holds that this is a falling or fallen star not supposed to be fallen from its high estate, but to denote some Divine quality bestowed from above, whereby men shine in virtue, learning, and works of piety like bright stars on the earth. If this figure is found pierced with a round hole in the centre, it is no longer a Mullet, but a *Spur*. Of this rule there can be little question, as I find that the ancient family of Spurre, of Cornwall, bore a "Mullet pierced," as an evident allusion to their name. A gold spur becomes the dignity of knighthood, and a silver spur for that of an esquire. (Guillim.)

The SUN. Guillim says this is the emblem of Glory and Splendour, and is the fountain of life. Sloane Evans gives the meaning of this bearing to be "absolute authority." One ray of the sun signifies "By the light of Heaven." Tertullian states that the Roman kings had their crowns constructed with points in the shape of the sun's beams, because they were themselves like suns and flaming lights; for the whole world was led by their example.

The MOON was dedicated to the chaste Diana, and symbolised Serene power over mundane actions. The moon was said to bear that sovereignty by night which the sun bore by day.

The CRESCENT or increscent moon was said to signify one who has been "enlightened and honoured by the gracious aspect of his sovereign." It is also borne as the symbol of a "Hope of Greater Glory." In ancient days both the sun and moon were the objects of an adoration, of which some traces are still observable in various rites and customs

throughout the world.

A Crescent and Mullet star of gold, on a green shield, form the ensign of the Turkish Empire, and as such was borne by the Saracens. The Minshuls of Cheshire, whose representative, Sir Michael de Minshul, was at the last Crusade in A.D. 1280, bore in their arms, especially conferred on Sir Michael, a crescent and star. The Hootons of Cheshire, who intermarried with the Minshuls, bore three stars or Mullets on a bend. Heraldry offers very numerous examples of the bearing of Crescents and Mullets, many of which bearings were undoubtedly derived from the Crusades. The Crescent and star are shown by D'Alviella to have been used together as symbols in Asia Minor and Egypt very many centuries before the Turkish conquests.

FIRE. The worship of fire was anciently connected with the universal worship of the sun. Guillim states that its bearing signifies Zeal. It would be difficult to find a more fitting symbol. One may be "consumed with zeal," as by fire!

LIGHTNING. This is said by Chassaneus to have been adopted as a device by Tomyris, Queen of Scythia. Guillim states that it signifies in armory the effecting of some weighty business with great celerity and force. The Roman Eagles were represented grasping in their claws a forked ray of lightning. D'Alviella shows that this is an extremely ancient symbol.

ROCKS signify, says Guillim, Safety, Refuge, and Protection.

The PORTICULLIS is considered in heraldry to signify an effectual protection in emergency, as it was used to guard the entrance to a fortress, and could be suddenly lowered against a surprise attack of the enemy, when there was no time for drawing up the drawbridge, or for closing and barricading the heavy doors.

**HUNTING HORN.** This may have been adopted as a memento of the chase, and might signify one who is fond of high pursuits, as the chase was anciently reckoned, next to war, to be the most noble employment.

**TRUMPET.** Guillim says, "The sound of the trumpet is as the loud, far-reaching voice of the general, and encourages to the fight; this therefore, with the *Drum* and *Fife*, which serve for the direction and encouragement of armies in the field, are emblems well becoming one who has bravely followed their sound in war. The symbolism therefore is a summons to be "ready for the fray."

**CANNON, MORTARS, CANNON BALLS, and GRENADES** are well bestowed on those who have dared their terrors in sieges and battles.

The **SWORD**, Guillim remarks, is a weapon fitted for execution and justice, and he holds that it is the true emblem of military honour, and should incite the bearer to a just and generous pursuit of honour and virtue in warlike deeds. When borne with a cross in the same field it would signify the defence of the Christian faith. Elsewhere he refers to the **Sword** as signifying Government and Justice. The **Cross of St. Paul** consists of a cross-hilted sword.

**ARROWS and ARROW-HEADS.** In the Scriptures arrows are sometimes referred to as emblems of affliction. Guillim affirms that the bearing of arrow-heads is both ancient and honourable; of *Arrows*, he says these are of the number of weapons "destined to avengement," but he afterwards remarks that "*Bows and arrows* may signify a man resolved to abide the uttermost hazard of battle, who to that end has furnished himself to the full." These may be taken to symbolise either "Martial readiness," or, if with a cross, affliction. In English arms the arrow points are usually

shown pointing downwards, but in France they reverse this practice.

**SPEAR or LANCE.** The Romans regarding the use of this weapon as exhibiting the perfection of martial affairs, bestowed it only upon the valiant and well-deserving soldier. It is the emblem of knightly service, and would signify devotion to honour. Spears are sometimes borne in allusion to the crucifixion, together with other similar emblems.

**SPEAR-HEADS or PHEONS.** Guillim says of these bearings, "Being apt and ready to pierce, according to some authors, they betoken a dexterity and nimbleness of wit to penetrate and understand matters of highest consequence." It would be more in keeping with the meaning of all the other similar charges, to ascribe the symbolism of these to be "readiness for military service."

The **SHIELD.** This, says Guillim, is the defence and safeguard of soldiers in war, and serves to honour them by depicting their armorial bearings in time of peace. It signifies "a Defender" when borne of one plain colour in a coat of arms as a special bearing or charge. The shield is often referred to in the Scriptures.

**SADDLES** and also **STIRRUPS** and **SPURS** would, according to Guillim, signify preparedness for active service. The spur was also an emblem to "press onward."

**HORSE SHOE.** The well-known emblem of good luck. One of these was anciently considered to be a sure safeguard against malign influences, and in the rural parts of England, especially Devon and Cornwall, horse shoes may still be seen hung over the doors of cottages and stables as safeguards against evil spirits. It has also been used as a feudal tribute.

**TRUNK OF A TREE.** This was anciently an object of venera-



tion. D'Alviella states that among the Hessians of the eighth century it was the *Simulacrum* of the god Thor.

**FUSIL.** This is shaped very much like the lozenge, but is narrower and slightly longer. It has been stated to denote travel and labour.

**MASCLE.** This is of the shape of a lozenge, but "Voided," i.e. hollowed out in the centre, leaving only the rim of the figure. Guillim remarks, "This is the mesh of a net, which in Holy Writ is the hieroglyphic for persuasion, whereby men are induced to virtue and verity, and so may seem after some sort to be caught." Sir John Ferne says, they may signify, "when borne in a red shield, the bearer to have been most prudent and politic in the stratagems of war, for that colour is dedicated to Mars."

**SHACKLEBOLT** (or *Fetterlock*). Guillim says, this, being one of the emblems of victory, is an honourable bearing in armory, and may well be borne by one who in the wars has taken his enemy prisoner, or for one who by his prowess can fetch off with strength, or by his charity redeem, any of his fellow-soldiers in captivity. It is generally used in armory with the latter signification. Sir Walter Scott represents Richard I. bearing the Shacklebolt as his device, when proceeding to the release of Ivanhoe.

**WATER BOUGETS** are said to have been conferred on those who had brought water to an army or to a besieged place. They represent the ancient manner of carrying water in skins.

**CATHARINE WHEEL.** This was said to have been used in the martyrdom of St. Catharine, and therefore it is the emblem of one who is prepared to undergo great trials for the Christian faith.

**ESCARBUNCLE.** This is the symbol of supremacy, and is of great antiquity. It is generally accepted, says Sloane Evans, as representing a brilliant gem.

**BUCKLES,** in armory are considered ancient and honourable bearings, and signify victorious fidelity in authority. They are of various shapes, such as round, square, oval, and lozenge-shaped.

**MAUNCH** or **SLEEVE.** This is a lady's sleeve of a very ancient pattern, and evidently became used in heraldry from the custom of the knights who attended tournaments wearing their ladies' sleeves as *gages d'armour* in the lists. No particular meaning has been ascribed to it as a bearing, but we may feel sure that each knight that adopted it said, "For my lady's sake." This and many other tournament devices have been introduced into armory direct from the tourney lists, and probably because of their having been borne triumphantly in great tournaments.

The **CLARION** or **REST.** The very nature of this bearing has been hotly disputed, and, to use an expression of Mr. Planché's, "has been the cause of much inkshed." I think, however, that Planché has fully established the fact that this represents the ancient clarion, and that it was neither the rest for a lance, nor an organ "Suffle." If it be accepted as a clarion, it would have the same signification as the trumpet, before referred to.

**BEACONS** or **CRESSETS.** Formerly each county possessed one or more beacons, in order to arouse all the country in the event of an invasion. They signify one who is watchful or who gave the signal in time of danger.

**CHAINS,** when borne alone, or upon animals, represent a reward for acceptable and weighty service. They are often

conjoined with crowns and collars, and would mean that the bearer of such symbols had placed a chain of obligation on those whom he had bravely served. For the same reason chains and collars are marks of honour in the orders of knighthood, as well as for sheriffs and mayors.

**FUSIL OF YARN.** This is of a different form to the Fusil before referred to. It is a hank of yarn with the spindle within, and is borne by the Trefusis—Lord Clinton's—family, evidently as an allusive bearing. It is of great antiquity. Morgan states that "Negotiation" is the meaning that has been assigned to this figure.

**COVERED CUP.** This charge is borne by the Butler family, in evident allusion to their family name, which latter again alludes to the office of king's butler, which is said to have been originally held by the head of this family. Other *Covered and open Cups* are sometimes representative of the Chalice used in the Communion or "the Mass," just as the *Torteaux* or red roundels borne by the Courtenays represent the Eucharistic "Manchet-cake" or water used in the Roman Catholic Church, and which alone, without the Chalice, is presented to the laity.

The **FRET** has been termed "the heraldic true lover's knot." It consists of a mascle, behind or through which, two lines stand interlaced in the form of a saltire. This is really a bearing of nearly the same form as when a shield is borne "fretty," which latter is a lattice-work arrangement of interlaced pieces. A fretty shield consists throughout of a series of apparent mascles, or meshes of a net, and Planché inclines to the belief that a net is intended by this armorial figure. Guillim's ruling as to the meaning of the net would still apply here, and, like the mascles, the fret or fretted shield

would signify "Persuasion." When taken with the symbolism of the colours, such bearings are full of interest and dignity. We find in Froissart that the fret was so much valued, that in Edward III.'s French war, Lord Audeley conferred on his four chief followers his golden fret, to be borne within their arms, on a red ground, in memory of their great assistance to him in that war. Lord Audeley's own arms consisted of a red shield bearing a gold fret.

**DIAPER.** This is a fanciful tracery of lines on the shield, which was formerly used when representing arms on stained glass. These lines are formed of circles, squares, &c., within which were small flowers, stars, and other minute objects. This tracery has caused some confusion to the decipherers of ancient bearings.

**GAMMADION** or *fylfot*. Planché cannot account for the origin of this figure, but said it is found introduced into heraldry at a very early period. D'Alviella, however, shows clearly that it is one of the earliest symbols of the world—as old as the Egyptian "flying disc"—and that it has travelled around the whole earth among all races, and from the very dawn of civilisation. It was, he says, the emblem of felicity. This zigzag decoration was constantly used by the Greeks in their costumes, architectural decorations, and pottery. It was used by the Chinese, Japanese, Thibetans, Hindoos, Celts, Franks, Saxons, Fins, and Romans, and by the Yucatan of North America, as well as by the Hittites, but curiously enough it is not met with either in Egypt, Assyria, or Chaldaea. Mr. Andrew Lang asks, "Was it brought in a migration of which there is no evidence, or was it separately evolved?"

**GUTTES** or *drops*. These represent according to their

colours various liquids, which are termed and signify as follows:—

Yellow . . .	Gutté d'or . . .	Drops of gold.
Blue . . .	Gutté de larmes . . .	Drops of tears.
Green . . .	Gutté d'olive . . .	Drops of oil.
White . . .	Gutté d'eau . . .	Drops of water.
Black . . .	Gutté de poix . . .	Drops of pitch.
Red . . .	Gutté de sang . . .	Drops of blood.

These guttés are sometimes used for the purpose of differing.” As we know that boiling pitch was often poured down upon the assailants of castles, I consider that this symbolism refers to its first bearer having performed a daring assault under a cloud of such drops rained down upon him.

ROUNDLES. The old heralds have attached various names and significations to these round figures. When of gold they were called Bezants, and represented ancient Byzantine coins. This bearing has been said to denote “one who had been found worthy of trust and treasure.” The white roundle is called a *Plate*, and denoted “generosity.” The green was called a *Pomme*, and had the same signification as the apple, when purple it was called a *Golpe*, and “denoted a wound”; when blue it was “a *Hurt* or wortleberry”; when black it was “a *Pellet*, *Ogress*, or *Gunstone*,” and represented a cannon ball; when red it was called *Torteau*, and signified the communion wafer or “Manchet-cake”; when Tawney it was called an *Orange*, and signified a tennis-ball. Such are the terms generally applied by our ancient heralds, who in this respect are often in agreement.

The FOUNTAIN. Before leaving the subject of roundles, I should refer to this figure, which is also considered to be one of the roundles. It is represented crossed with wavy

bars of blue and white in order to represent water. It signifies a fountain or spring.

The WHIRLPOOL is a circular voluted figure occupying the whole of the shield.

The WHEEL is the emblem of Fortune. The *winged wheel* was anciently used as a symbol of motion among the Greeks. (D'Alviella's “Migration of Symbols.”)

The CORNUCOPIA or Horn of Plenty is the ancient symbol of the bounty of Nature's gifts, and would possess the same signification in heraldry. It has been used in England as a crest, and is borne in the arms of Peru.

CHAPLETS and WREATHS. These have been worn of various kinds from the earliest times. A wreath of wild olives was the reward of the Olympic games, of laurel leaves in the Pythian, of parsley in the Nemean, and of pine-twigs in the Isthmic games. The Romans gave a wreath of grass to individual soldiers who had performed a deed of special valour in the field. This was supposed to be made of grass plucked from the field of battle.

The TRIUMPHAL WREATH was composed of laurel leaves accompanied with berries. The laurel was consecrated by the Romans to Apollo. A laurel wreath was worn in token of victory by the Roman emperors during their magnificent triumphal entries into Rome. (Guillim.)

LAUREL LEAVES. Guillim says that these leaves were considered in ancient times as remedies against poison, and were used as tokens of peace and quietness. Laurel branches were held in honour in the temples of ancient Greece.

The CIVIC WREATH was of oak leaves and acorns, tied together with a ribbon. It was given to him who saved a brother citizen's life, but in modern times it has been ascribed emblematically to one who has shown the larger civic virtue

of patriotism in defence of his native land.

The FLORAL CHAPLET is generally shown with green leaves, and with four roses at equal distances from each other. It is the crown of joy, and award of admiration.

GARLANDS of FLOWERS were worn at weddings, festivals, and feasts in that springtime of the world, the ancient Classic times. The wreath was often worn around the neck, in order that the scent of the flowers might be fully enjoyed.

Nisbet quotes an ancient Latin writer, who says that all flowers are the symbols of hope, but they are oftener used as emblems of joy

OAK TREE, ACORNS, and OAK LEAVES. The Oak holds the first place amongst trees, and is said to signify Antiquity and Strength. Wreaths of oak leaves were consecrated to Jupiter, and the tree itself was held sacred by the Greeks. A great deal might be written about the sacred trees of antiquity, including the "Tree of Life" and the "Tree of Knowledge." Certain trees have been held in high veneration from the earliest time, both in Europe and Asia. The ash was particularly venerated by the Saxons.

The cedars of Lebanon are scripturally referred to as being emblems of stately beauty, and they were carved as symbols within the Temple of Solomon.

OLIVE BRANCH or LEAVES are the emblems of Peace and Concord. The Dove brought back an olive branch to Noah.

The PALM is the emblem of Victory, Justice, and Royal honour. All the victorious princes in olden time when returning in triumph from mighty enterprises bore palm branches. David wrote, "The righteous shall flourish as the palm-tree." In armory the palm branch is often used as the symbol of a victor.

The CYPRESS, PINE, and YEW are held to be emblematical

of Death, but D'Alviella states that among the Egyptians these evergreen trees symbolised Hope in an eternal life beyond the tomb.

The PINE CONE is stated by Count D'Alviella to have been an emblem of "Life," amongst the ancient Semitic races, the same as the CRUX ANSATA or key-cross among the Egyptians.

ACACIA branches or leaves signify Eternal and affectionate remembrance.

WOODBINE LEAVES are, says Guillim, the type of love, which injures nothing it clings to.

IVY LEAVES. Morgan gives their definition to be "Strong and lasting friendship—*Neque mors separabit.*" The Ivy and Vine were by the Romans consecrated to Bacchus, the Myrtle to Venus, the Poplar to Hercules, Wheat-ears to Ceres, and Reeds to the river gods.

BAY LEAVES. It is generally understood that the wreath of bay was that which was anciently conferred on the poet, and it is also applicable to other distinguished writers, but Mr. Grant Allen considers that the bay was in ancient times the victor's laurel. Modern usage has established the distinction here stated.

HOLLY. This evergreen was used to adorn temples and sacred places, and its name is derived from the word holy. Morgan says, these leaves are emblems of truth.

The BROOM plant or PLANTA GENISTA is the emblem of humility, and was the badge of the Plantagnet family, who probably derived their surname from their badge, as was the case of many others who had adopted striking cognisances, before the surname had become settled as an affix to the Christian name.

The POMEGRANATE fruit is, according to D'Alviella, the symbol of fertility and abundance. It is borne in the arms

of Granada, and was used as a badge by Katharine of Aragon. Henry VIII. bore this badge "impaled" or divided with his own badge of a rose, at various tournaments.

APPLES, PEARS, and OTHER FRUIT, Morgan says, signify Liberality, Felicity, and Peace.

The WHEAT GARB or SHEAF, says Guillim, signifies "Plenty," and "that the first bearer did deserve well for his hospitality." It is, however, held by other writers to mean that the "Harvest of one's hopes" had been secured, and I hold that this, the higher symbolism, should, by Guillim's own ruling, be accepted here.

WHEAT-EARS, in the Scriptures, are referred to as emblems of the faithful, and were probably so intended when first borne in arms.

The RED ROSE, according to the old poets, signified and expressed "Beauty and grace," and is reckoned the first amongst flowers. The old name of Rosamund signifies "Rose of the world." As before stated, all flowers are held to be typical of Hope, and also of Joy.

The WHITE ROSE was the type of Love and Faith. Count D'Alviella states that the Rosette was a solar symbol among the most ancient races.

The LILY is the emblem of Purity, or "whiteness of soul," and by the Roman Catholic Church was ascribed to be the special emblem of the Virgin Mary. Ferdinand, king of Spain, instituted a special order under the name of the Lily. It is borne in arms under various colours. Some writers have derived the armorial lily from the Egyptian lotus, but the fleur-de-lis is undoubtedly a golden lily. It is borne in the French arms on a blue shield,—blue being the colour ascribed to the Virgin,—so that the "Most Catholic country,"—one of whose kings was canonised as St. Louis,—bore a thoroughly

emblematical armorial ensign.

The TREFOIL, or three-leaved grass, is frequently used in heraldry. This is the *Shamrock*, and Guillim says it signifies Perpetuity, or that the just man shall never wither. It is the floral device of Ireland.

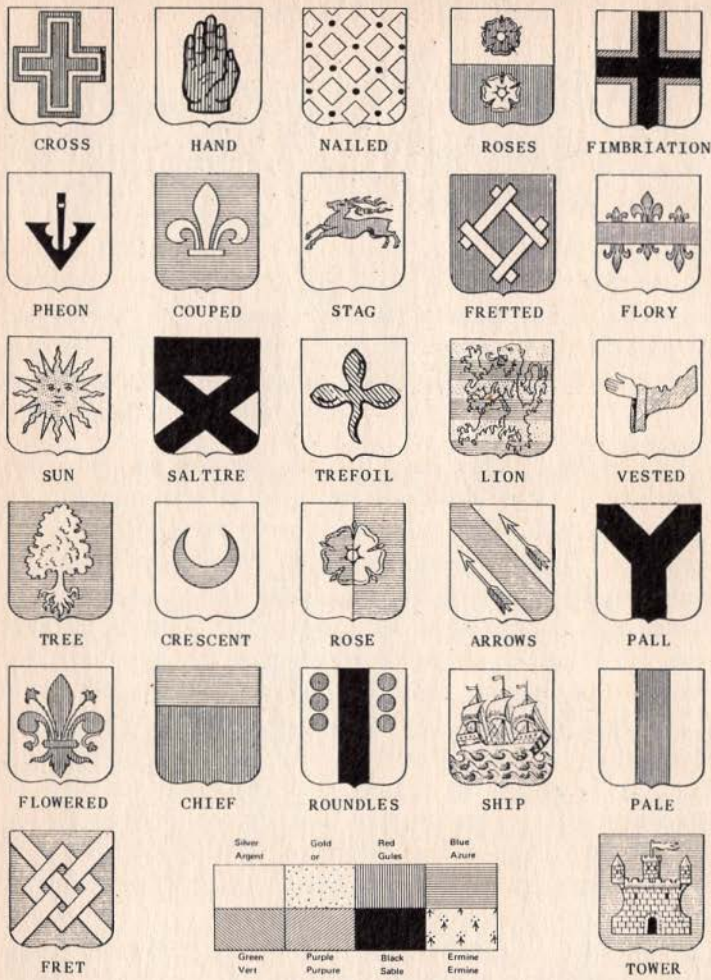
But wit perceives  
The triple leaves  
And cries, "Oh do not sever,  
A type that blends  
Three godlike friends —  
Love, Valour, Wit, for ever".

QUATREFOIL. This, says Nichols, signifies the Primrose, which of all other flowers brings good tidings of spring.

CINQUEFOILS. Like all other flowers these signify Hope and Joy. Cinquefoils were held by the ancient heralds to represent the following flowers, according to the colours in which they happened to be borne: The yellow cinquefoil was the Primrose; the white represented the Jessamine; the red was the Rose, the blue was the Periwinkle; the black, the "Dawle"; the green, the five-leaved grass; the purple, the Buglass; the Tawney, the Stock Gilly-flower—"July-flower"; and the Sanguine, the Poppy. The Huitfoil is the mark of Cadency for the ninth son. The French heralds simply named the colour of each cinquefoil without ascribing it to be any particular flower, and this course is followed by all other modern heralds.

MARIGOLD or "Golden Mary," This flower, Morgan states, was the emblem of Devotion and Piety.

PINKS and CARNATIONS are often borne in arms, and signify Admiration. I think that most of the floral heraldic bearings were first adopted as tournament devices, and afterwards



A feature of heraldic art in the seventeenth century was the development of an engraving system which, while representing coats of arms in black and white, also indicated, through use of a standard convention, the true tinctures of heraldic fields and charges.

continued as armorial emblems. Daisies, and especially the garden varieties, are often used as devices for the name of Margaret or Marguerite. Mr. Andrew Lang mentions that Queen Marguerite de Valois placed daisies on her book-covers. Margaret, Countess of Richmond, and mother of Henry VII., also adopted the same device.

The CHAPEAU or Cap of Maintenance is sometimes borne as a charge in the shield, but oftener underneath the crest. Every text-book on heraldry supplies the distinctions observed with regard to the bearing of variously designed helmets, together with their owners' crests, and also as to the rule respecting supporters. Every one is permitted to display a "mantling" with his arms if he chooses to do so. This mantling appears to represent the original coat of arms, as it now takes its colours from those of the shield, and, in some instances—where it is shown turned back at the sides—we find charges from the shield reproduced upon the mantling.

The HELMET itself, as a bearing within the shield, is held to denote Wisdom and security in defence.

CRESTS. The crest was worn by the knight on his helmet, who often thus reproduced the chief charge in his coat or shield of arms. This process, however, was sometimes reversed in practice, as during the growth of heraldry the crest which had been borne on the helmet was sometimes also adopted as the sole armorial bearing.

The MURAL CROWN was of gold, adorned with battlements, and was given by the Romans to him who first mounted the breach in the walls of a besieged town or fortress. It is also applicable to the defender of a fortress, or as a token of civic honour.

The NAVAL CROWN was of gold, and ornamented with the prows and sterns of ancient galleys. This was usually

awarded to the one who first boarded an enemy's ship. It is sometimes now awarded in the arms of distinguished naval commanders.

**TORCH.** The bearing of a torch in arms is for a zealous man who has engaged in some signal service.

The **SPHERE** possesses a geographical or scientific reference. Archimedes is said to have directed that one should be engraved on his tomb.

**FLINT STONES** and **STEEL.** These ancient means for producing fire have been borne as denoting readiness for zealous service. John, Earl of Flanders used as a device a flint stone and steel. His son Philip the Good founded the order of the Golden Fleece, the collar of which order bears flint stones and steels.

**MEN** and **WOMEN** are often borne in the shield of arms, as well as in the crest. The symbolisms of such bearings are decipherable in many ways, but some of these cannot now be even a matter for speculation. *Moors* or *Moors' heads*, as I mentioned before, are supposed generally to refer to conflicts with the Saracens.

A **MOLE** is borne by both the Twistletons and the Mitfords. A *Rat* occurs in the crest of the Dawsons. A *Seal* is borne by Fennor, of Sussex. A *Monkey* is borne as a crest by the Fitzgeralds. No symbolism has been attached to these bearings, and the reason for their adoption is unknown.

A **LAMB'S FLEECE** is appropriately borne by the Jason family.

The **TENT** or **PAVILION** was another of the emblems of readiness for martial employment. "To your tents, O Israel!"

The **HOURLY-GLASS** is the emblem of the flight of time and man's mortality.

A **BOOK**, if open, signifies Manifestation, and if closed,

Counsel. (Morgan's "Sphere of Gentry.")

**INSECTS.** The only symbolisms that have been attached to any one of these besides the Grasshopper, Ant, and Bee, referred to previously, is to the *Butterfly*, the Greek emblem of Psyche, or the Soul. This is occasionally borne in heraldry.

**PILGRIMS' WALLETS** and **PALMERS' STAVES** have been borne in reference to early pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

**PASSION NAILS** are borne in token of poignant suffering undergone by the first bearer. Three black passion nails piercing a red human heart were borne by Sir R. Logan, who accompanied Lord James Douglas to Jerusalem with the heart of King Robert Bruce.

**BELLS** are occasionally borne in arms, and signify the supposed power of church bells to disperse evil spirits in the air, and as to their invocation of guardian saints and angels. A *Hawk's bells* would denote one who feared not to signalise his approach in either peace or war. Hewlett, in his "Armour of the Middle Ages," states that bells were sometimes worn on the horses used at tournaments.

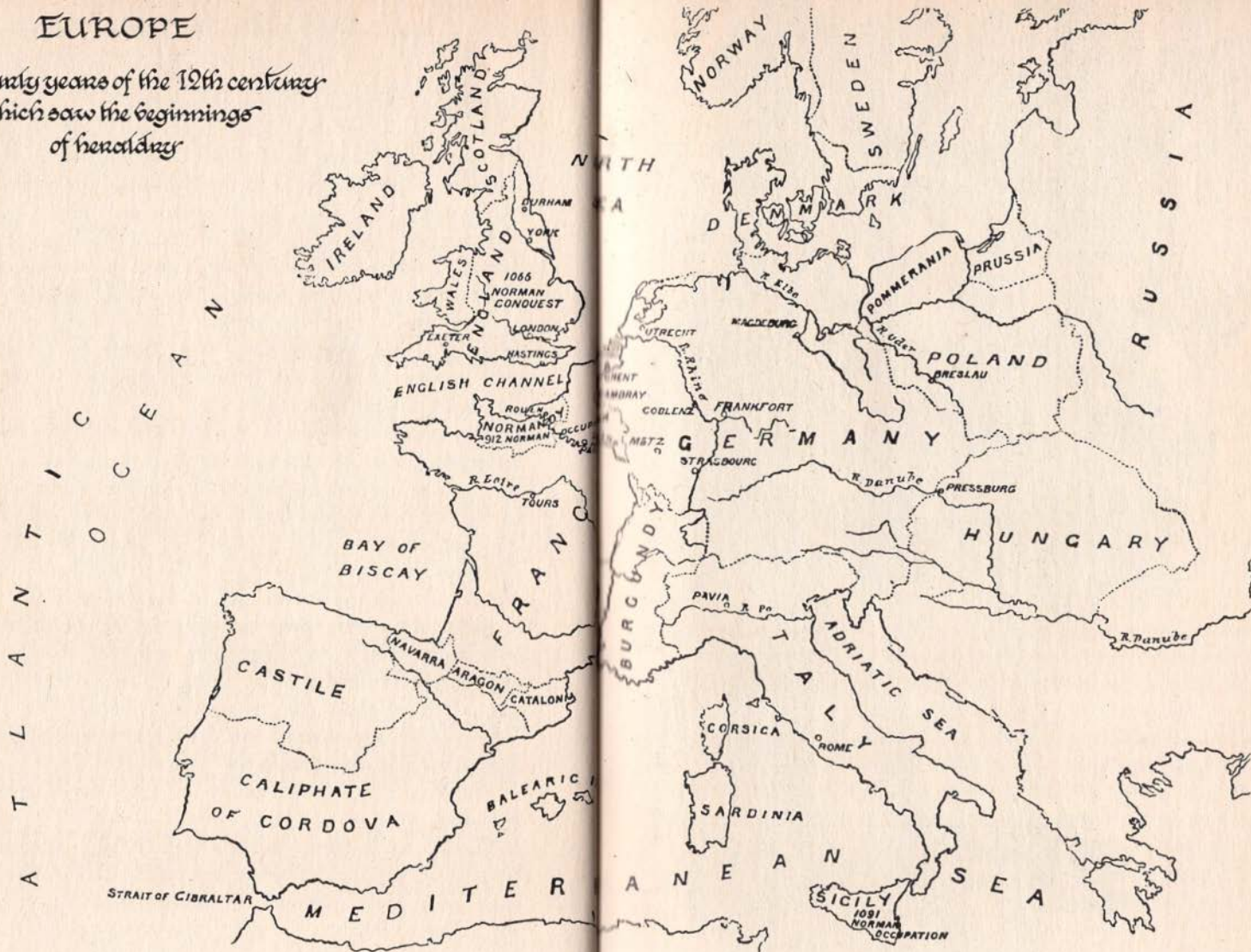
**KEYS** are often borne as emblems of guardianship and dominion, chiefly in connection with the Roman Church, with special reference to St. Peter. The ancient arms of the See of Rome show the keys crossed, being then called the "keys of life and death," but the *Crux Ansata* of the ancient Egyptians also represented the "key of life."

**MUSICAL PIPES** and **TABORS** are emblems of festivity and rejoicing.

**FLAGS** and **BANNERS** borne on the shield, or as crests, are usually adopted in reference to some special action in which they have been captured, or otherwise as a signal reward for gallant service. They are also sometimes found borne with religious emblems.

# EUROPE

in the early years of the 12th century  
which saw the beginnings  
of heraldry





*Background to Irish Heraldry*

In the early chapters of this work the reader will have learned something of the origin, history and significance of symbols and emblems as they apply in a general way to heraldry. In the following pages we will concern ourselves with the question of symbols and emblems as they occur in the context of Irish heraldry.

Heraldry is, of course, simply one facet of Irish civilization — a civilization remotely associated with the Mediterranean and which to-day we share with several western European countries. The shared common inheritance of that civilization includes a copious fund of old and traditional symbols, some of which, in due course, came to be used in Irish heraldry.

When considering the practice of heraldry among native families, it should be remembered that feudalism had little or no effect on Gaelic society. Tournaments and tournaments were unknown in Ireland as were the mediaeval heralds who organised and regulated them. Consequently, the intensely personal system of heraldry so characteristic of countries like France, England and Scotland is foreign to native Irish heraldic practice.

At the same time as feudalism was providing Europe with a political framework, Celtic Ireland was divided into a large number of small states or septs, each ruled by a king. Such a political arrangement, not unnaturally, gave rise to a good deal of warfare between one district and the next. A feature of that warfare apparently was the use of emblematic standards in battle.

Ireland, according to Bernard Burke, author of the *General Armory of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland*, claims a higher antiquity in the use of banners and standards than any other



European country, penetrating even beyond the Christian era. The learned author goes on to say that the minor families were occasionally standard-bearers to more outstanding families and that in some instances the office of standard-bearer was hereditary. References to such standards were found by that outstanding antiquary of the last century, John O'Donovan, in an old Irish manuscript:—

#### Standard of O'Sullivan

I see mightily advancing in the plain,  
The banner of the race of noble Finghin,  
His spear with venomous serpent entwined,  
His host all fiery champions.

#### Standard of O'Loughlin

In O'Loughlin's camp was visible a fair satin sheet,  
To be at the head of each battle, to defend in the field,  
A fruit bearing oak, defended by a chieftain justly,  
And an anchor blue, with fold of a golden cable.

It is the projection on to a shield of the emblems and devices found on old gaelic war standards that lies at the root of many Irish coats of arms. It should be observed that old Irish arms are noticeably lacking in heraldic ordinaries which are such a feature of classical European heraldry. Frequently, Irish coats consist simply of a single emblem such as a boar, stag, lion or tree with little duplication or triplication of such emblems.

Such arms as were used in Gaelic Ireland tended to be representative of the community. They were expressive of a common cause and unity of effort in time of war. Moreover, the king of a gaelic district or tuath, as it was known, was not a hereditary ruler but was elected from a small dynastic group within the community by the Oireachtas or legislative council. Such representative use of arms has given rise to the popular term "clan" arms.

### *Principal Irish Heraldic Symbols explained*



According to mediaeval treatises on heraldry, a symbol is defined as something which conveys one thing to the eye and another thing to the mind. Of all the symbols occurring in Irish heraldry, perhaps the one which catches the eye most frequently is the symbol of the tree. In some instances the tree is depicted whole, in others only a branch or stump or leaves are shown.

What is the significance of the tree as found on Irish coats of arms? Why does the tree figure so prominently as an emblem in Irish heraldry? Are there some varieties of tree which are featured more often than others? Is there a different symbolism attaching to different trees?

To attempt to answer these questions we must travel back in time, well beyond the limits of Irish history, deep into the Celtic past — back to the heyday of the druids in fact. The druids were the long white-robed priests who kept the secrets of Celtic religion and culture very much to themselves. They were famous for their sacred groves and tree-cult.

We have an account of one such sacred grove — at Massalia (Marseilles) in ancient Gaul which Julius Caesar felled because it interfered with the fortifications of the city. Nobody was prepared to touch a tree in the grove and Caesar had to use an axe himself on one of the oaks before he could persuade anyone

to begin the work of desecration. Among the trees numbered in the grove were the holly-oak, the common oak and the alder.

Under the gaelic code of laws, known as the brehon law, the death penalty was demanded for the unlawful felling of certain trees. This ancient edict is commemorated in one of the triads of Ireland:

Three unbreathing things paid for only with breathing things:  
An apple tree, a hazel tree, a sacred grove.

The site of one of the most celebrated oak groves of early Ireland was at Rathcroghan, a flat-topped circular mound almost seventy feet in diameter. Here, in the shadow of the great oaks, the early rulers of the West of Ireland made their home. In later times their royal successors, the O'Connors, were inaugurated kings of Connaught quite close to the great rath.

According to the brehon code, trees were divided into various categories depending on their nobility. Seven of the better known trees featured in the first category were known as *Chieftain Trees* and their nobility was explained as follows:

Oak: its size, handsomeness, and its pig-fattening acorns.  
Hazel: its nuts and wattles.  
Apple: its fruit, and bark suitable for tanning.  
Yew: its timber, used for household vessels, breast-plates, etc.  
Holly: its timber, used for chariot shafts.  
Ash: its timber, used for shafts of weapons and regal thrones.  
Pine: its timber, used for making roof beams.

In Celtic tradition the druids were credited with the magical power of transforming trees into warriors and sending them into battle. This tradition is given literary effect in a poem entitled *The Battle of the Trees*. This poem is one of deep symbolic

content and it may not be out of place here to quote some verses from it:

From my seat at Fefynedd, a city that is strong,  
I watched the trees and green things hastening along.

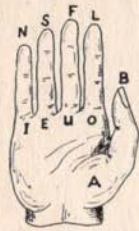
The alders in the front line began the affray,  
Willow and rowan-tree were tardy in array.

With foot-beat of the swift oak, heaven and earth rung;  
Stout guardian of the door, his name on every tongue.

By far the most significant aspect of tree-culture, so to speak, in pre-historic Ireland, is the fact that our most ancient alphabet was formed from the initial letters of a series of trees. Consequently, this alphabet is known as the "tree" alphabet. The "tree" alphabet consisted of thirteen consonants and five vowels. As the druidic year was a lunar one, each consonant and thus each tree was assigned a month. Trees, therefore, were at once cast in the role of alphabet and calendar.

#### Celtic Tree Alphabet and Calendar

B Beth (birch):	Dec. 24 - Jan. 21
L Luis (rowan):	Jan. 22 - Feb. 18
N Nion (ash):	Feb. 19 - Mar. 18
F Fearn (alder):	Mar. 19 - April 15
S Saille (willow):	Apr. 16 - May 13
H Huath (hawthorn):	May 14 - June 10
D Dair (oak):	June 11 - July 8
T Tinne (holly):	July 9 - Aug. 5
C Coll (hazel):	Aug. 6 - Sept. 2
M Muin (vine):	Sept. 3 - Sept. 30
G Gort (ivy):	Oct. 1 - Oct. 28
P Pethboc (little elder):	Oct. 29 - Nov. 25
R Ruis (great elder):	Nov. 26 - Dec. 22



It has been said, indeed with some justification, that human civilisation really began when man started to use his hands. In druidic times in Ireland the open hand was used as a kind of keyboard of the letters in the "tree" alphabet. The tops of the fingers and the joints were used to represent the consonants, with the vowels coming at the

base of the thumb and other fingers. Our current phrase "to have something at one's finger-tips" recalls this ancient Irish method of expressing language.

The language in question was known as ogham and was used in Ireland and Britain for several centuries before the introduction of the Latin ABC. The origin, according to the Book of Ballymote, is linked with "Ogma Sun-face son of Breas" — the name of one of the early gods of the Gael. Interestingly, the prominent finger-tip letters BLN form the root consonants of Belinus, the celtic sun-god. Considerations such as these tend to suggest a link between the symbol of the open hand and the sun.

As a mark or sign, the open hand is of considerable antiquity and its use rather widespread. In India, a golden hand was the symbol of labour and the productive power of the sun. In Europe, during the early centuries of Christianity, God the Father was invariably represented by the open right hand. Cut into one of the arms of the high cross of St. Muredach at Monasterboice in Co. Louth is the figure of a beautiful open hand enclosed in a circle. The latter may well be an example of a very old symbol in a relatively new context.

To our remote forebears the palm and outstretched fingers reminded them of the sun and its rays. The old sun-worshippers of Mexico were in the habit of dipping their hands in red pigment and pressing the moistened palms against the walls of

their temples. An early native example of the use of the red hand device is afforded by the seal of Odonis (Hugh) O'Neill, King of the Irish of Ulster, 1344-1364.



There is an old saying to the effect that the month of March "comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb". Actually, the third month of the Celtic lunar year ran from 19 Feb. to 18 Mar. and introduced the "lion" season lasting to early summer. Thus, the lion represented the second of the four seasonal beasts of the Celtic calendar.

The use of the lion as a heraldic symbol came naturally as it were. The word *leomhan* was the gaelic term not merely for a lion but also for a great warrior or chieftain:

*An leomhan do-bheir an chraobh*

The lion-warrior who sweeps the prize

It is not unusual in old Irish romance tales to find vivid descriptions running to a full page of text of such lion-warriors.

As chief of brute creation, the lion has been regarded both with awe and curiosity down through the ages. It was looked upon as the most dignified and bravest in the face of danger. Ancient writers recount that when it is hunted it does not hide itself nor does it flee to well-protected, isolated places, but sits in an open space where it may be seen and there prepares to await the enemy and defend itself.

The lion, we are informed in old treatises on heraldry, is a long-lived creature and when it walks it moves its right foot first, taking care to protect the claws, for it uses these as a man does his sword. When it is enraged it strikes the ground with its tail.

Its home is in the mountains and high places. When it sleeps its eyes remain open — a belief which accounts for some fine examples of leonine sculpture at entrance gates around Ireland.

To bear a lion on one's shield signifies, according to old heraldic works, bravery, ferocity and liberality, these being derived from the good nature and qualities of the lion.



In a niched altar-style tomb face in the Dominican Abbey in Strade, Co. Mayo is cut a finely sculptured male figure, the hands (upraised to shoulder height, palms forward) and feet all showing single indentations — clearly a representation in stone of the person of Christ. The face is noticeably full of light: on the head, over

the forehead, is a fleur-de-lys — the flower of light.

The symbolism of the fleur-de-lys appears to be grounded on a theme in the writings of one of the early fathers of the Church, namely Tertullian, where he speaks of the stem of the lily as representing the Virgin with the flower issuing therefrom signifying Christ. Tertullian in turn seems to be giving expression to an utterance of Isaiah in which the Hebrew prophet speaks of a flowering rod stemming from Jesse upon which the spirit of God is destined to rest. Whatever the precise origin of the symbol, the fleur-de-lys, typifying the central figures of Christianity, has over the centuries enjoyed a special place in ecclesiastical symbolism.

The conventional fleur-de-lys is generally regarded as a stylised form of the iris or lily. The lily, of course, is also found as a charge in heraldry but to a comparatively lesser extent — which provides a neat example of the superiority of the symbolic over the natural form.



Of the great variety of visual motifs in use among the Celts there is scarcely one more typically Celtic than the emblem of the boar. It is hardly surprising then that this emblem, in one form or another, is such a favourite heraldic symbol on the shields and crests of Irish families.

That the cult of the boar was widespread in the past in Ireland may be gleaned from the number of place-names containing the element *torc*, the gaelic term for a boar. As examples we would instance Torc Mountain near Killarney, Kanturk in Co. Cork and Inishturk, an island off the Co. Mayo coast.

Boar-hunting was a favourite pastime among our remote ancestors. It is an ever-recurring theme in Irish romantic literature. One of the best known tales from the Fenian cycle sagas ends in a fatal boar hunt. It is entitled *The Pursuit of Dermot and Grainne*.

In essence this tale recounts the struggle between Fionn and Dermot O'Dyna, two of the most celebrated heroes of the Fianna, for the hand of Grainne, daughter of the High-King. Dermot refuses to fight Fionn in single combat, so the latter contrives a chase of the notorious wild boar of Ben Bulban. Dermot is fatally gashed in the course of the chase and the suggestion is that Fionn had assumed the form of the notorious boar to overcome his rival.

Adding to the mystique attaching to the boar was the notion, current in Irish mythology, that the dead heroes feasted on pork meat in the Otherworld. Here the cauldron of the Dagda, the supreme deity of the Celts, provided a never-failing supply of choice porcine meat. Mythologically speaking, therefore, it can be said that pork was the food of the Celtic gods.

In battle, Celtic warriors wore miniature replicas of the boar on their persons, presumably as a charm against injury and death. From Celtic Britain comes an oblong shield with the outline figure of a boar cut into the metal almost in heraldic fashion, although this usage of the emblem cannot have been for purposes of identification. A number of examples of the use of this symbol on coins can be seen in our museums.

Archaeology has yielded up a number of pieces of Celtic art which add considerably to our understanding of the symbolism of the boar. In the Celtic division of the museum of St. Germain-en-laye in France is a sculpture of a god, the bust charged in relief with a highly bristled passant boar. Early peoples were apparently struck by the similarity of the bristles on the neck of the boar to the rays of the sun.

Extant also is a further work of art which shows the Celtic figure of Diana riding on the back of a boar. Diana is, of course, well known in mythology as the goddess of the chase.



Old Irish families like the McCartheys and O'Connells describe themselves, according to a common motto, as *sinsear clanna mileadh*, that is to say, the ancestors of the Irish race. That claim to antiquity was invariably expressed in heraldic terms by means of the symbol of the stag.

Following the ice age the primal face of Ireland became covered with natural forest providing an ideal habitat for large land animals such as the deer — long before the arrival of the first man who may well have come “dry-shod”, as it were, via Scotland. To this day the wild red deer is still the antlered monarch of the waste mountain lands of Kerry, Donegal and Wicklow.

The “roebuck in the thicket” is one of the most persistent themes in old Irish romantic literature. *The Chase of Slieve Fuad*, a saga from the Fenian cycle, begins in the following fashion:

Fionn and the Fianna went one day to hunt at Slieve Fuad. When they had come near to the top of the mountain, a deer suddenly bounded from a thicket before them, very large and fierce, with a great pair of sharp, dangerous antlers. She led them through rugged places, over rocks and bogs, and into deep glens. She then made her way across the open country to a rugged and bushy hill where they suddenly lost her among the rocks and thickets.

Invariably the “deer” turns out to be a beautiful lady possessed of a gold ring or a magic drinking horn. He who finds the ring or drinks a potion from the wonderful horn will find wisdom, knowledge and prophesy. But the quest is never easy and the “deer-lady” is always loathe to yield up her secrets.

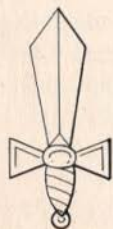
Another old Celtic romantic tale entitled *The Chase of Slieve Gullion* exudes precisely the same theme.

For the Christian mystics the stag sometimes wore a cross between its antlers, as it appeared to St. Hubert, patron of huntsmen, who, without rest, had been chasing it for weeks through the dense forest.

Of all the animals the stag was regarded as the most handsome. It was said to be free of cholera and to be the wisest of all wild animals. According to old primers on symbolism, it caused its hind to give birth to its young in a protected place away from the traffic of men. It then led them back to a place which had only one entrance in order to secure them from attack by other beasts. The branches of its antlers declare its age; a stag with seven tines or points on each of its antlers was regarded as a royal stag.

The month of the stag marked the opening of the thirteen-

month Celtic calendar year. The heraldic piece, consisting of a stag leaping from an opening in an embattled tower, constituted the old crest of Ireland.



Since the sword has been a tool in the hands of warlike man all through the ages, it is natural to expect that as a symbol its use in heraldry would be widespread and varied. In Irish heraldry the symbol of the sword is encountered in a variety of poses. Frequently it will be found being wielded menacingly in a natural or mailed hand.

Sometimes it is supported by lions or other animals. On occasions, two swords will be displayed in saltire (crossed) which has become the standard mark for indicating the locations of battlefields on maps and charts.

It should perhaps be recalled here that the primitive sword was a thrusting weapon with a pointed blade and, therefore, not very dissimilar to a spear.

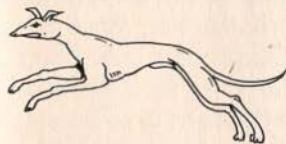
In Irish folklore and mythology the sword was invested with great magic and mystery. The sword of Nuada, for example, was such that when unsheathed it was irresistible and none could stand in its path. The sun hero Mac Cecht, in addition to his huge spear, wielded an immense sword from which blazed forth mighty sparks that illuminated the land.

Cuchulainn possessed a sword known as *cruaidin catutcheann* which shone at night like a torch.

In folk tales the lightning-sword has survived as the "sword of light", known in gaelic as *cloidheamh soluis*. This particular sword was possessed by a hideous giant and whoever got possession of it became a hero. The "sword of light" is heraldically represented on the shields of a number of Irish

families including, for example, that of Finnucane.

Dermot O'Dyna, legendary hero of the Fianna, was possessed of two swords, the *Morallta* or *Great Fury* and the *Begallta* or *Little Fury*. These swords he is said to have got from Mannanan Mac Lir, god of the sea and Angus, god of the sun. He carried the great sword in affairs of life and death and the smaller one in adventures of less danger. He had a facility for dancing on the edge of the great sword, a feat which when attempted by lesser men invariably ended in death.



When, following the Cromwellian conquest, the defeated Irish leaders wished to take overseas with them a memento of their native land what they chose to take was an Irish wolfhound. There is in existence a patent

of Henry VIII granting wolfhounds to Spanish noblemen as a princely gift. In addition to the wolfhound, the ancient Irish were also partial to the deerhound and the greyhound, both of which are frequently referred to in the Gaelic law tracts. The profession of *cu-maoir* (steward of hounds) was highly regarded in Ireland: *Cunagusos*, cut on an ogham stone at Aghalisky in Co. Cork, might just be the name of one such steward.

The sound of hounds in a hilltop chase is a recurring theme in the romance literature of Gaelic Ireland with the names of Fionn's celebrated deerhounds, *Bran* and *Sceolann*, constantly invoked by the poets.

The greyhound, frequently in apposition to the oak tree, is a commonplace figure in Irish heraldry. This composite heraldic symbol desolves, via the gaelic roots of its individual elements — *cu*, a hound and *dair*, an oak — into the divine mythological personage known as *Curoi mac Daire*.

Curoi was the ancestor-deity of a Celtic tribe variously known as the *Belgae* or *Builg* or *Erainn* who settled mainly, but not exclusively, in the south of Ireland some centuries before the birth of Christ. The presence, therefore, of this symbol on the arms of a particular family could be viewed as a presumption of the part of the family to descent from the pre-gaelic *Erainn*.

A remembrance of Curoi, who was killed by Cuchulainn in a struggle for the fair Blathnaid, will be found in the great stone fort that bears his name at Caherconree in the Dingle peninsula in Co. Kerry.



There is abundant evidence to show that the Celts worshipped the sun, moon and other natural elements like the wind. Greek writers referring to the Celts state that they worshipped their gods by turning about in the direction of their right hands. In the Book of Leinster we read that, after the death of Cuchulainn, his steed bade

farewell to Emer by going round her thrice sunwise. When ancient kings of Ireland wished to demonstrate their authority over the whole island they made a circuit of the country, taking care to follow the course of the sun. Blessings were invoked on cattle and houses by carrying a fiery circle sunwise round them. Similarly, rounds were made *deiseal* (right-handwise) round healing wells and sacred stones.

In the eyes of our early forefathers, the daily course of the sun, bringing about the unfailling alternation of light and darkness and the regular succession of the seasons, was the most striking example they had of the divine order of things. Hence, to go right-handwise, thus imitating the course of the sun, was not only the correct way to arrange a journey but was likewise beneficial in the general affairs of life. Thus, the most solemn declaration

of the truth was effected by calling as witness the heavenly powers.

In ancient Ireland an oath was taken by giving the sun, moon and stars as sureties. King Laoghaire, for instance, swore to the people of Leinster "by the sun and wind" that he would never again extract tribute from them. The practice of swearing by the heavenly bodies survived well into Christian times. Indeed, the sun and moon became types of Christ in the Christian symbolism of the early middle ages.

Finally, the term "star of the field" is a literary phrase applied to outstanding warriors of the gaelic past: it is found so applied to Brian Boru in the Book of Armagh.



Oh, the shamrock, the green immortal shamrock  
Chosen leaf of bard and chief,  
Old Erin's native shamrock.

— Irish Melodies: Thomas Moore.

The *trifolium repens* or dwarf clover has, over the centuries, retained a place of honour in the repertory of Irish emblems ever since St. Patrick first made use of the "dear little plant" to ease the doubts in the minds of the fifth century Irish regarding the nature of the Trinity. Strangely, however, the trefoil\* or shamrock as it is popularly known has not acquired any great status as a heraldic symbol, being found mainly as a supporting charge on the armorial shields of Irish families.

On the other hand, countless examples could be adduced testifying to the popularity of the trefoil as a general or non-heraldic symbol. It figured, for example, as a mint mark on the coins of Henry the Fourth, King of England 1393-1413. In the reign of Charles the First, copper coins minted at Kilkenny by Rinucinni to pay the confederation's Irish soldiers carried a representation of St. Patrick with mitre and crozier displaying a

\*symbolic form of the shamrock.



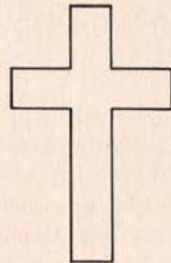
trefoil to the assembled people. Coins issued by Sarsfield during the siege of Limerick featured the figure of Hibernia holding in her hand a trefoil. The badge of the Order of St. Patrick, founded in Dublin in 1783, bore the emblem of the trefoil. On the passing of the Act of Union in 1800 the trefoil joined the rose and the thistle, the three, conjoined, constituting the badge of the several countries of the newly-formed United Kingdom.

The symbolism of the trefoil, heraldic and otherwise, notwithstanding the patrician tradition cited above, is probably more securely grounded on popular custom and practice, as evinced by the following passage from the journal of Thomas Dinely, dated 1681: "The 17th day of March yearly is St. Patrick's, an immoveable feast when ye Irish of all stations and condicions were crosses in their hats, some of pins, some of green ribbon and the vulgar superstitiously wear shamroges, 3-leaved grass. . . ."



The theme *pax et copia* — peace and plenty — is one which occasionally finds expression in mottoes associated with the coats of arms of Irish families. Frequently, this theme is symbolically represented by the garb or sheaf of wheat. On an elementary level, the presence of this symbol on the arms of a particular family might simply highlight the fertility of the region with which the family is associated. Occasionally, however, a folk tale may underlie the symbol. Some Kilkenny families, for example, display the garb on their shields and crests out of deference to a tradition relating to St. Kieran, who is said to have blest the corn and cursed the rushes in ancient Ossory. Finally, the symbol of the crescent moon is sometimes found in conjunction with the garb, a circumstance possibly explained by the fact that *corran*, the gaelic word

for "crescent moon", is also, by association of shape, the gaelic for "reaping-hook".



One of the most enduring customs rooted in the Irish countryside relates to the hanging of wooden or straw crosses above the doors on the inside of houses — a custom the origin of which goes back to the early days of Christianity in Ireland. The custom is believed to have originated with the change from the fixed pagan festivals to the moveable Christian feasts and the consequent necessity of keeping people informed about forthcoming church feast-days. This responsibility was a matter for the clergy who had small crosses made and sent round to the homes of the people who were thus kept up to date with the Christian calendar.

For the pre-Christian people of Ireland, as for people elsewhere, the rude upright pillar stone was a typical means of expressing their notion of the deity. Christians quickly developed the practice of cutting the fundamental symbol of their own newly acquired faith on these stones. Considering the upheavals of some fifteen hundred years of history, the number of such cross-incised stones that still survive in the Irish countryside is a matter for wonder.

Many of the cross forms on old pillar stones were later given expression in the heraldry of Irish families. Among the principal forms employed on heraldic shields were the Latin cross (see illustr. above), the tau cross, the cross crosslet and the saltire cross.

The tau cross, a noted example of which stands at Killinaboy, Co. Clare, is, in effect, the final letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The cross crosslet, consisting of four identical crosses aligned on

the cardinal points, with the ends of the shafts falling on a single point, is a singular expression of the universality of the Christian message. The X-shaped or saltire cross is simply the initial cypher of "Christ" in the Greek language. An elaborate form of the saltire may be observed on an ancient stone at Kilfountain in Co. Kerry.

Lastly, the occurrence of the cross, particularly as a major charge on the shields of families of Norman descent, may be a pointer to participation by the ancestors of such families in mediaeval crusading movements.



In Irish folklore, birds are sometimes referred to as the "demons of the air". In tales of yore their screams, foreboding victory or defeat, could be heard above the din of battle. On other occasions they were known as "birds of the forest of learning". According to an ancient legend the lonely crane of Iniskea, Co. Mayo was regarded as

one of the wonders of Ireland. It should, therefore, cause little surprise that the bird motif is so strongly represented in the plethora of Irish heraldic symbols.

Pride of place in the "bird family" of emblems, so to speak, goes to the eagle. Only in the last fifty years has the golden eagle completely disappeared from the Kerry mountains; a number of fine specimens of this truly magnificent bird are on view at Muckross House, Killarney.

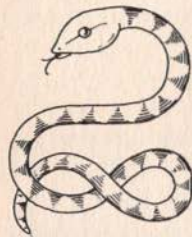
Only marginally less important, from the heraldic point of view, is the symbol of the hawk. An old gaelic triad credits the following trio with the keenest eye-sight in the world: a hawk on the tree top, a hound in the glen and a girl in the midst of a crowd. The "hawk of the Suir" — *seabhac na Suire* — was

particularly sharp-eyed and it is noticeable that in the case of a number of Tipperary families (the river Suir flows mainly through that county) the hawk is a favourite heraldic emblem.

The swan was considered a "soul" bird, that is to say, the bird that bore the spirits of the departed Celtic chieftains to the snowy polar regions away from the sun — the paradise of Nordic mythology.

The swallow, known as the martlet in the language of heraldry, was looked upon as the bird of perpetual movement. Current among the ancients was the notion that the swallow never alighted on the ground. Accordingly, he is depicted without proper feet on heraldic achievements.

The dove by definition is the "bird of Jove". The coat of arms of the Sheehans (O'Siochain — the peaceful ones) features the symbol of the dove in both shield and crest.



The reader may be aware from reports in the public press of the discovery in the Rhineland in the spring of 1979 of the grave of a Celtic chieftain whose chariot had been buried with him. Among the funerary items recovered in the course of subsequent excavations was the figure of a goddess holding in each hand a representation of a serpent. At New Grange in Co. Meath, generally considered to be a bronze age burial ground, numerous pillar stones decorated with serpentine or spiral motifs can be observed at the entrance to the tumulus. However, by far the largest volume of evidence in support of the view that our Celtic forebears indulged in a measure of snake worship will be found, strange to relate, in the heraldry of Gaelic families.

To the Celts, like other peoples of the remote past, the serpent

was the personification, so to speak, of fertility and renewal. The notion was current among them that when the serpent grew old he retired to a hidden place and, drawing himself between rock clefts and other rough apertures, he cast his old slough and reappeared in his new skin. Additionally, because of the forked shape of his tongue the serpent was associated with lightning and, as a consequence, naturally, with the sun.

In this connection it is interesting to note that native heraldry affords copious examples of the serpent entwining the oak tree and the sword, both of which were closely associated with the sun in Celtic mythology.

In his History of Ireland, the Abbe Geoghegan recounts an interesting anecdote touching upon the widespread use of the symbol of the serpent in Irish heraldry. Gaothal, eponymous ancestor of the Goidels, or Gaelic people, he informs us, was bitten by a snake in the Egyptian desert, but was cured by a touch of the wand of the prophet Moses. This circumstance, according to our author, is commemorated in the arms of many Gaelic families.



Our earliest documentary allusion to Irish pre-Christian beliefs occurs in the following passage from St. Patrick's Confession: "the splendour of the material sun which rises every day at the bidding of God will pass away, and those who worship it will go into dire punishment; whereas the true sun, Christ, whom we Christians worship, shall endure for ever". Here we have the testimony of an unimpeachable authority that worship of the sun was a prominent feature in the life of fifth century Ireland which clearly presented an obstacle to Patrick in his missionary endeavours.

This worship is symbolically represented in Irish heraldry through the medium of the griffin.

Robert Graves in *The White Goddess* makes the statement that the heraldic griffin is a lion with griffin-vulture's wings and claws and represents the sun-god as king of the earth and heavens. This composite creature, according to the same authority, may well be a relic of a very old two-season calendar, the eagle portion representing the summer and the lion portion the winter.

Old Irish folklore presents us with a grim view of the griffin: we would instance the following verses from *The Voyage of Maoldun*:—

A horrible monster, with blazing eyes,  
In shape like a lion and tremendous in size,  
Awaiting the boat they saw;  
With big bony jaws  
And murderous claws,  
That filled them with terror and awe:  
  
How gleeful he dances,  
And bellows and prances,  
As near to the island they draw;  
Expecting a feast —  
The bloodthirsty beast —  
With his teeth like the edge of a saw.

Because of its symbolic association with the sun the griffin has come to represent the precious yellow metal and in this context the device is often depicted encircled by bezants or gold discs as in the coat of arms of a prominent Irish banking institution.

Finally, it may be observed that in gaelic parlance the term *griobh* — a griffin — invariably carries with it heroic connotations: *griobh-fhear* signifies a daring hero and *griobh-cath* a battle of heroes. There is an old Irish saying to the effect that the griffin is the protector and pillar of the Decies, an old topographical term for Co. Waterford.



But Liban east and west shall swim,  
Long ages on the ocean's rim,  
By mystic shores and islets dim,  
And down in the deep sea cave.

A fair young lady named Liban is the central figure of the old Irish romance entitled *The Overflowing of Lough Neagh*. In essence, this tale recounts how *The Plain of the Grey Copse* (now Lough Neagh in north-east Ulster) became inundated when a magic well overflowed, drowning everybody except Liban. God protected her from the water, giving her the shape of a salmon except her face and breasts which did not change. After much wandering in the ocean she was eventually baptised by St. Comgal in the monastery of Bangor: he gave her the name *Murgen*, that is "Sea-born" or *Murgelt*, i.e. "Mermaid".

The conventional figure of the mermaid — a beautiful woman with a round mirror, a golden comb and a fish-tail — occurs as a heraldic piece on the crests and shields of a number of Irish families. Some of those families claim a remote descent from mermaids; others, like the O'Byrnes and Cullens, believe they inhabit areas formerly associated with mermaids, e.g. *Mureday* (the land of the sea-goddess) in south County Wicklow.

The symbolism of the comb and mirror, like that of the young sea maiden herself, remains somewhat of a mystery. In the Bible the wisdom of Solomon is defined as the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, the image of perfection and goodness. On the other hand, coastal lore in Ireland saw the merrow in a more prosaic light, viewing her as a bride preparing to meet a bridegroom on *terra firma*. Yet again, susceptible mariners did not take too kindly to the haunting harmony of the mermaid: to them her comb (sometimes used for plucking the strings of the lyre) and mirror stood for vanity and heartlessness.



The story of how Fionn came to be the first person to taste the salmon of knowledge which swam in the Boyne river near the present village of Slane is so well known that we need not dwell on the details of it here. Despite its air of antiquity numerous versions, both literary and traditional, of the legend survive to the present day. It is, of course, essentially a myth, that is to say a story which has at its core a deep religious significance.

In Celtic religion the Otherworld was the source of all wisdom, especially of that wisdom which gave a knowledge of future events. The Otherworld god was all-knowing. This idea is reflected in the epithet *rofhessa* — of great knowledge — attaching to the Dagda, as the supreme god of the Celts in his benign mood was known.

The Celtic Otherworld was frequently conceived as situated beneath the sea or a lake and, as such, the most appropriate form for the god to assume would be that of a salmon. Heraldic representations of this theme will be found in the coats of arms of quite a number of Irish families. Here it should be noted that rivers other than the Boyne, notably the Erne, were also home to the *eo fis* or salmon of wisdom.

Because he tasted the divine fish, Fionn not only acquired the gift of wisdom and prophesy but also the power of healing a person in sickness by giving him a drink of water from the Boyne in the palms of his hands. This aspect of the "salmon of knowledge" myth survives in the oft-heard gaelic toast *Slainte an bhradain chughat* — the health of the salmon to you!

Since Fionn first acquired supernatural wisdom by placing his thumb in his mouth, having been scalded after coming in contact with the cooking salmon, our phrase "wisdom tooth" may well be a further relic of the "salmon of wisdom" myth.



The question is often asked as to which of our national symbols, the harp or the shamrock, takes precedence over the other. The fact is that, while the shamrock is a popular and widespread symbol of Ireland, the harp constitutes the official emblem of the country.

The lawfully constituted government of the day and its executive makes constant use of this symbol. It is featured on the reverse of the coinage of the state. It constitutes the principal device on the seal of the President whose standard, also, is emblazoned with the same device.

One of the earliest references in print to the arms of Ireland will be found in a book entitled *Introductio ad Latinam Blasoniam* by John Gibbon, printed in London in 1682. In a list of coats of arms of twenty-five Christian states, the entry for Ireland reads as follows:

*Hibernia, Citharam auream, cum chordulis argenteis caeruleo in Scuto depictam: Bl. a Harp Or, stringed Arg.*

The harp has been regarded as the emblem of Ireland since mediaeval times. It occurs as one of a number of royal crests, surrounding a portrait of Richard III, on an old roll of arms, contemporary with that monarch, and now preserved in the College of Arms, London.

The model for the heraldic representation of the arms of Ireland is the harp preserved in the museum of Trinity College, Dublin, popularly known as the Brian Boru harp. This particular harp, of exquisite workmanship, standing thirty-two inches high with upright pillar of oak and sound box of red sawn, has thirty strings and a large crystal set in silver. Small harps, of this description, were in common use for devotional purposes in the Irish monasteries and are represented on the knees of monks on a number of our ancient stone crosses of the ninth and tenth centuries.

- A** Acacia 63  
Acorns 62  
Agricultural Implements 47  
Alerion 34  
Anchor 49  
St. Andrew's Cross 19  
Angels 51  
Angus dei 31  
Annulet 7, 46  
Ant 33, 69  
Antlers 44  
Anvil 49  
Apples 64  
Argent 13  
Arm 54  
arms  
    parlantes 7  
Arrow 54  
Arrow, Bow and 54  
Arrow-Heads 8, 54  
Arrow Points 54  
Ass 30  
Axe 50  
Axe, Battle 8  
Azure 13
- B** Badges 8, 26  
Balls, Cannon 54  
Band 20  
Banner 10, 69  
banner of the Cross of St. George 31  
Bar 20  
Bar Nebulee 20  
Barrulet 20  
Barry 25  
Barry Wavy 20  
Vasilisk 42  
baskets 41  
baton  
    shortened 23  
battle-axe 8  
Battune Sinister 23  
Bay leaves 63  
Beacons 57  
Bear 28  
Bearer 32  
Bee 33, 69  
Bells 69  
Bells, Hawks' 69  
Bend 22  
Bend, parti per 25  
Bend Sinister 22  
Bendlet 22  
Bendy 25  
Berries 61  
Bezants 8, 60  
Billets 46  
Bird,  
    Claw of 35  
Bird,  
    Leg of 35  
black 13  
blue 13  
boats 43  
Boar 31  
Boar's head 9, 31  
bones, crossed thigh 45
- Book 68  
Border 23  
Bordure 23  
Bouquets, Water 56  
Bows and Arrows 54  
Branch, Olive 62  
Bridge 50  
Broom 63  
brusque 14  
Buck 44  
Buckles 57  
Buglass 57  
Bull 30  
Butterfly 69
- C** Cadency 65  
cake, Manchet 60  
Calvary Cross 51  
Camel 33  
Cannon 54  
Cannon Balls 54  
canting arms 7, 8  
Canton 21  
Cap of Maintenance 67  
Caps 67  
Carinthian Chough 40  
Carnations 65  
Carpenters' Squares 48  
Castle 50  
Cat 32  
Cat-A-Mountain 32  
Catherine Wheel 56  
cedars 62  
Centaur 43  
Chains 57  
Chalice 58  
Chapeau 67  
Chapel, Floral 62  
Charges, Colours of the Common 27  
Chequy 49  
Cherubs 51  
Chevron 20  
Chevronels 20  
Chief 19  
Chough  
    Carthian 40  
    Chough Cornish 39  
Cinqufoil 65  
Civic Wreath 65  
Clarion 57  
Claw of a Bird 35  
close 36  
coat of arms 67  
Cock 39  
Cockatrice 42  
coins of gold 8  
Colours of the Common Charges 27  
Column 50  
Compony 49  
Cone, Pine 63  
Conies 32  
Conjoined 35  
Cornish Chough 39  
Cornucopia 61  
Cost 22  
Costises 22  
counterchanged 27
- couped 28  
Covered Cup 58  
crab 41  
Crescent 8, 9, 52, 53  
Cressets 57  
Crests 67  
Crosier, Pastoral 46  
Cross 9, 19, 51  
Cross Crosslet 51  
Cross Flory 19  
Cross Moline 45  
Cross Patoncee 19  
Cross Potent 50  
Cross of St. George 31  
Cross of St. Andrew 20  
Cross of Calvary 51  
Cross of St. Julian 20  
Cross of St. Paul 54  
cross, per 25  
crossed staff 31  
Crow 39  
Crowns 46, 67  
Crown, Mural 67  
Crown Naval 67  
Crusades 8, 9  
Cubes 49  
Cup  
    Covered 58  
    Open 58  
Cushions 51  
Cygnet 38  
Cypress 62
- D** Daisies 65  
Dancette 17  
Dawle 65  
Deer 44  
Dexter 25  
Diaper 59  
Dice 49  
disc,  
    flying 59  
displayed 34  
Division Lines 25  
Dolphin 40  
Double Eagle 33  
double empire 34  
Dove 39  
Dragon 42  
drops 59  
Duck 38
- E** Eagle 34, 9  
Eagle,  
    displayed 34  
Eagle, Double 33  
eagle,  
    two-headed 34  
Eagle of the East 9  
Ears of Wheat 64  
eau, Gutte D', 60  
Elephant 29  
elevated 35

Emballted 18  
empire-double 34  
Endorse 21  
Engrailed 17  
ensigns 9  
erased 28  
Ermine 15  
Ermines 15  
Erminois 15  
Escallop Shell 44,8  
Escarbuncle 57  
escrol 35  
Escutcheon 19,24  
Estoilles 52  
Eye 46

**F** Falcon 36  
" close  
" rest  
" rising  
" volant  
Falcon's  
Lures 36  
Feathers 35  
Feathers,  
Plume of 35  
Fess 20  
Fess,  
parti per 25  
Fetterlock 56  
Finger Ring 46  
Fire 53  
Fishes 40  
Flags 69  
Flaming  
Heart 45  
Flanches 23  
Flasques 23  
Fleece, Lamb's 32,68  
Fleece of Gold 32  
fleur-de-lis 29,64  
Fleurette 19  
fleury,counterflory 23  
Flint Steel 68  
Flint Stones 68  
Floral  
Chaplet 62  
Flory 19  
Flowers 64  
Flowers,  
Garlands of 62  
fluing disc 59  
Foot 45  
Fountain 60  
Fox 32  
Fret 58  
Frets 27  
fretty 58  
Fruit 64  
Furs 14  
Fusil 56  
Fusil of Yarn 58  
Fylfot 59

**G** Galley 49  
Gammadion 59  
Garb of Wheat 64  
Gannet 38  
Garlands of  
flowers 62  
Gauntlets 45  
Genists,  
Planta 63

St. George, banner  
of the Cross of 31  
girdle 20  
Glass, Hour 68  
Goat 31  
Gobbonny 49  
gold 13  
Gold, Fleece of 52  
Golden Mary 65  
Golpe 60  
Goose 38  
Gorged 38  
Grass 65  
Grasshopper 33,69  
green 13  
Grenades 54  
Greyhound 32  
Griffin 41  
griffin,  
head of 42  
Griffins' legs 35  
gripping talons 34  
Gules 13  
Gunstone 60  
Gutties 59  
Gutties D'eau 60  
" de larmes 60  
" d'olive 60  
" d'or 60  
" de poix 60  
" de sang 60  
Gyron 24

**H** Hammer 48,49  
Hand 45  
hand, red 45  
Hare 32  
Harrow 48  
Harp 47  
Harpy 43  
Hart 9,44  
Hawk 36  
" close 36  
" rest "  
" rising "  
" volant "  
Hawks' Bells 69  
Hawks' lures 37  
Head, Boar's 9,31  
Head, Human 45  
Head of  
a Moor 68  
Head of  
Leopard 29  
Heads of Lions &  
other animals 28  
heads severed 28  
Heads, Spear 55  
Heart 45  
Heart,  
flaming 45  
Hedgehog 32  
Helmets 9,67  
Heraldic  
Heraldic  
Lines 17  
Heraldic  
Rights 10  
Heron 38  
Holly 63  
Holy Lamb 31  
hooks 41  
Horn of  
Plenty 61

Horn,  
Hunting 54  
Horns 44  
Horse 30  
Horse, White 9  
Horse Shoe 55  
Hour Glass 68  
House Snail 33  
Huitfoil 65  
Human Head 45  
Hunting Horn 55  
Hurt 60  
Hydra 43

**I** Implements  
Agricultural 47  
indented 17  
Inescutcheon 23  
Inkhorn 47  
in lure 35  
in Orle 23  
Insects 69  
insensed 30  
Invecked 17  
inverted 35  
Ivy leaves 63  
**J** Jaune 13  
Jerusalem 69  
jessamine 65  
jessant 29  
St. Julian's  
Cross 20  
July Flower 65

**K** Keys 69  
Kite 37

**L** Ladder,  
Scaling 50  
lady's  
sleeve 22  
Lamb 9,31  
Lamb's  
Fleece 32,68  
Lamb, Holy 31  
Lance 55  
large cross 20  
larmes,  
Gutties de 60  
Laurel Leaves 61  
Laurel,  
branches 61  
leaping 28  
Leaves, bay 63  
" Ivy 63  
" Oak 62  
" Olive 62  
" Woodbine 63  
Leg 45  
Leg of an  
animal 35  
Leg of a  
Bird 35  
Leopard 29  
Leopard's  
Head 28  
Letters  
Text 46  
Levels 48  
Lightning 53  
Lily 64  
Lines 17

lines of  
division 25  
Lion 9,27  
" passant 28  
" salient 28  
Lion's Head 28  
lobster 41  
lotus 65  
Lozenge 46  
Lozengy 49  
Luce 41  
Lymphiad 49  
Lyre 47

**M** Maintenance,  
Cap of 67  
Manchet  
cake 60  
Mantel  
Mantling 67  
Marigold 65  
Martel 49  
Martlet 38  
Mary Golden 65  
Masle 56  
Mastiff 32  
Masts 49  
Maunch 57  
maunche 22  
Men 68  
Mermaid 43  
Millers' Cross 46  
Millstones 46  
Mitres 67  
Mole 68  
Moline, cross 46  
Monkey 68  
Moon 52  
Moors 68  
Moors' Heads 68  
Mortars 54  
Mountain,  
cat-a- 32  
Mule 30  
Mullet 52,53  
mullet  
pierced 52  
Mural Crown 67  
Murray 14  
Musical Pipes 69  
Myrtle 63

**N** Nails, Passion 69  
Napoleon 33  
Naval Crown 67  
Nebulee 17  
Nebuly 17  
nets 41  
nowed 42

**O** Oak  
Leaves 62  
Oak  
Tree 62  
Ogress 60  
Olive  
Branch 62  
olive,  
Gutte d', 60  
Olive  
Leaves  
Or 13

or,  
Gutte d', 60  
orange 14,60  
ordinaries 19,4  
Origin of  
Armorial bearing 1  
Orle 23  
Orle, in 23  
Ostrich 35  
Ostrich  
Feathers 35  
owl 37  
ox 30

**P** Pale 21  
Palet 21  
paley 25  
Palm 37  
Palmer's Staves 69  
Panther 30  
Parrot 37  
parti per Bend 25  
parti per fess 25  
Passant 28  
Passion Nails 69  
Pastoral Cross 46  
Patoncee,  
Cross 19  
Pavillion 68  
St. Paul,  
Cross of 54  
Peacock 37  
Pean 15  
Pears 64  
Pegasus 43  
Pelican 37  
" in her Piety 37  
" vulning 37

Pen 47  
per Bend 25  
per Chevron 25  
per Fess 25  
per Saltire 25  
per Pale 25  
Periwinkle 65  
Pheons 55  
Phoenix  
pierced, Mullet 52  
Pike 41  
Pilgrims' Staves 8  
Pilgrims' Wallets 69  
Pillar 50  
pincers 49  
Pine 62  
Pine Cone 63  
Pinks 65  
Pipes,  
Musical 69  
Planta Genista 63  
Plate 60  
Plenty,  
Horn of 61  
Plough 48  
Plume of  
Feathers 35  
Plummets 48  
points, arrow 54  
poix, Gutte de 60  
Pomegranate 63  
pomme 60  
poplar 63  
poppy 65

Porticulis 53  
Potent 15  
Potent,  
Cross 50  
Primrose 65  
Purple 14  
Purse 50

**Q** Quarter 22  
quarterly 25  
Quatrefoil 65

**R** Rabbits 32  
Ragulee 18  
Raguly 18  
Ram 31  
Rat 68  
Raven 39  
red 13  
red hand 45  
Red Rose 64  
red roundels 58  
Reeds 63  
Rhinoceros 29  
Ribbon 22  
Ring, Finger 8,46  
rising 36  
Rocks 53  
roses 27  
Rose, Red 64  
Rose, White 64  
Rosette 64  
Roundels 60  
roundle, white 60  
roundless 27  
Rudders 49

**S** Sable 5,13  
Sacred Tree 62  
Saddles 55  
sails 49  
Salamander 42  
Saliant 28  
Saltire 19,20  
sang,  
Gutte de 60  
sanguine 14  
Scaling  
ladders 50  
Scarfe 22  
Sceptre 46  
Scythe 48  
Seal 68  
Seraphs 51  
serpent 42  
severed heads 28  
Shacklebolt 56  
Shamrock 65  
Sheaf 64  
Shell,  
Escallop 8,44  
Shells, other 45  
Shield 9,55  
shield 4,5  
Ships 49  
Shoes 45  
Shoe, Horse 55  
Sickle 48  
silver 13  
Sinister 25  
Skulls 45

Sleeve 57  
 Snail, House 33  
 Snake 50  
 Spear 55  
 Spear-Heads 55  
 Sphere 68  
 Sphinx 42  
 Spiders 33  
 Spurs 52,55  
 Squares 49  
 Squares,  
 Carpenters' 48  
 Squirrel 32  
 Staff,  
 crossed 31  
 Stag 44  
 standards 9  
 St. Andrew's  
 Cross 20  
 St. Julian's  
 Cross 20  
 St. Paul's  
 Cross 54  
 Star 9,52,53  
 Staves,  
 Palmers' 69  
 Steel 68  
 Stirrups 55  
 Stock Gilly  
 Flower 65  
 Stones, Flint 68  
 Stools 51  
 Stork 38  
 Sun 52 Sun's Ray 52  
 surcoat 10  
 swallowing a  
 fleur-de-lis 29  
 Swan 38  
 Swan's Head 38  
 Swallow 39  
 Sword 8,54  
 Symbolic Side  
 of Heraldry 7  
 Symbolisms of  
 Colours 13  
 Symbolisms of  
 Charges 27  
 Symbolisms of  
 Ordinaries 19

**T** Tabors 69  
 Talbot 32

**U** Undee 17  
 Unicorn 41

**V** Vair 15  
 Varus 15  
 Vert 13  
 Vine 63  
 Voided 56  
 Voiders 23  
 volant 36  
 vulning 37

**W** walking 28  
 Wallets, Pilgrims 8,69  
 Water Bougets 56  
 Water bottles 8

talons,  
 gripping 34  
 Tawny 14  
 Tenne 14  
 Tent 68  
 Text  
 Letters 46  
 thigh, crossed  
 bones 45  
 Tiger 28  
 Torch 68  
 Torteau 58,60  
 Tortoise 41  
 Tower 50  
 Tree,  
 Oak 62  
 Tree of Knowledge 62  
 Tree of Life 62  
 Tree,  
 Sacred 62  
 Tree  
 Trunk 55  
 Trefoil 65  
 Tressure 23  
 tressure  
 fleury counter-fleury 23  
 Trestles 51  
 Trident 46  
 Triumphal Wreath 61  
 Trumpet 53  
 Trunk of a  
 Tree 55  
 twisted 42  
 Two-headed  
 eagle 34

wavy 17  
 Wheat-Ears 64  
 Wheat-Garb 64  
 Wheat-Sheaf 64  
 Wheel 61  
 Wheel,  
 Catherine 56  
 wheel, winged 61  
 Whirlpool 61  
 White 13  
 White  
 Horse 9  
 White  
 Rose 64  
 white roundle 60  
 winged wheel 61  
 Wings 35  
 " Conjoined  
 " elevated  
 " in lure  
 " inverted  
 Wolf 11,28  
 Women 68  
 Woodbine Leaves 63  
 wortleberry 60  
 Wreaths 61  
 Wreath, Civic 61  
 Wreath Triumphal 61  
 Wreath of bay 63  
 " " grass 61  
 " " green  
 " " leaves 62  
 " " laurel  
 " " leaves 61  
 " " oak  
 " " leaves &  
 acorns 62  
 " " parsley 61  
 " " pine  
 " " twigs 61  
 " " wild  
 olives 61  
 Wyvern 42  
 " twisted  
 " nowed

**Y** Yarn, Fusil of 58  
 yellow 13  
 Yew 62

*Supplementary Index to Irish Heraldic Symbols*

Apple tree 76  
 Anchor 74  
 Ash tree 76, 77  
 Birds 90  
 Boar 81  
 Branch 75  
 Cross 89  
 Dog 85  
 Dove 91  
 Eagle 90  
 Fleur de lys 80  
 Garb 88  
 Griffin 92

Hand 78  
 Harp 96  
 Hawk 90  
 Hazel tree 76, 77  
 Heron 90  
 Holly tree 76  
 Leaves 75  
 Lion 79  
 Mermaid 94  
 Moon 86  
 Oak tree 74, 75, 76, 77  
 Pine tree 76  
 Salmon 95

Serpent 74, 91  
 Shamrock 87  
 Stag 82  
 Stars 86  
 Sun 96  
 Swallow 91  
 Swan 91  
 Sword 84  
 Tree 75  
 Tree trunk 75  
 Trefoil 87





MOON



CAT-A-MOUNTAIN



MULLET



MULLET PIERCED



NEBULEE



OSTRICH



OSTRICH FEATHER



OWL



PALE



PALEY



PEACOCK



PEAR



PEGASUS



PELICAN



PELICAN IN HER PIETY



PELICAN VULNING



PEN



PER CHEVRON



PER SALTIRE



PHEON



PHOENIX



PILLAR



PINCERS



MUSICAL PIPES



HORN OF PLENTY



PORTCULLIS



QUARTER



QUARTERLY



QUATREFOIL



RABBIT



RAGULY



RAT



RAVEN



RHINOCEROS



RING



ROSE



SALIENT



SALTIRE



GUTTE DE SANG



SCYTHE



SHAMROCK



SHIELD



SHOE



SWAN



SNAKE



SPHERE



SQUIRREL



STAG



STORK



SURCOAT



HORSESHOE



SWORD



TALBOT



TENT



TORCH



TOWER



TREE TRUNK



TREFOIL



TRESSURE



TRIDENT



UNICORN



VAIR



FESS VOIDED



VOLANT



WAVY



WHEEL



WINGS CONJOINED



WOLF



WREATH OF LAUREL



WYVERN