

German Tilting Saddle in the Tower Armory.

Height, 3 ft. 11 in.

NOTICE OF A GERMAN TILTING SADDLE OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY, RECENTLY ADDED TO THE TOWER COLLECTION.

THE saddler's art in the Middle Ages was far different from what it has become in our own days, when the highest baron or the noblest dame in the land is content to ride forth on a seat made of a plain strip of leather and a few iron nails. In the old time, embroidery, carving, painting, gilding, and even precious stones, gave to this part of a knight's appointments a splendour not exceeded by any other portion of his costly equipment. When reading in old inventories of horse-furniture adorned with pearls, weapons mounted with diamonds, helmets surrounded with sapphires and emeralds, we are at first tempted to believe that these were but mock jewels; yet, on reflection, the probability of the accounts and the reason of the practice become apparent. In those days, when property was stored up in plate and jewels, the wealthy knight or squire looked upon his "*ailettes frottées de perles*," and his "*baudrier harnaché d'or et orné de pierreries*," simply in the light of investments.

The ancient Germans, as we learn from Cæsar, did not use saddles in their warfare. "Neque eorum moribus turpius quicquam aut inertius habetur, quam ephippiis uti: itaque ad quemvis numerum ephippiatorum equitum, quamvis pauci, adire audent."¹ The Anglo-Saxons, when we obtain pictorial representations of them, are found in the possession of saddles, which, however, are mere pads; and from some of them hangs a sort of tufty fringe, which has been supposed to represent the skin of an animal.²

In Beowulf, we read of a horse bearing "a saddle variegated with work, made valuable with treasure: that was the war-seat of a lofty king, when the son of Healfdene

¹ De Bello Gall., lib. 4, c. 2.

² Good examples occur in Cotton MS., Claudius, B. iv.; one of them engraved in Strutt's Horda, vol. i. pl. xvii. The fine manuscript of Prudentius, in the

Tenison library, furnishes us with several illustrations of this kind. The Anglo-Saxon saddle, with a plain edge, appears in the Cotton MS., Cleopatra, C. viii.

would perform the game of swords." *Canto* 15. In 605 we find recorded a charter of Ethelbert, King of Kent, which furnishes another example of the enriched saddle. He gives to the church of St. Augustine "Missurum etiam argenteum, scapton aureum, item sellam cum fræno aureo, et gemmis ornatam, speculum argenteum, armilausia oloserica, camisiam ornatam, quod mihi xenium de domino papa Gregorio sedis Apostolicæ directum fuerat, quæ omnia supradictæ ecclesiæ gratanter obtuli."³ It will be seen by the illuminations we have mentioned, that the saddle was provided with a girth, breastplate, and crupper, the latter being fixed to the sides of the saddle: pendent ornaments are attached to the crupper and breastplate. Real stirrups of this period have been procured from the graves. They are of a single piece, having a loop for the attachment of the leather.⁴

In early Norman times, we find the saddle formed on a frame, with high pommel and cantle: the Bayeux tapestry furnishes many examples. In frequent instances, the front and back take the form of volutes, after the manner of Ionic capitals. The girths are fastened to the panels. See Plate 3 of Stothard's series. In Plate 4, a saddle has a zig-zag edge, something like the borders of those in the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts before noticed. The high pommel and cantle may be seen also in the seals of William the Conqueror, William Rufus, and Henry I.⁵

In the twelfth century a novelty appears—the saddle-cloth. This is found in the second seal of Henry I., in the seal of King Stephen, and in that of Louis VII. of France. In these examples it is quite plain; but in the seals of Conan, Duke of Brittany,⁶ c. 1165, and of Henry II., it is of an ornamental character. All the royal seals of this century may be consulted for minor details; but the second of Richard I. is the most curious, as showing the manner in which the warrior was supported in his seat.⁷ The peytrel, at this time, is furnished with pendent ornaments, of a circular form—probably small globular bells. We obtain some light on the mode of ornamenting saddles in the XIIIth century

³ Kemble, *Codex Dipl.* No. iv.; *Monast. Ang.* 1, 24. A plain edged saddle appears in *Cott. MS.*, Tiber., B. v., an Anglo-Saxon calendar. It is engraved in *Strutt's Horda*, pl. xii.

⁴ See *Worsaae's Copenhagen Museum*,

p. 95, and *Bahr's Livonian Graves*.

⁵ Compare also the curious carved church-door engraved in *Worsaae's Copenhagen Museum*, p. 103.

⁶ *Harl. Charter*, 48, G. 40.

⁷ *Carlton Ride Seals*, H. 17.

from the work of Theophilus, the monk, "De diversis Artibus." In his instructions to saddlers, he says, "Sellas autem equestres et octoforos, id est, sellas plicatorias, scabella, cæteraque, quæ sculpuntur, et non possunt corio vel panno cooperiri, mox ut raseris ferro, fricabis asperella,⁸ sicque bis dealbabis, et cum sicca fuerint, rursum asperella planabis. Posthæc in circino et regula metire, et dispone opus tuum, videlicet imagines aut bestias, vel aves et folia, sive quodcunque pertrahere volueris. Quo facto, si decorare volueris opus tuum, auri petulam impones."⁹ The same writer tells us that the saddles of ladies should be embellished with images of birds, beasts and flowers, wrought in gold or silver: "Eodem modo, potes in auro et argento facere imagines super libros evangeliorum et missales, et bestias atque aviculas ac flores super sellas equestres matronarum exterius."¹

From Peter of Blois, Archdeacon of Bath and Chaplain to King Henry II., we learn that battle-scenes and cavalry fights were among the subjects most in favour with the knights and their saddlers. Censuring the effeminate manners of some of the military class of his time, he writes:—"Bella tamen et conflictus equestres depingi faciunt in sellis et clypeis, ut se quadam imaginariâ visione delectent in pugnis, quas actualiter ingredi aut videre non audent."²

The rich materials, that were employed for saddles during this century, appear from passages in some of the romances of the time.³ In "Atis et Prophelias," written about 1160:—

D'Ivoire furent li archon
Borde de pierres environ.

In "Girard de Vienne," composed about the same period:—

Dcs seles furent tuit doré li arçon,
A flors, a bestes pointuré environ.

In the thirteenth century we find representations of these ornamented saddles; the part of the saddle selected for decoration being the hinder portion of the panel and the back of the cantle. In the seal of Alexander II. of Scotland,

Shave-grass.

⁹ Lib. i. c. 23, Ed. Hendria.

¹ Ibid. lib. iii. c. 78: De opere ductili quod sculpirur.

² Petri Blesensis Opera. Epist. 94, Ed. Giles.

³ Laborde, Notice des Emaux du Louvre, Glossaire, *Arçonnières*.

1214, the panel is ensigned with a lion rampant, the same device being on the shield also.⁴ An analogous instance is furnished by the seal of Robert Fitz-Walter, c. 1298, the silver matrix of which is preserved in the British Museum. In the Lives of the Offas, a manuscript of this century (Cott. MS., Nero, D, II.), on folio 7, is the figure of Offa the First: his bearing is a saltire, which appears upon the shield and back of the saddle.

Saddles with armorial bearings are frequently mentioned in documents of this century. In the Roll of Expenses⁵ for the Tournament held in Windsor Park in 1278, we find an account for saddles, which appear to have been purchased at Paris from Felis le Seler. The account is given in French money. From it we select the following items, the cost being given in the English money of the period. Eight saddles, "de armis Angliæ," at £2 each; four saddles for coursers, at 17s. 6d.; twelve others, at 15s. Four saddles, "broudatae de filo auri et argenti tracto: videlicet una de armis Roberti Tibetot, una de armis Johannis de Neele, una de armis Imberti Guidonis, et una de armis Comitis Cornubiæ," amounting together to £22, or about £5 10s. each. The most expensive saddle was, however, one "broudata eodem modo de armis Johannis de Grely cum scalopis argenti," its price £9 10s.

In the Account of Expenses of John of Brabant and Thomas and Henry of Lancaster, for 1292—3, edited by Mr. Burt, for the Camden Society,⁶ we also find mentioned armorial decorations and the prices of the saddles, the latter varying from 10s. to 13s. 4d. :—

"Compotus Remondi de Bourdeaus: Pro duabus sellis in Nativitate Domini ultimo preterita pro Johanne et Anfrido de armis domini Guidonis Ferrei, xxs. Item de eodem pro sella simili domini Johannis de Duz, xiijs. iiijd. Item pro sella dextrarii pro Johanne, de eodem, cum clipeo domini Godefridi de Brabantia, xvjs. Pro sella cursoris de eodem cum eodem clipeo, xiijs. iiijd. Item de eodem pro sella altera cursoris cum armis domini Edmundi, xiijs. Item de

⁴ Cotton Charter, xix. 2.

⁵ Printed in Archæologia, xvii. p. 306.

⁶ Camden Miscellany, vol. ii.; see also an account of this curious document communicated to the Archæological Institute by Mr. Hudson Turner: Proceedings, March 3, 1848. "Johannes et Anfridus," were John of Brabant and Humphrey

Bohun, probably the eldest son of the fourth Earl of Hereford, who appears to have been the companion of the young prince. "Dominus Edmundus" was Edmund Crouchback; "Thomas and Henry," his two sons, successively Earls of Lancaster. For a notice of Sir Guy Ferre, see Arch. Journ. xi. 375.

eodem pro duabus sellis de armis domini Thome Paenel de festo Penthecostes nunc instante pro Johanne et Anfrido, xxs. Computat Reymondus de Bordeus pro iiij sellis ad palefridos emptis pro Thoma, Henrico, Domino Galfrido de Langelee et Domino Alano de Wandesseph, xlvjs. viij*d.* . . . Pro ij sellis ad cursores, de armis Comitibus Sabaudie, xxiiij*s.*”

The very curious volume, edited by Depping, containing the trade regulations of Paris in the XIIIth century, abounds in information on the subject now before us. We can only venture to give one or two of the more striking rules for the “*Paintres et Séliers de Paris.*”

“Nus ne puet estre séliers à Paris, ne vendre sèles garnies de cordouan, s’il n’achate le mestier du Roy.

“Nus seliers ne puet coudre bazane avec vache ne avec véel pour nul fournement, ne nule menniere de poil avec bourre, quèle que elle soit.

“Nus ne puet paindre de couleur à or sèle derrière, se elle n’est couverte de fin or, c’est à dire, d’or sanz mesleure d’argent, que en apèle *or parti* : mès l’arçon devant puet-il paindre de ce que li plera.”

From this paragraph we see that the place of honour was the outside of the cantle (of which more anon); but why the saddler should be permitted to lavish his roguery on the pommel does not so plainly appear.

“Nul ne puet mestre en sèle ne en escu chose emprintée ne enpastée, ne ieteiche d’estain, se ce n’estoit, &c.

“Li séliers apèle chose *emprainte* ou *empastée* ou *ieteteiche* d’estain, quant aucuns fet euvre par molles, et puis celle chose mollée atache à colle seur l’arçon : quar toute euvre enlevée (*relevée*) doit estre faite de plâtre à pincel, et sur la sèle et sur l’escu.”

The mode of producing this moulded work is clearly described by Theophilus, lib. 3, c. 75.

“Nus séliers ne doit sèle tainte garnie livrer devant que èle est (*ait*) esté vernicié, se ce n’est sèle dormant,” &c.⁷

The arçon of a saddle of the close of the XIIIth century, carved in pear-wood, is still in existence, and exhibits the mode of decorating by carving the *back of the cantle*. It formed part of the Debruge collection, and is now in the possession of Mr. Evans, at Paris. It has been engraved in the

⁷ “Réglemens sur les Arts et Metiers de Paris, ou Livre des Métiers d’Etienne Boileau.” Paris, 1837. Titre 78, p. 206.

Handbook of M. Labarte, and reproduced at p. 417, vol. xii. of this Journal.

A very good representation of the saddle of the XIIIth century will be found on folio 27 of Harl. MS. 3244. It is there composed of a raised pommel and cantle, the panel being of square form, and bordered by a fringe. The poitrail is sometimes plain, as in the first seal of Hen. III. (Harl. Charter, 43, C. 38) : in other examples it has the pendent ornaments noticed as occurring at a previous period. In plate 37 of the Painted Chamber, the pattern is a string of golden trefoils. The royal seals of this century may be consulted, but do not present any novelties.

In the fourteenth century we find the same kind of saddle as in the last.⁸ The use of armorial bearings on the cantle was continued. A manuscript⁹ of the time furnishes an instance, in which the shield and cantle of a knight are both charged with a cross.

The elaborate ornamentation of saddles prevailed throughout this century. In the expenses at the marriage of Princess Blanche of Bourbon to the King of Castile¹ in 1352, we find an account for a litter made for the princess. Among the items occur, "pour le hernois de 2 chevaux, selles, colliers, avalloueres et tout ce qui y appartient pour le dit hernois, fait de cordouan vermeil, garnis de clos dorez, et les arçons² devant et derrière pains de la devise de la dicte litière,"—that is to say, with the device of the Princess Blanche.

In 1376, Sir Marmaduke Constable, knight, leaves as his mortuary, "optimum equum meum cum cellâ deauratâ prout solebam equitare."³

In 1397, we have richly ornamented saddles made for the Duchess of Orleans by Jehan de Troyes, the King's saddler :—"une riche selle de broderie à chevaucher . . . et le harnois fait de broderie et clouez de cloz d'or fin

⁸ Good examples occur in Roy. MSS., 20, D, i., and 20, B, xi., in the bas-reliefs of the tomb of Aymer de Valence (Stothard, pl. 49), and in Add. MS. 12228, the Romance of Meliadus.

⁹ Roy. MS., 19, B, xv.

¹ Douet D'Arceq. "Comptes de l'Argenterie des Rois de France au 14^e siècle," p. 297. Paris, 1851.

² According to Du Cange (voce *Arctio*), who quotes Salsmasius, this part of the

saddle was so called from its curved form—"Arciones vocamus ab arcu, quod in modum arcus sint incurvi." Du Cange likewise quotes a grant of the year 1301 to Adam de Vallemont, by the service of providing annually for the king "duos arcones ad sellam vacuos, unum videlicet armis nostris Francie communibus, et alium armis Clodovei regis predecessoris nostri depictos."

³ Testamenta Eboracensia, vol. i. p. 97.

et faiz sembles a soulays et a treffles volans par dessus et les carrefours esmailliez de turterelles dorées de fin or et le mors et les estriers de haulte entaille."⁴

Among the numerous specimens of ancient leather-work collected from excavations in London by Mr. Roach Smith, and now deposited in the British Museum, are several pieces of horse-furniture of various kinds. The most interesting of these are two portions of saddles, both apparently of the XIVth century. One of them is of embossed work, representing scrolls of foliage interspersed with animals and monsters of various kinds. The other, which is somewhat later in date, is engraved with running patterns, and retains a portion of its original colouring. Attached to it is a case for a knife, likewise of leather.⁵

But in the XIVth century, two new and very curious features appear in some of the military saddles. They are made so high in the seat that the knee of the rider is on a level with the horse's back. Instances of this fashion occur in the figure of Sir Geoffry Louterell,⁶ and in the statue of St. George at Basle, given by Mr. Cruikshank in the Journal of the Archæological Association for 1857. The second feature to which we have alluded consists in carrying the pommel and cantle so far round the knight's person, that they touch each other, or fairly become one continuous rail. The earliest example we have seen of this mode is that given by Hefner (Trachten, Part II., pl. 8), from a chronicle written and illustrated about 1350. The front of the saddle in this miniature is represented as forming a shield for the leg as far as the ankle. The metal ewer figured at page 114 of Worsaae's "Copenhagen Museum," supplies an analogous instance. And another is furnished by the figure of St. George, on the triptych of the Madonna di Rocca Melone, preserved at Susa; a notice of which was communicated to the Institute by Mr. Nesbitt, and the figure engraved in the last volume of this Journal, page 207. Into a saddle of this kind the knight must have crept from the back of the horse.

In the fifteenth century we obtain a real specimen of this singular type. It is represented in the plate at the head

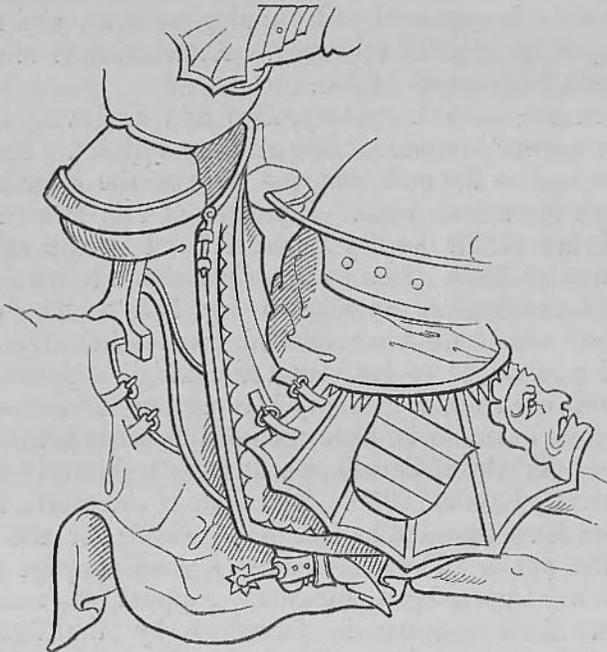
⁴ Accounts of the Dukes of Burgundy quoted in Laborde, Notice des Emaux du Louvre: Glossaire, sub voce *Selle*.

⁵ See Mr. Roach Smith's Catalogue of

London Antiquities, Nos. 619, 620, pl. xi.

⁶ Engraved in Carter's Sculpture and Painting, pl. xiv., and in the *Vetusta Monumenta*, vol. vi.

of this article, from the original, formerly in the collection of the Baron de Peuker of Berlin, and now deposited in the Tower of London. It will be seen that in this example the rail is quite continuous; and, when fixed for the encounter, the champion would be carried forward rather in a standing than a sitting posture. This specimen receives the most striking illustration from the drawings given in Hefner's "Trachten," Part II., pl. 138; one of which we have copied, so far as it bears upon our inquiry. The subject is a



Saddle from Illumination, 1471.

tournament with rebated swords and cudgels, and is especially valuable from being dated. The date is 1471. There are four figures in Hefner's plate, and all have the saddle joining in its fore and after parts: little bells are appended to the hind rail in two of the subjects, and the whole design is full of curious details.

The Tower example is formed of wood, covered with hide, and partially with canvas; then comes a coat of *gesso*, and

upon that there has been painting. The front measures in its greatest length, 3 ft. 11 in. There is a distance of ten inches from the saddle proper to the seat of the knight.

In King René's "Tourney-book," c. 1475, we have a provision for the tilt, much resembling the defence here shown; but in this case the saddle-shield and the peytrel are in one piece. "Ce hourt est fait de paille longue entre toilles fort porpointées de cordes de fouet; et dedans le dit hort y a un sac plain de paille, en façon d'un croissant." This forms a pad to defend the horse's breast. "On couvre le dit hort d'une couverture armoyée des armes du seigneur qui le porte," &c. Drawings both of the hourt and the *sac* are given in pl. vii of the "Tourney-book," and other drawings show the appearance of the courser when fully equipped.

The characteristic of the ordinary war-saddle of the fifteenth century is, that it overlaps the thigh of the rider in front, and rises moderately high behind, always permitting the knight to sit well down on his horse.⁷

At the close of the fifteenth century, but more frequently in the sixteenth, appears a new kind of tilting saddle. The saddle itself is made low, because in the tilt for which it was employed, the chief object was to thrust the adversary out of his seat over the horse's haunches; but fastened to the front of it was a defence of plate which completely covered the leg of the champion as low as the calf. This appendage was sometimes made permanently fast to the saddle; sometimes it was attached by straps only. It is named *Beinschiene* and *Knieplatte* in the German Tourney-books. An early example of it occurs in the picture of a tourney at Innsbruck in 1496, engraved by Hefner, Part II., pl. 109 of the "Trachten." It again appears in the Tourney-book of William of Bavaria, published by Schlichtegroll, and from another copy of this curious volume, in Hefner's plates, 89 and 90. Other instances occur in the *Triumph* of the Emperor Maximilian. A real specimen is preserved in the Dresden Gallery.

In the sixteenth century we find a modification of the old leg-shield with peytrel, already noticed in the preceding

⁷ For the usual war-saddle of this time, see Harl. MS., 4431, fol. 114; Harl. 326, fol. 13; Roy. MS., 18, E, iv. fol. 292; Cott. MS., Nero, D ix. fol. 39 and the War-

wick Pageants, from the Rous Manuscript, Julius, E, iv. engraved in vol. ii. of Strutt's Horda.

age. It now consists of one piece, protecting the horse's breast, and the knight's body from the waist downwards. This contrivance appears also in the *Triumph* of Maximilian and the *Tourney-book* of Duke William; and again in the *Kunstbuchlin* of Jost Aman, 1578, cuts 121 and 229. In some cases the defence is not covered by any mantling; in others it has a covering, with heraldic devices, and terminated by a border hanging free and fluttering in the wind. The name of this tilting-piece was in the German *hohes Zeug*, which the French writers render *Haute barde*.

The ordinary war-saddle of the XVIth century differs but little from that of the XVth. Good specimens appear in the *Tournament Roll* of Henry VIII., preserved in the *Heralds' College*, in Hefner's plate 115, and in Jost Aman, cuts 185, 231, &c. The "selles d'armes" of the *tourney roll*, having no riders upon them, show very exactly the construction and ornamentation of this part of the horse-furniture. One of them has been given in Shaw's *Dresses and Decorations*, with the usual fidelity of the artist. A fine embossed plate of steel, inlaid with gold, which had formed the arçon of a saddle in the middle of this century is in Lord Londesborough's collection. It was exhibited to the Institute in February, 1856. See vol. xiii. of this Journal, p. 181.

The war-saddle of the seventeenth century is well shown in Captain Cruso's "*Militarie Instructions for the Cavallrie*," published in 1632. The engraving has been copied by Grose.

In compiling this short account, it has not been attempted to give a complete history of *the Saddles of the Middle Ages*. Indeed, the writer can only hope to be excused for the insufficiency of his work by the consideration that, in a thousand instances, the masterly treatise which all the world admires has been suggested by some crude essay which all the world has forgotten.

JOHN HEWITT.