

## NOTES ON COLLARS OF SS.

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The study of antiquities would be a very dreary vocation if it dealt only with subjects and objects that are thoroughly well understood, and did not urge,—and herein lies the fascination of the pursuit,—to the investigation of questions still unsolved—mysteries, such as Stonehenge, and enigmas, like “cup markings;” perplexities such as are involved in the construction of “banded mail,” or in the origin and meaning of the collar of SS., *par excellence* the “*crux antiquariorum*.”

Perhaps no mediæval decoration has excited so much interest as this celebrated livery collar. There has certainly been no lack of research or, indeed, of controversy, in the matter, from the time of Camden to the present day, and during this period the meaning of the letters has been variously explained as:—St. Simplicius,—Salisbury (Countess of),—Soissons (Martyrs of),—Silentium,—Societas,—Souvenez,—Souverayne,—Seneschallus,—and Sanctus; while one fervid expositor finds the true explanation of the secret in the S-shaped lever on the bit of a horse's bridle.<sup>1</sup> This wild derivation may be at once dismissed.

It would appear that the testimony for the first six explanations is exceedingly dubious, but there is more or less indirect evidence in support of the other three; it is therefore very remarkable, not to say discouraging, that the origin and real meaning of the SS. collar should still remain a mystery. Yet it is perhaps more remarkable still that we should be equally uninformed as to the origin of the two most exalted Orders in Europe—the Garter, and the Golden Fleece.

It may be allowed that there is a good deal to be said in favour of “Seneschallus,” for John of Gaunt was Seneschal, or High Steward of England, and there has fortunately been preserved in the British Museum a drawing by Nicholas Charles, Lancaster Herald, from a window of Old St. Paul's, of the arms of “Time honoured

<sup>1</sup> See “Notes and Queries,” vol. ii., p. 195

Lancaster" within a collar of SS. of the early form, namely, a buckling strap with S's upon it at intervals. This is the earliest pictorial example that has been noticed. John of Gaunt died in 1399, and there is presumptive proof that he gave a collar of SS. to his nephew Richard II. A collar of the same kind occurs upon a corbel head of a regal personage, in a doorway in the south aisle of Southwell Minster. It is desirable to mention this example because, although the architecture with which it is connected is ascribed to the beginning of the fifteenth century, the head is apparently of an older date, and may possibly represent Edward III.

But the earliest sculptured example appears to be that represented on the effigy of Sir John Swinford, who died in 1371 (44 Edw. III).<sup>1</sup> Now, if it could be shown that this effigy was sculptured many years after his death, the fact still remains that this knight was entitled to wear a collar of SS., and it consequently follows that this decoration was an established collar of livery when Henry of Lancaster, Earl of Derby, was yet a boy, since he was not born until 1360. This would seem at once to dispose of the favourite conjecture that the collar was first devised by Henry IV, when he was Earl of Derby, in allusion to his motto, "Souverayne."

In support of "Sanctus" there is also something to be urged, for it may be borne in mind that church vestments were not infrequently powdered with S's for Sanctus. For instance, in 1386, Sir John Mautravers bequeathed to the church of Pourstoke, "j par vestimentorum cum S. literis deaureatis;" and in 1402, Sir John Depeden bequeathed to his chantries in the church of Helagh, Yorkshire, a complete vestment of silk, "habens S. literam nigram enbroudez super les orfrays."<sup>2</sup>

Ornaments charged with letters conveying religious sentiments, initials of personal names, and mottoes, were common enough in the middle ages, and towards the latter end of the fourteenth century heraldic collars came into fashion in accordance with this feeling. These, in their origin, were merely private family decorations, quite dis-

<sup>1</sup> Escheat, 46 Edw. III. No. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Testam. Eborac. pp. 175, 295.  
Surtees Society's Publications.

A magnificent cope at Stonyhurst

College, of the time of Henry VIII, has a border formed of collars of SS. and port-cullises. *Archæological Journal*, vol. xvii, p. 186.

tinct from collars of orders of knighthood, and were charged with personal devices. Of such kind was the collar of ermines shown on the effigy of John fourth Duke of Brittany, who died in 1399, in allusion to the fabled origin of his arms; the collar of mermaids shown on the brass of Thomas fourth Lord Berkeley, who died in 1392; and perhaps the collar of park palings represented on the effigy of Thomas de Markenfield, who died about 1415.

Of this nature, then, was the origin of the collar of SS.; and it is easy to conceive that the events of that stirring time would rapidly develop the family collar of an august house into a badge of feudal allegiance, to become, eventually, the decoration of a great political party. Whether the letter S. was originally derived from "*Seneschallus*," or from "*Sanctus*," we shall probably now never know; the former seems the most likely source, but this point is really of much less interest than the question of the first appearance and use of the collar. Its subsequent employment as the "*Livery*" of the great Lancastrian party during the reigns of Henry IV., Henry V., and Henry VI., is now a matter of history which is amply illustrated in almost endless variety by the effigies and brasses of this period.<sup>1</sup> At the head of these examples must be placed those which occur on the tomb and canopy of Henry IV. at Canterbury, in conjunction with the motto, "*Souverayne*" and "*Atemperance*," together with the SS. collar exhibited on the effigy of his Queen, Joan of Navarre.

The earliest recorded description of a collar of SS. occurs in a wardrobe account of Henry of Lancaster, Earl of Derby, taken in the 15th of Richard II. (1391-2), in which it is thus rather vaguely described: "*Pro 1. coler auri facto pro domino Henrico Lancastrie, Comiti Derb. cum xvij. literis de S. ad modum plumarum cum rotulis et scripturis in eisdem cum signo*"<sup>2</sup> in torrecto ejusdem."<sup>3</sup>

In the statute for the regulations of apparel, passed in the 2nd of Henry IV., it is ordained that—"All the sons of the king, dukes, earls, barons and baronettes, might use the livery of our Lord the King of his collar as well

<sup>1</sup> A list of the effigies and brasses throughout the kingdom, on which the SS. collar is represented, together with notes upon the pendants, and the social positions of the wearers, would be a valuable contribution to the history of the decoration.

<sup>2</sup> The late Mr. J. G. Nichols, who published some valuable papers on family collars in the "*Gentleman's Magazine*," vols. xvii., xviii., and xix., suggested that *cygno* was the word here intended.

<sup>3</sup> Planché, "*Cyclopædia of Costume*," p. 127.

in his absence as in his presence ; and all other knights and esquires should use it only in the presence of the king, and not in his absence." This implies feudal allegiance.

With regard to pendants attached to collars of SS. of this period, the figure of a swan is the only one which appears to have any special significance. This was the badge of the Bohuns, whose heiress, Mary de Bohun, was first wife of Henry IV. It occurs on a medallion as a pendant to an SS. collar worn by John Gower the poet, who died in 1408, in his effigy in the church of St. Mary, Southwark, and it is on record that collars of SS. with pendants charged with a swan were made for Gower and other persons as the livery of the house of Lancaster.<sup>1</sup> All other pendants of this time, as far as can be ascertained from sepulchral monuments, are merely trefoil ornaments fastening the ends of the collars and having occasionally an extra ring hanging from them.

The collar of SS. appears to have been repeatedly conferred upon envoys and foreigners of distinction, and notably upon certain eminent Italians who visited this country in the early part of the fifteenth century, this decoration appearing upon their monuments in the churches of St. Eustorgio and St. Ambrogio at Milan.<sup>2</sup> We also learn from a contemporary document that the chivalrous Swiss traveller, Conrad von Scharnachthal, received this mark of the royal favour from Henry VI., when he came to England in 1446 ; it is further stated that he constantly wore the collar of SS., which is represented in his memorial in a window in the church of Oberhofen, on the northern shore of the lake of Thun.<sup>3</sup>

We learn from the *Chronique des Ursins* that Henry V. exhorted those of his train who were not noble, to demean themselves well at the battle of Agincourt, and that "il leur donna congé de porter un collier semé de lettres S. de son order."<sup>4</sup> This monarch is represented in

<sup>1</sup> Planche's "Cyclopædia of Costume," p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> *Archæological Journal*, vol. xv., p. 286.

<sup>3</sup> " " vol. xvi., p. 359.

<sup>4</sup> Favines' "Theatre of Honour and Knighthood." Translation, edit. 1623, Book v. p. 67.

In the British Museum is a circular brass pendant, 3½ in. diameter, containing

on a field Az. a swan ducally gorged and holding in its bill a buckling collar with six S's on a pale blue ground. Mr. Franks has been kind enough to call my attention to this interesting example of Italian work. If it is not a pendant of a Lancastrian collar it presents, at least, a remarkable coincidence.

a MS., formerly his own, in the library of Ben'et College, Cambridge, seated upon a throne powdered with S's; and a portrait of Henry VI., in the possession of the Society of Antiquaries, represents him wearing a golden collar of SS. with a pendent cross.

On the accession of Edward IV. in 1461, the SS. collar was supplanted by the Yorkist collar of suns and roses, which, with the different pendent badges of the rival houses, namely, the white lion of March, the black bull of Clare, and the white boar of Richard III., continued in constant use until the accession of Henry VII., in 1485. The Lancastrian collar was now revived, and we meet with numerous representations of it upon monumental effigies and brasses until the close of the reign of Henry VIII., the ends of the collars being usually fastened by one or two portcullises, with a pendent rose. It is during this period that the SS. collar first appears upon the effigies of legal dignitaries.<sup>1</sup>

From documentary evidences of this time we gather that Edward Stafford, Earl of Wiltshire, bequeathed his collar of the King's Livery to his cousin of Shrewsbury in 1498.<sup>2</sup> In 1519 an entry occurs in the King's Book of Payments: "to Sir Richard Wingfield for a Collar of Esses 55 $\frac{3}{4}$  oz. at 40s. and £6 for the fashion;"<sup>3</sup> and at the marriage of Prince Arthur in 1501, Sir Nicholas Vaux wore a collar of SS. weighing eight hundred pounds of nobles.<sup>4</sup>

This was the age of great gold chains and collars, but unfortunately very few of them have come down to the present time. The portraits by Holbein and the painters who immediately succeeded him have made us familiar with the general characteristics of these massive chains, but the collar of SS. is seldom represented save in the portraits of legal dignitaries. But it is very satisfactory to know from the following document<sup>5</sup> that the collar of SS. worn by the Lord Mayor of London is a genuine decoration of the time of Henry VIII. It is perhaps

<sup>1</sup> In Foss's "Lives of the Judges of England," vol. vii., p. 23, the descents of some of the judicial collars are traced.

<sup>2</sup> Will of Edward Stafford, "Halsstead's Genealogies," p. 211.

<sup>3</sup> "Calendar of State Papers," vol. iii. part ii. p. 1537.

<sup>4</sup> Fuller's "Worthies," edit. 1811, vol. ii. p. 182.

<sup>5</sup> Communicated by the obliging courtesy of Sir J. B. Monckton.

the finest of its kind in existence, and its great size and magnificent modern pendent jewel make it a fitting attribute of an ancient and dignified office.

"Martis xxvij<sup>o</sup> Octobr a<sup>o</sup> R.R. Henr viij xxxvij<sup>o</sup>

"Att this Co<sup>r</sup>te my Lorde Mayer brought in & delyu'yd here in the Co<sup>r</sup>te to the hands of M<sup>r</sup> Chamb'len the Colo<sup>r</sup> of Esses lately gevyn to this Cytie by S<sup>r</sup> John Alleyne Knight & Ald'r'an to be used alwayes & worne by the lorde Mayer of this Cytie for the tyme beinge togeth<sup>er</sup> w<sup>th</sup> an obligac'on to be made by this Cytie to the executo's of the seid S<sup>r</sup> John Aleyn accordynge to the teno<sup>r</sup> of the laste wyll of the said S<sup>r</sup> John Aleyn & the same afterwards delyu'yd ageyne to the seid lorde Mayer at the same Co<sup>r</sup>te."

It is not known under what circumstances Sir John Alleyne became the holder of a collar of SS., but he probably received it at the hands of the King. Clearly he had no power to confer it by will, or otherwise, on the office of Lord Mayor of London, but it may be assumed that the chief magistrate obtained leave to add it to the insignia of the function of which it has since formed so conspicuous an ornament.

An interesting estimate, dated February 23, 1684-5, of articles to be provided for great officers of state at the coronation of James II contains the following entries:—

	oz.	dwt.	gr.	li.	s.	d.
"It <sup>m</sup> One Collar of SS. . . . poiz	19	10	0			
For Silver Gilding and Workmanship . . . .	24	18	09			
It <sup>m</sup> Two Collars of SS. . . poiz	34	07	12			
For Silver and Workmanship . . . . .	33	11	10			
It <sup>m</sup> Six Collars of SS. . . poiz	89	15	00			
For Silver and Workmanship . . . . .	82	08	09" <sup>2</sup>			

The above collars were probably for the three Kings of Arms,—the gilt one being for Garter,—and the six Heralds.

In Ireland the collar of SS. forms part of the municipal regalia of Dublin, and was given to the Lord Mayor of that city by Charles II. The Mayor of Cork has a very fine example, with a pendent portcullis, and the Council Book of the corporation contains the following naive entry concerning its acquirement:—

"31<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1755. That a collar of SS. and gold chains be bought for the Mayor and Sheriffs of this city, to be worn by them in their several offices, for the

<sup>1</sup> Letter Book Q., fo. 148.

<sup>2</sup> "Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries," vol. ii, No. 31, p. 222.



honour and dignity of this city, same to be made like the collar and chains worn by the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs of the city of Dublin."<sup>1</sup>

Queen Elizabeth gave a collar of SS. in 1571 to Maurice Roche, Mayor of Cork; this is still preserved at Ganetstow House.

The SS. collar of Lord Chief Justice Denman was bought in 1850, for £100, by the Corporation of Derby, and has since been worn by the Mayor of that town.

Thus, in latter and degenerate days, has the renowned badge of the Lancastrian livery been purchased with money. Obviously the mere possession of an SS. collar establishes no right to wear such a decoration.

In England, the collar of SS. is worn officially at the present day, with certain differences—such as knots, roses, the rose, shamrock and thistle surmounted by a crown—by the Lord Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench, the Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, the Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer, the Kings of Arms, the Heralds, the Serjeant-at-Arms, and the Serjeant-Trumpeter.

It will be seen from the accompanying illustrations from full size drawings, that the S's were fixed, occasionally backwards, upon a strap, at various distances from each other, and therefore in arbitrary number, or strung, or linked together. The letters were made of latten, or brass, as in two examples found in the Thames;<sup>2</sup> of silver, like the herald collars as worn at the present day, which, when bestowed by the Sovereign, conferred the degree of

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to the kind co-operation of Dr. Caulfield for this communication.

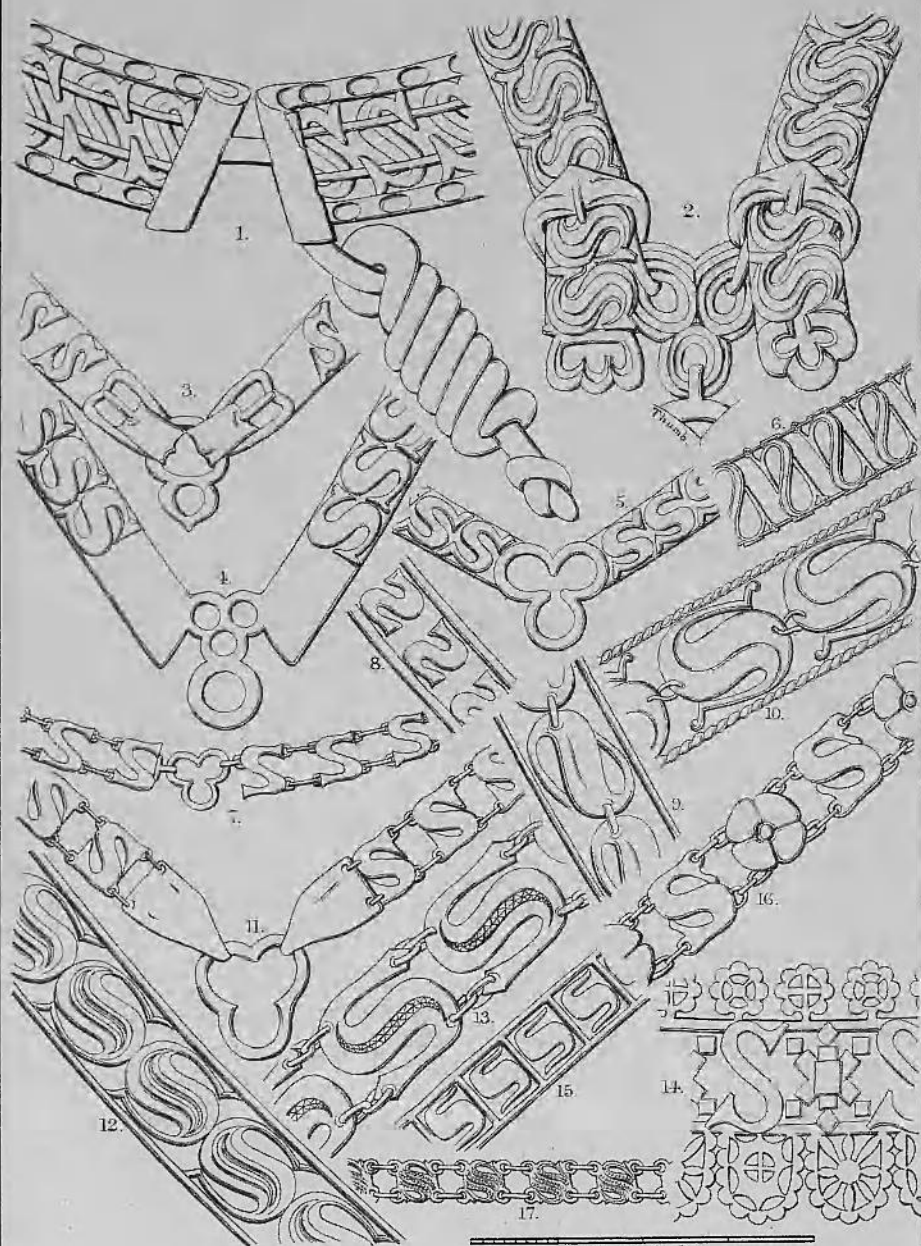
<sup>2</sup> These are now in the British Museum. The one has *hjt* on the body of the letter, and a hole at each end for attachment, and is stamped in very thin metal. It is evidently an ecclesiastical ornament. The other example is  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch high and has a stud at the back for attachment. This may well have formed part of a collar of SS.

If every person who is represented wearing a collar of SS. in his effigy or brass, actually possessed such a decoration, allowing even for its frequent transference by death to others, there must have been a very large number extant throughout the first half of the fifteenth century. And this is taking no account of the SS. collars worn by the numerous persons who have left no effigies or brasses behind them as evidences of their

privilege.

No doubt many of the examples in gold and silver were melted down in accordance with the changes of fashion or of political feeling, and the accession of the House of York would cause the disappearance of most of the SS. collars worn previous to that date; but what has become of all the chains of SS. of the time of Henry VII. and Henry VIII.? Those in stamped leather, or *cuir-bouilli*, which were presumably worn in the earlier times, have naturally perished like the leather swordbelts and baudrics of the Edwardian period; but the S's in latten do not fall into any of the above categories. Yet it is somewhat surprising, not only that no instance of a gold or silver S for affixing, or for forming one of a chain of S's has come down to our time, but that only two separate S's in bronze have come under the notice of antiquaries.

# COLLARS OF SS.





esquire ; or of silver gilt, like the collars of the Kings of Arms, which was, in earlier times, the special attribute of knighthood.

*References to Illustrations.*

1. Collar of Sir John Swinford, died 1371 ; from his effigy in Spratton Church, Northamptonshire.
2. Collar of Sir John Cressy, died 1444 ; from his effigy in Dodford Church, *ib.* It will be noticed that the tongues of the buckles are thrust through the letter S. A similar arrangement is shown in the collar of Sir Richard Vernon, died 1452, in his effigy in Tong Church, Salop. This seems to imply that the letters were occasionally made of some pliant substance like *cuir bouilli*.
3. Collar of Sir John de Wittelbury, died *circa* 1410 ; from his effigy in Marholm Church, *ib.*
4. Collar of Sir Thomas Greene, died 1457.
5. Collar of Phillippa Greene, died 14— ; from their effigies in Greene's Norton Church, *ib.*
6. Collar of Edward Stafford, Earl of Wiltshire ; died 1499 ; from his effigy in Lowick Church, *ib.* This may be taken to represent the collar which he bequeathed to his cousin of Shrewsbury.
7. Collar of Jane Knightley, died after 1537 ; from her effigy in Upton Church, *ib.*
8. Collar of Sir Henry Vere, died 1516 ; from his effigy in Great Addington Church, *ib.*
9. Collar of Chief Justice Sir Robert Brudenel, died 1531 ; from his effigy in Deane Church, *ib.*
10. Collar of Sir Richard Knightley, Gentleman-Usher-Extraordinary to the King, died 1534 ; from his effigy in Fawsley Church, *ib.*
11. Collar of Sir Richard Knightley, died 1537 ; from his effigy in Upton Church, *ib.*
12. Collar of William, Lord Parr, Knight of the Body, died 1546 ; from his effigy in Horton Church, *ib.*
13. Collar of Sir Thomas Andrew, died 1564 ; from his effigy in Charwelton Church, *ib.*
14. Collar of Penelope, Lady Spencer, died 1667 ; from her effigy in Brington Church, *ib.* This is a mere private ornament.
15. Collar of Ralph Hastings (?) died *circa* 1480 ; from his effigy in the habits of a pilgrim in Ashby-de-la-Zouch Church.
16. Collar of Sir Richard Salkeld, died 1501 ; from his effigy in Wetherall Church, near Carlisle.
17. Collar in the possession of Mr. J. Hilton.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This collar was exhibited at the monthly meeting of the Archaeological Institute, April 6, 1882. It is of silver, the front of the S's being gilt and ornamented with a series of small circles stamped with a punch. Suspended to it is a gilt rix-dollar of John George, Duke of Saxony, to which are attached three gilt shillings of Frederick IV of Denmark, each having a thin silver gilt lozenge of the usual Scandinavian type attached to it.

This example is rather puzzling. It has hardly a mediæval character and it

is not a modern collar of a judge, or of a herald. It is probably a fanciful object of the last, or of the early part of the present century. It was bought by Mr. Hilton, with no history attached to it, at a sale in London in the present year, and its exhibition at the Institute suggested to the author of the above "Notes" to thus re-write and add considerably to a short notice on collars of SS. which appeared some years ago in a work by himself, that is not within the reach of the public.