

NOTICE OF AN EXAMPLE OF MILITARY COSTUME AT THE
COMMENCEMENT OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

WE are indebted to Dr. Ferdinand Keller, President of the Antiquaries of Zurich, and a corresponding member of the Institute, for bringing under our notice the illustration of Mediæval Costume, to which the following observations relate. He has kindly communicated the drawing from which the accompanying woodcut has been prepared.

In the interesting Abbey church of Königsfelden, on the banks of the river Reuss, and near its confluence with the Aar, in the Canton of Argau, numerous examples of the decorative Arts of the Middle Ages are preserved, deserving of the notice of travellers in Switzerland, whose attention is not exclusively devoted to the picturesque attractions or the Alpine grandeur of that country. The antiquary who takes pleasure in the investigation of primeval or of Roman remains, ecclesiastical or military architecture, the arts of design, illustrations of manners and customs, costume, or indeed of any subject in the extended field of archæological research, cannot fail to discover in the ancient towns and historical sites of Switzerland many a remarkable relic not only interesting in its local associations, but available as illustrative of olden times in our own country.

In the early part of the fourteenth century the locality, subsequently occupied by the monastery of Königsfelden, was the scene of a cruel tragedy, almost under the walls of the Imperial Castle of Habsburg. The tyranny of Albert of Austria, who obtained the Empire in 1298, having with his own hands slain his rival, Adolph of Nassau, had become insupportable to the Swiss, and insurrection rose to such an extent that, in May 1308, the Emperor set forth in person to suppress it. He had made no great advance into the Canton of Argau, when, reaching the confluence of the rivers which unite near the ancient *Vindonissa*, Albert passed the ferry of the Reuss in a small boat, attended only by four of his suite, who were leagued for his destruction. John of Suabia, their chief, provoked to this murderous act by the avarice of the Emperor his uncle, who unjustly withheld his patrimony, struck the first blow. The assassins effected their escape, but the vengeance of Agnes, Queen of

Hungary, daughter of the murdered Albert, was savagely wreaked upon their kindred and connections,—not less than 1000 innocent victims having, as it is stated, been slaughtered even in her presence, to expiate the crime.

On the spot where the assassination of the Emperor took place, an Abbey was founded in 1310, by the widowed Empress, Elizabeth, and the Queen of Hungary. It was endowed with the confiscated estates of their victims. This Abbey was suppressed in 1528, and, with the exception of some portions still habitable, it is now falling to decay. The conventual church, the burial-place of many of the Austrian family, is likewise in a dilapidated condition; here, however, may still be seen a considerable quantity of remarkable painted glass representing scriptural subjects, and numerous figures of saints.¹ There are also many very interesting tombs, and sculptured achievements of nobles who fell at Sempach in 1386. Of the painted glass Dr. Keller has caused coloured facsimile drawings to be made by the skilful hand of Mr. Græter, and has thus enriched greatly the large series of drawings of painted glass in Switzerland, which claims special mention as a remarkable feature of the collections formed, under Dr. Keller's direction, by the Antiquaries of Zurich.

Mr. Græter, to whose pencil this Journal has already been indebted, has made an accurate drawing of one of the figures at Königsfelden, presenting an exemplification of costume at the period of transition from defences of mail to those of plate.² (See woodcut). This figure forms part of a group of Saracens, the assailants of the convent of St. Damianus at Assisi, by order of the Emperor Frederick II. They were struck blind through the prayer of St. Clara. The details of costume are curious and well defined. The warrior wears a green sleeveless surcoat over a hauberk of the peculiar variety termed banded mail. The basinet is white; and it deserves observation, as a proof of minute attention to accuracy in details, that although the vervilles are continued

¹ Among the figures of saints may be mentioned one of St. Louis, Bishop of Toulouse, son of Charles II., King of Naples, and nephew to St. Louis, King of France. He is portrayed vested in a cope, he holds a crosier in his right hand, and a closed book in his left. His feet are bare, possibly in allusion to his ascetic habits, and he is girt with a cord like a Franciscan. St. Verena, a local saint of

considerable celebrity, whose bath near Windisch (*Vindonissa*) is much frequented by sterile females, is represented holding a large double-toothed comb, and a water-vessel, or *biberon*, with a little spout for feeding the sick or infants.

² The dimensions of the figure are 20½ inches, from the outstretched hand to the foot.



Illustration of Military Costume in Switzerland.

From Painted Glass in the Abbey Church of Königsfelden, Canton of Argau; founded in 1310.

all round its lower margin, the lace passing through them, and serving to attach the basinet to the camail, extends only as far as the brows, beyond which the mailed defence beneath would not be continued. On the shoulder a narrow piece is seen coloured yellow (slightly dotted in the woodcut), extending beyond the green shoulder-band of the surcoat, and apparently part of some defence worn beneath it. This probably represents an *épaulière* ; which, and also the *genouillières*, likewise here coloured yellow, may have been of thick or jacked leather, not of metal. The use of such a shoulder-piece, it may be remarked, would explain the peculiar rigid appearance of the surcoat in that part, in certain effigies, and on seals ; examples occur where the narrow sleeve projects stiffly, almost at right angles to the neck of the figure, and seems wholly inconformable to the natural rounded contour of the shoulder. The hands are here protected by gloves of banded mail, with the fingers divided. The thighs, so far as they are seen under the scalloped skirt of the surcoat, appear to be defended by *chaussons*, or *haut-de-chausses*, of gamboised or *pourpointed* work, in longitudinal ribs : whilst the legs are encased in *chausses* of banded mail, with greaves protecting the shins, and attached by narrow straps round the calf of the leg.³ These greaves are black, with longitudinal yellow lines, and intervening rows of small thin rings ; these probably represent narrow strips of metal and flat riveting plates, fixed upon jacked leather. The feet are covered by the banded mail, without any *sollerets* or additional protection. The sword is unusually short, with a massive round *pommel*, and very small cross-guard ; the *bouterolle* of the scabbard is partly concealed by the leading of the glass. It will be observed that the leading has been represented in the woodcut, in like proportion to the design that it bears in the original. Lastly, the small ovoidal shield must be noticed, on account of its very unusual form. It is coloured yellow, and charged with a sable wing within a *bordure*. Among the numerous varieties in the forms of the shield, this egg-shaped type has not elsewhere been found, so far as we are aware. It occurs, however, in one other instance, but somewhat varied, in the church of Königsfelden.

³ It must be remarked that on the calf of the right leg the mail is represented in accordance with the more usual conventional mode of delineation, by parallel rows, without any intervening bands, as

in the other parts where armour of this description is here seen. This may however be only an accidental deviation, the space being extremely contracted.

The curious figure which has been brought under our notice through the kindness of our friendly correspondent, the learned President of the Antiquaries of Zurich, is interesting to the student of military costume, as an accession to the examples of the peculiar armour before mentioned, which occurs towards the close of the thirteenth century, known as banded mail. We must admit our inability to solve the difficult question, whether this type of representation, not unfrequently to be found in sculpture, sepulchral brasses, painted glass, seals, and more particularly in illuminated MSS., may have been merely a conventional mode of delineating that which it is almost impracticable to delineate with precision, namely interlaced mail, or whether in fact, as some have supposed, it denoted defences of some other description. This subject has been discussed by Mr. Hewitt, to whose observations in a former volume of this Journal⁴ reference may be made, but more especially to his Manual of Ancient Armour and Arms in Europe, which none can consult in investigations of this nature without advantage and instruction.⁵

I have the more readily availed myself of the obliging communication of Dr. Keller to bring under the notice of the Institute the curious illustration of costume, which I have endeavoured briefly to describe, in the hope that some of the numerous tourists who annually visit the Swiss Cantons, may be induced to linger for awhile on the banks of the Reuss, and explore both the Roman vestiges of *Vindonissa*, and the interesting remains of the Abbey of Königsfelden. The value of every example of mediæval art is enhanced, when we are enabled to assign to it an approximative date; in the present instance there appears to be little doubt that the painted glass, to which allusion has been made, may confidently be regarded as of the early part of the fourteenth century. The date of the foundation by Agnes, Queen of Hungary, has been assigned to the year 1310; and there, in a cell now destroyed, she passed nearly half a century, in penance and bitter remorse for the savage indulgence of vindictive passions.

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⁴ Archaeol. Journal. vol. vii. p. 362.

⁵ Ancient Armour and Weapons in Europe; by J. Hewitt: London, J. H. Parker, 1855; p. 260—269. See also the numerous examples of various modes

of delineating mail; *ibid.* p. 123. The second volume of this valuable work, in which the subject is brought down to the close of the fourteenth century, has recently been completed.