

GAUNTLETS.

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Of late we have heard much of the Mailed Fist, and I propose to say a few words on some varieties of this portion of the military equipment. The Baron de Cosson, F.S.A. once read a very interesting paper before the Institute on Gauntlets,¹ and in that valuable communication he sketched the development of this defence, illustrating the latter part of his paper by various examples lent by himself and other collectors of armour. I do not propose now to encroach on the ground so ably covered, but rather to touch on some varieties of the gauntlet which the Baron left unnoticed.

It will be remembered that the gauntlets described in that paper were, in most cases, of the class which are worn in pairs, that is, in which both hands are of the same construction. Those to which I shall now draw attention are in all cases single gauntlets, whether for the right or left hand.

Much that is incorrect has been written about the so-called "forbidden gauntlet," the proper name of which was the close or locking or tourneying gauntlet. Any one who has read the memoirs of La Marche, the life of Jacques Lalain, the realistic romance of Petit Jean de Saintré, and other works dealing with *pas d'armes*, tournaments and the like, will recognise how impossible it was for any forbidden arm or armour to escape notice and consequent prohibition. It may be remembered that when Jehan Boniface was going to fight with Jacques Lalain at Ghent in 1446, one of the lances shown to the judge by the former was disallowed, and it is also recorded that the duke of Burgundy, when presiding at such events, was in the habit of inspecting the arms used, so that there might be no foul play. So also on the eve of the fight

¹ *Archaeological Journal*, xli, 272.

between Diego de Guzman and Lalain, the two judges, Jean de Lune and Pedro de Heras, forbade the former to use the axe which he had brought, as being "de mal engin." In 1446, according to la Marche, when Lalain fought an English squire named Thomas, at Bruges, the latter carried the kind of axe called *bec de faucon*. Chastelain, in recounting the same fight, does not mention this, but says that the squire had an axe "qui n'etoit pas telle comme pour lors on avoit accoutume porter en lices." However, on the squire's earnest request, and by consent of Lalain, the duke allowed the weapon. It is curious that St. Remy, under date 1435, in describing a combat between Merlo and de Charny, states that the former's



FIG. I. LOCKING GAUNTLET.

Tower Armouries, class iii, no. 59.

weapon was a "*bec de faucon ce que on n'a point veu ou royaulme de France, car becq de faucon n'est mie hache, ains sont deux choses,*" and might have been objected to by Charny, but the objection was not raised. It seems odd that a weapon with a French name was unknown in France.

The so-called forbidden gauntlet was in fact a well-recognised part of the panoply, as may be seen on examining the album of suits made by Jacobi (Jacob Topf). In this book we find such a gauntlet with most of the suits, and curiously enough in one suit of Sir Henry Lee's, where it is omitted in the drawing, the actual

gauntlet is still preserved in the possession of the Armourers' Company.

The arrangement is simple, for the distal end of the last finger-plate is prolonged in such a manner as to touch and lie upon the inside of the wrist-piece to which, when the sword was grasped, the distal plate was fastened by a turning-pin working in a hole in the plate. The quillons of the sword or tourney club thus prevented the weapon from being driven backward through the hand, and the pommel equally prevented it from being drawn out. This gauntlet was used for the tourney where riders armed with wooden maces and blunt pointless swords hammered each other to their hearts' content.

No. iii, 59, of the Tower collection (fig. 1) is a very elegant specimen of the kind. It closely resembles a gauntlet belonging to the suit of Philip II at Madrid, known as that "de Lacerias," which was made in 1545 by Desiderio Colman of Augsburg, and is figured on page 70 of Count de Valencia de Don Juan's catalogue. The upper part of the back of the hand is covered by a series of five lames articulated to each other at the sides; next are three deeper lames with cabled ridges at their hinder margins, and beyond these a still deeper plate which conforms to the contour of the inner side of the wrist, to which it can be attached by a turning-pin. The cuff-piece is somewhat conical, with a round and ridged margin. The thumb consists of four pieces, two with the diamond-shaped ridge so often seen on gauntlets of German make. The last piece, which has a simulated thumb-nail, is returned over the thumb. This gauntlet in its present state, unlined, weight 11 lb. 6 ozs. and the fourteen separate pieces of metal work with one another like a lobster's tail.

Of the use of a single gauntlet we have notes in various places, and I may mention instances from the British Isles in the sixteenth century. To begin with Scotland, in the examination of Andrew Henderson after the Gowrie conspiracy in 1600, the deponent stated that "he sent his boy for his gauntlet and steel bonnet." In England we have, in the ballad of Mary Ambree, of the end of the sixteenth century (Percy collection), a description of the heroine in these words:—

A helmet of proof she straight did provide,
 A strong arming sword she girt to her side,
 On her hand a good fair gauntlet had she.

As to Ireland, Stanihurst, in his description of Ireland and the Irish in 1584, quoted by Camden, speaks thus of the Irish Karne warriors : "Cetricis aut manicis ferreis armati



FIG. 2. IRISH SOLDIER WITH GAUNTLET.
 From Douce MSS. Oxford.

pugnant." This does not clearly define the kind of defence, but in a unique woodcut in the Douce collection in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, we see what was the kind of gauntlet used. The group shown is surmounted by the legend "Drawn after the quicke," and exhibits some six Irish soldiers in costumes which are again found in

a curious Dutch manuscript in the British Museum.¹ It contains several sketches in pen and ink and water colours illustrating costumes and the like in England and Ireland. Fig. 2 shows one of the warriors with a plate-gauntlet of mitten form on the left hand. The cannon portion reaches nearly to the elbow, and the whole seems to fit loosely to the arm. This is the only illustration I have found of this gauntlet. *The Image of Ireland* (1581), by J. Derricke, does not mention it, nor do any of the woodcuts in that work show any signs of such a defence.²

A very rare type of gauntlet, and one which I have not met with at Madrid, Vienna, Paris or Brussels, is no. iii, 58, in the Tower collection (fig. 3). At first sight it resembles a manifer for the left hand (fig. 4). It has the flattish spayed cuff-piece and the broad stout

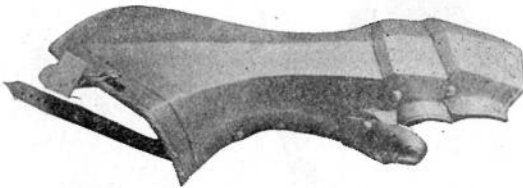


FIG. 3. GAUNTLETS FOR "BARRIERS."

Tower Armouries, class iii, no. 58.

lames protecting the fingers as in that defence; but standing out from these last will be observed two short flanges somewhat curved. When the hand is closed round the staff of a weapon these small plates close round it also, and conform it to its shape. It will be seen that such flanges are quite unnecessary for the holding of reins as in the bridle-gauntlet, but in holding a staff they would prevent an opponent's spear-point from being forced between the hand and the staff of the wearer. That such a protection was necessary we see from the beautiful copy of the romance of *Petit Jean de Saintrê*,³ where, in the

¹ MS. Add. 28,330, a journal of events up to the year 1574.

² Speaking of Perkyn Warbeck's army of Irish, Hall (p. 484) says, "the most

part of his soldiers were harnessed on the right arm, and naked all the body."

³ Nero, D. ix, Cott. MSS. in the British Museum.

combat between Jean and the seigneur de Loysselench, the former has driven his lance, not only between the seigneur's staff and gauntlet, but also through his hand, thereby disabling him. Such a defence for the hand would then be necessary at barriers unless, as in the romance quoted, some of the staves of the "lances à poulcer" had on them roundels of plate. In England we find the "lance à poulcer" called a "pouchen staffe." Stowe, under the year 1565, mentions a combat at barriers where there were to be "Thre pushhes with the pouchen staffe and twelve blows with ye sword." The thumb is protected as in the manifer. The gauntlet is for the left hand, which would generally be the forward hand at barriers.

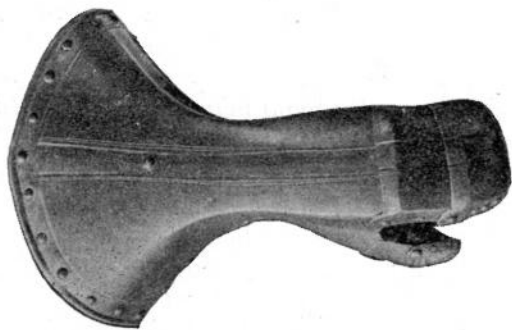


FIG. 4. MANIFER, OR "MAIN DE FER."

Tower Armouries, class iii, no. 95.

The gauntlets of the suit in the Tower of London (part is also at Windsor) ascribed to Sir John Smith (class ii, no. 12) are peculiar in that the cuff portion suddenly becomes more constricted where the cannon of the brassard terminates. The object of this was probably to allow the cannon to enter the gauntlet only as far as necessary, and then, tightening at the hand, it would fit closer and be more comfortable.

On the effigy at Breda of Engelbert II of Nassau, who died 1504, the detached gauntlets, in alabaster, are of the mitten type shown in no. 17 of the plate of Baron de Cosson's paper on gauntlets mentioned above, but the left

hand is divided so that the fingers are two and two. This arrangement is also seen in actual gauntlets in the collection at the Porte de Hal, at Brussels, no, 10, considered to be German.

The small suit for Charles I when about twelve years of age (class ii, no. 18 of the Tower collection) appears to be French in make, as both as regards design and ornamentation it much resembles no. 124 of the Musée d'Artillerie at Paris, which is known to have been made by Petit of Blois for the youthful Louis XIII. The right-hand gauntlet of the suit in the Tower has a short pin about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick from between the second and third knuckles. The use of this is not very apparent, but it is suggested that its purpose was to protect the hand from the pressure of the vamplate. No other instance of such a pin has been met with, and it seems quite possible that for the delicate hand of a child such an arrangement was of use, though a man could grip his lance with sufficient strength to prevent his hand being jammed into the narrow part of the conical vamplate.

The effigy of Albrecht of Hochberg (d. 1574) in the church of Pforzheim, a cast of which is in the museum at Nuremberg, shows a small strap and buckle across the inside of the wrist, pulling the lower thumb-piece toward the outside piece of the hand. It is for the left hand and is an anticipation of a modern way of fastening the glove when buttons are not used.

There is one gauntlet referred to in the time of Henry VIII of which unfortunately we know nothing. Wingfield reports to his king that he has presented to Francis I the sword "for the nimble handling whereof he hath or knoweth no feat, but thought it not maniable and called the Admiral to him and caused him to feel the weight thereof, who showed him that he had seen your grace weild one more pesaunt than the same, as deliverly as could be devised, but for such promise as he had made your highness, he might not disclose the manner how, saving that it was by means of a gauntlet." Francis accordingly asked for such a gauntlet, and offered in exchange a pair of cuirasses such as he had not seen, "the secret thereof was only for the easy bearing and sustaining of the weight of such pieces as rest upon the cuirasses,

the shoulders should sustain no burthen." This was just before the meeting at the Field of Cloth of Gold, and we are told that when the terms for the friendly contests between the two sovereigns were being arranged the two-hand sword is left out as it seems a dangerous weapon and few *gauntlets* would stand the heavy strokes to which they would be exposed. In the inventory of Henry VIII of 1547 arms and armour are mentioned: "X turnninge¹ gauntlets"; "three manufiers" (*mains de fer*), and "two secrete vambray for the hevie turnninge sworde." The last entry evidently relates to the request of Francis.

At the foot-combats when Philip II arrived in England, the close gauntlet or anything to fasten the sword to the hand was not allowed. The Tower inventory of 1611 uses the term "close gauntlet for the locking," but in the similar inventory of 1629 "turning (tourneying ?) gauntlet" is employed.

The statute of 4 and 5 Philip and Mary noted that "the want of a gantlet or gantlets shall not be reckoned a deficiency in the arming of a corslet."

Sir Roger Williams in his *Briefe Discourse of Warre* (1590) when speaking of the equipment of horsemen says, "let his gauntlets be also so light as you can desire," but Sir John Smithe in his *Instruction Observation and Orders Militaire* does not mention this part of the cavalryman's equipment. Francis Markham also in his *Five Decades of Epistles of Warre* (1622), does not refer to the gauntlets; in fact, while saying that the men-at-arms or lancers are to be armed at all pieces from the head to the knee, and the pistoliers in like fashion, he says the carbines have poldrons to the elbow and no more, and to the light horse he assigns a shirt of mail.

Cruso, in his *Militarie Instructions for the Cavallrie* (1632), assigns ordinary gauntlets to the lancer, cuirassier and the other divisions of horse-soldiers. In 1630, however, we find mention of a long gauntlet in a letter of Sir Edmund Verney to his son in which he says he has not yet received his armour. "I believe ther is never a long gauntlett sent. Let Hill make one with all the speede

¹ Evidently a mistake for tourneying.

he can possibly ; for it will kill a man to serve in a whole curass. I am resolved to use nothing but back, breast, and gauntlet."

Warde, in his *Animadversions of Warre* (1639), does not mention the gauntlet. Gervase Markham, in his *Soldiers' Accidence* (1643), gives the cuirassiers or pistoliers a left-hand gauntlet, but does not mention it in the equipment of other horsemen. Hexham, in the *Principles of the Art Military* (1642), does not refer to the left gauntlet.

We know that such a gauntlet was used in the seventeenth century by cavalry to protect the left or bridle arm, and several suits in the Tower of London have these long gauntlets. The one illustrated in fig 5 is a part of the armour belonging to, though probably never worn by James II, and it shows that as late as 1685 at least the use

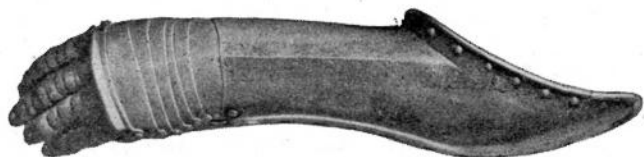


FIG. 5. LONG GAUNTLET OF JAMES II.

Tower Armouries, class ii, no. 24.

of such defences was common. This one, like the breast and back of the same armour, has an engraved and partly gilt surface, and the letters J.R. surmounted by a crown. Boheim calls these long gauntlets *Pickenierhandschuh*, and says they were used by the pikemen in the Thirty Years' War, and were the latest form of iron gauntlet used.

That the gauntlet was used as a weapon we have evidence in the memoirs of du Guesclin under the year 1356, where we are told that after he had the English squire Thomas of Canterbury on the ground "pour lui faire porter de ses marques, il lui donna quelques marques du tranchant de son epee sur le nez et tant de gourmades de son gantelet de fer que Thomas etoit couvert du sang qui couloit sur ses yeux et sur son visage avec

tant d'abondance qu'il ne pouvoit pas voir celui que le frappoit."

Ideas seem to have changed by 1449 when we come to the combat between Jacques Lalain and John Pientois, a Burgundian squire. Lalain, having let go of his own axe and seized his opponent's, struck several times at his face with the upper spike of the axe. These blows Pientois endeavoured to parry with his right gauntlet while striking at Lalain's face. At last Pientois was wounded in the face and then the combatants were parted. Lalain then said "ce n'est pas honneste bataille de combattre au poing comme les femmes." To this the squire replied that if he had not taken his weapon he would have fought him with it "et sont les mains faictes a l'homme pour assaillir et pour defendre." So la Marche describes this fight, but Chastelain, in his life of Lalain, makes him say "Jean, je ne me pourrois plus tenir de vous dire que c'est trop fait en commere de combattre au gantelet tant qu'on ait baton en main dont on se puit aider." On this occasion Lalain, as usual, had his face bare and, besides that, he wore no armour on his right leg. The squire had a head-piece which was neither *salade* or *bascinet* but a kind of "capel de fer" specially made for the occasion, and a high "baviere," or *bufe*, so that only his eyes could be seen. The hand-blows only began after some sixty-three blows had been exchanged, so no doubt the combatants had by then become somewhat wild in their fighting.

La Marche in describing the Tournoi de Gand in 1469 says: "et fut combatue cette bataille de sy pres qu'ils combatirent des epees et des ganteles."

At the Porte de Hal, Brussels, an armour of Philip II (S 1, 27) has a curious left-hand mitten, the cannon portion of which is very rigid. At Madrid an armour of Charles V (A 101) has also a very rigid left-hand miton all in one piece. It is figured in pl. ii of the new catalogue, and Count Valencia calls it one of the most curious of German ideas for the joust, like but less rich than one of the emperor Maximilian at Vienna.¹ The large articulations from the shoulder to the elbow only play to bend the arm

¹ Boheim, *Waffensammlung*, xlviii, 2.

towards the pommel of the saddle, forming one piece with the gauntlet which protects the hand and rein.

In an ordinance made by Richard II in 1386, and probably in force for many years, it is mentioned that "if any man take a prisoner, that he take his faith and his heddepece, or his right *gauntelet* of him in a gage, and in token that he hath so taken him . . ."

The suit A 129 of Charles V of the year 1538 at Madrid has scale fingered gauntlets, but the index finger of the right hand is covered with fine chain mail to give greater ease.

Some notices of gauntlets from wills and other contemporary sources may be of interest.

1307-1312 John Marmaduke bequeaths "*cirotieccce de Balayn*," value 12d and 1 par *cirotecarum de ferro* "of the same value."

In 1311 the ordinances for the various trades in Paris mention that plate gauntlets are to be tinned and not covered with leather; also that the rivets are all to have washers. These orders were repeated in 1396.

1322 the Wigmore castle inventory mentions a pair "*cirothecarum de plate*."

1350 Wm. de Grantham leaves a pair of iron gauntlets.¹

1360 John de Wygan leaves a pair of gloves of plate.¹

1387 Roger Lunt leaves a pair of gloves of plate.¹

1392 John de Clifford leaves "*unum bonam par de cirotecarum de plate*."²

1392 Robert Usher leaves a "*payr glovys de plate*."

1396 Symon Wynchcombe leaves six pairs of gloves of plate.¹

1404 John Sloo leaves a pair of iron gloves.³

1422 Bishop Bowet's inventory mentions "*uno pari de cirothecarum cum condolis de laton de antiqua forma*." These gloves will remind one of the brass gauntlets hanging over the Black Prince's tomb, and at late as 1547 in Henry VIII's inventory are "a paier of gauntletts of copper and guilte."

1474 John Seynte left "*unum par sereticar de plate*."³

¹ Court of Hustings, London.

³ Bristol Wills.

² Durham Wills.

1358 the inventory of William II, count of Hainault, includes "deux wans (gants) a boucles d'argent emailles des armes de Haynau," also "longs gants de balaine, 7 paires de gants de plates" and "3 paires de gants de laiton."

1373 In the metrical chronicle of du Guesclin we have "gans a broches de fer qui sont a redoubter."

Von Leber, in his *Wiens kaiserliches Zeughaus*, at page 300, says: "Although Schemel who wrote his tourney book in 1568 quotes and figures at f. 80 of his manuscript the right-hand close gauntlet which he calls *Turnierbentze* (with spear and sword) for the foot tourney over barriers as requisite portions of armour, yet these close gauntlets or *Turnierbentze* were in Germany not allowed for the tourney, and the challenges of the sixteenth century forbade to the tourniers repeatedly their use." So for instance in the challenge for the Munich tourney in 1568, article 9: "For the foot tourney shall no advantage be used, no *shifting* on the helmet or other advantage." In the *Freiturnier* on horseback (article 7): "No *Venturirer* shall use a close gauntlet or other advantage" and so on.

So far had the effeminacy of the sixteenth-century knight increased: what a difference from the whalebone tourney-gauntlets with which the tourniers of the thirteenth century were contented, i.e. leather gauntlets furnished with whalebone to protect the hand from hard blows.