XXIV

STATE AND COURT ATTIRE

CORONATION DRESS—PARLIAMENTARY ROBES—MISTAKES IN COURT DRESS—VESTIGES OF THE WIG AND OF THE CHAPERON—COURT CARDS

The English sovereigns are heads of the Church as well as of the State, and in connection with their coronation dress there are, as might be expected, many survivals from the past. The vestments used on the occasion in question agree almost entirely with those which we have described as being worn by a bishop at mass. We may except, however, the amice and the maniple, while the sceptre and crown take the place of the crosier and the mitre. The first vestment to be put on is of linen, and is an albe or rochet, and up to the time of James II it was provided with sleeves—it is known as the Colobium sindonis. Over this is placed the tunicle or dalmatic. This is made of silk, and across it is worn the stole in the same way as deacons were ordered to do in the year 561. The custom is still followed in Greece and Rome, whereas priests generally put on the stole immediately after the albe.

Over the dalmatic comes the imperial mantle which
seems to have been originally a chasuble, but is now slit up in front. This garment, which is of cloth of gold, is embroidered with eagles, that are interesting as probably representing the claim of the King of England to be Emperor of Britain and Lord Paramount over all the Islands of the West. In Charles II’s reign further ornaments occurred in the shape of roses and fleur-de-lys, and on Queen Victoria’s mantle there were roses, half red and half white, as well as thistles, shamrocks, and fleur-de-lys, while the eagles were embroidered in silver.

At the coronation of King Edward VII the vestments which we have described were all used with the exception of the albe, and to the other devices on the imperial mantle the lotus flower was added as a symbol for India, as the King was the first sovereign to be crowned as Emperor of India.

The robe which the King wears at the opening of Parliament has a cape of ermine made up in miniver style, and it is lined throughout with the same fur. We might here say that ordinary ermine is decorated with the tails of the stoat, which remain black when this animal puts on its winter dress, whereas in the case of miniver the fur is spotted all over with little black pieces made from the skin of some other animal. This has not always been the same, but at the present time Persian lamb is used.

The magnificence of the King’s parliamentary robe and its train of crimson velvet may be gathered from
the fact that in the making of the miniver, upwards of ten thousand pieces of black fur were used. In a portrait of the King, taken when wearing this robe, he is shown in the uniform of a Field Marshal, and holds in his hand the Field Marshal’s baton. The latter originally was a box in which the general carried the orders of his sovereign, and it is rather curious that what was once the emblem of the servant should come to be used by a crowned head himself.

The rank of noblemen is indicated on their parliamentary robes by the number of bands of ermine with which they are decorated. A Baron has two, a Viscount two and a half, an Earl three, a Marquis three and a half, and a Duke four, whereas on their coronation robes the same effect is gained by a similar number of rows of black spots on the miniver, which forms a kind of cape.

As in connection with life at Court there are a number of special uniforms and official dresses which are carefully prescribed, it is likely that we should find among the dress of those surrounding the sovereign, many and excellent examples of survivals. There is, indeed, one uniform which has come down to us practically unaltered from the year 1485. This is the dress worn by the Yeomen of the Guard, who may be looked upon as the King’s Retainers. (See Figure 142.)

It is an obvious example of the point that we have
dwelt upon in connection with badges and liveries, for borne on the back and chest are the royal crown and initials. Of course, the latter have altered from time to time, and when the King came to the throne

![Fig. 142. — A Yeoman of the Guard of the present reign.](image)

the Tudor crown, which had been superseded by that of St. Edward, was replaced.

The development of the badges on the coat is interesting. In Henry VII’s reign there was the crown and the red and white rose. In the time of Anne the thistle was added, and the rose was
placed upon a stalk. The Tudor crown was also replaced, for during the Stuart period, St. Edward's crown had appeared, and the royal motto was added. In the Georgian period St. Edward's crown again was made use of, while George III added the shamrock. Now, in King Edward VII's time, we have the Tudor crown, the rose, thistle, and shamrock, the motto "Dieu et mon droit," and the initials "E.R."

What the original uniform was, is not quite certain, but practically the same kind of coat was worn in Henry VIII's reign that appears now. The ruff would appear to be Elizabethan, though the hat is earlier. The officers used to wear a similar but more gorgeous uniform, but when William IV commanded that only officers of the army should be given commissions in the Guard, the present dress, which is that of a field officer of the Peninsular period, was introduced. When King Edward VII came to the throne he left the decision as to whether they should wear the old Tudor dress, to the officers themselves, and they decided in favour of the more modern military one. We might mention the halberds that are carried by the Yeomen, and also allude to some of the duties which they have carried out, from the making of the King's bed in early times to searching the Houses of Parliament before the session opens, which is a memory of Guy Fawkes, and of attending, as they have done for centuries, at the giving of alms by
the sovereign in Westminster Abbey on Maundy Thursday.

Very many uniforms seen at Court show the turned-back edges and the lining of the tails, described when we were dealing with the evolution of the coat (see p. 34)—for instance, in the case of the gentlemen-at-arms, and of several officials. We may mention also the Scottish Archers who wear a green coat with a turned-back part—which represents the lining—of red velvet.

The style of Court dress which may be worn to-day by civilians has become somewhat simpler, though ruffles and frills are still to be found in connection, and may be worn with, what is known as old-style dress that is always adopted by the legal profession. The knee-breeches come from the time of William III, and the coat in its original form dates back to the time of Napoleon. The sides of the coat have, however, been cut away, and this was done during the last reign, when the alteration was made for the convenience of those who were not accustomed to wear a sword.

The more recent simplification of Court dress has, however, provided pitfalls for the unwary, and all sorts of curious mistakes in small details are made. To show how easy it is to put a button too many here, or too few there, we may describe the differences between the old and new styles. On the old there are seven buttons up the front of the coat and
three on the cuffs. In the new, there are but six in the first case and none in the second. Again, in the simplified coat there are no buttons below the flaps (which represent pockets), and but four buttons behind on the tails. In the old style there are three buttons below the flaps—while there are similar ornaments on the waistcoat, which is skirted—and there are six buttons on the tails. Then in addition there is the wig-bag, to which we shall refer in a moment, at the back of the coat collar, as well as the frills and ruffles. Although on the lace of these as much may be spent as on the rest of the costume, the cost of the simpler dress is really not much less than that of the other. A survival is, of course, to be seen in the sword and in the simplified costume, it is worn in a frog instead of on a sling.

We have made it evident how much a man now depends upon his tailor for correctness in the detail of his Court dress, and it is amusing to find that wig-bags are put on to modern-style coats, and that the number of buttons is often quite wrong; but if these are the faults of the tailor, it is the man himself who is responsible who goes to Court with his sword hanging at his right side. We have not heard of military men making such a mistake, but officers have been known to appear with their cross-belts over the wrong shoulder. It is a good thing for some that Court etiquette is not so strict as it has been in the past.
A curious survival is found in connection with old-style dress and some of the uniforms which are worn by officials, and we have had to mention similar vestiges when speaking of the Lord Mayor’s coachman and of the Welsh Fusiliers. This is what is known as a wig-bag (see Figures 109 and 113), though in the Lord Chamberlain’s descriptions it is now referred to by the same name as the ornament of somewhat similar origin of the Welsh Fusiliers, namely, the “flash.” It consists of a small bag of silk, at the bottom corners of which little satin ribbon loops are fixed, while the whole is covered by an elaborate rosette of satin ribbon, and is suspended from the back of the coat collar. The bag represents the old bag in which the bob of the wig was placed, and the loops no doubt are those through which a ribbon was passed, which went round the neck of those who wore wigs, and was secured by a jewel on the breast. This was to provide against the wig being lost, should it fall from the head of its wearer, for these curious replacements of natural hair were of considerable value, costing twenty, thirty, sixty or even more guineas. The rosette of ribbon is the modern representative of the bow that tied the wig. (See Figure 143.)

We have already traced the connection which Mr. Calthrop has shown between the cockade and the chaperon, and we might mention again that this ancient form of head-dress survives in connection
with the hood of the mantle of the Knights of the Garter and of other Orders, for instance, those of St. Patrick and of the Thistle. (See Figure 144.)

In the case of the Knight of the Garter, the hood consists of a flat piece of crimson velvet about three-

![Image](image.png)

**Fig. 143.—The wig-bag or "flash" from a Court suit, showing the rosette held away and displaying the black silk bag. At the lower corners of the latter loops are seen, which are probably the remains of those through which a ribbon was passed, which went round the neck and fastened on the breast by a brooch.**

quarters of a yard across, slightly oval in shape, and at a spot a little on one side of the centre is to be found the remains of the turban of the chaperon. It is a thick ring covered outside with crimson velvet, and inside with white silk. To one side of this is fastened a long band of crimson velvet one and three-quarter times as long as the hood is wide. This
represents, of course, the liripeipe of the chaperon. (See page 166 and Figures 122–125.) The edges of the velvet in all cases are ornamented with a white silk piping. The hood is fixed on the right shoulder, and the band representing the liripeipe is brought across the breast of the wearer. In addition there are some wide loops and ends of ribbon called the streamer, and narrow ribbons with which to fasten the structure to the mantle.

The hoods of the Orders of the Thistle and of St. Patrick are similar in construction, and in the case of the former the velvet of which they are made is blue in colour. On the mantles of other
Orders only the streamer remains. On the left shoulder of the Knights of the Bath and of St. Michael and St. George there is a small vestige of aiguillettes. This is of silk cord in the former case, and of gold cord in the second. The under-dress, which is not commonly worn now, is furnished with trunk hose and silk tights, and from its appearance is known as the silver dress. Much the same style was carried out in all the Orders that we have up to the present had occasion to mention. In the more modern Orders there is, of course, no such ancient under-dress.

If we have Kings and Queens at Court, we also have Kings and Queens and Knaves among our playing-cards, and the costumes which survive on the curious pictures which represent them in double, but without their lower limbs, are worthy of some little attention. As a matter of fact, they are Tudor dresses, slightly modified perhaps of recent years, but nevertheless, a common and widespread relic of the fashions which were in vogue when Henry VIII was going through his matrimonial troubles, and shaking this country clear from its allegiance to the Pope.

There are two series of ceremonial dresses not immediately connected with the State which it may be worth while to investigate. They are, in the first place, the liveries of the City Companies, and in the second the insignia of Masons. In the first case, on some of the gowns we find again the chaperon
appearing as a hood on the shoulder, and many of the caps that are worn have survived for some centuries. A few of the companies still possess their ancient embroidered hearse cloths, which recall the early semi-religious and provident purposes of the guilds out of which the great City Companies have developed.

There seems no doubt, too, but that the apron of the Masons is actually derived from that worn by the craftsmen when at work, and in some countries it is still of the same circular form as those which were used by the English masons of the eighteenth century. Other parts of the clothing of Masons are no doubt derived from the old guild liveries, and in the fact that some high officials wear gauntlets we have a reminder of the knights' armour, and possibly a survival from the time when high officials were knights.