

XXVI.—*Contemporary Authority adduced for the popular idea that the Ostrich Feathers of the Prince of Wales were derived from the Crest of the King of Bohemia. In a Letter from Sir NICHOLAS HARRIS NICOLAS, G.C.M.G. to Sir HENRY ELLIS, Secretary.*

Read 13th May, 1847.

MY DEAR SIR,

Torrington Square, 12th May, 1847.

IN the paper which I had the honour of communicating to the Society of Antiquaries last year on the Origin and History of the Badge of Edward Prince of Wales,^a I stated that there was no *contemporary* authority for the popular idea that the Ostrich Feathers were derived from the Crest of the King of Bohemia who was slain at Crecy, and that it could not be traced to any earlier writer than Camden.

An accident, which in historical and antiquarian investigations often supplies information, when all the obvious and direct sources of knowledge have been exhausted, has just shewn me that I was mistaken, and I lose no time in submitting to the Society what I have discovered on the subject.

Towards the end of the anonymous historian of the reign of King Edward the Third, printed by Hearne,^b that indefatigable antiquary quotes a remarkable passage from the celebrated physician John de Ardern's Medical Treatise; and, as he attended all the eminent persons of the court of King Edward the Third, he was likely to have known the origin of the Prince of Wales's badge.

There are several copies of Ardern's curious Treatise in the British Museum, but the passage is omitted in most of them, and it has been now transcribed from the copy in the Sloane Collection, (No. 56, folio 76,) and collated with another copy in the same collection, (No. 335, folio 67,) both of which were certainly written towards the close of the fourteenth century.

In the chapter "On Hemorrhoids," Ardern says, that he has depicted on a pre-

^a Archaeologia, vol. xxxi. p. 350—384.

^b "Walteri Hemingford Canonici de Gisseburne Historia de rebus gestis Edwardi I. Edwardi II. et Edwardi III. Accedunt inter alia Edwardi III. Historia per anonymum," &c. Oxon. 1731. Vol. II. p. 444-6. Note. The note relating to the Feather is not referred to in the Index to that work.

vios folio a “Nastare” (a species of clyster-pipe), and a feather of the Prince of Wales, to which he refers, and then adds :—

“Et nota quod talem pennam albam portabat Edwardus primogenitus filius Edwardi Regis Angliæ super crestam suam, et illam pennam conquisivit de Rege Boemiæ quem interfecit apud Cresse in Francia; et sic assumpsit sibi illam pennam quæ dicitur *Ostrich fether*, quam prius dictus Rex nobilissimus portabat super crestam. Et eodem anno quo dictus strenuus et bellicosus princeps migravit ad Dominum, scripsi libellum istum manu propria, videlicet Anno Domini 1376, et dictus Edwardus princeps obiit vi. idus Junii videlicet die Sanctæ Trinitatis apud Westmonasterium in magno Parlamento, quem Deus absolvat, quia fuit flos miliciæ mundi sine pare.”

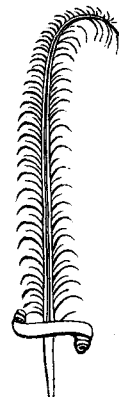
In the margin of these manuscripts the annexed representations of the feather are given :—



MS. Sloane 76, fo. 61.



MS. Sloane 56, fo. 71.



MS. Sloane 335, fo. 67.

There is therefore, undoubtedly, the statement of a contemporary, who from his situation was likely to be well informed on the subject, that the Black Prince took the Ostrich Feather from the crest of the King of Bohemia, whom he slew at Crecy, and assumed it for his own crest : but, though this assertion is entitled to great weight, I am not, I confess, convinced of its accuracy ; and I still expect that proof will some day be found that the Ostrich Feather and the mottoes “Ich Dien” and “Houmout” were derived from the Prince’s maternal house of Hainault.

It is a most remarkable fact, that the *only contemporary* evidence of the institution of the Order of the Garter is to be found in a tailor’s account, and that the *only contemporary* notice of the Prince of Wales’s Badge should occur in a memorandum in a treatise on Hemorrhoids !

I avail myself of this occasion to make a trifling addition to my remarks on the Order of the Garter, as well as to those on the Ostrich Feathers.

The charter ° granting the Duchy of Aquitaine to the Prince of Wales, on the 19th of July, 1362, is curiously illuminated. In the upper corner on the left hand are the Prince's arms supported by two angels; and on the right a man is represented in a stooping posture holding over his head a sable shield charged with three Ostrich Feathers, each having a label but no motto. The sides of the shield are also supported by angels. Below this drawing is the effigy of another angel, who holds a long scroll in his hand, which occupies the greater part of the right margin, and contains the motto—

“*Hony soit quy mal y pense.*”

Believe me to be, my dear Sir,

Yours very faithfully,

N. HARRIS NICOLAS.

SIR HENRY ELLIS, K.H.

Sec. S.A.

° Engraved for the new edition of the *Fœdera*, vol. III. p. 667.