

The

# CUTTER'S PRACTICAL GUIDE

to

# LIVERY GARMENTS, &c.

## INTRODUCTION.

In treating of Livery Garments, it will be well if, at the start, we get a correct definition of what livery is. The dictionary explains it as follows:

"LIVERY.—That which is delivered out stately, as clothing, food, etc., especially the peculiar dress by which the servants of a household are distinguished; peculiar dress appropriated by any body of persons to their own use; company of those wearing such a garb; any characteristic dress or outward appearance; an allowance stately given out; v. t., to clothe in livery."

Liveries are of very ancient origin. When the ancient Greeks used that pithy saying, "The dress shows the man," they intended it to convey that it proclaimed his social condition, quite as much as his moral character. The custom of livery is really derived from the term "liberata," or "liberatio," a term applied to the delivery or distribution (made by the Merovingian and Carolingian races) of particular sets of clothes to the servants throughout the palace, and at the sovereign's expense. In common phrase this was called a "livree," and it was ordinarily performed in the plenary courts of France. We also find a term of similar signification used by the early German emperors.

In the days of chivalry, livery, in the proper sense of the word, often covered noble backs; the duke's son was page to the prince, and wore his livery. The earl's second son serving a duke donned his master's coat and colours. The knight's second son, and the esquire's son, joyfully wore the livery of him they served; whilst many cases are recorded of the younger brothers of noblemen serving their elder brother, and wearing with all humility their elder kinsman's coat and badge.

The badge on the arm is distinctly traceable as far back as Edward IV., and consists of a cloth or metal circle, worn on the left arm, and displaying the crest of the wearer's master. This is only retained by the

few at the present time, such as the fraternity of Watermen, who wear the "Doggett's Coat and Badge," the Lord Mayor's servants (illustrations of which are given on our Livery Plate), as well as here and there a company of firemen, etc. This mode was at one time so general that when people desired to apply a proverb to people lacking the ordinary appendages, they said: "Like a coat without a badge."

The badge was probably peculiar to England, as it appears to have excited the curiosity of foreigners in the time of Queen Elizabeth.

Laced cloaks were given as livery in the time of James I. For a considerable time, livery was worn by other common men, besides salaried servants; they were looked upon as the retainers of him whose livery they wore, and their service was that of the strong hand, which was ever ready to be raised in their master's services. So formidable a body did they become in time, that the law at last stepped in, and decided that without license no noble could retain such followers; and permitted the master to give livery only to his own household servants, officers, and counsel learned in the law. When this law was evaded, as it sometimes was, the penalty of imprisonment was enforced, and increased by fine of £5 per month for every retainer kept without license.

The Earl of Oxford, at Hemingham, on one occasion received a visit from Henry VII., and, in order to do him honour, had a large muster of retainers specially for this occasion. The King, after thanking him for his good cheer and hospitality, said: "I may not endure to have my laws broken in my sight. My attorney must speak with you." The poor Earl was mulcted in the enormous sum of £10,000, for merely putting livery on the back of a few score men, contrary to the Statute of Henry's first Parliament.