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The statuts and ordinances of the mooste noble ordre of saynt George named the Gartier (Statutes of the Order of the Garter)

In English and Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment
England, London, 1587-1588

ii (paper) + i + 42 + ii folios on parchment, watermark on the second paper front flyleaf of a crowned flagon, modern foliation in pencil, 1-42, complete (collation i-xxi²), no catchwords or signatures, ruled in red ink (justification c. 163 x 93 mm.), written in dark brown ink in English cursive script (Secretary) by two scribes (hand changes on f. 29) in single column on 26 lines, the letter copied on the first end flyleaf is written in dark brown ink in a flowing Secretary hand with long ascenders and descenders on 16 lines, rubrics in red in the left margins, 2-line initials in liquid gold or blue, the former on grounds alternating in blue, dark pink and ochre, the first initial on f. 1 is ornamented with feathering in red and blue extending to the margins, decorated with illuminated royal arms of Elizabeth I on the recto of the front parchment flyleaf, and on its verso the illuminated badge of the Chancellor of the Order of the Garter, and the arms and crests of Amias Paulet; slight water damage in the lower margins of some leaves (e.g. ff. 19, 24), a few insignificant stains, otherwise in pristine condition. ORIGINAL BINDING of limp vellum with the royal arms blocked in gold to center, flanked by initials E.R. for Elizabeth Regina, within badge of the Order of the Garter surmounted by crown, within two fillet frames in gilt, with fleur-de-lis corner stamps, same design on front and back boards, spine stamped with five small Tudor roses in gilt, with marks to top and bottom of fore-edge where ribbons used to be, vellum stained but overall the binding is in good condition. Dimensions 212 x 147 mm.

An exquisite piece of Elizabethan penmanship and artistry in almost pristine condition. The Order of the Garter, founded in 1348, is one of the oldest Chivalric Orders in Europe. Queen Elizabeth I effectively used the Order to establish her authority over a predominantly male court. Made for Sir Amias Paulet, the jailer of Mary, Queen of Scots and Chancellor of the Order, our manuscript is distinguished by its finely painted heraldry: the arms and crests of Paulet and (unusually) the royal arms of Queen Elizabeth I. The last copy of these Statutes listed for sale was in 1981 (Schoenberg Database).

PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript was made for the Chancellor of the Order of the Garter, Sir Amias Paulet (1532-1588). Paulet followed his father to the position of Governor of Jersey, and in 1576 Queen Elizabeth I appointed him Ambassador to Paris. Letters from Paulet to the Queen written during his embassy in Paris survive in the Bodleian Library (Oxford), MS. Add. C. 82 and MS. Rawl. A. 331 (the latter letter book was edited by O. Ogle in 1866). Today Paulet is best remembered as the harsh jailer of Mary, Queen of Scots, during the two final years of her imprisonment. She remained in his strict custody until her execution on February 8, 1587. Paulet's reward was his appointment to the prestigious office of Chancellor of the Order of the Garter, on which occasion he would have been given this manuscript. On the second (paper) front flyleaf of our manuscript was inscribed "AETATIS SUAE", the Latin formule used for recording the age reached by the deceased, although Paulet's age at his death in 1588, 56, was never added.

2. Private collection.

TEXT

ff. 1-30v, [Statutes of the Order of the Garter]; incipit, "The statutis and ordinances of the mooste noble ordre of saynt George named the Gartier Refourmed explained declared and Renewed by the moste hygh most excellent & moost puysant prynce kyng Henry the viiith by the grace of God kyng of Englande and of France defendor of the fayth lorde of Irlande ... shal be from henceforth always accompted eligible and may be chosen to be one of the companions of this Order"; [ff. 31-32v, blank];

Statutes on the Order of the Garter. On ff. 1-27v the thirty-eight statutes written during Henry VIII's reign, and slightly altered during Elizabeth's reign (printed in Ashmole, 1971, pp. 793-802, who notes the Elizabethan changes made to the wording in the margins marked by asterisks), followed by ordinances made during Elizabeth's reign. The oath of the knights on f. 27v, specific to Elizabeth's reign, differs slightly in wording from that printed by Ashmole on p. 823, and is longer, including at the end: "And further that you shall healpe to defende and mayntayn ... the rights and liberties of the College of the blessed lady and St. George the Martyr wherein the honorable order of the garter if founded."

ff. 33-34v, incipit, "Juramentum Prelati et Cancellarii Ordinis quod Scriba eidem exhibebit in presentia Supremi aut ab eo deputati ...".

An oath of the Prelate and the Chancellor of the Order; Ashmole, 1971, p. 811.

ff. 35-42v, incipit, "Horum primus erit Prelatus ordinis ...";

Constitutions for the offices of Order: the Prelate, the Chancellor, the Register, the Garter King of Arms, and the Usher; Ashmole, 1971, pp. 802-804.

f. i (first endleaf), incipit, "Elizabeth by the grace of God Quene of England, France, and Ireland, defendor of the faith & and Sovereigne of the noble Order of the Garter ...".

A copy of a letter by Queen Elizabeth I to Lord Howard of Effingham, appointing him as her Lieutenant at the coming Garter feast (April 22, 1588). This letter is not included among the several letters of installation by Queen Elizabeth I printed in Ashmole's 1672 work.

The Statutes, as found in our manuscript, are printed in the appendix of Elias Ashmole's *The Institution, Laws and Ceremonies of the Most Noble Order of the Garter*, 1672, reprinted by Frederick Muller in 1971, pp. 793-802 (Online Resources). The Statutes, as they were written during the reign of Henry VIII, remained largely unchanged until the eighteenth century, except for a more major reform under Edward VI, which however was declared invalid within a year of its creation by his sister Mary Tudor. Ashmole's edition includes passages that differed, such as the oaths given by the knights during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Elizabeth I (cf. Ashmole 1971, pp. 822-823).

The Order of the Garter, the most distinguished and exclusive British chivalric order, was founded by King Edward III of England in 1348. The Treasury accounts in this year record the gift made by the King's son, Edward, the Black Prince, of twenty-four garters to knights of the Order (Waddington, 1993, p. 97). Membership of the Order was (and still is) limited to the sovereign, his eldest son, and twenty-four knights. Knights were exclusively men until 1987, when a statute decreed by Queen Elizabeth II allowed this honor to be awarded to women. The motto of the Order "Honi soit qui mal y pense" is found on the Garter that the members wear buckled below the left knee. For an example, see the Garter of Maximilian I, King of Romans, which was studied at the occasion of the exhibition "Gothic: Art for England 1400-1547" (cf. Marks and Williamson, 2003, cat. 81, p. 215).

The patron saint of England, St. George, is the patron of the Order, and the ceremonies are held in St. George's Chapel in Windsor. Several Garter feasts during Elizabeth I's reign were held at Greenwich or Whitehall, after she decreed in 1567 that this feast need not be celebrated at Windsor (Waddington, 1993, p. 107). This was one of her many strategies for personalizing her presidency of the Order. Perhaps the most interesting of them, in her effort to assert female dominance over a chivalric order of male knights, was the emphasis during her reign of the legend of the Garter. According to this myth, the insignia of the Order derived from a ballroom scene at Calais, where King Edward had displayed an action of courtly gallantry by picking up the garter that had slipped from the leg of the Countess of Salisbury while she was dancing. According to legend, the King presented the garter to the Countess saying "Honi soit qui mal y pense" ("shame on he who thinks evil upon it"), defending the lady's reputation. Accentuating an image of an order whose foundations had been in honor of a lady, and rejecting, as Raymond Waddington writes, "the probably more genuine origination of the garter as a symbol battlefield bonding among fighting knights ... encodes the mythic truth of what the Order had become under Elizabeth" (Waddington, 1993, p. 109).

Only a small number of manuscripts containing the statutes for the Order of the Garter survive from the sixteenth century. Examples include the exceptionally lavish copy made for Francis I of France now in the British Library, and the statutes prepared for Paulet's successor as Chancellor, Sir John Woolley (Royal Collection, RCIN 1081223; see Online Resources). All known sixteenth-century copies are on parchment and have the arms of the original recipient at the front of the volume, usually on the verso of a leaf bearing the arms of the Order. Our copy, unusually, includes the royal arms of Elizabeth I, followed by the recipient's arms (Amias Paulet) on the verso. Sixteenth-century copies of the Garter statutes are exceptionally rare on the market: our manuscript is apparently the first to surface since 1981 (Schoenberg Database).

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

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<https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=cPA1AQAAAMAAJ&hl=fr&pg=GBS.PP7>

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The Order of the Garter

<https://www.stgeorges-windsor.org/about-st-georges/history/the-order-of-the-garter/>

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