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EMBLEMS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE.

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MANKIND, in all ages and in nearly every land, has shown a desire to have associated with his own identity some peculiar mark or symbol as an emblem characteristic of his family, his attainments or his place of residence. These insignia—carved in stone, in ivory and in gold, painted on wood, or worked in silk and woollen fabrics—have represented almost everything in the animal and the vegetable world; yet they were not chosen in an indiscriminate manner and without meaning, but with due consideration for the appropriateness thereof, as tokens to perpetuate the remembrance of some valiant deed of arms, some special act pertaining to the welfare of the Church or State, or some other event in the history of the life of an individual person, or of a community as a nation.

The earliest chronicles give evidence of these symbols being worn and used, and the ancients were particularly careful that there should not be any misconstruction of the implied meaning, for nothing was employed that was not truly emblematic. In the second verse of the second chapter of the Book of Numbers we find that "Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house." In the first Book of Kings we read of "Letters being sealed with Ahab's

seal;" and seals are mentioned very often in Revelations; also the "Lion of Judah." Josephus, in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, gives a minute description of the "essen," or "oracle," composing the breast-plate of the High Priest, on which were twelve precious stones engraved with the names of the sons of Jacob. Seals were very popular in Egypt and Rome. In Britain, the ecclesiastical seal first made its appearance in the ninth century; while under the Normans sealing became a legal formality. In Scotland, it dates from the eleventh century, when Duncan II. was on the throne. In point of beauty, the seal reached its highest degree of elegance in the fourteenth century. In the fore part of the present century, letters were usually fastened with wax and protected with the impress of a seal; but the use of the adhesive envelope has, to a great extent, done away with this, while on documents of a legal nature, the simple paper wafer is sufficient to accompany the signature. (To the impetuous gentleman who has mortgaged his property, no doubt the little red disc appears as large as the great seal of William the Conqueror!)

In its signification, the "totem" of the savage differs but little from the gorgeous escutcheon above the royal seat of honor in the British House of