

## C A P. XXIII.

*The Observation of the Grand Feast by  
absent Knights.**Absent Knights enjoined to observe the Grand  
Feast.*

§ 1. **H**AVING shewn with what Magnificence and Ceremony the Feast of St. George has been, and ought to be observed; as also how strictly the Statutes oblige the *Knights-Companions* to appear annually thereat; and what severe Penalties they are liable to, if absent, except on reasonable Cause of Absence. Yet left the Honour might receive diminution, from too small an Appearance at its publick Solemnities; it was farther at the Institution of the Order Decreed: That none of them should depart the Kingdom, without first acquainting the Sovereign, and obtaining his special Leave and License; nevertheless the Sovereign granted them License to go beyond Sea, before the rest of his Subjects, if they were dispos'd to undertake any Military Expedition, from whence any Glory of Knighthood might be hop'd for.

It was then by the eleventh Article also ordained; (on whatsoever occasion the Absence might be,) That where-soever any of the *Knights-Companions* resided, during the said Feast, they should wear their Mantles of the Order, from the Hour of the first Vespers on the Eve of St. George, till the second Vespers on the Feast Day were finished; as they should have done, had they been present in Person, with the Sovereign or his Deputy, during the whole Celebration of the Feast; (in case they were not deprived of their Liberty.) the Proregation of the Feast notwithstanding.

King Henry VIII. observing the Custom of these Celebrations began to be neglected, in the eleventh year of his Reign, enlarged the Law in this particular, explaining the said eleventh Article. He declar'd and enjoind the wearing of the whole Habit on the Eve of St. George, if the *Knights-Companions* were not under restraint. Then he enume-

enumerated the times for wearing it; to wit, on the Eve; at all times of Divine Service, Dinner and Supper; unless in case of War, Sickness, or other just Impediment; when it was sufficient, if the absent Knight did wear the *Garter* and *George*, either in a Gold Chain, or Silk Ribbond.

And when the same Sovereign, about three Years after, made a general Reformation of the *Statutes*, he enjoin'd the absent *Knights-Companions* (unless under restraint,) to prepare a Capital Stall in the Church or Chappel where he design'd to hear Service, to the Honour of the Sovereign; in which should be set up the Arms of the *Order* within a *Garter*; and also to erect another Stall, as far in distance (according to the proportion of the said Church or Chappel,) from the Stall of the Sovereign, as is the absent Knights Stall in the Castle of *Windsor*, and therein place his own Arms: And should wear the whole Habit of the *Order*, and hear Divine Service, such as the Church ordained for the said time; as well on the Eve and Morning, as on the Afternoon on the Feast Day. He is likewise to do Reverence towards the *Altar*, in the Honour of God, and after towards the Stall erected for the Sovereign, at his coming in and going out of the said Church or Chappel, and as often as he should pass before the said Stall. But Emperors, Kings, Princes, or Electors, are excepted, who may place their Seats and Stalls as they think fitting.

This Decree is still in full force, and we shall only further observe, that it has been usual for the absent Knight to perform the same Ceremonies as near as may be to what is observed at *Windsor*, and to be attended with a convenient Number of Gentlemen before him, well habited, with the Officers of his Household, &c. who, according to their Degrees, proceed two and two together bare-headed; and that he Dines and Sups alone at all times, unless a *Knight-Companion* be with him.

*How it is to be observed in Case of Sickness.*

§ 2. In Case of Sickness, if the absent Knight was only confin'd to his Chamber, the Custom was to prepare a Capital Stall for the Sovereign, in the Chamber where

he lay, and another Stall for himself, placed according to the before-mentioned directions, to remain during the Feast; in which Room Divine Offices were celebrated. And if the absent Knight was so Sick as to keep his Bed, then his whole Habit of the Order was laid thereon; and upon this Account *Ambrose*, Earl of *Warwick*, falling Ill at *Greenwich*, when *St. George's Day* was there celebrated, *Anno 30 Eliz.* retir'd to his Chamber, and sat in his Robes.

*In what manner the Feast hath been observ'd by absent Knights.*

§ 3. Of this, the *Black-Book* of the Order gives a very considerable Precedent; Namely, the Feast of *St. George* held at the Palace of *Hereford*, by Prince *Arthur*, 15 *Hen. VII.* being then in his Government of the Principality of *Wales*; and had with him *Sir Richard Pool*, one of the *Knights-Companions*; where every thing, according to the form of the *Statutes*, was duly observ'd. The Prince's Sword was born before his Stall, and the Service performed by his *Herald* with great exactness. Likewise the Sovereign's *Herald* stood all the while before the Sovereign's Stall, which was adorned with accustomed Ornaments; and the Bishop, who performed Divine Service, had his Seat erected near the High *Altar*.

There are other Instances, as particularly those observ'd by *Sir Henry Sidney*, at *Shrewsbury* and *Ludlow*, 23 and 24 *Queen Eliz.* which were very remarkable.

As to the observation of the Feast, by a Knight beyond Sea, there is an Instance in *Robert*, Earl of *Leicester*, Lieutenant for *Queen Elizabeth*, Governor, and Captain General of the united Provinces, and there celebrated the Feast, 1586. He had an *Escutcheon* of the Order, impaled with the Sovereign's Arms, fixt to the front of his House, so also to the back of her Stall in the Church, and his own Arms at the back of his own Stall.

He proceeded on Horse-back to the Church, a Pursuivant riding before him, wearing a King of Arms's Coat; who, after Sermon, proceeded before him to the Offering; which he made for the Sovereign and himself; Service being ended, he returned to his Lodging, and dined with great Solemnity.

*Dispen-*

*Dispensations for Absence granted during Life.*

§ 5. Sometimes Dispensations for Absence have been obtained for Life, upon the Petite of the *Knights-Companions* setting forth their Age and Infirmity : An Instance of which, we find was granted to the Lord *Dacrees*, 26 *Hen. VIII.* and the Earl of *Derby*, 14 *Car. I.* and the Lord *Musgrave* ; but both with this Restriction ; that the absent should be obliged to send to *Garter* for his Escutcheons, at the same time that he sent his Excuse, and Petite for Dispensation ; and should solemnly keep in his own House the Feast, with all the sacred Rites and Ceremonies, in his Robes, and other Ornaments, if Health permit ; and in Case of Sickness, upon his Bed, according to the ancient *Statutes*.

This Act was thought of so great Importance to be observed, that the Chancellor was ordered to transcribe it, and send it to each of the *Knights-Companions* ; acquainting them at the same time, with the Penalties they should be liable to, if they neglected the least Punctilio. And the like was again observed, and repeated to them, before the Feast of the ensuing Year.

## C A P. XXIV.

*The Degradation of a Knight-Companion.*

§ 1. **T**HE Ensigns of the Order are not to be withdrawn from a Knight, during Life, unless Guilty of some of those Marks of Reproach, set down in King *Henry VIII's Statutes*, viz. Heresy, Treason, or Flying from Battle : It has sometimes been found, that Prodigality has been made a fourth Point, where a Knight has so wasted his Estate, as to be incapable of supporting his Dignity. The Pretence for divesting