

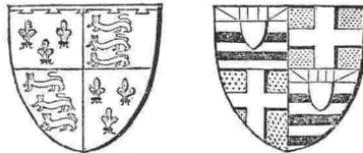
SIGN OF THE WHITE SWAN.

[READ SEPTEMBER 14, 1848.]



I beg to point out an object of interest in the ancient town of Clare, which has been little noticed.

In front of the Swan Inn is an ancient sign of a white swan and other figures, carved in bold relief, and recently painted and gilded. The swan is about the natural size. On one side is a shield bearing *France and England*, and a



label. On the other side is a shield bearing, 1st and 4th, Barry of six, or and sable, an inescutcheon argent, on a chief of the first 2 pallets, between 2 Gyronny cantons of the second, for *Mortimer*; 2nd and 3rd, or, a cross gules, for *De Burgh* or *Ulster*.

The sign is over the door; it may have been originally (I judge from its shape) the support of a window. The corbel is 9 feet 8 inches by 2 feet 4 inches.

This carving probably alludes to the regal pretensions of the ancient Lords of Clare. Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, married Joan of Acre, daughter of Edward I. On the death of their son Gilbert de Clare, the last Earl of Gloucester of this great family, the Honor of Clare came to

his sister and coheirress Elizabeth de Clare, who married John de Burgh, by whom she had William de Burgh, Earl of Ulster. She rebuilt and endowed University Hall, in Cambridge, after its total destruction by fire, and it has since been called Clare Hall.

Elizabeth, solé daughter and heir of William de Burgh, Earl of Ulster, married Lionel, third son of Edward III., who obtained with her the Honor of Clare, and was created Duke of Clarence.

Lionel, Duke of Clarence, was buried in the chancel of the Priory Church, about 1368. His daughter and heir Philippa, by his first wife Elizabeth de Burgh, married Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, and through her the House of York derived its claim to the throne. The grand-son of this marriage, Edmund Mortimer, was born in the Castle of Clare, and died in 1424.

Ann Mortimer, his sister, and ultimately solé heir, married Richard Plantagenet, Earl of Cambridge. Their son, Richard, Duke of York, was heir to the Honor of Clare, and, by the same descent, to the crown of England.

His son became King of England as Edward IV., after the long struggle between the Houses of York and Lancaster. He would be entitled to the arms of France and England, or Plantagenet, by his descent from Edward III., and to the arms of Mortimer and De Burgh or Ulster, in right of his grandmother, Ann Mortimer.

Probably the suns and the crescent and star on the sign, have some allusion to the three suns, afterwards conjoining in one sun, seen at the battle of Mortimer's Cross*, which gave the crown to Edward IV., and which was the reason of his using as his cognizance, when King, the sun, generally with a white rose in the centre.†

Is it too much to suppose that the swan *chained* has some

* Shakspeare's Henry VI. (3rd Part) Act 2, Sc. 1.—The stage-direction is—"a Plain near Mortimer's Cross, in Herefordshire."

"Dazzle mine eyes, or do I see three suns?"

"Three glorious suns, each one a perfect sun." &c.

Ib. Sc. 3.—"Edward's sun."

Richard III. Act 1, Sc. 1.

"Now is the winter of our discontent

"Made glorious summer by this *sun of York*."

† So sculptured on the font in the Church of Stoke by Neyland, in this County.

allusion to the subjugated, usurping line of Lancaster, the swan being one of the supporters to the arms of Henry IV?

RICHARD ALMACK.

[Mr. Almack's suggestion that the "swan *chained*" has some allusion to the subjugated usurping line of Lancaster" is not tenable; for the *chained* swan was a supporter of Henry IV and V., and was assumed as a badge by Edward III., who appeared at a tournament with swans on the trappings of his steed, and with this profane and boasting motto:

"Ha! ha! the white swan!

"By God's soul I'm the man."

The frequent occurrence of the "Swan" and the "Peacock" as the signs of great inns, and consequently as surnames of individuals (*Camden Remains*, p. 102) is due to the fact that no state entertainment was considered complete in the middle ages unless one of these birds was served up whole: and it was the practice for knights to take solemn vows before "the Peacock" or "the Swan," and "the ladies." Perhaps the motto quoted above may have been assumed by Edward III. in consequence of some such vow. Aylmer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, who died in 1323, is represented on his tomb in Westminster Abbey in a tilting dress, and with a swan's head for the crest of his helmet. J. W. DONALDSON.]