



Thomas Courtenay.

The Courtenay Coat of Arms

by Austin Matlack Courtenay, 1898.

The following material was provided to the Courtenay Society by Thomas Thatcher who is a descendant of Thomas Edgeworth Courtenay.

The following account of the history of the Courtenay Coat of arms was written by my great-great-grandfather, Austin Matlack Courtenay - Tom Thatcher, 1996.

The escutcheon is Or. (gold), quartered, and bearing, dexter chief and sinister base, three torteaux gules (red), and sinister chief and dexter base, rampant lions azure (blue); surmounted by an Earl's coronet, and a dolphin naiant as crest. The motto is, "Ubi lapsus. Quid feci," "Whither am I fallen? What have I done?"

The above bookplate, retaining as crest the dolphin over an Earl's crown, has above the shield an Esquire's helmet, to show that it belongs to an untitled gentleman in a family whose lead is or was an Earl. The crest for ordinary use, as a seal or stamp, is an escutcheon, Or., with three torteaux, gules, surmounted by a dolphin, naiant (swimming) over the Earl's crown, and bearing the motto beneath.

In Cleveland's history of the Courtenay family, he writes, "the motto of the family is, "Ubi lapsus? Quid feci?" which in all probability was first made use of after the death of Edward Courtenay, the last Earl of Devonshire of the Elder House, and seems to be a complaint, by way of expostulation, for that the Honours and Estates that were enjoyed by the Elder House were not conferred ("at that time") on this family, being next in succession..."

On the restoration of the Earldom in 1835, some slight changes were made. The dolphin is discarded as the crest, and above the Earl's coronet is a Prince's crown with ostrich feathers, in token, I presume, of royal descent. The "Label of three points" appears on the escutcheon, and the motto is changed to, "Quod verum tutum," or "True things are safe." It appears in Cleveland that this was the motto of Peter Courtenay, Bishop of Exeter and Westminster, died 1491, and was doubtless chosen because the former "complaint by way of expostulation" was no longer appropriate after the restoration of the title.