SERJEANT, or Sergeant (from Lat. *semens, semre,* to serve, through O. Fr. *sergant, serjant,* mod. Fr. *sergent),* the title (1) of a non-commissioned officer in the army and of a subordinate officer of police; (2) of certain officials of the royal household (see *Serjeants-at-arms,* below). (3) The name was also given formerly to the highest rank of barristers in England and Ireland (see Serjeant-at-Law). In the middle ages *semens* had a variety of applications all connoting the sense of service, from the *semens de pane et mensa,* the domestic servant of a monastery, to the *servientes de armis,* the serjeants-at-arms (Fr. *sergeans d’armes)* of monarchs, the *servientes (sergeans)* who were the apparitors of the French king, and vassals who held by a special service (serjeanty, *q.υ.).* The *serjeants {fratres servientes)* formed also an important division of the great military orders (see Saint John of Jerusalem, Knights of the Order of, and Templars). Du Cange (*Glossarium,* *s.v*. “ Serviens ”) gives many other instances.

1. *Military Title.—*In its early military uses the word implied a subordinate, and it is not clear how it came to be used for a minor commander. The “ serjeants ” of ordinary medieval armies were the heavy-armed (generally mercenary) cavalry or men-at-arms. In the 15th century it became usual to sub- divide troops of all sorts into groups of dissimilar combatants, graded amongst themselves according to military or social importance. Thus a “lance,” or group, might consist of a heavy-armed lancer (man-at-arms), a mounted and a foot archer and an armed valet, and the “ serjeant ” would be its most important member. But the general evolution of armies led to their being classed by arms and grouped in more homogeneous regiments. Under such an organization the title of the group- leader lost its cavalry significance and became specifically the designation of an infantry rank. From the cavalry it disappeared altogether, the titles “ corporal of horse,” “ maréchal des logis,” &c., taking its place. In 16th and 17th century armies the title serjeant is found amongst the highest ranks of an army. With a partial return to the old meaning it signifies, in all its forms, an expert professional soldier, the serjeant of a company, the serjeant-major of a regiment and the serjeant-major-general of the army (these last the originals of the modern ranks, major and major-general) being charged with all duties pertaining to the arraying, camping and drill of their units.

In modern armies the word serjeant is used of a non-com­missioned officer ranking between corporal and serjeant-major. A “ lance-serjeant ” is a corporal holding the appointment and performing the duties, but not having the rank of serjeant. The serjeant-major in the British service is a “ warrant-officer,” although in the cavalry and artillery the ranks of “ troop,” “ squadron ” or “ battery serjeant-major ” are non-commissioned and correspond to the “ colour-serjeant ” of infantry. This last officer is the senior non-commissioned officer of a company, and has, besides his duties in the colour-party, the pay and accounting work of his unit. The former “ corporal of horse ’’ and “ corporal-major ” still survive in the British Household Cavalry. In Germany, Austria and Russia the regimental serjeant-majors of infantry and cavalry are styled *Feldwebel* and *Wachtmeister* respectively, while in France the titles are *adjudant* and *maréchal des logis* or *maréchal des logis chef.*

2. *Serjeants-at-Arms.—*In the British royal household there are eight serjeants-at-arms, whose duties are ceremonial; they have to be in attendance only at drawing-rooms, levees, state balls and state concerts. There are also two other serjeants-at- arms to whom special duties are assigned, the one attending the Speaker of the House of Commons and the other the lord chancellor in the House of Lords, carrying their maces and executing their orders. ?The Speaker’s serjeant-at-arms is the disciplinary officer of the House of Commons, whose duty it is to expel members at the order of the Speaker and to arrest and keep in custody those persons condemned to this punishment by the authority of the House. The serjeants-at-arms have no special uniform. At court they wear any naval, military or civil uniform to which they may be entitled, or the court dress of those holding legal appointments, but not entitled to wear

robes, *i.e.* a suit of black cloth, with knee-breeches, lace bands and ruffles, a black silk cocked hat with rosette and steel loop and a sword. A silver collar of office is worn on special occasions. This costume, with the chain, is that worn by the serjeants-at- arms in the House of Lords and the House of Commons always.

SERJEANT-AT-LAW, the name (see above) given to what was formerly an order of the highest rank of barristers at the English or Irish bar. The word is a corruption of *semens ad legem,* as distinguished from *apprentidus ad legem,* or utter barrister, who probably originally obtained his knowledge of law by serving a kind of apprenticeship to a serjeant. When the order of serjeants was instituted is unknown, but it certainly dates from a very remote period. The authority of serjeant counters or countors *{i.e.* pleaders, those who frame counts in pleading) is treated in the *Mirror of Justices,* and they are named in 3 Edw. I. c. 29. They may possibly have been the representa­tives of the *conteurs* mentioned in the great customary of Normandy. The position of the serjeant had become assured when Chaucer wrote. One of the characters in the *Canterbury Tales* is

“ A serjeant of the law, wary and wise,

That often had y-been at the parvis.”@@1

Serjeants (except king’s serjeants) were created by writ of summons under the great seal, and wore a special and distinctive dress, the chief feature of which was the coif, a white lawn or silk skull-cap, afterwards represented by a round piece of black silk at the top of the wig. They enjoyed a social precedence after knights bachelors and before companions of the Bath and other orders. In this they differed from king’s counsel, who had simply professional as distinguished from social rank. Socially the serjeant had precedence, professionally the king’s counsel, unless indeed, as was often the case, a patent of pre- cedence was granted to the former. The serjeants at the Irish bar had precedence next after the law officers of the crown. Till past the middle of the 19th century a limited number of the serjeants were called “ king’s (queen’s) serjeants.” They were appointed by patent and summoned to parliament. Until 1814 the two senior king’s serjeants had precedence of even the attorney-general and solicitor-general. It was the custom for serjeants on their appointment to give gold rings with mottoes to their colleagues. Down to 1845 the order enjoyed a very valuable monopoly of practice. The serjeants had the right of exclusive audience as leading counsel in the Court of Common Pleas. In 1834 a royal mandate of William IV. attempted to abolish this privilege, but in 1840 the judicial committee of the privy council declared the mandate informal and invalid. The monopoly was finally abolished in 1845 by Act of Parliament. For at least 600 years the judges of the superior courts of common law were always serjeants, but by the Judicature Act 1873 no person appointed a judge of the High Court of Justice or the Court of Appeal was required to take or have taken the degree of serjeant-at-law. The serjeants had their own inn of court known as Serjeants’ Inn, which was formerly in two divisions, one in Fleet Street and one in Chancery Lane. In 1758 the members of the former joined the latter. In 1877 the society was dissolved, the inn sold to one of the members and the proceeds divided among the existing serjeants. The order is now extinct.

See *Serviens ad Legem,* by Mr Serjeant Manning; and *The Order of the Coif,* by Mr Serjeant Pulling.

SERJEANTY. Tenure by serjeanty was a form of land- holding under the feudal system, intermediate between tenure by knight-service (*q.v.*) and tenure in socage. It originated in the assignation of an estate in land on condition of the per­formance of a certain duty, which can hardly be described more exactly than as not being that of knight-service. Its essence, according to Pollock and Maitland, might be described as “ servantship,” the discharge of duties in the household of king or noble; but it ranged from service in the king’s host, distinguished only by equipment from that of the knight, to petty

@@@l The parvis was the porch of old St Paul’s, where each serjeant had his particular pillar at which he held interviews with his clients.